The Anti-Israel Movement on U.S. Campuses, 2020-2021

Sections

1 Executive Summary
2 Introduction
3 Main Campus Anti-Israel Groups
4 Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)
5 Rhetoric on Zionism and Zionists
6 Rhetoric on violence
7 Graffiti, Vandalism and Targeting the Israeli Flag
8 Events in May 2021
9 Funding for Anti-Israel Groups
10 Donor Acknowledgement
11 Endnotes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary
During the 2020-2021 academic year, much of the anti-Israel activist movement on campus continued to vilify Israel and Zionism and ostracize pro-Israel and Zionist students. This action disproportionately impacts large percentages of Jewish students, for whom a connection with Israel is an integral component of their religious, social, or cultural lives and identities. Many Jewish students reported feeling compelled to hide aspects of their identities.

The campus anti-Israel movement’s rhetoric and actions span from legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies to expressions of antisemitism from some activists. Anti-Israel rhetoric that veers into antisemitism may include: invoking classic antisemitic tropes; denigrating Zionism as inherently racist; and demeaning pro-Israel students for their identities and/or calling for their exclusion from campus spaces.

The campus anti-Israel movement is led by student groups and some professors. Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) continue to be two of the most influential anti-Israel campus groups, allied often with likeminded organizations such as Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) and American Muslims for Palestine (AMP).

One of the most common strategies of anti-Israel activists in 2020-2021 was to promote the view that any expression of a connection with or support for Israel is racist, thereby implicitly painting many Jewish students as being complicit in the alleged misdeeds of the Israeli government. Another tactic used by anti-Israel activists, many of whom are not Jewish, was to loudly insist that Zionism and support for Israel cannot be a part of Judaism, despite that for many Jewish students these are integral components of their Jewish identities.

Some of the most strident anti-Israel activists also called for Israel to be dismantled or denied its right to exist; expressed support for violent
resistance to Israel; and called for Zionists and pro-Israel students to be excluded from campus life.

- Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel continue to be a cornerstone of anti-Israel campus activity. Student governments considered 17 BDS-inspired calls in 2020-2021. Eleven of them passed. BDS resolutions and related initiatives during the 2020-2021 academic year at times contained blatant misinformation or language intimating support for violence against Israel.

- The conflict between Israel and Hamas in May 2021 was a flashpoint for anti-Israel activism on campus. During and after Israel’s violent conflict with Hamas that month, campus anti-Israel groups and activists engaged in anti-Israel activity and inflammatory rhetoric at the highest rate in recent memory.

- While the COVID-19 pandemic forced most anti-Israel activity online, the movement’s organizing did not appear to falter.

- The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) renewed its giving to JVP in Summer 2021; WESPAC (Westchester Peace Action Committee) Foundation continues to be the fiscal sponsor for SJP. RBF continues to fund other groups that engage in inflammatory rhetoric on Israel; WESPAC continues to propagate such rhetoric.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background: The anti-Israel movement on U.S. campuses**

Over the past few decades and through the 2020-2021 academic year, a small but vocal segment of U.S. student groups and faculty have espoused anti-Israel views on U.S. campuses. This reflects a stance among some parts of the left which alleges that Israeli human rights violations against the Palestinians, or at times the very existence of Israel, are representative of the worst of global systemic injustices.
The rhetoric and activity of the anti-Israel movement on U.S. campuses continues to span the spectrum from legitimate critiques of Israeli government policies to expressions of antisemitism by some activists. In a number of instances, Jewish students report feeling attacked and, in some cases, compelled to hide their Jewish identities.

Anti-Israel animus may be manifested in various ways, including: calling for the end of Israel’s existence as a Jewish state; accusing Israel of committing genocide or ethnic cleansing; labelling Israel an “apartheid state;” calling for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel; supporting violence or a military confrontation with Israel; and opposition to Zionism and Zionists. Zionism[1] may be broadly defined as the movement for Jewish statehood in the Jewish people’s historic homeland.

Rhetoric may become antisemitic when classic tropes are espoused, such as those relating to "dual loyalty" or Jewish/Zionist power over a country’s policies; when Zionism is denigrated as inherently racist; or when pro-Israel and Zionist students are ostracized and demeaned as “white supremacists” or otherwise unfit for participation in the campus community. A majority of American Jews feel attached to Israel[2] or view a relationship with Israel to be a part[3] of their Jewish identities.[4]

