

How Can I be Prepared for Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israel Bias on Campus?

Anti-Israel and Anti-Semitic Scenarios

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INTRODUCTION

From academics to social life to extracurriculars, your college experience will offer an exciting menu of activities, some of them familiar and some new. One thing you'll probably encounter on campus that may be new to you is vigorous discussions about hot-button issues.

You've probably heard that one of those issues is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And you may be concerned that you'll encounter some challenging situations on your campus.

If you do, the most important thing to remember is that you're not alone. You have many resources available to help you deal with whatever situations you face, from Hillel, to your school's student life professional, to fellow students, and Jewish organizations like ADL.

Maybe you're an activist, eager to take on challenging situations and engage in heated discussions with your peers. Maybe you'd rather keep your head down and focus on your studies and your social life. And most likely you're somewhere in between.

Whatever your style, you may find yourself in a position where you want some guidance on how to react.

Sometimes anti-Israel and anti-Semitic language and actions are really obvious—you can't miss them. Other times, the situation is more nuanced. That's why it's important to be informed.

We've put together some scenarios that represent situations you might face, along with suggested steps you could take to prepare beforehand, or to take action at the time.

Of course, every situation is different, and there's no cookie-cutter response that always works. You should always contact your campus Hillel, ADL or another organization or campus leader to discuss the specific set of circumstances you're facing and get advice on a potential plan of action.

ADL monitors anti-Semitic and anti-Israel attitudes in the U.S.

- For information about anti-Semitic incidents that were reported in recent years, please see [our latest audit](#).
- For information on anti-Israel activity, visit our main [Anti-Israel Activity & BDS](#) page.

MOCK ANTI-ISRAEL DEMOLITION NOTICE

As you leave your room one morning, you notice a flyer taped to your door warning that your residence hall will soon be demolished. The rest of the flyer contains so-called “facts” about how many Palestinian homes have been demolished by the Israeli military to collectively punish and “ethnically cleanse” Palestinians.

What is this about?

The flyer refers to a strategy of the Israeli military, which says it engages in highly selective home demolitions, not as a form of collective punishment but in response to legitimate security needs and the illegal status of the homes. In some cases, Israel has also demolished the homes of Palestinians who carried out terror attacks against Israelis to deter others from terrorist action.

This message, and others like it, could represent legitimate political discourse. Students on your campus are allowed to try to raise awareness about an issue they perceive to be unfair. There are, however, some factors that would make this action far less acceptable:

- If the university sanctioned the message.
- If the flyers targeted Jewish students and/or Jewish residence halls.
- If the flyers contained messages with an imminent threat of harm.

What can I do?

- **Notify** your school’s housing department. Many schools have policies that prohibit placing flyers without prior permission and/or outside of designated locations on campus. If that’s the case on your campus, you could have them removed quickly.
- **Strategize** with other students, your campus Hillel and/or representatives of the pro-Israel community about countering the false allegations made in the

flyer. You may want to respond directly or incorporate a response to this into an event you're planning for later in the semester.

- **Don't** rip down these or other anti-Israel flyers you find around campus. Instead, fight bad speech with good speech.

QUESTIONING THE FITNESS OF JEWISH STUDENTS FOR CAMPUS OFFICE

You are running for a student government position. At a meeting to consider your candidacy, members of the student government raise questions about whether your being Jewish and/or your association with Jewish student groups constitutes a conflict of interest that would prevent you from being impartial, particularly when it comes to Israel.

What is this about?

The implication that a student's Jewish identity makes them biased is fundamentally anti-Semitic. *Everyone* has a background and belongs to an ethnicity, race, or gender, and many people have religious affiliations. Any argument that states that your background or identity automatically affects your objectivity is offensive and demeaning.

What can I do?

- **Inform** your college president or student life administrator and urge them to speak out against the unfair assumptions raised by the student government members.
- **Organize** on-campus educational training sessions on diversity and bigotry that would be required for student government members and open to other students on campus. These training sessions will explain why this behavior is anti-Semitic and provide historical examples of Jews being accused of disloyalty or bias because of their identity. (ADL has provided such training

to student governments in coordination with university administrations.

