

Deputation from the **Network of Engaged Canadian Academics (NECA)** to the Justice Committee. May 27, 2024. NECA is a member of the Alliance Combatting Campus Antisemitism (ALCCA).

Submitted by: Cary Kogan, PhD, cofounder of NECA

Preamble:

NECA is a non-partisan group of Jewish and non-Jewish academics united in our shared concerns about rising antisemitism on Canadian campuses. We are a Canadian network of more than 300 academics from 41 Canadian universities and colleges across all disciplines. We advocate for academic freedom, diverse perspectives and an expansive understanding of inclusion. We thank the justice committee for launching this critically important study of antisemitism.

Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: Antisemitism and its normalization on Canadian campuses began well before October 7, 2023 but has been on a precipitous rise since the Hamas terror attack in Israel and is indisputably at record levels in Canada, rising more than 109% from 2022 to 2023. Jews comprise a mere 1.4% of the Canadian population, yet are experiencing 2/3 of all religiously based hate crimes (a statistic undoubtedly higher now since these data were compiled in 2022), Our members have reported incidents of the most egregious forms of antisemitism that they or students have witnessed or experienced. These have occurred in classrooms (e.g., forcing Jewish students to participate for marks in the “Global Strike for Gaza”), public spaces (e.g., chants to commit genocide against Jewish people, displaying Hamas flags), on line (on course related websites seeing posts that say “Hitler should have finished the job”), within student government (e.g., with one-sided motions that call for expelling Hillel from student groups), by student groups (e.g., a Students for Justice in Palestine chapter launched a campaign to keep campus “safe” by removing Zionist narratives by compiling a list of professors; posting statements that call for the destruction of the Jewish state), and in faculty unions (e.g., with one-sided motions denying Jewish members their rights to define antisemitism). The safety and well-being of Jewish students, faculty, and staff in under threat. Recommendation: Hold University leadership to account to ensure that they are implementing their policies against harassment, bullying and toxic work environment. The threshold for action should not be hate speech but rather speech that creates a toxic environment.
2. Issue: Loss of viewpoint diversity in higher learning about Israel-Palestine. As academics, we strongly believe in the fundamental value of academic freedom, vigorous and rigorous exchange of ideas, as well as the role of professors in encouraging and facilitating robust discussion of fact-based perspectives. With academic freedom comes academic responsibility. What we are observing is a willful disregard for basic principles of proper scholarship and overwhelmingly teaching and researching a single viewpoint that asserts among other calumnies that Israel is “white settler-colonial state”, that “commits genocide,” and is “an apartheid state.” These highly contested terms when presented to learners without any other viewpoint is tantamount to indoctrination, especially since there is a surfeit of evidence to the contrary. Radicalized professors are also intentionally using their classrooms to traffic in antisemitic tropes about Israel, Jews,

and Israelis often in courses that are unrelated to the topic of the Middle East.

Recommendation: 1) immediately fund ten Canada Research Chairs that are dedicated to research on Jewish identity and antisemitism that must include anti-Zionism / anti-Israeli racism in its definition of antisemitism. The selection panel for these Chairs must include professors who are experts on antisemitism including its contemporary forms as described in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition and its illustrative examples and 2) ensure the proper training of all people working on campuses about what is academic freedom, viewpoint diversity, and freedom of expression. Convene a National committee on academic freedom to ensure there is consensus on the definition of academic freedom. [NECA has created a resource about these issues.](#)

3. Issue: Lack of mechanisms to ensure that universities and their academic departments maintain viewpoint diversity and refrain from statements that would not align with the scholarship or ideas of their faculty. Following the May 2021 Israel-Hamas conflict, 18 different Canadian academic units signed pledges to the [Palestinian Feminist Collective solidarity statement](#), which accuses Israel of being entirely responsible for the conflict, states that there are not “two sides,” and denounces any dialogue with those who think differently (i.e., “anti-normalization”). Such narrow, partisan statements signed by academic units is antithetical to academic freedom and the purpose of the academy. Academic units do not benefit from academic freedom, only individual professors do. In its failure to remain neutral, such statements effectively, “censure any minority who does not agree with the view adopted” ([Kalven Report, 1967](#)). Recommendation: Adopt and enforce the position on political neutrality as articulated and espoused by [McGill’s Department of Political Science](#):

