

**Submission to the House of Commons**  
**Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights**

Study on *'Antisemitism and Additional Measures that Could be Taken to Address the Valid Fears that are Being Expressed by Canada's Jewish Community'*

Submitted by the Following Students from  
the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law:

Arjun Gupta, Student Leader and Convenor

Ferdous Hasan, Co-President, Muslim Law Students' Association

Shayna Horvath, President, Jewish Law Students' Association

May 26, 2024

Dear Members of the House of Commons, Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights:

In recent months, Canada has witnessed a troubling rise in both antisemitism and Islamophobia, particularly on university campuses, acknowledging these are different experiences for different communities. These environments, meant to be safe spaces for learning and growth, have instead become hotbeds of fear and division.

We are writing as three law students at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law—including the President and co-President respectively of the **Jewish Law Students' Association** and the **Muslim Law Students' Association**—to stand united in our concern, and to offer our perspectives from leadership roles within our respective communities.

We are deeply grateful to Mark Sandler for his leadership in the National Respectful Dialogue Initiative. We believe his work is crucial in addressing these issues. Our goal is not to duplicate his efforts but to complement them by highlighting the positive impact of cooperation at the university level, as Janice LaForme emphasized in her written submission to this committee.

In October 2023, we issued a [joint statement](#)<sup>1</sup> wherein we called for a reduction in heated rhetoric, and we urged our law school community to express their freedom of expression with sensitivity and tact, focusing on shared pain rather than allowing hatred to divide us. This statement was supported by nearly 2,500 members of the legal community, including through an [online petition](#)<sup>2</sup> signed by the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, former Chief Justice of Canada, and by several Bay Street firms that circulated our statement to their members.

The rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia is not just a campus issue; it reflects broader societal fractures. However, universities are unique in their ability to shape future leaders and influencers. By fostering environments of mutual respect and understanding, we can mitigate these prejudices at an important age and stage in life. Although our efforts have room for improvement, we have seen a measure of success through our collaborative approach at the University of Ottawa, where Jewish and Muslim law students worked together to condemn hate in all its forms. This model, if adopted widely, might serve as a powerful tool in combating these issues nationally.

**Our recommendation is straightforward:** increased consultation and involvement of Jewish and Muslim student leadership in university policies and initiatives aimed at combating hate. A collaborative approach is essential to replicate the successful model established by Jewish and Muslim law students at the University of Ottawa, with the goal of understanding each other's perceptions of deeply painful issues. Where possible, Jewish and Muslim students should work together in efforts to combat both Islamophobia and antisemitism. This cross-community support both strengthens the initiatives and builds solidarity and understanding between groups.

We have encountered specific incidents that illustrate the urgency of this issue. Swastikas have been painted on campus buildings, Muslim students have been called terrorists, hijab-wearing students have been spat on, and students with Jewish surnames have been advised to remove their names from roommate assignment systems to avoid potential conflict. These examples, while not exhaustive, highlight the pervasive nature of hate and the need for proactive measures.

We acknowledge that we are not experts but passionate advocates sharing what we have observed. Our approach is rooted in humility and a genuine desire to make our campuses safer and more inclusive. We ask for your support in promoting these collaborative efforts and implementing policies that reflect our shared commitment to eradicating hate. You can demonstrate to Canadians that our leaders are taking action against antisemitism and Islamophobia, fostering a future where all students feel safe and respected.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to this crucial issue.

Respectfully,

Arjun Gupta, Student Leader and Convenor  
Ferdous Hasan, Co-President, Muslim Law Students' Association  
Shayna Horvath, President, Jewish Law Students' Association  
May 26, 2024

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<sup>1</sup> The joint statement can be found at the following link: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eU\\_8YK4V3bsT7hJMjWEwPmm0ccKNs7nm](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eU_8YK4V3bsT7hJMjWEwPmm0ccKNs7nm)

<sup>2</sup> The online petition can be found at the following link: <https://www.change.org/p/an-open-letter-from-canada-s-law-community>