

JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE OF CANADA

IMPACT: The JDL is a right-wing, anti-Palestinian organization with a history of lethal violence that describes itself as a militant defense for Jewish people. JDL Canada has worked with anti-Muslim individuals and organizations in the U.S. and Canada, its members have engaged in physical assault during protests, and it has opposed a parliamentary motion condemning Islamophobia.

- **The Jewish Defense League (JDL) was established in New York City in 1968 by Rabbi Meir Kahane amid the “white backlash” to the New York City teachers’ union strikes of 1968,** which fueled racial tensions between the predominantly white Jewish teachers union and predominantly non-Jewish African American residents. Soon thereafter, JDL shifted its efforts to focus primarily on the persecution of Soviet Jews, through protests against Soviet officials and disruptions at Soviet institutions and gatherings in the U.S. **JDL has also targeted, among others, Muslims and Arabs with tactics that have included a deadly bombing and a mass murder.**
- On its website, JDL states that **“global Islamic terrorism must be defeated.”** It lists Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, Hitler Loyalists, and the Nation of Islam, among others, as “domestic separatist terrorists creating division & instability.”
- In December 2001, **Irving David Rubin, the then-leader of the JDL, and Earl Leslie Krugel, “a leading member,” were arrested for conspiring to bomb a mosque** located outside Los Angeles, California, and **an office of U.S. Representative Darrell Issa, who is a Christian of Lebanese descent.** As reported in *The Washington Post*, the investigation involved the use of an informant and FBI surveillance. Krugel was recorded by the informant saying, “Arabs needed a wake-up call” and **“the JDL needed to do something to one of their ‘filthy’ mosques.”** Rubin was also recorded stating his **desire to “hunt down” Palestinians** and to demonstrate that the JDL was “still alive in a militant way.”
- **The Canadian branch of the JDL was established in 1979.** According to its website, JDL Canada “is committed to the restoration of pride and integrity to the Jewish People, the return of Jewish values, the reclamation of the Jewish sense of Justice and the abolition of hatred and bigotry.” As listed on its website, JDL Canada’s top focus areas are education, self-defence, security, media monitoring, and protests.
- **Meir Weinstein is the national director** of the Canadian branch of the JDL and is described by JDL Canada as a “disciple” of Rabbi Kahane. **Weinstein revived the previously dormant group in 2006 in the wake of rallies in Toronto and Montreal against the Lebanon war of 2006.**
- In February 2018, JDL Canada—under the name “The Center for Jewish Defense”—**encouraged supporters to attend a public meeting to oppose Motion 103,** a non-binding motion passed in March 2017 that calls on the Canadian government to condemn Islamophobia. Its Facebook event page **claimed that M-103 “denies free speech and promotes radical Islam.”** JDL Canada has also **sought to draw connections between Muslim organizations and domestic terrorism.**
- JDL Canada has engaged in anti-Palestine activities on Canadian university campuses. This has included **labeling a mural of art of Palestine anti-semitic, and heckling and intimidating participants at the University of Toronto’s Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign launch.**

JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE OF CANADA

- JDL Canada has **occasionally partnered with The Soldiers of Odin, a right wing group inspired by anti-immigrant organizations in Europe**, to provide security to Sandra Solomon. Solomon is a proponent of the conspiracy theory that the Muslim Brotherhood is behind the passage of M-103. In March 2018, **Solomon ripped pages out of Qurans outside various mosques in Mississauga, Ontario.**
- **In September 2013, JDL Canada hosted Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer**, American anti-Muslim activists who gained international recognition for organizing a campaign in 2010 against an Islamic community center in Manhattan, New York. In response to the concerns voiced by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) about their visit, **Spencer described NCCM as enabling “the advancing jihad.”** At JDL Canada’s event, **Geller claimed that Muslims are “scrubbing the textbooks, they are proselytizing for Islam in the school--the five pillars and all that nonsense.”** She also called the burqa “the most offensive garment I have ever seen.” Spencer stated that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which describes itself as “second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations,” is an **“Islamic supremacist” organization that “is dedicated to imposing Islamic law over the West.”** Spencer also described Islam an **“authoritarian, supremacist, and violent ideology that wants to . . . subdue and destroy our civilization and freedom.”**
- **JDL members have a history of violence and assaults at protests.** In December 2017, JDL Canada member Yosef Steynovit was indicted for assault and hate crime charges against a Palestinian-American during the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) policy conference in Washington, DC, a conference with **a history of platforming anti-Muslim speakers and funders.** In March 2017 at a demonstration countering M-103, a JDL Canada member assaulted and made death threats against Canadian journalist Kevin Metcalf, who was recording the demonstration.
- **JDL’s Twitter account and two versions of its Facebook profile page were suspended** during 2018. Weinstein’s Facebook account was also reportedly suspended for 30 days.

This factsheet is published in collaboration between the Bridge Initiative and researchers at Wilfrid Laurier University. More information about this project can be found here.

Last updated April 11, 2019