

THE USE AND MISUSE OF ANTISEMITISM STATISTICS IN CANADA

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“Canadian Jews Most Targeted Group for Third Year in a Row” ^[1] proclaimed B’nai Brith Canada in a press release issued on July 22, 2019. Jews and others who are deeply troubled by the spread of antisemitism worldwide must have been alarmed to learn that Canada was being added to the growing list of countries where antisemitism is on the rise.^[2] But how accurate are B’nai Brith’s claims? Upon close examination, it turns out that B’nai Brith’s interpretation of the state of antisemitism in Canada is misleading at best, perhaps deliberately so. The alarming headline actually obscures a complex web of established facts, dubious claims, overt and covert political agendas, avoidable inaccuracies, methodological opacity and unexplained exclusions - all of which demand examination.

Since 1982, B’nai Brith Canada has published an *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents* which the organization claims to be an “authoritative document on antisemitism in Canada.”^[3] Indeed, the *Audit* is very widely cited. It has been employed for decades by Canada’s unfailingly pro-Israel governments as well as by an impressive range of media outlets including the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, The Globe and Mail, the Calgary Herald, Radio Canada, the U.S. State Department and

numerous other mainstream news sources and civil institutions. The reliability of the *Audit*, however, is rarely questioned.^[4]

The *Audit*'s shortcomings were, however, flagged more than ten years ago in an article by journalist Jonathan Kay who quipped "Reporters politely overlook the fact that B'nai Brith's definition of "incident" is dumbed down: any web posting, stray comment or scrap of graffiti fits the bill...Most readers don't stop to scrutinize how trivial these examples are: they just look at the impressive seeming bar graphs which purport to show a Jewish community in a constant state of terror."^[5]

B'nai Brith Canada cannot be understood as a neutral source for reporting on the nature and scope of antisemitism in Canada. It has both a political and a financial interest (its fundraising relies largely on its positioning as the premier opponent of antisemitism in Canada) in touting increases in antisemitism. Of course, that alone does not make its *Audit* suspect. But there are serious criticisms that can be levelled against the *Audit* itself and against B'nai Brith's specific claims about antisemitism in Canada. Chief among these are: inclusion of expressions of criticism of Israel as incidents of antisemitism, complete lack of methodological transparency, obfuscation of evidence of low levels of antisemitic sentiment among the Canadian public, and disregard of evidence of the attitudes about antisemitism of Canadian Jews themselves.

Moreover, B'nai Brith's claim that Jews are the most targeted group in Canada fails to take into account that racialized and marginalized groups are much less likely to report incidents of hate and harassment. Primarily, however, the *Audit* has to be understood within the context of the increasingly vigorous criticism of Israel in relation to its human rights abuses as well as Israeli government strategy to suppress such criticism worldwide.

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Inclusion of criticism and/or attacks on Israel

In their 2019 Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, the U.S. Anti-Defamation League reported a total of 2,107 incidents of antisemitism in the U.S., including 1,127 cases of harassment, 919 cases of vandalism, and 995 incidents of assault including 5 deaths. The ADL 2019 Audit encompasses a U.S. Jewish population of approximately 6.97 million.^[6] The B'nai Brith 2019 Audit, on the other hand, reported 2,207 antisemitic incidents in Canada - a country that is home to approximately 392,000 Jews.^[7] In other words, the B'nai Brith Audit claims that an equal number of antisemitic incidents has taken place in Canada despite the fact that the U.S. has a population 9 times that of Canada and has 17 times as many Jews.

Are Canadian Jews 17 times more likely than their American counterparts to experience antisemitism? How could this possibly be the case? The answer lies largely in the methodological differences between the two audits.

The ADL is a far less progressive organization than it likes to claim and is faithful to the same pro-Israel ideological agenda^[8] as B'nai Brith Canada. In a recent open letter urging progressive groups not to partner with the ADL, a coalition of more than fifty political and faith groups on the left stated that the ADL "has a history and ongoing pattern of attacking

Total number of antisemitic incidents in the U.S. reported by the ADL

2,107

Number of Jews in the U.S.

6,970,000

Total number of antisemitic incidents in Canada reported by B'nai Brith

2,207

Number of Jews in the Canada

392,000

social justice movements led by communities of color, queer people, immigrants, Muslims, Arabs, and other marginalized groups, while aligning itself with police, right-wing leaders, and perpetrators of state violence.^[9] Despite this well-deserved criticism, the ADL's Audit of U.S. incidents of antisemitism is far more transparent in relation to its methodology and contains a great deal more data than does the B'nai Brith Canada Audit.

