

From: Medicine Dean

Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2023 5:02 PM

To: DARA Board of Directors

Subject: RE: Open Statement To The University Of Toronto Temerty Faculty Of Medicine From Jewish Physician Faculty

Dear Dr. Kadish:

I very much respect and appreciate you writing to me with a statement of principles endorsed by so many of our esteemed colleagues. There is no question these past weeks have been horrific. The trauma, distress and fear that have been triggered by the October 7 attacks in Israel is palpable, and the abhorrent acts of antisemitism in the GTA and beyond are extremely disturbing. I too share immense anguish over the suffering and deaths of all innocent civilians, Israeli and Palestinian.

Without commenting on any specific situations – which we are prohibited from doing for privacy reasons related to personnel matters – I can say emphatically that we condemn antisemitism in our learning environments and research spaces. As interim Dean, I assure you that the Temerty Faculty of Medicine affirms faculty members' rights to defend their position on Israel in accordance with University and Faculty policies.

With respect to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, the University of Toronto gave careful consideration to this and decided against adoption for reasons you may refer to in Recommendation 3 of the [2021 Report of the Anti-Semitism Working Group](#). Temerty Medicine is supporting all of the recommendations from this Working Group. Relatedly, I note the encouraging sign that the University has just announced the appointment of a Director for Faith and Anti-Racism in the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office, further to Recommendation 2 of the Anti-Semitism Working Group.

We are also working with deans across Canada, through the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC), to understand better how to provide supports and resources to faculty, staff and learners who are all navigating these challenging issues.

On the matter of academic freedom, and freedom of expression, these are indeed not an absolute: The University's policies clearly recognize that there are competing rights which must be considered, and here I draw your attention specifically to <https://freespeech.utoronto.ca/>, where these matters are addressed in several policies, statements, and reports.

My hope is that together we can resist the forces of polarization that threaten our community and find a way forward to stand together as human beings who yearn for a peaceful end to the suffering of all those in mortal danger and in moral distress.

As I have said before and continue to believe deeply, kindness, compassion and respect must guide our actions.

Sincerely,

Patricia Houston

Patricia Houston, MD, MEd, FRCPC

Interim Dean, Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Interim Vice Provost, Relations with Health Care Institutions, University of Toronto

Vice Dean Medical Education, Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain