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**March 20<sup>th</sup> Forum will challenge charitable status of Zionist organizations**

It was 1978 and Dr. Ismail Zayid had already been teaching at Dalhousie University in his adopted home of Halifax for five years, when one morning he opened his Halifax Herald to a front-page story that upset him deeply. The Jewish National Fund (JNF), the 107 year-old “charitable” organization instrumental in raising money to help establish the State of Israel, was honouring Halifax businessman, and former Chair of the JNF’s Atlantic branch, Peter Herschorn for his “humane work” in contributing to the construction of Canada Park in occupied Palestine. “Since when is it considered ‘humane work’ uprooting people’s homes and building picnic areas where families once lived?” says Zayid.

For Zayid, as for many Canadians, Canada Park is a monument to European colonialism built as it is on the ruins of three Palestinian villages, including Zayid’s own family home, bulldozed and dynamited by Israeli troops in 1967.

“In our village of Beit Nuba,” Zayid recalled, “eighteen people were buried alive in their homes because they couldn’t get out of their houses in time. My elderly uncle was unable to move quickly enough so they began dynamiting anyway. He barely escaped with his life.”

Dr. Zayid, Professor (Ret’d.) of Pathology at Dalhousie’s Faculty of Medicine, is among a growing group of individuals and organizations disputing the “charitable status” of Zionist organizations like The Jewish National Fund, whose donations have supported the Israeli government’s policies of “ethnic cleansing” toward the Palestinian people. Even Ha’aretz, Israel’s leading newspaper, reported in 2006, “It’s well known that the “national institutions” - the Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund - primarily exist to enable institutional discrimination based on ethnicity.”

Dr Zayid will speak at a forum sponsored by NOT IN OUR NAME (NION): Jewish Voices Against Israel’s Wars, on Thursday, March 20 at 7 PM at OISE, Room 5-250, 252 Bloor St. West (at the St. George subway station). The forum’s title is “A MILITARY OCCUPATION IS NOT A CHARITY: Contesting the charitable status of Zionist organizations.”

The other members of the panel are Abbie Bakan, Professor of Political Studies at Queen’s University and Toronto-based activist and writer, Dan Freeman-Maloy.

Bakan, a member of NION, says, “The Jewish National Fund is a political organization that represents *Zionism*— not the interests of the Jewish people. Zionism is a political strategy that supports an exclusively Jewish state, founded and maintained by colonialism, and the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian population. Support for an apartheid state should not be treated as if it is charity.”

“For too many decades,” adds Freeman-Maloy, “Canadian fundraising for institutions like the Jewish National Fund and Jewish Agency has enjoyed de facto taxpayer subsidies by being classified as ‘charitable.’ As the dispossession of the Palestinian people grinds into its 60th year, a serious challenge to Canadian complicity in this process is long overdue.”