Perhaps the most consequential paragraph in the ADL Audit is the following:

ADL is careful to not conflate general criticism of Israel or anti-Israel activism with antisemitism. However, Israel-related harassment of groups or individuals may be included when the harassment incorporates established anti-Jewish references, accusations and/or conspiracy theories, or when they demonize American Jews for their support of Israel. We have also included cases of picketing of Jewish religious or cultural institutions for their purported support for Israel.

The B'nai Brith Canada Audit on the other hand, states that "To delineate the parameters of antisemitism and identify its root causes, B'nai Brith Canada uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism" (p.6). This, it can be argued, is one of the significant underlying factors in the improbable disproportion between ADL's U.S. numbers and those reported for Canada. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA WDA) has a starring role in this tale.

The definition was developed between 2003-2005 as a research tool for the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC).^[10] When the EUMC was dissolved in 2007, the definition was removed from the

organization's website by its successor, The European Agency for Fundamental Rights. In May, 2016 the definition was resurrected, notably through the efforts of Mark Weitzman of right-wing Simon Wiesenthal Center, and adopted at the IHRA plenary in Bucharest. While the legitimacy of this process is currently in dispute^[11], the IHRA WDA is nonetheless promoted internationally as a powerful weapon against growing antisemitism. Twenty-nine countries have subsequently adopted the definition as have many local governments and civil institutions.

The IHRA WDA includes a short definition of antisemitism which has been aptly described by Professor David Feldman, Director of the respected Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism (University of London), as "bewilderingly imprecise".^[12] What follows the definition are eleven examples of antisemitism, seven of which brand certain criticisms of Israel as antisemitic. The document was adopted without any open public input by Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party government in 2019 as part of its anti-racism strategy.

It is aggressively promoted in Canada and elsewhere by pro-Israel groups such as the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies, and the Canadian Council

for Reform Judaism who are urging local governments and other public institutions to adopt the definition as a tool to define antisemitism in their midst. It is not difficult to understand why the IHRA WDA found wide acceptance among Canadian government officials and other public figures. As Oxford philosopher and antisemitism scholar Brian Klug has pointed out, the inclusion of the term “Holocaust” in the title of the document seems to render it unchallengeable. As Klug argues, “It’s almost as if rejecting the IHRA definition were tantamount to denying the Holocaust”.^[13]

In Canada there has been energetic pushback^[14] against the IHRA WDA by progressive Jews, Arab Canadians, Muslims, academics, unions and civil liberties associations all of whom see the document as a threat to freedom of expression, academic freedom and to the right of Palestinians to publicly narrate their decades-long struggle for justice.

Recently, opposition to the IHRA WDA has been voiced by large and influential Jewish organizations in the U.S.^[15], a development that reflects the growing rift in the North American Jewish community in relation to Zionism and to the centrality of Israel to Jewish life and Jewish identity.

This development presents a dilemma for institutions seeking to adopt the IHRA who have been led to believe by its proponents that there is unanimous support among Jews for what must increasingly be seen as a highly controversial document.

While the IHRA WDA purports to be a tool for identifying and therefore reducing antisemitism, its focus on criticism of Israel appears to belie this intent. In effect, the IHRA WDA continues the campaign, initiated in the 1970s by leaders

of the U.S. Anti-Defamation League. In their 1974 book *The New Anti-Semitism*, Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein described what they claimed was a new form of anti-Jewish hatred emerging on the political left. The intention of this “new Anti-Semitism”,^[16] they argued, was to render the State of Israel a proxy for the entire Jewish people. As cultural historian Amy Kaplan explains, their argument was that “condemnation of Israel arose not from opposition to Israeli policy in the occupied territories but from the world’s forgetting about Jewish victimization in the Holocaust.”^[17] In this view then, robust criticism of Israel, including opposition to the political ideology of Zionism, had to be understood as the newest iteration of the “oldest hatred.” Furthermore, It certainly cannot be coincidental that the New “Anti-Semitism” designation appeared a year after Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban told a group of American Jewish leaders that, “One of the chief tasks of our dialogue with the Gentile world is to prove that the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is not a distinction at all.”^[18] Indeed this is a sharp contrast to the earlier attitudes of Zionist leaders, who saw opposition to Zionism by Palestinians and their allies as a reasonable and understandable response to colonization and dispossession.^[19]

That B’nai Brith Canada uses the IHRA WDA as its primary yardstick for measuring antisemitic events should not be surprising given the organization’s record of branding well-known Palestine solidarity activists,

including some Jews, as antisemites and “terrorist sympathizers.” Bnai Brith is proud to have doggedly pursued well-known Canadian critics of Israeli policy including academics, former Canadian diplomats and progressive members of provincial and federal legislatures.

