



November 22, 2023

## **OPEN STATEMENT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE FROM JEWISH PHYSICIAN FACULTY**

The Israel Gaza War is causing agony for many TFOM faculty and polarization in the TFOM.

We feel immense anguish over the suffering and deaths of innocent Israelis and Palestinians. We believe in the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to self-determination and statehood.

Yet, on the streets of Toronto and in the TFOM itself, the hostile and belligerent position towards Jews who identify with the state of Israel, or who identify as Zionists, is discriminatory.

The distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is tissue thin. Only for Jews is self-determination and autonomy – Zionism – denounced as a racist endeavour. Only for Jews is living in their indigenous homeland considered “colonialism”.

We, therefore, hold the following as central to our identity as Jews in the TFOM:

- We affirm the right of TFOM faculty to be openly Zionist and to support the right of Israel to exist and defend itself as a Jewish state and for those faculty to be free of public ostracism, recrimination, exclusion, and discrimination in the TFOM.
- To us, being a Zionist in 2023 means that we accept the right and the necessity of the survival of the Jewish people, and the existence of a Jewish state that ensures their survival. Anything that undermines or threatens Israel’s survival, undermines, or threatens the existence of the Jewish people and is, ipso facto, antisemitic.
- We know that accusations against Israel as “apartheid”, “colonialist”, or “white supremacist” or committing genocide are mendacious and aim to promote the argument that Israel should be dismantled as a Jewish state, making such accusations themselves antisemitic.
- We reject as antisemitic any blame on Israel for Hamas’ slaughter of Jews and non-Jews, and any justification for the slaughter because of historical context, opposition to settlements and occupation, or legitimate resistance.
- We reject as antisemitic any claims of equivalency between the Israeli people’s right to self-defence against terrorist groups who seek to annihilate Israel and the Jewish people, and the Hamas terror attacks against Israeli civilians.
- We reject as antisemitic any claims of equivalency between the duty of Israel to rescue its citizens who are being held hostage by Hamas and the Hamas terror attacks against Israeli civilians.

- We reject as antisemitic the imposition of a collective political responsibility on Jews to denounce Israel simply because they are Jews.
- We affirm the right of Jews alone to define antisemitism for themselves absent any interference from those outside of the Jewish community.
- We implore the TFOM in any investigation of antisemitism to apply the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.
- We reject the expectation that Jews must reach total consensus on the definition of antisemitism; we know that the vast majority of Jewish TFOM faculty endorse the IHRA definition; and we disavow the weight given to a tiny minority of Jewish faculty who object to the IHRA definition.
- We abjure the cover of “academic freedom” within the TFOM to permit unrestrained antagonism by some TFOM faculty to Zionist Jews and their publicization of grotesque and antisemitic characterizations of Israel, the only Jewish state.
- We believe that academic freedom is not absolute. In particular, leaders in academic medicine with power over learners and faculty, who in some cases are the sole leader responsible for thousands of learners and faculty, should not be issuing statements which collide with equity, diversity and inclusion for Jews or which make Jews feel unsafe and unwelcome in the TFOM and which are unrelated or unessential to their core academic role, research, and publishing of results.
- We ask and expect that Jews receive the same consideration and protection that the TFOM provides to other minority groups.