

# Justice Committee

## Deputations

**Canadian Women**  
**Against Antisemitism** 

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**Canadian Women Against Antisemitism was honored to submit two deputations to the Justice Committee regarding Antisemitism on campuses, in the unique perspective of Woman and Judaism.**

**Testimony for  
Justice Committee Study on Antisemitism<sup>1</sup>**

First, let me thank the members of the Justice Committee for convening this important study on antisemitism at this crucial time.

Please note that some of the language in this testimony is explicit. I have also been asked to maintain the anonymity of the victims, aside from myself, many of whom fear reprisals, repeated targeting or loss of employment

My name is Talia Klein Leighton and I am the Spokesperson for the Canadian Women Against Antisemitism, or as Ghada Sasa, a T.A. and doctoral candidate at McMaster University calls us, one of the “Nazis in Pink Jackets.”

According to protesters at TMU on April 30th, I am a “Zionist whore” and a “fucking child abuser for having Zionist babies” and of course, a “Rich Jewish Bitch.” I was also told that “I ought to be raped” but I will come back to that last one later.

This interaction reinforced several truths about the collision between antisemitism and misogyny.

1. There is no difference in their eyes between “Jew” and “Zionist” and as one man wrote in an email to a Toronto woman in April, 2024, “...WE ARE TURNING THE OVENS BACK ON AND FUELLING THE GAS CHAMBERS. WE WILL EXTERMINATE EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU ANIMAL JEWS AND ZIONISTS.”
2. When directed at women, antisemitism is habitually paired with misogyny. The hateful gaze goes beyond our faith, our nationality, and ethnicity and invades our bodies, our sexuality and bares the breadth of our intersectional identities. Let me cite some examples:
  - a. One woman was texted “U r the product of nazi rape...stop pretending to be Jewish...crack whore.”
  - b. In March, 2024 a man left this Facebook audio message “Fuck you Jewish bitch. Soon we’re going to burn all of you, bitch.”
  - c. “How’d you know she was lying?” “She’s a woman.” “and Jewish” was posted on Twitter last August.
  - d. Or an email, “You are a grimy, verminous, narcissistic “C-word.” That’s why the ideology of Zionism is so befitting of an evil, bug-eyed, hook-nosed hag like you.”

So, as we have illustrated, not only are “Jewish” and “Zionist” used as derogatory slurs, but in the same breath, women are called “bitch, whore, hag, hoes, child abusers and the C-word.”

3. Sex is weaponized when coupled with Jew-hatred;
  - a. Whether by the use of lewd and suggestive language from this anonymous caller, who said, “Listen up bitch from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free. Suck my dick. Israel can suck my dick. All you hoes can go kill yourself.”

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Women Against Antisemitism is submitting our deputation as a member of the Alliance Combatting Campus Antisemitism. (ALCCA)

- b. Or descriptions of specific sex acts, like the graffiti targeting a Jewish student that included “Your mother is Hamas and I love her, we made love last night (doggy-style.)”

Before I go any further, I need to thank our friends at B'nai Brith Canada, who mined their database of antisemitic incidents on our behalf. Unfortunately, they were unable to provide any statistics on the number of incidents directed toward women as this has never been tracked.

That said, let's talk about the monster in the room. Rape.

There is the ever-present threat of rape, like the grade 6 girl who was told that she should get raped by Hitler, that all Jews should die and that she should be the next to die.

Then, paradoxically, we have seen at many of these protests and encampments that there is both a denial of the sexual violence that occurred on Oct. 7 and calls for it to be repeated.

Denying the sexual violence of Oct. 7, which was documented and glorified by the perpetrators themselves, has been used to undermine the Israeli right to self-defence but also to undermine the credibility of pro-Israel and feminist advocates in Canada.

Samantha Pearson, the Director of the Sexual Assault Centre at the University of Alberta authored an open letter that denied the sexual violence of Oct. 7th referring to it as “unverified accusations” while also suggesting that using the term “terrorist” to label Palestinian “resistance”, is Islamophobic. When we put this side by side with the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre hosting a pre-rally event to make posters for a pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel, antisemitic rally in January, we have Jewish communities of women who have no safe space to turn to and who are further traumatized by the sense that, as Jews, their trauma will be dismissed and diminished.

It took Canada's Foreign Ministry until Dec. 7th - 2 months - to make any kind of statement on the use of rape and sexual violence by Hamas, beginning with the embassy in Tel Aviv releasing a statement that suggested that both Palestinians and Israelis had been equally subjected to sexual violence, creating a false moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas. Later the same day, Minister Joly finally tweeted that “Using sexual violence as a tactic of war is a crime. We strongly condemn #SGBV, including rape, perpetrated by Hamas against women in Israel on October 7. We believe Israeli women.”

When Jewish women on campus are told that we “ought to be raped” and “Long live Oct. 7th” and “Resistance by any Means Necessary” we know, reflected in the faces of Liri Albag - 18, Karina Ariev - 19, Agam Berger - 19, Romi Gonen - 23, and Naama Levy's bloody sweatpants, that these are not idle threats. How can it not be obvious that this is intimidation of a most intimate and insidious kind, and that the threat is harm enough. By calling these encampments peaceful, replete with these slogans and epithets, the campus leaders across Canada and even courts in Quebec are creating a culture of permissiveness that is mainstreaming and legitimizing antisemitism and the use and the threat of rape to promote the antisemitic agenda. The campus leadership and those who support or tolerate the encampments have chosen the wrong side. They have taken the side of the rapists, bigots and misogynists and every Jewish woman on these campuses faces a clear and present danger.

## Recommendations

1. The radicalized and threatening language displayed, yelled and chanted at university and college encampments must be identified and acknowledged as hate and antithetical to “peaceful protest” by campus administrations. Encampments on university and college campuses cannot be allowed to continue and must be viewed as threatening, intimidating and unlawful entities. For campuses to comprise areas that are unsafe for Jewish students, faculty and staff is completely unacceptable and undermines the Canadian commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. Encampments must be dismantled immediately with legal and academic sanction for those involved.
2. “We believe all women” must include Jewish women. Jewish and Israeli women must not carry an additional burden of proof in the service of antisemitism or political expediency. This must be broadcast at all levels of government and public service.
3. The safety and well-being of all survivors of sexual violence, including Jewish women, are paramount. To ensure that rape crisis centres provide an environment that is truly supportive and free from any form of political bias or influence, we recommend a national policy that mandates political neutrality within all federally, provincially and municipally funded crisis centres. Failure to adhere to the established political neutrality policy would result in suspension or termination of federal, provincial and/or municipal funding until compliance is achieved.
4. Campuses must adopt a clear and standardized definition of antisemitism and antisemitic hate-speech based on the IHRA definition and the lived experiences of Jewish students. The Canadian Jewish community is entitled to, and must be empowered to define our own oppression. It is imperative that this definition be used to enforce Codes of Conduct and protect Jewish students on campus.
5. Training in antisemitism must be compulsory for all equity and enforcement-related positions on campus and in any federally-funded institutions, and organizations as well as unions . We recommend that this training be developed under the auspices of the Special Envoy on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in conjunction with Jewish community organizations, like Canadian Women Against Antisemitism.
6. To ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all students, faculty and staff, including Jewish students, faculty and staff, at Canadian post-secondary institutions, we recommend that every campus appoint a dedicated professional to specialize in handling hate-related complaints. This individual would be tasked with managing any Code of Conduct complaints that are mitigated by hate. This individual would be required to work in conjunction with designated community and on-campus organizations related to each type of racism and discrimination to ensure that each complaint is managed in an informed and equitable manner.
7. CWAA recommends that special prosecutors be appointed to deal solely with hate-related criminal offenses to ensure that they are prosecuted in a timely manner as outlined in Section 11(b) of the Canadian Human Rights Act and proposed amendments contained in the proposed Online Harms Bill (C-63), by individuals well-versed in all forms of racism and discrimination, and all hate-related legislation. This specialization will enhance the effectiveness of legal responses to hate crimes, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive the justice that they deserve. The special prosecutors must also collaborate with community organizations to ensure that victim impact is fully understood for each incident.

Written Submission to the Justice Committee Study on Antisemitism  
Regarding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Frameworks

Canadian Women Against Antisemitism (CWAA), a member of the Alliance Combating Campus Antisemitism (ALCCA) applauds the Justice Committee for conducting a study on antisemitism, especially with the unprecedented surge of antisemitism in Canada.

CWAA is committed to uniting and empowering the Jewish community and our allies through events and advocacy. We are continuing to build upon our considerable grassroots platform, creating coalitions while advocating to all levels of government with the voice of our growing organization.

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As Canadian Jewish women, we stand at the intersection of a myriad identity principles. And it stands to reason that we deserve, as every other woman in this country, the right to stand in whatever intersectionality we choose, at any given moment, without reservation. However, as Jews and Zionists, we are increasingly required to amputate and fragment our identities as the price of admission into public life. We are being forced to self-censor for the sake of social acceptance and employment.

This is a cautionary tale of what happens when the language of anti-oppression, diversity, inclusion and equity is used to oppress, colonize, silence, exclude and rob the equity of those who do not fit into the false binaries of oppressed versus oppressors. Our identities are being co-opted and hijacked by Others as the semantics of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are defining what is Jewish identity, what is Zionism and what is antisemitism, in the absence of mainstream Jews.

The impact of international events, the biases that have been thrown into sharp relief, the mainstreaming of perverted propaganda and the relative silence and outright betrayal by many of those elected to lead us, across all levels of government, only serves as a constant intensification of the pain of our amputated selves.

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In preparation for this deputation, CWAA interviewed Jewish women employed at post-secondary institutions and within the civil service. We are keeping their identities anonymous over concerns of loss of employment and other forms of retribution. We have also looked into EDI policies and documentation. Much of the latter information is covered in the CWAA Submission on Ontario Bill-166. For the sake of brevity, we are including a link [here](#).

For many of us, October 7th serves as a dividing line between a level of naive complacency in the “before times” and the harsh reality of mainstreamed antisemitism in the “after times.” However, for the women we spoke to, the antisemitism that has been breeding in the EDI space began long before Hamas terrorists invaded Israel in the worst massacre against Jews since the Holocaust. The women working in equity have been experiencing the rise of micro-aggressions and self-censorship and “the erasing of our community and our history.” As one of our interviewees stated, “The language used to talk about Jews is antisemitic and there is an inability to recognize what antisemitism is and then these false definitions are used to perpetuate more antisemitism.”

“The idea in EDI is that if the Jews have good outcomes, then the system is responsible for these good outcomes, just like the system is responsible for bad outcomes. If the outcome for the Jews is good, then they are part of the system and therefore the Jews are White and benefiting from their whiteness.” The EDI framework has been co-opted to become a zero-sum game of oppression, where all communities are evaluated as either oppressors (holding power) or oppressed (without power). Characteristics of the majority group are assigned to the former, and characteristics of minority groups are assigned to the latter. Most of these characteristics are racialized and incorporate the biases of those charged with developing or using EDI materials. Jews in Canada run the full gamut of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, or Mizrahi, and while many may be light-skinned, Jews do not self-identify as White and certainly not White Supremacist, which is antithetical

and paradoxical to the Jewish identity. However, in this false-binary, Jews have been assigned the category of White. This, despite a richness of history, DNA and archeological evidence to support the notion that Jews are not White, but are rather an ethnicity and nationality unto ourselves.

"This has also enabled an erasure of Jews from the Middle East. My family is Kurdish, from Iraq. They were part of the 950,000 ethnically cleansed from Arab and North African countries after 1948. Defining Jews as White and European ignores and erases a large part of the Jewish population." This feeds the EDI and Hamas' own mythology that the Jews in Israel are White Western Colonizers. This gross perversion of propaganda has been mainstreamed since October 7th and is becoming entrenched in our schools, universities, government and civil service.

The superficial determination to define Jews in this manner has allowed the myth that Jewishness is only defined by religion. Our nationhood, ethnicity, language, genetic connection to each other, and the indigeneity to our land has effectively been erased through the EDI framework - advancing an ahistorical fabrication that presents as fact. This framework, and the antisemitism that has unfortunately been built in over time, has effectively established an unquestionable narrative that is shaping government policies and programs and presenting itself as the dominant narrative in our classrooms, workplaces, and communities.

"Working in post-secondary education, the worst offenders, those most antagonistic to including anything about antisemitism have been the Faculties of Education and Social Work. The most isolating thing for me is the EDI trainers that are perpetuating these antisemitic stereotypes are the same ones refusing to acknowledge that antisemitism is even an issue. There is no authentic recognition of either our identity or our oppression."

According to sources, some of the materials circulating and insinuating into the course offerings at the Education Faculties and, by extension the school boards, trumpet the false narratives that place Jews in the position of settler/colonialist thereby erasing 3,000 years of Jewish indigeneity and 76 years of Israeli democracy.

There is no room in this black and white framework to recognize that Jews are succeeding DESPITE the roadblocks and biases against them - that Jewish students are excelling while ALSO facing antisemitic bullying, systemic barriers, the erasure and silencing of our identities, and exclusion from "equity-deserving" programs. While simultaneously eroding our meritocracy, this also feeds age-old antisemitic conspiracy theories about control and power.

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Our Jewish and Zionist hearts were broken by the massacre, the rape and sexual violence, the barbarism and the unknown fate of the hostages in the Hamas terror tunnels. 85% of Canadians say that Israel forms a significant part of our Jewish heritage. The majority of Jews are Zionist. We cannot be forced to fracture our identity from the country of our indigeneity. As such, Anti-Zionism is absolutely antisemitism. It is the denial of Jews to self-determination in our ancestral homeland and it is a denial of a significant aspect of Jewish identity. Since October 7th, antisemitism has exploded across the country, on campuses and is finding even greater traction in the spaces specifically established to protect and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in Canada. Encampments in universities across the country are co-opting Indigenous sovereignty, Black Lives Matter, false equivalence of Zionism to apartheid and other racially-charged accusations to dehumanize and denigrate Jews. Faculty, student and worker unions are supporting and endorsing this hateful rhetoric. For a country whose ethic is built on concepts of multiculturalism and tolerance, this is both nonsensical and dangerous and we are witnessing the product of mainstreaming antisemitic misrepresentations of Jewish identity and a total lack of understanding of antisemitism on campuses, school boards, unions, law enforcement and public agencies across the country. Without an immediate, acute and powerful course correction, antisemitism will continue to spiral in our communities. Jewish existence in Canada will soon be under threat.

## Recommendations

1. According to the 2021 census, the Jewish community comprises 1.4% of the Canadian population, forming one of the smallest minorities in the country. This needs to be acknowledged and Jewish individuals and community organizations must be afforded the same rights, protections and considerations as every other minority. This includes access to programs and services and considerations within EDI frameworks and anti-racism, anti-discrimination initiatives.
2. The full diversity of the Jewish identity must be acknowledged within EDI frameworks. This includes the recognition of Jewish peoplehood, ethnicity, nationality, multi-denominational religion, cultural diversity and language. This also includes the Zionist and indigenous aspect of Jewish identity. Zionism must be acknowledged as the self-determination of Jewish people in their ancestral homeland of Israel.
3. All EDI frameworks must adopt a clear and standardized definition of antisemitism based on the IHRA definition and the lived experiences of Canadian Jews as determined by the mainstream Jewish community as well as with a recognition of evolving manifestations of antisemitism. For example, anti-Zionism is antisemitism. Just as others cannot be empowered to define the Jewish identity, they cannot be empowered to define antisemitism.
4. Given the complexity and diversity of the Jewish identity and the complexity and evolving nature of antisemitism, it is imperative that antisemitism be decoupled from Islamophobia throughout EDI frameworks. This does disservice to both communities and enables an over-simplification of both particularities.
5. Strike an EDI review task force under the auspices of the Special Envoy for Preserving Holocaust Education and Combating Antisemitism. This task force must include members of mainstream Jewish organizations, such as CWAA, to review a cross-section of EDI training materials to identify factually inaccurate and erroneous teachings, gaps and areas of improvement, particularly with respect to antisemitism and anti-Zionism.
6. Referencing the IHRA handbook and other tools and materials created by recognized mainstream Jewish scholars and educators, develop materials to include with EDI training specifically focusing on the histories and cultures of Jews from across the globe, and including their ancestral and current relationships with Israel.
7. Training in antisemitism must be compulsory for all EDI positions and administrators in any publicly-funded institutions, and organizations as well as unions. We recommend that this training be developed under the auspices of the Special Envoy on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in conjunction with mainstream Jewish community organizations, like CWAA.
8. Representation of mainstream Jewish voices in EDI spaces across all public sectors.

## Conclusion and Considerations

Jews have felt excluded from EDI spaces for several years despite being at the forefront of anti-racism advocacy. As we have shown, EDI spaces have either rejected the need to combat antisemitism, downplayed/ignored its impact, or outright perpetrated antisemitism. Tackling antisemitism in EDI spaces will require significant capacity and credibility building. It will be a significant change to current practitioners as well as for Jewish people, who will no doubt continue to feel reluctant/fearful when asked to enter/re-enter this space. This will require a cultural shift, but denying the need and the right to do so is antisemitic on its own.

Canada is at a watershed moment and we can either choose to continue along this path of over-simplified false-binaries that are destroying the fabric of Canada's diverse tapestry or we can embrace the nuanced and rich complexities of our communities and through the courage of our convictions and the ethics of real diversity and understanding, we can ensure that all Canadians can live and thrive authentically.