

OCTOBER 2025 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# THE CIJA REPORT:

A Pattern of Anti-Palestinian Racism  
and Genocide Denial at the Centre for  
Israel and Jewish Affairs



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As Jewish authors, we understand that genocide denial is a uniquely dangerous act. The longstanding denial of eliminatory violence against Palestinians, specifically the Nakba, continues and it is the very denial of it by groups like CIJA that allows it to perpetuate. **We have devoted more than a year of collective effort to analyzing and coming to grips with this unacceptable situation.** This work includes important recommendations to hopefully, at least in part, redress CIJA's harmful interventions in the public sphere in Canada.

# Executive Summary

This report shines a light on how the current discourse about antisemitism in Canada serves to manufacture consent for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

A number of pro-Israel institutions play a key role to these ends, including B'nai Brith Canada and the Friends of Simon Weisenthal - Centre for Holocaust Studies.<sup>1</sup> Playing an outsized role in this context is one pro-Israel lobby group, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA). Our report finds that CIJA engages in racism, the dehumanization of Palestinians, the promotion of unconditional support for the state of Israel and its military, and the silencing of Palestinians, their allies, and supporters, including dissenting Jewish voices. Through their social media posts, public statements, and lobby efforts, CIJA is engaging in the denial of an ongoing campaign of mass extermination that meets the legal definition of genocide.<sup>2</sup>

**Racism is a key component of enabling genocide. Relying on false claims that Palestinians and their supporters are motivated by antisemitism<sup>3</sup> and relying on widely critiqued data to manufacture the appearance of an astronomical rise in antisemitism, CIJA consistently engages racist and distorting tropes of Palestinians to support its lobbying.**

Racism against Palestinians builds upon an architecture of discrimination that attributes a foundational antisemitism to Muslims and Arabs.

This report uncovers the mechanics of how CIJA's public statements, social media posts, and media releases operate to actively support the state of Israel and its genocidal campaign. CIJA's lobby efforts have included advocating for heightened criminalization of Palestine solidarity protests, such as "bubble-zone" legislation<sup>4</sup> and enhanced funding for policing and law enforcement. It has also engaged in "lawfare" — the strategic use of legal tools to suppress political opponents. The impact of these efforts has material consequences, including silencing voices that are calling for the liberation of Palestinian people from occupation, and engineering a longstanding "exception" rendering Palestine, Palestinian lives, and Palestinian human rights as unworthy of consideration.<sup>5</sup>

This report documents an escalation point, not a starting point. CIJA embraced anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobic policies and expressions well before the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks. For example, as reported by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, CIJA countered former New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh's mild criticism of Israel's August 2022 bombing of Gaza by alleging that "the rabid Jew-hatred" of Palestinians is the cause of Palestinian suffering.<sup>6</sup> In 2017, CIJA vehemently opposed Bill M-103, legislation created to address and document Islamophobia after the Quebec City mosque shooting in which six worshipers were killed and five injured.<sup>7</sup> CIJA objected especially to the use of the term "Islamophobia,"<sup>8</sup> referring to it as

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1 Though it is beyond the scope of the report to analyze each group, their collective efforts build on one another. B'nai Brith in particular has played a central role in the university sector. See their [Submission to the Standing Committee on Science and Research for its Study Regarding the Distribution of Federal Government Funding Among Canada's Post-Secondary Institutions](#), May 24, 2024 and the Jewish Faculty Network's [response](#).

2 Human Rights Watch, *Israel's Crime of Extermination, Acts of Genocide in Gaza*, December 19, 2024.

3 For discussion centring the need for analytic clarity with respect to antisemitism, including the ways in which the term is falsely used to frame Palestinian activism, see: Abigail Bakan and Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "Antisemitism as Anti-Jewish Racism: Reflections on an Anti-Racist Analytic," *Historical Materialism* 32 (1): 225–66.

