

It has been repeated so often that it has almost become trite: that Canada's Jewish community, as in the United States and elsewhere in the Western world, is the single largest victim of hate crimes.

No matter who is measuring it, whether it's Statistics Canada or local police departments, or Jewish human rights organizations, the conclusions are the same: Canada's Jewish community, despite numbering some 405,000 people, or about one percent of the population, are dramatically and disproportionately overrepresented as hate crime victims.

Jew-hatred in society is nothing new, and is so ancient it has been called "history's oldest hatred." Antisemitism is considered a bellwether to determine the health of a society. When antisemitism thrives, bigotry, racism and xenophobia runs rampant. When antisemitic language proliferates, no one is safe. When criminal harassment and violence against Jews is normalized, there's an increase in violence generally in society, and especially against other minority communities. Fundamentally, antisemitic lies endanger not only the Jewish people, they endanger our very democracy, our fundamental freedoms and our basic liberties.

But that doesn't mean that contemporary Canadian society does not have a unique responsibility in combatting it. Quite the opposite; history has shown that the media has a powerful ability to help pave the way for some of the worst genocides in history.

Next year will mark 80 years since the end of World War Two, and with it, the Holocaust, the systematic murder of six million European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. But those murders did not happen overnight. They began with the careful dehumanization of Jews, both in Nazi propaganda outlets, and in the European media, writ large. Once Jews were no longer seen in society as humans, it became easier to strip them of their civil rights, to deport them to death camps, and to murder them en masse.

What is perhaps most chilling is that this widespread dehumanization of Jewry across European media took place long before the Nazis ever came to power, and much of it lasted even after six million Jews were murdered. In other words, these media outlets were not always told to demonize Jews; they did it of their own volition. When newspapers in France or Poland in the 1920s printed antisemitic cartoons, they did not necessarily think they were paving the way for mass murder. And their actions on their own didn't commit atrocities, but their efforts certainly helped.

One need not only look at Jews to see this lesson play itself out. Even more recently, in 1994, the Rwandan genocide of 800,000 Tutsis at the hands of Hutu extremists was preceded by a long campaign of hate speech on Rwandan radio which portrayed the country's Tutsis as cockroaches. In fact, the genocide began when Rwandan radio instructed the country's Hutu's, in code, to begin massacring their former friends, neighbours and colleagues.

Today, overt, even explicit Jew-hatred is still generally frowned upon in polite and politically correct Canadian society, though merchants of hate are [aggressively trying to change that](#). While most Jew-haters in Canada and worldwide don't stand at street corners yelling "death to the Jews" in English (though anti-Israel protests certainly have featured those chants in Arabic), they have gotten their messages across in different ways. As the Executive Director of HonestReporting Canada, a non-profit organization founded in 2003 to ensure fair and accurate Canadian media coverage of Israel, I am here to testify that some Canadian news media have helped them, every step of the way.

Post Hamas' genocidal massacre of 1,200 innocent Israelis on October 7 – which was the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust – the word Zionist has been used, conveniently and cynically, by

Jew-haters, to refer to Jews [without actually having to say Jew](#). And as a result, a bigot can effectively say what they want about “Zionists” when it is [patently clear they are referring to Jews](#). Yet the news media has generally not only failed to put pen to paper to condemn this tactic, it has given succor with coverage to those who use such expressions claiming an undue influence of a nefarious “Zionist lobby”. Substitute the word “Zionist” with “Jewish” and the antisemitic trope is clear.

Antisemites have attempted to frame their Jew-hatred as nothing more than legitimate criticism of Israel. We cannot be fooled by this. As pointed out by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) [definition of antisemitism](#), widely accepted by many countries, including the government of Canada: “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”

However, calling for the destruction of the world’s only Jewish state, and denying the Jewish People the right to self-determination in their historic homeland is absolutely an act of Jew-hate. And this is done widely, and indeed almost universally, by activists who hide behind a thin veneer of anti-Israel activism to mask their antisemitic motives. Calls to “globalize the Intifada” and chants in support of Palestinian “resistance” are euphemisms meant to cloak incitement to violence against Jews.