[Please be in touch with your local ADL office.](#))

- **Seek support** support from other minority students on campus and issue a joint statement condemning the idea that anyone's religious, sexual, political, or racial affiliations prevent them from making effective, unbiased decisions.

CHARGE THAT A SPONSORED ISRAEL TRIP IS BIASED

Your (non-Jewish) roommate returns from a trip to Israel and submits an op-ed to the campus newspaper about her experience. The editorial board declines the submission on the grounds that the trip was biased because it was sponsored by a Jewish organization.

What is this about?

This issue has cropped up on several occasions in recent years, including in campaigns for student government when the candidate (usually non-Jewish) has participated in a trip to Israel sponsored by a Jewish organization such as ADL, AJC, or the David Project. These students' opponents have even run entire campaigns charging that the student is a "pawn" of an effort by Jewish and Israeli organizations to "indoctrinate" non-Jewish students about Israel.

In fact, many of these trips make an effort to be objective, and offer students the opportunity to meet with diverse voices, including Israeli and Palestinian students. It is also unfair and insulting to accuse a student of being unable to form their own opinion because of the trip. Nevertheless, these students, upon returning from Israel, are sometimes accused of lacking impartiality, somewhat similar to scenario #2.

What can I do?

- **Contact** the newspaper's editorial board and/or faculty advisor to voice your concern about this silencing of speech.
- **Write** [a letter to the editor of the newspaper](#) to raise awareness of the issue.
- **Urge** your college president or student life administrator to speak out against the unfair assumptions raised by the editorial board of the campus newspaper.

SWASTIKAS ON A JEWISH FRATERNITY

You are a member of a Jewish fraternity. When leaving the building late one evening, you are shocked to find several crudely drawn swastikas on the outside of the building.

What is this about?

The image of the swastika, used by the Nazi party in Germany before and during the Holocaust, is by far the most famous and shocking anti-Semitic symbol in history. Today, it is often used in acts of vandalism targeting Jews and Jewish institutions around the world, and it invokes extremely painful memories for Jews.

In recent years, the swastika has also been used by anti-Israel activists to accuse Israel and its supporters of Nazi-like practices. This fundamentally anti-Semitic accusation associates the victims of Nazi crimes with the Nazi perpetrators. And it also minimizes the impact of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis against Jews and other minorities during World War II.

What can I do?

- **Call** campus security immediately.
- **Document** the entire scene, taking pictures or video with your phone before the vandalism is removed.

- **Notify** the administrator who oversees fraternities and sororities on campus.
- **Write** [an op-ed in your campus newspaper or online blog](#) about the emotional impact of seeing a swastika on a Jewish building.
- **Organize** a campus-wide event to condemn this act of hate. This can be coordinated through your student life office.
- **Urge** the college administration to publicly condemn the incident and reiterate that incidents like this will not be tolerated. Hillel, Chabad, ADL and other organizations can provide you with support and strategies to use when approaching campus officials.

Here's an example. After a swastika was painted on the Alpha Epsilon Pi house at Emory University in October 2014, University President James Wagner issued this statement:

...On behalf of our community, I denounce this abhorrent act. It is an offense against a Jewish fraternity and the Jewish members of our community, and it is a repugnant, flagrant emblem of anti-Semitism. It is also an offense against the entire university. Among the many pernicious things the swastika symbolizes, in the last century it represented the most egregious and determined undermining of intellectual freedom and truth-seeking. In short, its appearance on our campus is an attack against everything for which Emory stands. Emory University will not tolerate such acts. Instead we must together pledge Emory University's continuing commitment to raise awareness and prevent all forms of violence and discrimination; to foster openness and diversity of thought, experience, spirituality, and culture; and to seek positive transformation in our community and the world. We all have a responsibility to uphold the principles we hold dear

as an academic community, and to create a community that is inclusive, open, respectful, and welcoming to all...

ANTI-ISRAEL DIVESTMENT RESOLUTION INTRODUCED

A member of the student government introduces a resolution calling for the university to divest from several multinational companies that do business with Israel, arguing that these companies help perpetuate Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

What is this about?

