

From: **Ismail Zayid** <izayid@eastlink.ca>
Date: Fri, Jun 11, 2010 at 8:20 PM
Subject: I oppose the decision to grant an honorary degree to Heather Reisman

May, 11, 2010.

Dear President Campbell, and Vice-Presidents McClatchie and Jollymore,

I am writing to express great concern with Mount Allison University's decision to grant an honorary degree to Ms. Heather Reisman, President and CEO of Indigo Books and Music Inc.

Ms. Reisman and Mr. Gerry Schwartz founded HESEG - Foundation for Lone Soldiers which provides scholarships and other support to former "lone soldiers" in the Israeli military – individuals from outside Israel with no family in the country who join the Israeli military and participate in all aspects of its repression of Palestinians. According to their website HESEG was established "to recognize and honour the contribution of Lone Soldiers." In particular, "priority is given to combat soldiers."

By rewarding and supporting Lone Soldiers, Reisman and Schwartz provide support for Israel's military effort. HESEG has close ties to the Israeli military and includes on its Board of Directors notorious figures from Israel's military establishment, such as Maj. General Doron Almog. Warrants have been issued for Almog's arrest in the UK in 2005 and in Spain in 2008 on suspicion of war crimes.

"Lone Soldiers" participate in a military that operates checkpoints that restrict Palestinian freedom of movement, enforces the occupation of Palestinian land, and has a documented history of human rights violations. At any time there might be 5,000 "Lone Soldiers" in the Israeli military in all capacities. As you know, the Israeli military is responsible for war crimes in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Lebanon.

Israel's latest assault on Gaza in December 2008 killed over 1300 people, and injured over 5,000. Among those killed were 300 children. In those attacks 18 schools were destroyed and 280 damaged. Because of the blockade on construction materials – enforced by the Israeli military - the damaged schools have not been rebuilt or repaired. HESEG representatives went into Gaza to hand out \$160,000 worth of "thank you" gifts to Israeli soldiers during these attacks.

I understand that Indigo Books & Music Inc. is publicly committed to good corporate citizenship, for example establishing the Love of Reading Foundation which provides books and learning materials to schools in need. Unfortunately, Palestinian schoolchildren are currently being denied access to books and learning materials by the Israeli Military which Ms. Reisman supports through the HESEG Foundation. According to an October 2009 Human Rights Watch report only 10% of required school textbooks have been printed in Gaza this year because printing supplies have been subject to the blockade which is enforced by the Israeli military. Only two truckloads of stationary have been allowed into Gaza in 2009 while 120 truckloads have been blockaded by the Israeli Military.

As a supporter of human rights I hope that you will reconsider the decision to honor Ms. Reisman with a Mount Allison degree. The connections between Heather Reisman and the Israeli Military, through the HESEG Foundation, is a tarnish on Mount Allison's good reputation – especially in this Year of International Engagement that promised to challenge the "university community to more critically consider [its] place in the world and the part [it] can play in more actively engaging it at home and abroad." More importantly, universities and intellectuals have a special responsibility to create a just society and to oppose war and militarism – in this way they stay true to the greatest writers and scholars.

Yours Sincerely,

Ismail Zayid, MD.

President, Canada Palestine Association.