

# SUBMISSION

To the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Re: Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places)

Collectively on behalf of:

IfNotNow Toronto  
Independent Jewish Voices  
Jewish Faculty Network  
Jews Say No to Genocide  
United Jewish People's Order

*October 23, 2025*





Dear Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights:

Bill C-9, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places)*, will have far reaching impacts on the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadians and we implore you to consider the legacy that it would leave in diminishing the role of civil society in pursuing justice.

As the committee's co-chair, Larry Brock, himself noted: "The bill, as drafted, is vague and broad...[and]...provisions risk capturing peaceful protest and legitimate dissent."

We are a collective of Jewish organizations who share these concerns.

Much of the talk around this Bill has been about addressing antisemitism. We know antisemitism is real and linked to all other forms of oppressive systems. We also know that criticism of the State of Israel is not inherently antisemitic, nor is protesting corporations, institutions or individuals who have directly supported the Israeli government or who seek to silence pro-Palestinian movements.

In contrast, the Jewish organizations that Members of Parliament (MPs) reference as supporting Bill C-9 are organizations that perceive almost all criticism of Israel as antisemitic. For those organizations, they want legislation like Bill C-9 to give politicians and police the tools to scare, silence and criminalize critics of Israel and those working in solidarity with Palestine.

### **Risk of Subjectivity and Bias**

Bill C-9 imposes severe consequences for protest activities, language and visual displays. The language of the legislation means that police will be enforcing a law based on their perception of people's intentions. For example, the legislation says it should apply when actions are "motivated by hatred" and/or when there is "intent to provoke a state of fear". This leaves a lot of room for bias to influence enforcement.

We can already see how bias is playing out in the debate about Bill C-9.

During the Second Reading debate, MP McCauley stated that the phrase "from the river to the sea" means "...the extermination of the Jewish people between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea". In fact, as discussed in *Jewish Currents* (2011), the phrase is a call for freedom for Palestinians and for an end to Israeli apartheid. It represents the hope of creating a single democratic state where all people are equal and free from discrimination. As Yousef Munayyer writes in the article, "The phrase...captures this future as no other can, because it encompasses the entire space in which Palestinian rights are denied."



During the hearing around the University of Toronto's Palestine solidarity encampment, at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in July 2024, Justice Markus Koehnen (2024) ruled that slogans such as 'From the River to the Sea, Palestine Shall Be Free' were not per se antisemitic. He noted that while "these expressions are perceived as hurtful and threatening to many Jews...I was not taken to any evidence to suggest that any of the named respondents or encampment occupants were using these slogans or symbols with any intention of violence, antisemitism or hatred."

Politicians regularly use loaded language to describe peaceful protests, referring to them as being hateful and supporting terrorism when they are actually calling for an end to Israeli occupation, apartheid and genocide. During debate on this Bill, MP Baber talked about the weekly protests at Bathurst and Sheppard in Toronto. There, supporters of Palestine and supporters of Israel rally with flags and chants. However, MP Baber refers to Palestine solidarity protestors as "thugs" and supporters of Israel as "peaceful".

Concern about bias and discretionary enforcement extends to the conflation of hate with discomfort. Slogans and symbols at Palestine solidarity rallies are considered hateful because they make some members of the Jewish community uncomfortable, while pro-Israel protestors wave the flags of Israel and its army without comment, despite the fact that these formations, according to many reputable organizations and experts, are currently committing genocide.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2024) and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant (2024) who are accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Would symbols relating to the State of Israel also be considered hateful and therefore subject to the provisions of this Bill?

Israel advocacy groups invest in police training. They set up tailored trips to Israel<sup>2</sup> specifically for police. Concerns have been raised about the increasing militarization of the police as well as the use of Israeli training, tactics and technologies (Rodman, 2020). These advocacy groups also push the controversial IHRA working definition of antisemitism as the frame for how police and courts should interpret what they see and hear at protests (Independent Jewish Voices, 2025). Bill C-9 is the latest tool Israel advocacy organizations want to further restrict and criminalize protests that increasingly resonate with the public and damage support for the Israeli state.

