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SUBMISSION TO

**THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY
INTO ANTISEMITISM IN CANADA**

BY

CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

AUGUST 20, 2009

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SUBMISSION OF CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN CANADA¹

Introduction: What is Antisemitism

Antisemitism² has been described as “the longest hatred.” It is a disease of the mind and the soul which, at various times throughout history, has forbidden Jews the right to live as Jews or even the right to live. It has forced Jews to choose between their faith and participation in society, between citizenship and religious practice, between life and death.

Many definitions have been offered to describe the condition of antisemitism. Most simply, it is the hatred of Jews manifested in words and deeds. Other definitions, such as the one developed by the European Forum on Antisemitism, are worthy of consideration.³

As with all diseases, the virus that drives the infection must constantly re-invent itself in order to survive. So it is that the hatred of Jews, once focused on actual membership in a faith community, transformed itself into a murderous biological hatred. A Jew could not escape his or her Jewishness through conversion or lack of religious practice. One was Jewish not by choice or by birth, but by DNA.

Under the terror of Nazism, this biological antisemitism was yoked to the racial theories of National Socialism. Jews were perceived as a disease that infected the purity of the Aryan race. The population of Germany and those countries falling under Nazi domination was subjected to repeated messages that proclaimed the Jews to be lice, a cancer, and a bacillus. Those who doubt the power of words to motivate populations to action do so only by ignoring the deadly results of Nazism.

While the horrors of the Holocaust offer a chilling example of man’s inhumanity to man, the events of 1939-1945 can also form a barrier to our understanding of antisemitism. There is a danger that the Holocaust will be seen not only as an *example* but also as a

¹ Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) is the domestic advocacy arm of the Jewish community of Canada, and acts on behalf of the Jewish Federations across Canada. Since its inception in 1919, Congress has actively defended the fundamental human and civil rights of all Canadians and especially those of more vulnerable ethnic, religious and other minority and equality-seeking groups. CJC articulates the perspectives of the Jewish community on a variety of issues of national scope and significance that lends an institutional expertise to this submission.

² The term “anti-semitism” was coined in the late 19th century by Wilhelm Marr and has always been used to describe the condition of hatred of Jews, both individually and collectively. Those who attempt to widen the definition of the term to include all Semitic peoples do so out of error or malice. In the latter case, the purpose is to deprive Jews of even the words to describe those who hate them. It is for this reason that Canadian Jewish Congress employs the term without a hyphen. An antisemite is not a person who is “anti” Semites. Antisemites hate Jews.

³ www.european-forum-on-antisemitism.org/working-definition-of-antisemitism/english

definition: confronted by an incident of a swastika scrawled on a synagogue wall, or of a *kippah*⁴-wearing student struck by an egg as he walks home from school, we may be tempted to wave these incidents off as being insignificant compared to the massacres in the ghettos of Europe and the death camps of Nazi-occupied Poland. Such a perception can result in the paralysis of society's healthy defensive mechanisms. Danger is often not perceived until it is too late.

The old forms of antisemitism are still very much with us today. The ancient lies of Jewish culpability for the crucifixion of Jesus still find their adherents. The vicious lie of the Blood Libel – which accused Jews of murdering Christian children so that their blood could be consumed - continues to circulate.⁵ The idea that Jews were responsible for the Black Death that swept Europe in the 14th century has been revived in the modern age, with Jews being accused of creating and spreading the AIDS virus.⁶

What do all of these lies have in common? Each of them posits that the Jews, either singly or corporately, are malicious and malevolent creatures whose aims and goals are incompatible with the welfare of the societies in which they live; that the Jews will corrupt the nations that offer them shelter and that the relationship between a Jew and the established social order is not a mutually beneficial one, but parasitical in nature. Thus, to supporters of aristocratic privilege, the Jew is a carrier of democratic principles and a threat to their status. To the communist, prosperity betrays Jews as capitalists. To capitalists, the presence of Jews within the socialist movement is proof that they desire the destruction of the economic system. Only within the mind of the antisemite can such contradictions be sustained. Such conspiracy theories bring dangerous comfort to those who seek easy answers to the ills that beset the world. The answer they find is the same that was coined by Heinrich von Treitschke and later adopted by the Nazis: *Die Juden sind unser Unglück!* (The Jews are our misfortune).

⁴ The head covering traditionally worn by observant Jewish men. Its use is associated with showing reverence and respect to G-d.

