I am a sixty-six-year-old single Jewish woman and I have lived in the Roncesvalles Avenue/High Park Boulevard area of Toronto since 2020. Before October 7th I did not feel on edge moving about in my neighbourhood as a Jewish person but within days of the attack, posters with inflammatory language requesting participation in demonstrations were plastered, weekly, along Roncesvalles Avenue. You couldn’t walk 15 or 20 feet without seeing another one.

On a Sunday morning in the spring, I walked out of my apartment into a group of 20-30 people walking up my street and chanting into a bullhorn “from the river to the sea, Palestine will soon be free”. This stopped me cold. To many Jewish people, including me, this phrase conjures the image of the removal of all Jewish people from Israel, by any means.

The purpose of this submission is not to explain my politics or address the many complexities of the situation in the Middle East, but to point out that as a person with family members who survived the Auschwitz death camp and having been married to a child of holocaust survivors, I am acutely aware of what happens in a society that does not stand up to hatred and I am frightened by what I see in Toronto. I want to live in a diverse community amongst other people who can respect cultural differences but there is an increasing atmosphere of “think as I think” or be labelled a “racist”.

I see more and more Palestinian flags and Pro-Palestinian signs, symbols, and graffiti in my neighbourhood. While these actions are not antisemitic, they have coincided with a frightening escalation of attacks against Jewish schools, synagogues, hospitals, and businesses. It is chilling to watch what happened at the University of Toronto where hateful behaviour went unchecked. Failure to address the problem at the outset resulted in months of intimidation and marginalizing of Jewish students. It is disheartening that only Jewish voices seem to be raising the alarm. The silence from the non-Jewish community is deafening and an isolating experience.

I would like to see police policy that respects the right for people to express their views but that quickly and consistently addresses hateful and illegal behaviour to signal to all Torontonians what is acceptable in our society. When the line between free speech and hate speech is crossed, the response must be timely and appropriate if we are to curtail, punish and prevent otherwise reasonable people from being swept along in a mob mentality. Jewish people have lived the consequences of not speaking up.

I would like to see the TDSB prioritize **education** of police cadets AND the existing police force **in the complexities of the Middle East situation and the tools available as a police force to better inform**:

1. restricting protests to appropriate areas including Queens Park, Nathan Philips Square, and the Israeli Consulate and preventing large demonstrations which disrupt everyday life and target Jewish businesses and Jewish areas of the city to harass and intimidate Jewish people.
2. whenrhetoric at demonstrations moves from the realm of free speech to hate speech; to this end, it is important to have **Arabic speaking officers** at demonstrations to identify if Arabic signage and messaging is crossing the line into hate speech.
3. how to apply the **full array** of appropriate criminal code charges **out of some 20 odd available criminal code offences and/or city by-laws** that are on the books.
4. How to identify symbols/insignias of banned groups that are present at demonstrations and laying charges if appropriate.

It is also important to see policy that addresses the issue of demonstrators who conceal their identity since this can lead to laying a charge with an aggravating component. This is critical because if officers don’t have the education and tools to make arrests as hate speech occurs, disguised perpetrators will not later be identifiable and held to account. We must send a clear message that hateful behaviour is not tolerated in Canadian society. This will show the Jewish community that their safety and security is being considered.

Finally, I would like to see a policy of cooperation with other police forces and the appointment of a dedicated prosecutor so that there is consistency in enforcement and in laying charges in similar fact situations.

I recognize the emotionally charged situation that ongoing war in the Middle East triggers in Toronto communities and I recognize the fundamental importance of permitting protests and safeguarding free speech. This must be balanced against what I see as a tolerance for hatred under the guise of free speech. I implore the Toronto Police Services Board to establish policy that will assist police officers to send a message that our society will confront the rising tide of antisemitism.