

Anti-Palestinian Racism in Canada:

CJPME's 2022 Report



**CANADIANS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

December 2023

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)

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www.cjpme.org

Table of Contents

Contents

Executive Summary	1
The need for a report on anti-Palestinian racism	3
Why the need to combat APR is more urgent than ever	4
State-sponsored APR: The IHRA definition of antisemitism	5
The crisis of racism in Canada: APR in context.....	6
The emergence of the ACLA description of anti-Palestinian racism	10
Methodology	12
Challenges to gathering data on APR	12
Identifying concrete and verifiable sources of APR	13
Development of the APR analysis framework	14
Examples of APR from the 2022 data.....	17
Silencing	17
Excluding	17
Erasing.....	19
Stereotyping	19
Defaming.....	20
Dehumanizing.....	21
Nakba denial.....	22
Justifying violence.....	22
Failing to acknowledge indigeneity.....	23
Erasing human rights.....	24
Pressuring to exclude	25
Defaming as antisemitic	26
Defaming as terrorist threat or sympathizer	27
Defaming as opposed to democratic principles	27
Trends in the 2022 APR data	29
Total examples in the dataset.....	29
Total examples related to antisemitism smears	29

Other most prominent manifestations of APR.....	30
Worst APR offenders.....	32
Interesting findings vis-à-vis media organizations	33
Interesting findings with non-profits.....	33
Recommendations	34
Incorporate APR into EDI frameworks.....	34
Don't adopt a definition of antisemitism which promotes APR.....	34
Introduce programs to educate the public about APR	35
Ensure that schools do not provide a conduit for APR	36
Guidelines for Canadian media	37
Recommendations for Palestine solidarity activists.....	39
Notes.....	41

Executive Summary

Anti-Palestinian racism (APR) is a widespread problem in Canadian society which goes almost entirely unrecognized and unaddressed. A non-exhaustive study of APR in Canada in 2022 by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) identified 507 examples of this form of racism in online written content. The vast majority of these examples of APR came from non-profit organizations (67 percent), followed by right-leaning media organizations (33 percent).

CJPME identified examples of APR based on the description published in May 2022 by the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, in a report entitled, “Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations.” These examples were drawn exclusively from online written content from 2022 from institutional Canadian sources known to be frequent purveyors of APR. The study deliberately excluded examples from social media, religious organizations, and various other sources. As such, it is necessarily limited in scope. This indicates that the problem of APR is likely much more serious than indicated here.

While APR can take many different forms, 354 of the examples of APR (70 percent) identified in the study included defamatory slander of Palestinians as being either 1) antisemitic, 2) terrorist sympathizers, or 3) anti-democratic. Of these three, slander of Palestinians as antisemitic was the most common subtype of APR at 293 examples (58 percent), followed by terrorist-sympathizer (118 examples, 23 percent) and anti-democratic (29 examples, 6 percent).

Of the examples in which Palestinians were slandered as antisemitic, it was most common for this to be justified based on their 1) criticism of Israel, 2) being ‘anti-Israel’, or 3) being anti-Zionist. These results suggest that the conflation of antisemitism with criticism of Israel is a driving force behind APR. Definitions of antisemitism which engender this conflation, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition (IHRA), should be recognized as purveyors of APR.

This report recommends that governments, companies and other institutions move quickly to adopt measures to incorporate APR in their equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) frameworks. The report also recommends that governments and institutions avoid adopting (and roll back the adoption of) any definition of antisemitism which itself promulgates APR (including IHRA). It is also recommended that governments incorporate APR into their anti-racist public awareness programs targeting not only the general public, but also law enforcement and other critical professions.

This report also recommends that Canadian media give special attention to their reporting on Israel-Palestine, as poor reporting can often be a source of APR, and also contribute to the popularity of racist ideas about Palestinians among readers. The report’s recommendations provide guidelines for how media can counter APR and be more inclusive of Palestinian perspectives – e.g. providing greater historic context in coverage of Palestine-Israel.

The report advises Palestinians and their supporters to highlight the problem of APR in Canada, and to oppose it vigorously.

While this particular study was focused exclusively on examples from 2022, the report notes that there has been a huge uptick of incidents of APR in Canada since Oct. 7, 2023. Among other things, many people in Canada have been warned, suspended, investigated or fired by their employers or academic institutions due to the expression of their views on Palestine. CJPME plans to undertake a report on the problem of APR in Canada each year, and expects that its 2023 report will highlight the growing and devastating impact of APR on Canadian society.

The need for a report on anti-Palestinian racism

For decades, Palestinians in Canada and elsewhere in the diaspora have faced a form of racism tied to their very existence. In the West, for a Palestinian, sometimes simply stating their place of origin can trigger a heated political or religious debate. Palestinians in the West have always been sensitive to the fact that openly discussing their background could have significant negative repercussions in their workplace or community. This is one aspect of a phenomenon which is increasingly named as “Anti-Palestinian Racism” (APR).

APR also prevents open discussion on Palestinian rights because it positions Palestine solidarity as something that is socially unacceptable.¹ People may be reluctant to participate in Palestine solidarity events, for example, due to the fear of negative repercussions for such involvement. This fear of retribution contributes to the marginalization of Palestinian narratives by discouraging people from speaking out in defence of Palestinian rights.²

Another major impact of APR is the harm and trauma caused by the targeting of the Palestinian racial identity. For Palestinians, social disapproval in the West intensifies the anxiety of being Palestinian and – as described above – can lead Palestinians to hide their identity for fear of persecution.³ This can result in isolation, depression and other mental health issues.⁴

Palestinians in the West haven't had the luxury to think about the inherent racism they face. As a largely immigrant community, they've been focused on establishing their citizenship and place in society and ensuring the well-being and prosperity of their families. This is essential for a people whose status is often precarious, whether because they are officially refugees, because they are officially stateless, or because their status may be tentative or temporary in a foreign country. Because of this, Palestinians in the West are often resigned to the fact that others will try to deny their stories, their culture and their heritage.

As such, it is no surprise that it is only recently that Palestinian civil society and scholars have begun to formalize an understanding of the racism faced by Palestinians. A key step in this process was the publication of a report in May, 2022 by the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA) entitled, *Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing, and Manifestations*.⁵ The ACLA's report represented a years-long effort – in consultation with dozens of civil society organizations and experts – to characterize the type of racism that Palestinians face. The ACLA's description of APR enables Palestinians and their advocates to more easily identify the unjust, dehumanizing, exclusionary and discriminatory experiences they may encounter, as well as validate the harm caused by it.⁶ While the focus of the ACLA report's analysis was Canada, the resulting description of anti-Palestinian racism (APR) would likely describe the challenges facing any Palestinian diaspora community in the West.

The ACLA's description was intended to address the censorship and personal harm caused by APR, not to prevent discussions on Palestine-Israel by shutting down pro-Israel speech.⁷ The ACLA's description provided a framework Palestinians and their allies can use to address incidents of APR, enabling more productive discussions on the issue of Palestine-Israel, and

averting attacks on the image and heritage of those involved.⁸ With the ACLA description of APR in hand, the Palestine Solidarity movement is tasked with finding concrete ways to spread awareness about the problem of APR and find ways to combat it. There has also clearly been a need to make the problem of APR more apparent to Western society as a whole, and to provide concrete evidence of it. This 2022 report on Anti-Palestinian Racism in Canada is CJPME's attempt to do just that.

Why the need to combat APR is more urgent than ever

The Oct. 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel and Israel's subsequent war on Gaza have led to an explosion of incidents of APR, highlighting the urgency of the problem. Although there is increased discussion of APR in the media and public sphere, this is not a sign of better recognition and prevention; instead, it is a sign that Palestinians and their allies in Canada face even greater repression and threats to their civil liberties than ever before. To give a few examples of APR witnessed in recent weeks:

- Although there is no official statistic, since October 7, many people in Canada have been warned, suspended, investigated or fired by their employers due to the expression of their views on Palestine. *The Maple* published an article highlighting a sampling of cases that included educators, physicians, pilots, journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, and restaurant staff.⁹
- People in Canada have been assaulted for wearing a keffiyeh,¹⁰ threatened with violence for putting up posters about Palestinian children,¹¹ and verbally abused for displaying a Palestine flag on their car.¹² Relatedly, incidents of Islamophobia have also skyrocketed since Oct 7, with Muslim Canadians targeted in a record number of attacks.¹³
- There has been a widespread demonization of pro-Palestine demonstrations, which Ontario Premier Doug Ford referred to as “hate rallies.”¹⁴ Those who participate in demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinians have faced calls that they be charged for supporting terrorism and/or be deported,¹⁵ been defamed in racist political cartoons which claim they support “killing Jews,”¹⁶ and have been referred to as “Tide Pod Taliban” by radio personalities.¹⁷
- In Calgary, a protestor organizer was arrested and charged with a hate-motivated crime for using the popular chant, “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” This is a simple call for freedom which has been grossly re-interpreted by critics as a call for violence. The charges were later stayed.¹⁸
- Horrifying acts of violence against Palestinians in the United States also affect the atmosphere in Canada. In Michigan, a 6-year-old Palestinian boy was stabbed to death by a man confronting him and his mother “about what was going on in the Middle East.”¹⁹ In Vermont, three Palestinian university students wearing keffiyehs and speaking Arabic were shot and injured while walking near the university.²⁰

This dangerous escalation in APR, alongside a concurrent rise in Islamophobia, has created an unsafe environment for Palestinians in Canada which is described by experts as “much worse

than what we saw in the aftermath of 9/11.”²¹ While the spike in such incidents is associated with Israel’s war on Gaza, this report will demonstrate that APR is a widespread and prevalent problem even in “quiet” times.

State-sponsored APR: The IHRA definition of antisemitism

One of the most significant mechanisms of APR today is the controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism (“IHRA”). Pro-Israel organizations around the world have been pushing governments, institutions, and companies to adopt this definition, which threatens to suppress Palestinian perspectives. In Canada, IHRA has been adopted by the federal government as part of its federal anti-racism strategy, and by provincial governments including Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Alberta.

Critics have long warned that IHRA conflates antisemitism with criticism of Israel, and for that reason, it is seen by many as a threat to political expression about Israel, including forms of activism in support of Palestinian rights.²² This is because several of the examples listed on the IHRA website refer to criticism of the State of Israel and Zionism, rather than racism and discrimination against Jews as a group. For example, one of IHRA’s examples of antisemitism is “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.” However, Israel has many policies and practices against the Palestinians which can be accurately described as racist, and which have been identified as “apartheid” by Palestinians and leading human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.²³ Many supporters of IHRA wish to use this definition in a way that labels these human rights groups as antisemitic and therefore shut down their criticism.²⁴ There are many documented cases in North America and Europe where IHRA was invoked in order to shut down political expression about Israel and Palestine.²⁵

For this reason, IHRA is opposed by a wide range of Canadian civil society groups including Independent Jewish Voices Canada, the BC Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Federation of Students, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Confédération des syndicats nationaux, and over 40 faculty associations and academic unions.²⁶ Internationally, over 100 civil society organizations, including major international, Israeli, and Palestinian human rights groups, have asked the United Nations not to adopt the definition.²⁷

In Canada, CJPME is especially concerned about how IHRA is being implemented by government bureaucracies in a way that threatens to suppress speech. Departments are moving to require Canadian organizations to sign attestation forms in support of IHRA as a condition of receiving grant funding. This means that in order to receive government funding, Canadians of Palestinian, Arab or Muslim origin may lose their very right to discuss their own personal experiences and family histories of racism and dispossession as a result of the actions of the Israeli government. In early 2023, more than thirty Canadian civil society groups urged the Canadian government to abandon this requirement, warning that it “risks undermining the very anti-racism work the government seeks to support.”²⁸

Policies like the above which suppress Palestinian perspectives should be understood as a form of state-sponsored APR.

The crisis of racism in Canada: APR in context

In its ground-breaking 2022 report, the ACLA underlined that its analysis of anti-Palestinian racism was a product of “the exchange of knowledge, strategies, demands, and lessons between movements” that emerged thanks to multi-issue solidarity.²⁹ The trends since Oct. 7 suggest that APR is now in an upward trajectory, and cross-movement solidarity will be needed now more than ever if Palestinians and their allies are ever to see a reversal of this new tendency.