⁵ The Blood Libel accused Jews of making use of the blood of Christians to prepare the unleavened bread that is consumed during the Holiday of Passover. One example of a recent use of this slander appears at <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=sd&ID=SP15000>

⁶ In a review of "Progressive" Jewish Thought and the New Antisemitism: "Although the new anti-Semitism relies on traditional themes such as that Jews are 'clannish, conspiratorial, money-hungry, manipulative, predatory, etc.,' Rosenfeld maintains that it is protean and evolving. The Palestinians, for instance, charge that Jews are poisoning their wells; Arabs claim that Jews are disseminating AIDS in the Arab world."
http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=3&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=625&PID=1666&IID=1680&TTL=Freedman_on_'Progressive'_Jewish_Thought_and_the_New_Anti-Semitism

How does contemporary antisemitism manifest itself?

And now, in the early years of the 21st century, we watch as antisemitism once again mutates. With the traditional forms of Jew-hatred banished, more or less, to the fringes of society, this longest hatred has found a new way to express itself and to wrap itself in a garment of greater respectability. Antisemitism may now no longer speak of a goal to make a country *Judenrein* (cleansed of Jews) but instead it may aim for a world that is *Judenstaatrein* (cleansed of a Jewish State): Israel within the community of nations becomes the stand-in for the individual Jew and anti-Zionism becomes the new antisemitism.

There are those who claim that the linking of anti-Zionism with antisemitism is a misleading attempt to shield Israel from legitimate criticism of its behaviours. This position is incorrect. One has only to look at the vibrancy of debate on Israeli policies and practices that takes place within the Jewish state itself to realize that Israel has no immunity from legitimate criticism. Nor should it. While not all criticism of Israel is antisemitic, some criticism does cross that line, and it does so by invoking very specific themes.

Former Israeli Cabinet Minister Natan Sharansky has noted that words and actions that demonize or de-legitimize Israel as a Jewish state, or that hold it to discriminatory double standards are unacceptable. Bradley Burston, a journalist for the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, has also provided a useful checklist to determine where the line is drawn. One such example is: *“It is racist to suggest that all peoples have a right to self-determination in the land of their ancestors, with the exception of the Jews.”*⁷

What lurks in the dark heart of antisemitism in all of its manifestations, the thing that lies in the nucleus of the virus, is paranoid suspicion. When the sociologist Theodor Adorno was asked to define the phenomenon, he put it simply: “antisemitism is a rumour about the Jews.” It is a belief that the Jews are not like us (they don't share our values); that they are not committed citizens (the charge of dual loyalties); that they are dishonest (Holocaust denial, for example, charges that Jews manufactured the “lie” of the Holocaust in order to extort money from nations and corporations and to force the creation of the state of Israel). Like a caricature from a poor novel, Jews are, for antisemites, always seen as manipulative, treacherous and evil. In earlier times, Jews were linked to Satan – the ultimate evil. Today, in more secular times, ultimate evil is

⁷ Other observations by Burston are: It is racist to maintain that Muslim historic and religious claims to Jerusalem and the Holy Land are absolute and date to antiquity, and at the same time to negate and dismiss Jewish historic and religious claims, to call Jews interlopers and usurpers and carpetbaggers in the land of their Bible, which is a sacred reference for Muslims as well. It is racist to declare Zionism as an evil before which all other evils in the world pale, and to argue that any act of violence against non-combatants is justified in the service of defeating Zionism. It is racist to take Israel and only Israel to task for its shortcomings in the areas of civil equality, sharing of resources, and the search for peace, while keeping silent or even taking pains to legitimize the same failures on the part of the countries and peoples one happens, as blindly as a pre-pubescent football fan, to support.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/955402.html>

found not in theology but in ideology. Thus we see the portrayal of Israel as an apartheid practitioner or the new Nazi state.

The comparison of Israel to Apartheid South Africa or Nazi Germany demonstrates the way in which the line between legitimate criticism and antisemitism can be crossed. Nazi Germany was so irredeemably evil that the nations of the world united to fight for its destruction. Apartheid South Africa was based on a theory and practice of racial discrimination that negated the most fundamental principles of equal human worth. To place Israel in this company is to say that it, too, is unworthy of membership in the community of nations and, indeed, cannot be permitted to survive.

There can be no doubt that such comparisons are intended to delegitimize and demonize the Jewish state. Neither the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia nor the *genocidaires* of Rwanda were compared to Nazis. This “honour” is reserved for Israel. In such a way, the Jewish people (the victims of Nazism) are made to appear indistinguishable from their oppressors. Simultaneously, the Jews become deserving of the same treatment that was meted out to the Third Reich (total destruction) and are further condemned for committing the evils that were done to them. In a similar vein, boycotts, a tool of Nazi Germany used against the Jews, are now being used against the Jewish state.

