

Deputy Chief Constable, Fiona Wilson, O.O.M. Investigation Division Vancouver Police Department

Superintendent, Lisa Byrne O.O.M. Investigation Division
Vancouver Police Department

Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Peter Juk KC BC Prosecution Service – Headquarters

Ellen Leno Administrative Crown – 222 Main Street BC Prosecution Service

June 11, 2024 Sent via Email

Attn: Fiona Wilson

Lisa Byrne Peter Juk Ellen Leno

Re: Charlotte Kates, VPD File No. 2024-70103

I write on behalf of the BC Civil Liberties Association ("BCCLA") to express concerns regarding the arrest of Charlotte Kates in relation to allegations of incitement pursuant to s. 319 of the *Criminal Code* (the "*Code*"). We ask that the investigation and charge approval process consider Ms. Kates' constitutionally protected expression during its engagement. In support of this we offer legal information and provide our opinion. It is our hope that charges will not be approved. While Ms. Kates is aware of our involvement, we do not act for Ms. Kates but act in furtherance of our mandate to advance, protect and defend civil liberties and human rights in BC and across the country.

The right to freedom of expression enshrined in s. 2(b) of The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the "Charter"), is a core and necessary tenant of Canada's democracy and must be protected to the highest degree. Its protection is premised upon fundamental principles and values that promote the search for and attainment of the truth through an open exchange of ideas, participation in social and political decision-making, and dissent. This right includes voicing criticism of the actions of foreign states and support for international human rights. As such, the

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BCCLA has regularly spoken out about the dangers of conflating criticism of the state of Israel and support for Palestinian liberation as antisemitic or hateful towards Judaism or Jewish people.

Freedom of expression does not preclude the right to espouse what some people might consider an unpopular, insensitive, or even hurtful position. History shows that oppressed peoples, their supporters and advocacy groups, have particularly relied on expressive freedom to communicate their concerns and bring others to their cause.

Alleged Offence

On April 29, 2024, the Vancouver Police Department ("VPD") confronted Ms. Kates on the bus and arrested her for allegedly committing two offences, Public Incitement of Hatred and Willful Promotion of Hatred pursuant to ss. 319(1) and 319(2) of the *Code*. The arrest related to comments made by Ms. Kates during a 'Free Palestine' rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery on April 26, 2024. The comments in question were captured in a short and partial video clip of her speech that was shared over social media.

Ms. Kates was released from police custody on the attached release order (the "Undertaking") directing her to attend a mandatory court appearance on October 8, 2024, and with an additional condition that she "not attend any protests, demonstrations or assemblies". This condition is extremely broad in scope, especially considering the *Code* suggests that an assembly is a gathering of three or more people. It is also designed specifically to limit Ms. Kates' s. 2 *Charter* rights. Importantly, the condition does not appear to fall within the meaning of any of the enumerated "additional conditions" permitted under s. 501(3) of the *Code*, specifically ss. 501(3)(e) and (k). A "protest/demonstration/assembly" is not a place or geographic location as contemplated by s. 501(3)(e). And s. 501(3)(k) is only available for the purpose of ensuring the safety and security of any victim of or witness, not to prevent the repetition of the offence.

After Ms. Kates was arrested and released from police custody, the VPD issued a public statement saying, "they are conducting a criminal investigation to determine whether comments [Charlotte] made [...] violated hate-crime laws." This language is concerning as the evidence of Ms. Kates' speech is available and in the VPD's possession. It is not difficult for VPD to assess the *actus reas* and *mens rea* of the alleged offence and make decisions on how to proceed.

Notwithstanding the investigation and Ms. Kates' constitutional right to be presumed innocent pursuant to section 11(d) of the *Charter*, politicians including Vancouver's mayor, Ken Sim, and BC Premier, David Eby, took to their official "X" accounts and the media to vilify and denounce Ms. Kates' speech calling it a "glorification of terrorism and antisemitism", "vile hatred" that does not belong in this country, and "the most hateful". ²

¹ Vancouver Police Department, "VPD investigates alleged hate crime at Art Gallery protest" (1 May 2024), online: https://vpd.ca/news/2024/05/01/vpd-investigates-alleged-hate-crime-at-art-gallery-protest/.