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4 For an explanation and critique of bubble zone legislation, see: Irina Ceric, "Bursting the bubble (zone): Resisting Toronto's anti-protest by-law," *Canadian Dimension* (June 9, 2025).

5 For discussion on the "Palestine exception," see for example: Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (Stanford University Press, 2019); Marc Lamont Hill and Mitchell Plitnick, *Except for Palestine: The Limits of Progressive Politics* (The New Press, 2022); Palestine Legal and Center for Constitutional Rights, *The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US* (2015); Sheryl Nestel and Rowan Gaudet, *Unveiling the Chilly Climate: The Suppression of Speech on Palestine in Canada* (Independent Jewish Voices, 2022).

6 Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), *Anti-Palestinian Racism in Canada: 2022 Report*: (CJPME, December, 2023).

7 *Motion M-103: Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination*, 1st Sess., 42nd Parl., 2016. 65-66 Elizabeth II. 2017.

8 Steven Zhou, "Zionist Groups in Canada are Jumping on the 'Creeping Sharia' Bandwagon," *Buzzfeed Daily Newsletter*, November 15, 2017.



“misleading, ambiguous, and politically charged.”<sup>9</sup> These are but a few examples of Islamophobic positions taken by CIJA.<sup>10</sup>

Labelling critics of Israel as antisemitic, as CIJA does, is a clear example of anti-Palestinian racism, as the 2022 Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA) framework (discussed further below) lays out. This phenomenon is not new. For a number of decades, the state of Israel has promoted the idea that critiques of Zionism and critique of Israeli state policies, laws, and practices constitute a “new” antisemitism, since Israel is a Jewish nation-state. Many pro-Israel Jewish lobby groups have adopted this framework and have been key players in silencing Palestinian political calls for liberation by naming this movement as antisemitic. This discourse around antisemitism has become particularly salient in the context of Israel’s ongoing genocidal campaign in Gaza as we are witnessing a heightened level of racism directed at expressions of Palestinian solidarity and Palestinian political and human rights in Canada.

Our research finds that CIJA has played a key role in this disturbing trend. CIJA claims to represent the views of 150,000 Jewish people in Canada through the Jewish Federations of Canada, out of a total Canadian Jewish population of approximately 335,000.<sup>11</sup> CIJA is often relied on by media and politicians to represent “the Jewish community” in Canada in the media and in government lobbying efforts.

**This report reveals and exposes the harm caused by policy makers, the media, institutions, and legislatures when they adopt ideas, policies, and legal regulation that CIJA promotes in relation to the state of Israel.**

Since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel and Israel’s genocidal operation in Gaza, relentless assault on

the West Bank, and the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe that the state of Israel has generated, CIJA’s role on the national landscape has been amplified. We analyzed public statements made by CIJA between October 7, 2023, and March 29, 2024, including 1,625 posts made by the CIJA X (formerly Twitter) account, 40 official press releases published on the CIJA website, and 144 instances where CIJA staff or executives were quoted in the media. We sought to understand CIJA’s claims of antisemitism and to analyze their implications. We found that many of these claims promoted other forms of racism, where they conflated critiques of Israel with antisemitism. In this light, we assessed how, in the context of an Israeli genocide against Palestinian people, CIJA’s accusations of antisemitism aim to silence critique of Israeli violence against Palestinians.

Palestinians and their supporters in Canada have been threatened, subjected to increased policing, surveillance and doxxing, fired by employers, sanctioned by university administrators, and have been subjected to various forms of abuse, all of which is documented in several reports.<sup>12</sup> Our report adds to this documentation by recording the specific role played by CIJA in this disturbing trend.<sup>13</sup>

As a starting point for analysing anti-Palestinian racism (APR), this report relies on a framework for understanding this form of racism developed by the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association.<sup>14</sup> Our methodology entailed analyzing CIJA’s public communications in order to qualitatively evaluate the prevalence of anti-Palestinian racism in CIJA’s claims to speak for Jewish Canadians

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12 See for example: CJPME, *Anti-Palestinian Racism in Canada: 2023 Report*; Bascima Mosse and Sumara Sibery, *Anti-Palestinian Racism in Canada: 2024 Survey Report* (Palestinian Canadian Congress, March, 2025); David Mastracci, “A List of Some People in Canada Fired for Pro-Palestine Views,” *The Maple*, November, 10, 2023; Race Equity Caucus, York University, *Surveilled and Silenced: A Report on Palestine Solidarity at York University* (September, 2024).