Canada has not been immune to the infection of this new form of antisemitism. In 2006, the Ontario Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees passed a resolution calling for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. Since then, elements within CUPE Ontario have attempted to promote the BDS campaign within the wider labour movement. Also in 2006, the United Church of Canada considered a BDS proposal at its triennial general council. That proposal was transformed through debate into a more balanced initiative. However, demonstrating the fashion in which the new and old forms of antisemitism resemble each other, the United Church in 2009 debated three fresh anti-Israel proposals. These proposals relied on background material that, using traditional themes of antisemitism, alleged the willingness of Jewish organizations to engage in bribery and the potential disloyalty of Jewish Canadians.

On Canadian campuses, the ritual known as Israel Apartheid Week has taken root at the University of Toronto, York University and other locations. This annual event creates a poisoned environment where Jewish and pro-Israel students become subject to harassment and intimidation.

The notion of Israel as an Apartheid state came to full bloom at the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism. This conference, better known as Durban I, was convened to discuss serious manifestations of racism, such as the plight of aboriginal peoples and to consider redress for the injustice of the Atlantic slave trade. Instead, the conference was transformed into an opportunity for the persistent and continuous demonization of Israel. Virtually every session within the NGO forum became an occasion for condemnation of Israel. Jewish delegates were silenced while copies of the infamous Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a centuries-old forgery alleging a Jewish plot to dominate the world, were openly sold. Durban I, described by Canadian MP Irwin Cotler as a “festival of hatred,” demonstrated - not for the first time - how international

organizations such as the United Nations can themselves be used by activists with a darker agenda. It is for this reason that Canadian Jewish Congress was so vocal in its concerns regarding the Durban Review Conference, held in 2009 and commonly referred to as Durban II, and why we were so appreciative of the principled stand taken by the government of Canada, with support from the opposition Liberals and New Democrats, as it declined to attend this tainted event.

Why is the work of this Inquiry important to Canadians?

Canadian Jewish Congress is deeply appreciative of the efforts that have been extended by the Government of Canada to speak out against antisemitism. The establishment of the Inquiry demonstrates not only the commitment of the government to engage in this matter but also speaks to its readiness to join with other democracies facing the challenge of combating this most persistent of hatreds.

But this is not simply a battle that is being waged on behalf of a single community. In many ways, the fight is not simply against antisemitism but for the values and principles which lie at the foundation of our democratic society.

Canadian Jewish Congress is fully supportive of the current position adopted by the Government of Canada, as expressed at international forums, that antisemitism is a unique form of hatred that requires customized remedies as opposed to generalized anti-racism strategies. That said, the uniqueness of the malady should not be interpreted to mean that the risks of the infection spreading more widely are not great.

One of the measures of a society's health and vitality is the manner in which it cares for those who exist at its margins. Antisemitism, left unchecked, has shown itself to be lethally effective at moving Jews to that precarious zone. More broadly, though, the existence of antisemitism hints at weakness within the structures of society, with implications not only for minority groups but for the majority as well.

It is perhaps cliché to say that Jews have often acted as the “canary in the coal mine,” providing an early warning of noxious substances that will soon endanger the health of society as a whole. Although antisemitism is aimed at a single community, its dangers extend more broadly. Hatred that is directed at a particular group can soon become an entrenched habit that will reach out to include other groups the haters may deem unacceptable. The entire process erodes Canadian values and can eventually endanger any minority group.

What can the Parliament of Canada do?

The importance of the work of the Inquiry cannot be overstated. We would be remiss if we did not continue to emphasize what is at stake in the task that lies ahead. In 2007, the doors of the Beth Israel Synagogue in Edmonton were defaced with a swastika. To make the message clear, accompanying graffiti proclaimed “This means not welcome” and “get out!!!” We can think of no clearer explication. Antisemites and other haters seek to disenfranchise, isolate and marginalize their victims and, in so doing, render them helpless. What is the antidote? For that we need only turn to the events of Spring 2004.

In the early part of 2004, the Jewish community of Canada was the victim of a series of antisemitic incidents that reached an intensity that had not been seen for decades. In response to incidents, including a graffiti spree in York Region where 13 separate instances of vandalism were recorded, the overturning of gravestones in a Jewish cemetery, and, most frightening of all, the firebombing of a Jewish school in Montreal, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and Canadian Jewish Congress organized a community rally. We thought that the event would provide an opportunity for a beleaguered community to come together. It turned out to be so much more. Politicians requested an opportunity to offer their support but more to the point, representatives of virtually every ethnocultural community in Toronto came to the event and filled the building. As the crowd overflowed the building and spilled onto the street, the message of the evening was clear. We were not alone. The victims of hate were embraced and protected and, on that evening, it was the perpetrators who were isolated.⁸

Domestically, Canada’s well-respected policy of multiculturalism continues to encourage communities to maintain and nurture their ethno-cultural uniqueness: this notion of “respect for diversity” is one of the hallmarks of Canadian society. At the same time, though, what is required is shared respect for the important principle that while citizens may have multiple identities and attachments, they must rigorously be committed to an overarching set of shared Canadian values. This is the essence of values-based citizenship: along with the rights and freedoms that accrue to Canadian citizenship come responsibilities and obligations.