### **Government Shielding Religious Institutions from Accountability**

Religious institutions should not be shielded by the state. Canada's history of abuses by religious institutions against Indigenous people, often supported by the Canadian

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2025, and United Nations, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Abraham Global Peace Initiative, n.d.



government, and the current resurgence of residential school denialism are clear examples of why people need to be able to protest religious and political institutions.

Bill C-9 would limit opportunities for congregants to object to the policies or decisions of their religious leadership or institutions. Israel advocacy organizations like this idea. They are angry that Jewish community members protested at synagogues that hosted the sale of real estate on land that Canada agrees is illegally occupied by Israel. This is a legitimate reason to protest regardless of which kind of building is hosting the illegal sale.

In Toronto in 2024, Jewish community members opposed to Israel's ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinians were denied entry to a synagogue where a political event, advertised as being open to the community, was being hosted. In the resulting standoff with security, the entrance to the synagogue was temporarily obstructed. Under this law, this might have resulted in a 10-year prison sentence. This is a politically-motivated and disproportionate response.

## **A Gateway to Increasing State Repression**

A National Post article from September 2025 reports that MP Poilievre wants Canada to follow the U.S. in designating "antifa" as a terrorist organization. But "antifa", short for *anti-fascist*, is not a group; it's a broad term for people who oppose fascism, white supremacy, and other forms of oppression. It has no leadership, structure, or funding. If a future government carried out such a designation, this Bill could criminalize anyone participating in protests for Indigenous land rights, immigrant justice, workers' rights, climate action, or countless other causes — even if they never identify as "antifa."

We are seeing a rapid descent into authoritarianism in many countries. We are concerned that Bill C-9 is taking Canada down that path and that, once in place, it would be used to exhaust and imprison critics of those in power and their allies.

We hope that Members of Parliament will see the danger this represents and vote against this Bill.

## **References**

Abraham Global Peace Initiative. (n.d.). *Police academy*.  
<https://agpiworld.com/police-academy>

Independent Jewish Voices. (2025). *Silenced in our name: A Jewish Commentary on Canada's IHRA Handbook*.  
<https://www.ijvcana.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Silenced-In-Our-Name.pdf>



International Association of Genocide Scholars. (2025, August). *IAGS resolution on Gaza*.

<https://genocidescholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/IAGS-Resolution-on-Gaza-FINAL.pdf>

International Criminal Court. (2024, November 21). *Yoav Gallant*.

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/defendant/gallant>

International Criminal Court. (2024, November 21). *Benjamin Netanyahu*.

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/defendant/netanyahu>

Munayyer, Y. (2021, June 11). *What does "from the river to the sea" really mean?* Jewish Currents. <https://jewishcurrents.org/what-does-from-the-river-to-the-sea-really-mean>

Rodman, K. (2020, June 28). *Submission to the Ontario Police Oversight Review, 2016*.

<https://www.justpeaceadvocates.ca/submission-to-the-ontario-police-oversight-review-2016/>

United Nations. (2024, September 20). *Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories*

(A/79/363). <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/271/19/pdf/n2427119.pdf>

University of Toronto (Governing Council) v. John Doe. (2024, August 2). *Ontario Reports*.

<https://digital.ontarioreports.ca/ontarioreports/20240802/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1998408#articleId1998408>

---

**IfNotNow Toronto** is a home for Jews who seek to end North American Jewish support for occupation, apartheid and genocide.

**Independent Jewish Voices** is a grassroots organization grounded in Jewish tradition that opposes all forms of racism and advocates for justice and peace for all in Palestine-Israel.

**Jewish Faculty Network** is a national network of Jewish Canadian academics who share a strong commitment to social justice in support of an ethical life, whether defined through religious observance or secular action.

**Jews Say No to Genocide** is a coalition of Independent Jewish Voices, United Jewish Peoples Order, IfNotNow Toronto, Jewish Members of Showing Up for Racial Justice Toronto and World Beyond War, Jewish Faculty Network and other members of the Jewish community in Canada.

**The United Jewish People's Order** is a non-partisan, independent, socialist-oriented, secular cultural and educational organization.