The role of the news media here is two-fold: to stop giving endless free publicity to hate rallies. Just as news media outlets would not provide breathless play-by-play coverage of a KKK rally, stop giving oxygen to hate rallies who have attacked Jewish hospitals, vandalized Jewish businesses, attacked synagogues, invaded Jewish residential areas, committed assault, harassment, intimidation, and more. Holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of Israel is antisemitic and not saying so, is intellectually dishonest.

Secondly, even if the news media deems it necessary to report on an anti-Israel/antisemitic hate rally, it cannot continue to act as stenographers for protesters, showing callous disregard for journalistic integrity.

When a protester chants “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” a clear and indisputable statement calling for the destruction of Israel, do not air it, do not legitimize it with exposure. And certainly do not call such rallies “peaceful protests.” The same goes for calls for “intifada,” referring to violent terror uprisings against Israel that led to the murder and maiming of thousands of Israelis in suicide bombings, stabbing rampages, and shooting attacks. Chanting “by any measures necessary” has no benign interpretation. It justifies and condones Hamas’ atrocities.

For example, when [newspaper columnists at the Toronto Star](#) call university occupations – where Jews have been physically assaulted and prevented from entering campus – “civil disobedience,” that is not only a [patent falsehood](#), it is [dangerous whitewashing](#) of a real threat to the civil rights of all Canadians.

Nor should those with connections to hate speech be given an opportunity to spew their bile in the news media. But that’s what happens with anti-Israel activists, again and again and again. One group based in Canada, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), organized a party celebrating Hamas’ October 7 massacres, in an indescribable repugnant act. But that has not stopped the group from being given written and broadcast coverage regularly for the last 8 months by Canada’s media, without any nod whatsoever to their support for terrorism.

Perhaps most egregious, the Canadian media’s refusal to call Hamas terrorists is utterly contemptible and indefensible. A group that is a banned terrorist organization in Canada and fits every conceivable definition of terrorism and yet is not identified as such is a repulsive slap in the face to the truth, and a subtle message that killing Jews is still not terrorism.

The Canadian news media has made Israel's counter-terrorism operations in Gaza the most important news story, all but ignoring real famine and genocide in places like Sudan. And while that's their right, as perhaps indefensible as it may be, in many corners, it has consistently produced reports so irresponsible [they verge on fake news](#), with no consequences whatsoever. Case in point, [CBC](#), [CTV](#), the [Globe and Mail](#) and the Toronto Star falsely reported that Israeli airstrikes killed 500+ Palestinians at a Gaza hospital, when in truth, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket misfired and landed prematurely outside the al-Ahli hospital in Gaza, tragically killing dozens. In addition to providing endless free publicity to those who seek to demonize the world's only Jewish state with unsupportable lies, as well as by whitewashing antisemitic movements masquerading as anti-Israel, the news media has helped contribute to the demonization of Israel's very existence, and as such, has directly contributed to the rise of Jew-hatred.

When some news outlets, in particular CBC, Canada's publicly-funded broadcaster, publish and broadcast an incessant barrage of anti-Israel content, demonstrating no apparent interest whatsoever in balance, context or even a basic responsibility to the public, this isn't just negligence, it's dangerous. The most obvious manifestation of this is when news media outlets repeatedly platform anti-Israel activists, providing virtually no voice on the other side whatsoever, particularly when those speakers deny the Jewish People's right to self-determination, a textbook case of antisemitism according to the IHRA definition accepted by the Canadian government.

Canadians, like Israelis, have the privilege to live in a society with a free press, one of the benefits of living in a liberal democratic society. But news media outlets have an immense duty of care and a tacit fiduciary responsibility to their consumers and stakeholders which has been shamefully neglected in huge parts and in particular since October 7, 2023.

In an attempt to remedy the situation before us, we propose the following four key recommendations:

1. Stop giving publicity to antisemitic hate rallies masquerading as peaceful protest, including on campus
2. If necessary to report on them, stop whitewashing their hateful chants and actions as legitimate and/or peaceful
3. Stop quoting and giving a platform to individuals and organizations who promote hatred and terrorism and the denial of the Jewish People's right to self-determination
4. Start calling Hamas, and groups like it, which are banned in Canada, what they are: terrorists.

As Voltaire once said: "Those who can make you believe in absurdities, can make you commit atrocities."

We cannot allow antisemitism to become ubiquitous and to be normalized & weaponized. Never again is now.

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