² See: @KenSimCity, "I wholeheartedly denounce any celebration of terrorism and antisemitism. This kind of behaviour is despicable and has no place in our city. To those who spew this vile hatred, you are not welcome here. We will always stand up against all forms of hate and ensure Vancouver remains a city of diversity, inclusion, and respect." (28 April 2024), online: *X*, https://twitter.com/KenSimCity/status/1784677722691932608; @PierrePoilievre, "Common Sense Conservatives denounce the glorification of terrorism & antisemitism in our streets. We stand with the Jewish people and all Canadians against this hatred." (28 April 2024), online: X

No Judicial Oversight

The Supreme Court of Canada established that restricting political speech through pre-trial conditions is something that should only be done after careful consideration by judicial officers. Such activities have been described as the criminalization of dissent.³ We agree. Judges have rejected bail conditions that prevent people from engaging in political activity, noting this type of infringement upon *Charter* rights is a significant concern.⁴ As stated by the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Zora*:⁵

Such conditions that restrict additional Charter rights **must be rigorously assessed to determine whether such a restriction is justified** and proportional to the risk posed by the accused. It must always be remembered that by making such a condition on bail, the judicial official is **criminalizing the accused's exercise of their Charter rights at a time when they are presumed innocent prior to trial.** [Emphasis added].

In this matter, Ms. Kates was made subject to a release order that restricts her *Charter* rights for at least **five months** without judicial scrutiny. In our view, this is an inappropriate condition for the VPD to impose as it impacts Ms. Kates' rights to due process and the presumption of innocence.

In light of all this, the BCCLA is concerned that the *Code* is being weaponized to silence particular political speech, namely statements in support of the Palestinian liberation movement including the right to resist Israel's occupation.⁶

https://twitter.com/PierrePoilievre/status/1784611083942043800; The Canadian Press, "B.C. premier deplores 'most hateful' speech praising Hamas attack" (30 April 2024), online: *CBC* https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/eby-condemns-hamas-language-1.7189910#:~:text=British%20Columbia-B.C.%20premier%20deplores%20'most%20hateful'%20speech%20praising%20Hamas%20attack,attacks%20by%20Hamas%20on%20Israel.

³ See Jillian Rogin, "Gladue and Bail: The Pre-Trial Sentencing of Aboriginal People in Canada" (2017) 95-2 Canadian Bar Review 325, 2017 CanLIIDocs 64, https://canlii.ca/t/72v, at footnote 141: "Restricting political activity through bail conditions has been described as the criminalization of dissent", see Jackie Esmond, "Bail, Global Justice and the Limits of Dissent" (2003) 41:2 Osgoode Hall LJ 323 at 333."

⁴ See: *Collins v. R.*, 1982 CanLII 5525 (ONSC), https://canlii.ca/t/jw9s0; *R. v. Clarke*, 68 WCB (2d) 366, [2000] OJ No 5738 (QL) (Sup Ct); *R v. Singh*, 2011 ONSC 717; *Fields v. R.*, 1984 CanLII 5701 (ONSC), https://canlii.ca/t/g99km.

⁵ R. v. Zora, 2020 SCC 14 (CanLII), [2020] 2 SCR 3, https://canlii.ca/t/j89v2 at para 99.

⁶ Palestinians have a recognized right to under international law to resist Israeli occupation see: Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1) (adopted at Geneva on 8 June 1977), No. 17512 at Articles 1(3) and 1(4), online (pdf): https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%201125/volume-1125-i-17512-english.pdf. This inalienable right is affirmed in the context of the right of self-determination of all peoples under foreign and colonial rule. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has expressly affirmed the right of Palestinians to resist Israeli military occupation, including through armed struggle: see General Assembly resolution A/RES/38/17 (21/11/1983), which states that it "Reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of the peoples for their independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle", online: *United Nations* https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-184195/ . For more information about Israel's occupation see: B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the

Political Speech is not Hate Speech

On numerous occasions in response to people being charged or reprimanded for expressing support for Palestine and Palestinian rights⁷, the BCCLA has stressed that there is a difference between political speech and what could be legally considered and charged as hate speech under the *Code*.