During the 2020-2021 academic year, many campus anti-Israel groups and faculty continued to eschew the idea that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a tragic dispute between two legitimate national movements with competing claims for the same small piece of land. Instead, Israel is viewed solely through a condemnatory lens, and its creation and existence as a Jewish state is demeaned as a cut-and-dry case of settler-colonialism. Oftentimes, Israelis are seen as little more than white European colonists engaged in the physical erasure of Palestinians from their land, perpetuating an apartheid regime. Comparisons are made to apartheid South Africa or Algeria under French colonial rule. Zionism is labelled as inherently racist.
Accordingly, much of the anti-Israel movement on campus continues to reject the “two-states for two peoples” solution, which would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state of Israel as part of a mutually negotiated final status peace agreement. Instead, they often advocate for one democratic state in the region for all people regardless of religion or ethnicity—but one that rejects Zionism and the legitimacy of a Jewish state. A minority of anti-Israel advocates go even further and call for some Jewish Israelis to leave the country altogether. In tandem, activists often deny that the Jewish people are indigenous to the land of Israel (just as Palestinians are also indigenous).

Continuing a historic trend, in 2020-2021 a segment of campus anti-Israel groups and activists engaged in rhetoric that incorporated antisemitic tropes, including those related to alleged Jewish power and control over the media or political affairs. While major anti-Israel groups state their opposition to antisemitism on their websites, they repeatedly appear unaware, ambivalent or defiant when their own rhetoric about Israel and Zionism becomes offensive or plays into antisemitic themes. More often, they deny that it is even possible for anti-Israel or anti-Zionist rhetoric to be antisemitic. While only a minority of anti-Israel activity on campus explicitly references antisemitic tropes, the large volume of anti-Israel activity ensures many Jewish students will encounter bigotry.

In addition to the use of antisemitic tropes and themes, anti-Israel rhetoric can become antisemitic when opposition to Zionism turns into the active maligning, exclusion and denigration of Zionism and Zionists. During the 2020-2021 academic year such a pattern was evident, in particular during the May 2021 Israel-Hamas conflagration. Viewing Zionists as inherently nefarious and undeserving of certain rights can lead to many Jewish students feeling isolated and under siege. Moreover, the vitriol aimed at Jews who support Israel's existence is rarely matched with energy targeting non-Jews, most of whom also recognize and support Israel's existence.
Criticism and debate over the policies of the State of Israel—like criticism of any country—is part of a healthy campus ecosystem. The First Amendment protects the right to boycott, as well as to engage in harsh and divisive rhetoric. Yet, students and faculty of all political stripes can do their best to engage in healthy and respectful dialogue.

**MAIN CAMPUS ANTI-ISRAEL GROUPS**

**Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)** is the most active anti-Israel group on campus in the United States, consisting of a network of approximately 180 chapters across the country mostly concentrated in the Northeast, Midwest and California (20 or so chapters are based in Canada). The group organizes lectures and rallies; disseminates propaganda via its social media accounts and campus newspapers; organizes anti-Israel BDS resolutions and petitions on campuses and more. A significant segment of SJP’s rhetoric is combative and inflammatory, and some incorporates antisemitic tropes. Historically, SJP’s trademark controversial actions have included constructing mock “apartheid walls” and distributing fake “eviction notices” across campuses in attempt to mimic Israeli actions toward Palestinians, though these tactics have essentially been abandoned during the pandemic.

In 2020, the umbrella National SJP made concerted efforts at greater cohesion and organizing. In public announcements, the group expressed its desire for individual chapters to coordinate to a greater degree in pursuit of their strategic goals. It is unclear to what extent this has occurred.

**Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)** is a radical anti-Israel activist group whose campus chapters work closely with SJP in organizing some of the activities outlined above. JVP strenuously advocates for a Jewish future and a Judaism in which Zionism has been eradicated. They view it as unacceptable that fellow Jews
identify with Zionism, which they see as racist and a form of “Jewish supremacy.” Such an approach dovetails with SJP’s extreme anti-normalization views, and campus JVP chapters often partner with the group on a variety of initiatives. Several of the more radical members of JVP espouse rhetoric that peddles antisemitic tropes including language about inherent Zionist greed or nefarious control over political developments. Like SJP, the group ignores the full range of Zionist identities and often equates the mildest expressions of support for Israel with the furthest fringes of hardline Zionist expansionism. JVP activists often claim to be the voice of or represent the Jewish community during campus hearings on anti-Israel resolutions.

**The Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM),** a likeminded Palestinian nationalist activist group overwhelmingly composed of younger people, also has a considerable presence on campus and often organizes and partners with SJP and JVP. The group is strident in its rejection of a two-state solution under any circumstances and often engages in inflammatory rhetoric.