13 Though it was beyond the scope of this project to analyze the ways that these attacks might disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and racialized people, what can be gleaned from our data is that CIJA’s activation of state apparatuses to combat antisemitism, including increased criminalization and securitization, reproduce structural racism. For analysis of the activation of state power by pro-Israel lobby groups in the context of criminal law and the ways this activation reproduces racism, see for example: Jillian Rogin, “Legislating Hate: Pro-Israel Advocacy and Hate Speech Criminalization in Canada,” *Journal for the Critical Study of Zionism* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2024): 1.

14 Dania Majid, *Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing, and Manifestations* (Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, April, 2022), 17.

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9 Ron Csillag, “Why are Jews so divided on M-103 and the term Islamophobia?” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 2, 2017.

10 For a detailed discussion of how pro-Israel lobby groups more broadly contribute to the promotion of Islamophobia in Canada, see: Jasmin Zine, *The Canadian Islamophobia Industry: Mapping Islamophobia’s Ecosystem in the Great White North* (Islamophobia Studies Center, 2022).

11 CIJA has made this claim to represent 150,000 Jewish people in Canada repeatedly, including to the *Standing House Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development*. StatCan last surveyed Jewish population numbers in 2021 and reported this figure.

and address antisemitism.<sup>15</sup> This approach is based on our study focus, which is to understand the narratives that CIJA disseminates about Palestinians and their supporters in Canada, including many Jewish people, and to analyze whether and how these narratives both obscure and support genocidal violence.

Our study is grounded in an anti-racist approach that understands that all forms of racism are interconnected. As scholars of race and religion show, it is impossible to understand antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism and anti-Arab racism as entirely distinct concepts, because they are shaped by European imperialisms and by various forms of (now often secularized) Christian/white supremacy.<sup>16</sup> It is also helpful to understand the basic relationship of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim/anti-Arab<sup>17</sup> movements historically. Jewish-Muslim antagonism, while portrayed as timeless, is actually a fairly recent European invention.<sup>18</sup> This is supported by the well documented history of Jewish-Muslim cohabitation in many regions, where conflict arose and resolved, but was never a stable and unfixed aspect of the relationship.<sup>19</sup> This history frames our current understanding of all racism as interdependent and connected. Consequently, it is not possible to address one form of racism by solidifying others.

**Yet, our study found that CIJA frequently defines antisemitism in a way that relies on harmful depictions, assumptions, and characterizations of Palestinian people while simultaneously homogenizing Jewish people and erasing non-/anti-Zionist Jewish voices.<sup>20</sup>**

We found CIJA's public statements about Jewish people themselves to be antisemitic, including: claims that there is a singularity of Jewish opinion on issues such as Zionism and the relationship between Jewish people and the state of Israel; the repetition of a dual loyalty trope (that Jewish people owe special loyalty to Israel); and statements that Jewish identity is inextricably linked to Zionism.<sup>21</sup> On a broader scale, these narratives, made in support of Israel's genocidal campaign, imply that genocidal violence against Palestinians constitutes an *essential part of Jewish identity*, and frame genocide as necessary for Jewish survival.<sup>22</sup>

Critically, our study found that CIJA's public statements culminate in denying the genocide of Palestinians and the decimation of Palestine. Read collectively, CIJA's claims justify or minimize the mass killing and maiming of Palestinians as nothing more than a measured, proportionate, and necessary response to Hamas' political violence; CIJA conflates all Palestinians with the political violence Hamas commits, which then associates all Palestinians with "terrorism" and operates to justify genocide against an entire people.<sup>23</sup>

