

Canada's CBC Exposes Jewish National Fund's Support of Israeli Military, Where Does The NDP Stand

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An explosive CBC expose Friday on the Jewish National Fund should be the beginning of the end for this powerful organization's charitable status. But, unless the NDP differentiates itself from the Liberals and Conservatives by standing up for Canadian and international law while simultaneously opposing explicit racism, the JNF may simply ride out this short bout of bad publicity.

According to a story headlined "[Canadian charity](#) used donations to fund projects linked to Israeli military", the JNF has financed multiple projects for the Israeli military in direct contravention of Canada Revenue Agency rules for registered charities. The organization has also funded a number of projects supporting West Bank settlements, which Global Affairs Canada considers in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The story also revealed that the Canada Revenue Agency, under pressure from Independent Jewish Voices and other Palestine solidarity activists, began an audit of the state-subsidized charity last year.

After detailing the above, (which provoked hundreds of mostly angry comments from readers) the story notes that the "JNF has had strong relations with successive Conservative and Liberal governments." The CBC published a picture of politicians congregated at the Prime Minister's residence above the caption "Laureen Harper poses with JNF Gala honorees during a group visit to 24 Sussex Drive in 2015."

But the JNF, like all good lobbyists, has hedged its political bets and the story could have noted that the social democratic opposition party was represented at this JNF gala as well and has dutifully supported the dubious "charity". NDP MP Pat Martin spoke at the JNF event Harper organized to "[recognize](#) and thank the people that have helped to make JNF Canada what it is today." In 2016 NDP foreign critic H  l  ne Laverdi  re [participated](#) in a JNF tree planting ceremony in Jerusalem with JNF World Chairman Danny Atar and a number of its other top officials. The [president](#) of the Windsor-Tecumseh Federal NDP riding association, Noah Tepperman, has been a [director](#) of JNF Windsor since 2004 and has funded the organization's events in London, Ontario.

In 2015 Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath published an [ad](#) in a JNF Hamilton handbook and offered [words of encouragement](#) to its fundraiser while Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter [planted](#) a tree at a JNF garden in 2011. Manitoba NDP Premier Gary Doer was [honoured](#) at a 2006 JNF Negev Dinner in Winnipeg and cabinet minister Christine Melnick received the same [honour](#) in 2011. During a 2010 trip to Israel subsequent Manitoba NDP

Premier Greg Selinger signed an accord with the JNF to jointly develop two bird conservation sites while water stewardship minister Melnick spoke at the opening ceremony for a park built in Jaffa by the JNF, Tel Aviv Foundation and Manitoba-Israel Shared Values Roundtable. (In 2017 Melnick [won](#) a B'nai Brith Zionist action figures prize for writing an article about a friend who helped conquer East Jerusalem and then later joined the JNF).

Besides NDP support for this dubious “charity”, the story ignored the JNF’s racist land-use policies. The JNF owns 13 per cent of Israel’s land, which was mostly [taken](#) from Palestinians forced from their homes by Zionist forces in 1947-1948. It discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel (Arab Israelis) who make up a fifth of the population. According to a UN report, JNF lands are “chartered to benefit Jews exclusively,” which has led to an “institutionalized form of discrimination.” Echoing the UN, a 2012 US State Department report detailing “[institutional](#) and societal discrimination” in Israel says JNF “statutes prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews.”

Indicative of its discrimination against the 20% of Israelis who aren’t Jewish, JNF Canada’s Twitter tag says it “[is the caretaker](#) of the land of Israel, on behalf of its owners — Jewish people everywhere.” Its parent organization in Israel — the Keren Kayemet LeYisrael — is even more open about its racism. Its website notes that “[a survey](#) commissioned by KKL-JNF reveals that over 70% of the Jewish population in Israel opposes allocating KKL-JNF land to non-Jews, while over 80% prefer the definition of Israel as a Jewish state, rather than as the state of all its citizens.” While such exclusionary land-use policies were [made illegal](#) in Canada seven decades ago, that’s the JNF’s raison d’être.

An organization that recently raised [\\$25 million](#) for a Stephen Harper Bird Sanctuary, JNF Canada has been directly complicit in at least three important instances of Palestinian dispossession. In the late 1920s JNF Canada spearheaded a [highly controversial](#) land acquisition that drove a 1,000 person Bedouin community from land it had tilled for centuries and in the 1980s JNF-Canada [helped finance](#) an Israeli government campaign to “Judaize” the Galilee, the largely Arab northern region of Israel. Additionally, as the CBC mentioned, JNF-Canada build [Canada Park](#) on the remnants of three Palestinian villages Israel conquered in 1967.

A map the JNF [shows to nine](#) and ten-year-olds at Jewish day schools in Toronto encompasses the illegally occupied West Bank and Gaza, effectively denying Palestinians the right to a state on even 22 percent of their historic homeland. Similarly, the [maps](#) on JNF Blue Boxes, which are used by kids to raise funds, distributed in recent years include the occupied West Bank. The first map on the Blue Box, designed in 1934, [depicted](#) an area reaching from the Mediterranean into present-day Lebanon and Jordan.

The JNF is an openly racist organization that supports illegal settlements and the Israeli military. Many NDP activists understand this. The party’s MPs now have a choice: If they stand for justice and against all forms of racism, for the rule of international law and fairness in the Canadian tax system, they will speak up in Parliament to keep this story alive. The NDP needs to set itself apart from the Liberals and Conservatives by following up on the CBC’s revelations to demand the Canada Revenue Agency rescind the JNF’s charitable status.

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