**American Muslims for Palestine (AMP)** is a Chicago-based anti-Israel and anti-Zionist activist organization that works both in the general community and on college campuses. Established in 2005 by University of California, Berkeley, lecturer (and current AMP National Chairman) Hatem Bazian, AMP has seven chapters across the country. Some of the group’s activism includes policy-focused pro-Palestine work, including organizing in support of Rep. Betty McCollum’s HR 2590, which would limit how Israel can spend American aid. However, left unchecked is a pattern of rhetoric from some of the group’s top leadership that promotes the denigration of Zionists and classic antisemitic tropes including those related to the role of Jews in politics.

AMP’s organizational roots lie in the now-defunct Islamic Association of Palestine (IAP), which was once described by the U.S. government as functioning to “disseminate information/propaganda” for Hamas. Though IAP officially dissolved in 2004, many of its leaders continued their activism with AMP,
including Rafeeq Jaber, Abdelbaset Hamayel, Kifah Mustapha, Osama Abuirshaid (current AMP Executive Director), Nihad Awad (current Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations) and Raed Tayeh. IAP was never charged with wrongdoing.

Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), the youth wing of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), has played an increasingly active role in the anti-Israel movement on campuses in recent years. DSA officially endorsed BDS in 2016, and some YDSA activists on campus are also SJP or JVP members. While YDSA does not reject a two-state solution to the conflict, its anti-Israel activism on campus only rarely entertains such an outcome.

Largely due to concerted efforts by both SJP and JVP to form allyships with other groups considered part of the political left-wing, student organizations dedicated to addressing other prominent social justice issues, such as climate change, police brutality and income inequality, often actively support anti-Israel initiatives. These partnerships give anti-Israel activity increased exposure across campuses and likely help to corral support for anti-Israel resolutions considered by student governments and student bodies.

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS (BDS)

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Resolutions

Support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel continues to be a central feature of the campus anti-Israel movement. The official BDS movement has three core demands: an end to Israel's occupation and the dismantling of its security fence, full equality for Israel's Arab-Palestinian citizens, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Campus BDS campaigns often go beyond these demands and incorporate language accusing Israel of perpetrating ethnic cleansing, genocide, apartheid and more.
Other elements of the official BDS movement include an economic boycott, which targets Israeli companies that they claim contribute to alleged human rights violations against Palestinians; an academic boycott, which prohibits exchanges with Israeli educational institutions and affiliated academics; and a cultural boycott, which targets Israeli "cultural institutions," such as Israeli artists and performers (as well as calling for cultural figures to not perform or appear in Israel). The BDS movement also includes "lobby groups" and those they allege to be "complicit" in Israeli government activity in this category.[22]

Student governments considered 17 BDS-inspired calls in 2020-2021. Eleven of them passed. A number of BDS resolutions called on their universities to sever ties, usually through endowments or other investments, with companies that provide services or equipment to the Israeli military. To date, none of these universities have divested from these companies, and in many cases, the university president directly condemned BDS and the resolution.

Three of the BDS resolutions or student-run outfits sponsoring them veered into troubling rhetoric in 2020-2021, including:

- At Pomona College in April 2021, a BDS resolution[23] passed by the student government would have forced Jewish and pro-Israel student groups to pledge support for BDS before being eligible for university funding. After public outcry, including a letter from Pomona College President Gabrielle Star imploring the student government to reconsider,[24] the student government passed a revised BDS resolution without the language of concern in the beginning of May.[25]

- A BDS resolution spearheaded by SJP University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and passed by its student government in September 2020 claimed that Israel had a policy effectively barring non-Jews from public parks: "Caterpillar Inc. ... is building parks [in Israel's Negev region] ... that would only be accessible to nearby Jewish settlements."[26] They provide a citation to a short article[27] by a Christian Zionist group that does not
The Cultural Boycott and Anti-Normalization

Promoting boycotts, divestment and sanctions against any country is properly protected by the First Amendment. Yet the implementation of the official BDS Movement's cultural boycott guidelines, which call for the shunning of “activities that involve Israel, its lobby groups and complicit institutions or that whitewash Israel's human rights violations,” has had an inordinately large impact on the Jewish community, as pro-BDS groups often consider most American Jewish organizations “lobby groups” or “complicit institutions” and deserving of a boycott. A similar impact has been seen from the implementation of the BDS Movement's anti-normalization guidelines, which label as “intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible” any event “involving Palestinians and/or other Arabs on one side and Israelis on the other (whether bi- or multi-lateral) that are based on the false premise of symmetry/parity between the oppressors and the oppressed or that assume that both colonizers and colonized are equally responsible for the ‘conflict.’”[30]

In May 2021, for example, SJP co-founder and University of California, Berkeley lecturer Hatem Bazian signed and promoted on Facebook a collective statement
Palestine Statement of Principles for American Muslim Leaders and Communities” that reads: “We renounce the use of interfaith dialogue and engagement as a trojan horse to normalize Zionism and Israel while building relations with Zionist organizations, like...JCRC [Jewish Community Relations Council] ...”[31] There are more than 100 JCRCs across the United States representing the mainstream American Jewish community.