^[20] In one well-documented campaign, the organization attempted to have federal funding rescinded from a 2009 academic conference at Toronto’s York University entitled “Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace.” Much of the proposed conference program focused on the one-state model for achieving peace and justice in Israel/Palestine. In its efforts to shut down the event, B’nai Brith Canada submitted a libelous statement to the York administration on June 12, 2009 asserting that “The veil of academia provided by these sponsors should not fool anyone. No academic body should lend its imprimatur to a conference where several of the speakers are actively engaged in Holocaust denial, rationalize terrorism, and are infamous anti-Israel propagandists.”^[21] B’nai Brith was subsequently forced to apologize for and retract this statement.

The use of accusations of antisemitism as a strategy to suppress condemnation of Israel’s well-documented apartheid^[22] regime has been promoted by the Israeli government for decades.^[23] Israeli “hasbara” efforts intensified

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around 2007 in response to the founding of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and similar international forms of dissent. Since then, “anti-Zionism is antisemitism” discourse has morphed from a talking point to a campaign to influence policy decisions and legislation around the world. As journalist Ben White has documented, a series of conferences organized by the Israeli Foreign Ministry as the “Global Forum for Combatting Antisemitism” has been increasingly focused on influencing foreign governments to “adopt and strengthen anti-discrimination laws” and on “educating officials about the connections between delegitimization of Israel and anti-Semitism.”^[24] In 2019, the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy was granted a \$35 million (USD) budget to combat BDS worldwide; promoting the IHRA WDA was a key component of this strategy and one enthusiastically embraced by B’nai Brith Canada.

The B'nai Brith Audit's lack of methodological transparency

The B'nai Brith Audit is almost entirely lacking in methodological transparency. This becomes glaringly apparent when it is compared to the detailed data contained in the ADL Audit. While the B'nai Brith Audit offers examples of the incidents it has catalogued, they are simply that – examples. The ADL website, on the other hand, contains a database that lists all of the antisemitic incidents that the organization has documented, sorted by state and date. The ADL provides descriptions of the incidents that allow the reader to grasp the context of each incident, whereas the B'nai Brith Audit only includes cherry-picked examples of incidents with little detail included. B'nai Brith's accounting of antisemitism covers only the over-all number of incidents, a breakdown of incidents by type (harassment, vandalism and violence), and a regional breakdown.

The contrast between the two Audits is most evident in the case of campus antisemitism. Hardly helpful in a political moment in which debates around the extent of campus antisemitism have become inflamed, the B'nai Brith Audit reports that there was “a significant number of reports to B'nai Brith Canada about students facing harassment on campus from their peers and professors for being openly supportive of the State of Israel and/or for being Jewish.”^[25] These are serious allegations. The B'nai Brith Audit, however,

offers us no numbers and no analysis of these incidents.^[26] Reading the Audit, we are left with the impression that antisemitism is pervasive on campuses and poses a grave threat to Jewish students. The ADL Audit, on the other hand offers at least some numerical evidence related to this phenomenon. According to the ADL, there were 186 incidents of antisemitism on U.S. campuses in 2019.^[27] Ninety-seven of these incidents involved harassment and 89 involved vandalism. No evidence of violent incidents is reported. Significantly, only 20%, or 37 incidents, were catalogued as “Israel-related.” This detailed reporting allows a more honest accounting of the extent and the context of antisemitic incidents on campuses than the uncontextualized and selective reports that appear in the B’nai Brith Audit.

More accurate accounting, however, might pose a challenge to the moral-panic discourse that is circulated by B’nai Brith Canada and other Zionist organizations who often allege that campus antisemitism is a “pervasive and cancerous hate.”^[28] While anti-Zionist rhetoric on campus can and does occasionally stray into antisemitic expression, it must be emphasized that not every, nor even most utterances of anti-Zionism are manifestations of antisemitism. Significantly, notable Jewish Studies scholars and other Jewish intellectuals have argued^[29] that anti-Zionism in both its historical and contemporary forms has been a principled stand and one that reflects an ethics-based opposition to the concept of the ethnocratic state and a commitment to equal rights for all those who live in Israel/Palestine. Consequently, strong criticism of Israel, including support for the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement should not be a criterion for judging when an action or utterance is antisemitic unless there is additional proof of underlying anti-Jewish animus. The lack of detail in the B’nai Brith Canada Audit, means that the reader must

Incidents of antisemitism on U.S. campuses in 2019 reported by the ADL

186

20%

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trust B'nai Brith's judgement as to what is legitimate criticism of Israel and what is truly antisemitism. A more transparent audit would let us judge for ourselves.

