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**Fwd: From the Desk of Ezra S. Shanken - February 12, 2016**

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Calgary United with Israel (CUWI) <info@cuwi.ca>  
To: s n <bananasays@yahoo.com>

Mon, Feb 15, 2016 at 4:18 PM



From the Desk of Ezra S. Shanken, CEO

[t/@eshanken](#) [t/@jewishvancouver](#) [f/jewishvancouver](#)

February 12, 2016 | 3 Adar 5776 | Shabbat Candlelighting at 5:09 p.m.

This message has 565 words and will take about 3 minutes to read.

While we officially celebrate Israel's independence once a year on Yom Ha'atzmaut, what unites us all every day is our love for our homeland. When we celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut we celebrate not just the physical existence of the State of Israel, but what it represents as an island of democracy and diversity in a sea of intolerance.

Just as the State of Israel is diverse, so, too, is our community. We each play a role in creating a respectful space for passionate debate about ideas, opinions and diverse political points of view. Such freedoms of speech and expression are cornerstones of any democracy, whether in Canada or Israel.

One thing our Jewish Federation does not debate, however, is Israel's right to exist. So, you can imagine our concern when we were wrongly linked with BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) by community members who disagree with our Yom Ha'atzmaut Committee's decision to invite singer Achinoam Nini (Noa) because, it would seem, her political views are different from theirs.

We take allegations of supporting BDS very seriously, and we have done our due diligence by looking closely into the facts. Reports suggesting Noa promotes BDS are incorrect. You can read her condemnations of BDS in English [here](#) and [here](#), and in Hebrew [here](#).

As for our Jewish Federation, let me be absolutely clear about this:

**Jewish Federation is unambiguous in our opposition to BDS, which is discriminatory and is antithetical to peace. We are deeply committed to continuing the fight against BDS at every opportunity.**

To suggest otherwise is wholly inaccurate. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Unfortunately, sensational accusations make for great fodder online, where it's faster and easier to click and share misinformation than it is to check the facts. Even mainstream media can get caught up in this, as happened with *The Jerusalem Post*. We are appreciative of their swift action to remove an article they published earlier this week that lacked credible research. They also issued the following clarification and apology:



*The article "Vancouver Jews outraged over Ahinoam Nini invite to Independence Day event," which appeared on jpost.com on February 9, in no way intended to suggest that The Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver or Ms. Nini herself support the BDS movement. We apologize for any confusion that may have been caused.*

If you would like to read a more balanced article, you can click [here](#) for the one published today by *The Canadian Jewish News*.

Our tradition tells us that Abraham and Sarah's tent was open on all sides. Why? So that travelers could be welcomed no matter what direction they came from. So let it be with our community. We can be a tent that is open to all, that has space for diversity, and where people can engage in respectful debate. Let it be open to all those who want to join the discussions of the day, be they easy or difficult, simple or complex. Not only can our community exist in such a sacred space, it can thrive.

We do not all share the same political perspectives, and probably never will. But we do share the democratic values that allow ourselves and our neighbours to express them. We are very much looking forward to celebrating Israel's Independence Day with you, and to welcoming you no matter which direction you have traveled from.

Shabbat shalom,



Ezra S. Shanken  
CEO, Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver

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