

Sunday May 26, 2024

Deputation to: House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights – Hearings on Antisemitism

By: The Council of Muslims Against Antisemitism

The Council of Muslims Against Antisemitism (CMAA) is a group of global Muslim thinkers, professionals and activists, led by its founder director Raheel Raza that is committed to fighting antisemitism in all its guises. This group took its foundational inspiration from Canadian values of tolerance, justice and peace among Canadian diverse communities living together side-by-side.

We recognize antisemitism for what it is – a uniquely pervasive, enduring, and lethal form of hatred which has insinuated itself into multiple cultural, religious and political frameworks across the globe. We recognize the particular threat posed by the meteoric rise of antisemitism in the 21st century. Often genocidal or eliminationist in intent or expression, it represents an unprecedented amalgam of the more familiar strains of antisemitism promoted in extremist right-wing, left wing and Islamist ideologies. The spread of contemporary antisemitism has been accelerated by globalization and the advent of 21st century technologies.

The CMAA endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition constitutes the world's most widely accepted definition of antisemitism which has been adopted or endorsed by 43 countries including Canada. It appropriately recognizes that the demonization of the State of Israel as a Jewish state is antisemitic, whereas criticism of Israel, its government, policies or actions of a type that all countries are subject to, is not.

Despite challenges that include receiving death threats, we are committed to working with like-minded groups to challenge antisemitism wherever it may appear. We are working relentlessly towards the goal of attaining a hate-free Canadian community.

As Muslims from across the Muslim and political spectrum, we will constitute, mobilize and catalyze a distinctly Muslim voice to counter the antisemitism that has become deeply entrenched and remains woefully underchallenged within the broader Muslim world. At the same time, we will

support the recent efforts of those Muslim organizations, some Muslim-majority countries and those Muslim leaders, writers and theologians who have undertaken initiatives to confront the antisemitism which has been allowed to fester within our communities.

We, as Muslims, will also confront the influence and systemic promotion of antisemitism by Islamist extremists of all sorts, for whom the demonization and hatred of Jews is a central pillar of belief. Islamist Jew-hatred constitutes a profound threat not only to the Jewish community, but to democracies, the Muslim world and to global stability.

CMAA has forcefully condemned the murderous attack on Israel and its civilian population by the genocidal antisemitic terrorist organization Hamas backed by Iran. For those considering or actively legitimizing or justifying Hamas' terrorist acts, they need only examine the use by Hamas of the Gazan civilian population as human shields and Hamas' own unequivocal goal to eliminate every Jew or Zionist on the face of the earth.

CMAA has also forcefully condemned Hamas' sex crimes on October 7: "Today, more than ever, we need to stand up for women and girls everywhere, and that means talking about the sexual violence that happened on October 7. If we remain silent, we are giving up, surrendering to bias and hate, and abandoning women everywhere."

Since October 7, Canada has witnessed the unprecedented rise in antisemitism on its streets and campuses. The protests and related intimidating tactics have considerably shrunk the space for Jews or anyone to express opposing political arguments. When Jews or other communities try to stage counter-protests or simply try to engage in opposing political discourse they are threatened and brow-beaten by the demonstrators and their organizers. There are numerous examples from Canadian campuses, malls and streets where Jewish students and like-minded others were harassed by these protesters.

The sad part is it happens in full public view, sometimes right in front of law enforcement agencies. Despite that, it appears that often, no law enforcement action is taken against this behaviour.

During the current wave of protests, university authorities allowed anti-Israel encampments on various campuses across Canada. The CMAA decided to disseminate a countervailing point of view for the university students in the form of a video message from a Palestinian student. The message simply condemned terrorism and Hamas. It did not otherwise

inject itself into the competing narratives about the Middle East. The truck was refused entry into the university (U of Toronto) where the huge encampment was decorated with pro-Hamas and pro-Palestinian slogans and was being protected by campus security. The encampment's food was being supplied by the same route the CMAA truck sought entry to. But the campus security firmly refused entry to the truck and blocked the gate. The CMAA team explained to security what the message was and asked for permission to park the truck a considerable distance from the encampment so as to play the video message for students. Not allowed. Then the team tried to hand over a written statement to university authorities explaining the purpose of its visit and providing details of the video message. To our surprise that too was not allowed. After much argument one officer finally received the statement and asked the team to leave immediately.

The whole incident felt surreal. Here we were in the middle of Canada's largest university that is supposed to promote Canadian values but instead, refused to facilitate a space for a message that simply condemned terrorism and Hamas. This was not only contrary to Canadian values but also to Canada's stated foreign policy on the Middle East.

We believe in and support respectful dialogue, including the National Respectful Dialogue Initiative by Canada's law community. But the space for respectful dialogue has diminished greatly since October 7. Our pray and demand is to keep this space open for all Canadians and to uphold and enforce the constitutional guarantees that ensure rights of all communities and faiths.

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(Directors of The Council of Muslims Against Antisemitism, a member of the Alliance Combatting Campus Antisemitism)