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2024 ANNUAL DUES:

Following consideration and approval by Convocation lawyers will be required to pay \$1956.00 (down from \$1,981) and paralegals will pay \$990.00 (down from \$1,035). The report to Convocation on the 2024 budget is [available online](#).

ON A PERSONAL NOTE: ISRAEL

On October 13, 2023, the Treasurer of the Law Society wrote “After many days of consideration and dialogue, the decision has been made that the LSO should not comment on or issue a statement regarding the events in Israel and Gaza “

That is in direct conflict with how many national, international, large and small law firms are reacting. The media is full of explanations for the “silence” that many public institutions, even those dedicated to social justice, have chosen.

Robyn Urback expresses her “bewilderment ... that so many purported social justice advocates are failing the most basic test of human decency.”

Marcus Gee has captured the essence of this “situation”:
“What happened in Israel on October 7 was monstrous. If you can’t bring yourself to say that without adding a “but” – or worse, can’t bring yourself to say it at all – you have lost all claim to a hearing from decent people.”

Mark Sandler, Former Bencher and a brilliant lawyer has written and I agree that:
“Confirmation bias and the repetition of “big lies” have closed minds to the nuanced and difficult issues that truly exist in the Middle East. One of those lies has to be called out. Hamas’ unspeakable atrocities have nothing to do with legitimate grievances about far-right Israeli politicians or the quality of life of innocent Palestinians, or the conduct of settlers, grievances ironically championed by many Israelis, as is the two-state solution – albeit with more and more difficulty as earlier peace processes were met with suicide bombers. As well, the unilateral return by Israel of Gaza merely provided terrorists with a revitalized proximate platform from which to constantly attack Israel.... It is time for Canadians to

support its Jewish community in times of its greatest need. It is equally important to support those Palestinian and Islamic voices who reject violence but crave peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Our Canadian values require no less.” For Mark’s full analysis click here
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/confronting-celebration-evil-mark-sandler-jlrhc>

Hamas has no interest in anything other than the destruction of Israel, and the killing of "infidel" Jews. Chants of "gas the Jews" in Australia, and “from river to sea” (the slogan of jihadists). Here and around the world, there are elevated numbers of hate crimes against Jews and their institutions. The obscene proposition that Israel alone is responsible for recent events has been so disheartening to Jews, especially those of us who previously have mistakenly felt secure in our place in Western society.

As a profession and as lawyers dedicated to the rule of law and committed to social justice, we must unequivocally deplore and condemn the undeniable terrorist attacks by Hamas in Israel. Silence by the Law Society is not acceptable. In fact, silence or ambivalent statements by our public institutions is not tolerable.

Nor should we tolerate the recent rhetoric of Canadian law students. On October 20, 2023, 74 students at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law had the temerity to publish on “X” an anti-Israel diatribe aligned with the goals of Hamas being a not so thinly veiled antisemitic attack against their fellow law students, professors, and the general public whom they have never met. Each signator has voluntarily chosen to bring into question whether they possess the requisite good character to be called to the Bar of Ontario.

Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities, Jill Dunlop delivered in the Legislature on October 17th a well-reasoned response to “*the hateful statements we have seen*”. In calling on the Universities to act, she unequivocally stated: “*The celebration, justification and/or denial of the atrocities committed by Hamas or other affiliated terrorist groups have no place in Ontario and certainly not in our post-secondary institutions and should therefore be grounds for misconduct.*”

For those of you not aware, Jews the world over are heart sick. These intentional acts of brutality hearken back to the days of the pogroms in eastern Europe and Russia, and Nazi atrocities. They provoke raw feelings of extreme fear and vulnerability. Enhanced local security to respond to security threats amid calls to violence merely underscores the risk and feeling of being alone in the world today as a Jew. Silence by many public institutions or outright support for Hamas has only exacerbated these feelings of fear and isolation.

I recognize that those of Palestinian origin are also deeply worried about loved ones and the future. One should not be confused or equate the Palestinian people with Hamas who do not seek peace but pursue death and destruction. Hamas does not represent the majority of Palestinians. Most people in Gaza are also victims of Hamas. In that pain we have a shared experience. However, any attempt to rationalize the actions of Hamas must be rejected and condemned without reservation.

Ironically, the Law Society has a Human Rights Monitoring Group (HRMG) tasked with bringing to our attention human rights violations of lawyers, the judiciary and human rights defenders. Yet the Law Society now wants to be silent about the grotesque human rights violations perpetrated by Hamas. However, in advance of today’s Convocation the Treasurer removed the HRMG report from the agenda, I can only guess that was to avoid highlighting the LSO’s blatant hypocrisy of silence regarding the October 7th Hamas slaughter, torture and kidnapping of over 1000 Israeli citizens. If those are not barbaric human rights violations what are?

I urge the Law Society to reconsider its decision of “silence” and stand up and be counted as part of the world of human decency and as an agency of social justice and an instrument of the rule of law. This is not about politics but about morality. If the Law Society, whose motto is “Let Right Prevail” does not lead the way, then we can expect no better of law students, professors, lawyers and the general public.

If you or a colleague are feeling in need of a safe place to talk and a warm ear to listen, I remind you of our Member Assistance Program. It is a confidential service funded by and fully independent of the Law Society and LawPRO. It has been designed to help members achieve health and wellness goals. Lawyers, paralegals, law students, judges, other legal professionals, and their families are provided with confidential access to several innovative online services. Don't go this alone. Call 1-855-403-8922

November 1-8, 2023, is Holocaust Education week. By then much more will have changed in our world. But to ensure we never forget the past I encourage you to participate in any one or more of the spectacular learning opportunities available.

For more information see:

<https://torontoholocaustmuseum.org/participate/signature-programs/neuberger-holocaust-education-week>

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