Sections 319(1) and 319(2) of the *Code* deal with public incitement and willful promotion of hatred against any identifiable group. The term "identifiable group" is defined in s. 318(4) as meaning, "any section of the public distinguished by color, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, general identity or expression, or mental or physical disability." These provisions do not contemplate statements made in relation to acts of resistance directed against an occupying state.

In addition, the *Code* does not define "hate", but the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R v Keegstra* sets out interpretive guidance for lower courts and the police. Chief Justice Dickson (as he then was) opined that 'hatred' connotes emotion of an intense and extreme nature that is clearly associated with vilification and detestation" which, "if exercised against members of an identifiable group, implies that those individuals are to be despised, scorned, denied respect and made subject to ill treatment on the basis of group affiliation." Nowhere in this definition could statements made about resistance against an occupying state or criticism of a state reasonably enter the equation. Alleged hate speech targeting members of an identifiable group requires actual evidence of hate based on the *identity* of that *group*, which is an essential element missing in the case of Ms. Kate's speech.

Hate speech charges can result in severe stigma and stress and anxiety for the accused. They can also embolden violent backlash towards individuals charged and to others who share the same sentiments. If found guilty, these charges can lead to heavier sentences. Under s. 718.2(a)(i) of the *Code*, the "hate-motivated" designation is an aggravating factor and can result in imprisonment.

Occupied Territories ("B'Tselem") "The Duty to End the Occupation" (11 November 2017), online: https://www.btselem.org/duty_to_end_occupation

⁷ See: "Open Letter to Alberta Crown Prosecution Services and Calgary Police Service on Wesam Khaled and November 18 Police Conduct" (27 November 2023), online: *BCCLA* https://bccla.org/policy-submission/open-letter-to-alberta-crown-prosecution-services-and-calgary-police-service-on-wesam-khaled/; "Letter to the Ontario Minister of the Attorney General RE: Policy violating employee freedom of expression is discriminatory and not in the public interest" (19 December 2023), online: *BCCLA* <a href="https://bccla.org/policy-submission/letter-to-the-ontario-ministry-of-the-attorney-general-re-policy-violating-employee-freedom-of-expression-is-discriminatory-and-not-in-the-public-interest/; "Letter of Support for the Reinstatement of Professor Lesley Wood" (23 February 2024), online: *BCCLA* https://bccla.org/policy-submission/letter-of-support-for-the-reinstatement-of-professor-lesley-wood/; "Submission to the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) External Reviewer" (8 March 2024), online: *BCCLA* https://bccla.org/policy-submission/submission-to-the-toronto-metropolitan-university-tmu-external-reviewer/ and; "Open Letter: BCCLA https://bccla.org/policy-submission/open-letter-bccla-urges-immediate-withdrawal-of-charges-against-toronto-peace-eleven-activists/.

⁸ R. v. Keegstra, [1990] 3 SCR 697, at 777, https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/695/1/document.do.

Imagine if saying "Happy Canada Day" were to be considered hate speech. Many Indigenous people, including myself, find the celebration of July 1st to be offensive because of Canada's genocide of Indigenous peoples but the criminalization of such expression would be absurd.

The Chilling Effect of Suppressing Expression in Support of Palestinian Rights

Wielding the power of the *Code against* Ms. Kates for voicing her opinion about an act of armed resistance in response to well-documented, repeated acts of aggression by Israel and Israeli settlers against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories ("OPT") prior to October 7, 2023⁹, is an overreach and sets a dangerous precedent. Charges of this nature not only serve to silence the political speech of the individual charged, but also have a chilling effect on protest and freedom of expression for everyone. As such it is extremely dangerous and repressive to misuse the hate speech provisions to target individual expression or conduct that may be hurtful but is not hateful or antisemitic.

