



**From the Office of the Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism**

It's hard to believe, but we're already well into May -trees are in bloom, patios are open, and Canadians have finally ditched their cumbersome coats for the season. It's fitting that May; a time of renewal and freedom is also Jewish Heritage Month given that no one understands the importance of renewal and freedom more than the Jewish People.

In late April, Jews around the world finished celebrating Passover-the festival of freedom, where the youngest child at the seder asks, "Why is this night different from all other nights?". It feels like this very question is as relevant as ever, "Why is this Jewish Heritage Month different than all the ones before?"

The alarming and disturbing levels of antisemitism we're seeing across Canada make this Jewish Heritage Month feel differently than those of years past. We're seeing antisemitism spread across our streets and our campuses so much so that many Jews feel the need to hide their Jewishness, whether it be by tucking their Magen Davids under their shirt or taking down their mezuzahs. I am actively engaging with provincial ministers of higher education and university presidents about the encampments that have encroached upon the quads of many university campuses. I continue to advocate for university codes of conduct to be reviewed and enforced to make sure that Jewish students feel safe. I believe strongly in civil discourse and freedom of expression, but that freedom cannot and does not include hate speech and calls for violence against the Jewish and Israeli community.

Therefore, this Jewish Heritage Month holds an even more profound significance as, despite the hatred they face, Jews across the country will proudly celebrate their rich cultural tapestry, enduring traditions, and invaluable contributions they've made to Canadian society. There has never been a more important time to reflect on the remarkable journey of Jewish Canadians, whose resilience, determination, and unwavering spirit have left an indelible mark on our country.

This is my second communique, following my first one in December. It will provide an update on how my office has been working diligently to fulfill my mandate to preserve Holocaust remembrance and combat antisemitism by tackling our main areas of focus: law enforcement, education, data collection, universities, online harm, and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. To follow the work we've been doing, I can be found at:

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I wish everyone a happy, healthy, and proud Jewish Heritage Month.

## Budget 2024

Earlier this year I spoke with Minister Freeland about the rising antisemitism in this country. I was very pleased to see that in Budget 2024, tabled on April 16<sup>th</sup>, significant measures proposed to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and to combat antisemitism. We know that an increase in funding alone will not solve the serious epidemic of antisemitism we are facing here in Canada. However, this will help us get some of the hard work done, that is, to address the underlying conditions that allow antisemitism to flourish in the country. Here are some of the highlights from the budget:



*Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Freeland*

- Increase in funding to the Security Infrastructure Program (SIP) to support the safety and security of Jewish communities.
- Increase in funding to support police colleges to develop training on handling hate crimes.
- Increase in funding for specialized training to crown prosecutors on the unique dynamics of hate crimes. My office will be closely engaged to ensure that antisemitism is incorporated in these trainings.
- Increase in funding to help Statistics Canada improve data collection on hate crimes across Canada. Very important as it relates to Jewish communities and tracking the rise in antisemitism we have seen in recent years, especially after Oct 7.
- Funding announced to support the construction of the Montreal Holocaust Museum.
- Increase in funding to support initiatives that seek to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and help improve Canadians' understanding, awareness towards the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism.
- Increase in funding to my office to ensure that we have the support to closely track the points above and ensure that antisemitism is addressed throughout.

## Canada's Definition of Antisemitism

My office has been working on a handbook that will serve as a toolkit on the application of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism that has been adopted by the Canadian Parliament and most provincial governments. I have travelled from coast-to-coast meeting with stakeholders of all stripes to get their feedback on the handbook. Simply put- we want to get this right. Once complete, the handbook will be a practical tool for policy makers to be able to use the definition in various contexts. So, keep your eyes out for the handbook in the coming months.

## Toronto



I was fortunate enough to spend Purim in Toronto this year. I attended an important and moving event at Temple Sinai to honour the memory of Judih Weinstein Haggai, a Canadian Israeli who was murdered by Hamas on October 7<sup>th</sup>. It was meaningful to listen to Judih's voice recordings of her poetry, and to celebrate the kindness that she bestowed upon everyone she met.

I was honoured to speak at the rally held by the Canadian Women Against Antisemitism, in which 3000 people stood shoulder to shoulder while calling for an end to hatred in our streets and in our institutions. This event reminded me once again why we are stronger together.

I also met with the formidable Victoria Mancinelli of LiUNA Canada to discuss how allies can step up to support the Jewish community. Victoria's voice has been such an important one in the fight against antisemitism in this country.

### Edmonton, Calgary, and Montréal



I had the pleasure of seeing the incredible work that the Jewish communities of Edmonton and Calgary are doing to help preserve Holocaust remembrance and combat antisemitism. While in Alberta, I met with both Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek and Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, as well as Calgary and Edmonton's Chiefs of Police and some of their key hate crimes teams, to discuss the rise of antisemitism that we're seeing all across the country, including in Alberta. I emphasized the importance and urgency of ensuring the safety of the Jewish community. I also met with the Chief of Staff to the Alberta's Minister of Education to discuss their plans for mandatory Holocaust Education. The Jewish Federations of Calgary and Edmonton are doing exceptional work to serve their local communities, and we were honoured to learn about all the important initiatives that they have on the go. We will maintain our advocacy for assistance for all Jewish communities across the country to ensure these communities continue to flourish.



*With Victoria Mancinelli*

In Montreal, I was proud to stand with community leaders from every level of government to insist on the safety of the Jewish community and their right to be able to live without harassment and intimidation.

### Washington

Antisemitism and hate go beyond borders - especially in today's digital world. That's why I travelled to Washington to engage with my counterparts, as well as members of the U.S Government, and leaders from Google, Microsoft to discuss how we can work together to tackle the spike in antisemitism we've seen since October 7.

