

Boycott World Pride 2006 in Jerusalem

Israel, Land of “Love Without Borders”

World Pride was scheduled to be held in Jerusalem in August of 2005. The sponsoring organization, Jerusalem Open House, themed the event “Love Without Borders.” This title is ironic, because the Israeli government was at that very moment building its Segregation Wall, a 25-foot concrete barrier which will cut off approximately 200,000 Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem from their families, neighbors, jobs and schools in the rest of the West Bank.

In late June, Open House announced that it was postponing the event for one year, because the scheduled festival coincided with the Israeli “disengagement” from Gaza. JOH Executive Director Hagai El-Ad stated that it was inappropriate to celebrate while thousands were being displaced from their homes. This statement was a slap in the face to the tens of thousands of Palestinians who have been violently displaced from their homes in the last 60 years. In the last five years, the Israeli government has demolished over 15,000 Palestinian homes, leaving over 100,000 homeless.

According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, “Since 1967, Israel has created a ‘greater’ Jerusalem which controls the entire central portion of the West Bank and cuts economic heart out of Palestinian state. While constructing 90,000 housing units for Jews in East Jerusalem, the municipality has intentionally created a shortage of 25,000 housing units for

Palestinians. The goal is three-fold: (1) to maintain a 72%-28% majority of Jews over Arabs – a racist policy that elsewhere in the world is called ethnic cleansing; (2) to confine the Palestinian population to small islands – Palestinian Arabs make up a third of the Jerusalem population, but only have access to 7% of the urban land; and (3) to ultimately force them out of the city.” Straight and queer Palestinians alike will be subject to racist policies designed to keep them a minority and force those who cannot build homes out of the city. This is not an environment in which we can celebrate “Love Without Borders.”

The reality of the location for “Love Without Borders” is separation, land theft, and the apartheid policies of Israel in the Occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and Syrian Golan Heights. The love Palestinians have for family members and loved ones living in the West

Bank will have a strictly enforced border, while queers will celebrate “Love Without Borders.” It’s time we ask InterPride and Jerusalem Open House, co-sponsors of World Pride 2006, how they will address this contradiction:

With the Israeli military setting up scores of checkpoints throughout the Occupied Territories, making travel into Israel nearly impossible, will “love without borders” be available to Palestinian queers? Contact Hagai El-Ad, Executive Director of Jerusalem Open House, hagai@joh.gay.org.il and ask if he plans to demand that the Israeli government open the checkpoints so that Palestinians who live moments away from West Jerusalem can participate in the “Love Without Borders” march. Contact InterPride’s Co- President, Suzanne Girard, suzanne.girard@interpride.org, and ask her she is encouraging attendees of World Pride to join demonstrations demanding the Wall be torn down.

Let’s make “Love Without Borders” a reality, not a marketing slogan. Boycott World Pride Jerusalem. Demand the United States government stop all military aid to Israel. Demand an end to illegal Jewish-only settlements in the Occupied Territories. Demand equal rights for all peoples living in Israel/Palestine.

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