

# Dahlia Kurtz: Police must start cracking down on hate rallies

Enforcing existing laws would be a great place to start

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Pro-Palestinian protesters gather along the route of the United Jewish Appeal's annual Walk With Israel march, in Toronto on June 9. Photo by Arlyn McAdorey/The Canadian Press

In June, the Toronto Police Service Board issued an open request for public input into the priorities for its new public order policy, which will detail how the force handles "protests, demonstrations and occupations."

Enforcing existing laws would be a great place to start. The No. 1 job of a police officer is to keep the peace.

Jews account for less than one per cent of Canada's population, yet we are the victims of 70 per cent of religious hate crimes. This surge of hate over the past 10 months underscores an utter failure of leadership and police response.

So here's my submission to the board. Some of the ideas are costly, but they are necessary if we hope to maintain a city that is free from hatred and safe for all its residents. And some ideas can be easily implemented with virtually no cost.

Police need to understand words and symbols. For instance, inverted triangles (worn or gestured) are modern swastikas. Hamas terrorists use the symbol to mark people on their kill list.

Likewise, those who are chanting for Jews to go back to Europe are essentially telling Jews to return to the gas chambers. It's a call for genocide.

And when a loudspeaker publicly plays Hamas spokesperson Abu Obaida shouting, "It is jihad, victory or martyrdom," as happened at a Toronto rally, it is a call to annihilate Jews.

All of these are worthy of hate-crime charges, yet police have been reluctant to lay any.

Protests are advertised and live-streamed on social media. Police should monitor this. They need resources to identify these events, pinpoint the organizers and prepare for any possible illegal activities, including hate speech, before they occur.

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Once police start targeting and arresting a group's leaders, others will emerge. Police should thus monitor these groups online, to see who these nefarious individuals are.

The police department must enhance its ability to investigate cybercrime and online hate. A 30-person Hate Crime Unit that also has to deal with mischief and other crimes is inadequate. Police must have the ability to thoroughly investigate protest leaders for possible foreign interference.

Follow the money. How do these people manage to attend so many protests? Where's all the money coming from? Who pays for those massive flags and banners?

Police should also use social media to proactively communicate with the public about what's unacceptable, such as: no masks, no inverted triangles, no telling Jews to go back to Europe, no calls to globalize the intefadeh (October 7 was an intefadeh — they are now calling for it on a global scale) and so on.

How do you stop potentially illegal actions at large events that include thousands of people? If you can't prevent the rally, prevent the rally point.

Also, this is where police become paralyzed by inaction. But that's the wrong approach to take. Police must gain the respect of protesters by showing that they are willing and able to arrest those who are breaking the law.

Recently, an officer in Brampton, Ont., was seen on camera telling two protesters to [remove their masks](#). Precedent set.

Police need bodies at these protests to capture the offences. I understand they may want to hold off on making arrests until after a protest to prevent riots. But it's hard to keep track of people at these demonstrations — especially when they're all dressed the same. Patience and follow-up will fail without the proper manpower.

Let's change this. Start setting examples. Make arrests, mid-protest.

The Toronto Police Service should develop criteria and policies that allow its officers to deal with breaches of the peace at large protests. The objective should be to remove offending individuals from the scene and restore the peace.

We also need more uniformed officers and investigative units. We need more people on the ground to collect evidence. What are they chanting? What flags do they wave? If these findings result in hate-related offences, police have an obligation to make arrests.

Police should be documenting repeated expressions of hate, in order to build robust cases against these individuals. Much of this can be crowdsourced from people like myself who have been documenting this behaviour for months.

Police should also have contingency plans. For example, the department should have plans in place to deploy officers in response to unexpected and urgent situations.

And police should stop integrating Islamophobia into every mention of Jew-hate. For instance, when you send an officer into a temple, as Chief Myron

Demkiw did to take his place at the Pride of Israel town hall on July 31, please do not have that officer stand in front of the Jewish community, in a synagogue that was vandalized at the hand of Jew-hate, and read off a piece of paper [preaching about Islamophobia](#) — repeatedly.

I discovered [a video](#) of Chief Demkiw in a mosque in June. He wanted to assure the Muslim community that the police were doing everything they could to “return a sense of safety” in the face of “Islamophobic hate.”

Do you think the chief spoke to them about Jew-hate, too?

Now that I’ve answered the Toronto Police Service Board’s request, I’d like it to respond to my questions.

Who will sit down and examine these suggestions? What’s the board’s stance on the protests? What would the board like to see Toronto police do?

I get it: you want to keep the population happy. But what population do you want to keep happy?

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*Dahlia Kurtz is a writer, speaker and radio talk show host. Her latest book, “Dear Zionist, You are not alone: 18 Letters of Hope and Light,” is available at [DahliaKurtz.com](#) and on Amazon.*