

NDP Members Must Push for Pro-Palestinian Positions

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When will NDP members push back against the party leadership's all-too friendly relations with Canada's leading Israel lobby group?

Recently, former NDP Premier of Nova Scotia Darrell Dexter [joined](#) the board of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) while four years ago NDP foreign critic Paul Dewar and MP Robert Chisholm attended a CIJA sponsored [Young Leadership](#) Israel Advocacy Program retreat.

A 2014 calculation found that [20 NDP MPs](#) had been to Israel on a CIJA (or its predecessor) financed tour. Since 2016 now party leader Jagmeet Singh has participated in one of these trips as have Randall Garrison and Murray Rankin, the NDP's two executives on the [Canada Israel](#) Inter-Parliamentary Group, which has [hosted lobbying](#) events on Parliament Hill with CIJA.

NDP MPs have also taken CIJA representatives into their offices. In 2014-15 BC MP Nathan Cullen's office [took in Daniel Gans](#) through CIJA's Parliamentary Internship Program, which pays pro-Israel university students \$18,000 to work for parliamentarians (Gans [then worked](#) as parliamentary assistant to NDP MP Finn Donnelly). In 2014 Cullen met representatives of CIJA Pacific Region to talk about Israel, Iran and other subjects. According to CIJA's summary of the meeting,

"Mr. Cullen understood the importance of a close Canada-Israel relationship."

CIJA takes aggressive extreme, anti-Palestinian, positions. CIJA backed moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem, ripping up the Iran nuclear accord and Israeli forces killing over 120 peaceful protesters in Gaza in Spring 2018.

Before its February convention CIJA called on the NDP to "[push back](#) against marginal elements within the party" promoting Palestinian rights. The organization was likely the driving force behind a *Globe and Mail* article on the eve of the convention titled "[Supporter of](#) homophobic, anti-Semitic U.S. religious leader to speak at NDP convention."

At the start of the year CIJA called on its supporters to write the government to request Canada take more Eritrean, Sudanese and other African refugees that Israel is seeking to expel. Apparently, CIJA wants an as 'Jewish and white as possible' state in the Middle East, but supports multiculturalism in Canada.

CIJA [works](#) with and co-[sponsors](#) events with the Jewish National Fund, which engages in discriminatory land-use policies outlawed in this country nearly seven decades ago. JNF Canada CEO Lance Davis [previously worked](#) as CIJA's National Jewish Campus Life director and CIJA [campaigned](#) aggressively against a 2016 Green Party resolution calling on the Canada Revenue Agency to revoke the charitable status of the JNF, which owns 13% of Israel's land and systematically discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Beyond defending racist land-use policies abroad, CIJA has stigmatized marginalized Canadians by hyping "Islamic terror" and targeting Arab and Muslim community [representatives](#), [papers](#), organizations, etc. In response to a 2016 truck attack in Nice, France, CIJA declared "[Canada](#) is not immune to...Islamist terror" and in 2017 they highlighted, "[those strains](#) of Islam that pose a real and imminent threat to Jews around the world."

In a bid to deter organizations from associating with the Palestinian cause or opposing Israeli belligerence in the region, CIJA demonizes Canadian Arabs and Muslims by constantly accusing them of supporting "terror." Last September the group said it was "[shocked](#)" Ottawa failed to rescind the charitable status of the Islamic Society of British Columbia, which CIJA accused of supporting Hamas, a group Palestinians and [most](#) of the world consider a political/resistance organization.

CIJA pushed to proscribe as a terrorist entity Mississauga-based IRFAN (International Relief Fund for the Afflicted and Needy) because it supported orphans and a hospital in Gaza through official (Hamas controlled) channels. Its 2014 press release about the first Canadian-based group designated a terrorist organization boasted that "[current](#) CIJA board member, the Honourable Stockwell Day...called attention to IRFAN-Canada's disturbing activities nearly a decade ago."

CIJA aligned itself with the xenophobic [backlash](#) against the term "Islamophobia" in [bill M-103](#), which called for collecting data on hate crimes and studying the issue of "[eliminating systemic](#) racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia." CEO Shimon Fogel said the "[wording](#)" of M-103 is flawed. Specifically, we are concerned with the word 'Islamophobia' because it is misleading, ambiguous, and politically charged." It takeschutzpah for a Jewish community leader to make this argument since, as Rick Salutin [pointed out](#), anti-Semitism is a more ambiguous term. But, Fogel would no doubt label as anti-Jewish someone who objected to the term anti-Semitism as "misleading, ambiguous, and politically charged."

If NDP officials are uncomfortable severing ties to the lobbying arm of Canada's Jewish Federations at minimum they should refuse to participate in CIJA's parliamentary internship program and lobbying trips to Israel.

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