In terms of the present discussion, this means the promotion of a shared understanding among Canadians, whether born here or recently-arrived, that while opinions—even those passionately held—can be freely expressed, such discourse must be conducted in ways compatible with basic Canadian values including democracy, civility, social harmony, inter-community respect and understanding. Our laws, though, must make it clear that certain ideas – those which promote hatred for example – are beyond the pale regardless of how nicely they are expressed. Multiculturalism can coexist with the core values entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but only if it is

⁸ It is worth noting that 10 years ago, in Toronto, a group of neo-Nazi skinheads demonstrated in front of a hotel in Scarborough where Roma refugee claimants were being housed. Their signs provided an accessible primer to the way in which language can be used to dehumanize and intimidate: “Honk if you hate Gypsies”; “Canada is not a garbage can”; “you are a cancer.”

understood as inclusive rather than exclusive, and as long as it recognizes that diversity must exist within limits defined by Canadian values.

If the government of a democratic nation has any role in fighting hate then it must do two things simultaneously: in both the domestic and international arenas, it must model the behaviour that it wishes to see and it must create the framework in which men and women of good will can act, and in which persons of ill will cannot.

Conclusion

The submission of Canadian Jewish Congress has attempted to map out the key areas for the Inquiry to investigate as it considers how best to combat antisemitism in Canada. We respectfully request that you review the recommendations that follow this paper. We trust that out of this process there will emerge a form of permanent mechanism able to oversee the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations across party, departmental and jurisdictional lines and to foster ongoing innovation and research into fighting the threat posed by antisemitism to the Jewish community of Canada and to all Canadians.

We look forward to the opportunity to appear before the members of the Inquiry at its sessions in the fall to elaborate upon the concepts put forward in this brief and to share our expertise in other areas of concern to the panel.

All of the above is respectfully submitted in the hope of making a positive contribution to the important work of this Inquiry.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS TO THE INQUIRY

Promotion of Canadian Values

Canadian values of diversity and inclusion suggest that all sectors of Canadian civil society as well as the public sector have a responsibility to work together to challenge and condemn all manifestations and purveyors of antisemitism in this country. This must be based on a clear understanding of contemporary antisemitism, which includes its anti-Israel elements as well as Holocaust denial, trivialization or distortion. The inquiry should recommend:

- 1) That political leaders stress the need for civil discourse, based on Canadian values, among groups in Canada, especially when dealing with contentious political issues.
- 2) That funding guidelines should be strengthened to withhold any form of government funding or other support for NGOs that preach hatred or antisemitism - particularly those involved in integration and settlement of new Canadians where they may influence understanding of the responsibilities and obligations of Canadian citizenship.

Involvement in International Forums

Canada has taken an important step by joining the community of governments dealing with antisemitism through its participation in the London Conference on Antisemitism. It has already undertaken a leadership role to further this work through its commitment to host the next international conference on antisemitism in Ottawa in 2011. The inquiry should recommend:

- 3) That the government move quickly to ratify and/or enact the various international instruments dealing with antisemitism (including international commitments to combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial, including but not limited to, the Berlin Declaration of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and similar UN resolutions) and prepare constructive suggestions and resolutions befitting its role as host for the 2011 conference.
- 4) That political and diplomatic leaders take up their special obligation to challenge expressions of antisemitism and threats of genocide in the international arena, including the rejection of such statements by foreign leaders, foreign diplomats and representatives at international forums such as the UN and through international conventions and protocols to which Canada is a signatory.

Building Institutional Capacity

As part of its efforts to combat antisemitism, Canada must strengthen its institutional capacity to deal with the issue both internationally and domestically. This will require the design of metrics that will allow it to objectively understand the dimensions of the problem and the development of a “scorecard” to track progress and respond to domestic institutional needs. These tools will help Canada place its own progress on the issue in an international context. The inquiry should recommend:

- 5) The establishment of a permanent, adequately funded secretariat within the CPCCA to oversee future Coalition activities, monitor implementation of priority recommendations and ensure compliance and accountability (including annual reporting by each Department on the implementation of Inquiry recommendations and other action items within their jurisdictions).
- 6) The creation of a permanent, publicly-accessible “ambassadorial” position under the auspices of the most appropriate Department (Foreign Affairs, Justice, Multiculturalism) to develop and implement policies, projects and research on combating antisemitism, including the provision of funds to NGOs to further these aims.⁹ This office should also table an annual Report to Parliament on progress made and challenges outstanding in combating antisemitism in Canada, triggering a government response.

