

Whither Anti-Palestinian Racism?

Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives. Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including: denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians; failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine; erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians; excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies; defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values¹

It is unconscionable to the writer of this testimony that the Justice Committee's hearings on Antisemitism and Islamophobia at this time, would allow such a misstep to happen as to forego Anti-Palestinian Racism (APR).

This is a time of genocide against the *Palestinian* people².

This is a time of all-out discrimination, harassment, termination, suspension, silencing, defamation, and doxing against Palestinian Canadians and their supporters, by Canadian Zionists: in the workplace, in the media, on university campuses. And this is a time of climactic weaponization of Antisemitism by the latter, in order to effect such discrimination, harassment, termination, suspension, silencing, defamation, and doxing against Palestinian Canadians and their supporters. With one tool: the definition of Antisemitism promoted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, that Canada's special envoy to IHRA is advocating for all postsecondary institutions to adopt. This, in contempt of the definition's outright rejection by Canadian Academics and their representatives, foremost among them the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and including the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, the Fédération Québécoise des Professeures et Professeurs d'Université, as well as 40+ Faculty associations across Canada³.

How is criticism of Israeli state oppression an attack on that state's Jewish citizens, let alone, on Jews worldwide, many of whom are neither Israeli citizens nor Israel advocates, and who identify in no way with a genocidal state that purports to represent them despite themselves? How does conflating criticism of Israeli state oppression with anti-Jewish racism, which the IHRA definition's examples accomplish, protect Jews from Antisemitism, Palestinians from Anti-Palestinian Racism and Muslims from Islamophobia? While it is not my business here to expand on Antisemitism, it is my purpose to point that a coherent antiracism strategy by the Canadian government can only succeed if it tackles ALL forms of racism together, intersectionally, and not separately and selectively. Any governmental antiracism strategy literally affirming that a critique of *states* is racist, is morally confused at best, fascistically inclined, at worst.

My point by no means denies the specificity of each form of racism, meaning that as much as Antisemitism is distinct from, say, Anti-Arab or Anti-Black or anti-Indigenous racism (yet intersects with them), so is APR distinct from Islamophobia even as it intersects with it.

The absence of Anti-Palestinian Racism at these hearings is jarring, embarrassing, insulting. It seeks to accomplish one goal: that of allowing Canadian Zionists to concentrate on portraying Palestinians and

¹ Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, « [Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations. Community Consultations and Reflections,](#)” 2022.

² Raz Segal, “[A Textbook Case of Genocide,](#)” *Jewish Currents*, October, 13, 2023; Francesca Albanese, [Anatomy of a Genocide: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,](#) 25 March, 2024; International Court of Justice, [Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\) - Request for the indication of provisional measures,](#) 26 January 2024.

³ The #noIHRA campaign is hosted on the Independent Jewish Voices website: <https://www.noihra.ca/academic-campaign>

their supporters as Antisemites, by denying Palestinians their humanity and their dignity, their history as oppressed indigenous people at the hands of a colonial power and their fundamental rights as members of the community of nations. What Canadian Zionists are also doing meanwhile is forfeit, underplay or mischaracterize the real threat to Canadian Jews (and to so many other minorities) posed by Canadian White Supremacist groups: shockingly, the hearings on Antisemitism were unconcerned with this alarming reality.

The siloed and selective approach to entrenched Canadian racism by the Canadian government is all the more perplexing given broad documentation based on solid empirical research of Anti-Palestinian Racism⁴, and its intersections with other forms of racism⁵, has been made available in extensive reports. These are deemed trustworthy enough for public stakeholders to now include Anti-Palestinian Racism as part of their anti-racism strategies⁶. Among the most recent of these reports is the groundbreaking “Combating Anti-Palestinian Racism and Antisemitism: an Intersectional Approach to Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy,” a joint submission by four respected Canadian human rights organizations: Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA), Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV), and Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC).

It is in reference to these frameworks that I now turn to my own story. I contend that so long as the Canadian government and institutions ignore or contest their validity, my story and that of countless other Palestinian Canadians and their supporters will go unaccounted for or be dismissed, allowing racism to fester and remain entrenched in Canada.

I am a professor of Arab History at the University of Montreal, a member of the Palestinian Canadian Academics and Artists Network, and a descendant of Nakba survivors. My experience within my workplace since way before October 7, 2023, is a concerning reflection of mainstream APR, unabashedly upheld by Canada’s political establishment.

