

June 23, 2025

Audley Salmon  
Toronto District School Board  
5050 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario M2N 5N8

**Re: Yearbook Censorship and Anti-Palestinian Racism at Ursula Franklin Academy**

Dear Mr. Audley Salmon,

I write on behalf of the Anti-Racism Program of the CJPME Foundation (ARPCF) to express deep concern over the recent [suppression](#) of a yearbook photograph at Ursula Franklin Academy (UFA). On 13 June 2025, students received yearbooks in which a full-page sticker concealed the image of two students smiling while wearing keffiyehs, a traditional Arab scarf widely recognized today as an emblem of Palestinian identity and solidarity. When questioned, staff initially claimed a “misprint,” yet the TDSB has since acknowledged that the picture was hidden because it was deemed “political.”

**1. The Incident Exemplifies Anti-Palestinian Erasure**

By designating a benign cultural symbol as unacceptable while allowing countless other cultural signifiers to appear unchallenged, the school’s action singled out Palestinian expression for censorship. This decision echoes the findings of the independent provincial investigation [released](#) in April, which documented “human-rights-based erasure of the Palestinians’ existence inside and outside of school” across the TDSB.

**2. Contradiction of Board Policy and Commitments**

Only three weeks ago, trustees voted to accelerate a dedicated plan to combat Anti-Palestinian Racism, explicitly [acknowledging](#) that Palestinian students face systemic bias and suppression of identity within TDSB schools. Concealing the keffiyeh image therefore undermines the very strategy the Board has pledged to advance and signals to students that Palestinian identity is still subject to exceptional scrutiny.

### **3. Harm to Students and School Climate**

The keffiyeh is not a political slogan or banned item of clothing—it is a cultural symbol, much like a Métis sash or a Punjabi patka, representing heritage and identity. Labeling it as “political” unfairly stigmatizes Palestinian identity, discourages students from expressing their culture, and contributes to a hostile and exclusionary environment for Palestinian students. The fact that nearly 100 students walked out in protest reflects how deeply this action harmed the school community and eroded trust. Even when Palestinian symbols or issues are politically charged, that is no justification for censorship or erasure. Schools must support open, respectful expression—not suppress it.

### **4. Requests for Immediate Action**

We request that the TDSB take immediate action to address this matter, including the following:

- Remove all stickers from the 2024-25 yearbooks and redistribute unaltered copies to students.
- Issue a public apology acknowledging that the concealment was discriminatory and constituted anti-Palestinian racism.
- Affirm in writing that students may openly wear keffiyehs and that Palestinian cultural symbols are welcome expressions of identity within the TDSB.
- Implement mandatory professional learning for administrators and staff—this month—on anti-Palestinian racism, drawing upon community expertise and the forthcoming Board strategy.
- Establish transparent protocols ensuring no future censorship of yearbook or school-sanctioned materials based on Palestinian identity or solidarity.

We look forward to your prompt response outlining the measures you will enact.

Sincerely,

Jamila Ewais  
Lead Researcher of the Anti-Racism Program  
CJPME Foundation