

## 1.0 OVERVIEW

### 1.1 About JEFA

The Jewish Educators and Family Association of Canada (JEFA) is a registered not-for-profit corporation that was born out of necessity to represent Jewish educators, students and their families, in the K-12 school system. Its founding members represent licenced educators, parents and education experts who felt compelled to respond to the precipitous increase in antisemitism in our education system. For more information, please go to [JEFA.ca](http://JEFA.ca).

### 1.2 Highlights of The Jewish Experience in K-12

Antisemitism is rampant and normalized throughout Canada's K-12 education system. This submission presents a small subset of the totality of issues, including the following highlights:

1. Following continued inaction by the TDSB, after receiving a petition from nearly 5000 parents<sup>1</sup>, approximately 300 people come together to walk a child to school to help keep him safe<sup>2</sup>.
2. School Board decision-making relating to equity and anti-hate resourcing is based on student achievement and is "focused on students who are underserved and underperforming."
3. Holocaust education, including holocaust survivors, are routinely cancelled under public pressure and teachers have been directed by admins to "teach both sides of antisemitism."

## 2.0 THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Jewish day schools are Canada's top target of domestic terrorism. In the last year there have been at least four violent attacks on Jewish day schools including a brazen shooting by multiple gunman at Bais Chaya Mushka School for Girls just this week<sup>3</sup>. Bomb threats are an unfortunately common occurrence and one Jewish school in Montreal was targeted by shooters on multiple occasions<sup>4</sup>.

These purpose-driven acts of terror clearly indicate the targeted and violent nature of anti-Jewish hate in Canada.

**Recommendations:** (1) Emergency funding for security for Jewish schools and institutions; (2) short-term increase in police funding in all major cities, and; (3) long-term enhanced domestic terrorism focus on addressing antisemitic groups targeting Jewish institutions.

## 3.0 THE JEWISH STUDENT EXPERIENCE

### 3.1 In the Classroom

School Boards have placed "identity affirmation" above the principle that students should be educated at school, not indoctrinated. Political ideology in class has become standard, such as:

- Wearing political clothing: shirts with the map of Israel coloured with a watermelon, "Free Palestine" bracelets, earrings, etc. and keffiyehs, including one teacher who wore a keffiyeh to a field trip at the Toronto Holocaust Museum.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/stop-antisemitism-in-toronto-s-schools>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nationalpost.com/news/community-support-walk-held-for-bullied-jewish-student-at-toronto-school>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/police-suspects-gunfire-jewish-girls-school-1.7215118>

<sup>4</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/International/montreal-jewish-school-targeted-shooting-2nd-time-week/story?id=104832890>

- The repeated promotion of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) movement, including multiple instances of it being promoted, and Israel accused of ethnic cleansing and genocide, immediately following or as part of holocaust education.
- Classrooms are replete with political materials including: Palestinian flags, maps of Israel painted over with a Palestinian flag or watermelon colours, Ceasefire Now poster etc..
- Educators boast about fulfilling their moral obligation to teach propoganda to children, including one kindergarten teacher boasting online about speaking to their students about how the “children of Palestine” are “targeted” and killed by Israel.
- A shocking school-wide “Palestine Art contest” that called for students to mobilize against Israel “bombing.. hospitals with children and doctors inside”<sup>5</sup>.
- School libraries include inappropriate books like “Baba, what does my name mean”, which is a child’s picture book that calls for the primary-aged reader to draw a map of “Palestine from the river to the sea”.

**Recommendations** - (1) Recognize the dissemination of terror propoganda to minors as child abuse; (2) Conduct a national inquiry into political indoctrination, and incorporation of personal worldviews and political ideologies, in the public school setting, and; (3) recognize “from river to sea”, and other similar remarks, as hate speech, rather than their current status of ‘identity affirming’ content for children’s picture books.

### 3.2 In the Yard

In the schoolyard Jewish students are harassed, intimidated, and bullied by their classmates, and their persecutors do not experience meaningful consequences. Jewish students are scared, and parents do not have confidence that the school boards are able to protect their children. A very small number of incidents garner media attention because parents are concerned that coming forward will increase the targeted harassment of their children. Examples of some troubling incidents include:

- An Israeli-Canadian teen was viciously attacked during school hours in New Brunswick<sup>6</sup>
- Israeli student is repeatedly bullied, told that they will do to him “what Hamas did to Israel”
- Reports of parents removing their Jewish children from public school, including this parent who spoke publicly about some of the issues faced by her child<sup>7</sup>
- FOI obtained PDSB records reveal “around 40 students swarmed” a child shouting “Jews deserve to die”

**Recommendations** - Advocate for (1) primacy of student safety over consideration of impact of consequences on aggressor students; and (2) no differential disciplinary treatment of ‘racialized groups’ in context of hate offences, as this practice tolerates and foments hate.

## 4.0 INEQUITABLE SCHOOL BOARD EQUITY PRACTICES

Human rights policies have seemingly succumbed to mob rule and school board bureaucracy as opposed to upholding their original purpose of helping minorities susceptible to persecution. Today’s school boards, despite not having the staff with the requisite qualifications to do so, routinely engage in the development of human rights policies. Too often guided by public pressure, the policies lack thoughtful deliberation. It is inherently inequitable for children to have different human rights depending on which school board they attend.