Hillel, the most prominent campus Jewish student organization in the United States, may also be included in the BDS call. A 2018 Arabic-language article on the BDS Movement’s official website describes Hillel as “considered...complicit in promoting the regime of racial segregation and Israeli colonial settlement and protecting it from accountability.”[32] While National SJP and JVP do not appear to have an official policy of calling for a Hillel boycott, over the years individual activists or SJP chapters have done so:

- September 2020: An American University graduate student who was formerly an SJP leader at Butler University published a piece in the anti-Zionist Electronic Intifada stating that “Zionism should have no place or standing in such organizations on college campuses. Zionist organizations like Hillel only perpetuate narrow-minded thinking and reinforce racism.”[33]

- In 2019, University of Washington's SJP affiliate complained of Hillel's participation in a Middle East cultural event, writing that “the very presence of Hillel and the representation of a violent settler colonial state is both political and unquestionably neither ‘family-friendly' nor safe for Palestinian students.” (The university ensured that Hillel was able to participate.)[34]

- May 2017: Stony Brook University SJP condemned a Muslim Students Association (MSA) event with “Zionist Hillel," opining that “Zionism should not be on campus and should not be mixed in with Judaism in the interfaith community.”[35]
The BDS Movement's anti-normalization guidelines requiring Israelis to see themselves as oppressors and colonizers as a precondition for engagement likewise shuts out most of the Jewish community. This type of anti-normalization sentiment was evidenced\[36\] by BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti during a March 31, 2021 webinar, when (like in the statement signed by Bazian) he invoked interfaith dialogue: “any interfaith dialogue that is used to whitewash war crimes, crimes against humanity and an apartheid regime” should be rejected. Whatever his intent, such a remark seems to imply that organizations and individuals who support Israel should not be allowed to participate in interfaith dialogue. Notwithstanding recent polling showing a quarter of American Jews agreeing with the view that Israel practices apartheid, an overwhelming majority continues to oppose it.\[37\]

Both Barghouti’s sentiment and the themes in the statement signed by Bazian were reflected by pro-BDS campus groups during the 2020-2021 academic year. In April 2021, an Instagram post by SJP at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champagne with the heading “SJP UIUC rejects normalization” stated complete opposition to dialogue with Zionists: “A fundamental part of being a Zionist is not recognizing and supporting Palestinian human rights, which is why there is no fair and equal ‘dialogue’ to be had with Zionists.”

Historically, pro-BDS campus groups such as SJP and JVP have also engaged in the heckling and interruption of campus speakers deemed pro-Israel or Zionist.\[38\] One notable example occurred at University of California, Irvine, in 2010 when students shouted at then-Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren, refusing to let him speak. Students involved in the incident were escorted out of the room and arrested. In other instances, anti-Israel student activists have staged walkouts or gone so far as to approach the speaker’s podium to stage their disruption.\[39\] During the 2020-2021 academic year, this was all but halted due to virtual learning during the pandemic. Zoombombing by student activists occurred on only rare occasions.
Zionism, broadly defined as the movement for Jewish statehood in the Jewish people's historic homeland, is almost universally opposed by anti-Israel student groups.

Yet this opposition at times takes the form of active denigration and demeaning of Zionism and Zionists, with activists alleging that Zionism is an inherently bigoted ideology. Such rhetoric ignores that there are various schools of thought within Zionism, spanning the left-right political spectrum. Moreover, Zionism has broad support from different ethnic communities in Israel and around the world. It has helped establish an ethnically diverse, democratic state in which basic rights are protected and which shares a vision of equality and justice for all.

In a number of instances in 2020-2021, excessively stringent, incendiary or antisemitic language was espoused by anti-Israel campus groups in addressing Zionism or Zionists on campus. Such rhetoric often insinuated that the presence of Zionists and Zionism on campus is unacceptable. This illiberal and exclusionary language can have the effect of making many Jewish students feel attacked for their identities.