A review of historic racism in Canada is far beyond the scope of this document. Nevertheless, it is useful to highlight some key developments of the past several years which shape today’s Canadian discussions around APR. A good starting point for this contextualization would be the publication in 2015 of the final reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)³⁰ which published 94 “calls to action” to facilitate true reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples. The TRC placed the problem of racism on the Canadian policy agenda as never before, with piercing chapters like “Colonialism in the Age of Empire.”³¹ The TRC situated the problem of anti-Indigenous racism in a multi-issue context and propelled calls for an anti-racist transformation of Canadian society.

In addition to the inherent importance of the TRC on anti-racist discourse in Canada, it is also important to point out how the struggles of the Palestinian people are being recognized by Indigenous people as being not dissimilar to their own struggles. A petition signed by 132 Indigenous activists, artists and intellectuals released on Oct. 27, 2023 stated, “It has been heartbreaking and unsurprising to see the colonial powers in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe line up behind [Israel’s] genocide [of Palestinians].”³² The petition also highlighted the “apartheid” and “settler-colonial” nature of Israel’s oppression of Palestinians. An excellent article in the *Toronto Star* in November, 2023 highlighted how Indigenous advocates across North America were “expressing solidarity and finding common ground with the Palestinian community.”³³ The article summarized how leading thinkers on Indigenous rights were seeing the parallels between what their peoples had gone through, and Israel’s violent colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories along with other Israeli state policies forcing Palestinians from their homes and lands.

One telling example is that of Ms. Wanda Nanibush, curator of Indigenous art at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto for seven years, and known for making the link between Indigenous peoples living in Canada and Palestinians. In a 2016 feature for *Canadian Art* magazine, entitled, “An Indigenous perspective on the contested land of Palestine,” Nanibush linked the experience of Indigenous peoples living in Canada to that of Palestinians.³⁴ Ms. Nanibush departed the AGO in November, 2023 in what was described as a “mutual decision” by the institution, apparently due to her criticism of Israel’s War on Gaza.³⁵ But news reports also made clear that the AGO had received pressure about Nanibush from pro-Israel

organizations, including the Toronto-based organization Israel Museum and Arts, Canada (IMAAC). IMAAC wrote, “We are exhausted and disgusted by [Nanibush’s] dedication to repeating that Israel is involved with genocide and colonialism.”³⁶

Beyond the affinity felt between Indigenous activists and Palestine solidarity activists, they often face the same racist forces. A multi-year study that was published in 2022 under the title, *Mapping Islamophobia’s Ecosystem in the Great White North*³⁷ described anti-Indigenous and anti-Palestinian forces within the same international hate networks.³⁸ The study was conducted by Jasmine Zine, a professor of sociology at Wilfrid Laurier University, who was inspired to study acts of far-right terrorism following the Quebec City Mosque Massacre of Jan. 29, 2017. The massacre had been a wake-up call about the online spread of hate for many researchers in Canada like Zine. In her study, Zine found that part of the backlash in Canada to Indigenous, Black, and immigrant-rights struggles was being conducted by what Zine called the “pro-Israel backlash industry.”³⁹ While Zine did not name APR as such, she traced it in practice across Canada’s far right.

Islamophobia

Even though the urgent problem of Islamophobia in Canada had been increasingly studied and debated in the period following 9/11 and the so-called ‘War of Terror,’ the Quebec City mosque attack of Jan. 29, 2017 finally put the issue of Islamophobia firmly on the Canadian radar. By coincidence, a motion from Liberal MP Iqra Khalid – Motion M-103 – had been deposited on December 5, 2016, and came up for debate in Parliament just weeks after the Quebec City attack. In parallel, a few candidates in the concurrent Conservative leadership race took highly polarizing positions on M-103. Some Conservative leadership candidates even denied that there was a specific problem of Islamophobia, despite the Quebec City attack just weeks prior.

Despite the controversy, Motion M-103 was ultimately passed, and resulted in a Parliamentary report on religious discrimination in Canada published in February of the following year. The report addressed not only Islamophobia, but other forms of religious discrimination in Canada. Like the TRC’s report, the Committee’s report made dozens of recommendations – a total of 30⁴⁰ – on how governments and civil society could address the problem of Islamophobia. Just days after the Parliamentary report was published, CJPME published the results⁴¹ of a public opinion poll conducted late in 2017, confirming the attitudes behind many of the trends reported yearly by Statistics Canada. Given the debate in February of 2017, CJPME’s survey shed light on 1) the negative attitudes toward Muslim Canadians and those perceived to be Muslims in Canada, 2) the severity of the problem of Islamophobia in Canada, and 3) the degree to which the contemporary political discourse on Muslims often misrepresented actual Canadian attitudes.

Islamophobia and APR will inevitably be confused and conflated for a number of reasons. For one, many Palestinians are Muslims, so prejudice against one identity will inevitably be confused with prejudice against the other. In addition to being a visible “other” in Western

society, the fact that Muslims are vocal against the repression of Palestinians makes them an even greater perceived threat among certain racist communities in the West. In fact, an article published by one of the Canadian purveyors of APR cited later in this report asserted that support for an independent Palestine was driven by Muslim religious ideology, at one point arguing, “Palestinianism is imbued with Islamism.”⁴²

Many Muslims – in Canada and elsewhere – take a keen interest in Palestine because many Muslim-Canadians have roots in the Middle East, and have concerns and affinities for the Palestinians. These Muslim Canadians realize how the West’s failure to address the legitimate grievances of the Palestinians has led to regional instability and excessive foreign interference. Muslims are also particularly sensitive to the injustices imposed upon the Palestinians – recognizing them as fellow Muslims – and thus feel a keen aversion to Western disregard for Palestinian life and liberation. Palestine – and Jerusalem especially – also hold a special religious significance for Muslims worldwide as they are the site of the Al Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. As such, if any community is going to suffer discrimination for its support for Palestinian rights and liberation, it will be the Muslim community.

Horrific incidents of Islamophobia have continued to occur in Canada since 2018 – a notable incident being a car-ramming attack that killed a Muslim family in London, ON in June, 2021. Such incidents finally triggered a number of constructive and concrete steps by the Trudeau government, including the codification of the definition of Islamophobia by the government, the recognition of January 29 as a day of remembrance and action against Islamophobia, and the appointment of a Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia.

Especially since the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, there is a clear sense that both Islamophobia and APR are growing in parallel in Canada. In fact, there are indications that increased Islamophobia frequently feeds into increased APR, and vice versa.⁴³

Anti-Arab Racism

In 2021, CJPME and partner organizations published the results⁴⁴ of a poll on anti-Arab racism in Canada. The sponsoring organizations had long observed that Arabs in Canada face insidious forms of systemic racism in Canada. The survey confirmed what the sponsors had long suspected about how anti-Arab racism manifests itself in Canada, including: 1) the general opposition to immigration from Arab countries, 2) the frequent racial profiling of Arabs in Canada, 3) the many barriers to the Canadian employment market for Arabs, and 4) the negative stereotypes about Arabs and Arab culture. Like with Muslims, racism against Arabs in Canada can often be tied closely to APR in Canada.

APR in relation to other forms of racism

Despite the associations mentioned above, APR is distinct from both Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. This is true even though individuals can simultaneously be the target of one or

more of these forms of discrimination. Palestinians are Arabs, so they often suffer discrimination in Canada for being Arabs, e.g. if they have an Arab-sounding name, if they have an Arab accent in English or French, if they use ethnic dress, etc. But in addition to this, they also face APR. For example, as noted above, they may be “shut down” when they talk about their family’s place of origin, or their views in support of Palestinian rights – as per the description of anti-Palestinian racism.⁴⁵

Religiously, Palestinians can be Muslim, Christian or Druze. Although a strong majority of Palestinians are Muslim, a disproportionate number of Palestinians in Canada are Christian.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, many Canadians mistakenly assume that all Palestinians are Muslim. As such, Palestinians in Canada – even the Christian and Druze ones – frequently face Islamophobia, whether because of their name, their place of origin, their cultural habits, etc. But again, Palestinians will face anti-Palestinian racism *in addition* to any racism they face because they are Muslim, or perceived as Muslim.

While Islamophobia is a malignant presence in Canada, using Islamophobia as a proxy for anti-Palestinian racism is unwise and unhelpful.⁴⁷ First, this strategy assumes that the only discrimination faced by Palestinians is Islamophobia, when of course Palestinians face additional forms of discrimination as Palestinians.⁴⁸ Second, this approach suggests that the Palestinian struggle is a global, religious-based struggle between Muslims and Jews rather than a regional Palestinian struggle against oppression and colonialism.⁴⁹ Both of these shortcomings misrepresent or ignore the destructive impacts of anti-Palestinian racism, and contribute to the broader suppression of Palestinian identity and narratives.⁵⁰

“While there many be intersections between [Islamophobia and APR],” the ACLA notes, “APR and Islamophobia are distinct conceptual categories.”⁵¹ Efforts to deny Palestinian distinctiveness and portray Palestinians as part of an amorphous Muslim (or for that matter, Arab) mass are themselves a quintessential form of Orientalist racism.⁵²

APR as backlash to Palestine advocacy

Over the past decades, there has been a huge increase in support for Palestine in Canada. The rise of the BDS movement, Israeli Apartheid Week, the May 2021 protests of support for Palestine, and now the post-Oct. 7 groundswell of support for Palestinian life and liberation, have each demonstrated the widespread popular sympathy for Palestinian grievances. Each of these reference points has pushed the Palestine solidarity movement to the forefront in highly prominent ways. At the same time, this rise in activism has been met with increased backlash. In *Mapping Islamophobia*, Zine highlighted the attack on Palestinians and their supporters as an urgent concern. “Globally,” she wrote, “countless scholars and pro-Palestinian activists have faced backlash for criticizing Israel, a situation that is exacerbated by [the] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s [IHRA’s] working definition of antisemitism which includes as antisemitic a broad range of criticism of the state of Israel, particularly targeting decolonial and anti-racist critiques.”⁵³

Independent Jewish Voices Canada came to a similar conclusion in a report co-authored by Sheryl Nestel and Rowan Gaudet, under the title *Unveiling the Chilly Climate: The Suppression of Speech on Palestine in Canada*. Nestel and Gaudet joined in raising the alarm about the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which they identified as “an unprecedented attempt to frame criticism of the State of Israel or of the political ideology of Zionism.”⁵⁴

The emergence of the ACLA description of anti-Palestinian racism

The ALCA’s initial foray in identifying the problem of APR was made in 2022, when it used the phrase *anti-Palestinian racism* in its response to a hiring scandal at the University of Toronto (UofT). As the ACLA noted, the scandal at the UofT had provoked a wider discussion of how and why Canada was “regarded as an especially hostile place for Palestinian advocacy.”⁵⁵

Following the incident at the UofT, the ACLA invited Palestine solidarity activists and movements across Canada to be involved in consultations on how APR manifests itself. Ultimately, these invitations and consultations were widely embraced by the Palestine solidarity community, and the resulting discussions highly fruitful. “There is broad agreement among those consulted,” concluded the ACLA, “for the need to name anti-Palestinian racism as a distinct form of oppression faced by Palestinians and those advocating for Palestinian rights.”⁵⁶ By April 2022, the ACLA had developed and published a solid and defensible description of anti-Palestinian racism.

The ACLA’s description of APR reads in full:

“Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives. Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including: denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians; failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine; erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians; excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies; defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values..”⁵⁷

To CJPME’s understanding, the ACLA is the first organization in the world to develop a rigorous description of APR. As such, the ACLA deserves strong recognition and thanks. Nevertheless, the onus now falls on Palestine solidarity organizations 1) to capture incidents of APR, and then 2) to pressure institutions to reject APR in all its forms. The current report – which we hope will become an annual publication – is an attempt to tackle the first challenge. The second challenge must be addressed by painstakingly working with government institutions, corporations and civil institutions to incorporate APR into their equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) frameworks.

In one positive example, early in 2023, the Peel District School Board (GTA west) acknowledged the problem of APR and the frequent conflation of APR and Islamophobia.⁵⁸ In another positive step, the NDP highlighted the problem of APR in Canada in a statement in October, 2023.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, only once these two above steps have been fully funded and addressed over the long term will Canada make progress on combatting APR.

