

Organizations Accross Canada Oppose Harper Government's Threat to Criminalize Criticism of Israel

By [Independent Jewish Voices](#)

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[Independent Jewish Voices – Canada](#)

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Independent Jewish Voices – Canada (IJV) approached dozens of labour, civil rights, student and community-based organizations from across the country to endorse a statement defending the right of Canadians to freely criticize the State of Israel and employ the tactic of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as a legitimate form of protest. The statement, entitled “Oppose the Canadian government’s threat to criminalize criticism of Israel”, condemns the Canadian government’s repeated assaults on the right to freedom of expression regarding this issue.

As of April 14, the statement has 75 organizational endorsements, including from the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, La Ligue des Droits et Libertés, the Green Party of Canada, Québec Solidaire, the National Union of Public and General Employees, and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. For a full list of organizational endorsements, [click here](#).

The Canadian Labour Congress, with the endorsement of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the National Union of Public and General Employees, and Unifor, has written their own statement that echoes the concerns of the IJV-initiated statement, which you can [read here](#). The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association has also issued a similar statement, which you can [read here](#).

[Click here](#) to read an IJV-written Frequently Asked Questions regarding the statement below.

Oppose the Canadian Government’s Threat to Criminalize Criticism of Israel

In 2009, the Canadian government gave major support to the [Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism](#) (CPCCA), a group of parliamentarians who accused those challenging Israel’s unjust treatment of Palestinians of being anti-Semitic. The goal of the CPCCA was to create a climate in which criticism of Israel could be criminalized in Canada. Fortunately, that initiative was unsuccessful, thanks to widespread opposition from members of the Canadian public.

In what appears to be another attempt to suppress criticism of Israel, the Canadian government has signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with Israel which makes the claim that “the selective targeting of Israel is the new face of anti-Semitism” and declares that Canada will oppose those who support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)

movement.

Shortly after the MOU was signed, Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney announced to the UN General Assembly that the Canadian government would exercise “zero tolerance” toward “all forms of discrimination including rhetoric towards Israel, and attempts to delegitimize Israel such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.”

All this follows on the fact that in October 2014 the Canadian government passed changes to the criminal code in Bill C-13 which expanded the definition of identifiable groups to be protected against public incitement to hatred to include “nations”. This change to Canadian law parallels the situation in France, where alterations to the French penal code have led to the [conviction](#) of twenty French citizens who support the BDS movement, on charges of inciting racial hatred.

It is not yet clear how the Canadian government intends to implement a policy of “zero tolerance” to those who exercise their freedom of speech by advocating and participating in boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns to pressure Israel to respect the rights of Palestinians. What is clear, however, is that the Canadian government is determined to target people who expose and oppose Israel’s mistreatment of the Palestinians. Such efforts by the government can only put a chill on Canadian democracy and may lead to the criminalization of such dissent down the road.

We are unequivocal in our condemnation of *all* forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. It must be stressed that it is not anti-Semitic to criticize the state of Israel. Those who equate such criticism with a hatred of Jewish people are simply attempting to silence Israel’s critics.

In the face of these actions on the part of the Canadian government, we must defend the right of people in a democracy to criticize *any* government’s behaviour and to participate in boycotts designed to alter that behaviour if they choose to do so.

We, the undersigned organizations, oppose attempts by the Canadian government to criminalize criticism of or opposition to the actions of any country. (There are now 83 organizational endorsements)

Alternatives

Artistes pour la Paix

Association of Palestinian Arab Canadians

l’ASSÉ-Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante

BDS Québec

Boundary Peace Initiative

Boycott Israeli Apartheid Coalition

Canadians Arabs and Jews for a Just Peace

Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario

CJPME-Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

Canadian Friends of Sabeel

Canada Palestine Association

Canada-Palestine Support Network

Canadian Peace Alliance

CUPW-Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Le Centre International de solidarité ouvrière

Le Centre Justice et Foi

La Coalition Pas de démocratie sans voix

CUWU-College and University Workers United

Comité de solidarité de Trois-Rivières

CSU-Concordia Students Union

CSN-Confédération des syndicats nationaux

Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain – CSN

Conseil régional FTQ Montréal métropolitain

Entraide missionnaire

F4P-Faculty for Palestine

FFQ-Fédération des femmes du Québec

FTQ-Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec

FIQ-Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec

FNEEQ-Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec – CSN

FMC-Forum Musulman Canadien / CMF-Canadian Muslim Forum

FRAPRU-Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain

Green Party of Canada

Graduate Students' Association, Carleton University

Graduate Students' Association, Concordia University

Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

Hamilton & District Labour Council

Hamilton & District Labour Council's Human Rights and Peace Committee

Halifax-Dartmouth & District Labour Council

Independent Jewish Voices – Canada / Voix juives indépendantes – Canada

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, Canada

Island Peace Committee

Justice for Palestine (McGill Law)

Justice for Palestinians – Calgary

KAIROS Kelowna

Kelowna Peace Group

La Ligue des Droits et Libertés

Mid-Islanders for Justice & Peace in the Middle East

National Union of Public and General Employees

Network to Oppose War and Racism – Pacte contre l'Agression, l'Intolérance et la Xénophobie

l'Observatoire Critique des Droits Humains et ImmigrantEs

Ontario Civil Liberties Association

PAJU-Palestiniens et Juifs unis – Palestinian and Jewish Unity

Palestinian Student Association – University of Ottawa

Palestine Solidarity Network – Edmonton

Palestine Solidarity Working Group, Sudbury

Peterborough & District Labour Council

Québec Public Interest Research Group – Concordia

Québec Public Interest Research Group – McGill

Québec Solidaire

Rideau Institute

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network

Seriously Free Speech Committee

Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group

Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights – University of Calgary

Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights – McGill

Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights – University of Ottawa

Solidarity Halifax

Students Against Israeli Apartheid – Carleton

Students Against Israeli Apartheid – University of Toronto

Students Against Israeli Apartheid – York University

SFPP-Syndicat de la fonction publique et parapublique du Québec

STTP-Syndicats des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes – Région du Québec

Tadamon!

Toronto Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid

United Jewish People's Order

United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine & Israel

Universalist Muslims

University of Winnipeg Student Association

Voice of Palestine

Winnipeg Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid

* To add an organization to the list of endorsers, please send the name of the organization in an email to tyler@ijvcanada.org.

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