

Alert: Subject

[+]06/07/05_FROM: Rebecca Garrett_SUBJECT: **Kazemi exhibit censored**_FORWARD: **Library removes Kazemi photos** after complaint_ Last Updated Tue, 07 Jun 2005 13:05:21 EDT CBC Arts_An **exhibition of work by slain Canadian photographer Zahra Kazemi has been shut down**, following complaints it was **too sympathetic to the Palestinian uprising**. Last week, a collection of 23 black-and-white photos Kazemi took during her travels in countries like Israel, Iran and Afghanistan opened at a municipal library in the Montreal borough of Côte Saint-Luc, which has a large Jewish population. A library **patron complained** that several of the **photos depict scenes of the intifada, the Palestinian uprising in Israel, and of Palestinian refugee camps**. Gallery **officials decided to remove five images**. Kazemi's son **Stephan Hachemi** told Radio-Canada Monday that dismantling the exhibition shows a lack of respect. "To me, this is truly a **violation of the spirit of my mother's work**," he said. Hachemi gave the borough an **ultimatum – either display all the photos or none of them – so organizers have closed the exhibit**. Côte Saint-Luc Mayor **Robert Libman** told CBC News Tuesday that the library's gallery isn't there to provoke controversy. "It's a very **complicated conflict**, and to create an impression where the Palestinian cause is being martyred by oppression by the Israeli government, **we don't consider that to be a fair portrait**," Libman said. He added that, in the future, such **politically charged work won't be displayed at the library**. The borough council had commissioned the exhibition to draw attention to the ongoing fight to find out what happened to **Kazemi, who died in Tehran on July 11, 2003**. At the time, the Montreal-based photographer was in the **custody of local police**, who had **arrested her for shooting pictures of a student demonstration outside an Iranian prison**.[+]06/07/05_SUBJECT: Re: **Kazemi exhibit censored**_FROM: Jayce Salloum_This is really pathetic, is there any email addresses or phone numbers to **write in response** to this exhibition being cancelled?[+]06/08/05_FROM: Rawi Hage_TO: Undisclosed recipients_Dear friends, activist, artists and people of concern,_I urge you to **write the below officials and voice your protest** against such a **blunt attack on freedom of expression and marginal voices**. I believe we been **bullied enough, censored enough and intimidated enough**. Everyone has a right to show their own suffering. **Enough with the monopoly** on suffering._I urge you to write even one small sentence concerning the Kazemi matter. I also suggest that a demonstration should be held in front of the CSL library with the photographs in questions held up high in our hands. Just a reminder that the CSL library **belongs to all Canadians** not just the few._PS **Send your protests to: Mayor Libman: rlibman@ville.montreal.qc.ca** _CSL Library: contact@eleanorlondonlibrary.org[+]06/08/05_FROM: Gita Hashemi_TO: Undisclosed recipients_SUBJECT: Library removes photos_Once again, another case of **ensorship**. I urge you to **write protest letters**, however short they may be, to: Mayor Libman: rlibman@ville.montreal.qc.ca _CSL Library: contact@eleanorlondonlibrary.org[+]

Action: From

To Robert Libman and/or Elenor London Library. [+]06/08/05_FROM: Rebecca Garrett_SUBJECT: **Censored Exhibition**_It was with shock and dismay that I read the CBC account of the **censoring of Zahra Kazemi's exhibition**._It is my understanding that the constitution of Canada guarantees the **right of speech and representation for all**, and seeks to **ensure equity in our civic spaces and public institutions**. There is nothing in the constitution that says that this **space** of respectful **dialogue** should only exist if everyone has the same **opinions** about any particular issue. On the contrary, the whole point is to maintain a **space** where **differing viewpoints** can be spoken, viewed, discussed. This is a **fundamental right**, as well as the challenge and the privilege of **life in a democracy**._If the CBC story is indeed accurate, then what is at stake is **not just the censoring** of one photographic exhibition. What is **at stake is the trust** that we **Canadians place in our public institutions**. I believe that **your actions** constitute a misuse of **public resources**, and cannot help but contribute to an erosion of trust in our shared **public values**._Please tell me there has been some mistake in the reporting of this situation.[+]06/08/05_FROM: Rawi Hage_SUBJECT: **Censorship: Côte St-Luc library!**_I am appalled at **your decision to censor** the work of **Kazemi**. Yet we **witness** another **bureaucratic bullying, discriminatory action** aimed at **art and freedom of expression**. Might I remind you that **Arabs and Palestinians** in this country also **contribute** with their **taxes to maintain those libraries**. Libraries are and should always be an **open forum for all communities**. They do not belong to a single **community**. There are photos of Israeli soldiers carrying weapons in the **Kazemi** show, why was the objection only directed at the **Palestinians'** showing? Why the **double standard, the biased representations, the fear and effacement** of the "other"? These subjects were obviously the artist's initial choices to photograph, and they ought to be **shown and respected**. Enough with the cultural **hegemony, censorship, racist exclusions**. I am certain that there are books in your **library's** content that are as "controversial" and "menacing" as **Kazemi's** images. Where and when will it stop, your **censorships, your fears and ignorance** that is?[+]06/08/05_FROM: Jayce

