

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)20 7413 5500
F: +44 (0)20 7956 1157
www.amnesty.org

21 September 2020

Dean Edward Iacobucci
University of Toronto Faculty of Law
78 Queens Park
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Dear Dean Iacobucci,

We write to you on behalf of both Amnesty International Canada and Amnesty International's Crisis Response Programme to ask for clarity around recent media reports about the recruitment process to appoint a new director of your university's International Human Rights Programme (IHRP).

Amnesty International has, through its Digital Verification Corps (DVC), a now four-year partnership with the IHRP. The DVC is an award-winning, flagship programme within the Crisis Response Programme at Amnesty International's International Secretariat. It trains students from seven universities across the globe, including the University of Toronto, on the process and practice of open source research for human rights advocacy and accountability. The IHRP became a DVC partner in 2017 and has successfully contributed to many Amnesty outputs—including, most recently, our analysis of the global misuse of [tear gas](#). Other projects have included the opportunity to work with the United Nations to conduct open source investigations for their own research. The DVC has been and continues to be an extremely effective experiential learning programme, with many of our volunteers now using the skills learned from working with Amnesty to secure professional work in human rights organisations around the world.

While the relationship with the IHRP has been strong, for the past year the work has suffered from the lack of a permanent director. We were happy to learn from the Assistant Dean of steps to hire a new permanent director to move the programme forward.

We have therefore read with concern allegations that the decision of the hiring committee was rejected due to external pressures, reportedly from a sitting judge, concerning the candidate's academic research profile. We have been further concerned that information released regarding the timeline and chain of events does not appear to allay the concerns that have been raised by the hiring committee, as well as a number of the programme's former directors, staff and students. The resignation of the hiring committee as well as members of the IHRP's staff further fuel our sense that something is not right.

We note that the failure of the current recruitment means the IHRP will now enter a second year without a permanent director. This gap in leadership makes it difficult for us to understand why, if the stated immigration reasons motivated the choice, you would decide not to wait a few months to have a director in place, rather than start the long recruitment process again.

We are contacting you because we fear that any appearance of impropriety in this case could harm the future of Amnesty's partnership with the IHRP. If we associate with a programme that may have given in to or gives the appearance of having given in to inappropriate external pressure of this nature, it could create serious reputational risk for Amnesty and our network of universities. We very much hope that we are able to continue with our partnership with the IHRP, which we value greatly, but to do so requires a full, transparent explanation of events. We would therefore ask the Law School to conduct an independent external review of what has happened, and to make its findings public.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Joanne Mariner
Director, Crisis Response
Amnesty International
International Secretariat



Alex Neve
Secretary General
Amnesty International
Canada



Sam Dubberley
Head, Evidence Lab
Amnesty International
International Secretariat

cc President Gertler, University of Toronto