Other features of the ADL Audit are helpful in understanding the extent of antisemitic incidents in the U.S. while simultaneously revealing the disturbing inadequacy of the B'nai Brith Canada Audit. For example, the ADL Audit reports that out of 2,107 antisemitic incidents documented in 2019, 270 were attributable to extremist groups on the right such as the Daily Stormer Bookclub and the Loyal White Knights, a Klan-related group. The growth of white supremacist^[30] groups in Canadian society in general and on campuses in particular is often overlooked in the rush to label pro-Palestine groups and individuals as antisemites. Stealth activities such as painting swastikas or writing antisemitic comments on buildings should not be assumed to be the work of the "left" when there is increasing evidence of a burgeoning white supremacist movement in Canada.

Finally, and very significantly, a comparison between the ADL Audit and that of B'nai Brith Canada can be made in regard to reports of online hate. Over ninety percent of the antisemitic incidents reported in the B'nai Brith Audit were defined as harassment and 83.2% of these occurred online. All told, of the 2,011 incidents of antisemitic harassment logged by B'nai Brith, 1,809 occurred online. As University of Toronto sociologist Robert Brym reports in his recent article examining B'nai Brith's antisemitism statistics, "a single tweet reported to B'nai Brith Canada and identified as antisemitic counts as an incident."^[31] One only needs to think about how many tweets appear in a typical Twitter thread or conversation to understand the impact of this methodological strategy on the total number of reported incidents. Additionally, as Brym points out, the number of antisemitic incidents reported

to B'nai Brith increased significantly with the institution of their 24 hour-a-day hotline and a more recently launched online reporting mechanism available on the organization's website. While this is not the only reason for B'nai Brith's reported rise in antisemitic incidents, it is very likely a significant contributor to the 499% rise in incidents reported in the B'nai Brith Audit between 2001 and 2017. "But," as Brym asks, "incidence of what?" The noted sociologist, and one of the leading scholars of contemporary Canadian Jewish life, concludes that this rise in incidents can probably be attributed to some degree to the conflation of "antisemitic and anti-Israel acts."^[32]

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How antisemitic is Canada based on data other than the B'nai Brith Audit?

In assessing the veracity of B'nai Brith's 2019 Audit, it is useful to compare the advocacy group's claims about the extent of antisemitism with those contained in the government-issued document *2018 Police-reported Hate Crime in Canada*.^[33] At the outset, it is important to differentiate between what is legally defined as a hate crime under Canadian law and what B'nai Brith describes in its *Audit* as an "antisemitic incident." *The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey* defines police-reported hate crimes thusly: "Police-reported hate crime is defined as a criminal violation against a person or property motivated by hate, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, culture, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression or any other similar factor."^[34] In addition, four specific types of incidents are designated as hate crimes in the Criminal Code of Canada: advocating genocide, public incitement of hatred, wilful promotion of hatred when directed against an identifiable group and mischief against property used for religious worship. Evidence that an offence such as assault was committed on the basis of bias, prejudice or hatred can result in increased penalties.^[35] While under some circumstances antisemitic incidents

reported to B'nai Brith may reach the level of hate crimes, the Audit does not identify these nor does it include any information as to how or even if the incidents it reports are verified.

In 2018, there were 1,798 police-reported hate crimes in Canada accounting for less than 0.1% of the two million total crimes reported. Forty-four percent of these were motivated by racial or ethnic animus, 35.5% were motivated by religious animus and 21% targeted sexual minorities or groups. Jews are classified, for these purposes, as a religious group, as are Muslims. Arabs, on the other hand, are classified as an ethnic group. It is not clear where an attack on a Muslim Arab, for example, would be counted. Given the police classification system, in 2018, there were 347 hate crimes targeting Jews which accounted for 19% of all reported hate crimes. In the same year there were 283 hate crimes that targeted Black people, 173 that targeted Muslims and 110 that targeted Arabs and West Asians. By this count, Jews are indeed the most targeted group.