Salloum_SUBJECT: To Côte St Luc Mayor Robert Libman_Dear Mayor Libman,_Your **actions to close** the exhibition of **Zahra Kazemi** are ill-founded, baseless, **cowardly**, and **ignorant**. You seek to deny the **'truth'**, to **ensor** views you don't agree with and basically to run under a table and hide. Grow up and **get a back-bone**.[+]06/08/05_FROM: Mary Ellen Davis_SUBJECT: **Censorship: Côte St. Luc Library**_The Jewish **people** do not privately own the notion of suffering. Many **other people** have experienced the tragedy of **genocide, ethnic cleansing, occupation, racism, dispossession**. Among them the **Palestinians** today, who have been inflicted the strange destiny of becoming the **Victims of Victims!**_Please **open your mind** to the suffering of the **other**._If necessary, read Haaretz journalists Gideon Levy, Amira Hass, Akiva Eldar, Meron Rappoport. And the reports of **Israeli anti-occupation organizations** such as Btselem, Gush Shalom, MachSom Watch, Rabbis for **Human rights**, Israeli Committee **Against House Demolitions**, Physicians for **Human rights** (Israel), etc._Do not **ensor Kazemi's** exhibition.[+]06/09/05_FROM: Freda Guttman_SUBJECT: **Kazemi exhibit at Côte St-Luc library**_Mr. Libman,_Your **act of censorship** of the **Kazemi** exhibition is a part of a **pattern in North America** of the **denial** of what is a fact – that Israel **daily** commits **war crimes, illegally occupies** land that does not belong to it, and has carried on a regime of **cruelty, repression, dispossession and murder** under which **Palestinians** are forced to **live**. People who **speak out** against these crimes and the violations of the **human rights of Palestinians**, are systematically labeled as anti-Semitic or if Jewish, self-hating Jews. It is very similar to the zealotry with which **people** were persecuted in the days of Senator McCarthy._But rest assured, the **truth has a way of seeping out, despite all** the attempts to suppress it. History has proved this. In the future **people** will say, "How could you have allowed this to go on when you knew it was happening?" How will you answer them? Jews who uncritically accept **Israel's actions**, no matter how **criminal**, do Israel and indeed **all Jews** a great **wrong**. The future will prove this too._You have shamed the Jewish **people**, the **people** of Côte St-Luc, the **people** of Montreal and Canada._It would take a great act of courage on your part to reverse your terribly wrong decision. I hope you do._I would like to add the most **shameful** thing to the list of wrongs you have done, which is that you have **dishonoured** the name of **Zahra Kazemi**, a woman who **gave her life for her cause, the human rights of all peoples**.[+]06/09/05_FROM: Mireille Astore_SUBJECT: A **concerned** librarian_Dear Sir/Madame _It has come to my attention that you have **shut down** an exhibition by the Canadian-Iranian photographer **Zahra Kazemi**. As a librarian I am puzzled by **your action** since librarianship is a profession that encourages the widespread of **knowledge** no matter how **uncomfortable** it seems at the time. The fact of the matter is that this exhibition is one of the many ways the general **public** can **come to grips** with the violence that exists, whether we like it or not, and an avenue for the expression of their silent **concerns**. It is a way to further **knowledge** and to enlighten. I am **saddened** by this act as it demonstrates to me also how out of step your **library** is with the worldwide and Israeli view of the **Palestinian** question. As a librarian I urge you to reconsider **your action** and to allow the exhibition to open. I am attaching below an article from the Israeli newspaper Haaretz which might help you in **your decision**._ARTICLE TRUNCATED[+]06/09/05_FROM: Gita Hashemi:_SUBJECT: **Zahra Kazemi's** photos_I am writing to voice my strong objection to **your recent action** of removing Ms. **Zahra Kazemi's** photography exhibit from the **library**._Given the **documentary** nature of Ms. **Kazemi's** work and that **your decision** was based on the inclusion of photographs from Israel, I find **your action** inexcusable and nothing short of **censorship**. If her photographs from Afghanistan and Iran are "admissible" by your standards, then why are the ones from Israel problematic?_By **your action** you have clearly manifested your **lack of moral courage** and your **inability** to create in your **library** a **space** for gaining **knowledge** and learning the **truth**. I find it appalling that while the government of Canada has taken official steps to uncover the **truth** about Ms **Kazemi's** murder in Iran for nothing more than taking pictures outside a **prison**, her photographs exposing the **prison-like** conditions for millions of **Palestinians** and the atrocities of Israeli occupiers are being **subject to censorship** in her Canadian home. Is this the **democracy** you preach to the rest of the world?_As an Iranian-Canadian, an artist and a university teacher I demand your immediate apology to Ms. **Kazemi's** family and, further, the re-mounting of the original collection of photographs that were on display in your **library**.[+]06/09/05_FROM: Michael Neumann_SUBJECT: Re the exhibition supporting Madame **Kazemi**_As a Jew whose family was **decimated** by the Nazis I am outraged that you should purge an exhibit of photographs which puts Israel in an unfavorable light. My parents **did not escape** Hitler and fight the Nazis so that a state which brings **disgrace** on the Jewish **people** might be defended through **censorship of the arts**._On numerous occasions respected **international** agencies have found Israel guilty of **war crimes and crimes against humanity**. Given these judgments, I would say that to compare Israel to **other** states that violate **human rights** expresses an objective, not a biased point of view.[+]06/09/05_FROM: Stuart Brown_SUB-



