

Since news of the IHRP scandal broke, the Jewish community at the law school has faced increasing instances of antisemitic rhetoric. As the JLSA stated in its written statement back in September, one of the most harmful and pervasive antisemitic tropes is one of Jews as ‘puppet masters’, controlling political processes from behind the scenes. This myth has been actively harmful to Jews everywhere, and most recently to Jews at the law school.

When discussion of the scandal first began in the law school Facebook group, certain students shared distinctly antisemitic sentiments. In attempting to determine which judge on the Tax Court was implicated in the scandal, one student posted that Justice Spiro was “the Jewish judge, so that makes sense”. This attitude of assuming that Jews work behind the scenes in some sort of shadow conspiracy has historically led to pogroms, antisemitic laws, and general deep and unwarranted suspicion towards the Jewish people. This sort of stereotyping does not belong at our school.

A number of Jewish students from different years have reached out to the JLSA just this past month to express their worries about sentiments voiced by their fellow law students in the wake of the IHRP scandal. The recent letter to the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, which called for academic censure of the University of Toronto, referred to “the objective of maintaining Jewish Israeli control”. Jewish students have reported feeling targeted and unsafe as a result of language that they find “plainly antisemitic”.

This scandal seems to have opened the floodgates for an increase in antisemitic rhetoric unrelated to the IHRP scandal. In the wake of recent two-sided violence in East Jerusalem, both a U of T law prof and one of our own SLS Equity Officers shared a meme that attributed the blame fully to Jewish actors. That Equity Officer has recently posted memes that deny any historical Jewish presence in the land of Israel. This attitude is harmful, and works to return Jews to the position of complete statelessness and helplessness that has historically led to unspeakable harms perpetrated against the Jewish people. It is, of course, completely inappropriate for an SLS Equity Officer to post public statements that denigrate one of the equity groups whom they are meant to support. In the wake of the IHRP scandal, these sorts of antisemitic incidents have been allowed to pass with little to no comment.

This law school is a less welcoming place for Jewish students than it was one year ago. I, along with the rest of the JLSA executive, sincerely hope that the law school community finds a way to process the IHRP scandal without further alienating Jewish students on campus and the Jewish community at large.

Sincerely,

The Jewish Law Students’ Association executive