



Defending Freedom | Protecting Democracy | Combating Antisemitism

AGPI Policy Report

The Combatting Hate Act (Bill C-9)

Position Paper by The Abraham Global Peace Initiative (AGPI)

1 – Introduction & Purpose

The *Combatting Hate Act* (Bill C-9) is now advancing through parliamentary committee review. The legislation seeks to amend the *Criminal Code of Canada* to strengthen our laws against hate propaganda, hate-motivated crime, and obstruction of access to religious or cultural spaces.

As the Founder and CEO of The Abraham Global Peace Initiative (AGPI), I have long advocated for these reforms, calling for a direct response to the rising tide of antisemitism and the extremism of pro-Hamas demonstrations since October 7, 2023.

Over the past five years, hate-motivated incidents reported by police have more than doubled, reaching nearly 20,000. The free-marketplace-of-ideas approach—akin to the American First Amendment model—has proven insufficient in protecting minorities. In any civil society, the true test of democracy is how it protects its minorities.

This paper outlines AGPI's position on Bill C-9, why we support its intent, how it responds to real harm experienced by Jewish Canadians, and what improvements are needed to make it both just and enforceable.

On **March 28, 2025**, The Abraham Global Peace Initiative published a comprehensive proposal in the *National Post* titled “*Make Hate-Law Reform a Federal Election Issue.*” That policy paper outlined a series of legal measures to combat antisemitism and radical extremism in Canada—many of which are now reflected in Bill C-9.

The government clearly listened to AGPI’s recommendations. Several of our key proposals are now part of Bill C-9:

- **Removal of Attorney General consent** for hate-propaganda prosecutions—one of AGPI’s most urgent calls for depoliticizing justice.
- **Creation of a stand-alone hate-crime offence** to increase penalties for hate-motivated acts.
- **Ban on display of hate and terror symbols**, including insignia used by Nazi and Islamist extremist movements.
- **Protection of religious and cultural access** through new offences targeting intimidation and obstruction.

These inclusions mark a milestone in AGPI’s national advocacy. They demonstrate that sustained civil-society engagement can produce tangible legislative results.

2 – Overview of Bill C-9

Bill C-9 (the *Combatting Hate Act*) would:

1. **Remove Attorney General consent** for hate-propaganda prosecutions, allowing police and prosecutors to act without political delay.
2. **Create a new offence** prohibiting the *wilful public display* of symbols that promote hatred—such as Nazi insignia or emblems of listed terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, or Al-Qaeda.
3. **Establish a stand-alone hate-crime offence** so that hate motivation automatically elevates the seriousness of any underlying crime.
4. **Criminalize intimidation or obstruction** of access to buildings used for religious or cultural purposes—including synagogues, mosques, churches, schools, and cemeteries.
5. **Define “hatred” and “protected places”** more precisely within the *Criminal Code*, consistent with the Supreme Court’s *Whatcott* test.

These changes address longstanding enforcement gaps and acknowledge that protecting vulnerable communities requires both symbolic and practical measures.

3 – Why AGPI Supports Bill C-9

AGPI supports Bill C-9 for several reasons:

- **Rising antisemitism and extremist intimidation:** Since October 7, Jewish Canadians have faced increased harassment and threats at schools, workplaces, and public gatherings. Demonstrations have blocked access to events and institutions.
- **Removing political barriers:** Requiring Attorney General consent has proven an obstacle to justice. I have personally witnessed the difficulty of pressing for hate-crime charges and the politicization of such decisions.
- **Enhancing deterrence:** The new hate-crime offence sends a strong message that crimes targeting identity groups will be treated as serious threats to social order.
- **Visible accountability:** Prohibiting public display of terrorist or Nazi symbols will help remove visual incitements that normalize hate.
- **Protecting access to community life:** Making it illegal to intimidate or obstruct access to places of worship and cultural spaces responds directly to the lived experience of many Canadians.

At a recent AGPI event at Toronto's Casa Loma, pro-Hamas demonstrators surrounded guests, blocked vehicles, and shouted threats. Women were singled out and harassed. Although laws already prohibit obstruction, enforcement was delayed and uncertain. Bill C-9 would empower police to act immediately.

While not perfect—the bill omits bans on the glorification of terrorism and on masking—AGPI considers it a vital step forward.