Building Analytical Capacity

The fight against antisemitism requires reliable statistics, measurement and analysis. Canada should be at the forefront of developing reliable tools based on international consensus on definitions and measurement techniques. This would allow Canadian authorities to better understand the context of such hate crimes domestically and to place them in an international context. This would simultaneously provide assistance to international bodies through input from Canada. The inquiry should recommend:

- 7) That police departments at all levels of jurisdiction be encouraged to establish dedicated hate and bias crime units with a universal, standardized definition of what constitutes such crimes. They should also be encouraged to establish specialized training to understand, recognize and respond to such crimes appropriately.
- 8) That a national database of hate and bias crimes be developed to track trends and patterns, and that Statistics Canada update and modernize methodologies for capturing and analyzing such data. Data compilation must be as uniform as possible among all jurisdictions to ensure analysis will use comparable information.
- 9) That a comprehensive database of antisemitic content on the Internet be established to allow for better understanding and more effective tracking of contemporary manifestations of antisemitism worldwide and in Canada. Such a database would

⁹ This office would also monitor Canada’s compliance with international agreements and treaties dealing with the dissemination of hate (this office would be analogous to the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism established by the US State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour).

require international agreement on uniform and objective standards and definitions as well as measurement and reporting techniques, in order to ensure all database users globally are comparing similar information.

Putting the Canadian Government's House in Order

The Government of Canada must ensure its legal and administrative systems are doing all they can to engage in the fight against antisemitism. Existing legal protections should be maintained new regulatory initiatives should be investigated, and the provision of appropriate training should also be facilitated. The Inquiry should recommend:

- 10) That the existing statutory “fence of protection,” both in the Criminal Code and in Human Rights legislation, should be reaffirmed and, where appropriate, strengthened.
- 11) That regulatory measures, especially in the field of telecommunications, that are consistent with Charter standards for the protection of free expression should be considered. This should include ratification of the *Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime and the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime*.
- 12) That appropriate training be provided for members of Federal Boards and Tribunals that deal with hate speech and antisemitism to ensure appropriate application of the law.
- 13) That the Security Infrastructure Pilot Project be made permanent with sustainable funding for the Jewish and other at-risk communities to upgrade security at communal institutions in the face of the contemporary threats of violence.

Working with Provinces and Independent Institutions to Combat Antisemitism

While respecting the Constitutional division of powers that places Education and Administration of Justice under exclusive provincial jurisdiction, the Canadian government can work with the provinces, courts and police to combat antisemitism. The Inquiry should recommend:

- 14) That the Government of Canada work with the provinces, courts and police to ensure training and educational opportunities are available within the criminal justice system to help it cope with the unique challenge of hate crimes and antisemitism.
- 15) That it similarly work with the provinces to develop educational resources to help sensitize Canadian students to the dangers of antisemitism and the importance of joining the struggle against it.¹⁰

¹⁰ An excellent example of an anti-racism resource is Choose Your Voice. This program, developed by the Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee in partnership with FAST (Fighting Antisemitism Together) provides students in grades 6-8 with materials for understanding the nature of antisemitism and other forms of racism. The key message of the program is that students (and all citizens) have a responsibility to “choose the voice of the hero” and not stand idly by (much less participate) in the face of racism.

Meeting the Special Challenges of Antisemitism on Campus

Colleges and Universities are within the provincial sphere of jurisdiction, and are undoubtedly entitled to the respect that is accorded to the principle of academic freedom. Nevertheless, it is on the campuses of these institutions that some of the most troubling and pernicious manifestations of the new antisemitism have arisen. The Government of Canada and the Parliamentary Inquiry can each play constructive roles in helping academic institutions better meet the challenges posed by the new antisemitism. The Inquiry should recommend:

- 16) That the Federal Government and/or the Inquiry consider offering assistance sponsoring conferences and other similar initiatives, or the issuance of statements of principle to help combat hate on campus.
- 17) That the Federal Government and/or the Inquiry work with the provinces to help administrators develop suitable tools and structures to deal with this burgeoning problem in an effective and principled manner.

Respectfully submitted
On behalf of Canadian Jewish Congress
AUGUST 20, 2009



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