



Ontario
Civil Liberties
Association

"The OCLA takes a vigorous and highly principled approach to defending free speech rights, which is an approach that is sorely needed in Canada today."

— John Carpay,
President,
Justice Centre for
Constitutional Freedoms

"I am very pleased to learn of the Ontario Civil Liberties Association, and wish it the greatest success in its work, which could not be more timely and urgent as elementary civil rights, including freedom of speech, are under attack in much of the world, not excluding the more free and democratic societies."

— Noam Chomsky,
Institute Professor, MIT

"Freedom of expression is our most fundamental and most precious freedom. It has been under attack in Canada for years. The Ontario Civil Liberties Association has taken a position on freedom of expression that is both courageous and principled. The OCLA now stands alone and its position should be supported by all Canadians who cherish democracy and freedom."

— Robert Martin,
Professor of Law,
Emeritus,
Western University

ocla.ca



October 29, 2013

By email

Dr. Mamdouh Shoukri, President, York University
president@yorku.ca

Dear President Shoukri,

We have received your and Dr. Morrison's letters of July 18 and 19, 2013. We have also received additional information from Students Against Israeli Apartheid at York University (SAIA) regarding developments in this matter during the summer and since the beginning of the Fall term.

We find it astonishing that York continues to maintain SAIA's ban from official student group status, on grounds of undisclosed evidence of an alleged "academic disturbance" caused by noise from a rally in Vari Hall that took place in March 2013. That venue is the symbolic nexus of debate on your campus, yet your administration has decided to stifle debate by stripping a student political group of its ability to book rooms and access university resources. Moreover, you have trespassed an alumnus and SAIA member, Mr. Hammam Farah from campus for the same reasons.

We are aware of letters sent to your office by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), protesting your administration's removal of SAIA's group status and indicating disturbing aspects of university policies and the student code that threaten fundamental freedoms on your campus. We support the positions of the CCLA and CAUT, and we reiterate our request to you to immediately restore SAIA's group status and revoke the trespass ban against Mr. Farah.

We also urge you to release the evidence supporting York's allegation of academic disturbance in order to allow open and reasoned debate of your administration's actions in this matter within the York community and the broader society. In this regard, since York has visibly and expressly violated freedoms of individuals and continues to apply harsh sanctions, it has an onus beyond a vague allegation of "academic disturbance."

We look forward to your response,

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Hickey
Executive Director

Cc: SAIA York, CAUT, CCLA