

Pulse

Remove study permits from terrorist supporters | Sergio R. Karas

By **Sergio R. Karas**

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(November 6, 2023, 1:04 PM EST) -- Since the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel, university campuses across the United States and Canada have seen large, strident and sometimes violent demonstrations in support of Hamas, despite the brutality they exhibited in their attack and the taking of hostages to be used as human shields and propaganda pawns. Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah are designated terrorist organizations by the government of Canada.

One particularly disturbing incident involves the Lincoln Alexander Law School at Toronto Metropolitan University, formerly known as Ryerson University. On Oct. 20, 2023, a group of 74 students at that law school who called themselves "The Abolitionist Organizing Collective" sent an open letter to the dean titled "Lincoln Alexander School of Law's unequivocal solidarity with Palestine and list of demands for the administration." The letter is nothing but a collection of lies, misrepresentations, inaccuracies, and vile antisemitic tropes.

The most concerning part of the letter, however, is that it ends with giving the university a deadline tantamount to a threat. In an act of profound cowardice, the students hid their identities to prevent their names from appearing in the public domain. The university published a tepid response that relies on the usual platitudes and equates antisemitism to other forms of hate and discrimination that have nothing to do with the contents of the letter. It was a disappointment, to say the least. To this day, neither the university nor the law school appears to have taken any disciplinary action against the students involved in this diatribe.

While the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects freedom of expression, it does not protect threatening conduct and the intentional spread of misinformation, or the promotion of hate against an identifiable group. In addition, the conduct exhibited by the students involved makes it readily apparent that they are unfit to practise law, and that their legal education is sorely deficient. The students' identities should be made public, and they should be expelled from the law school for promoting hate and creating a threatening environment for other students and the public at large. They also bring the legal profession into disrepute, and these are individuals who may be licensed to practise law soon. The Law Society of Ontario should carefully examine the role these students played and question whether they are of good character to practise law as required by the applicable rules.

The protests on campus and elsewhere in support of designated terrorist organizations bring another question to the fore: some of the protesters may be foreign students who currently hold study permits. Should study permit holders have their permits revoked if they participate in activities in support of terrorist organizations? In the United States, Sen. Marco Rubio has introduced a resolution requesting the president to exercise his authority to "revoke visas and initiate deportation proceedings for any foreign national who has endorsed or espoused the terrorist activities of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah." The government of Canada has been silent on this issue.

Terrorist supporters, also known as sympathizers or facilitators, are individuals who provide various

forms of assistance to terrorist organizations. Their activities range from financial support to ideological recruitment and logistical assistance. Allowing such individuals into a country under the guise of pursuing education can pose a severe risk to national security. These individuals can exploit their presence to radicalize others, fundraise for terrorist activities, or even engage in acts of violence.

Removing study permits from terrorist supporters disrupts the networks that terrorists rely on. These networks can extend their reach internationally through the presence of sympathizers, making it crucial to prevent them from establishing a foothold in the country.

Enforcing the removal of study permits for terrorist supporters promotes international security cooperation. By taking this proactive stance, a country signals its commitment to the broader global effort to combat terrorism. It encourages other nations to adopt similar measures, creating a united front against the menace of terrorism.

Educational institutions play a vital role in shaping the minds and perspectives of their students. Allowing terrorist supporters into these institutions can lead to the dissemination of extremist ideologies, threatening the safety and well-being of other students. Removing such individuals can help create a more conducive and safe learning environment.

By removing study permits from terrorist supporters, a country reaffirms its commitment to democratic values, the rule of law and the rights and security of its citizens. It sends a clear message that violent ideologies and actions will not be tolerated.

National security is a paramount concern for countries around the world. In an era of global interconnectedness, ensuring that individuals entering a country for educational purposes do not pose a threat to that nation's security is of utmost importance. Individuals known to support or engage in terrorist activities should have their study permit revoked. Such a policy can be an essential tool in safeguarding a country's security while upholding the values of international education.

While it comes with challenges, addressing the issue with a balanced and ethical approach can be a significant step toward ensuring the safety and well-being of citizens and international students alike. Canada must immediately identify any study permit holder that participates in activities supporting designated terrorist organizations and commence deportation proceedings against them.

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