This is particularly alarming, since our findings have also uncovered disturbing historic and ongoing claims made by CIJA to be a sole representative of Canadian Jewish voices. CIJA explicitly identifies itself as "*the official, representative organizational voice of the Jewish community*"

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15 As noted in the ACLA report on anti-Palestinian racism, we recognize that Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism are often interrelated. The choice to focus on anti-Palestinian racism should be understood to include the ways that Islamophobia is often levied against Palestinians and comprises a critical component of anti-Palestinian racism.

16 Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford University Press, June, 2003); Anidjar, "Muslim Jews," *Qui Parle* 18, no. 1 (2009): 1–23; Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford University Press, October, 2007); Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (University of California Press, October, 2010), 141–64; Talal Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason* (Columbia University Press, December, 2018).

17 Anti-Arab racism often converges with Islamophobia but it has been, and often is, directed at Christians, Jews, and other people who identify or are perceived or identified by others as Arab.

18 Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*; Anidjar, "Muslim Jews,,"; Anidjar, *Semites*.

19 David M. Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims: How Christians Imagined Islam as the Enemy* (University of California Press, January, 2023). See also, Mo Pareles and Braden Russell, "Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Racism: A Long View" (2025), forthcoming in *Religion Compass*; draft on file with the authors of this report.

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20 Judith Butler, in Jewish Voice for Peace, *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice* (Haymarket Books, April, 2017), ix.

21 Itamar Mann and Lihi Yona, "Defending Jews from the Definition of Antisemitism," *UCLA Law Review* 71 (2024): 1150.

22 The ways in which pro-Israel lobby groups attempt to shape Jewish identity towards Zionism and in this current moment, as in favour of genocide, is part of the ongoing PhD research of Jillian Rogin, one of the authors of this report.

23 The label of terrorism has enabled state sponsored "counter-terrorism" initiatives that target racialized people and in particular, Arab and Muslim people for surveillance, detention, deportation, and other gross infringements of civil liberties and the term itself ought to be reconsidered. See for example: Reem Bahdi and Fahad Ahmad, "Why charging incels with terrorism may make matters worse" *The Conversation Canada*, June 16, 2020. See also Zine, *The Canadian Islamophobia Industry*.

of Canada.”<sup>24</sup> It further claims to be “the community’s primary vehicle for Jewish community advocacy efforts, helping to improve the quality of Jewish life in Canada and strengthen the Canada-Israel relationship.”

And yet, not a single person within CIJA has ever been elected to represent Jewish people. Rather, CIJA is an advocacy agency that works on behalf of Jewish Federations of Canada - United Israel Appeal. Jewish people who opt to be members of various Jewish institutions, such as Jewish community centres in Canada that are affiliated with Jewish federations, may not even be aware that they are represented by CIJA’s advocacy, or that a portion of their membership dues to JFCs is allocated to CIJA.<sup>25</sup>

Since CIJA does not have formal membership, its claims to represent Jewish people or communities in Canada is gravely undermined. Further, we have serious additional concerns with CIJA’s claims to represent Jewish people in Canada, since the organization fails to account for organized Jewish *opposition* to CIJA’s political positions.<sup>26</sup>

In summation, analysis of our data reveals:

- 01. CIJA promotes anti-Palestinian racism through the idea that unrestricted violence against Palestinians is necessary for Jewish safety.**
- 02. CIJA promotes anti-Palestinian racism through a false narrative linking the movement for Palestinian rights and the rise of antisemitism in Canada.**
- 03. CIJA engages in antisemitism by defining Jewish identity as Zionist and anti-Palestinian through its persistent exclusion of large segments of Jewish people and voices from a singularly presented “Jewish community.”**
- 04. CIJA’s advocacy for the erosion of free speech,**

