



Jewish Faculty Network

December 5, 2023

The following statement was approved by the JFN

JEWISH FACULTY NETWORK PUBLIC LETTER IN SUPPORT OF ALLIES UNDER THREAT:

We write as Jewish faculty from universities and colleges across Canada to extend our gratitude for, and solidarity with, your statements and actions against the escalating violence and suffering taking place in Palestine/Israel. In the midst of so much grief, the vilification, threats and dismissals you have endured demonstrate how this war plays out at home.

We share the horror of the Hamas attacks on Israeli and other civilians on October 7. We have friends and family among those killed and taken hostage by Hamas. Yet we are deeply alarmed about how these traumatic events are being used to justify unprecedented repression and surveillance by university administrators, governments, and other institutions couched in false allegations of antisemitism or of supporting terrorism.

We say to administrators, governments and media: *do not weaponize our grief.* And we say to our Jewish communities: *do not weaponize your grief.*

We have long [opposed](#) the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism at our universities on the grounds that it weaponizes criticism of the State of Israel. In this we stand with the [Canadian Association of University Teachers \(CAUT\)](#), many faculty unions, and some university administrations.

As scholars and public intellectuals, we must address the meaning of colonialism, racism, apartheid, antisemitism and anti-Palestinian racism grounded in careful research and study. We need informed scholarship and vigilant protection of academic freedom in our classrooms and across our campuses. We also need spaces for students and colleagues in our institutions to conduct the most difficult public conversations. This is a central responsibility of institutions of higher learning, and at its best, this can inspire deep listening and learning across difference.



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We are no strangers to antisemitism. We do not and cannot minimize the trauma of anti-Jewish racism – both immediate and intergenerational. But we refuse an essentialist vision of Judaism and Jewish nationalism associated with the State of Israel which declares any criticism of that vision as antisemitic. Judaism cannot be equated with loyalty to the State of Israel. This equation erases generations of debate within Jewish communities and Jewish scholarship. Even among those who identify with Zionism, differences have flourished concerning religious and spiritual interpretation and national identities.

Instead of this equation, we follow a much longer history of Jewish ethics which encourages dissent and self-reflection. We recognize that Judaism and Jewish culture are practiced by a global, multi-ethnic, multiracial and otherwise diverse group of people. This vision allows us to recognize the equal worth of all who live between the river and the sea, and strives to ensure a future centered around equal rights and dignity for all.

This tradition calls us to oppose the dehumanization of Palestinians everywhere. It compels us to speak out when urgent academic and political speech regarding genocidal violence is criminalized. We reject the faulty logic that a campaign of indiscriminate violence can result in greater security. Never again means never again for all.

We draw inspiration from the demonstrations around the world led by Palestinians, Jews, and others, that refuse justification for the collective punishment of Palestinians. We raise our voices with those calling for an immediate, permanent ceasefire as well as a hostage/prisoner exchange as a first step to practicing a more just future. And we applaud our colleagues who are using their expertise and knowledge to centre a just future in our collective conversations.

Signed,

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jewishfaculty.ca