

## BRIEF SUBMITTED TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### RE ISLAMOPHOBIA HEARINGS 2024

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I am a Palestinian woman, a third-generation Palestinian refugee, and a graduate student at Concordia University. My supervisor is Kevin Gould, a member of Independent Jewish Voices. The last few months have been exceedingly difficult. My family still resides in the occupied territories of Palestine, where they face unprecedented circumstances due to both Israeli and Palestinian Authority repression.

Before October 2023, I experienced personal exclusion regarding Palestine from academics associated with the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies at Concordia. They refused to discuss the Israeli occupation of Palestine or acknowledge my experiences. The institute not only offers Canadian students fieldwork opportunities in Israel, but also in illegal settlements and occupied East Jerusalem, actions that contravene international law. Additionally, Canadians can travel to occupied Palestine through Israel without the numerous checkpoints and stringent entry requirements that we Palestinians face. Moreover, the Institute promotes racist views towards Palestinians, denying their existence by referring to them simply as Arabs or Muslims. It portrays them as [violent<sup>i</sup>](#), and a group of people that has garnered worldwide support for their cause, including among Jewish communities in the USA and Europe, thus perpetuating the narrative that Israel must always protect itself from this oppressed group. The Azrieli Institute has consistently hosted anti-Palestinian speakers, who claim the West Bank is part of Israel, and has organized events denying Palestinian indigeneity in the Occupied territories and Palestine, challenging the international legal status quo in the region. The institute has even hosted speakers from NGOs that support 'lone soldiers' in the IDF, despite Canadian laws prohibiting citizens from enlisting as lone soldiers in foreign armies.

Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism, and antisemitism are long-standing forms of hatred. Although all have escalated recently, Canadian media and government officials have predominantly targeted Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians. Ford has [labeled<sup>ii</sup>](#) them as immigrants who allegedly do not share 'Canadian values.' Moreover, consistently linking antisemitism and Islamophobia as interconnected issues is problematic. This approach risks misrepresenting all Muslims as antisemitic and all Jewish people as Islamophobic. It also mistakenly merges the political dimensions of the Palestinian cause with a religious conflict between Jews and Muslims, which is inaccurate. Additionally, this narrative overlooks the critical issue of anti-Palestine racism.

Since October 2023, many public figures and politicians have incited violence or called for the policing and disciplining of pro-Palestine protesters on and off campuses. Liberal MP Housefather, a member of the committee, previously [suggested<sup>iii</sup>](#) that faculty members involved in pro-Palestine activism should be disciplined for teaching views supportive of Palestine or for crediting students who attend Palestine solidarity rallies. Furthermore, Ontario Premier Doug Ford has [stated<sup>iv</sup>](#) that encampments are infused with hatred, echoing earlier accusations against pro-Palestine students and faculty by Jill Dunlop, the minister of higher colleges and universities, who [labeled<sup>v</sup>](#) pro-Palestine faculty members as terror glorifiers and inherently violent, urging universities to discipline them for misconduct. This type of discourse stereotypes Palestinian and Muslim students as inherently violent, dehumanizing them and jeopardizing their safety and freedom of expression. Neither the university nor the police are effectively addressing the safety concerns of Palestinian students, who are also targeted by anti-Israeli groups on

campus. Off campus, there are public figures who [have](#)<sup>vi</sup> publicly supported the ongoing violence and genocide in Gaza. This represents a double standard: public figures who speak in support of Palestine face constant disciplinary actions. Meanwhile, voices against diversity and inclusivity regarding Palestinians in Canada do not face the same repercussions.

As a Palestinian in Canada, I consistently face multiple barriers, starting with Canada's refusal to recognize Palestine. This systemic prejudice extends from the government to various anti-Palestine institutions, including intimidation from B'nai Brith, CIJA, CAEF, Rebel News, National Post, Jewish Defense League, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal, and many others. Additionally, police surveillance and violence target Palestinians and their allies at protests and in daily life. Police even target Muslim men wearing kufiyehs without justification, and there are recent cases of fines issued to Muslim men near mosques during Al-Fajr prayers, also without clear justification.

As a Palestinian woman who has witnessed Israeli undercover forces invading Palestinian campuses in the West Bank to arrest students, and as someone who was frequently stopped by Israeli soldiers as a child to inspect my school bag, claiming I am hiding a knife, and whose home was raided multiple times without cause, I am concerned about the suppression of pro-Palestine advocacy and activism on campuses and the dismissal of the Palestinian narrative. As a student at Concordia, I have even been stalked by anti-Palestinian students, which reminds me of the intimidation and violence we experienced in the West Bank from Israeli settlers or soldiers.

Our universities have failed to protect us. Concordia University has allowed student groups to use its name to host Israeli soldiers who participated in the genocide in Gaza. These soldiers, who are also Canadian, have committed crimes against humanity under Canadian law. Imagine the reaction of the Canadian government if a student group decided to host members from the Russian military to share their perspectives—would such an event be allowed to proceed? Moreover, universities are silent on the topic of Islamophobia and Anti-Palestinian Racism. Some students have reported that committees addressing Islamophobia on campuses are merely nominal and are ineffective in combating hate crimes and speech against Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian students.

I would like to emphasize that silencing discussions about Palestine—potentially through the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which systematically seeks to erase Palestine and any form of solidarity with the Palestinian people—will not resolve the issues of anti-Palestinian racism, Islamophobia, or antisemitism. The notion that Jewish people in Canada are unsafe because Palestinians and their allies freely express their opinions is both problematic and itself antisemitic. It undermines the Canadian citizenship and identity of Jewish individuals, segregating them from the broader Canadian society and wrongly implying a uniform affiliation with Israel, responsibility for its actions, and obligation to its image. This is clearly not the case, as demonstrated by significant Jewish involvement in Palestine solidarity activism over the past nine months. This type of discourse not only marginalizes these Jewish voices but also Palestinian ones, endangering both groups by failing to address the real hate crimes committed against them.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/7158432747566708/?ref=newsfeed>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ford-immigrants-jewish-girls-school-shooting-1.7219365>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://x.com/AHousefather/status/1735330840597434562?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1735330840597434562%7Ctwgr%5E3205bd6b2405a7c8d9c98a128db294cc45c1ae1b%7Ctwcon%5E](https://x.com/AHousefather/status/1735330840597434562?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1735330840597434562%7Ctwgr%5E3205bd6b2405a7c8d9c98a128db294cc45c1ae1b%7Ctwcon%5E)

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<sup>iv</sup> <https://x.com/ColinDMello/status/1787579199336644971>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.osgoodefaculty.ca/ohfa-executive-statement-defending-academic-freedom/>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://yvesengler.com/2023/12/16/portrait-of-a-fanatically-pro-israel-canadian-town/>