PRIORITIZING ANTI-RACISM
August 13, 2015

A statement by Palestine Solidarity Committee – Seattle
The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice
Seattle Mideast Awareness Campaign

The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation has recently issued a statement expelling member group *If Americans Knew* for violation of anti-racist principles. See the US Campaign statement here, other statements and rebuttals here and here.

We support the US Campaign's movement toward prioritizing anti-racism and placing the struggle for Palestinian rights in a broad anti-racist context. Anti-racist work requires new learning and re-evaluation of strategies, worldviews, and stances for many of us. Strategic focus on undoing one system of oppression does not mean condoning other systems of oppression. We have to be clear and consistent that racists and white supremacists are not our allies in the struggle for Palestinian freedom.

The US Campaign notes Alison Weir's appearances on right-wing and white supremacist interview shows. We have heard some guilt-by-association comments and arguments about this, but simple association is not the issue. Many of us accept interviews by hostile shows or hosts with whom we disagree, but if we do so, we try to foreground our disagreement with them and to frame the Palestinian struggle in the context of the global struggle for justice. Reaching an audience by appearing to "match" them is good sales technique but is no justification for implicitly accepting the context of racism or white supremacy. In particularly virulent cases, even the act of appearing on a show may allow our struggle to be placed in an unacceptable racist context; and certainly allowing oneself to appear to be an ally of racists and white supremacists cannot be considered an acceptable tactic.

However, our major concern goes deeper than this. For years we have been disturbed by the tendency of several people and groups, including *If Americans Knew*, to try to reach a white middle-class audience by presenting US government support for Israel as a unique exception to supposedly benevolent US foreign policy. This whitewashing of US policy dangerously ignores the long history of US government support for racist, dictatorial and murderous regimes all over the world, as well as racist, murderous and dictatorial actions directly by the US. US policy toward Israel is consistent with US government history and practice.

By itself, this might only be a political disagreement; but this strategy of whitewashing US policy goes hand-in-hand with insisting that US policy has been hijacked or corrupted by outside interests, in this case Jewish special interests. Not only does this revive the racist stereotype of powerful Jewish puppet-masters controlling the world — a favorite trope of extremist white supremacists — but it ignores ongoing US colonial and racist policies as well as a wide range of corporate, military, and Christian special interests that finance and support Israel and the Israel Lobby.

Furthermore, privileging a white middle-class target audience can lead into traps. For example, the postcard by *If Americans Knew* that asks "What would you do if the world demanded that we 'recognize the right' of another country to take over 78% of our land?" uses a slogan that many of us have used in some version over the years, but we have come to realize that this slogan insults the many millions of Native Americans, past and present, who already know exactly how this feels. We can't afford to ignore that large-scale ethnic cleansing was central to the founding of the US as well as Israel.

This is only one example of how we need continually to re-examine our assumptions and our longtime stances and tactics. The struggle against Israel's racism, apartheid, war crimes and ethnic cleansing must be placed within the broader struggle against racism, apartheid, war crimes and ethnic cleansing everywhere, including all these crimes as perpetrated in and by the United States.

We have had personal and professional interactions with Alison Weir and *If Americans Knew* for many years, and we respect and appreciate their exhaustive media analyses and some of their intelligent, hard-hitting handouts and materials. At the same time, we have always had to sift and choose which of their materials we could use, and we have hesitated to recommend them or their website. We have tried to work in loose coalition and be civil colleagues, even though we have had grave concerns about some statements and citations they have made, some of which are cited in the US Campaign's statement.

After studying the statements, counter-statements and transcripts, we are forced to agree with the conclusions of the US Campaign. We hope that Alison Weir and *If Americans Knew* can reconsider their attachment to outdated and unacceptable tactics, realize that the US Campaign has responded to valid concerns, and recognize and repudiate those mistakes.

We must emphasize that we are not saying any of this to comfort our Jewish or Israeli allies or to allow any of them to ignore their own challenges and responsibilities. But we find the US Campaign's analysis on this matter to be sound. Though we might have hoped for more negotiation or different outcomes, we support the US Campaign's conclusion and action.