JECT: **Censorship** Like many others, I am appalled at your decision to censor the work of **Kazemi**. I agree heartily with those who have told you that this sort of **bureaucratic bullying and discrimination** against art and freedom of expression is a disgrace. **Libraries** are and should always be an **open forum for all communities**. **Double standards and bias** feed **fear** and a wish to **efface** the "other". These subjects were obviously the artist's initial choices to photograph, and they ought to be shown and respected. **Cultural hegemony, censorship and racist exclusions** are unworthy of Canadian society and especially of a city with the diversity of Côte St Luc. As a voter in the city, I will have to draw my own conclusions in November. [+]
06/09/05 FROM: Asif Devji SUBJECT: **Kazemi** Photo exhibition_Dear Madam or Sir, I was disturbed to read a CBC report that the CSL library would be removing images of **Palestinians** from its exhibition featuring the work of photojournalist **Zahra Kazemi**. Presumably, Ms. **Kazemi's work** is being featured at the library to highlight the injustice that was done to this woman; her **detention, torture and murder** in Iran following her attempts to photograph a student demonstration outside a **prison** there. The journalist was put through these horrors to **silence** her reporting, to keep certain images from the **public eye**. How unfortunate and **ironic**, then, that the CSL library, in exposing this journalist's **work** posthumously as a means of acclaiming her courage to document the **truth**, would itself act to **suppress** those of her **documentary** images which it may find to be politically unpalatable. In doing so, the CSL library associates itself with the kind of **censorship** that the Iranian authorities exhibited in punishing Ms. **Kazemi** for showing a view of the world which they found **uncomfortable**. I do hope that the library will reconsider this decision and maintain its neutrality as a **site for the fair display and discussion of all perspectives**, political or otherwise. [+]
06/09/05 FROM: Jocelyne Doray SUBJECT: **Censorship** Mr. Libman, As Gideon Levy (Jewish Israeli citizen) once said, in an interview with Jon Elmer, in September 2003: "Just as you cannot be half-pregnant – you are either pregnant or you are not – you cannot be half-democratic. You cannot draw a line and say, I'm a **democracy** on a certain territorial line, and on the **other** side of this line I'm not **democratic**; or, I'm **democratic** only to one **people** and I'm not **democratic** to the **other people** who live in the same land. It is a **myth** today (that Israel is a **democracy**). Israel is a **democracy** – a real and liberal and full **democracy** – only to its Jewish citizens, only within the old Israel, within the 1967 borders. The rest (of Israel), on the **other** side of the line, is the farthest thing from a **democracy**. It is one of the most brutal, cruel regimes in the world today." Were **Kazemi's pictures** staged? Of course not. They were **real people** in these photographs? Yes indeed. Perhaps some members of the Jewish **community** do not want the rest of the world to see, and understand, what is happening in **Palestine-Israel**? But the rest of the world already knows what is happening there. Maybe some members of the Jewish **community** themselves do not want to see what is happening there? Maybe they want their dream of a **democratic** Israel to remain intact? And so, perhaps, they prefer to keep their eyes shut. Nothing else can explain that **Kazemi's exhibition** was cancelled. [+]
06/09/05 FROM: Magdonla Gombos SUBJECT: **Protesting an Appalling Decision** The decision to remove **Zahra Kazemi's** photos from an exhibition at the CSL Library is appalling and is against everything a **library** should stand for. Even more alarming is Mr. Libman's response: "It's a very complicated conflict, and to create an impression where the **Palestinian** cause is being martyred by oppression by the Israeli government, we don't consider that to be a fair portrait," Libman said. He added that, in the future, such politically charged **work** won't be displayed at the library. There are two issues here: 1- If **libraries** are not free to invite debate in a **democratic** society, where can debate take place? Thinking that the solution is to avoid such "controversial" issues in the future is saying that it is better to bury our heads in the sand and not acknowledge the world around us when it is not convenient. 2- Unfortunately, it is not a question of impressions but of facts that the **Palestinian** cause is martyred by oppression by the Israeli government. Stating otherwise is simply not facing the **truth**. **Palestinians** suffer the longest standing **occupations** in modern history, against numerous UN resolutions, against common sense and common human decency. The closing down of the exhibition is adding insult upon injury. The only way to mend this situation, to invite **open discussions**, to practice **democracy** is to reinstall the exhibition fully without any **political censorship**. Let there be **open debate**, let there be **freedom of expression**. [+]
06/09/05 FROM: Maya Khankhoje SUBJECT: **Freedom of expression** Dear Mayor Libman, **Zahra Kazemi** had her own vision of the world, as is the right and duty of any artist, thinker or humanist. That her vision did not sit well with some is no reason for a **public library** to censor her **work**. **Public Libraries** are just that, **libraries** that belong to the **public**. Nobody in a free society has the right to muzzle the **freedom of expression** of anybody else, provided that **other people's** rights are not being trampled on. **Kazemi's** very **life** was trampled on because she recorded the **truth** exactly as she saw it. Please do not let the library in your borough muzzle the **truth**. Years ago you held an exhibition of photographs by Tina Modotti. Modotti herself paid with her **life** for defending the **truth** her camera recorded during the

