

Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper Raising Funds for Racist Organization

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Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper (left) with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu. ([Canada Prime Minister's Office](#))

At the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on Sunday, Canadian Prime Minister [Stephen Harper](#) will help raise funds for an organization that practices discriminatory land use policies long outlawed in this country.

In a first for a sitting prime minister, Harper will address the 100-year-old [Jewish National Fund](#) of Canada. While it is illegal to restrict the sale of property to certain ethnic or religious groups in Canada, the JNF does just that in Israel.

Into the 1950s restrictive land covenants in many exclusive neighborhoods and communities across [Canada](#) made it impossible for Jewish, Black, Chinese, Aboriginal and others peoples deemed to be non-“white” to buy property.

It was not until after the Second World War that these policies began to be successfully challenged in court.

In 1948, Annie Noble decided to sell a cottage in the exclusive Beach O' Pines subdivision on Lake Huron to Bernie Wolf, who was Jewish.

During the sale Wolf's lawyer realized that the original deed for the property contained the following clause: “The lands and premises herein described shall never be sold, assigned, transferred, leased, rented or in any manner whatsoever alienated to, and shall never be occupied or used in any manner whatsoever by any person of the Jewish, Negro or coloured race or blood, it being the intention and purpose of the Grantor, to restrict the ownership, use, occupation and enjoyment of the said recreational development, including the lands and premises herein described, to persons of the white or Caucasian race.”

Noble and Wolf tried to get the court to declare the restriction invalid but they were opposed by the Beach O'Pines Protective Association. Both a Toronto court and the Ontario Court of Appeal refused to invalidate the racist covenant.

But Noble pursued the case — with assistance from the [Canadian Jewish Congress](#) — to the Supreme Court of Canada. In a six-to-one decision the highest court reversed the lower courts' ruling and allowed Noble to purchase the property.

The publicity surrounding the case prompted Ontario to pass a law voiding racist land

covenants.

In 2009 the federal Conservative government defined the Noble and Wolf vs. Alley Supreme Court case “an event of national historic significance” in the battle “for human rights and against discrimination on racial and religious grounds in Canada.”

Six decades after the Supreme Court delivered this blow to racist property covenants, our Prime Minister Stephen Harper will be promoting a charity that discriminates in land use.

A 1998 [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) report found that the JNF systematically discriminates against Arab citizens of Israel — who make up about 20 percent of the country’s population.

According to the UN report, JNF lands are “chartered to benefit Jews exclusively,” which has led to an “institutionalized form of discrimination.”

[More recently, the US State Department’s 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices noted](#): “Approximately 93 percent of land [Israel] was in the public domain, including approximately 12.5 percent owned by the NGO Jewish National Fund (JNF), whose statutes prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews.”

For their part, JNF Canada officials are relatively open about the discriminatory character of the organization.

In May 2002, JNF Canada’s executive director for eastern Canada, Mark Mendelson, explained: “We are trustees between world Jewry and the land of Israel.”

JNF Canada’s head Frank A. Wilson echoed this statement in July 2009: “JNF are the caretakers of the Land of Israel on behalf of its owners, who are the Jewish people everywhere around the world.”

The JNF’s bylaws and operations are clearly incompatible with Canadian law concerning racist property covenants.

Yet JNF Canada, which raises about \$8 million annually, is a registered charity in this country. As such, it can provide tax credits for donations, meaning that up to 40 percent of their budget effectively comes from public coffers.

Does Stephen Harper support racist land use policies?

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