Resolutions like this have been introduced at scores of campuses since 2004, when members of the Palestinian community issued a global call for a boycott of Israel. They are part of a broader effort to delegitimize Israel in the eyes of the international community. Most of the time these resolutions do not pass, but they can still create a lot of tension on campus as well as make Jewish and pro-Israel students feel isolated. Even if the resolution does pass, the university almost never has an obligation to respond to a student-led initiative. In fact, to date, virtually no university has divested its funds from companies that work with Israel.

What can I do?

Countering the BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) movement requires short-term and long-term strategic planning. Building successful coalitions against BDS can help defeat a resolution if and when it is introduced. The suggestions below incorporate both year-round strategic steps to counter BDS and immediate actions you can take if a divestment resolution is introduced.

- **Be** involved on campus with all kinds of organizations, from student government to social groups to newspapers. Being actively engaged is a great way to meet new people, build coalitions, and exchange views with

your peers. When you already have relationships, you can more effectively discuss and speak out (or even vote) against anti-Israel actions, including divestment resolutions.

- **Mobilize** like-minded students to launch a campaign against divestment. Work with Hillel and other pro-Israel groups on campus to develop a unified strategy to respond. Testify before student government, write an op-ed for the campus newspaper, explain your concern to your friends and acquaintances. Hillel and other organizations, such as ICC, IAN, J Street U and ADL, can help you develop talking points and arguments to refute specific allegations.
- **Monitor** the ongoing social media conversation during the divestment campaign. It's important to know when a resolution will be introduced so you can attend the Student Council meeting and advocate against it (some of these resolutions are planned behind the scenes). You'll also be able to see whether the people who are advocating for the resolution are using anti-Semitic or otherwise hostile rhetoric.
- **Notify** campus personnel if any of the language used to advocate for the resolution or within the resolution itself makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- **Call** on the administration to publicly reject the divestment resolution, if passed. For example, in March 2016, Eric W. Kaler, President of the University of Minnesota, issued this statement rejecting a divestment resolution:

...The University does not endorse measures advocated in the SJP resolution, which has been offered in support of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement. The BDS Movement, while not directly mentioned in the resolution, has called for a comprehensive academic, cultural, economic and consumer boycott of Israel. In general, our university should be wary about such boycotts, given our core values of academic

freedom and our commitment to the free exchange of ideas, uncertainty about the impact of such efforts, and concerns that we may be unfairly singling out one government and the citizens of the country in question. In this case, my concerns are heightened by the fact that the Global BDS movement does not seem to distinguish between opposition to the policies of the government of Israel and opposition to the existence of Israel... I hope our students – who represent such diverse backgrounds and perspectives – will come together in common efforts to advance peace and reconciliation in the Middle East region and the world...

- **Organize** programming that highlights constructive initiatives to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace.

CO-SPONSORS ARE PRESSURED TO PULL OUT OF AN EVENT FEATURING AN ISRAELI SPEAKER

You and a group of students are organizing an event about environmental entrepreneurship, with a keynote speaker from Israel. The program is sponsored by a wide range of groups on campus, including Hillel, the campus environmental club, the Black Student Union, and the entrepreneurship club. Several days before the event, a friend forwards you a petition that urges the co-sponsors to pull out of the event, because it “whitewashes” Israel’s policies toward the Palestinians, and protests the environmental damage inflicted on them by Israel.

What is this about?

In recent years, activists hostile to Israel have frequently tried to block Israeli voices from being heard on campus, whether the speaker is addressing the conflict or not. Sometimes campus groups are urged to pull out of events co-sponsored by Hillel, due to its support for Israel, even if the event has nothing to do with Israel. Most of the campus groups who are pressured to pull out of co-

sponsorship of these events have no policy or engagement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but they are told that their involvement will validate Israel and occupation.

In the past year, anti-Israel activists have solidified this base of support by repeatedly linking the Palestinian cause to contemporary civil rights issues in the U.S., including the American judicial system, immigration, the Black Lives Matter movement and others. Groups active on progressive and civil rights issues are urged to support harshly critical approaches to Israel, and to reject interactions with Israelis and supporters of Israel.