What goes unmentioned in B'nai Brith's reporting is that the percentage of police-reported *violent* hate crimes targeting Jews is far lower than that for other groups. Eighty-four percent of hate crimes against Jews were categorized as non-violent, with the vast majority catalogued as "general mischief or property-related offenses which targeted premises used for religious worship or identifiable as connected to the Jewish community."^[36] Most of these incidents likely involved graffiti. While 16% of hate crimes against Jews were deemed "violent," 40% of hate crimes targeting Blacks and 40% of those targeting Muslims were classified as violent. Thus, there were 113 violent hate crimes against Black people, 70 against Muslims and 55 against Jews. In terms of the most violent hate crimes, Jews are clearly not the

most targeted group. It should be noted that, statistics for 2020 will likely reflect a further rise in hate crimes against racialized people inasmuch as Chinese Canadians are reporting an alarming rise in anti-Asian racism with 43% of those interviewed for a recent Angus Reid poll reporting that they have been threatened or intimidated since the start of the COVID19 pandemic.^[37]

This, however, is not the end of the story when it comes to examining which groups are most targeted for hate crimes in Canada. Academic studies and reports by advocacy groups confirm that racialized and Indigenous people report hate crimes and discrimination at much lower rates than do white people.^[38] Jews, on the other hand, tend to report discrimination at much higher rates than do other groups. There are likely three reasons for this: 1) there are dedicated and easily accessible community-based mechanisms for reporting antisemitic incidents, 2) Jewish organizations like B'nai Brith actively educate, encourage and solicit community members to report incidents and 3) most Jews do not experience the kinds of systemic discrimination at the hands of civil authorities that would discourage them from reporting antisemitic hate crimes.^[39]

Violent hate crimes

113

against Black people

70

against Muslims

55

against Jews

Overall, two-thirds of hate crime incidents in Canada are not reported to the police.^[40] Given the degree of anti-Indigenous racism in Canada, it is astonishing to learn that only 2% of reported hate crimes targeted Indigenous people. In fact, marginalized and racialized groups hesitate to report hate crimes. There are several reasons for this including: language barriers, fear of retaliation from the offender, distrust of law enforcement or belief that law enforcement will not assist them, fear of law enforcement stemming from past traumatic and/or group historical experiences, undocumented immigrant status, and other factors. Consistent and unimpeded reporting of hate crimes by racialized individuals and Indigenous people would likely increase hate crime statistics significantly. Were this to happen, racially motivated hate crimes would certainly emerge as a proportionally much greater percentage of hate crimes than currently recorded, and religiously motivated hate crimes (including antisemitism) would proportionally shrink. Moreover, state violence against racialized and Indigenous people is never documented in police-reported hate crime statistics and therefore makes no appearance in official records claiming to reflect the state of “race relations” in Canada.

I am not suggesting here that the pain and trauma of being the target of a hate crime is greater for one group than for another. The context within which this suffering occurs, however, is significant. When making claims about antisemitism, it must be acknowledged is that there is almost no evidence that systemic anti-Jewish discrimination and hatred, a well-documented feature of Canadian history,^[41] continues to operate in any significant way today. This is not the case for racialized and Indigenous Canadians who face significant systemic discrimination. Black Canadians, for example, are 20 times more likely than whites to be shot dead in the city of Toronto by police.

There are half as many Black teachers as Black students in the Canadian school system and a recent report by the Toronto District School Board revealed that in the 2019-2020 school year there were 291 reported hate incidents, the “overwhelming majority” involving anti-Black racism.^[42] Black Canadians have also had four times the age-adjusted hospitalization rate and twice the death rate of whites during the COVID 19 pandemic. Given this contrast, it’s impossible not to recall the author and anti-racist icon James Baldwin’s comment of over a half century ago: “One does not wish, in short, to be told by an American Jew that his suffering is as great as the American Negro’s suffering. It isn’t, and one knows that it isn’t from the very tone in which he assures you that it is”.^[43]

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Antisemitic attitudes in Canada and What do Canadian Jews think about it?

According to an ADL survey of antisemitic attitudes in 18 western countries, Canada has among the lowest rates of antisemitism, with 8% of Canadians holding antisemitic views.^[44] Sweden ranks as the country with the lowest prevalence of antisemitic attitudes at 4%.^[45] By contrast, 41% of Hungarians hold antisemitic views. Canadian Jews themselves believe that other minorities experience racism at much higher rates than Jews. While approximately one third of Canadian Jews believe that discrimination is “often” directed at them, they are more inclined to indicate that Indigenous people, Muslims and Blacks experience more bigotry and inequality.^[46] It would seem then that Canadian Jews have a much more realistic and empathetic view of the victimization of marginalized groups than does B’nai Brith which chooses to sensationalize and misrepresent the extent of antisemitism.