- A zine (electronic activism-focused pamphlet for students) published by Tufts SJP in November 2020 denigrated both Zionists and Jews by name, insinuating that Zionists do not genuinely support freedom for all people and that Jews are taught from childhood to endorse "settler-colonial practices."
In December 2020, SJP at University of Illinois, Chicago posted a meme on their Instagram account that actively encouraged the shaming of Zionists by calling them “colonizer,” “racist,” telling them to “go back to Brooklyn” and more. Advocating for fellow students to “go back to Brooklyn” is unconscionable, and the idea that Zionists are from Brooklyn plays into an antisemitic trope:

February 28, 2021: The National SJP Conference featured U.S. Palestinian Community Network’s Nesreen Hasan, who remarked that “liberal Zionists”
do not have a place in social justice spaces, alleging they do not support Palestinian rights.[40]

- March 2021: SJP at University of Illinois-Chicago posted a message on Instagram that appears to insinuate that Zionism is the core cause of all Islamophobia.

  ![](image)

- Nov. 18, 2020: On Facebook,[41] SJP at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (SJP UIUC) called for pro-Israel students to be excluded from racial justice organizing, claiming that white supremacy and racism is inherent to pro-Israel advocacy. Responding to the university's call for Zionists to be allowed in social justice spaces, SJP stated:

  - “they [UIUC administration] fail to mention that as Zionists, they actively advocate for white supremacy and racism, effectively excluding them from all anti-racist organizing.”

- July 7, 2020: Florida State University's SJP tweeted “Zionism is racism,”[42] a slogan often heard in anti-Israel circles.
In December 2020, JWeekly reported that University of California, Merced Professor Abbas Ghassemi had made a series of posts on social media that espoused a litany of antisemitic tropes, including those related to money, greed, power, finance and media. After Ghassemi’s posts were exposed, he deleted his Twitter account and the university opened an investigation, announcing that Ghassemi would not teach during the Spring 2021 semester. Ghassemi is not known to have associated with any campus anti-Israel groups. As of July 2021, it is unclear whether Ghassemi will continue teaching at UC Merced. His offending posts included:

- June 14, 2020: An image of “The Zionist Brain” descends into many of the most well-known antisemitic tropes related to finance, global power, greed, exploitation, thievery and deception:
December 8, 2020: After President Biden’s election victory, Ghassemi tweeted: “Surprise, surprise!! The entire system in America is controlled by [the] Zionist. Change of president is just a surface polish, change of veneer. Same trash different pile!”

December 13, 2020: Ghassemi commented: "the Zionists and IsraHell interest have embedded themselves in every component of the American system, media, banking, policy, commerce ... just a veneer of serving US interest and population – everyone pretends that is the case."

In June 2020, the senior class president at Pomona College shared blatantly antisemitic comments on social media that referred to “zionist-israel-birthright-vacation-stuck-oncomparing-holocaust-to-racism-WW2-worshipping bitches.”[44] She later apologized.[45] A spokesperson for the college condemned the incident in a statement.[46]

JVP, SJP, PYM, DSA and AMP have each officially expressed their opposition to Zionism, at times employing divisive or inflammatory language:

- Jewish Voice for Peace: In early 2019 JVP released a statement on Zionism[47] reading, in part:

  “Jewish Voice for Peace is guided by a vision of justice, equality and freedom for all people. We unequivocally oppose Zionism because it is counter to those ideals ... we have come to see that Zionism was a false and failed answer to the desperately real question many of our ancestors faced of how to protect Jewish lives from murderous antisemitism in Europe. ... While it had many strains historically, the Zionism that took hold and stands today is a settler-colonial movement, establishing an apartheid state where Jews have more rights than others. Our own history teaches us how dangerous this can be."

- Students for Justice in Palestine has expressed its anti-Zionist stance since it was founded in the 1990s. A document announcing National SJP’s 2018
annual conference encapsulates the group's current approach. It veers into inflammatory rhetoric, suggesting that it is impossible for Zionists to be anything but cruel and destructive to Palestinians:[48]

- “Zionism is perverse in all aspects of Palestinian life and aims to destroy Palestinian existence and culture.... We know that Zionism is ethnic cleansing, destruction, mass expulsion, apartheid, and death... Zionism is a human ideology and a set of laws that have been challenged and can be destroyed.”

- The Palestinian Youth Movement, in various pages across its website, expresses rigid opposition to Zionism that at times flirts with antisemitic tropes about global political conspiracies:
  - “We understand the consequences of Zionism across the region and believe it is centrally tied to the suffering of the Arab masses by repressive regimes, including Syria.”[49]
  - “It is the obligation of Palestinians worldwide to raise our banner and confront Zionism...”[50]
  - “‘Zionism’ is of such toxicity...”[51]
  - “We recognize that poverty, dictatorship, repression, sectarianism, civil war and state violence in the Arab countries is directly an outcome of Zionism and its goal to destabilize the region.”[52]
  - “our conviction in our pending triumph as Palestinians: the overthrow of Zionism...”[53]

- YDSA: In February 2020, YDSA's parent organization, Democratic Socialists of America, endorsed a statement containing a passage that casts Zionism as immutably at odds with the rights of others, especially Palestinians:
  - “Zionism, the political ideology that drives Israel's oppression of Palestinians is a form of supremacy and is inherently anti-
To varying degrees, the above statements go beyond simple opposition to Zionism and into its demonization. Anti-Israel groups tend to either ignore or fail to seriously consider that those who embrace Zionism or Israel are far from a political monolith and include everything from anti-occupation activists to supporters of settlements in the West Bank. By actively excluding all of them, they actively exclude most of the Jewish community.