Methodology

Challenges to gathering data on APR

For a number of reasons, CJPME knew that gathering reliable data on APR was going to be a challenge. While self-reporting of incidents is often assumed to be one of the most effective ways to gather data on such racism, it has many issues in practice.

The problems with the self-reporting of racist incidents are very common. In its report examining systemic racism and religious discrimination published in 2018, Parliament's Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage found that under-reporting was a predictable and acknowledged challenge of addressing the root causes of racism, especially among Muslim-Canadians. Witnesses from both law enforcement and civil society acknowledged the problem. One of the witnesses from civil society stated that they encountered people daily who had been victims of hate crimes, but that "they will not come out and report it, that they do not feel safe to do so, they do not feel they would be supported if they did so, and they do not feel that anything would happen if they did so."⁶⁰ Another witness to the Committee suggested that "fear of engaging with the police" was another reason preventing some of her clients from reporting.⁶¹

In a report on police-reported hate crime in 2015, Statistics Canada suggested a number of possible explanations for the underreporting of hate crimes incidents. Many of the reasons related to the fact that individuals simply aren't aware that they could, or should, report such crimes. In parallel, many victims of such crimes aren't aware that there are protections – both in the workplace and in society at large – for people who face such crimes.⁶²

The ACLA self-reporting form acknowledged these challenges, asking respondents who had not formally reported the incidents why. The possible reasons included: fear of not being believed; fear of reprisal; lack of awareness of a complaint process; concern that the complaint wouldn't be taken seriously; and lack of trust in the reporting authority.

As such, victims of APR face all of these pressures to underreport. On top of this, while many Palestinian-Canadians know that they face various forms of discrimination, many are not even aware that APR has now been codified. For example, when CJPME spoke to students about APR in 2022, many knew that they had faced various forms of discrimination for being Palestinian, but none of them were aware of the ACLA's report. Even if they consider reporting it, Palestinian-Canadians may presume that the discrimination they face may simply have been a form of Islamophobia or anti-Arab racism.

Like other marginalized immigrant communities in Canadian society, many Palestinian Canadians prefer to "stay under the radar" when they face racism and discrimination, and not to cause trouble. Many are first- or second-generation immigrants trying to get established

economically, prepared to overlook racist affronts if it enables them to advance toward greater economic independence.

The Committee's study highlighted other problems with reporting hate crimes, all of which apply to the study of APR. For example, the lack of uniformity of reporting was cited, whereby different types of data are collected by multiple civil society organizations, or multiple law enforcement entities. This is certainly the case with APR, where in late 2023, there are at least three different national-level organizations⁶³ offering to collect data on discrimination faced by Palestinian Canadians. The issue of lack of uniformity of data is tied to the problem of the decentralization of the collection. The Committee heard a number of recommendations calling for the centralization of the collection of data on racist incidents. This too is a problem faced with reporting on APR.

Identifying concrete and verifiable sources of APR

Despite the lack of self-reported data, CJPME knew that incidents of APR are everywhere: hiding in plain sight. The CJPME team has long noted that many Canadian organizations consistently publish content – e.g. statements, opinion articles, “news” – which is full of APR. In fact, one could argue that some of these organizations literally exist to spread APR, ensuring that Palestinian narratives are demonized, excluded and silenced. CJPME chose to narrow the scope of its study by focusing exclusively on this type of published content.

The advantage of identifying these types of incidents of APR is that the incidents are public and permanent. That is, while a self-reported incident of APR is legitimate and horrifying, there are often limited witnesses, it is transient, and the interpretation of events may be subjective. In contrast, the documentation of online examples of APR provides a verifiable and permanent snapshot of the incident. Even if the institutional websites in question take down their racist entries, Internet tools like the WayBack machine still provide ready access to the page.

While there are literally dozens of institutional purveyors of APR, CJPME sought to focus on those institutions which were the “worst offenders,” where incidents of APR would be easy to identify and classify. CJPME quickly identified about a dozen such institutions, most of them non-profit organizations, and a few of them right-wing “media.” Apart from this core group of institutional purveyors of APR, there were a few independent purveyors of APR: e.g. right-wing columnists like Avi Benlolo, Barbara Kay, and others.

Needless to say, such an approach is far from exhaustive. However, since CJPME had very limited resources for this study of APR, it was forced to rigorously contain its scope in order to ensure a manageable study. Since the data collection includes only institutional online incidents, it necessarily excludes many other valid and observable forms of APR, both online and in-person.

In terms of defining the report’s scope, the following rules were therefore applied in identifying and classifying online examples of APR for the study:

- **Scope limited to written-only online content.**
 - **Online content only.** The first implication of this scope decision was the exclusion of ad hoc examples of APR (e.g. The London school board's decision to use the example of a "Free Palestine" t-shirt as an example of clothing which might "incite violence"⁶⁴), and focusing exclusively on online examples of APR.
 - **Written content only.** For both media and non-profit purveyors of APR, a decision was made to assess only written content for APR. Any broadcast – audio or visual – was excluded from the analysis. Exceptions were made only for video content directly amplifying written incidents of APR, as in the case of the slander against Archbishop Desmond Tutu cited in this report as an example of defamation.
- **Scope limited to verified Canadian-only online content.** Some online content and entities are non-specific in their geographic scope and targeting. A decision was made early on to include only content which could be specifically tied to a Canadian entity (media, non-profit, etc.) targeting a Canadian audience.
- **Scope limited to institutional content.** There are many purveyors of APR in Canadian society, but many do so outside the framework of any institution. CJPME wanted its analysis to focus on institutional sources of APR, given that institutional sources could be more readily held to account, and that the institutional sources would be more limited in number. (Realistically, individual purveyors of APR are so numerous that it would be impossible to document them).
- **Scope excludes social media content.** Related to the above point, CJPME considered it a futile exercise to try to document APR in social media. First, at the institutional level, much of the APR on social media would mirror the APR identified on the institution's websites. And second, trying to document the potentially millions of social media posts, comments, stories, tweets, etc. would be an impossible task.
- **Scope excludes content from "religious" organizations.** While there are a number of Canadian evangelical Christian organizations which clearly reflect attitudes of APR, these attitudes are often conflated with religious text and interpretation. In practice, trying to parse out what are citations from racist religious scripture, vs. what are modern-day racist attitudes often becomes more arduous than it's worth.

As such, this report only captures a small fraction of the APR that is present across Canadian society.

Development of the APR analysis framework

Once it was clear that it would be easy to identify large numbers of incidents of APR, the next step was to determine the best way to classify the various examples of APR. Naturally, CJPME looked to the ACLA description of APR for such a framework. While the ACLA's APR description is introduced in paragraph form, it is actually a "laundry list" of many different ways in which

APR is manifested in society. As such, CJPME decided to parse the ACLA definition into a type of classification grid, as shown in the table below.

After reviewing the classification grid, and trying to apply it to online examples, three enhancements/clarifications were introduced into the analysis.

1. **Disambiguation of “defamation.”** First, CJPME realized that the issue of “defamation” appeared twice in the classification, first in APR type #5, and second in APR type #12. To remove ambiguity in the analysis, it was decided that type #5 (“defaming” generally) would be applied in cases of non-specific defamation against Palestinians as a group or class, and that type #12 (“defaming [...] with slander”) would be applied to distinct forms of slander, whether against specific Palestinians/allies, or for specific alleged incidents.
2. **Sub-classing of “defaming with slander.”** Next, for APR type #12, it was deemed useful to break “defaming [...] with slander” into three subcategories as suggested by the ACLA definition: a) slander as “inherently antisemitic,” b) slander as a “terrorist threat/sympathizer” and c) slander as “opposed to democratic values.” This decision was made because each type of slander was distinct, and would arise in highly varied circumstances. It was felt that providing this type of granularity would be useful.
3. **Sub-classing of antisemitic slander.** Finally, for type #12A, as the classification model was applied to online incidents of APR, CJPME realized that there were many justifications for which Palestinians and their allies were accused of being “inherently antisemitic.” For example, it could be because Palestinians/allies had criticized Israel, criticized Zionism, hosted Israeli Apartheid Week events, supported the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel, etc. And in some cases, Palestinians/allies were criticized as inherently antisemitic without any reason given. Therefore, item #12A of the model was eventually expanded to include 11 different subtypes.

Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that
1. silences [Palestinians or their narratives],
2. excludes [Palestinians or their narratives],
3. erases [Palestinians or their narratives],
4. stereotypes [Palestinians or their narratives],
5. defames [Palestinians or their narratives] or
6. dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives.
Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including:
7. denying the Nakba and
8. justifying violence against Palestinians;
9. failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine;
10. erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians;

11. excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies;
12. defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being
A. inherently antisemitic,
1. <i>[no reason provided]</i>
2. [for criticizing Israel], i.e. the criticism is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
3. [for being “anti-Israel”], i.e. the “anti-Israel” view is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
4. [for applying standards of behaviour on Israel], i.e. applying standards (“double-standards”) of behaviour on Israel is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
5. [for being anti-Zionist], i.e. the anti-Zionist position is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
6. [for “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination”], i.e. any objection to Israel as a “Jewish state” is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
7. [for associating Israel with apartheid], i.e. associating Israel with apartheid is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
8. [for supporting BDS], i.e. support for BDS is framed as <u>inherently antisemitic</u>
9. [for associating Israel with colonialism]
10. [for associating Israel with occupation]
11. <i>[other]</i>
B. a terrorist threat/sympathizer or
C. opposed to democratic values.

While the above model was deemed the best possible framework by which to classify online incidents of APR, it was by no means perfect. As with any such model to assess racism, there is an unavoidable element of subjectivity. Especially as the model gets quite granular, it would be possible to have differences of opinion as to which type of APR had been observed. For example, it would easy to disagree as to whether an article were “silencing” Palestinian narratives, or “erasing” Palestinian narratives, or doing both.

In practice, under the model, most online incidents of APR exhibited multiple forms of APR. That is, most online incidents were so sloppy and “over the top” in their contempt for Palestinians and their narratives that several forms of APR were easily identified. As a result, most articles classified under the model have multiple APR boxes checked.

Examples of APR from the 2022 data

Silencing

A main function of APR is to silence Palestinians. Canadian examples range from support for attacks on Palestinian journalists to institutional pressure to shut Palestinian voices down.

One notorious Canadian purveyor of APR, a website called TheJ.ca, suggested that fatal violence is justified to silence Palestinian journalists. After prominent Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu-Akleh was killed by the Israeli Army in May, 2022, TheJ.ca suggested that Abu-Akleh deserved it.

TheJ.ca published a photo of Abu-Akleh's dead body with text dismissing any regret that she had been killed and her voice violently silenced. The killing of Abu-Akleh was not "unfortunate" or "regrettable," TheJ.ca declared: it was "the death of [an] antisemitic journalist."⁶⁵ In fact, TheJ.ca berated Israeli politicians who had expressed regret at the killing, and continued saying, "So I'll ask out loud what many of us are thinking: Is sadness really the appropriate Jewish response in this instance? Is Akleh's demise truly 'tragic'?"

Where it does not involve support for outright violence, APR still works to shut down Palestinian voices through defamation, slander, and institutional pressure. Any space that opens for Palestinians is open to APR attack. In October, 2023, the *Toronto Sun* targeted the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) for alleged "political indoctrination" on the grounds that schools in Canada's largest city had launched an initiative to discuss Palestinian experiences of APR "through the lens of 'anti-racism' and 'anti-oppression.'"⁶⁶

Purveyors of APR also seek to silence efforts to expose anti-Palestinian racism in Canada. Two major Canadian purveyors of APR – the newspaper *The National Post* and the organization B'nai Brith Canada – thus attacked the academic funding of a Canadian university researcher, Jasmin Zine, who addressed the issue of anti-Palestinian racism in her research on Islamophobia. The *National Post* demanded an end to such research – "Shut it down," wrote columnist Barbara Kay – and attacked Zine's report on Islamophobia in Canada as a "fatwa-lite document."⁶⁷ B'nai Brith attacked Zine's record as "antisemitic" and called for an end to financing for her research, a grave breach of the independence and integrity of academic research funding in Canada.⁶⁸

Examples of silencing through defamation, slander, and institutional pressure are cross-listed later in this report, since they operate through other forms of APR (e.g., the defamation of Palestinians as inherently antisemitic, or inherently terroristic, or otherwise unworthy of being heard).

