

Deputation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on behalf of the Jewish Medical Association of British Columbia.

The atmosphere at the University of British Columbia and other institutions of higher learning in British Columbia has become hostile to Jewish students. These students are being harassed and intimidated by faculty, by fellow students and by the hostile environment now present on university campuses. University administrators and faculty are ignoring the problem and even exacerbating it by turning a blind eye to what is happening.

In the Faculty of Medicine of which I am a member, the atmosphere within the medical school at the University of British Columbia has become a highly charged one. Students organize themselves into groups representing a certain race or ideology and are highly critical of others. This is antithetical to the practice of medicine in which physicians and the health care teams need to work together in the best interests of the patient.

Many students fear that their future acceptances into residency programs and privileges in hospitals will be affected by their Jewish identity. It is concerning to think about what effect this will have on the future of medical practice and our ability to provide colour-blind and ethnic-blind services to patients. There are many physicians who worry that our future ability to treat patients effectively and without prejudice is in great jeopardy.

Recently, across North America, several Jewish professors, including an esteemed one in Victoria, have resigned their university appointments, saying that they are no longer willing to work within a hostile environment. They are very frustrated by a university culture that permits the acceptance of antisemitic comments, without speaking out against them or taking action to deal with them. <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/ubc-professor-medicine-resigns-antisemitism-response>

In the classroom, many faculty members are promoting an agenda that goes beyond being pro-Palestinian veering into hateful rhetoric which questions Israel's right to exist. In one especially egregious example, students in the school of midwifery at UBC have been required to do a Genocide Acknowledgement at the start of class.

GENOCIDE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

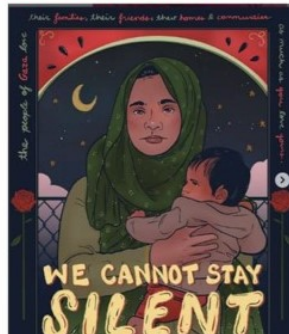
Canada has provided \$28.5 million in military exports to Israel in the past 4 months

Canada refuses to call for a ceasefire

At least 28,000 Palestinians have been massacred

70% are women and children

This is a prison abolition and reproductive justice issue



On social media, many professors engage in one-sided comments on the political situation in the Middle East. This may be legally acceptable as free speech but is morally reprehensible. Students see these posts, such as this historically inaccurate, inflammatory one, and must sit in classrooms knowing that their teachers have extreme geopolitical views and propagate false blood liable fake news which has been disproven by multiple credible non-Israel aligned organizations and experts. This is irrevocably poisoning the learning atmosphere for these students.

ISRAEL HAVE LONG STOLEN ORGANS FROM DEAD PALESTINIANS

On 26 December 2023, 80 bodies of murdered Palestinians were returned to Gaza through the Karam Abu Salem border crossing. All had organs missing.

This is not new. Israel have admitted to harvesting organs in the past, and claims of further instances have been reported since, with illegally harvested organs from deceased Palestinians used in medical treatments of Israeli citizens.

Antisemitism is becoming mainstream within university culture. Research shows that incidents of hate directed towards Jews far outpaces that directed towards any other group, but the institutions of higher learning fail to acknowledge this. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/bnai-brith-antisemitic-report-record-high-1.7195197> Within the university's DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) framework, hatred towards people of colour, Indigenous people and members of the LGBTQ community are clearly acknowledged and attended to with zero tolerance. Discrimination towards Jews however is not even identified as a problem.