Mexican Revolution, the Spanish Civil War and other struggles for peace and equity. I am glad you did not cancel that exhibition for **fear** of offending some of your patrons. [+]
06/09/05 FROM: Charlotte Kates SUBJECT: **Zahra Kazemi** Dear Mayor Libman and the Côte St. Luc Library, I was deeply distressed to hear of the removal of five photographs from the exhibition of the **work** of the late photographer **Zahra Kazemi** at the Côte St. Luc library because of their content and their view toward **Palestine**. The **Palestinian** and **Arab** perspective and **community** are also members of the **community** whose views, opinions, feelings and emotions should also matter, be represented and be seen without **fear** that images of **Palestine** and **Palestinians** may offend someone somewhere. "Offense" at the existence and visibility of a **Palestinian** perspective – or a **truthful** perspective (**Kazemi** was hardly a critic solely of the Zionist state) – is itself political, and is itself controversial. Why should those who want to ensure that images of **Palestine** are **silenced** and **censored** be appeased while those who create those images be deprived of a voice? The disposability of the **Palestinian** perspective smacks of **racism**. The entirety of the exhibition should be restored. [+]
06/11/05 FROM: Maire Noonan SUBJECT: **Stop Censorship!** Mr. Libman: I am shocked and **concerned** to hear that some of Ms. **Kazemi's** photos have been **censored** and taken out of the exhibition. This is a direct violation of the **freedom** of expression. The State of Israel has been engaged in severe **human rights** violations for decades; the occupied territories are **illegal** under **international law**. The wall that Israel is building into **Palestinian** territory is **illegal** under **international law**. **Palestinians** are suffering under Israeli oppression on a daily basis and are denied any chance of a decent human life. With any ounce of honesty, you will know that this is true. How can a photo exhibit that portrays and comments this suffering be **censored**? Where is your conscience?! What country do you live in?! The only decent thing you can do at this point is apologize and put the photos back in the exhibition immediately. [+]
06/14/05 FROM: Jamelie Hassan SUBJECT: **Censorship: Côte St-Luc Library Removes Kazemi Photos** after Complaint_Dear Mayor Robert Libman_Regarding Report of **Censorship** for **Zahra Kazemi's** Photography Exhibit_I am writing to add my voice to the many who are appalled and outraged at the news of your decision to censor the work of Canadian photojournalist **Zahra Kazemi** and to cause the closing of this very important exhibition of her photography at the **Library** of Côte Saint-Luc. It is indeed painful for all who cherish **freedom** of expression that you have made this decision as Mayor. This is yet one more example of discriminatory action against the **representation** of the **Palestinian-Israeli** conflict in our **public spaces** – spaces which are meant as **forums** for debate and also for dialogue. All Canadians contribute to public institutions in Canada such as **libraries** through our taxes. Libraries are and should always be an **open forum for all communities**. Libraries such as Côte Saint-Luc do not belong to a single **community**. Your decision to remove photos of **Zahra Kazemi** and then to dismantle the exhibition – for whatever reason – demonstrates a lack of **respect** for this courageous photojournalist whose tragic and brutal death in 2003 continues to be of national and **international concern**. This is a blatant act of **censorship** and, as Stephan Hachemi has publicly stated, is a violation of the **spirit** of his mother's **work**. Enclosed is press release on film project "Sister Speak to me – a tribute to **Zahra Kazemi**" which also includes images of **Kazemi's** photos. ARTICLE TRUNCATED [+]
06/17/05 FROM: Rahat Kurd SUBJECT: **Restore the Zahra Kazemi Exhibit** Mayor Robert Libman, By now it has been over a week since you shut down the **Zahra Kazemi** photo exhibit. I am writing from Vancouver in the hope that you will have had time to reflect on your decision. You are an elected official in a Canadian city, and your job does not give you the right to **control** the **public's perception** of any conflict, anywhere in the world. It may be painful to behold images that depict the reality of **people's** lives under military **occupation** in a place that you would like to believe upholds ideals that you cherish personally. But declaring the photos to be "offensive", and indeed taking a position on the Israeli-Palistine conflict with regard to those photos, is certainly outside the bounds of the role you have been elected to fulfill. You surely also must realize how your actions have placed you in a kind of political **complicity** with the criminals who **silenced Zahra Kazemi** so horribly and brutally. Those **responsible** for her death would not have been able to **censor** her **work** outside of Iran. You, sir, have accomplished what the "Mullahs in Iran" could not. If you really believe that the Israeli government requires this kind of defense on your part, I strongly urge you to step down from your post as Mayor of Côte St-Luc. [+]

Response: To

From Robert Libman unless otherwise noted. [+]
06/08/05 TO: Rawi Hage_We solicited the exhibition in order to support Madame Kazemi's son's quest for justice. **We were unaware** however that the exhibition, once organized with the accompanying text, sought to portray the **State of Israel** as an oppressive regime. **Israel is a democratic country** and the exhibition clearly equates and compares Israel to the **Taliban regime** in Afghanistan and the **Mullahs in Iran**. That is an **unbalanced and offensive portrait** of Israel and extremely sensi-