The real injustice that we are increasingly bearing witness to is the vilification and criminalization of expression in support for the cause of Palestinian resistance to settler-colonialism, occupation, and apartheid. State actions that specifically oppress Palestinian voices and those who support the Palestinian liberation movement, is itself a form of discrimination and anti-Palestinian racism. The use of the *Code's* incitement provisions to conflate speech calling for Palestinian liberation as inciting hatred towards Jewish people is one example of anti-Palestinian racism. As Dania Majid, author of Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations (2022), observes:

Palestinians in effect are being erased from the landscape. Falsely depicting the oppression of Palestinians as a religious conflict hinders the decolonization and liberation efforts of Palestinians and restricts their ability to resist and testify against their injustices. Significantly and erroneously, this false reduction prohibits the possibility that Palestinian self-determination and Jewish self-determination are not mutually exclusive. ¹⁰

nti-Palestinian+Racism-+Naming%2C+Framing+and+Manifestations.pdf.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution" (April 2021), online (pdf): https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media 2021/04/israel palestine0421 web 0.pdf; Human Rights Watch, "Israel: 50 Years of Occupation Abuses" (4 June 2017), online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/04/israel-50-years-occupation-abuses; B'Tselem, "A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid" (January 2021), online: https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101 this is apartheid; B'Tselem, "Settler Violence = State Violence" (25 November 2021), online: https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, UN General Assembly (August 12 2022), online: <a href="https://www.un.org/unispal/document/report-of-the-special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-palestinian-territories-occupied-since-1967-report-a-hrc-49-87-advance-unedited-version/; Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, General Assembly Security Council, "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (6 June 2022), online: https://www.un.org/unispal/document/palestinian-people-continue-to-be-deprived-of-their-freedom-dignity-and-rights-by-israel-letter-from-state-of-palestine-a-es-10-903-s-2022-452/.

¹⁰ Dania Majid, Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, "Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations" (25 April 2022), at 24, online (pdf): https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61db30d12e169a5c45950345/t/627dcf83fa17ad41ff217964/1652412292220/A

Recently, retired Chief Justice of Nova Scotia, J. Michael MacDonald, submitted his final report looking into an open letter from Toronto Metropolitan University law students to the Lincoln Alexander School of Law's administration. The letter expressed "unequivocal support" for Palestine and "all forms of Palestinian resistance" triggering massive backlash including calls for expulsion. In his 204-page report, Mr. MacDonald carefully considered various contextual factors to conclude:

[W]hile the letter was understandably troubling and offensive to many, the students' participation in the letter, when placed in its appropriate context, was nonetheless a valid exercise of student expression and therefore protected under the University's Statement on Freedom of Speech. The principles of freedom of expression, including those set out in the Statement on Freedom of Speech, give wide latitude for students to apply their experience and learning, and to experiment with written advocacy. The standard is not perfection. Students are entitled to make mistakes, and even cause harm, without necessarily facing sanctions.¹²

The same should be considered when contemplating the application of the *Code* to punish and silence similar forms of expression especially considering that the Supreme Court of Canada has held that "an activity by which one conveys or attempts to convey meaning will prima facie be protected by s. 2(b) of the *Charter*.¹³This is a content neutral approach¹⁴, meaning that "activities cannot be excluded from the scope of the guaranteed freedom on the basis of the content or meaning being conveyed."¹⁵

People in Canada should not fear police interaction, arrests, criminal charges, or reprisal when they exercise their *Charter* protected rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. On the contrary, the police have a duty to facilitate peaceful protest, and ensure that people have the space and freedom to express their views publicly. This duty involves serving the public **as a whole.** External pressure from those who dislike or find offensive the content of the expression does not justify any abrogation of this duty. Expressions of support for Palestine and Palestinian rights will not always be executed in a "perfect" or sensitive way but nevertheless they must be protected as Mr. McDonald stated above.

Given the serious nature of the alleged offences and the overly broad restriction on Ms. Kates' liberty, we urge you to give this letter due regard in your respective assessments. The public interest always lies in open political discourse and is not served in shutting down dialogue through the misuse of the *Criminal Code* to remove a dissenting voice.

¹¹The Honorable J. Michael MacDonald, "Strengthening the Pillars: Report from the TMU External Review" (31 May 2024), online (pdf): *Torontomu* https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/report-release/TMU%20External%20Review%20Report%20dated%20May%2031,%202024.pdf

¹² *Ibid* at 14 (p. 12)

¹³ Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority v Canadian Federation of Students — British Columbia Component, 2009 SCC 31 at para 27.

¹⁴ Hogg & Wright, Constitutional Law of Canada, 5th ed Supp, Volume 2 (Toronto: Thomson Reuters, current to Rel. 1, 7/2023) at §43:11 (citing R v Keegstra, [1990] 3 SCR 697 at 828)

¹⁵ R v Butler, [1992] 1 SCR 452 at 488.

