

Anti-Racism Program

C J P M E F O U N D A T I O N

– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

ARPCF demands resignation of OCDSB Trustee for racist slander of Keffiyeh

Montreal, April 25, 2025 —The Anti-Racism Program of the CJPME Foundation (ARPCF) demands the resignation of Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) Trustee Nili Kaplan-Myrth for the racist and inflammatory remarks made during an April 8 board meeting, when she [declared](#) that the mere sight of a Keffiyeh—a traditional Palestinian cultural garment—was “an act of aggression.” This statement, made in response to a presenter wearing the Keffiyeh, constitutes a clear act of anti-Palestinian racism, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and criminalizing the public expression of Palestinian identity. The ARPCF argues that such rhetoric is not only dehumanizing, but it also blatantly contradicts the OCDSB’s own Expression of Identity and Global Conflicts policy, which explicitly affirms students’ rights to wear cultural items like the Keffiyeh as a form of identity expression.

“Trustee Kaplan-Myrth’s comment has not only breached the policy of the Board, but worse has created a completely toxic and unsafe environment for all Palestinian learners who wish to be able to express their identity and culture safely at school,” said Jamila Ewais, a lead researcher of the ARPCF. “Kaplan-Myrth needs to look in the mirror and ask herself why she continues to spread harmful myths about the inherent violence of Palestinian identity. These comments about any other group would be immediately seen for what they are: despicable racist attacks on the humanity and culture of vulnerable groups. Such comments are especially dangerous because this group is currently facing a genocide,” added Ewais.

The ARPCF is alarmed by the failure of board leadership—including the meeting chair, Trustee Cathryne Milburn, and Director of Education Pino Buffone—to acknowledge the racist nature of Kaplan-Myrth’s remarks or to affirm the board’s existing policies. Allowing this rhetoric to go unchecked sends a chilling message to Palestinian students and their allies that their identities are unwelcome and that their cultural expression may be met with punishment or public vilification. This incident underscores the urgent need for the OCDSB to be held accountable for protecting all members of its school community from racism—including anti-Palestinian racism, which continues to go unrecognized in far too many institutions.

“This reflects a broader and deeply troubling pattern of supporters of Israel purposefully targeting Palestinian cultural symbols under the false pretense of promoting safety, while in reality fostering a climate of exclusion and fear to undermine Palestinian rights and safety,” added Ewais. “Kaplan-Myrth is putting her political support for Israel ahead of the safety of Palestinian and Arab students. The only reasonable outcome is for her to resign.”

The ARPCF stands with parents, students, and community members who are calling for immediate action. We demand that the OCDSB discipline Trustee Nili Kaplan-Myrth for her racist statement, issue a public apology to affected students and families, and affirm its commitment to combating all forms of racism, including anti-Palestinian racism. We urge community members to write to the board, speak at upcoming meetings, and insist that human rights policies be upheld without bias. Palestinian identity is not aggression—it is culture, history, and belonging. The OCDSB must do better in upholding its responsibility to foster a safe, respectful, and truly inclusive learning environment for all.

About the ARPCF – *The mandate of the Anti-Racism Program of the CJPME Foundation (ARPCF) is to create public awareness about racism in Canada. This mandate falls in line with the Foundation’s broader purpose of monitoring and combating manifestations of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination by increasing public awareness of such biases.*

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