The Justice Committee members will recall some of the more recent manifestations of APR from the very mouths of Canada’s current Liberal government. They are invited to imagine what it has felt like and continues to feel like, for Palestinian Canadians, to be on the receiving end of existential erasure, epistemic violence, genocidal incitement and moral repulsion. For example, on October 8, 2023, Immigration Minister Marc Miller tweeted his “disgust” and “shame” towards his own Montreal constituents after they took to the streets in support of a 2.3 million refugee population - besieged, impoverished and battered since decades by Israel. Later, on 11 January 2024, he partly justified the colossal failure of his visa program for Gazans on the grounds that every single Gazan adult was by default a suspect: “we don’t know these people”, he went on record as saying. On November 8, 2023, in an interview to the CBC, MP Anthony Housefather said that “There is something wrong in this country where a war in the Middle East has spread into Canada and is making Jewish Canadians feel this unsafe”. As a matter of fact, there is nothing wrong for a war engineered, implemented and nurtured for 77 years in the Middle East by Western countries, among them Canada, to head back home and rekindle its fire in the cradle that birthed it. As to Jewish Canadians feeling “this unsafe,” I am convinced they do, given MP Housefather’s oblivion to the deeds of White Supremacist Antisemites. I am however equally convinced that Jewish Canadians are in fact acutely aware of the dangers posed to their own safety as well as to that of Palestinian Canadians by Zionism and its

⁴ Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, « [Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations. Community Consultations and Reflections](#),” 2022; Independent Jewish Voices, “[Report: Unveiling the Chilly Climate – The Suppression of Speech on Palestine in Canada](#)”, 2022; Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, “[Anti-Palestinian Racism in Canada: CJPME’s 2022 Report](#)”, 2023.

⁵ Jasmin Zine, *The Canadian Islamophobia Industry, Mapping Islamophobia’s Ecosystem in the Great White North*, Berkley, Ca., Islamophobia Studies Center, and the Islamophobia Research & Documentation Project, 2022.

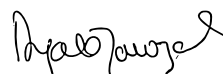
⁶ Toronto District School Board, “[Combating Hate and Racism: Student Learning Strategy Update 2024](#).”

celebration. Talking of which: on May 6, speaking at a Holocaust remembrance event, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau declared that in “a country like Canada it should be and it must be safe to declare oneself a Zionist, Jewish or not,” conflating, or rather confusing, the right of Jews to self-determination with a political ideology premised on the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population of Palestine. Premier Trudeau said what he said *after* the International Court of Justice had ruled on plausible genocide. How can declaring one’s unflinching support for the racist and deathly ideology underpinning the current state of Israel and its very constitution⁷ be anything but genocidal incitement? How can celebrating instead of criticizing Zionism create safety for Palestinians and their supporters, in Canada, in Palestine and in Israel?

I strongly believe that my experience at the University of Montreal, before and since October 7, can only be understood in the context of the calamitous sway of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and its mainstreaming of APR. On December 5, 2022, in a bid to silence me and violate my academic freedom, I was branded an antisemite by a colleague in a Senate meeting, after I advocated for suspending our agreements with Israeli universities, until such times as Israel fully complies with International Law⁸. The total indifference of my administration, colleagues and peers to the public smear was a stark reminder of the extent to which the association between “Palestinian” and “Antisemite” has become normalized. As shocking perhaps was a Dean’s ignorant assumption that “the conflict in the Middle East does not concern us” and his ensuing recommendation that rather than adopt this foreign conflict, we should make space for Palestinians on our campuses and “expose them to the mind-blowing power of our liberties.” On 6 November, and again on 29 January, I challenged the University of Montreal’s President on his October public statement regarding “The war in the Middle East,”⁹ asking him why he could not bring himself to name my people, to utter the words of Palestine and Palestinians in his statement, and whether since the ICJ ruling of 26 January he would consider replacing his unfortunate choice of words to describe a possible crime against humanity (“the situation”) by “genocide”: he would not. In December 2023, in a second blatant violation of my academic freedom, a historical exhibit on Palestine, 8 months in the making, was canceled by the Dean. It was due January through March 2024 at the Carrefour des Arts exhibition space of the Faculty of Arts and Science. No explanation was offered other than undefined, and unsubstantiated, “security reasons”. To this day, I have neither received an apology, nor even a recognition that my exhibit was cancelled. In March and April 2024, a divestment request was put to the president of the university regarding the compromised investments of the university chancellor, whose Israeli company LeddarTech is part of an Israeli military consortium (Avatar): the president refused to ask the chancellor to divest from Israel.

Since the publication of the five reports quoted above on APR, Islamophobia and Antisemitism (2022-24), the numerous requests put to the University of Montreal’s diverse departments that they adopt these reports and insert APR in their anti-racism campaigns, have fallen on deaf ears. The violence contained in this Campus policy of denial and dismissal, is mirrored in MP Housefather’s sham hearings. It is also best captured, and made possible, by Terra Nullius statements like those of former BC Minister of Education Selina Robinson, who, on 30 November was caught pandering to pro-Israel agent B’nai Brith and peddling in Israeli propaganda: Palestine before the arrival of the Zionist colonists, she said, “was a crappy piece of land with nothing on it.”

Montreal, 21 June 2024



⁷ In its 2018 Basic Law, Israel “outed” itself as an officially racist polity by declaring that “[the State of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people](#)” *de jure* expelling 20% of its own non-Jewish citizens from full equality under the law and inscribing apartheid into the Constitution.

⁸ All facts described in this paragraph are duly referenced in the public minutes of the University of Montreal’s Senate meetings (December 2023 to April 2024 and January 2023), on the webpage of the [Secretariat General](#).

⁹ Daniel Jutras, « [Message à propos de la situation au Moyen Orient](#), » 12 octobre 2023.