



May 6, 2021

President Meric Gertler
University of Toronto
president@utoronto.ca

Dean Jutta Brunnée
University of Toronto Faculty of Law
deansoffice.law@utoronto.ca

Dear President Gertler and Dean Brunnée,

RE: CAUT's censure of the University of Toronto as a result of interference with the IHRP hiring process

The HIV Legal Network is dedicated to promoting the human rights of people living with, at risk of or affected by HIV or AIDS in Canada and internationally, through research and analysis, litigation and other advocacy, public education and community mobilization.

For many years, the HIV Legal Network has partnered with the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law on a number of human rights projects. Most recently, IHRP clinic students worked closely with our lawyers to [challenge anti-LGBT laws in the Caribbean](#) and to produce a book [showcasing the resilience of Rwandan genocide survivors of sexual violence](#). Our staff lawyers have also delivered guest lectures in the IHRP class on topics ranging from regional and international human rights advocacy (on various issues) to the importance of monitoring and evaluating human rights work. Over the years, IHRP students have played an active role in bringing the HIV Legal Network's projects to life and advancing our organization's mandate. In return, IHRP students are provided with unparalleled, real world opportunities to develop their skills as human rights advocates. These opportunities are essential to the success of the IHRP as a world-class training ground for human rights lawyers.

Thus, it is with disappointment and regret that the HIV Legal Network has decided to suspend our partnership with the University of Toronto and the IHRP, in solidarity with the censure imposed by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) on April 22, 2021.

We were deeply troubled when we first learned in September 2020 of the University's decision to abort the hiring process of Dr. Valentina Azarova following concerns raised by a donor about Dr. Azarova's work on human rights in Israel and Palestine. In the intervening eight months, the University has had several opportunities to rectify the situation and take a principled stance on academic freedom. Instead, the University has deflected responsibility, denied wrongdoing, and continued "business as usual," even in the face of this rare censure. (When interviewed by the [Times Higher Education](#) regarding CAUT's decision to censure the University of Toronto, President Gertler "expressed confidence it would create no major problems

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for the university” and commented that “...we will carry on with business as usual.”) We cannot support an institution whose actions so squarely oppose our own core values of human rights and accountability.

We stand in solidarity with Dr. Azarova and the courageous faculty, staff and students at the University who have spoken out against these injustices. Accordingly, and effective immediately, the HIV Legal Network will not engage with the University on speaking engagements or collaborative projects until the situation is resolved appropriately.

With regret,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Elliott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Elliott
Executive Director