

BRIEF FOR THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

ANTISEMITISM AND ADDITIONAL MEASURES THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO  
ADDRESS THE VALID FEARS THAT ARE BEING EXPRESSED BY CANADA'S  
JEWISH COMMUNITY

ON BEHALF OF LAWYERS COMBATING ANTISEMITISM,

May 27, 2024

This brief is submitted on behalf of Lawyers Combating Antisemitism<sup>1</sup>, a dedicated group of legal professionals committed to eradicating antisemitism and promoting tolerance, diversity, and equality through legal means. Our mission is to provide a collaborative platform for lawyers to share insights and strategies in addressing antisemitism.

We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where Jewish legal professionals are recognized and supported. Our active engagement includes developing legal strategies and promoting legislative and policy initiatives to combat antisemitism.

Founded by Jill Mayer<sup>2</sup>, our group comprises over 1,680 members worldwide, with more than 900 in Canada. The group is active on LinkedIn, consisting of attorneys, law students, and emerging legal minds. Our members engage in discussions on:

- Legal approaches to combating antisemitism
- Legislative and policy developments related to hate crimes
- International human rights law as it pertains to antisemitism
- Successful strategies in the fight against antisemitism

Antisemitism within the legal community and broader Canadian society has been a growing concern for the last several years. Since October 7, 2023, however, a shocking wave of overt antisemitism is contaminating not only schools and campuses, but also Canadian society in general, including impacting law students, lawyers and legal professionals.

Our founder's own experiences highlight this issue. As Director of Continuing Professional Development at the Ontario Bar Association (OBA) from 2012-2019, Jill Mayer was known as a very strong supporter of diversity efforts, including spearheading the development of the OBA's Inclusive Leader Series<sup>3</sup>, leading the partnership with the Roundtable of Diversity Association for their annual conferences, and creating a diversity policy for speaker panels that has been used as a model by other associations. However, starting in 2017, Jill noticed a troubling trend of highly-qualified Jewish speakers being left off speaker panels by their peers and not recognized as part of a minority community. A proposal for programs on legal strategies to address antisemitism was also refused. Jill's attempts to highlight antisemitism were dismissed, reflecting a broader issue of marginalization within the legal community. She left the OBA in 2019, in part because of these issues, became a consultant, and began focusing more on Jewish causes.

Since then, Jill has helped develop a global Holocaust education conference, Liberation75, co-chaired a CIJA legal conference on online hate, and created various continuing legal education programs on combating antisemitism for associations in Canada and the United States.<sup>4</sup> These experiences led to the creation of the LinkedIn group "Lawyers Combating Antisemitism" in September 2023, to provide a resource hub for interested lawyers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14303931/>

<sup>2</sup> Jill Mayer is an accomplished executive, adult educator, volunteer, mentor, life-long learner and a lawyer, called in Tennessee. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jillmayer/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oba.org/InclusiveLeader>

<sup>4</sup> ACLEA, Why Antisemitism Education Should be Part of Your DEI Program, April 19, 2023, Professor Irwin Cotler, Michael Mostyn, Laura Shaw Frank, moderated by Jill Mayer, <https://www.aclea.org/news/634734/April-19-Webinar-Why-Antisemitism-Education-Should-Be-Part-of-Your-DEI-Program.htm>

Many Canadian lawyers have reached out to the group with concerns about increasing antisemitism, wishing to remain anonymous due to fears for their families' safety, over professional retaliation and for other personal worries. Some of their many concerns include the following themes:

- Witnessing university professors teaching antisemitic content
- Attempts by lawyer colleagues to remove Jewish lawyers from leadership positions and to get Jewish lawyers fired by contacting their companies and labeling them as "genocide supporters"
- Jewish legal counsel feeling compelled to leave toxic workplaces because of antisemitism
- Law firms ignoring rising antisemitism while addressing many other diversity issues
- Jewish lawyers feeling alienated and unsupported in their workplaces during these times of extreme trauma

As well a Canadian law student contributed this personal experience and asked to remain anonymous:

