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The Jihad Next Door

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One would have anticipated a calming of the hysterical anti-Israel rhetoric and often antisemitic activities on university campuses following the scathing [Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism](#) report condemning the hate and intolerance on university campuses. The report was followed by the Ottawa Protocol on Combating Antisemitism to reinforce Canada's commitment to confront antisemitism here at home and around the world. We should all be satisfied.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather than heed the warnings of our parliamentarians and the government, it appears universities have entrenched their position, resulting in an increased assault on tolerance, justice, and human rights. The universities profess to be the guardians of free speech and, in so doing, are aiding and abetting the increasingly toxic environment on campuses by providing public space to speakers who are divisive and hateful.

Of course, we are all advocates of unfettered speech. It is one of the cornerstones of a free and democratic society. But when one group is consistently targeted by hate campaigns, something is clearly wrong.

The trend of anti-Israeli activism on campus, writes the President of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East [Dr. Richard Cravatts](#) "...has become a convenient way for antisemites to mask their true prejudice against Jews by claiming that their problem is only with the policies of Israel, not with the Jews themselves...they single out the world's only Jewish state for condemnation and hold it to a higher standard than any other nation." They do not call out for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against tyrannies like Iran, Syria, Hamas, North Korea, and others. Nor do they complain about gender apartheid, honour killings, and suicide bombers in places like Iraq and Pakistan.

Instead, they focus their hate on the one democracy in the Middle East. Let's look at some recent examples of accommodation of hate propagandists on campus:

This fall, the University of Toronto took great pains to protect Dr. Hakim Quick's right to speak on campus for 18 weeks at the invitation of the Muslim Students Association. According to [Maclean's On Campus](#), Quick's controversial comments include one about "purifying" an Islamic shrine from the "filth of Christians and Jews." According to the same article, he described homosexuals as "one of the most dangerous groups coming to the surface." The university was well aware of Quick's controversial beliefs, having acknowledged the public pressure that led him to "publicly distance himself from some of his earlier offensive commentary." In giving its blessing for him to speak, the administration was not only insensitive to the concerns of groups Quick had targeted in the past, but complicit in giving a platform to hatred.

Another instance was the January 2012 tour de hate by Norman Finkelstein. A disciple of disgraced Neo-Nazi and Holocaust denier David Irving, Finkelstein recently spoke at five Canadian universities, including York -- a hotbed of antisemitism over the years. Among Finkelstein's horrific assertions he says, "Given the nonsense churned out daily by the Holocaust industry, the wonder is that there are so few sceptics." York University's reaction to the protests against his visit was standard university operating procedure -- defence of free speech, open debate, and not wanting to take "political positions." Sadly-- but not unexpectedly -- the university administration provided little sensitivity, compassion or leadership against this hatemonger, not dissimilar to its support of the visit by Hezbollah supporter George Galloway in 2010.

On January 25th, University of Western Ontario faculty member David Heap spoke on his home campus about his participation helping Hamas on the "Canadian" flotilla. As Jonathan Kay of the *National Post* eloquently put it, upon Heap's return, "Heap and his friends set their compass for a confrontation with the Israeli Defense Forces, the most humane and professional military in the Middle East. And their only real punishment for trying to bring material goods to a terrorist-controlled regime in Gaza is to spend a few days in climate-controlled, Internet-equipped Israeli jails complaining about their ordeal to journalist pals back home".

The very next day, an organization calling itself "The Coalition to Stop the War" sponsored a talk at McMaster University by a rabidly anti-Israel speaker named [Zafar Bangash](#). Despite repeatedly issuing calls for the '[liberation of Palestine](#)' and advising Israelis to 'go back where they came from,' McMaster asserted the presentation by Bangash would be respectful. However, his words were clearly hateful, inflammatory, and laced with veiled threats against Jews; Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center has turned the matter over to the police and is evaluating liability options against the university.

And on it goes. In February, a University of Toronto professor who has in the past brought anti-Israel speakers to campus will himself take the opportunity to speak in

support of those who would destroy Israel, while Simon Fraser University in Vancouver is importing their anti-Israel rhetoric via a feminist speaker from Syracuse University in New York. A pro-Palestinian Norwegian doctor is currently on a four-university Israel-bashing tour, and a slick video just posted on YouTube by the "Students Against Israeli Apartheid" at Carleton university labels (and falsely libels) Israel an "apartheid state" and encourages other students to join them in an Israel divestment campaign of Carleton's pension fund.

It's time to admit the truth of what is happening across the country: The hate is rapidly proliferating. These speakers and those who support and fund them are the tip of the iceberg of the antisemitism and intolerance toward Israel and the Jewish community which is being sown on Canadian university campuses and beyond. The obsessive pattern of abuse of speech and the marginalization and discrimination of a targeted minority group -- Jews -- is heavily defended by universities under the banner of "free speech." The Jihad next door has become intolerable and unacceptable. The organized pattern of hate and intolerance on university campuses has risen to epidemic proportions and, left unchecked, will continue to grow.

Despite our best efforts to respond to this trend by offering alternative presentations with a different, more inclusive message (and we will continue to do so despite what I am about to say), and the heroic efforts of students and community leaders, it is no longer sufficient to simply counter events with ever more events on campuses. Events diminish the university's responsibility by creating a false perception of a balance of opinion -- which the university seeks to justify inaction. Jewish communities should not have to suffer double-victimization by having to prove Israel is not an apartheid state and that the infamous ancient antisemitic libels against the Jewish people are not true. Neither truth nor logic is a match for deep-seated ideologies.

In recent months, it appears universities have undertaken an aggressive posture; it is surely no coincidence that divisive speakers continue to enjoy an open-door policy, with no fear of being called out for spouting even the most outrageous accusations and lies. This will ultimately be a costly position for all Canadians because, as history demonstrates time and again, bullies are never content to stop at the weakest kid in the schoolyard.