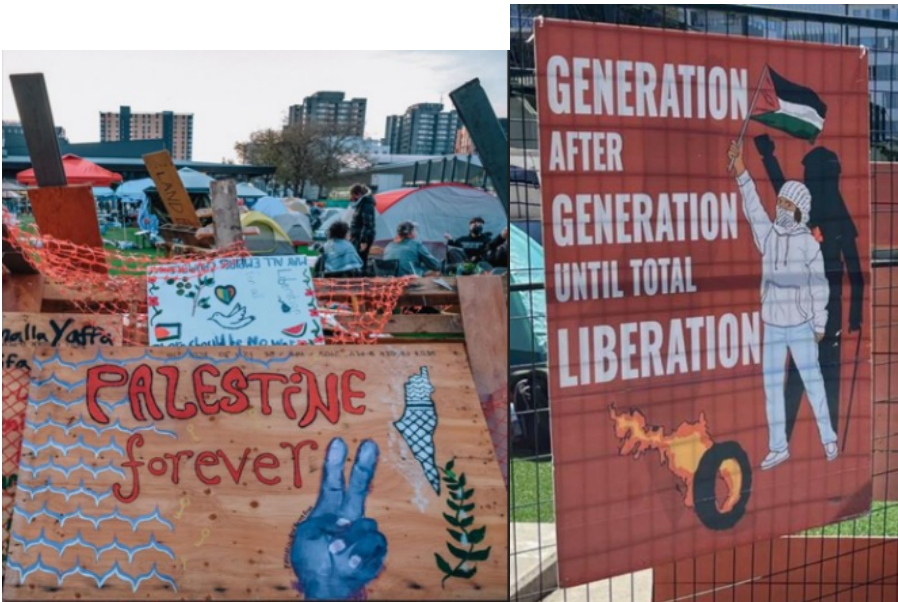
Many people in DEI and administration do not understand or purposely ignore the history of the Jewish people, the history of antisemitism and modern manifestations of antisemitism, one of which is singling out Israel while ignoring other global conflicts. This lack of understanding is not necessarily based on malice, but on ignorance and lack of contact or experience with Jewish people, given that we are such a small percentage of the population. There is an urgent need for people in administrative positions to have a clearer picture of Jewish history and to understand the significance of the longstanding presence of antisemitism in our history.

University administrators must acknowledge the fact that discrimination against Jews is a major issue. They must call out antisemitism for what it is, a major hatred pervading schools of higher learning. Their usual response, that they are calling out against hatred against every religious and ethnic group, is not good enough. They need to recognize the scourge of antisemitism specifically and deal with it directly.

Permitting the encampments to proliferate on campus feeds hatred and intolerance. These groups, which continually spew out anti-Israel and antisemitic rhetoric have resulted in fracturing of the campus community, with many faculty, staff and students experiencing alienation, marginalization and ostracization. While peaceful protest is an exercise of freedom of speech, hateful and discriminatory demonstrations designed to extort concessions from universities and colleges are appalling. The encampment at UBC is not providing a forum for rational discussion but its purpose is to promote a specific hateful ideology, to intimidate Jewish students and to foment antisemitism.

An Israeli colleague, who supports the existence of a Palestinian state, tried to engage members of the UBC encampment with a reasoned conversation about the situation in the Middle East. She was told that she had to acknowledge that Israel was committing genocide and was a colonial, oppressor country even before she would be allowed to have a discussion with anyone in the encampment. This approach mitigates against freedom of expression, which should be the cornerstone of any discourse on campus.

Here are a couple of examples of what we see at UBC. Note that the map of Israel is in keffiyeh colours, advocating for the destruction of the state of Israel and its replacement with a Palestinian state. The other picture features a burning tire, implying that violence is acceptable, including that perpetrated against civilians on Oct. 7.



Shortly after Oct. 7, one of the faculties at UBC took action to defuse predictable upcoming conflicts. A combination of Jewish, Muslim and professors of other religions signed a joint declaration requesting peace and civility within their faculty. Subsequently, there have been no major conflagrations within this faculty. Most other faculties have not taken proactive action and are still not taking sufficient steps to address the present explosive environment on campus.

Universities must recognize that hatred towards specific groups is not acceptable. What affects Jews will ultimately affect people of other religions and ethnicities. The university must be a place which fosters healthy debates and inclusivity. Presently, universities are in general ignoring a major threat to their well-being and they need to recognize this and take remedial action.

In conclusion, we implore university administrators to stop ignoring the scourge of antisemitism in order to protect Jewish students and Jewish teachers. The acceptance of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish hatred that exists blatantly on campus must be eradicated. While protecting Jewish students and teachers, they will be protecting the integrity of all students and of the institution itself.

We request the DEI departments to include Jews and Jewish issues within their framework. It is unconscionable that other groups are protected within the DEI framework, but Jews are excluded. This must change.

We request the universities to stop permitting encampments on their campus. These are populated by highly political groups who create fear on campus, engage in hateful sloganeering rather than respectful discourse, and defeat the purpose of a university to be an inclusive learning environment.

Submitted by Dr. Larry Barzelai, MD on behalf of the Jewish Medical Association of British Columbia on behalf, a member of the Alliance Combatting Campus Antisemitism (ALCCA).