

Good [morning/afternoon]. My name is Sydney Greenspoon. I have recently completed my final year at the University of Windsor, Faculty of Law. I am writing my Ontario bar admissions exams next month and will be articling with a Toronto law firm. I also have a Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Western Ontario. This past year, I served as co-president of the University of Windsor Law School's Jewish Students Association.

I am here to testify as to my experience as a Jewish student on campus in Canada. Canada has a growing antisemitism problem and its universities are its breeding grounds. Once a vessel for the free exchange of ideas, the Canadian academic environment has become poisoned by bigotry and antisemitism.

The University of Windsor, like many Canadian universities, has become an unsafe place to be a Jewish student. It is a campus that fosters hate and allows antisemitism to flourish, compelling the few Jewish students to hide any sign of our Jewish identity, in fear for our physical and psychological safety. The hateful climate has been enabled by ineffectual university administrators who have not taken the necessary steps to protect their Jewish students.

Jewish law students at Windsor and other Canadian law schools have been targeted and relegated to the metaphorical back of the classroom. This has occurred in broad daylight, with the administration's knowledge and the support of some faculty and staff.

I ask, how could this be? How are the Canadian government, law enforcement, the legal profession and the universities enabling this?

Antisemitism on campus did not start on October 7, 2023 when Hamas perpetrated its massacre against Israel. I have faced derogatory and antisemitic comments made by classmates, professors singling me out because of my beliefs, and a general lack of compassion towards the alarmingly increasing rate of antisemitism that has grown steadily in my time as a student. I have had friends ask me once they find out I'm Jewish if I will denounce Zionism.

For me, Zionism and the State of Israel are an integral, if not the *most* integral, aspects of what it means to be Jewish. Zionism is Jewish self-determination in our re-established ancestral homeland. I have always understood Zionism in the context of my religious beliefs and as a major aspect of Jewish life that is ingrained in our prayers, way of living, and daily practices. It was only when I began university that I found out that such a fundamental aspect of my religious and ethnic identity would be a problem for others in academia. Going into my final year of law school, I thought I had seen all the ugly faces of antisemitism, but nothing could have prepared me for the extreme and blatant forms of Jew hatred we students faced at the University of Windsor. It was only this year that it dawned on me that it was not only my Zionism my peers, professors and administrators took issue with, but my Judaism as well.

Prior to October 7<sup>th</sup>, Jewish law students would identify antisemitic incidents to university administration and receive retroactive apologies and empty promises for change, only to find ourselves back in the President's office a few months later.

October 7<sup>th</sup> marked a chilling turning point, where Jew hatred has not only continued to spread but surged to unprecedented levels on our university campuses. Since October 7<sup>th</sup>, rallies glorifying violence against Israelis and Jews, and coordinated attempts to stifle our Jewish voices have become disturbingly normalized and celebrated. My peers who I once considered friends have stopped interacting with me because I am a Jew. It is no better, and indeed actually worse, within our classrooms; where professors demonize Zionism, propagate hateful antisemitic rhetoric and single out Jewish students for our beliefs.

Here are but a few of the ways society, university administration, the professors and my peers have failed Jewish students on campus at UWindsor this past year:

- On October 7<sup>th</sup>, the Windsor Jewish Students Association posted on social media a statement of solidarity with Israelis. Before that horrific day was even over, we were advised by Windsor's Students' Law Society (the SLS) that they had deemed our message to be inappropriate and asked that it be taken down, given it would be "distressing" to the wider community. At the same time, the SLS had sent a mass email to over 60 of my peers creating a new, and in my view, discriminatory rule against "politicized posts". We fought back, and the SLS ultimately rescinded their rule.
- The Palestinian Solidarity Group (PSG) at the University of Windsor held their first of many rallies on October 10<sup>th</sup> - a rally to "mobilize for the Day of Resistance", with posters depicting the very Hamas paragliders involved in the massacre of babies, the brutal rape of women, and the kidnapping of innocent civilians – both Jewish and non-Jewish.
- Rallies such as these, walk-outs and so-called "die ins" became a normal occurrence with no condemnation by the administration despite the constant disruption to the academic atmosphere and direct intimidation of the Jewish student community.
- I have personally heard "death to the Jews" being chanted in Arabic and seen posters saying "Saved from Nazis to become Nazis". I have been told that I am not welcome at certain events on campus which are "explicitly anti-Zionist".
- When the Jewish Students Association participated in a club's day event at UWindsor, we were verbally harassed, threatened, and called "murderers" by other students while sitting at our booth promoting Jewish culture, religion and, ironically, teaching about the dangers of antisemitism. In fear for our physical safety, we fled the event. After reporting the incident to university authorities, we were told nothing could be done.
- I was effectively shut out from any debate on the proposed adoption of the boycott, divest and sanctions (BDS) movement at a meeting of the University of Windsor Student's Alliance (which was ultimately adopted).

- Many law professors wholly disregard egregious human rights violations, genocides, and ethnic cleansings that actually take place around the world, while demonizing the only Jewish state. One professor actually had the audacity to tell a Jewish law student that he hoped she would not return to his class as he did not allow Zionists in his classroom. These professors, to whom I have entrusted my legal education, are largely those who have been agitating with false and outlandish antisemitic rhetoric at on-campus events, within the classroom, and on their public social media accounts. It is difficult for me to reconcile how I can properly learn from individuals who hold such extreme and radical views about my people, religion, and heritage.

I commend this Government's adoption in 2019 of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) working definition of antisemitism as part of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy. Almost all of the examples of antisemitism found in the definition I have unfortunately experienced as a student.

I ask you - if this was happening to your child on a Canadian campus, would you condone it? If this was happening to any other minority group, would you condone it?

Today, I call upon university administrators across Canada and federal, provincial and municipal governments to take decisive action against antisemitism. Hate speech and violence must be unequivocally condemned, and those who perpetuate Jew hatred must be held accountable.

We need proactive policies to protect Jewish students such as the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism on campuses to provide clarity on what constitutes Jew hate. Governments should ensure that their Ministries understand and apply the definition to their work. Universities must enforce their existing rules and policies without discrimination. It is well past time for universities to listen to Jewish student voices and create a campus environment where all students feel safe and respected, not demonized and ostracized for our Zionism and Judaism.

My story as a Jewish university student is not unique. I have always been proud to be a Canadian, and Canadian values such as equality, tolerance and respect for others have resonated with me. My fear is that the irrational Jew hatred that is permeating our society, especially at our universities, has begun to erode these values and the rule of law.

I would ask that this Committee to reflect on the plight of Jewish university students in its study on antisemitism.

Thank you.

*Sydney Greenspoon*