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April 5, 2010

Margaret Atwood
c/o McClelland & Stewart
75 Sherbourne St., 5th Floor
Toronto, ON
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Dear Margaret:

Back in 1981, I remember vividly that when the Toronto police raided several bathhouses and arrested 300 men, you agreed to speak out at a hastily arranged benefit -- the first public figure to do so. Your courage meant a great deal to our gay community then, and your words were typically memorable: "Why on earth would the police object to cleanliness?"

I understand you're going to Israel in May, to accept the Dan David Prize at Tel Aviv University. Will you find words for the Gaza students who wrote to you yesterday, 44 miles down the coast, asking you to refuse the prize? Will you mention the ongoing siege of Gaza, and the larger occupation, whose check points and security wall have reduced the region to an apartheid state? Will you mention the two unarmed teenagers Mohammed Qadas, 16, and Asaud Qadus, 19, who were shot by Israeli army snipers last week? His aunt says that Mohammed had gone out to buy ice-cream. Why on earth would the army object to ice-cream?

I write today as a fan, someone who's life was changed on reading *A Handmaid's Tale*, someone who still treasures my rare edition of *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. For decades, you've been an extraordinary role model for so many of us, embracing the role of artist as a figure of conscience. You've consistently spoken out against a host of injustices, even as you engaged with the complexities of each issue. In May, will you decline this prize, in recognition of the growing boycott movement which is trying to contribute to peace in the region? Will you at least speak out against the war crimes committed a year ago? Will you perhaps donate a portion to a writers group in Gaza? Will you at the very least acknowledge the complexities that this award, and this conflict, represent? Or will you remain silent, making us wonder: why on earth would Margaret Atwood of all people object to complexity?

Sincerely,

John Greyson
Associate Professor, filmmaker