I am an Israeli Canadian Clinical Psychologist who has lived in Toronto for 35 years. I am proud to say that NOT ONCE have I encountered antisemitism or was worried for my safety as an Israeli/Jewish person prior to October 7th, 2023. But that is no longer the case as I am sad to say that no longer feel safe in Canada. The ‘anti Israel/ anti-zionist’/’pro Hamas’ demonstrations have been very hateful and threatening with few arrests or police interventions and the encampments were allowed to thrive with little interference while calling for the death of me and my family. The laws in Canada should not allow hate speech, clear racism, and intimidation but then again, they do.

I have the deepest respect for Toronto police who have shown, in the overwhelming majority of instances, professionalism in the face of extraordinary provocations and challenges. My comments should not be taken as a criticism of specific officers or the Service as a whole. On the contrary, whenever I met officers, whether it was when securing a Jewish event, a synagogue, a demonstration or Jewish day school, I felt very respected and secure. However, the Police officers are forced to act in the absence of a Board policy, with resource and training deficits, an imperfect understanding of the range of law enforcement measures available to them, and the limits of freedom of expression and assembly.

The result is - The Jewish community does not feel safe. Nor is it actually safe. The community feels that extremists largely operate with impunity, and the authorities do not understand when the boundaries of protected speech have been overrun.

The overwhelming majority of those protests with the various names of anti-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, or pro-Hamas or are characterized by stated objectives of the protesters, whether to “free Palestine”, “globalize the intifada”, end Israeli “genocide”. Some of the calls for global intifada, freedom for Palestine, or resistance have been accompanied by the phrases “by any means necessary”, “Zionism is racism,” “all Zionists are racist.” The Jewish community is under attack when anti-Israel protestors label all Zionists as racist or genocidal and demand that Zionism and Zionists be barred from universities.

 “We are anti-Zionist, not antisemitic” is a rallying call for the uninformed and the malevolent. It sounds legitimate to those ignorant of its history. But it distorts the meaning of Zionism which simply put, is the right of Jews to self determination in our ancestral lands. We believe in a democratic Jewish state with equality rights for all minorities. Criticizing Israel’s policies, its government, its military, the settler movement is not antisemitic when the criticisms do not apply a double standard. But being “anti-Zionist” demonizes 90% of Jews and the State of Israel’s very legitimacy.

I am asking the Board to recognize when protected speech becomes hate speech. An easy way to do so is to substitute the word ‘Zionist’ for the word ‘Black’ or ‘Asian’. When the encampments, for example, stated “no Zionists are allowed” or the chants in the demonstrations say “all Zionists are genociders and racist”. Substitute the word ‘black’. Would/should it be ok if we had places that said “no blacks allowed” or ‘all Asians people are genociders/racists’ etc? The answer is clearly ‘no’ ! but somehow when the word Jew or Zionists is inserted people pause and start considering if there is a ‘context’. There is no context for hate speech.

Government pollical leaders, including the City of Toronto’s Mayor have asserted the importance of freedom of speech and assembly, unless it devolves into hate. But little or no action is taken when speech does devolve into hate.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*I respectfully request that the TPS Hate Crime Unit include: 1) video recording anti-Israeli protestors for the purpose of identifying hate speech and charging such individuals; 2) educating TPS on the difference between hate speech and free speech; 3) interpreting coded language (i.e., intifada, from the river to the sea, armed resistance, martyrs, we don’t want no two states, we want 48...) and understanding the hate and intimidation connotation; 4) not allowing protestors to wear face masks (this is critical) ; 5) ensuring Jewish students/faculty/staff are not being prevented access to schools/campus spaces; 6) arresting those flying the Hamas flag 7) charging and arresting people who are not following the laws. There is a face covering law are people not charge ? What good are laws if we don’t enforce them? \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Again, I have the utmost respect for police officers in this city and I understand their hands are tied. We need to improve Board policy and improve funding so we can have a safe space for all. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to voice ourselves.