

**Aswat- Palestinian Gay Women and alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in
Palestinian society stand in solidarity with Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) in
their right to march in Toronto's Pride Parade.**

It was reported in a Toronto Star article on April 18 that Toronto city bureaucrats are threatening to cut funding for Pride in 2011 if Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) are allowed to march in the Parade in July 2010. Some of the arguments directed at QuAIA (by city bureaucrats and others) have been that:

- QuAIA's rhetoric contradicts with the city's anti-discrimination policy, claiming that Pride is not the place for politics.
- QuAIA have nothing to do with LGBTQ rights.
- QuAIA would be better off demonstrating against the Palestinian Authority or against Hamas, or even against Iran.

Hereby, we wish to refute their argument by stating that Pride parades started as political marches, and we firmly believe that solidarity should be with human rights first and foremost. We believe that as queers, one of the most disadvantaged and oppressed minorities in human societies, we should protest against all forms of oppression and struggle together to promote the rights of minorities and oppressed groups. As Palestinian queers, our struggle relates to social injustices caused by the discrimination that is deeply rooted in Israel's policies and practices against the Palestinian people, straight and gay alike.

Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are struggling for their basic human rights under Israel's stifling Apartheid. Our 62-year struggle for freedom from Israeli occupation and Apartheid is a struggle for justice and human rights from its inception. The struggle against occupation and Apartheid is a struggle for human rights, and that is the struggle that QuAIA is furthering.

Over the past decades, Pride parades around the world have been a platform for queers, not only to increase public awareness for LGBTQI rights, but also a platform to promote and defend causes like the feminist struggle, and the fight to end Apartheid in South Africa.

We strongly believe that Pride should embrace QuAIA and demand freedom for all Palestinians. Banning QuAIA from participating in Pride this year will be a black mark in the history of Toronto Pride.

In solidarity,

alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society [www.alqaws.org]

Aswat – Palestinian Gay Women [www.aswatgroup.org]