Excluding

APR aims to shove aside or shut down Palestinian narratives by all available means. It attacks Palestinians as inherently bigoted, ignorant, and unworthy of attention. APR targets even the

Palestinian *reality of being Palestinian* for exclusion from Canada. For example, TheJ.ca suggests that Palestinian narratives are entirely fabricated and ahistorical, arguing: “The Arabs, who later named themselves ‘Palestinians,’ antisemites and one-sided critics of Israel have little interest, if at all, in historical facts and nothing can penetrate their veil of elected ignorance.”⁶⁹

The exclusion of Palestinian narratives is often attempted with the assertion that Palestine/Israel belongs to Jewish people and to Jewish people alone. The 2022 Amnesty International report documenting Israel’s system of “apartheid” against Palestinians was thus a foil for a lot of Canadian APR. The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), for example, dismissed Amnesty’s report because doing so “ignores the right of Jews to their ancestral homeland, where they have lived for thousands of years.”⁷⁰ The implication was that Palestinian human rights were irrelevant because Israeli domination and repression were necessary and justified. CIJA’s arguments emphasizing an over-riding “right of Jews to their ancestral homeland” is a typical argument of such groups, and is often used to exclude Palestinian experiences of discrimination.

Even factually undeniable Palestinian claims are attacked in this way. For example, 2022 saw a continuation of Israeli raids on Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa Mosque. Truthful Palestinian reports about these raids were challenged by purveyors of APR as inherently racist fictions, and even “blood libels.” For example, Honest Reporting Canada (HRC) argued that accurately describing the forceful actions of Israeli security forces in and around the Al-Aqsa mosque was “a modern blood libel that has the potential to fan the flames of antisemitism against Canada’s 400,000 Jews.”⁷¹ Nevertheless, Canadian media and civil society organizations were simply describing what was literally filmed and reported at the mosque.

Purveyors of APR are experts at leveraging hostile disinformation to undermine Palestinian reports of Israeli aggression in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem. For example, TheJ.ca talked dismissively of what it considered the “‘Al-Aksa is in danger’ libel,” despite the fact that Israeli forces had literally entered the Al-Aqsa compound.⁷² In his crusade to stamp out Palestinian perspectives, Fegelman of HRC demanded that Canadian newspapers *de facto* endorse Israel’s annexation of Palestinian land and heritage. For example, although the Al-Aqsa Mosque is located in occupied Palestinian territory, not Israel, Fegelman writes, “Al Aqsa Mosque [i]s one of Israel’s holiest sites.” In doing so, Fegelman suggests that a Palestinian narrative of invasion or intrusion “inside one of Israel’s holiest sites” is pure fiction, and should be purged from news coverage.⁷³ Blind support for Israel’s occupation of Palestine seems to drive these attempts to literally deny facts occurring on the ground.

Racist efforts to exclude Palestinian truths from Canada can be as bizarre as they are oppressive. Wild falsehoods are imposed in the place of true Palestinian experiences. In a diatribe headlined “The Truth, And Nothing But The Truth,” the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation (CAEF) writes that “Jews come from Judea, Arabs come from Arabia, the Palestinian Arabs only usurped that name and identity in 1967 when encouraged to do so by the KGB working in cahoots with Yaser Arafat.”⁷⁴ In delegitimizing Palestinian history and

identity, CAEF is asserting that Israeli and pro-Israel stories are the only narratives worthy of inclusion in Canada.

Erasing

APR aims to erase Palestinians and to hand Palestinian land and history over exclusively to Israel. One way this works is through the misrepresentation of geography and population numbers.

Purveyors of APR are particularly energetic in their attempts to stamp out the use of the word “Palestine.” HRC campaigned to prevent any media from mentioning the very “existence of ‘Palestine,’” and the CAEF demanded the erasure of word.⁷⁵ The CAEF declared that Palestine is *as such* “a word of lies and an antisemitic campaign.”⁷⁶

For the same reason, CAEF attacked the presence in Canada of a few commercial products labelled “Made in Palestine,” campaigning to erase the word from the Canada Food Inspection Agency’s list of possible product origins. CAEF asserted that a product “cannot be produced in a country that does not exist. That is, even if the ‘Made in Palestine’ labels were supplemented with language stating, e.g., that the goods were ‘produced in an area administered by the Palestinian Authority,’ this description would *still* be false and misleading because the Canadian government does not recognize a ‘State of Palestine.’”⁷⁷ This broader drive to eliminate any references to Palestine amounts to the erasure of Palestinian narratives, history, and identity.

Many purveyors of APR suggest that “Israel” includes (or should include) more land than is internationally recognized by Israel’s pre-1967 borders – land intended for a Palestinian state. In its “Terror Wave *in Israel*” (italics added) alert which described developments in the West Bank and East Jerusalem – internationally recognized as Palestinian territory – CIJA simply “disappears” Palestine.⁷⁸

The “erasing” of Palestine and Palestinians by purveyors of APR was particularly evident following the February, 2022 publishing of Amnesty International’s report on apartheid in Israel. Many purveyors of APR consider all of historic Palestine to be geographically part of Israel, but reject the possibility of extending citizenship to Palestinians living in the West Bank. HRC – which considers “Judea and Samaria” (i.e. the West Bank) integral to modern Israel – is one such organization, yet it argues in parallel that only 21 percent of Israel’s population is Arab (i.e. only those with Israeli citizenship).⁷⁹ For these groups, the occupied territories belong to Israel but the population that lives there does not.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping Palestinians in various nefarious ways – e.g. as violent, antisemitic, etc. – is very standard practice among purveyors of APR. The *Toronto Sun* gives regular expression to anti-Palestinian stereotypes. In one April, 2022 article, the *Sun* falsely frames pro-Palestinian demonstrators in Toronto as Islamists engaged in “the cheering of civilians being fired upon

with chants of ‘Allahu Akbar.’” The same article uses the “Arab rejectionist” stereotype against Palestinians, arguing that Palestinians suffer deprivation not because of Israel’s oppression and apartheid, but because of “the desire by Palestinian leadership to continue hostilities, reject the two-state solution, and keep their people captive and impoverished.”⁸⁰

False and distorting stereotypes congeal around many themes of anti-Palestinian racism. Those Palestinians, and those allies of Palestinians, who insist on continued resistance to Israeli human rights violations are pathologized by purveyors of APR as “Arab forces that treasure their bloodlust against Jews,” in the words of the editor-in-chief of *The Suburban*, a Montreal-area newspaper notorious for its APR.⁸¹

Those in the Arab world who are willing to turn their backs on the Palestinian struggle for justice and human rights are in contrast celebrated as enlighteners and modernizers, engaged, in the words of TheJ.ca, in “a revolt against the religious extremism that the Arabs themselves exported to the rest of the Islamic world.”⁸²

As is always the case with stereotyping, fixed prejudices are used in the place of accurate depictions, and Palestinians and their allies are replaced by hostile caricatures.

Defaming

Purveyors of APR defame Palestinians, their narratives, and their allies, regardless of their targets’ integrity or moral authority. Often, purveyors of APR circulate images of Palestinians or their supporters alongside insidious attacks on their character. Archbishop Desmond Tutu – a global icon of the struggle for inclusivity and human rights for all – was attacked in this way by Canadian purveyors of APR.

Mike Fegelman of HRC defamed the Archbishop as a mouthpiece for “classical antisemitism” because he spoke out for Palestinian human rights. Soon after Tutu’s death, HRC published the defamation of Tutu with an accompanying video. The video’s visuals targeted the main South African icons of support for the Palestinian freedom struggle, showing Tutu holding hands with Nelson Mandela as representatives of the evil facing Israel.⁸³

“The Dark Anti-Israel Side of Desmond Tutu,” HRC’s video was advertised as saying, would stand “Exposed.” The HRC video, with flashes of flames and a swastika, attacked Tutu as a “bigot” because he had joined in condemning the Israeli collective punishment of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as “a gross violation of human rights.”⁸⁴ The fact that Israel *has* engaged in gross human rights violations is irrelevant to purveyors of APR, who defame all who speak accurately about the factual record.

Marty Gold, editor-in-chief of TheJ.ca, used similarly fraudulent logic to attack one of the most widely respected anti-racist writers in Canada, Desmond Cole, for “antisemitic tirades” – which had in fact been nothing but clear statements of principle on Palestine. Anti-Palestinian racism blended in this attack with TheJ.ca’s demonization of Black political self-assertion.⁸⁵ While the

html heading of TheJ.ca's attack on Desmond Cole read "Canadian nurses conference 'honoured' to host anti-Zionist," the website URL emphasized the defamation: "canadian-nurses-conference-honoured-to-host-antisemite."⁸⁶

All support for freedom for Palestine is defamed in this way. When Alexandre Boulerice of the New Democratic Party included the hashtag "#FreePalestine" in a Twitter post, CAEF defamed him for spreading "age old antisemitic lies" and "Jew hatred." It claimed the hashtag was enough: "#FreePalestine is generally a genocidal call to eradicate Israel," declared the CAEF: "It is unconscionable."⁸⁷

Dehumanizing

Animalistic imagery is sometimes used by purveyors of APR to depict Palestinians and their allies and to explain away their human outrage against Israel. *The Suburban* published an outlandish falsification of the facts that attacked all pro-Palestinian initiatives in Canada as "tentacles of the Muslim brotherhood." Palestinians feature in this metaphor as appendages of an Islamist octopus, its "tentacles" reaching into Canadian society in such forms as "the Boycott, Divest[ment] and Sanctions and Israel Apartheid Week libels."⁸⁸

TheJ.c, in its misrepresentation of the 1948 Nakba, portrayed "Arab civilians" in Jerusalem as comprising a "swarm of locusts" against which harsh action was necessary.⁸⁹

While the word "rabid" does not *only* refer to dogs, it was also used in a clearly prejudicial way by CIJA. The New Democratic Party leader, Jagmeet Singh, had responded to Israel's August 2022 bombing of Gaza with a moderate policy statement. CIJA countered that "the rabid Jew-hatred" of Palestinians is the cause of Palestinian suffering.⁹⁰

The representation of Palestinian children as a security threat to Israel, rather than as human beings, also veers towards dehumanization. Purveyors of APR downplay or deny the indisputable fact that Israel kills Palestinian children on a significant scale. What TheJ.ca dismisses as "the lies about Israelis killing Palestinian children" is backed up by the undeniable findings of the United Nations, Defence for Children International, and other reputable groups.⁹¹

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), which spends the vast majority of its budget on education and healthcare, was insidiously attacked by the so-called CAEF for "feeding and fueling" not *people* but "*the worst Jew hatred in the world.*"⁹² Palestinian children are presented as security threats systemically "taught how to kill Jews."⁹³ Canadian financing for UNRWA is attacked by TheJ.ca as support, not for refugees' basic needs, but for what the website smears as "the terror refugee industry."⁹⁴

Nakba denial

The fact that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes in historic Palestine by Israel in 1948 can no longer be credibly denied. Palestinians refer to this event as the *Nakba* (“catastrophe” in Arabic), when their lands were expropriated violently and without compensation. There is copious Palestinian and international proof of this fact, along with declassified Israeli documents recording the systematic expulsion of Palestinians.⁹⁵ Leading Israeli politicians now invoke the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 as a precedent for their own anti-Palestinian policies.⁹⁶

Unfortunately, Nakba denialism is commonplace among purveyors of APR. TheJ.ca, for example, attacked Harvard University professor Derek Penslar for describing what Israel had done in 1948 as “ethnic cleansing.” Israel never, TheJ.ca falsely claimed, pursued “forced removal of an ethnic group from a territory.”⁹⁷ In this case, TheJ.ca didn’t even make the effort to substantiate the false myth that Palestinians left their lands voluntarily.⁹⁸ Instead, it advanced this fabrication in the hope that the true facts of the Nakba could be drowned in a falsified he-said/she-said controversy. In the phrase quoted by TheJ.ca: “You say Nakba, we say you fled, let’s call the whole thing off.”⁹⁹

While CIJA and B’nai Brith Canada don’t necessarily outright deny the Nakba, they minimize and marginalize it. For example, a CIJA statement suggested that demonstrations marking the Nakba were pointless, and were simply “wasting energy,” “threatening Jews,” and “[harming] the Palestinian cause.”¹⁰⁰ For an organization dedicated to the support of Israel, it certainly makes sense for CIJA to dismiss and deny the lasting harm inflicted by the events of 1947-1949.

