



Abortion Rights  
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à  
l'avortement au Canada

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## University of Calgary is Right to Charge Anti-Abortion Students with Trespassing

NATIONAL - A national abortion rights group supports the decision of the University of Calgary to charge six anti-abortion students with trespassing. The charges stem from a November display of graphic photos of alleged aborted fetuses, juxtaposed with photos of genocide victims.

The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada says that students with the University of Calgary group "Campus Pro-Life" deliberately risked arrest by ignoring safety restrictions on where and how their display could be set up. Similar "Genocide Awareness Project" displays have erupted into violence or vandalism on other campuses across North America, including at the University of Calgary in 2005.

"This is not about the students' freedom of expression rights being denied. It's about protecting public safety," said Joyce Arthur, Coordinator of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. Arthur pointed to an October 2008 letter from University of Calgary lawyer Paul Beke to Campus Pro-Life. (<http://campusprolife.com:8080/cpl/resources/letter.pdf>) The letter reveals that Campus Pro-Life students had themselves told the university that their display would "likely trigger violence" – but that the students repeatedly refused to mitigate that risk, forcing the university to impose restrictions on the display.

"The university is on private property, so it's not obligated to uphold students' constitutional rights," said Arthur. "Even so, the university did not deny the students a right to put up the display – it simply asked the students to re-orient the display so passersby could avoid it if they wished. It's justifiable to limit the right to freedom of expression to protect the safety of students," said Arthur. She noted that the university's letter also explicitly warned the students that if they disobeyed the limitations, they would become illegal trespassers. There is no freedom of expression right for trespassers.

Regardless of constitutional arguments, the display is considered highly offensive and inappropriate for a university environment. "To compare abortion with genocide is exploitive and insensitive to real victims of genocide," said Lianne McTavish, another spokesperson for the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. "The display is especially disturbing because it appears to equate women who have abortions to Nazis and other genocidal murderers," she said. "Women students not only have a legal right to abortion, they have a right not to become targets of discrimination on their own campus."

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