4 – Limitations, Risks & Safeguards

AGPI recognizes that while this bill is necessary, it carries risks that must be managed through precise drafting and enforcement:

1. **Free-speech and protest boundaries** – Peaceful protest must remain protected; the law should target intent to intimidate or obstruct, not mere dissent.
2. **Overbreadth and clarity** – Terms like *obstruction* or *intimidation* must be clearly defined to avoid inconsistent enforcement.
3. **Transparency** – Public reporting of charges and convictions is crucial to build trust and ensure even application.
4. **Training and funding** – Law enforcement and prosecutors require education on identifying hate motivation, preserving evidence, and protecting Charter rights.
5. **Review mechanism** – Parliament should mandate a three-year review to evaluate the law's impact on both public safety and civil liberties.

AGPI also urges the government to integrate this law into a broader national hate-crime strategy that includes community security funding, improved data collection, and better inter-agency coordination.

5 – AGPI’s Policy Recommendations

AGPI formally calls for:

- **Rapid passage** of Bill C-9, with implementation supported by training and resources.
- **Precise definitions** of protected sites, including places of worship, community centres, and *private or rented venues hosting identifiable-group events*.
- **A protected protest clause** affirming the legality of peaceful, non-obstructive assembly.
- **Data transparency** and quarterly public reporting.
- **An independent oversight mechanism** to review enforcement outcomes.
- **Public education campaigns** promoting awareness of hate-crime laws and deterrence.

AGPI also proposes that any act of **obstructing access to Jewish events**—whether at synagogues, private venues, or public spaces—should fall under the bill’s protective scope. Intimidation does not end at the synagogue door; it extends to galas, educational forums, and cultural gatherings that express Jewish identity. Clarifying this application would ensure consistent national protection for all such events.

6 – Political Context and the Challenge of Enforcement

A bill can be enacted into law, but if it is not enforced with conviction, it risks irrelevance. AGPI remains concerned that, amid rising anti-Israel sentiment in parts of government, this legislation could fall on deaf ears.

Anti-Israel activists have grown increasingly emboldened—often feeling encouraged, or at least unchallenged, by political leaders whose statements blur the line between legitimate criticism of Israel and justification of antisemitic hostility. When leadership lacks moral clarity, extremists interpret silence as consent.

AGPI therefore cautions that **law alone will not curb hate**. Enforcement must be consistent, depoliticized, and programmatic. Canada’s government must respond **less emotionally and more systematically** to global and domestic crises. Policy must be built on principles of security, democracy, and human rights—not on ideology or populism.

We would also like to see **explicit clarification** that *obstructing access to Jewish events—whether at synagogues, private venues, or public spaces—falls within the protections of this*

legislation. Too often, Jewish community gatherings have been targeted outside hotel ballrooms, theatres, and cultural centres. The same legal protections that apply to houses of worship should extend to any Jewish event subjected to harassment or blockade.

If political will falters, extremists will exploit the vacuum. For Bill C-9 to succeed, it must be implemented with moral courage and equal justice for all Canadians.

7 - AGPI's Leadership in Hate Crime Reform

Critical Areas Still Missing

Despite this progress, the government's legislation **falls short of AGPI's broader vision** for comprehensive hate-crime reform. Bill C-9 does not:

1. **Legislate the IHRA definition of antisemitism.** Adoption remains voluntary; without legal force, antisemitic incidents continue to be misclassified or minimized.
2. **Create a federal hate-crime task force within the RCMP.** Police lack national coordination, resources, and intelligence capacity to track antisemitic and extremist activity effectively.
3. **Ban foreign extremist funding of NGOs and educational institutions.** This omission leaves space for radical ideologies to spread through community and campus organizations.
4. **Address radicalization on campuses, in unions, and the media.** There is still no oversight or accountability mechanism for taxpayer-funded institutions that platform antisemitic or extremist rhetoric.
5. **Enhance border and immigration screening** for individuals linked to extremist movements.
6. **Implement mandatory Holocaust and antisemitism education** nationwide.
7. **Codify penalties for online radicalization and platform accountability.**

AGPI urges Parliament to revisit these omissions in future legislative rounds. Without them, enforcement will remain reactive rather than preventive.

8 – Conclusion

Canada stands at a crossroads. The *Combating Hate Act* is more than a bill—it is a statement about who we are as a nation. It reflects whether we will allow intimidation, antisemitism, and extremism to erode our democracy, or whether we will act decisively to defend it.

Freedom of expression must never become freedom to terrorize. The right to protest ends where another citizen's safety begins. Bill C-9 marks an important step in restoring that balance.

AGPI urges Parliament to move swiftly, to refine the bill where needed, and to commit to its rigorous enforcement. A law unenforced is a promise unkept—but a law applied with courage and fairness can help rebuild the moral fabric of our nation.

Prepared by: The Abraham Global Peace Initiative (AGPI)

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