Justifying violence

APR often manifests itself in assertions that, while violence against Palestinians is regrettable, it is nonetheless necessary. Sometimes the justification is minimal, and sometimes the justification is purely imaginary. In May, 2022, audiences around the world were horrified when Shireen Abu-Akleh’s funeral procession was attacked by Israeli police, who were recorded on film forcefully striking Abu Akleh’s pallbearers in the legs with batons. At one point, the beating is so intense that the pallbearers actually drop the coffin. Rick Firth of HRC shamelessly justifies this brutality, writing, “Police were forced to take action to ensure the safety of everyone participating in the funeral procession and to respect the wishes of the Abu Akleh family.”¹⁰¹ The falsehoods printed in the HRC post are contradicted by an article *two days earlier* that appeared in the Times of Israel, which quotes Abu Akleh’s brother and his account of what happened.¹⁰²

Like in the Abu Akleh example above, purveyors of APR will often try to justify literal, physical violence, like the beating, shooting, and bombing of Palestinians. But APR will often also attempt to justify institutional forms of violence, e.g. the erection of walls, the closure of Palestinian neighbourhoods, the establishment of checkpoints. Often the justification for the violence is the supposed prevention of Palestinian “terror,” even though the Palestinian

“terror” threat is extremely vague or misrepresented. This is the case when Rick Firth of HRC talks in the *National Post* about the necessity of Israel’s apartheid wall. The “security barriers that Israel has in place between the ‘West Bank’, Gaza and Israel,” he writes, “have always been about one thing only: protecting the lives of all Israelis; Jews, Muslims and Christians alike, from continual Palestinian terrorist attacks.”¹⁰³ Of course, for purveyors of APR, any measure – regardless of how disruptive and oppressive it may be for Palestinians – will be justified if it provides “security” for Israelis.

Some of the worst violence against Palestinians in 2022 was ignited by the Sheikh Jarrah crisis, arising from Israel’s forced expulsion of Palestinians in Jerusalem to make way for Israeli Jewish settlers. In this context, Honest Reporting justified the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their Jerusalem homes on the grounds that, in the words of HRC, those targeted for expulsion were just “deadbeat Palestinian tenants.”¹⁰⁴ HRC justified the violence of ethnically discriminatory expulsions with the language of landlord-tenant relations.

CJIA consistently justifies Israeli military assaults. In May 2021, Israeli provocations in Jerusalem – including the Sheikh Jarrah expulsions and the raids of Al-Aqsa Mosque – prompted retaliation from Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Israel responded with military operations that injured almost two thousand Palestinians, including six hundred children, and killed 265 (of whom 63 were children).¹⁰⁵ CJIA justified this violence against Palestinians as a “self-defensive war Israel was forced to wage” and as such, suggested that the United Nations need not investigate Israel’s killing of Palestinians.¹⁰⁶

Failing to acknowledge indigeneity

When Amnesty International released its report on Israeli apartheid, Shimon Koffler Fogel, CJIA’s president and CEO, attacked the human rights group for failing to dismiss Palestinian rights in favour of “Jewish indigeneity” in Palestine.¹⁰⁷ For purveyors of APR, indigenous Palestinians are not indigenous at all – or at least, they are not so indigenous to Palestine as Israeli Jews are. Purveyors of APR assert that Jewish settlers born in North America, Europe, or elsewhere be considered “indigenous” to Palestine. They also suggest that exposing the brutalization of Palestinians by these same settlers is to violate the settlers’ indigenous rights.

This denial of Palestinian indigeneity in favour of the overriding “idea that the Jewish people have the right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland,” as Fogel phrases it, is noxious and pervasive.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes it involves directly denying that Palestinians are from Palestine. For example, TheJ.ca made up the false fact that “most of the ancestors of the Palestinians entered Israel [sic] in the early 1900s as labourers for Jews who had purchased land.”¹⁰⁹

Purveyors of APR use the alleged primacy of Jewish over Palestinian indigeneity – whether the Israeli Jews in question are from the United States, or Europe, or any other part of the world – to justify the expulsion of Palestinians. How can settlers “expel” indigenous Palestinians if the settlers are more indigenous? “The term ‘Nakba,’” HRC asserts, “is a hateful phrase that serves to effectively erase the Jewish People’s three thousand years of history in their ancestral

homeland.”¹¹⁰ HRC says that Palestinians, far from indigenous, are part of “a string of multiple conquering colonialists.” The claim here is that the European Jews who founded Israel rescued Palestine from its Palestinian inhabitants in an indigenous war of liberation.¹¹¹

CAEF extends this war-of-liberation line from the mass expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 to settler attacks on Palestinians in today’s occupied West Bank. CAEF’s line is that since all of Palestine is Israel, and all expulsions are liberatory, the theft of Palestinian lands by West Bank settlers is a form of indigenous Israeli resistance to the Palestinian “occupation” of lands that are mystically Israel’s by right.¹¹²

This form of APR features an especially brazen twisting of words. The occupied West Bank becomes “Judea and Samaria,” Israeli settlers on Palestinian land become “Decolonized Judeans,” and basic norms of truth are attacked alongside indigenous Palestinians.¹¹³

Erasing human rights

The erasure of Palestinian human rights with APR sometimes takes the form of an attack on international law in general, and it sometimes takes the form of an attack on the application of international law to the oppression of Palestinians. For Barbara Kay of *The National Post*, Amnesty International ceased to be a credible organization when it was infected with a “rabid obsession with Israel,” losing “the moral high ground it once commanded.”¹¹⁴

For CAEF, anything that exposes Israeli abuses against the Palestinians is considered suspect or false. The result is that factual reports about Israeli human rights violations against Palestinians are transformed – in the words of CAEF – into “lies perpetrated by international bodies like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or Michael Lynk, a Canadian professor with the ignominious title, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967.” CIJA would have the world believe that bigotry alone drives the publishing of human rights reports critiquing Israel’s abuses against Palestinians, “when the world can see the Arab population of Israel is wholly protected.”¹¹⁵

TheJ.ca likewise dismisses the import of human rights reports on Israeli abuses. For TheJ.ca, there’s only contempt for Palestinian human rights, since “[Palestinians] are discontented, ungrateful, insurgents, who have developed a society based on the hatred of Jews and the destruction of Israel.”¹¹⁶ TheJ.ca even denies there is an Israeli military occupation of the West Bank: the *fact* of several decades of Israeli military occupation reduces itself in TheJ.ca’s falsifications to “‘the big lie’ of ‘Israeli occupation.’”¹¹⁷ For CIJA, there *is* an Israeli occupation, but there’s no reason to make a fuss about Israeli human rights violations against Palestinians because “occupation, by definition, is not illegal and a negotiated peace must come first.”¹¹⁸ Similarly, there’s no need to be concerned about the report on Israeli apartheid by Amnesty International, since they are simply “false allegations.”¹¹⁹

According to purveyors of APR, *to oppose apartheid* is all well and good. But *to oppose apartheid in Palestine* is to assert rights that do not exist, because Palestinians are undeserving

of them and Israeli human rights violations do not exist either. So we read from *The National Post* that applying the concept of apartheid to Palestine, as Amnesty International, Nelson Mandela, and many Palestinians have, is “an insult to the millions of victims of the real version.”¹²⁰

Pressuring to exclude

The pressure to exclude Palestinian perspectives from Canada is endemic to APR. The cruder purveyors of APR, like TheJ.ca, are wholly unhinged in their demand for “an all-out war against antisemitism *and the boycott movement [against Israel]*.” But pressure for the exclusion of Palestinians, their narratives, and their allies is exercised across the board by purveyors of APR.¹²¹

Applying pressure to exclude Palestinian perspectives from media coverage is the *raison d'être* of organizations like HRC. This involves Nakba denial as a constant matter of policy: HRC attacks what it calls the “false claim that Palestinians were ‘driven out of their country,’” and this advocacy group aims to replace true and documented facts (Palestinians *were* driven out) with discredited myths (e.g., Palestinians “left at the behest of Arab leaders who told them to vacate their homes and to make way for marauding Arab armies”).¹²²

HRC demands that the whole of Canadian civil society pledge itself to these falsehoods, as it stressed in its attack on a feminist magazine in Winnipeg that made space for a factual account of the Nakba. The demand is that Palestinian voices be shut down in favour of myths. In this case, HRC argued that rather than having been driven out by Zionist and Israeli militias, Palestinians were instead “threatened to leave by local Arab leadership” (a reprehensible fabrication), with the result that “Arabs have their leadership, not Israel, to blame for exiling them from the freest country in the Middle East.”¹²³

Worse, since a concern for the oppressed and for the truth *in general* may lead to concern about the oppression of the Palestinians and the situation in Palestine *in particular*, Canadian purveyors of APR demand an attack on anti-racist education as a whole. CAEF promotes this as a crusade “against woke ideology in the classroom, knowing it is the portal to *antisemitism*” (italics added). Ultimately, CAEF is arguing that struggles for justice and opposition to racism are antisemitic.¹²⁴

Pressure to degrade and suppress inclusive civic initiatives also comes from the largest and most prestigious purveyors of APR in Canada, like CIJA and the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Education (FSWC). As discussed above, the IHRA definition of antisemitism is seen by many as a vehicle to muzzle criticism of Israel and Zionism. Efforts by pro-Israel organizations to impose the IHRA definition are very much strategies to exclude Palestinian concerns and narratives.¹²⁵

For example, CAEF wanted the IHRA definition to be used as a cudgel to punish the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art for hosting a panel including members who were critical of Israeli

abuses against Palestinians. The CAEF stated, “We call on the government to withhold funds from MAC [...] We call on all governments in Canada to uphold the federal commitment to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism [...].” Ultimately, by allowing criticism of Israel, the museum’s panel had, according to the CAEF, caused the museum to “defile” itself.¹²⁶

Defaming as antisemitic

The defamation of Palestinians and their allies as antisemitic is a lynchpin of APR. All who dare to support Palestinian rights and liberation are tarred with this brush.

Often, the accusations of antisemitism are rooted in the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and leverage to the widest degree possible the definition’s 11 examples. CJPME published a report – “IHRA’s True Intentions” – in December, 2022 analyzing the arguments of a letter endorsed by 180 pro-Israel organizations from around the world.¹²⁷ The letter, endorsed by both CIJA and B’nai Brith Canada, consistently used IHRA to attack criticism of Israeli human rights abuses, including criticism which used the terminology of “apartheid” or “settler-colonialism” to describe Israel’s oppression of Palestinians. To support its assertions, the document listed a series of tweets – including several from Canada – which contained these forms of political expression and claimed that they violate IHRA guidelines.

Ultimately, the position asserted by the joint letter left no doubt that the leading proponents of IHRA seek to conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism. Not surprisingly, many of the examples identified in CJPME’s 2022 study on APR follow this same pattern, asserting that a criticism of Israel or Zionism is an example of antisemitism.

The CAEF is one of the principal purveyors of this type of APR, and regularly publishes what it calls, “End Jew Hatred” reports. In effect, CAEF and other frequent purveyors of APR interpret as antisemitic any exploration of Palestinian life, true speech about the Palestinian experience, or human rights commentary. These groups leverage the IHRA definition as widely and broadly as possible. When groups like HRC want to impose their view that “anti-Zionism is antisemitism” it is just a foretaste of how broadly they want to apply the antisemitic smear.¹²⁸

The defamation often uses extreme hyperbole, and is often highly personalized. In one example, CIJA attacked the Concordia Student Union for inviting a renowned Palestinian activist and journalist, Ali Abunimah. CIJA sought to defame both the student union and the speaker with a vague attack on “CSU’s decision to invite a documented antisemite to speak on campus.”¹²⁹ In the same statement, CIJA accused Abunimah of having made “repeated calls for the erasure of the world’s only Jewish state,” but only provided indirect support for its accusation based on its preferred rhetoric around Israel.¹³⁰ Abunimah message is indeed ominous for those who support Israel’s ongoing repression and domination, as Abunimah supports a single democratic state with equal rights for all in historic Palestine. Needless to say, the event was allowed to proceed, and was hosted without incident.

