

## Ottawa Forum on Israel Palestine

Ottawa, Canada  
Ottawaforumip.ca  
613 327 0331

Ottawa, February 20, 2024

Mme. Chantal Carbonneau

Registrar, Supreme Court of Canada

[registry-greffe@scc-csc.ca](mailto:registry-greffe@scc-csc.ca)

Dear Mme. Carbonneau,

According to a recent article [in the Toronto Star](#), several Black human rights activists were barred from a meeting at the Supreme Court because of their personal beliefs regarding human rights for Palestinians.

According to the Star article, you cancelled an invitation to meet with some law clerks at the Court after you "*became aware of controversial posts and comments made about the conflict between Israel and Palestine on social media. These posts and comments had negative and concerning effects on a number of our law clerks.*" And further that the action was taken "*to safeguard the mental health and well-being of its employees.*"

I have not seen any retraction in the Star or other statement correcting the allegation.

In an interview with the [Hill Times](#) Derico Symonds, Director of Justice Strategy with the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute and one of the four excluded delegates, said he and the others have still not been told which social media posts might have been offending.

Clerking for the Supreme Court of Canada is a highly prized position for which there is intense competition among the brightest young law graduates in Canada. Those chosen are diligent, intelligent and presumably committed to Canadian values of freedom of speech and human rights. I admit to finding it disappointing that any of these men and women can not tolerate being in the same room as people who hold opinions at variance from their own.

Mme. Carbonneau, as you know, opinion in Canada is divided on the Israel/Palestine issue. Your decision to exclude these Black activists based on their private expressions of support for Palestinian human rights, raises some problematic issues about the recruitment criteria for the clerking program at the Supreme Court.

I would like to ask you five questions flowing from your decision.

1. The International Court of Justice has now decided that there is a "plausible" case of genocide against Israel. Why would personal posts about Israel/Palestine, - even any very critical of Israel - cause a problem for your law clerks, among the best and brightest law minds coming out of Canadian universities?
2. Would posts that support Israel or justify its bombing campaign in Gaza also be grounds for exclusion?

## Ottawa Forum on Israel Palestine

Ottawa, Canada  
Ottawaforumip.ca  
613 327 0331

3. What exactly were the social posts that you found problematic? Were they in any way antisemitic? Do you have samples?
4. Are there any other issues that might upset law clerks? For example, could an article about the Rohingya, abortion, medical assistance in dying, or the Tamil Tigers also be enough to bar a Canadian from participating in discussions at the Supreme Court?
5. What prohibitions might there be on new applicants for your clerking program? Are Black Canadian law graduates who support human rights for Palestinians screened out from clerkships at the Supreme Court?

Mme Carbonneau, the Supreme Court of Canada is one of our most trusted and valuable institutions. It would seem to be a significant violation of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms if the Supreme Court were to ban from its premises those Canadians who support human rights for Palestinians.

I hope you can provide a good rationale for this decision which, based on available public information, seems to be a violation of basic Canadian values.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Larson, Ph.D.

Chair, Ottawa Forum on Israel/Palestine

Cell: 613 327 0331