

Mohawk College Forces Finkelstein Out of Campus Venue

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Montreal, February 18, 2011 – Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) announced that Mohawk College decisions have forced CJPME to move a lecture by US scholar Dr. Norman Finkelstein. The lecture was to have taken place at the College Feb. 19, but will now be delivered at Centenary United Church, 24 Main St. West, Hamilton, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19.

In a Feb. 11 letter, the College had insisted that CJPME pay an additional \$1500 in costs for “security” and that “refusal to secure payment for the cost of the additional security will result in automatic cancellation of the rental space at Mohawk College.” In a letter yesterday, the lawyer representing Mohawk College again reiterated that the lecture would only be allowed to proceed at Mohawk College if CJPME paid the additional security charges. CJPME has refused to pay the charges – applied arbitrarily by the College days after the contract was paid – believing them to be a form of administrative discrimination, and a breach of CJPME’s rental contract with the College.

“Mohawk College has admitted to the media that they were pressured by Jewish groups to cancel the event,” explained Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. “Slapping us with a \$1500 ‘security’ bill was the best way to force cancellation of the booking without actually saying, ‘We’re censoring this lecturer.’” Mohawk College asserted that eight police officers were required to “secure” the 190-seat campus venue booked by CJPME. CJPME says that, while it has been asked – and agreed in the past – to pay for security at events, it has never been asked to pay for as many as eight officers. CJPME has run 19 events with Dr. Finkelstein in Canada in the past three years without a single incident of violence, yet has paid thousands for the needless security. An event co-hosted by CJPME at Queen’s University on Feb. 15th took place without incident, and with no security personnel present.

Dr. Finkelstein-the son of Holocaust survivors-has been critical of Israel’s assault on Gaza two winters ago and its 43-year occupation of Palestinian territories in his lectures and books. The move at Mohawk echoes a trend which CJPME and other social justice groups in Canada have noticed in recent years. Canadian universities make it increasingly difficult to host events by socially progressive speakers. Yet instead of outright refusing the events,

these universities insist on outrageous “security” charges or administrative delays which make the events practically and financially unviable. CJPME is considering legal action to recoup losses and inconvenience related to Mohawk College’s breach of contract.

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