In sum, it can be argued that conflation of anti-Israel activism with Jew hatred, an opaque methodology, the overcounting of online “incidents” and lack of an anti-racist critique in

the interpretation of hate crime statistics are all factors that serve to inflate B’nai Brith’s account of the extent of antisemitism in Canada.

Ironically, the 2019 B’nai Brith Audit reports a decline in vandalism and violence against Jews. By conflating anti-Zionism and antisemitism and by making alarming and misleading claims about the victimization of Jews, B’nai Brith and other organizations in the institutional Jewish community have managed to create the impression that antisemitism in Canada is increasing at an alarming rate. It is truly concerning that these claims are uncritically received and recirculated by media outlets and have formed the basis for policy decisions by Canadian lawmakers, including the adoption at federal and local levels of the highly problematic International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism.

Anti-antisemitism as a “get out of racism free” card

What would it mean to apply an anti-racist lens to what appears to be a whopping case of Canadian philosemitism? To be sure, opposition to antisemitism is necessary and many who take up this cause have honourable intentions. However, initiatives intended to counter antisemitism can often serve other purposes – including some that may actually impede the project of eliminating all forms of hate. There is little ambiguity surrounding the motives of the pro-Israel institutional Jewish community in pushing antisemitism to the fore at this political moment. And it must be noted that Canadian Jews are not immune to real fear generated by the news of deadly antisemitic attacks in the U.S. and Europe despite the absence of such attacks in Canada. However, given the relatively low levels of antisemitic sentiment among Canadians, and the near-absence of institutional racism against Jews, why are Canadian federal, provincial and municipal governments rushing to adopt measures against antisemitism? Indeed, why, in a country like Canada that is beset by racial inequalities which have deadly consequences for First Nations and Black, Brown and Asian people, does antisemitism draw so much attention?

For governmental bodies and institutions such as universities, ostentatious displays of concern about antisemitism and anti-Zionism may reflect an honest desire to root out any vestiges of Jew hatred. However, they can also be seen to bestow, what Lakehead University Research Chair in Culture, Media and Social Justice Max Haiven has called, the “get out of racism free card.” This free pass allows institutions to be perceived as addressing racial inequality while simultaneously obscuring and neglecting the structural racism and state violence that continues to afflict Indigenous and racialized groups. Unlike these racialized groups, European Jews have largely been de-stigmatized in the post-Holocaust era as the West continues to grapple with its genocidal past while persistently denying its racist present. Residing well within the borders of the “civilized” West, Jews and Israel are regarded as more deserving of protection and support than others who are viewed as external to the Western civilizing project.^[47] The role played in this equation by Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism cannot be minimized.

To be sure, this obsessive focus on anti-Israel incidents and their constitution as antisemitism deflects attention from the real threats to Jews in Canada which, as in the U.S., appear to be emanating mostly from the white supremacist right. However, what is also disturbing is the divide that is created between Jews and other victims of racial hatred. The B’nai Brith Audit portrays antisemitism as an exceptional and perhaps decisive form of hatred, thus unfailingly signalling a hierarchy of oppressions in which Jewish suffering trumps that of other groups. Recalling James Baldwin’s observation quoted earlier, one can only imagine the ill-will generated by this claim. What is lost here is opportunity for solidarity across difference and

the transformative possibility of understanding how antisemitism and other forms of racism share some contemporary characteristics and historical origins but also differ in their contemporary expression and impact. Jews and other marginalized groups need to consolidate our responses to racism, not fragment them. An honest accounting of antisemitism would be a good place to start.

This free pass allows institutions to be perceived as addressing racial inequality while simultaneously obscuring and neglecting the structural racism and state violence that continues to afflict Indigenous and racialized groups.

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- [22] *A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid*. B’tselem, The Israel Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, January, 2021
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- [25] *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2019*, B’nai Brith Canada, p 26. <https://www.bnaibrith.ca/antisemitic-incidents/>
- [26] B’nai Brith Canada’s *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2009* does offer a count of campus-related incidents: “Reported cases of antisemitism on university campuses have risen by 80.2%, from 76 cases in 2008 to 137 in 2009. This figure is even more alarming given that the number of incidents has increased almost four-fold since 2006, when there were only 36 reported cases (B’nai Brith, 2010, p. 11).
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