My main takeaways from these meetings were:



*With Deborah Lipstadt*

- Antisemitism cannot be seen only as a threat to Jewish communities. It's also a threat to democracy, national and international security. My colleague Deborah Lipstadt and I reiterated the importance of expanding our conversations to include foreign interference as we know that malicious actors - both domestic and foreign - use antisemitism and Holocaust distortion to destabilize societies. **I'll be connecting with other Special Envoys to help craft a guideline document that helps governments/civil society organizations respond to the cross-border nature of antisemitism.**



- While governments play a role in combatting antisemitism, the private sector needs to do their part - particularly the tech giants. Through discussions with Google and Microsoft, it became clear that businesses have a crucial role in keeping their platforms safe. An important aspect of this is having clear definitions of what constitutes antisemitism on their platforms. **I will be in touch with the tech companies and private businesses to encourage them to use the IHRA working definition of antisemitism - endorsed by the Canadian parliament - as a guideline.**

### Government meetings

I, like all of you, am horrified at the antisemitism I'm seeing on our streets, campuses, and even in our houses of government. I have spent the last few months meeting with various leaders at all levels of government to make sure they take action to curb the Jew-hate we're seeing in Canada. I've spoken with mayors, university presidents, chiefs of police, premiers, and federal ministers about the consequences of the inertia regarding antisemitism. These are not easy conversations, but they're necessary, and ones that I will keep having until I see concrete action taking place.

For example, we met with Chief Demkiw and his team at Toronto Police Services in January, at the height of the protests over the 401 in Armour Heights. We met with the heads of Hate Crimes Units for the Vancouver



*With Toronto Police Chief Demkiw*

Police Department and the Ottawa Police Services. My staff attended the Building a Case Against Hate Conference, an annual gathering of law enforcement officials put on by the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre (FSWC), which provides networking and training to law enforcement officials from across the country. We continue to work with law enforcement and education providers, like the FSWC, to identify needs in antisemitism training and how they can be effectively and systemically addressed. We also supported law enforcement in commemorating the Holocaust. In particular, I spoke at RCMP Headquarters in Ottawa for their Holocaust Remembrance Day event in January.

An important aspect of my international mandate is finding areas for collaboration on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism with foreign representatives in Canada. To that effect I met with several diplomats over the past few months including Yuliya Kovaliv, Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada. We discussed the importance of international collaboration in addressing the rise of misinformation, especially as to antisemitism and Russian's invasion of Ukraine. I also met with Dr. Mahmoud Eboo, Representative of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat to Canada, Melita Gabrič, Ambassador of the EU to Canada, Sylvia Meier-Kajbic and Sabine Sparwasser, Ambassadors of Austria and Germany to Canada.



*With Ottawa mayor Mark Sutcliffe*

## International travels

### The Organization of Security and Cooperation for Europe (OSCE) conference on addressing antisemitism:



I participated in the OSCE's conference on national security and antisemitism in early April in Malta. This is an important annual event on the OSCE calendar. The conference included a meeting amongst Special Envoys focusing on effective data collection and the need to go beyond recorded incidents of antisemitism and capturing intimidation and anticipatory intimidation - instances where Jewish people hide objects that may identify them as Jewish, as a self-protection measure.

At the main plenary I was asked to speak on, "Countering antisemitism: from the cyber sphere to the real world", alongside Aurore Bergé, France's Minister for Gender Equality and Combatting Discrimination, Eric Pickles, the UK's Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, and 3 other experts.

I spoke about how for Holocaust and antisemitism education, the burden cannot only be placed on schools. It's also vitally important to educate the public through museums, libraries, and public advocacy, with resource materials that appeal to individuals from all walks of life.

And perhaps most importantly while in Malta I participated in a meeting with the families of Israeli hostages, organized by the Permanent Mission of Israel to the OSCE. I am inspired by their perseverance and resilience and continue to advocate to #BringThemHomeNow."



In mid-April, I was in Brussels to meet with the Belgian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and heard that the Belgian Jewish community, much like our Canadian Jewish community is feeling a sense of abandonment, disappointment and isolation following October 7.

Of particular interest during my meeting with the office of Belgium's Minister of Gender Equality and Diversity and Inclusion, was Belgium's recent establishment of a national mechanism on antisemitism, under the leadership of an independent public institution. This mechanism comprises both civil society and government representatives at all levels and includes 2 plenary meetings per year and thematic working groups. The two priorities for 2024 are (1) education and (2) safety. I will be looking into the applicability of reproducing a similar mechanism here in Canada.

Other key meetings included a discussion with Katharina von Schnurbein, the European Commission's Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life since 2015. We discussed our many shared initiatives including combatting online harm, advocating for greater antisemitism training, correcting the absence of antisemitism in EDI/DEI, and ensuring a better understanding of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

## Coming Up

I wish I could say that it will be a quiet few months coming up, but sadly antisemitism continues to grow and seemingly thrive in Canada.

My team and I will be finalizing the handbook on the implementation on Canada's definition of antisemitism to guide policy and decision makers.

I will be working on the implementation of the new funding from the budget for Holocaust education and awareness. We know that there is a direct correlation between knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust and modern-day antisemitism, therefore the work to combat Holocaust denialism and distortion is more important than ever before. I will be gathering Canada's top Holocaust educators for a symposium on how to get Canadian schools ready for the updated Holocaust curriculum starting in 2025.

I will continue my advocacy with provincial ministers of higher education and university presidents to ensure that our Jewish students and faculty have a supportive environment in which to work and study.

Finally, I will be continuing to meet with leaders from all levels of government to ensure the Canadian Jewish voice is heard loud and clear. Antisemitism is a stain on the fabric of democracy and should not be tolerated in this country. I will continue to call for strong and courageous leadership to take a stand against the epidemic of antisemitism.

