



The Water Cooler

by Carl Rosenberg

Congratulations on victory in libel suit

Ed Corrigan is a lawyer in London, ON, specializing in immigration issues. He has a long-standing interest in the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and an encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish and Israeli critiques of Israeli policies and Zionism. He has written on these topics in many venues over the years, including a two-part article in *Outlook*, "Is It Anti-Semitic to Defend Palestinian Human Rights?" (Nov./Dec. 2009 and Jan./Feb. 2010.)

Corrigan recently took legal action against a fellow lawyer, William Hechter, who sent a libelous message in June 2010 to members of the Law Union of Ontario attacking Corrigan as "one of Canada's worst anti-Semites"—a smear that effectively puts Corrigan in the company of Ernst Zundel and Jim Keegstra. He won a settlement in an Ontario Small Claims Court, in which Hechter retracted and apologized for his statement. We congratulate Corrigan on his legal victory. His statement on the issue speaks for itself:

"I would like to thank the academics and activists who wrote letters of support—including 65 from members of the Jewish community—to support the argument that criticism of Israeli government policies or the ideology of Zionism is not anti-Semitic. I would also like to thank those individuals who agreed to come forward and testify at the libel trial. Together we presented a strong argument that criticism of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians is not anti-Semitic, and that Zionism can be criticized and commented on."

Voices of sanity

This issue features an eloquent article by Hannah Safran documenting the misogynistic attacks on women's rights on the part of *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) groupings in Israel. Religious fundamentalists of all kinds, whether Jewish, Muslim, or Christian, seem to share an obsession with controlling women's bodies, appearances, participation in society, and their very lives.

For this reason, I was glad to see a statement, "Religious Ethical Zionism," deploring not only attacks on women by *haredim* but also other acts of violence such as the burning of mosques by religio-nationalist settlers in the West Bank. The statement, co-authored by

Rabbi Jack Moline, of Agudas Achim Congregation (Conservative), Alexandria, Virginia, and Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel, of Temple Micah (Reform), Washington, DC, reads in part: "We stand in solidarity with the victims of these crimes We call upon Israeli government and legal authorities to bring these criminals to justice. We call upon the leaders of all branches and forms of Judaism to denounce these crimes for what they are: a denigration of the essential Jewish teaching that honors the divine image in which every human being is created." This statement was signed by dozens of people who identified themselves in various ways—Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, secular, and Orthodox.

This brings me to a related issue. As I write, several horrific murders have been in the news: the massacre of 17 civilians, including nine children, by an American soldier in Afghanistan; the shooting of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida; the beating death of an Iraqi-American Muslim woman, Shaima Alawadi, in San Diego; and the shooting of seven people—including a rabbi, and three children, at a Jewish school—in Toulouse in southern France.

In the face of all this horror, I was heartened by some responses to the wanton murders in Toulouse, whose demented perpetrator was allegedly acting to avenge the deaths of Palestinians killed in Israeli air attacks on Gaza. This prompted a strong statement from Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who declared, "It's time for criminals to stop using the Palestinian cause to justify their terrorist actions." The attack was similarly condemned in a joint statement by the PLO, Palestinian Authority, and Palestinian missions. These sentiments were echoed by Yasmeen El Khoudary, a Palestinian writer and activist in Gaza ("The Toulouse Killings: Not in Palestine's Name," *AlterNet*, March 28): "The suffering of people in France mourning the lives of young people lost is a feeling known all too well to the people of Gaza. The despair people feel living in the open-air prison that is blockaded Gaza sunk to new lows when the news came in about Merah's massacre in France We, Palestinians everywhere, refuse the killing of children to avenge suffering."

One of the few things that can be done in the face of maniacs invoking causes such as Palestinian self-determination (or alternately, the welfare of Jews or Israelis), is the repudiation of their atrocities by those in whose name they are acting. "Not in my name!" could become a universal protest against descent into barbarism. ♦