

CJPME Condemns Anti-Palestinian Smear Campaign Against Incoming Human Rights Commissioner

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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CJPME

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) condemns the smear campaign against Birju Dattani, the incoming chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC). The campaign, which is led by pro-Israel advocacy organizations, seeks to cancel Dattani's appointment over his past support for Palestinian human rights. CJPME asserts that challenging Israel's racist practices against Palestinians is a legitimate form of political expression and entirely consistent with Dattani's mandate to combat racism, and urges Justice Minister Virani to reject the calls to rescind the appointment.

"This witch hunt is about more than just Mr. Dattani. Pro-Israel groups are trying to police the boundaries of anti-racism work so that those who express solidarity with Palestinians are excluded," said Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. "At a time when Israel's racist and apartheid character is widely acknowledged by the international human rights community, pro-Israel groups are trying to make it a disqualifying offence to criticize racist Israeli practices. This is an absurd and dangerous request which the government must unambivalently reject," added Woodley.

Mr. Dattani has been defended by his former employer the [Yukon Human Rights Commission](#) and a group of human rights and labour organizations including the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and the Federation of Black Canadians (FBC). Although Minister Virani has nominally stood by the appointment, CJPME notes with regret that the government has itself fed into the smear campaign by ceding to calls for an unnecessary investigation and by [falsely suggesting](#) that Dattani failed to disclose his background.

CJPME believes that this incident underlines the need for the federal government to

recognize and combat anti-Palestinian racism, which has been [described](#) by the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA) as “a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives.” Unfortunately, APR was excluded from Canada’s renewed [Anti-Racism Strategy](#), published last month, even though the document had identified Palestinians as a group facing “unprecedented levels” of hate. CJPME also notes that the same organizations behind the smear campaign to fire Dattani are also leading the campaign to [prevent](#) institutions from recognizing anti-Palestinian racism, further attempting to exclude Palestinians from discussions about racism and discrimination.

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Featured image: Birju Dattani has been appointed chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. (Birju Dattani/[Yukon News](#))

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