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Monday November 27, 2017

# EX29.42.10

Executive Committee  
Toronto City Council

**RE: EX29.42 Hate-Sponsored Rallies such as Al Quds Day**

Dear members of the Executive Committee,

I am writing this communication with respect to Councillor Pasternak's administrative inquiry into hate-sponsored rallies. Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (FSWC) regularly monitors and reports on hate speech and hate-sponsored rallies, and so the organization is very familiar with hate-sponsored rallies of which Councillor Pasternak is concerned, and appreciate council looking at this issue seriously, an issue which we believe must be addressed by the City of Toronto.

FSWC is very involved in issues surrounding hate-sponsored rallies and hate speech. We advocated to stop the hateful Al Quds Day in June, with a petition campaign on our website which garnered thousands of signatures from concerned citizens across the GTA. Most recently, FSWC successfully advocated for hate crimes charges to be laid against the proponents of the antisemitic and hateful Your Ward News publication.

Ultimately, FSWC believes the city needs a strong policy to deter and eliminate hate-sponsored rallies from occurring on city property, rallies which seem to be increasing in number. Toronto is clearly susceptible to these rallies, for example the neo-Nazi and white supremacist organized rally planned in Kew Gardens just a few weeks ago. Additionally, when rallies are not banned outright from occurring, by-law enforcement during rallies is needed as well. For example the Al Quds Day rally was in contravention of by-law 608-11(A), among others, but was not enforced.

Free speech is an important right in any democratic and open society, but hate-sponsored rallies such as Al Quds Day where speakers have advocated for violence against Israelis and Jews, are reprehensible and very obviously cross the line in a city which prides itself on diversity and inclusion.

It is therefore critical that the city find tangible and enforceable solutions to quell these hateful events in our communities. Furthermore, by enforcing a strong policy on this issue, Toronto has the opportunity to be a leader and set an example for other cities across Canada to follow.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this communication.

Sincerely,



Avi Benlolo  
President and CEO  
Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies



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