



'Anti-Semitic hate rally' shouldn't be allowed on Ontario legislature grounds: Jewish groups

Sarah Boesveld Jul 31, 2012 – 2:54 PM ET | Last Updated: Jul 31, 2012 4:22 PM ET

Canadian Jewish groups are urging the Ontario government to stop an “anti-Semitic hate rally” from taking place on the steps of the legislature next month, saying it’s highly inappropriate for the Shia Muslim organized event to be held on public land.

At last year’s Al-Quds Day, speakers likened Israel to a cancer, waved yellow Hezbollah flags and hoisted images of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian leader of the Islamic Revolution who started the day in 1979 to mark the last Friday of Ramadan.

This year, the “International Day of Al-Quds” say they will gather to “express solidarity with all the oppressed of the world” and to “particularly remember the innocent civilians of Palestine who have been, and continue to be victimized by the oppressive and racist Zionist regime.”

Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, [sent a letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty](#) Monday, asking that the government take “every step possible” to prevent the Al-Quds Day organizers from getting a permit allowing them to protest at Queen’s Park on August 18th.

“Ontarians were shocked and embarrassed that a blatantly anti-Semitic event was held at the seat of the provincial government,” Mr. Benlolo wrote, pointing specifically to remarks made by Iranian activist Zafar Bangash at last year’s rally. “At last year’s event, Mr. Bangash called for a Jihad against Jerusalem, whereby

Islamic Law would be imposed upon Israel; he was in fact captured on video at the rally shouting, 'Inshallah I see that day when we, the Muslims, will march on Palestine and liberate Palestine...under Islamic law.' There is every reason to believe this year's event would feature similar messages of hate," Mr. Benlolo wrote.

In an interview with the *Post* from London, England Tuesday, Mr. Benlolo said Queen's Park is not a "platform to espouse their hate."

"They can do it in a basement or in another institution. Why bring it to the government? It's only because they want to gain legitimacy."

Last year, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs videotaped the annual Al-Quds day event at Queen's Park (it couldn't confirm how many events had been held there in the past) to take "evidence" of hate-mongering, media spokesperson Steve McDonald said.

Last month, CIJA shared video footage and their concerns about the event with Ontario's Sergeant-At-Arms at Queen's Park, who approves applications for events held on the grounds of the legislature. They've learned their concerns were received, but haven't yet heard whether the Al-Quds application has been approved or denied.

"We don't see this as a police issue, we see this as an issue for Queen's Park to manage the use of the legislature's grounds in an appropriate way and to prevent those grounds from being abused as a platform for hate," Mr. McDonald said. "More importantly, perhaps, [we want to] allow for the Canadian public to see for themselves the sort of radicalism that's being imported to our country by a very small segment of Canadian society."

The Ontario legislature's Sergeant-At-Arms Dennis Clark said they are "engaged in this application" process with the Al-Quds event organizers but would not elaborate further.

"An application comes through us, we take a look at it and then our investigative unit meet with the organizers and go over that they're subject to the rules on the grounds," he said, when asked what the general parameters for an application would be. The Sergeant-At-Arms also works with Toronto Police to ensure protests and events at Queen's Park are carried out in a lawful manner, he added. The ['Free Al-Quds' website](#) says the international event will be held this year in Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, plus London, England and

12 U.S. cities. An email asking to speak with Toronto's Al-Quds organizers went unanswered Tuesday.

The Jewish Defence League of Canada [has planned a counter-protest](#) for 2-4 p.m. on August 18 — exactly when the Al-Quds event is launched at Queen's Park. They plan to march down to the US Consulate on University Avenue.