Personal attacks or campaigns against Jewish Zionist students

In its most extreme and troubling manifestations, calls are made for individual Zionist and pro-Israel students to be barred from campus spaces, including, at times, from student government. Such calls almost always target Jewish students despite many non-Jews who also identify as Zionist or pro-Israel. ADL reported on this trend in its 2019 campus report, and it has continued since.

In 2020-2021, Jewish members of student governments on at least two campuses faced personal harassment and exclusionary calls because of their expressions of support for Israel and Zionism. In one instance, harassment led to the student leader's resignation.

- In February 2021, Tufts University student judiciary member Max Price faced harassment from some SJP members and student government officials for his pro-Israel views and identification with Zionism, with SJP petitioning for Price to recuse himself from fulfilling his duties helping to oversee an anti-
Israel student referendum, citing his involvement with a campus pro-Israel group.

- In an official complaint\[^57\] to the Tufts Senate, Tufts SJP alleged that Price “has a conflict of interest as the Tufts Friends of Israel E-Board President.”

- In a personal statement,\[^58\] Price reflected that in a November meeting, “...other student government leaders grilled me for over an hour about whether my personal beliefs and Jewish and Zionist identities impact my ability to serve on the TCUJ [Tufts student judiciary] on this issue. I was explicitly asked if being co-president of Tufts Friends of Israel—the sole Zionist student club on campus—rendered me too biased to participate in this process. The undercurrent of nearly every question was whether my Zionist beliefs, which are a central expression of my Jewish identity, disqualified me from serving on student government.”

- On August 5, 2020, University of Southern California (USC) student government vice president Rose Ritch resigned from her position, stating in her resignation letter\[^59\] that “…because I also openly identify as a Zionist, a supporter of Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state, I have been accused by a group of students of being unsuitable as a student leader. I have been told that my support for Israel has made me complicit in racism, and that, by association, I am racist. Students launched an aggressive social media campaign to ‘impeach [my] Zionist a**.’”

- On August 10, SJP USC responded to her resignation with a statement\[^60\] emphasizing their view that an identification with Zionism makes one inherently unqualified for a student leadership position: “SJP seeks to hold representatives of our institution at all levels accountable for their beliefs. In the conversation of accountability, Students for Justice in Palestine plays a central role in countering narratives that deny and erase this history of Palestinians’ struggle for dignity, human rights and liberation. Zionism in its
The present-day incarnation is one such narrative... SJP rejects the claim that Zionism is an inherent part of Judaism.”

- Examples of social media harassment directed at Ritch based on her identification as a Zionist included.[61]
To be quite honest USG is useless anyways and just a show of politics to seem like there's some "change" being made on campus. The president is trash & so is the VP who is a proud Zionist. The people in USG positions don't actually care about students of color. @uscusg are the ones who still helped fund Ben Shapiro coming to campus despite the many POC that were vocal about how harmful his presence would be.
In 2020-2021, SJP and JVP activists continued to occasionally express support for violence against Israel or for individuals who are known to have engaged in terrorist activity on behalf of US-designated terror groups such as Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Hamas and PFLP have perpetrated numerous lethal attacks against Israeli and other civilians, including hijackings, stabbings, setting off rockets and conducting suicide bombings.

While such rhetoric is properly protected by the First Amendment, it also has the effect of instilling fear in many Jewish students, who may have family in Israel (or be Israeli themselves) and are rightfully appalled when they see their fellow students appear to express support for violent attacks often targeted at Jewish Israeli civilians.

Expressions of support for violence were demonstrated in a variety of ways. At times, images were posted to social media of individuals holding weapons with no clear target in sight and no explicit support for a terror group (no usage of corresponding logos, phrases, etc.). At other times support for violence was expressed more directly:

- November 2020: Instagram post from Bears for Palestine (SJP) at the University of California at Berkeley.
August 2020: NY4Palestine, a collection of anti-Israel groups that includes the SJP chapter of New York City, held a rally in Brooklyn during which three protestors held Hezbollah and PFLP flags.\[^{[65]}\]

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**In Focus: Leila Khaled**

Veneration for or the hosting of Leila Khaled, a longtime leader within the US-designated[\[^{[66]}\] terror group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), is a recurring issue at American universities, and it was of particular significance during the 2020-2021 academic year. Khaled took part in the hijacking of two
In 1969 and 1970, Khaled’s co-hijacker, Patrick Arguello, shot and severely wounded\[68\] flight attendant Shlomo Vider.