Defaming as terrorist threat or sympathizer

Purveyors of APR often presume in their language that anything Palestinian automatically has an association with elements of terror. This applies not only to Palestinian political movements, but also to groups as benign as humanitarian organizations. For example, purveyors of APR have for years sought to smear the UN aid agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) as having links to terror organizations, although the organization has been repeatedly audited by international donors and proven to be highly reputable.¹³¹ “CANADA FUNDS TERRORISM,” was nevertheless the headline of one bombastic CAEF article on Canadian funding for UNRWA.¹³² B’nai Brith Canada, for its part, has for years campaigned to end Canadian funding for UNRWA, despite the organization’s key role in providing education and healthcare services to Palestinian refugees.¹³³

This demonization of Palestinians extends to all walks of Palestinian life. TheJ.ca was also one of many groups in Canada to attack representatives of Palestinian civil society organizations as, in words borrowed directly from the Israeli government, “terrorists in suits.”¹³⁴ For Mike Fegelman of HRC, the entire Palestinian city of Jenin, is legitimately subject to Israeli military assaults because it is “a hotbed of terrorist activity.”¹³⁵ Extending this frame beyond the West Bank, the CAEF contends that Israel has faced “terror from inside and outside from Arabs for over 70 years.”¹³⁶

Many pro-Israel organizations boast that the fact that Israel accepts Palestinian citizens of Israel as members of its Parliament (the Knesset) demonstrates that Israeli society is not racist. Nevertheless, CAEF still associates “terror” with Arabs writ large, and so it defamed Palestinian Arab members of the Israeli Knesset as “terror-supporting Arab members.”¹³⁷

In another example, an op-ed by Avi Benlolo in the *National Post* about two courses on Palestine at the University of Toronto – “Rethinking Palestine” and “Modern Palestine” – attacked any sympathetic research on Palestine as inherently supporting terrorism. The mere offering of these two courses, Benlolo suggested, showed that the U of T had been “co-opted” to “push the agendas of terror groups here in Canada.”¹³⁸

Defaming as opposed to democratic principles

APR defames Palestinians as inherently opposed to democracy, since the myth of Israeli “democratic” vitality requires the denigration of Palestinian principles. Whereas “Israel is a multifaith country where all religions are respected,” claims the CAEF, the Palestinian menace to all things democratic is revealed in the dark politics of “the undemocratic terrorist regimes of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.”¹³⁹

Palestinian citizens of Israel are tarred with the same brush. Protests by Palestinian citizens of Israel against discrimination by Israeli police and other authorities, and against the large-scale Israeli killing of Palestinians in the OPT, are reduced in an APR frame to “Arab violence in Israeli cities.” In the distorted language of APR, Palestinian citizens’ uprisings become “pogroms.” This

defamation featured lurid descriptions of how “Israeli-Arab citizens sided with Hamas” during Israel’s War on Gaza in May, 2021.¹⁴⁰ The contradiction is plain and striking. Palestinian citizens of Israel are tokenized as *evidence* of Israeli “democracy” when purveyors of APR find it convenient, yet attacked whenever they stand up for themselves in democratic action.

At issue, Avi Benlolo writes in *The National Post*, is a version of democratic life from which Palestinians are and must be excluded, since they supposedly scorn it. What is to be valued is not democratic rights for all, but a more strictly narrowed “western ideal of human rights.”¹⁴¹ And so the line is drawn. “The Jewish community,” for Benlolo – so far as it rallies for Israel as an expression of Western power – “is the vanguard of rebuffing threats to freedom and democracy.”¹⁴² And Palestinians, defamed by all available means, are cast out as beyond the pale.

Trends in the 2022 APR data

Total examples in the dataset

Overall, by combing through the websites of Canadian non-profits and media which have a reputation for expressing anti-Palestinian views, CJPME found a total of 507 examples of APR in 2022. As mentioned above, these online examples provide a verifiable and permanent snapshot of the problem of APR.

Non-profit organizations – several of them self-defined as pro-Israel – were the worst offenders, producing two-thirds (67 percent) of the recorded examples of APR. Media organizations were responsible for most of the remainder (33 percent), with statements from other miscellaneous purveyors of APR comprising the rest.

413 of the 507 examples (81 percent) included more than one form of APR, as per the evaluation matrix. 237 of the 507 examples (47 percent) had more than three different types of APR.

354 of the examples (70 percent) were defamatory, slandering Palestinians as either antisemitic, terrorist sympathizers, or anti-democratic. Of these three, slander of Palestinians as antisemitic was the most common subtype of APR at 293 examples (58 percent), followed by terrorist-sympathizer (118 examples, 23 percent) and anti-democratic (29 examples, 6 percent.)

As mentioned above, 67 percent of the total examples were from non-profit organizations, and 33 percent were from media outlets. Whereas most forms of APR studied in this analysis were shared more or less proportionately between organizations and media, there were a few interesting exceptions. Notably:

- Organizations were more likely than media sources to 1) deny the indigeneity of Palestinians, or 2) justify violence against Palestinians.
- The media sources were more likely than organizations to 1) stereotype Palestinians, or 2) accuse Palestinians of being opposed to democratic values.

Total examples related to antisemitism smears

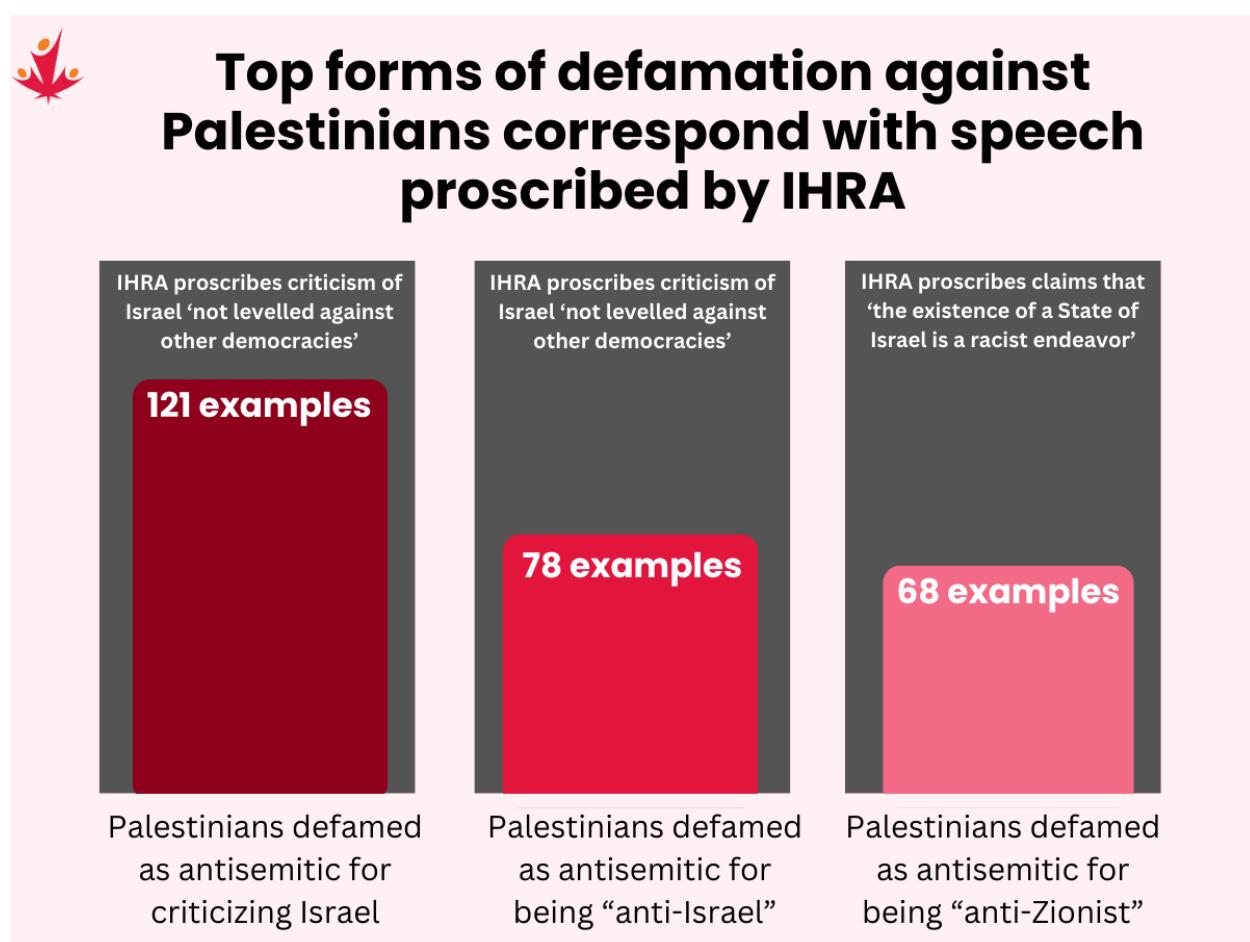
As described above, the smear against Palestinians as antisemitic was one of the most prevalent forms of APR observed in the analysis – found in 58 percent of the examples. This is not a surprise, and is likely driven by pro-Israel groups leveraging the space created by the IHRA definition which 1) defines criticism of Israeli practices as antisemitic, and 2) defines criticism of Israel's founding ideology (Zionism) as antisemitic.

The analysis found 190 examples in which Palestinians were smeared as antisemites by advocacy organizations, and 102 examples where Palestinians were smeared as antisemites by

media organizations. As described in our methodology, the analysis had broken down the antisemitism smear into 11 different sub-categories, four of which emerged as most prevalent:

- **Antisemitic for criticizing Israel** was by far the most common antisemitic smear (found in 121 examples, 24 percent of all examples)
- **Antisemitic for being “anti-Israel”** was the second most common antisemitic smear (found in 78 examples, 15 percent of all examples)
- **Antisemitic for being anti-Zionist** was the third most common antisemitic smear (found in 68 examples, 13 percent of all examples)
- **Antisemitic for supporting BDS** was the fourth most common antisemitic smear (found in 64 examples, 13 percent of all examples)

These results – where criticism of Israel and Zionism figures so largely – clearly give credence to the argument that IHRA is a primary driver of APR.