What can I do?

- **Explain the goals of the event** to partner organizations, and emphasize the importance of the free exchange of ideas on campus. Encourage students to attend the upcoming event instead of making assumptions about what it will or will not be about.
- **Write an op-ed stating that trying to shut down Israeli voices is biased and unconstructive.** Understanding and peace can only be reached through engagement and open discussion.
- **Organize** a roundtable discussion and invite members of student groups to participate so they can express their views in a constructive setting.

A PROFESSOR APPEARS TO ONLY PRESENT ONE PERSPECTIVE ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

You are taking a class on the modern Middle East. Your professor makes derogatory remarks about Israel, accusing it of racist policies toward Palestinians, arguing that Israel has tried to expand territory at the expense of people who previously lived on the land, and claiming that Israel's American supporters advocate for policies that are good for Israel without considering this country's

priorities. The reading materials for the class present similar views, and when you try to raise another perspective in class, the professor cuts you off.

What is this about?

There's nothing wrong with professors (or students) expressing views supportive of Palestinians and recognizing that Palestinians have their own narrative about 1948 and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, ADL receives complaints each year about professors on campuses across the U.S. who harbor deep and sometimes bigoted anti-Israel views and express these views in their classrooms. Some of them even help anti-Israel student groups organize their activities. While professors have every right to their views, such views should not be imposed on students, and alternative perspectives should not be silenced in an academic discussion.

What can I do?

- **Talk** to other students in the class to find out if they feel the same way. Discuss among yourselves whether you or they feel comfortable directly responding to the professor's views in the classroom.
- **See** the professor during office hours (or e-mail the professor) and explain your perspective.
- **Speak** to the chair of the department to discuss the situation, especially if:
 - You feel that your grade is suffering because of your views. Professors do not have the right to grade a student's work based on the opinions or perspectives they expressed, only on the quality of the work.
 - The professor's views have eroded the environment in the classroom.
- If you feel your grade has suffered because of your pro-Israel perspective, consider consulting with academic deans, provosts, and ultimately, the vice president and president of the university and appealing for disciplinary action. If you decide to make such an appeal, make sure you have

documentation, including statements from other students, the course syllabus and assigned readings, etc.

Note: It would likely be inappropriate for a professor who teaches an unrelated subject to spend substantial amounts of class time airing their views on the conflict. A math professor, for example, has the right to share their views, but if the focus of the class becomes the Middle East rather than math, you should address the issue with the department chair or dean. If you are not sure who to approach, ask your academic advisor to help you navigate the system.

FLYERS ADVERTISING PRO-ISRAEL EVENT ARE TORN DOWN OR DEFACED

You and other members of your pro-Israel group spend several hours hanging flyers around campus to notify students about an upcoming visit to campus by Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. The Ambassador plans to deliver a speech about a recent period of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. The next day, you find that many of the flyers have been torn down, and the rest have been defaced with graffiti and slogans accusing Israel of war crimes and of being responsible for "murder" and crimes against humanity.

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What can I do?

- **Document** the incident by taking a photo or video.

- **Contact** the dean of student affairs to lodge a specific complaint about the act of vandalism.
- **Meet** with appropriate personnel from the university, encouraging the university to investigate the incident and asking the administration to condemn the removal and defacement of the flyers.

AN ISRAELI SPEAKER IS INTERRUPTED AND PREVENTED FROM SPEAKING

A former prime minister of Israel is scheduled to speak on your campus. The event attracts 400 students, as well as members of the community. Ten minutes into the Prime Minister's speech, a student gets up and starts shouting at the speaker about Israel's alleged war crimes. Ten minutes later, a different student in another area of the room gets up and shouts at the speaker. Pretty soon, the Prime Minister cannot finish a sentence without being interrupted. After a while, campus security begins escorting these students out and the speaker concludes his talk.

What is this about?

When Israeli officials and diplomats speak on campuses, anti-Israel students and community members sometimes choreograph verbal disruptions, to the point that the speaker may be forced to leave the stage. Individuals or groups who shut down an event cannot defend their actions as "free speech." Using your own speech to deny another's right to free speech is not protected.

What can I do ...

...to prevent this from happening?

- **Check** your college handbook to make sure you are fully aware of policies regarding this type of behavior.

- **Ensure** that there is a relationship between campus police and Hillel and Jewish student leaders by requesting a meeting at the beginning of the school year with the chief of campus police.
- **Ask** a member of the university administration to address attendees at the beginning of the event. They should announce that efforts to shut down the event will not be tolerated and highlight the disciplinary measures the disruptors would face.
- **Limit** the event to students only. Outside agitators are often responsible for the disruptions. Swipe student IDs at the door to bar non-students.
- **Require** attendees to sign in for the event. This will deter students from engaging in disruptions because it is far less likely that their actions can remain anonymous. Consider adding a camera in the front of the room to record the event, and announce that the event is being recorded. This could deter students who don't want to be filmed disrupting the event.
- **Contact** campus security and ask them to have security personnel attend the event. If campus security is not at the event, alert them immediately if inappropriate behavior begins.

...if a disruption occurs during the event?

- **Contact** campus security immediately, if they are not already at the event.
- **Stay calm.** While this is a tense situation, confronting the disrupting students will escalate the situation.
- **Film** the incident on your phone. Anti-Israel activists who engage in this behavior will sometimes release an edited video alleging mistreatment by campus police or others at the event. If you have a full documented video of the event, you can also use it to highlight the inappropriate behavior of the disruptors.

... after the event?

- **Monitor** developments. Keep track of how the university is reviewing the conduct of the students to ensure that violations of campus code are taken seriously and that violators are disciplined.
- **Write an op-ed for the campus newspaper** about free speech and how the disrupters' behavior embarrasses the university.

A PROFESSOR ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO ATTEND AN ANTI-ISRAEL EVENT

Your political science professor announces an upcoming event on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict featuring an Israeli and a Palestinian, urging students to attend and offering extra credit. When the professor names the speakers, you realize that both of them are harshly critical of Israel, and one of them is promoting BDS action on campus. The professor makes no mention of this, and the title of the event, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Uncensored," does not provide context for the actual substance.

What is this about?

A university professor has endorsed an event that might present an unbalanced view of the conflict and possibly promote BDS action. The content of the event itself, because it is promoted as featuring both an Israeli and Palestinian, could be quite misleading as students attending this event might think the Israeli speaker represents the views of the vast majority of Israelis and their supporters in the U.S.

What can I do?

- **Circulate** fact sheets about both speakers, featuring examples of what they have said in the recent past and campaigns against Israel they have been involved in. Present the facts clearly without exaggeration. [ADL has "in his/her own words" research readily available for your use](#) and can help you create a fact sheet for your situation.

- **Tell** your professor that you are uncomfortable about their endorsing an event that is not balanced. It's possible they weren't aware that both speakers had similar approaches and that both are anti-Israel.
- **Organize** an event with a variety of perspectives on the conflict and ask your professor to promote that program.

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IS CALLED "CONTRADICTION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE"

You attend a meeting of a socially progressive group on campus because you want to get involved in their efforts to promote awareness, equality, and justice on campus. You are surprised to hear one of their planned campaigns is in support of BDS. When you mention to the group president that you're also active in a campus Israel group, she tells you that support of Israel contradicts social justice values, and that her group's commitment to fighting Israeli oppression through BDS is the same as their commitment to fighting oppression in the U.S.

What is this about?

For decades, many progressive, minority, and cultural community groups on campus have been critical of Israel, viewing Palestinians as the oppressed and Israel as the oppressor. While most of these groups do not actively organize programming on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is a growing trend for these groups to sign on to BDS campaigns or co-sponsor speakers who bring an extreme anti-Israel perspective.

Groups promoting BDS have solidified this base of support by repeatedly linking the Palestinian cause to that of contemporary civil rights issues in the U.S., including police brutality, anti-war, immigration reform, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Many progressive and minority groups are receptive to this argument and want to take part in an effort against oppression.

What can I do?

- **Have one-on-one conversations** with your friends in this community and explain why your support for Israel does not conflict with your commitment to social justice and progressive values. You can share your perspective on the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the efforts of Israeli civil society to promote progressive values within Israel and towards the Palestinians.
- **Bring** Israeli social justice activists to campus. Highlight people who are working every day within Israel against racism, for LGBTQ rights, and for Israeli-Palestinian peace.
- **Urge** your friends and contacts to see Israel for themselves and make up their own minds. Many organizations take students to Israel, including ADL's annual Campus Leaders Mission.

AN ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT SPONSORS AN ANTI-ISRAEL SPEAKER

You are walking across campus and see a sign for an upcoming event featuring a speaker known for virulently extreme anti-Israel rhetoric. The bottom right corner contains a short list of sponsors, including the usual student organizations you'd imagine would sponsor such a program but also includes academic departments.

What is this about?

Anti-Israel events on campus are generally sponsored by student organizations. However, in recent years, scores of events have received sponsorship from various university departments, such as one at Vassar that featured a speaker who, among other accusations, alleged that Israel harvested Palestinian organs. Pro-Israel groups rarely receive sponsorship from university departments for their events.

What can I do?

- **Speak** to the departments or university institutions that are sponsoring the event. Explain the impact this has on you and to the environment on campus. Make your concerns known to the administration as well.
- **Reach** out to Jewish community organizations, including ADL, to advocate on your behalf to the university's president and/or dean. ADL has successfully educated universities about extreme speakers and encouraged them to remove their endorsement and/or speak to the sponsoring departments about rescinding their endorsement.

AN "APARTHEID WALL" APPEARS ON CAMPUS

You are rushing to a class one afternoon, taking your usual route through campus. As you get closer, you realize that a makeshift wall is blocking your path. The wall is designed to replicate the security wall that divides Israel and the West Bank, with artwork that describes Israel as an "apartheid state" and a multitude of "facts" that paint Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in a negative light.

What is this about?

Walls like this have appeared on dozens of college campuses, most often during an annual anti-Israel program called "Israeli Apartheid Week" that first began in 2005. As with many of the other scenarios previously discussed here, students have a right to present their perspectives on campus. While free speech is one of the most sacred rights enjoyed by Americans – and the college campus is no exception – there are certain restrictions, and there's a right way and a wrong way for a wall to appear on a college campus.

The right to exercise freedom of speech on a public university campus can be limited by "time, place, and manner" restrictions. That is, restrictions must 1) be content neutral (they do not treat speech differently based on what is being said); 2) be narrowly tailored to serve a governmental interest such as ensuring students have access to classrooms; and 3) leave open ample alternative means of

expression (for example, sufficient public areas on campus where individuals can express their First Amendment rights). Many campuses have policies limiting, for example, where displays can be erected so they do not prevent students from getting to university buildings or school functions.

American colleges have an obligation to make sure nothing stands in the way of a student's right to walk across campus with total security, free of fear or intimidation. If hostile attitudes or activities taking place on campus intimidate students based on any aspect of their identity, religious, or political belief, the university has an obligation to swiftly address the issue. On one campus, Jewish students expressed discomfort with wearing kippot (skullcaps) because of the overwhelming anti-Israel atmosphere on their campus. They've reported that they often remove their kippot while walking around campus to avoid being harassed as supporters of Israel. The university must do everything in its power to ensure a thoroughly safe campus environment.

What can I do?

- **Get familiar** with your school's policies and practices. Particularly at private institutions, there may be some variation in freedom of speech guidelines.
- **Notify** campus police that the wall blocks access to a school building. The university may decide to make the sponsoring student group move the wall to a different area of campus.
- **Work** with the university administration to ensure that in the future, the wall is set up in an area of campus that does not block access to any university building.
- **Coordinate** with other pro-Israel students to write an op-ed to the campus newspaper offering an alternative narrative.
- **Focus** on pro-Israel programs and build coalitions to make a proactive and constructive impact on the campus community.

Always remember: If you encounter any of these situations, you are not alone! There is great support available from your campus administration, Hillel and other on-campus groups, as well as Jewish community organizations, such as ADL.

Have you encountered situations like these, or others, and want ADL's help or just to share your experience? [Contact us!](#)