



29 April 2008

Mr. José Dougan-Beaca
Coordinator
Anti-Discrimination Unit
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations,
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Dear Sir:

Re: CIJA Statement to the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference

In 2007, following all of the procedures set out by the UN Preparatory Committee itself, the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA) made an application to be accredited to the Durban Review process. What should have been a routine UN approval of an accreditation request by a Canadian NGO with proven track records in promoting tolerance and fighting racism, for us turned into a disturbing reminder of prejudice at work.

Despite the support and certification of the application by the UN Secretariat, some member states (with the support of the geo-political blocs they represented) turned the PrepCom deliberations into a discriminatory procedural football, all in the putative name of fighting discrimination, racism and xenophobia. For several hours at a PrepCom meeting in Geneva last week, the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA) was subjected to a debate that did no credit to the United Nations or the values it represents. It reinforced the obvious failings of the Durban Review process and sadly demonstrated once again that the much-touted Durban Review process is, in fact, no different than its predecessor.

The continuing and obvious actions by a group of member states led by Iran appear to us to be aimed primarily at marginalizing Jewish voices and memory. They remain at odds with the UN's high ideals.

How else can one reconcile the refusal by Iran and its supporters to accept the recommendation of the UN Secretariat of CIJA's bona fides as per the UN process and, instead, create new demands while, at the same time, argue that the goal of the Durban Review Process is to seek the widest possible NGO participation?

How else can one interpret the Catch-22 of Iran deliberately refusing to provide reasons before the April preparatory meetings as to why it objected to CIJA's accreditation then seeking to condemn CIJA for not responding to its requests in a timely fashion?

How else can one justify Iran's ongoing demands, backed by onerous 24- or 48-hour deadlines, that CIJA must continue to satisfy them as to the work of CIJA whose agencies have proven multi-year track records of national and international human rights service, supported by

substantial documentary evidence regarding its work combating antisemitism and racism and promoting tolerance and equality?

How else can one explain Iran's charges that CIJA is a 'commercial' organization when it has been provided from the outset with the relevant Canadian legal documents to demonstrate that CIJA is a not-for-profit organization?

This deliberate abuse of the UN process is highly discriminatory in its treatment of the accreditation application of the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy. The repetition of these questions, ignoring our previous responses and our submission of over 100 pages of documentation, is harassment, to which no established NGO should be subjected.

Despite the antisemitic and anti-Zionist hate that blighted and derailed the Initial Durban Conference, there remained hope that, working together, people of goodwill could identify common ground in the fight against racism, discrimination and xenophobia. However, the events of recent days have put into question again the will, or ability, to fix the broken Durban Process. While initially we felt it important to defend our name and reputation, it is now clear that, no matter what evidence we supply to demonstrate our bona fides, or how many times we supply it, under how many shrinking deadlines, it will make no difference in affecting the agenda of Iran or its supporters.

Therefore, in the circumstances, CIJA withdraws its previously submitted 2007 application for accreditation to the Durban Review process. The Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy will continue its important work to promote equality and tolerance in Canada and abroad and we shall seek membership and participation in other events where there is a positive interest in such goals.

CIJA expresses its sincere appreciation to the members of the European Union and other fair-minded states who tried, in their support of CIJA's application, to maintain a respectful, fair, and transparent process.

Yours sincerely,


Hershell Ezrin
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy

Cc: Board of Directors, Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy
Ms. Gwyn Kutz, Director, Human Rights, Gender Equality, Health and Population, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada