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Caption: Pride Toronto discriminates against Israel

PRIDE TORONTO INFUSED WITH DISCRIMINATION

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The movement to define Israel as an apartheid state has infiltrated the Pride parade. The mandate to promote and celebrate gay and lesbian rights has become aligned with an anti-Israel agenda.

On Sunday, June 28th, 2009, they marched in large numbers to condemn Israel. The two main groups were the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA) and Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA).

The Grand Marshall of the Parade is a featured anti-Israel speaker in the gay community. The Pride Executive Committee was indifferent to the optics this presented. They were indifferent to the anti-Israel marchers to advance their agenda – as long as no hate laws were broken.

A large anti-Israel contingent also appeared on Saturday, June 27th, 2009, in the smaller Dyke March. In fact, three separate groups protested Israel in the Dyke March. This means that of the 30 groups which participated in the Dyke March, a staggering 10% marched against Israel.

As in the case of the former racist South Africa, these “activists” believe that Israel should be dismantled and replaced with a new state. It is a concerted effort to destroy the State of Israel under the guise of human rights. It has no place in a parade mandated to celebrate gay rights.

The fact that Israel is NOT an apartheid state does not seem to matter. Arabs sit in the Knesset, vote, and are the only Arabs in the Middle East with the right to petition their own government. All of this was unthinkable under South African apartheid. The new “Israel equals apartheid” slogan is a slogan without substance.

Ironically, Israel is one of the most gay positive countries in the world. Last week’s 10th gay-pride parade in Tel Aviv saw an estimated 100,000 participants celebrate tolerance, human rights, diversity, and inclusion, for Jews and Arabs alike. As a democratic state, Israel protects the rights of all its citizens, regardless of gender, religion, and race. Israel's Supreme Court is even more liberal than Canada’s in areas pertaining to gay rights. Same sex rights legislation was enacted almost twenty years ago. These rights apply to Palestinians as well as Israelis. Moreover, Israel, the only democratic country in the Middle East, does not threaten, imprison, or kill gay and lesbian individuals for their sexual orientation. By way of contrast, marching for gay rights in Gaza or Tehran would invite persecution and human rights abuses.

In fact, being gay is illegal and punishable in many countries including Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Gambia, Liberia, Angola, Cameroon, Belize, Uganda, Malawi, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Qatar—where penalties may involve heavy fines, whipping, or lengthy prison terms. In some countries being gay warrants the death penalty. In Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, those “convicted” for being gay are subject to death, prison, deportation or flogging.

Yet Pride Toronto, abandoning its focus on gay and lesbian rights, permitted large anti-Israel messaging at its parade that was broadcast to millions. There is no place for discrimination and hate messaging in a parade that is mandated to celebrate diversity, tolerance and inclusion. It is inherently antisemitic to single out Israel.

The parade is primarily funded by the taxpayers. The \$300,000 that parade organizers received from Ontario taxpayers was designated to promote tourism. It was not for advocacy against Israel. The \$119,000 provided by the City of Toronto was to promote culture – not for anti-Israel advocacy. The money received from its main sponsor, the TD Bank is to support gay rights, not to demonize Israel.

Vilifying Israel violates Pride’s own Letters Patent (to promote and celebrate gay rights), its Mission Statement, and the policy of the City of Toronto that does not allow its grant money to be used in a hateful environment. Pride is for everyone. By allowing the hateful anti-Israel marchers thousands of gay Jews and supporters of Israel have now been marginalized, vilified, singled out, and excluded from the party.

At the end of the day, Pride Toronto has allowed itself to become the newest arena for an anti-Israel agenda. Its agenda has been hijacked by agitators who promote intolerance and hatred – all contrary to Pride’s Charter and mission and that of their sponsors and supporters. Antisemitism has a new face and a new arena.