

# U of T was right to rescind but wrong to offer controversial appointment

Author of the article:

**Michael Mostyn**

Publishing date:

Sep 24, 2020 • Last Updated 1 day ago • 3 minute read

<https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/mostyn-u-of-t-was-right-to-rescind-but-wrong-to-offer-controversial-appointment>



Michael Mostyn, CEO, B'nai Brith Canada. PHOTO BY SUPPLIED PHOTO /B'nai Brith Canada

## Article Sidebar

Share

A controversy has erupted over a decision not to hire Valentina Azarova, a “human-rights scholar,” at the University of Toronto law school.

Several media reports over the past week indicate that a gross injustice had been done to her given that a purported offer to head the law school's International Human Rights Program (IHRP) had been withdrawn, allegedly under outside pressure.

That pressure was related to what was described as Azarova's "scholarship" on Israel's "occupation of the Palestinian territories." However, no questions were asked about her "scholarship" or about how she came to be chosen as the lead candidate to head the IHRP program.

Azarova has a long history of uniform one-sided critiques of Israel. Did that make her an appealing candidate to begin with?



Valentina Azarova PHOTO

BY @VALENTINAAZAROV /Twitter

She has reportedly said that the rescinding of the offer was because of her work on the subject of the Israeli occupation. Yet Azarova herself told one media outlet: "I had no intention of doing Palestine work at U of T, in fact. It was not the work I presented in the interview. In fact, it's a fraction of the work

I've done in the past few years. I do work on immigration and supply-chain accountability."

## Advertisement

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below.

## Article content continued

The fact is, Azarova's body of work is overwhelmingly devoted — arguably obsessively committed — to "Palestine work." She is affiliated with the University of Manchester, which lists her publications. Nearly nine in 10 deal with Israel and Palestinian issues. There appear to be no publicly available references to her claimed work on "immigration and supply-side accountability."

Even if Azarova didn't raise her "Palestine work" to the advisory board, where was the hiring committee when it came to probing her?

It's stretching credulity to imagine that she had "no intention" of doing "Palestine work" at the law school's department devoted to international human rights.

There's a disconcerting conformity in Western academic circles in polemics against Israel — so strong that it violates the value of academic freedom and which has long created a hostile environment for Jewish and other pro-Israel students on campus.

Far from being an impartial academic, as she is often portrayed, Azarova is actively devoted to using a wide variety of platforms to promulgate anti-Israel advocacy.

She's been involved with anti-Israel organizations such as Al-Haq which, cloaked in the language of human rights, calls for "the inalienable right of Palestinian refugees" now numbering close to 6 million, according to the UN, "to return to their homes" in present-day Israel. Such a "return," which doesn't exist in international law, would result in the destruction of Israel as a Jewish

State. Al-Haq also has ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a listed terrorist entity in Canada — headed by a former senior PFLP operative and convicted terrorist.

## **Advertisement**

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below.

## **Article content continued**

Azarova has participated in extreme anti-Israel platforms including the Electronic Intifada, Al Majdal Quarterly (Badil), and the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Preventing her from becoming director of the IHRP program at one of the world's most prestigious law schools was a sound decision that likely has pre-empted a multitude of problems. The question remains: How was this individual recommended by U of T faculty for such a role in the first place?

Azarova has proved, with her anti-Israel obsessions, that she is far more devoted to indoctrination than education — and that amounts to a denial of genuine academic freedom.

U of T students deserve far better.

**— Michael Mostyn is the CEO of B'nai Brith Canada**