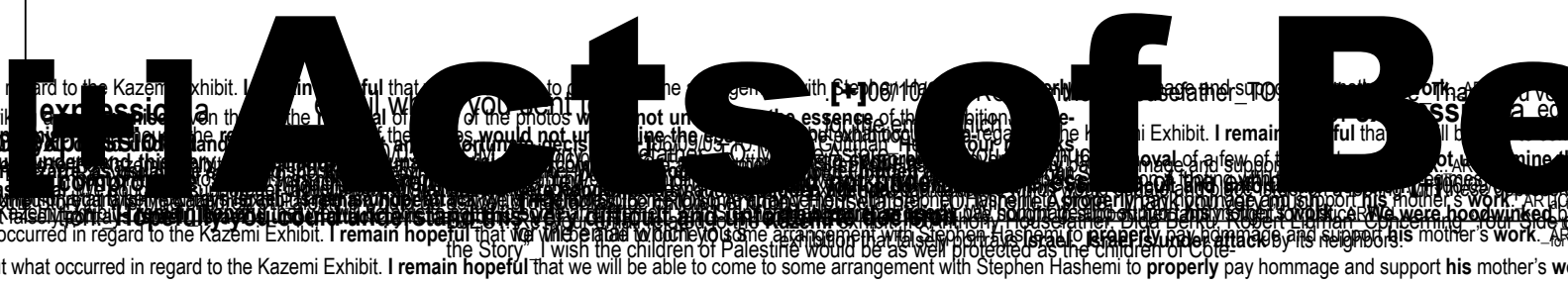
Enclosed is press release other's work. Enclosed is press release to behold that matter. What does not w... what...
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...tive in this community. We received **complaints** from numerous residents and tried to reason with her **son** to understand some of the **sensitivity** of a few of the photos. **He was unwilling to discuss** striking a **compromise**, even though the **removal** of a few of the photos **would not undermine the essence** of the exhibition. **Hopefully you could understand this very difficult and unfortunate decision.** [+]06/08/05_TO: Jayce Salloum_Dear Jayce_Thank you for your kind words. **Unfortunately, you are unaware** of some of the circumstances surrounding what happened. We solicited the exhibition in order to support Madame Kazemi's **son's** quest for justice. **We were unaware** however that the exhibition, once organized with the accompanying text, sought to portray the **State of Israel** as an oppressive **regime**. Whether you agree or not, **Israel is a democratic country** and the exhibition clearly equates and compares **Israel** to the **Taliban regime** in Afghanistan and the **Mullahs in Iran**. That is an **unbalanced and offensive portrait of Israel** and extremely **sensitive** in our community. We received **complaints** from numerous residents and tried to reason with her **son** to understand some of the **sensitivity** of a few of the photos. **He was unwilling to discuss** striking a **compromise**, even though the **removal** of a few of the photos **would not undermine the essence** of the exhibition. **Hopefully you could understand this very difficult and unfortunate decision.** [+]06/9/2005_TO: Stuart Brown_Dear Stuart_Unfortunately, you are unaware of some of the circumstances surrounding what happened. We solicited the exhibition in order to support Madame Kazemi's son's quest for justice. **We were unaware** however that the exhibition, once organized with the accompanying text, sought to portray the **State of Israel** as an oppressive **regime**. **Israel is a modern, democratic country** and the exhibition clearly equates and compares **Israel** to the **Taliban regime** in Afghanistan and the **Mullahs in Iran**. That is an **unbalanced and offensive portrait of Israel** and extremely **sensitive** in this community. **We were hoodwinked** by her **son** whom we wanted to support. **His** refusal to give details about the content of the exhibition in advance exposes that he wanted to promote a secondary **agenda**, the demonization of **Israel**. We received **complaints** from numerous residents and tried to reason with her **son** to understand some of the **sensitivity** of a few of the photos. **He was unwilling to discuss** striking a **compromise**, even though the **removal** of a few of the photos **would not undermine the essence** of the exhibition. **Hopefully you could understand this very difficult and unfortunate decision.** [+]06/09/05_TO: Freda Guttman_Hello_Your remarks are bizarre, as usual. We sought to support her family's fight for justice. **We were hoodwinked** by another **hidden agenda**, part of an exhibition that falsely portrays **Israel**. **Israel is under attack** by its neighbors. **Defending herself** against aggressors is her right. [+]06/10/05_TO: Gita Hashemi_Dear Gita;_Equating the **modern, democratic State of Israel** with the **Taliban of Afghanistan** or the **Mullahs in Iran** is offensive, inaccurate and political **propaganda**. **This was not our intention** when we sought to display Madame Khazemi's work. [+]06/10/05_FROM: Anthony Housefather_TO: Mireille Astore_Thank you very much for the email which you sent to the Eleanor London Library. I have asked staff to forward me all emails so I can respond directly. **I fully understand your concerns** based on what the media has reported. However there is **quite a bit more to the story** than perhaps you have heard to date and therefore I attach an op-ed piece that more fully sets out what occurred in regard to the Kazemi Exhibit. **I remain hopeful** that we will be able to come to **some arrangement** with Stephen Hashemi to remount the exhibit absent the text that **he** insisted be inserted together with **his** mother's work. ARTICLE TRUNCATED [+]06/10/05_FROM: Dida Berku_TO: Mireille Astore_I understand your concern, unfortunately there was a **breakdown in communication**. I am sending you my personal comments. At this point, Mr. Hashemi has taken back **his** mother's photos and we will not have any exhibition in the near future. However we **may be able to do so at a later date**. I have come to realise that while yes we did in fact **err in tampering** with the exhibit we also challenged a mindset which is very seldom questioned. A perspective which sees the suffering of the Palestinians as the sole fault of the Israelis. A view of the world that equates the **State of Israel, a democratic state with protected rights and freedoms** with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the **thuggery** of the **Taliban** in Afghanistan. Of course **we erred** in not previewing the exhibit and from a very cursory list of titles our staff could have known the subject and powerful impact of the photos. What was not divulged prior to the mounting of the exhibit was the narrative which would equate and place Israel on a footing with these oppressive regimes. And yes perhaps this is not so much the **personal agenda** of Mr. Hashemi but rather the **pervasive mindset** which has become the **common currency** in the world today. Due to the **unfortunate** course of events which saw us mount an exhibit in a library which is never used as a political venue, we have been drawn into an exhibition which promotes the view of **Israel** as the only one responsible for the refugee problem and the violence and suffering in the Palestinian territories. **This is not a view we would have consented to portray in our library.** In order to **avoid a controversy in our local com-**

