



Police to investigate protesters: Controversy over pro-Palestinian rally 'demands action'

Calgary Herald
Thursday, April 11, 2002
Page: B2
Section: City
Byline: Jason van Rassel
Source: **Calgary** Herald

Calgary police said Wednesday they will investigate the conduct of protesters at a pro-Palestinian rally downtown after all.

The decision represents an about-face from earlier this week, when investigators said they wouldn't launch a criminal investigation unless there was a formal complaint from a member of the public.

Police decided Wednesday to investigate the rally nonetheless, saying controversy over alleged anti-Semitic signs and slogans used by some protesters demanded action.

"Based on the impact the rally had on **Calgary**, we felt it was too large to move forward without a full investigation," said Const. Doug Jones, hate crimes co-ordinator with the **Calgary** police cultural resources unit.

"It certainly has the potential to result in a criminal charge.

"However, it would be premature to say if it will."

More than 2,000 people rallied in front of City Hall Friday afternoon to protest Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as the military action against Palestinians living there.

Protesters marched to the federal **Harry Hays** building and tried to get into office building housing the United States Consulate on 6th Avenue S.E., sparking some pushing and shoving when police blocked their way.

Some protesters carried placards comparing Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and carried flags emblazoned with the symbol of the terrorist group Hezbollah.

Most disturbing to members of the Jewish community, however, were allegations some marchers chanted "Death to Jews" in Arabic.

March organizer Nagah Hage said at the time he didn't hear any anti-Semitic chants, but publicly apologized to the Jewish community as a sign of good faith.

Hage, who could not be reached Wednesday, said then that such actions don't represent the city's Muslim community and stressed its members want to live in harmony with their Jewish neighbours.

Jones agreed, and said Hage played a role in calming down protesters when things became heated in front of the U.S. Consulate.

"I think what the majority of both communities want is peace," he said.

A Jewish community leader said he's pleased police are investigating the rally.

"They've worked with us and the Muslim community and I think they're doing an excellent job," said David Prasow, president of the **Calgary** Jewish Community Council.

Sentiment runs deep on both sides of the Middle East conflict, but Prasow said he believes the majority of the city's Muslim community are willing to make their views known in a respectful way.

"Both the Muslim and the Jewish communities believe they should live together peacefully, and if we have different viewpoints we should express them lawfully," he said.

Idnumber: 200204110171

Edition: Final

Story Type: News

Length: 431 words

Keywords: DEMONSTRATIONS; ANTI-SEMITISM; ETHNIC GROUPS; **CALGARY**; INVESTIGATIONS