



UNITED JEWISH PEOPLE'S ORDER – Canada

585 Cranbrooke Avenue Toronto, Ontario M6A 2X9

Telephone: 416-789-5502 Fax: 416-789-5981 Email: info@ujpo.org
Website: www.ujpo.org

January 22 2024

As members of the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO) we have been living in a state of heartbreak in recent months. We were horrified on October 7, 2023, when Hamas brutally killed 1200 Israeli and other citizens, and took approximately 240 hostage. We have watched in horror at the genocidal bombardment of Gaza from the State of Israel, which has relentlessly and systemically killed over 25,000 Palestinians, nearly 10,000 of them children, with the death toll rising daily from continued bombardment, starvation and disease. Nearly all of Gaza's two million civilians have been displaced and rendered homeless.

As the violence in Gaza, perpetrated by the State of Israel, continues, this horrendous siege is affecting our communities at home as well. We have seen and continue to see a rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Palestinian racism in Canada. As a progressive Jewish organization with a 100-year history in Canada, we know we are in an unprecedented moment and it is urgent that we raise our voices.

At UJPO, we have diverse identities across generations of Jews in Canada. Among us, our families have experienced intense antisemitism, suffered the consequences of the Holocaust, and experienced displacement and dispossession. Through all this, we yearn for a better world. Generations of progressive Jews have struggled to find safe haven for all, away from oppression and genocide, and some hoped that this could emerge in the contested land of Israel/Palestine. It has not. Other prominent Jewish organizations, with substantive resources and influence, have insisted that challenging the government actions of the State of Israel is antisemitic. It is not. We insist that no amount of atrocities – historical or current – can or should ever be used to justify the oppression of another people. We perceive that this oppression is what the State of Israel and its international allies are doing today, at the cost of Palestinian lives. Not in our name.

As Jewish people we know the importance of challenging actual antisemitism. We condemn in the strongest terms the recent antisemitic attacks targeting Jewish schools and synagogues here in Canada – such as those in Toronto and Peel Region, Ontario, and Hampstead near Montreal, and the firebombing of a synagogue in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec. We must all work together to challenge antisemitism when it appears, wherever it appears, from the far right or even in our movements.

The rise of actual antisemitism only underscores the importance of resisting and opposing claims that falsely equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Such claims only work to trivialize real anti-Jewish racism. Although the Israeli government may claim to act in the name of all Jews, and even as some Jewish institutions here at home repeat this claim, we know that equating the actions of the State of Israel with Jews living in the diaspora is false. There are many varieties of Zionism, but none of them can be equated with Judaism, Jewish culture or Jewish identity as a whole.

There have always been Jewish ideologies that support living in diaspora—such as *doikayt* (hereness) or diasporism—philosophies that celebrate the importance of the culture created wherever we are, prioritizing living full lives as Jews wherever we find ourselves.

The United Jewish People's Order was founded on the values of universalism, social justice and human rights. UJPO celebrates Yiddishkayt, an aspect of Jewish culture and language rooted in the tradition of the diaspora. Our commitment to Jewish values includes solidarity with all oppressed peoples here on Turtle Island, where we find ourselves.

This means we stand for mutual liberation: as we challenge antisemitism we challenge all forms of racism. As instances of antisemitism rise in Canada, we are also seeing instances of anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia. Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East recently released a study that outlines a rise in anti-Palestinian hate crimes in 2022 and 2023, which cites examples of people fired or suspended from their jobs for involvement in Palestine solidarity campaigns; assaults for wearing keffiyehs; and assaults for displaying Palestinian flags or participating in peaceful solidarity marches. We know that the widespread adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, which in its examples conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism, contributes to the rise in incidents of anti-Palestinian racism.

Let us be clear. We resist antisemitism, anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia together. We will continue to demand that all people here and in Israel/Palestine should have equal access to life, freedom and fundamental human rights. None of us will be free until all of us are free.

United Jewish People's Order Antisemitism Working Group.