...munity we created a **controversy** in the wider community. [+]06/10/05_FROM: Anthony Housefather_TO: Mireille Astore_Dear Ms. Astore, thank you for taking the time to write to us and spend as much time as you did outlining your position. Two small comments. Just because someone has greatly suffered as Mr. Hashemi has, does not make him a **reasonable person** to deal with, I have great compassion for what he has gone through and greatly support the effort to force Iran to bring his mother's killers to justice. That does not translate into a requirement to allow **him** to do anything **he** wants. Secondly, **we remain hopeful** that he will agree to **reasonably discuss the matter** and find a **proper accommodation** so that **his** mother's photos are exhibited without the inflammatory text he submitted. [+]06/13/05_TO: Magdolna Gombos_Dear Magdolna;_You need to review your history if you believe that the Israeli government can be equated with the **Taliban** of Afghanistan or **Mullahs in Iran**. **Israel struggles to protect itself** against **suicide bombers** every day. Do you condone the actions of these **suicide bombers** whose sole purpose is to blow up innocent people? [+]06/14/05_TO: Jamelie Hassan_Dear Jamelie;_I **fully understand your concerns** based on what the media has reported. However **there is quite a bit more to the story** than perhaps you have heard to date and therefore I attach an op-ed piece that more fully sets out what occurred in regard to the Kazemi Exhibit. **I remain hopeful** that we will be able to come to some arrangement with Stephen Hashemi to **properly** pay homage and support **his** mother's **work**. ARTICLE TRUNCATED [+]06/14/05_TO: Jamelie Hassan_Dear Jamelie_There is **no doubt** that we had a **very difficult decision** to make. The bottom line however, was that our small exhibition space, next to our children's library was never meant to be the forum for a political **propaganda** war, regardless of which side of the debate one favors. Images depicting the horror on the faces of Israelis after a bus explosion would never be put up there either. It was **inappropriate** to leave the exhibition there in its entirety, and regardless of **our best initial intentions, we had no choice** but to take it down. [+]06/14/05_TO: Maire Noonan_Dear Maire;_I **fully understand your concerns** based on what the media has reported. However **there is quite a bit more to the story** than perhaps you have heard to date and therefore I attach an op-ed piece that more fully sets out what occurred in regard to the Kazemi Exhibit. **I remain hopeful** that we will be able to come to some arrangement with Stephen Hashemi to **properly** pay homage and support his mother's work. Let me also mention that you are somewhat unfamiliar with the Charter guarantees for freedom of expression. **Free speech** is not absolute if it **goes beyond reasonable limits** in a free and democratic society. This is explicitly recognized in Article 1 of the Charter. The **removal** of part of the exhibit **does not contravene free speech** as the exhibition, with its accompanying text incites hatred. [+]06/17/05_TO: Rahat Kurd_Dear Rahat;_Unfortunately, you are unaware of some of the circumstances surrounding what happened. We solicited the exhibition in order to support Madame Kazemi's son's quest for justice. **We were unaware** however that the exhibition, once organized with the accompanying text, sought to portray the **State of Israel** as an oppressive regime. **Israel is a modern, democratic country** and the exhibition clearly equates and compares **Israel** to the **Taliban regime** in Afghanistan and the **Mullahs in Iran**. That is an **unbalanced and offensive portrait of Israel** and extremely **sensitive** in this community. **We were hoodwinked** by her **son** whom we wanted to support. His refusal to give details about the content of the exhibition in advance exposes that he wanted to promote a secondary **agenda**, the **demonization** of **Israel**. We received **complaints** from numerous residents and **tried to reason** with her **son** to understand some of the **sensitivity** of a few of the photos. **He was unwilling to discuss** striking a **compromise**, even though the **removal** of a few of the photos **would not undermine** the essence of the exhibition. **Hopefully this will help you understand this very difficult and unfortunate decision.** [+]