PFLP is also responsible for numerous terror attacks against Israeli civilians in Israel and the West Bank, including a bomb attack that killed 17-year-old Israeli Rina Shnerb\[69\] in 2019 and a shooting and meat cleaver attack\[70\] that claimed the lives of four worshippers in a Jerusalem synagogue in 2014.

Khaled is a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO) Palestinian National Council (PNC) and is widely viewed\[71\] as a feminist icon within the Palestinian national movement.

In 2020-2021 major controversy ensued when Prof. Rabab Abdulhadi of San Francisco State University announced her intention to host Khaled during a livestreamed class on September 23, 2020. When Zoom, Facebook and YouTube each shut down the webinar, a virtual “Day of Action” was organized on October 23 by students and professors at several universities to protest what they viewed as an impingement on freedom of speech. In April 2021, Prof. Abdulhadi again attempted to host Leila Khaled on Zoom. Zoom once again removed the event from their platform.

On several occasions, campus groups and figures went beyond dispassionate expressions of academic inquiry of Khaled and into open veneration for her, including her violent actions:

- In an August 2020 Facebook post, Prof. Abdulhadi wrote: “I can't express how honored I am/we are to be hosting revolutionary Palestinian militant and feminist icon, Leila Khaled. I wanted to grow up to become another Leila Khaled.”\[72\]
- In September, UC Berkeley SJP affiliate Bears for Palestine posted images of Leila Khaled carrying a rifle and wrote they were “inspired” by her.\[73\]
today and everyday, we are inspired by the powerful Palestinian women at the frontlines of our movement.
In September 2020, Prof. Abdulhadi was reported by Bay Area local newspaper XPRESS to have stated: “We really idolize somebody like Leila Khaled, somebody who actually stands up for herself, speaks for herself, actually goes to a plane and hijacks it ... It’s very interesting because in her film [“Leila Khaled: Hijacker”[74]], she says that it was easier to hijack a plane than to teach a class...And somebody, the film director, says to her, ‘Why is that?’ She says, ‘I go to a class and tell the students to be silent; they don’t listen to me. But when I’m on the plane, and I say [to] be silent, everybody listens.’ And to me, it was kind of like it rang a chord with me.”

On the October 23, 2020 “Day of Action” to oppose social media companies’ refusal to allow Leila Khaled on their platforms, University of Massachusetts, Boston Prof. Leila Faraskh (who is also an SJP member) remarked during a webinar:[75]

“And I think that the Leila Khaled and her hijacking of planes was very important to point out how much that, that act was an attempt to tell to the world that the Palestinians exist. Their aim is not to kill people, the hijacking plane it was never about killing people.... That armed struggle is legitimate. That it’s a struggle against what she, Leila Khaled, calls in the video ‘state terrorism,’ because colonialism is terrorism.”

On the National SJP conference plenary in February 2021, a speaker spoke glowingly of Leila Khaled as a “fighter” and “martyr.”

Support for the Palestinian “right to resist” is heard nearly ubiquitously in anti-Israel circles. Such phraseology can have many meanings, from peaceful demonstrations to the bombing of Israeli civilians.

It is commonly argued in the anti-Israel movement that Palestinians are afforded by international law the “right to resist” even with the use of physical force because they are under military occupation. Activists and academics sometimes offer the caveat that indiscriminate targeting of civilians is not permitted under
international law. Others go so far as to state that Palestinians must be supported in any form of “armed resistance” they choose.

**GRAFFITI, VANDALISM AND TARGETING THE ISRAELI FLAG**

From June 2020 through April 2021, graffiti, vandalism and the targeting of the Israeli flag by anti-Israel activists occurred on at least four separate occasions. Anti-Israel vandalism or graffiti which occurs on the property of a Jewish institution (such as Hillel or Chabad) that is not actively engaging in pro-Israel activities may be considered an antisemitic incident. Jewish institutions reported that their constituents felt a sense of being under siege after such incidents.