“1) The department as an organization does not take stands on political questions. It does not issue statements deploring, condemning, celebrating, or expressing concern about world events. The department includes members at all levels who take a wide range of positions on contested questions, both in their academic capacity as scholars studying politics, and in their private capacities as persons and politically engaged citizens of their many various societies. The department does not declare some of those views orthodox and others heterodox. No subset of the department— not its officers, not a majority of its faculty, not a majority of its students, no subset whatsoever— has the authority to take political positions that purport to be those of the whole department.”

4. Issue: The Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) campaign against Israeli institutions of higher learning. BDS demonizes and delegitimizes the only Jewish state, Israel. The BDS strategy also silences all Israeli voices - including those of Israeli peacemakers. It is fundamentally anti-peace. In addition to undermining the academic freedom of Canadian scholars, the BDS movement further threatens viewpoint diversity in academic institutions and unions alike, [directly restricting academic freedom and cutting off constructive civil discourse](#). BDS also penalizes Palestinian Israeli scholars. BDS principles have been promoted recently by several faculty unions and associations recently in the form of motions. Furthermore, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), a national organization representing faculty unions and associations across Canada asserted in an emergency motion that Israel is intentionally destroying Gazan Universities. An assertion that has no basis in fact. In that same motion, CAUT

Council called for measures directed at Israeli institutions akin to BDS.

Recommendation: Reject calls for BDS on campuses because it is a threat to academic freedom. University presidents must use their freedom of expression to call out faculty unions / associations when they advance BDS motions as anathema to the core values of the academy.

5. Issue: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion offices on EDI is intended to help redress historic and ongoing inequalities in access to and full inclusion in higher education for all minoritized peoples. Across most Canadian campuses, the minoritized group that suffers the highest number of hate crimes, Jews, are rarely included. EDI must meet its own standards of inclusivity and diversity. Recommendation: Ensure that EDI policies and frameworks explicitly include evidence-based material about Judaism and antisemitism including anti-Zionism. Many EDI offices employ theoretical frameworks (e.g., anti-oppression framework, critical race theory, settler-colonialism) that do not apply to Jews or to understanding Israel and the Jewish people's connection with the Jewish state going back several millennia. In some cases, these ideological frameworks actually perpetuate myths and harmful tropes about Jews. These ideological frameworks must be replaced with data-driven approaches to addressing disparities and discrimination of diverse groups (e.g., Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+). [See NECA's RESPECT model related to EDI.](#)
6. Issue: There is a lack of knowledge or understanding about Jewish identity and antisemitism among administrators, professors, staff, and students. Recommendation: Ensure that there is credible training for administrators (including EDI offices, Human Rights offices) about antisemitism including anti-Zionism.
7. Issue: Canada's adopted definition of antisemitism (IHRA) has been attacked on the false grounds that it limits academic freedom. Such campaigns denigrate and exclude Jewish experience, particularly when trying to combat the most common form of antisemitism seen on campuses, anti-Zionism. We are concerned about groups that purport to be about combating antisemitism that have launched campaigns against the IHRA definition (e.g., the [Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism, Racism, Colonialism & Censorship in Canada](#), ARC). Some of these groups claim to represent the Jewish community (i.e., the Jewish Faculty Network, Independent Jewish Voices) when they represent only a miniscule number of Jewish people. The reason for attacks on IHRA is because the illustrative examples included with the IHRA include those that reference the ways that anti-Zionism may be antisemitic. Rather than accepting that more than 90% of Canadian Jews believe that Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish homeland (<https://cjs.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cjs>), these fringe groups impose their definition of antisemitism on Jewish people who are experts by experience on the ways that antisemitism operates in the real world. Recommendation: Reaffirm the Government of Canada's commitment to IHRA as was accepted by all parties. Universities and Colleges must use this non-legally binding definition of antisemitism in supporting processes used to identify instances of antisemitism on campuses. [NECA has responded to the false accusations and myths about IHRA promoted by made by ARC, IJV, and the JFN.](#)