Re: Action: Subject

To Robert Libman. [+]06/08/05_FROM: Rawi Hage_SUBJECT: Re: Censorship: Côte St-Luc Library! Sir, **Three million people caged in a wall that can be seen from the moon**, living as second class citizens, with classroom interruptions, **apartheid**, malnutrition, political oppression, and poverty is it not enough to be considered an injustice? Are there hierarchies to injustices? You say democracy? **Israel is a theocratic state (not much different from Iran) in a perpetual denial of its dark existence.** I urge you to get out of Côte St-Luc and see **beyond that other wall of yours** that is veiling your humane vision. Your response is insulting, apologetic and if I may add either **complacent, evil or naive.** [+]06/08/05_FROM: Jayce Salloum_SUBJECT: **Repressing the difficult instead of encouraging debate** Dear Robert_I hope you can understand the **anger** and **frustrations** your actions of **censorship** have created. A **library** is an **open public resource** for learning and studying, not for 'politically cleansing' **views** that you and some of your **public** do not agree with. It is not up to you or the librarians to decide if the Israeli government and policies are worse or better than the Taliban. You should and must defend **freedom of expression** and **freedom of speech**. Why do you cower in the face of any criticism? A **healthy debate** is the basis of a **functioning democracy**. Even in so-called 'democratic' Israel there is more **debate** that you are permit-



ting to take place here in your town. Why don't you take a stand and support the right to **diverse opinions and views**? You could show whatever Zionist propaganda you want in a following exhibition to 'balance' what you find so difficult in the photographs you have **censored**. I plead for you to be strong and encourage **debate**, not act repressively and oppress those **views** you disagree with. The world is becoming more narrow-minded and repressing art and information is another action the narrows it even more. **[+]**06/09/05_FROM: Mary Ellen Davis SUBJECT: Re: your email related to the **Kazemi** exhibit_To Anthony Housefather, Dida Berku, Robert Libman_Concerning "Your Side of the Story" I wish the children of Palestine would be as well protected as the children of Côte-St-Luc, and not exposed to **views** of heavily-armed, abusive Israeli soldiers all over the West Bank and Gaza, humiliating their families at **checkpoints all day long, all week long, all year long**, except in Hebron where sometimes they have to protect the Palestinian kids from the rock-throwing settler kids. And I wish the children of Palestinian villages did not have to hear frightening **true** stories of their families' sheep, lambs, goats, kid goats poisoned to death by settlers who remain unpunished by your modern, democratic state of Israel (see text below).ARTICLE TRUNCATED**[+]**06/09/05_FROM: Mireille Astore SUBJECT: Re: **Kazemi** exhibit – a very concerned librarian_Dear Mr Housefather, Ms Berku, Mr Libman_Thank you very much for responding to my email regarding the premature dismounting of Ms **Zahra Kazemi's** courageous exhibition. I have to admit being more alarmed by your justifications and would like to point out the following: 1- With regard to Mr Hashemi's attitude I am breathless at the lack of compassion you show for his circumstances. To know that his mother has been horribly tortured and killed for taking photographs and yet continue to uphold **her name, her work and her courage** while risking his own safety has driven me here in Australia to honour his courage and strength by asking you to reconsider remounting the exhibition. I expect any decent human being who has suffered in the mildest of forms to be understanding of the incredible amount of strength it takes to keep functioning let alone to place yourself in situations that remind you of the horror your mother has endured in the name of **freedom – a virtue much admired in Canada, I hear**. As an ex-library manager, I have had to endure in the name of politeness patrons' aggressive behaviour over some **library** fines so you can understand my impatience in this regard. 2- As an ex-library manager who has worked in **libraries** in Australia and France I am appalled by the need to remind The Côte Saint-Luc/Hamstead/Montréal West Council and **Library** of the fact that when the **Library** Manager is absent, the delegated staff acting in her position is fully **responsible** for the decisions taken during her absence. In Australia and France, it is common practice for the Manager to uphold these decisions upon her return firstly as a form of **respect** for the staff member the **Library** Manager has chosen to delegate this role to, and secondly to avoid mishandling of tax payers' money upon her return by having to correct alleged misinformation such as in this case. My **library** colleagues here referred to this justification as poor management skills. 3- As a parent of two young children, I am fully aware of the **violence** that appears around them Even in the most benign cartoon shows aimed for them. If some parents wish to over-react and are concerned by what they saw in **Kazemi's** photographs this could be remedied with a sign alerting hyper-sensitive parents of the content of the exhibition at the entrance of the **library** with a sign. 4- Text accompanying exhibitions is a common practice in Australia and in overseas museums and galleries I visited. It promotes accessibility for those who are not able to understand the meaning of photographs and artworks. Explanations through text, particularly by those who worked closely with the photographer is a generous act that should be acknowledged as such. Further, **all**, and I stress **all**, **exhibitions carry** with them a **message** whether stated or not, to claim **ignorance** of such a fact after the exhibition is mounted demonstrates naivety of the first order. Again, if the **library** sees a conflict expressed in the exhibition, a sign to the effect "The **views** expressed in this exhibition are not necessarily those held by the x, y, z" at the entrance should be sufficient. A **library should not under any circumstances censor access to knowledge**. Any **library** that does is not worthy of its name. Again, I hope you are able to remount the exhibition, honour Ms **Zahra Kazemi's** memory in her fight for universal **freedom** and show Mr Stephen Hashemi the highest form of **respect** he deserves for enduring the following_ARTICLE TRUNCATED**[+]**06/09/05_FROM: Charlotte Kates SUBJECT: Re.: **Zahra Kazemi**_Dear Mayor Libman,_In **reality**, for the nearly six million **Palestinian refugees denied their right to return** home after being forced from their land simply for being Palestinians in their homeland, for the three million **Palestinians suffering under military occupation** in the West Bank and Gaza, and for the over one million **Palestinians inside the Israeli state suffering from continued dispossession and institutional discrimination and oppression**, Israel is neither a modern nor a democratic state. **Racist, apartheid states will be criticized** and when their behavior and the protests against it are memorialized in words and images, the **reality** of those states will come to light – and those who are offended and find the subject sensitive might best direct their efforts to attempting to ensure that this state is no longer racist and undemocratic, thus removing the need to expose the **reality** of the Israeli state. It appears to me that Ms. **Kazemi** – and her