Thank you for your careful consideration in your role as public servants.

Sincerely,

Veronica Martisius (she/her)

V. Martenero

Litigation Staff Counsel

BC Civil Liberties Association

CC:

The Honorable Niki Sharma KC, Attorney General (by email) Sergeant Steve Addison (by email) Detective Constable, David Young (by email)

Undertaking Canada: Province of British Columbia Form 10	Court File No.(s): Police Agency and File No.(s):
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A Young person within the meaning of the Youth Criminal Justice Act	January 30th, 1980
IDENTIFICATION: Accused/young person Charlotte KATES CONTACT INFORMATION:	Gender Fernale
You are alleged to have common OFFENCE DATE PLACE OFFENCE DESCRIPTION	SECTION / ACT
April 26th, 2024 Vancouver Public Incitement of Hatred Willful Promotion of Hatred	S. 319 (1) Criminal Code of Canada S. 319 (2) Criminal Code of Canada
You must attend court as indicated below, and afterwards as required by the court: [MANI Date October 8th, 2024 at Time 2:00p m. in the Provincial Court at	at .
2. You are required to appear for the purposes of the <i>Identification of Criminals Act</i> (if applied October 3rd, 2024 atTime 1:00p m. at Police Station the Vancour	in the Province of British Columbia cable): uver Police Department located at
Address 236 E Cordova Street, Vancouver in the You must also comply with any conditions that are indicated below by a check mark (check only those that are reasonable in the circumstances of the offence and necessary, to ensure the accused's attendance in court or the safety a continuation or repetition of the offence or the commission of another offence):	he Province of British Columbia
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(e) You must not go to (places which are related to the person(s) mentioned in the condition set out in paragraph (d)) ——————————————————————————————————	ce with the following conditions: Set out conditions
You must not enter the areas, (describe in detail the boundaries of the areas related to the person(s) mentioned in the	condition set out in paragraph (dl)) ce with the following conditions: Set out conditions
(g) You must deposit all your passports with Name/little at Pit	
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resident in the province of British Columbia or you do not reside within 200 km of the p You must comply with the following condition(s) (conditions for ensuring the safety and security of any vici	tim of or witness to the alleged offence(s)):
You must not attend any protests, demonstrations or assemblies.	

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	Police Agency and File No.(s):
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conditions of this undertaking may be varied with the written consent of the prosecutor and yoursel to replace this undertaking with a release order under section 515 of the Criminal Code.	f. In addition, you or the prosecutor may apply to a
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SEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE	

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You are warned that, unless you have a lawful excuse, you commit an offence under section 145 of the Criminal Code if you fail to follow any of the conditions set out in this undertaking, including

(a) to fail to attend court as required

(b) to fail to appear for the purposes of the Identification of Criminals Act as required (if applicable)

(c) to fail to remain in the territorial jurisdiction as specified in this undertaking (if applicable)

If you commit an offence under subsection 145 of the Criminal Code, a warrant for your arrest may be issued (section 512 or 512.2 of the Criminal Code) and you may be liable to a fine or to imprisonment, or to both.

It is not a lawful excuse to an offence under subsection 145(4) of the Criminal Code that this undertaking does not accurately describe the offence that you are alleged to have committed (subsection 145(6) of the Criminal Code).

If you do not comply with this undertaking or are charged with committing an indictable offence after you have been released, this undertaking may be cancelled and, as a result, you may be detained in custody (subsection 524(4) of the Criminal Code).

If you do not comply with this undertaking, the funds or valuable security promised or deposited by you could be forfeited (subsection 771(2) of the Criminal Code. I, the above-named accused/young person, understand the contents of this undertaking and agree to comply with the mandatory condition (to attend court)

and the conditions that are indicated by a check mark. I understand that I do not have to accept the conditions and that, if I do not accept the conditions, I

Signed on Date APRIL 29th, 2014 Accused Clerk wy. at City VANCOUVER British Columbia Police Officer DETHCTIVE CONSTABLE 2782 YOUNG Police Statio /MVCOUVAR POLICE DOPT.

NOTICE TO YOUNG PERSON: You have the right to be represented by counsel.

will be brought to a justice for bail hearing.

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