For example, while the Province of Ontario has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, only a single school board in Ontario has accepted it. Jewish students living streets apart have different rights and protections at their schools. It is worth noting that the school board that has adopted the IHRA definition has received a petition from thousand of parents in regards to its poor implementation.<sup>8</sup> Failure to both educate on IHRA and consider its impacts on other school policies, such as those relating to “student voice” and “identity affirmation” is vital.

<sup>5</sup> <https://x.com/OliveAuJus/status/1781503071723384986?t=dbtVCUoT7Qz15lzI8VWf1A&s=19>

<sup>6</sup> <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/israeli-teenager-says-she-was-attacked-at-new-brunswick-school-for-being-jewish>

<sup>7</sup> [https://x.com/neveragainlive1/status/1794370958704418871?t=n\\_gip9DCzvZHtafnrW6UWw&s=19](https://x.com/neveragainlive1/status/1794370958704418871?t=n_gip9DCzvZHtafnrW6UWw&s=19)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/urgent-action-needed-by-tdsb-to-address-antisemitism>

In contrast to the failed implementation of the IHRA definition, multiple school boards within Ontario have begun implementing Anti-Palestinian Racism (APR) training, for staff students and trustees, with the eye to its adoption as a protected equity class. Despite APR being virtually non-existent in most school board incident reporting systems and not being formally adopted by any level of Government, Equity department staff and a small group of vocal community members<sup>9</sup> have been fiercely advocating for its official and unofficial implementation.

APR is a proposed category of hate and discrimination that requires thoughtful deliberation because it expands on the concept of discrimination in two very unique ways: First, it would be the first category of racism to apply to a nation-seeking group. Currently, there is no protected equity class for Anti-Kurdish Racism or Anti-Yazeedi Racism, as examples. APR is inherently geopolitical. Secondly, this is the only form of hate that captures “narratives”; differences of opinion in relation to geopolitical issues become discriminatory. Some of the examples of “narratives” identified as protected speech in APR training documents for TDSB staff<sup>10</sup> include references to:

- Assigning genocidal or violent intent to the phrase “Free Palestine, from the river to the sea”, which the APR training frames as ‘hopeful Palestinian poetry’
- Asking why other Arab countries don’t help Palestinians is considered an example of APR
- Asking someone to denounce Hamas and Hezbollah as a means of testing the “acceptability” of their views on the Middle East conflict is also considered an example of APR.

APR disproportionately targets as racist anyone who believes in Israel’s right to exist, aka Jewry.

**Recommendations** – Need to evaluate the establishment and implementation of human rights and equity policies in the public school system to ensure consistency and that it is developed in accordance with established principles, rather than mobs and ill-trained bureaucracy.

## 5.0 STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

At the request of the families involved, these quotations are being provided anonymously.

*“I am a middle school student who has been told by many of my teachers that if there is a time that I feel afraid because of anti-Jewish rhetoric or situations at my school that there are only some safe teachers and vice-principal/principal to go to and they have told me who I cannot speak to as they will not help. In one case, my vice-principal/principal was actively involved in creating the momentum needed to have protests in the school. This has made the climate in the school horrible as a Jewish student. I feel unsafe sharing my Jewish identity in my school so I avoid doing anything where my identity might be revealed.”*

*“Every class I am in, someone says something antisemitic”*

*“I am afraid to let anyone know I am Jewish”*

*“For months our child was repeatedly harassed, physically intimidated, assaulted on top of being told by students that Jews did not deserve to live. Time after time we were assured that our child was safe in the school, yet the incidents kept happening. After the second physical assault we had to pull our child from the school for their safety because it was clear that the school did not have the situation under control at all. Now my child feels that the only way to survive in our school systems is to hide their Jewish identity.”*

*“Our experiences at our childrens' highschool has been isolating and have left our children ostracized. The student body and surrounding community are vocal about being anti-Zionist. Jew hatred is prevalent, with swastikas drawn and derogatory Antisemitic statements being voiced in the hallways, locker rooms and bathrooms. Attempts to educate the students were met with refusals to attend and protests by the student body.”*

*Since Oct 7 I've had a hard time going to school. Mentally I have had to prepare myself each morning. It started with student walk outs and books about Palestine in the library. Then another student telling my friends not to trust me because I'm Jewish. Then this cultural event with all the kids wearing keffiyehs and saying that Israel doesn't exist and wearing flags and t shirts with Israel but labelled Palestine. It's like I don't exist. If I were to wear any symbol like a Star of David I feel like I would be beat up. I can't show I'm Jewish.*

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/parents-urge-toronto-school-board-to-combat-anti-palestinian-racism-and-observe-nakba-day/article\\_d1435e40-12c1-11ef-b935-53d9e25022ab.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/parents-urge-toronto-school-board-to-combat-anti-palestinian-racism-and-observe-nakba-day/article_d1435e40-12c1-11ef-b935-53d9e25022ab.html)

<sup>10</sup>[https://x.com/Fairness\\_in\\_Ed/status/1790431551701835816?t=i3ctrffZog1fn-0x0p\\_zdA&s=19](https://x.com/Fairness_in_Ed/status/1790431551701835816?t=i3ctrffZog1fn-0x0p_zdA&s=19)