son – had a strong belief in opposing oppression wherever it takes place without confining that criticism to "acceptable" subjects. And any "compromise" that pretends that one oppressive state is "democratic" while another's crimes should be **open to public view is no compromise** at all, it is **censorship**.**[+]**06/14/05_FROM: Jamelie Hassan SUBJECT: Re: **Censorship: Côte St-Luc library**_Dear Mayor Libman_After reading your "Our Side of the Story" by Dida Berku, Anthony Housefather and Robert Libman, I still maintain my unconditional support of Stephan Hashemi in this situation and know from my own extensive experience of presenting **art work in public spaces** – including **public libraries** in **Canada** as well as the UNESCO project – Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt, that the **library space** has a **responsibility** to be engaged in the issues of our time. It is a very sad situation that you think children in **Canada** should be protected from "images" of the world where children are the victims of **violence** and states of war. I hope that the **library** will learn from this and not close the door, as stated, on controversial issues.**[+]**06/14/05_FROM: Magdolna Gombos SUBJECT: Re: **Protesting an Appalling Decision**_Sir,_It would be helpful in any **correspondence to read what the other party writes before making a reply**. Otherwise one runs the **risk of being irrelevant**.PS: Please refrain from using my first name to address me. I only included it to be **open and honest** not to be patronized.**[+]**

PostScript

[+]06/09/05_FROM: Freda Guttman_TO: Gita Hashemi SUBJECT: **Libman** response to me_These are Libman's answers to me. The accusation of "hoodwinking" is familiar to me – he accused Rawi and I of "hoodwinking" the city of Montreal and the MAI into sponsoring an anti-Israeli exhibit – **Artists Against the Occupation**. We sure hoodwinked them – they were so dumb, maybe they thought we meant the title referred to the Palestinian occupation of Israel! **Libman** also asked the Canada Council to rescind our grant.**[+]**06/09/05_FROM: Mireille Astore_TO: Rawi Hage SUBJECT: Your letter to **Libman**_It sounds as if **he agreed to have the show in the first place to actually promote Zionism via the anti-Islamic photos of Kazemi**. **[+]**06/11/05_FROM: Freda Guttman_TO: Gita Hashemi SUBJECT: Re: **Libman** responds to me_Did you hear on the news about our political theatre in front of the library? We 'decontaminated' the library of all 'subversive' books – the Saids, Chomskies, those on Human Rights, etc. These people believe in human rights for everyone except Palestinians who in their minds are not even human! The Jewish Alliance Against the Occupation, a group that started up shortly after the 2nd Intifada began, did the action. **[+]**06/14/05_FROM: Gita Hashemi_TO: Multiple recipients SUBJECT: Piece on **Kazemi** exhibit for Fuse_I'm putting together a short piece as artist project for Fuse about the **Kazemi** exhibit. More specifically, I want to highlight the exchanges with the surprisingly responsive **Mayor Robert Libman** whose exceedingly prompt **replies have been most illuminating about politics, public spaces, exercise of power and censorship in Canada**. At the moment my thought is to frame the piece as a spontaneously collective response while maintaining the individual identities and voices. Please forward to me your e-mail exchanges with **Libman** if you'd like to take part in this. Forward this to anybody else you know who's had an exchange with **Libman** specifically about the **Kazemi** exhibit. All suggestions and ideas are welcome.**[+]**06/15/05_FROM: Jamelie Hassan_TO: Gita Hashemi SUBJECT: **Censorship: Côte St-Luc library**_Check out G&M for excellent article in today's paper – Naomi Klein & Aaron Maté on **Kazemi** photos **censorship** with photos published.**[+]**06/15/05_FROM: Rawi Hage_We have just been made aware that the Globe and Mail edited Klein and Maté's article on **Kazemi** and the **censorship** of her photographs at the Côte St Luc library, including the **omission of references to CanWest**.**[+]**06/15/05_From the uncensored article by Klein and Maté:_(added by *Globe and Mail*) Criticizing a community library may seem like an extreme measure, but The decision to take down photographs thought to be "too sympathetic" to the Palestinian cause is also part of a disturbing pattern to silence opposition to the **expansionist** Israeli occupation of the **Occupied Territories**_(replaced by *Globe and Mail*) Gaza and the West Bank now in its 38th year. **Two summers ago, CanWest Global, Canada's largest media conglomerate, went so far as to produce a heavily-promoted full-length documentary that compared pro-Palestinian students at Montreal's Concordia University to Nazis. In September, the company's newspaper chain was admonished by the Reuters news agency for running its stories with ideological alterations to the original text.** And rarely in the media do we hear the many anti-occupation voices that challenge the **delusional consensus**_(replaced by *Globe and Mail*) delusion that Palestinians are to blame for their own misery.**[+]**07/07/05_FROM: Gita Hashemi_Is it true that Libman was the former head of B'nai B'rith?**[+]**07/07/05_TO: Gita Hashemi_**Mr Libman was indeed Executive Director of B'nai B'rith from 1995 to the end of 2001**. Bon courage. Wassalaam. **[+]**

Concept, sampling and remix: OpinionWare <http://opinionware.net> **[+]** Design: Daniel Ellis

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