*"Living as a law student in Canada since October 7th has been harrowing. For months after the attack, I would carefully peel my door open to look and see if someone had posted something on my door or had ripped off my mezuzah. I continuously debated taking my mezuzah off, knowing other students had been targeted for having them up on their doors. Once I enter campus I am greeted with signs. Flyers everywhere that talk about "Canada's funds genocide." "134 till Gaza becomes the New Auschwitz." "End the Genocide in Gaza." "Free Palestine" with a person wearing a keffiyeh in front of the Dome of the Rock. "From River to the Sea, Palestine will be free." Stickers of Palestinian flags. People freely wear keffiyehs at school and on campus. Meanwhile, I worry about relatives living in Israel, some of whom serve in the IDF.*

*I found no reprieve or solace in my favourite class, as my professor broached the subject of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with heavy anti-Israel bias and uninformed opinions. My chest grew heavy as I slumped my head into my lap.*

*With some classmates, it's been business as usual, as if the horrors of October 7th never happened. Other classmates have cut me off and no longer or barely speak to me because they know I'm a Jew who supports Israel. However, if they engaged, would realize that I have a complex and nuanced perspective of the conflict. Other classmates have debated me on the conflict and I found myself doing advocacy work I didn't sign up for. I've been accused of suffering from cognitive dissonance.*

*Jewish students trade horror stories; law student to law student; law school to law school. I sit and I watch my Jewish professors and administrators push down and hide every inch of their pain - the same pain that I'm feeling - to create an atmosphere of professionalism and neutrality.*

*My faith in my school, in my classmates and in humanity has been shattered. I came to law school in the hopes of improving the world, of making the world a more just and fair place. But I see no fairness, I see no justice. I see no space for nuance or understanding of an extremely complex situation. I only see a student population that is isolating and targeting the Jewish population and dehumanizing an entire country with antiseptic tropes, misinformation and disinformation. A population that has no interest in understanding. Seeing the state of my campus and law school, I wonder how can I improve a system that continues to deny a large part of my identity.*

*As law students, we are told that we are the future leaders of this country. I know classmates whose views about Jews and Israel are misguided, intolerant and just flat-out wrong. If that is the case, I am deeply concerned about our future leaders."*

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEASURES THAT COULD BE DIRECTLY TAKEN BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD OTHERWISE PROMOTE OR SUPPORT:**

1. Revise, at all levels of government, existing anti-racism training programs and materials to include antisemitism, ensuring the use of best practices in adult education, that they are unbiased, not racist,<sup>5</sup> learner-centered, and reflective of Jewish perspectives. Also, create such materials where do they not already exist.
2. Make sure that equity, diversity, and inclusion programs under federal jurisdiction not exclude Jews and integrate nuanced approaches in EDI initiatives to recognize and address the unique aspects of Jewish identity and antisemitism.
3. Adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism at all levels of government, and make certain that all policies, practices and legislation comply with and are informed by that definition. Educational institutions should make similar commitments, encapsulated in their policies, protocols, legislation, codes and procedures.
4. Ensure appropriate education and training takes place to implement the recommendations relating to the IHRA working definition, including training of prosecutors and police officers on the distinction between protected and hate speech.
5. Promote respectful dialogue initiatives within governments, on campuses and in professions.<sup>6</sup>
6. Encourage the imposition of conditions on educational funding to incentivize the creation of respectful dialogue strategies and safe spaces.
7. In private and public sector partnerships, fund campus conferences on the rule of law and strategies to promote respectful dialogue on controversial issues.

Lawyers Combating Antisemitism calls on the Parliament of Canada to take decisive action to address and combat antisemitism. By working together in the fight against antisemitism, we can create a more inclusive and just society for all.

Respectfully submitted,

***Jill Mayer, J.D.*** on behalf of **Lawyers Combating Antisemitism**, a member of the **Alliance Combatting Campus Antisemitism (ALCCA)**

**ALCCA dropbox:** <https://www.dropbox.com/request/71kY94jyKzflumiypYQo>

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<sup>5</sup> Discussion between Melissa Lantsman and Deborah Lyons in committee, May 23, 2024  
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7UB3v6AOXj/?igsh=MTdtbmpmMTdyNnV1MA==>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/open-letter-from-canadas-law-community-promoting-dialogue-sandler-8ogvc/?trackingId=hSpO%2F5AjcGi2xJ089gkVew%3D%3D>