**academic freedom, and increased securitization and criminalization is used to silence criticism of Israel and the genocide of Palestinians.**

Due to the prevalence of racism in CIJA’s public statements, which operates to justify genocide, we recommend the following:

- ☐ **Given the evidence of CIJA’s racism, we recommend that educational institutions, governments, and other organizations do not invite CIJA to do antisemitism training and talks, or to give evidence or to consult on antisemitism;**
- ☐ **Journalists should exercise caution before asking CIJA to speak on issues relating to antisemitism, Israel and Palestine, and issues relating to Jewish people in Canada;**
- ☐ **The general public should exercise caution, avoiding reliance on, or trusting information arising from CIJA as a representative voice of Jewish people in Canada;**
- ☐ **Law and policy makers, and law enforcement officers, should decline to engage CIJA on issues related to antisemitism, Israel and Palestine, and issues relating to Jewish people in Canada;**
- ☐ **No public funding should be allocated to CIJA to undertake antiracist work including antisemitism training.**

Perhaps it is unsurprising that CIJA’s framing of the situation ultimately endorses Israeli state violence against Palestinians. The strengthening of the relationship between Canada and Israel is one of CIJA’s stated priorities. What is surprising and worthy of interrogation is the way that institutions in Canada, including government, law enforcement, media, school boards, and universities have remained responsive to CIJA. This report raises serious questions about how CIJA has manufactured consent for Israel’s human rights violations — an ongoing illegal military occupation, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and genocide — and the willingness of many institutions to collaborate in this project.

It is our hope that governments, school boards, politicians, law makers, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, and others will be able to make more informed choices about who is called upon to speak as representatives of Jewish people in Canada and to question CIJA’s allegiance to state power and ethnic nationalism.

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24 This is drawn from CIJA’s registration of the organization, as submitted to the Officer of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada, *emphasis added*.

25 CIJA, “How is CIJA Funded?”

26 For evidence of a diversity of Jewish opinion in Canada, see for example: JSpace Canada, the New Israel Fund of Canada, and Canadian Friends of Peace Now, Arguments for the Sake of Heaven: A Jewish Community Divided, December, 2024. For an example of challenges to pro-Israel lobby groups’ claims to speak on behalf of Jewish Canadians, see: Bailey Greenspon, Jonathan Sas, and Sam Hersch, “We Are Progressive Jews Who Have Been Let Down by Our Community Leaders,” *Toronto Star*, October 21, 2024.

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## THE FULL REPORT INCLUDES:

### Introduction and Background

- Why CIJA: The Reason for Focusing on a Single (Jewish) Organization
  - What is CIJA?
  - CIJA's Alignment with Israeli State Hasbara (Propaganda)
  - Defining Antisemitism
- Deflecting the Debate: CIJA's Obfuscation of allegations of racism, apartheid, and genocide in Gaza

### Data Coding and Analysis

- Methodology
- Data Analysis: CIJA's False Assertions and the Construction of a Narrative in Support of Israel's Genocide

01. Unrestricted violence against Palestinians is necessary for Jewish safety

02. The pro-Palestine movement, which supports terrorism, is responsible for a dramatic spike in antisemitism

03. The vast majority of Canadian Jews support Israel and Zionism and are opposed to the pro-Palestine movement

04. Protecting Jews and combating antisemitism requires the restriction of civil liberties of pro-Palestinian protesters

### Conclusion



Perhaps what is more shocking are the ways that all levels of government in Canada, law enforcement, educational institutions, the media, and individuals, are listening intently to CIJA's racist rhetoric and remain amenable to CIJA's interventions....

The results of this study should deeply dissuade the public, educational institutions, the media, the government, non-profit organizations, and individuals from relying on CIJA to define antisemitism, from engaging CIJA on issues related to Israel and Palestine, and from relying on CIJA to address issues relating to Jewish people in Canada. The results should also encourage people to ask questions about what investments Canadian institutions have in listening to CIJA.

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