

## ISA supports the call for the reinstatement of Professor Lesley Wood

The International Sociological Association (ISA) expresses its deep concern and demands the immediate and full reinstatement of Professor Lesley Wood, who was, on November 23, 2023, indefinitely suspended from the Department of Sociology at York University by the York University administration. Professor Wood is a prominent and highly respected member of the Canadian sociological community whose career has been devoted to social justice research and whose work has been recognized through awards from both the Canadian Sociological Association and York University<sup>1</sup>. She has been an active member of the ISA and a member of ISA Research Committees on Social Classes and Social Movements (RC47) and on Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change (RC48).

This suspension was a response to charges brought forward by the Toronto Police Service against Professor Wood, who is accused of taking part in a protest action supporting a long-standing campaign against the HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers and, more urgently and broadly, opposing the Israel Defense Forces' ongoing military campaign in Gaza.

We believe that this suspension is unjustified and damages the sociological profession and academic community in Canada and internationally. The suspension threatens academic freedom, undermining the fundamental right and, indeed, the core responsibility of academics to freely speak out about public matters as citizens and scholars without fear of reprisal.

We are concerned that this suspension has been implemented and maintained despite vigorous opposition from the Department of Sociology at York and many other groups and individuals inside and beyond York University, and despite the demands of these groups and individuals that Professor Wood be immediately and fully reinstated.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Wood's book, *Direct Action, Deliberation, and Diffusion: Collective Action After the WTO Protests in Seattle* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) was awarded the 2013 John Porter Tradition of Excellence Book Award from the Canadian Sociological Association. Professor Wood also received the York University LA&PS Faculty Award for Distinction in Research, Emerging Researcher Category (2014) and the York University "Research Leader" Recognition (2013-14).



We are also highly concerned about people being accused of hate speech and anti-Semitism for expressing ideas of social justice or human rights. In this case, Professor Wood's family has been the victim of hate and anti-Semitism, which makes the whole situation especially painful for her as she expresses in her statement.<sup>2</sup>

We expect that York University, like all other universities in Canada and internationally, will uphold and strongly defend the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression. And as we declared in our Statement on the Situation in Israel and Palestine<sup>3</sup>: “The ISA, as an international community of more than 5,000 sociologists, declares its commitment to maintain the resolve of its global membership, strengthen international dialogue, particularly with and among those of our colleagues who are affected by this war, make critical voices heard in our global scientific communities, and facilitate the dissemination of critical analyses in its publications and scholarly events.”

We expect York University to respect due process, including the core judicial principle of the presumption of innocence.

We ask that Professor Wood be immediately and fully reinstated for all the reasons stated here.

Executive Committee  
International Sociological Association  
January 30, 2024

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<sup>2</sup> See: <https://lesleybikes.wordpress.com/2023/11/30/never-again-for-anyone-and-charges-of-antisemitism/>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about-isa/isa-human-rights-committee/statement-on-the-situation-in-israel-and-palestine>