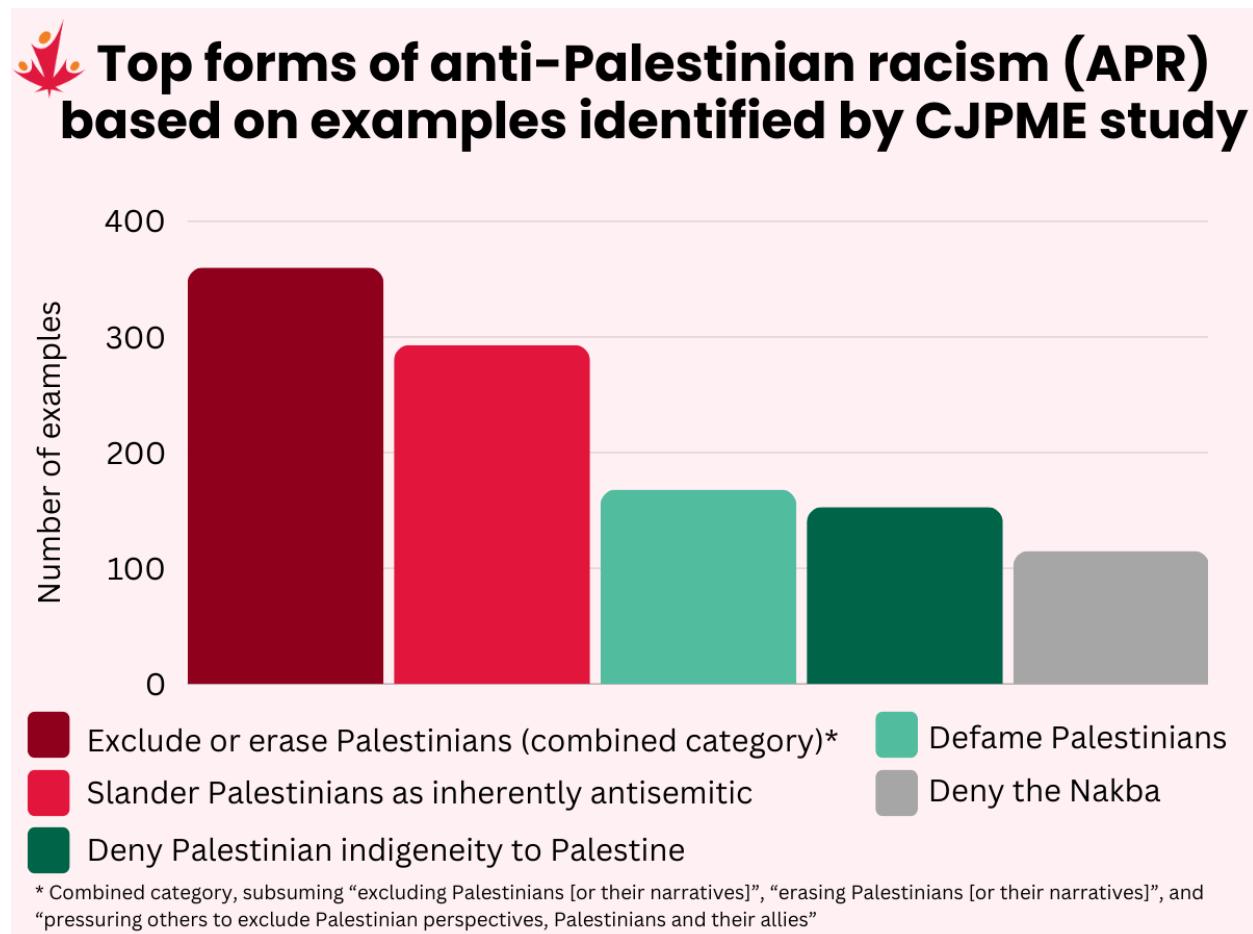


Other most prominent manifestations of APR

While defamation related to claims of antisemitism ranked prominently as one of the top forms of APR in the analysis, other forms of APR also stood out. The top five forms observed included:

1. **Forms of APR centered around erasing or excluding Palestinian and their narratives** was found in 360 examples (71 percent.) This category subsumed “excluding Palestinians [or their narratives]”, “erasing Palestinians [or their narratives]”, or “pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies”
2. **Slandering Palestinians and their allies as antisemitic** was found in 293 examples (58 percent)
3. **Defaming Palestinians generally** was found in 168 examples (33 percent)
4. **Denying Palestinian indigeneity to Palestine** was found in 153 examples (30 percent)
5. **Denying the Nakba** was found in 115 examples (23 percent)

As the top category, the tendency to exclude and erase Palestinians, their perspectives, their narratives and their allies represents a trend that CJPME had already observed anecdotally. Many pro-Israel groups and media seem intent on preventing any discussion or engagement about Palestine or Palestinians. Indeed, organizations like HRC and the CAEF seem to function as if this exclusion and erasing is their very *raison d'être*.

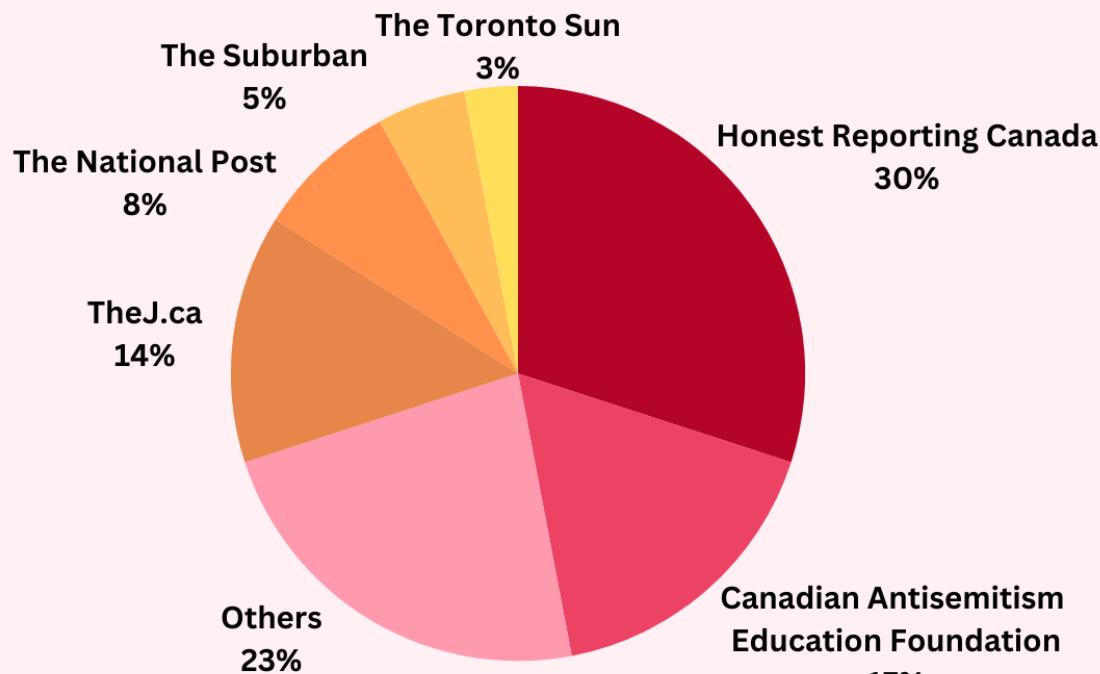


Worst APR offenders

In terms of the consistency and severity of racist, anti-Palestinian views, one of the worst propagators of APR in the Canada of 2022 was a website called TheJ.ca. CJPME issued a separate report – entitled *Legitimizing Hate: Canadian Politicians Advertise on Racist Website* – about the racist attitudes resident on this "media" organization's website. Only a relatively modest 73 examples in this analysis' (14 percent) come from this website, but the website is a small operation, and its communications are thoroughly laden with racism and hate.

The most prolific purveyor of anti-Palestinian racism in Canada was HRC, whose media pressure tactics to attack and exclude Palestinian and pro-Palestinian perspectives comprise 151 (30 percent) of recorded examples. Second in line was the CAEF, which makes up for 87 (17 percent) of examples.

Breakdown of the purveyors of anti-Palestinian racism (APR) based on examples identified by CJPME study



Interesting findings vis-à-vis media organizations

The analysis confirms the widespread impression that right-wing, English-language newspapers are regular purveyors of APR. 43 (8 percent) of this report’s 507 total examples come from *The National Post*, which regularly gives a platform to the extreme anti-Palestinian views of writers like Barbara Kay, Avi Benlolo and others. Another 14 (3 percent) of the examples come from the right-wing populist newspaper, the *Toronto Sun*.

While Palestinians, needless to say, bear the brunt of APR, the attack on support for Palestine is openly pursued as an attack “against woke ideology,” in the words of Barbara Kay. Anti-racist researchers need to take APR seriously as a spearhead of the wider racist backlash.

Interesting findings with non-profits

Non-profit organizations on the right, like HRC and CAEF, were the most prolific institutional purveyors of APR in Canada. Their constant promulgation of APR is one example of how racism is interwoven into the political and media landscape of Canadian society.

The subtler but more influential APR of organizations like CIJA and the FSWC, however, is in many ways more troubling. While similar in tactics to HRC, CAEF, and TheJ.ca, they are organizations that many Canadians consider altogether reputable. This makes their promulgation of APR even more dangerous.

In fact, the APR expressed by more mainstream, institutionally influential groups, like CIJA, reveals APR in Canada to be as much a centrist as a right-wing problem.

A key point was made by Barbara Perry, one of Canada’s leading anti-racist researchers, in comments in 2021 before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Perry tried to dispel the stereotype that racism comes only from marginalized hooligans. In fact, Perry emphasized, the racist backlash is often the work of people with “a higher level of education, university degrees and advanced degrees in some cases.”¹⁴³

As the ACLA explains, APR is “a form of respectable racism that is commonly perpetrated by those in positions of privilege and power.”¹⁴⁴ To implement policies which combat attitudes of APR present among those in positions of power is not always easy. But that is precisely what makes it imperative.

Recommendations

This above analysis has demonstrated that anti-Palestinian racism is frequent and widespread. However, it has tended to be overlooked and ignored, and is rarely recognized as a form of racism. Due to the nature of these challenges, tackling APR will require significant action within various sectors of society.

Incorporate APR into EDI frameworks

Authorities at all levels of the Canadian government must name APR as a distinct form of oppression and make explicit opposition to it part of their anti-racist frameworks, including as part of their equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) frameworks. The ACLA definition of APR provides the substance for institutions to begin this process immediately.

Incorporating APR into EDI frameworks needs to happen at all levels of government – at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, and especially in the nation’s school boards. In the days following Oct. 7, 2023, many politicians and government authorities made statements regarding developments regarding the Israel-Hamas war. While some of these statements were balanced and recognized both Israeli and Palestinian concerns and trauma, many featured common APR tropes: suppressing Palestinian narratives, assuming Palestinians were anti-democratic, and denying Palestinian indigeneity. Recognizing APR will be the first step for these institutions to avoid such missteps in the future.

School boards are another group of institutions which desperately need to acknowledge APR and adopt it into their EDI frameworks. While school boards did not figure largely in this analysis, they are often at the forefront of expressions of both APR and Palestine solidarity.¹⁴⁵ Despite many school boards making progress incorporating Islamophobia into their EDI frameworks, CJPME is only aware of the Peel District School Board in Ontario having in some way acknowledged APR.¹⁴⁶ Many educators were among those who were disciplined in some fashion for public statements and posts supporting Palestinian life and rights in the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023 attacks.¹⁴⁷

Incorporating APR into the EDI frameworks of the Canadian for-profit and non-profit sectors is also essential. Like with government authorities, many corporate leaders made statements soon after Oct. 7, 2023 which were extremely unbalanced. Exhibiting classic APR, many of these statements largely erased Palestinian history, justified violence against Palestinians, and erased the human rights and equal dignity of Palestinians. And in subsequent weeks, many employers suspended, dismissed and disciplined employees who spoke in opposition to Israeli violence against Palestinians.¹⁴⁸

Don't adopt a definition of antisemitism which promotes APR

As described in this analysis' findings, there seems to be a strong correlation between the many examples of Palestinians being slandered for criticizing Israel, being "anti-Israel," or being anti-Zionist, and controversial definitions of antisemitism such as IHRA which conflate criticism of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism. This aligns with the warnings that have been raised for years by many – including voices from within the Jewish community – that the IHRA definition of antisemitism would muzzle free speech around Palestine solidarity.¹⁴⁹ ¹⁵⁰ It is indeed ironic that a definition advanced as a solution to one form of racism is designed in such a way that creates prejudice against another group. There are several other excellent working definitions of antisemitism which do not create any of the problems triggered by the IHRA definition, such as the Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism, and these definitions are and should be considered as alternatives.¹⁵¹

In June, 2019, the Canadian federal government incorporated the IHRA definition into its *Anti-Racism Strategy, 2019–2022*. The Strategy listed the IHRA definition in its "Terminology" section, and did not include the problematic IHRA examples. As such, it was not clear whether the examples were to be considered, and whether criticisms of Israel and/or Zionism would be conflated with antisemitism. CIJA and B'nai Brith, however, claimed that the definition had been adopted in its entirety by the government.¹⁵² Regardless, Heritage Canada now requires recipients of Heritage funding to attest that they agree to the government's anti-racism strategy.

In addition to the federal level, Canadian proponents of IHRA have worked for years to have the IHRA definition adopted at the provincial level, in many Canadian municipalities, as well as in school boards. When the adoption is open to debate, the adoption is often highly contested, and sometimes blocked.¹⁵³ Unfortunately, the adoption is often done behind closed doors, as was done in Quebec,¹⁵⁴ and Ontario, where IHRA was adopted by an order in council.¹⁵⁵ Often the legal implications of the adoption are not clear, and the applicability of the definition's illustrative examples is not clearly stated.

