

# Carleton professors call for reinstatement of colleague accused of bombing Paris synagogue

BY JOANNE LAUCIUS , THE OTTAWA CITIZEN AUGUST 1, 2009



Hassan Diab, an Ottawa university teacher accused by the French government of bombing a synagogue in Paris in 1980, appears in court for a bail hearing.

**Photograph by:** Ronn Sutton, The Ottawa Citizen

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OTTAWA - Sociology and anthropology professors are demanding that Carleton University reinstate accused terrorist and fellow lecturer Hassan Diab.

“The senior administration has a chance to do the right thing. It’s never too late,” said Peter Gose, chairman of the department at the university.

The Lebanese-born Diab, who is now a Canadian citizen, is accused in France of killing four people and injuring dozens more in the 1980 bombing of a Paris synagogue. He faces an extradition hearing in January and is under virtual house arrest, but may leave to work. Diab was teaching a summer course this week when he learned he was terminated.

Gose said university president Roseann Runte had asked for a meeting with the department on Thursday afternoon, two days after Diab was fired. Of the 42 academics permanently employed in the department, 22 showed up for the meeting, including Diab’s common-law wife, Rania Tfaily. But Runte did not appear.

The professors then drafted the resolution, which said the university ignored its own procedures by terminating Diab, unanimously called for his reinstatement and supported Gose and John Osborne, the dean of the department of arts and social science, for assigning teaching duties to Diab.

"We have to say that our relationship is in bad shape," said Gose. "The department is solidly behind the idea that he should not have been dismissed."

Gose said he also takes issue with the way the course Diab was teaching was assigned to another faculty member without consultation.

"That's not the way it's supposed to be done. It's supposed to be done by the department. It's an area of the university we manage," said Gose.

Diab must wear an electronic monitoring bracelet, report regularly to the RCMP and can't own a cellphone. Under his bail conditions, Diab must live with Tfaily in her Ottawa home. He may leave for work and legal and medical appointments, but only if accompanied by Tfaily or one of the four other people who put up \$250,000 in combined bail, including Gose.

"The judge said he was not an immediate threat to anyone," said Gose.

Hiring sessional lecturers is subject to elaborate seniority rules under the collective agreement, Gose said. Diab, who has taught about five previous courses in the department, was at the top of the list in terms of suitability and availability to work.

Gose said hiring Diab was cleared by Osborne, as well as the associate director of human resources and Carleton's provost and vice-president academic, Peter Ricketts.

The department's reaction to the termination of Diab's teaching contract is the latest chapter of an episode that began Monday when a court proceeding heard that Diab had been hired to teach during the summer. He was fired Tuesday in the wake of criticism, including a statement by the Jewish advocacy group B'nai Brith.

On Wednesday, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, which represents 65,000 academics across the country, said the university had bowed to pressure from outside the university.

Gose said that when Runte called for a department meeting, professors were expecting an explanation of administration's actions.

In a statement on Friday, Carleton spokeswoman Lin Moody said Runte's meeting with the department was cancelled after the administration received a grievance from Diab's union, CUPE 4600.

"Because the decision is being grieved we will allow the grievance process to unfold as it should and won't be making any further comments."

Gose said that although it was not against the collective agreement for senior administration to fail to notify him and the dean about terminating a lecturer, the normal procedure would be to consult them.

“We have to get back to the situation where we respect the collective agreement and the rule of law. And the presumption of innocence,” he said.

“It’s not about anyone’s politics. It’s about procedure and it’s about respect.”

Gose said he believes administrators are being pressured by organized lobbyists.

“They’re on the fifth floor of the Tory building being bombarded by e-mails and not talking to the professoriate or the students,” he said.

“We have a large Muslim student population. There are more people to talk to beyond B’nai Brith. We’re a complex multicultural society.”

Gose sees this week’s events as a “continuity” of Israeli anti-apartheid week last February, when a poster depicting an Israeli helicopter bombing a Palestinian child holding a teddy bear was banned from campus, sparking debate about freedom of expression.

Frank Dimant, executive vice-president of B’nai Brith Canada, cites the events of the last week at Carleton as indicative of the mood on Canadian campuses.

Dimant said he is fighting an uphill battle against a coalition of neo-Nazis, left-wingers and academics.

“It’s appalling university professors would lobby for the reinstatement of a professor who is alleged to have bombed a synagogue. And one asks this question: is it because a synagogue was bombed?” he said.

“Can a rational Canadian citizen agree with the notion that their child is taught by a man who is charged with terrorist crimes?”

He added that the B’nai Brith statement was released to the public domain and the organization did not contact the university to press its case. “We will get the Canadian people to be the lobby group that influences the university.”

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