For all these reasons, government bodies which have adopted the IHRA definition should replace it with a different, less controversial, definition which does not reproduce APR, such as the Jerusalem Declaration.¹⁵⁶

Introduce programs to educate the public about APR

APR is very much ingrained in Canadian society, so a concerted effort to educate the public about APR is an essential long-term strategy. There are many levels at which public education and awareness programs could be extremely helpful. A few examples are provided here:

- **Governments at all levels could conduct public awareness campaigns** on racism which incorporate APR. As part of their broader anti-racist awareness initiatives,

governments could incorporate warnings/caveats about APR into their broader anti-racist public awareness strategies.

- **Governments at all levels could develop multi-cultural educational materials** which incorporate APR. Such materials could incorporate information about Palestine and Palestine solidarity within broader materials discussing history and different cultural practices as a means to foster cross-cultural understanding.
- **Governments at all levels could institute cultural competency training** to combat APR as part of broader trends of systemic racism. Such training could be targeted to professions perceived to be susceptible to systemic racism like APR (educators, judges, etc.) Such training would give individuals the opportunity to connect meaningfully with these ethnic groups perceived to be subject to systemic racism.
- **Governments at all levels could provide grants to academic experts** in Canadian universities to support the creation of research on systemic racism including APR. Such research could be used to inform public policy.
- **Governments should work with law enforcement bodies** to provide racial and cultural competency training which incorporate APR. Such programs should provide training for the handling of APR hate crime cases for officers and other members of law enforcement.
- **Governments should increase funding for investigations** by law enforcement of APR and similar forms of racism. Such funds could enable investigations into APR and other forms of racism and hate speech on the Internet. It could also be used to enforce existing laws to prevent racism like APR.

Ensure that schools do not provide a conduit for APR

As mentioned above, for better or worse, schools are often at the forefront of expressions of both APR and Palestine solidarity. As such, Canada's school boards have an important role to play in fostering a positive and respectful learning and working environments that enable students to reach their full potential. Schools are places that should support and guide students in their development and participation in a diverse, anti-racist and inclusive society. Schools must create a positive climate where all members of the school community feel safe, accepted, and valued upholding social justice and the human rights of each person.

Despite such generally accepted values, Palestinian students and their allies are often faced with blatant APR. In an article highlighting the issue in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), anti-black racism activist Desmond Cole wrote:

A Black student is suspended from school for saying the words “Free Palestine” during morning announcements. A book that includes journal entries of Palestinian children is banned from school libraries. An educator sharing anti-oppression resources on Palestine for colleagues on an opt-in basis is put under investigation and his mailout is cancelled. A student who comes to class wearing a keffiyeh—a traditional Palestinian

scarf—is told to remove it or get out. Students who object to history lessons that erase Palestinian existence are told they are antisemitic.¹⁵⁷

CJPME has been hearing about such incidents for years, but because the victims are minors, and the venues are largely shielded from outside view, it is difficult to address the issue. This makes it even more incumbent on school boards to adopt APR into their EDI frameworks, and consider an alternative to IHRA when looking to define antisemitism in their EDI frameworks.

Another potential area of concern was brought to CJPME’s attention in December last year when an “expert” was brought in to the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) to deliver a “Holocaust Education” session at Westmount High School. A parent raised concern about the session with the EMSB and the CBC, the latter of which produced a segment on the session. The CBC news segment shows a clip from the school’s YouTube page where Rambam is shown saying, “[People are saying] Israel is a terrible country, [that] they’re abusing the Palestinians – which is a bunch of crap. I lived in Israel. Trust me they’re doing everything *but* abusing the Palestinians” [italics added].¹⁵⁸

CJPME was not able to find any mention of the “expert’s” academic credentials qualifying him to lead a “Holocaust education” session. CJPME raised the issue with EMSB, asserting that there was clearly a need to review the process by which the EMSB selects and vets its “expert” speakers. This example demonstrates that school boards must ensure that the experts for such sessions have academic credentials around the experiences of Jews in Europe through the mid-20th century. School boards must also ensure that their Holocaust education speakers do not conflate 20th-century European antisemitism with the Palestinians’ struggle against Israeli colonial domination and apartheid. Ultimately, such speakers should be able to agree that people can be critical of Israel while still recognizing and acknowledging the horrors of the Holocaust.

Like all anti-racist organizations, CJPME supports the idea of anti-racist education in schools. Nevertheless, CJPME was surprised to see that Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia announced renewed emphasis on Holocaust education in the aftermath of Oct. 7, 2023, citing the need to combat antisemitism following pro-Palestine demonstrations in the respective provinces.¹⁵⁹ This indicates, of course, that both governments view support for Palestine as inherently antisemitic – a standard APR trope. There is thus clearly a need to disentangle antisemitism education from anti-Palestinian hate. *Anti-racist education in general* and *Holocaust education in particular* must be credibly separated from support for the State of Israel.

Guidelines for Canadian media

The examples from this analysis demonstrate that many media organizations are themselves perpetrators of APR. The media cited in this analysis have tended to be “right-wing” and/or fringe far-right media, and many of the examples of APR are appalling. Beyond these “worst

offenders,” however, there is a broad and latent APR in mainstream Canadian media. CJPME’s media analysts find themselves consistently pressuring the media in a number of ways which reflect the media’s implicit APR bias. Awareness of the below problems should compel leaders in mainstream Canadian media to do better.

Failure to balance voices = Silencing, excluding, erasing of Palestinian perspectives. “Single viewpoint reporting” and “prejudicial placement of viewpoint” are two issues that CJPME staff constantly observe with reporting on Palestine-Israel. By delivering stories which favour Israeli or pro-Israel spokespeople, or which put the pro-Palestinian perspective at the bottom of the story, media engage in the silencing, excluding and erasing which is core to APR.

Failure to provide context = Erasing, and denying Nakba and indigeneity of Palestinians. “De-contextualization of story/motivations” and “omission of key information” are another pair of issues that CJPME staff observe with reporting on Palestine-Israel. Mainstream media will often fail to mention key information that media consumers need to develop a fair interpretation of the news. For example, mainstream media often fail to state that Israel is a belligerent military occupant of Palestinian territory, or that Israel has been accused of apartheid by all major human rights organizations. Mainstream media will also often fail to describe important antecedents to news events, like the Nakba, Israeli human rights violations, a case at the International Court of Justice, etc. Hiding such context again contributes to the APR tendencies of erasing of Palestinians and their narratives, and in many cases, denying the Nakba and Palestinian indigeneity to the land.

Self-censorship = Excluding and erasing of Palestinian narratives. Many times, CJPME staff realize that mainstream media are essentially self-censoring. For example, when the Amnesty International report on Israeli apartheid was published in February, 2022, the mainstream Canadian media hardly covered it. By simply not talking about Palestinians, and ignoring key developments supporting their narrative, mainstream media again contribute to APR, by effectively excluding or erasing their voices and narratives.

Sourcing gullibly from Israeli sources = Justifying violence against Palestinians. “Failure to properly qualify the assertions of protagonists” is another common media failing that CJPME staff observe. The Israeli Army and Israeli Government are sophisticated PR machines which project the most positive spin on everything the army and government do. Nevertheless, many mainstream media quote Israeli sources with little or no skepticism. Israeli sources, for example, consistently refer to Palestinian victims of Israeli violence as terrorists, even when the victims are children, women, passers-by, or human rights organizations.¹⁶⁰ By parroting these narratives, Canadian media contribute to the APR tendency to justify violence against Palestinians.

Reporting gullibly about antisemitism = Defaming Palestinians with antisemitic slander. CJPME staff also often observe that accusations of antisemitism are often reported by Canadian media uncritically. Pro-Israel organizations consciously try to prevent criticism of Israel, by

condemning and marginalizing such critics, most commonly with the smear of antisemitism. When media develop stories and create headlines around these accusations, without exploring the basis for such charges, and without talking to the individuals accused of antisemitism, they contribute to the APR tendency to accuse Palestinians of being inherently antisemitic.

Standing up to bullying from HRC

In determining which propagators of APR were the “worst,” sheer volume does count. The record of HRC is atrocious, and media organizations which respond to its pressure do so at the cost of their own credibility. HRC considers itself a type of “media watchdog” organization, but neutral observers will understand it as an organization which seeks to banish any portrayal of Israel that is the tiniest bit negative. HRC also has political views which are fringe even for pro-Israel organizations, and HRC is prepared to weaponize the antisemitic smear whenever possible. Mainstream media which give credence to, or quietly cave under pressure from HRC do a disservice to their readers and the media industry generally.

Recommendations for Palestine solidarity activists

The Palestinian solidarity movement already faces monumental challenges as it tries to address one of the greatest injustices of our time, and APR presents a significant obstacle to this work. If the Palestine Solidarity movement can confront and discredit APR, it will enable progress on many other fronts. Below are some recommendations for individuals involved in Palestine solidarity:

1. **Prioritize the campaign against APR.** For the Palestinian solidarity movement, there are campaigns that may garner more immediate attention (like BDS, or divestment campaigns), but a successful APR campaign will pay huge dividends in the long-term. For example, Palestinians and their allies should work to have APR incorporated into their institutional EDI frameworks. When campus groups are successful in having APR recognized by their university, it will be harder for their opponents to undermine or dismiss their activism (e.g. divestment resolutions) using common APR tropes. When employees are successful in having APR recognized by their employer, this could help to protect them from being wrongfully dismissed based on social media posts in support of Palestine.
2. **Participate in informational events and activities around APR.** Palestine solidarity activists should make sure they and their network have the knowledge and training they need to identify and self-report APR.
3. **Don't be silent, don't submit; get the necessary help when victimized by APR.** Anyone who is a victim of APR must rally the support of their community to oppose it publicly and vigorously. Such individuals should also engage support from organizations like CJPME, and get legal help when necessary.
4. **Report incidents of APR.** While Palestinian solidarity organizations have a role to play in consolidating and centralizing the reporting of APR, this process relies on individuals self-reporting when they are victims of APR. Without empirical data, organizations like CJPME find it more difficult to bring visibility to this insidious form of racism.

Below are some recommendations for organizations involved in Palestine solidarity work:

1. **Prioritize the campaign against APR.** Like for individual activists, Palestine solidarity organizations should give APR file the strategic importance it deserves.
2. **Develop an APR task force.** There are many organizations and individuals which have an interest in fighting APR, but far fewer of them actually have the capacity to act substantively against APR. While organizations should communicate and share ideas on combatting APR, one or two key organizations with the capacity and expertise to lead the issue should be endorsed.
3. **Centralize and normalize the reporting of APR incidents.** As mentioned earlier in the report, there are at least three organizations that currently have APR self-reporting pages. These efforts should be consolidated and normalized, and the resulting centralized gathering point for this data should be widely publicized.
4. **Host informational events and activities around APR.** Palestinians and their allies should be made aware of the various ways that APR manifests itself in Canadian society. Once equipped, such individuals will feel more confident and comfortable self-reporting APR, and combatting APR.

Notes

¹ Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, *Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations*, (April: 2022), 18, <https://www.canarablaw.org/>.

² Ibid, 17-18.

³ Ibid, 18.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Sheryl Nestel and Rowan Gaudet, *Unveiling the Chilly Climate: The Suppression of Speech on Palestine in Canada* (Toronto: Independent Jewish Voices, 2022), 18, https://www.ijvcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Unveiling-the-Chilly-Climate_Final-compressed.pdf.

⁶ Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, *Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations*, 8, 20.

⁷ Ibid, 20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Davide Mastracci, “A list of some people in Canada fired for pro-Palestine views,” *The Maple*, November 10, 2023, <https://www.readthemaple.com/a-list-of-some-people-in-canada-fired-for-pro-palestine-views/>.

¹⁰ Joanna Lavoie, “Suspect charged after person wearing keffiyeh assaulted in Toronto's Yorkville area,” *CP24*, November 7, 2023, <https://www.cp24.com/news/suspect-charged-after-person-wearing-keffiyeh-assaulted-in-toronto-s-yorkville-area-1.6634744>.

¹¹ National Council of Canadian Muslims (@nccm). 2023. Twitter, November 25, 2023, 10:03 a.m., <https://x.com/nccm/status/1728429083267105070?s=20>

¹² Elianna Lev, “She's against torture, but wants us to be tortured?': Montreal woman verbally attacks driver with Palestine flag,” *Yahoo News*, October 12, 2023, https://consent.yahoo.com/v2/collectConsent?sessionId=1_cc-session_c0c5f530-953f-45a7-9ffc-824f6b9b09f8.

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