The destruction of the Israeli flag emerges in part from a broader anti-Israel discourse that increasingly associates the Israeli flag with white supremacy, racism, settler-colonialism, violence and more. This thinking was on display after a few Israeli flags were spotted at the Capitol insurrection in January 2021 (other national flags were also carried by protestors):

- SJP at University of Illinois at Chicago tweeted: “Israeli flags being displayed at the protests in DC two days ago. This shouldn’t be surprising, as far right ideologies all stem from the same form of racist hatred.”[79]
- SJP at University of California, Davis commented: “Nothing to see here, just your everyday ‘Israeli’ flag appearance at the white supremacist-led overthrow of the US government.”[80]
- Professor Rabab Abdulhadi of San Francisco State University linked Zionism to white privilege and white supremacy: “They still do fly confederate flag also #whiteprivilege #WhiteSupremacy #Zionism @TeachingPal @AmedStudies @SFSU4Palestine”[81]

While the burning of the flag of any country is properly protected by the First Amendment, such action to the Israeli flag can be intimidating to Jewish
students, who may associate it with violence against the state of Israel or anyone who identifies with it.

- In April, the word “Palestine” was graffitied in Arabic on the Hillel building at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The campus newspaper reported that the incident likely occurred on Holocaust Remembrance Day. UMass Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy sent an email to the campus community condemning the act and announced an investigation was underway.[82]

- In February 2021, an Israeli flag hanging off the balcony of a Jewish student's apartment at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) was egged, apparently by passersby.[83] The University administration condemned the incident.

- In September 2020, Hillel at Virginia Tech and Friends of Israel hosted a Shabbat dinner on campus and used an Israeli flag as decoration. They discovered it had been taken down and placed in a garbage can.

- In July 2020, the Hillel building at University of Wisconsin at Madison was vandalized with the words “Free Palestine.”[84]

**EVENTS IN MAY 2021**

Campus anti-Israel groups vehemently opposed Israel’s actions during the Hamas-Israel war in May,[85] generally claiming Israel provoked Palestinians with discriminatory measures in Jerusalem and that Israel's response to rocket fire in Gaza was severely disproportionate. Although most of the accompanying rhetoric likely fell within the bounds of legitimate discourse, a significant segment of campus anti-Israel groups engaged in what may have been an unprecedented amount of divisive and inflammatory messaging about Zionism and Zionists, as well as expressions of support for violence.

The cumulative effect of the month’s events was that many Jewish students were left with a heightened sense[86] of being isolated[87] or under attack,[88] in particular
when Jewish institutions were vandalized, which occurred on at least three occasions. Also contributing was the sheer frequency and severity of rhetoric equating Zionists with nefarious groups such as Nazis; calling for the end of Israel's existence; and intimations of support for violence.

At least 10 anti-Israel petitions circulated on campuses, often calling for BDS. A statement published by JVP at UC Berkeley and endorsed by JVP at UCLA went so far as to call for an “end to the fascist, genocidal, settler-colonial regime of Israel.” Four of five BDS resolutions considered in May passed a vote. During the attendant debate and processes related to two of these resolutions, there were significant issues:

- Student governments at Foothill College and Santa Clara University passed identical resolutions containing a clause in support of Palestinian “liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign[sic] occupation by all available means.” While Palestinians have expressed opposition to Israel in many peaceful ways, the phrase “all available means” is of issue. On May 20, the day the resolution passed, Hamas was in the process of purposefully and indiscriminately lobbing thousands of rockets at civilian areas in Israel.

- Historically, heated and sometimes inflammatory rhetoric accompanies student discussion and debate over proposed BDS resolutions. This occurred in a particularly egregious way on May 25, 2021, as a BDS resolution was being debated over Zoom at University of California, Santa Cruz. At least one individual sent antisemitic messages invoking the Holocaust in the chat function. The University administration condemned what they called a “‘Zoom bombing’ by parties not affiliated with the university.”
Participants at a number of anti-Israel rallies co-sponsored by SJP, JVP, PYM or AMP delved into classic antisemitic or violent tropes. It is not known whether many of these demonstrators were acting on behalf of official anti-Israel groups. No apologies were issued for the following:

- At a May 23 rally in Dallas, Texas co-sponsored by PYM, SJP UT Dallas, AMP Texas and Dallas Palestine Coalition, a protestor held a sign depicting the Star of David being thrown in the trash alongside text reading, “Please keep the world clean.”[94]
May 15: A sign at a rally in Washington, D.C. hosted by PYM read “US media also under Israeli occupation.”
A May 11 rally in Los Angeles co-hosted by JVP-LA, AMP, PYM and others featured a doctored photo of a bloodied Palestinian child over whose body former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu menaces, with a Jewish Star of David drawn on his forehead and blood dripping out of his open mouth. Text on the poster reads “Can't Get Enough Save Palestinian Kids.” A separate section of the same banner depicted deceased Palestinian children with accompanying text, “The Zionists=Palestinian Children Killers.” Yet another banner at the rally featured the same doctored photo of Netanyahu, but with the additions of two swastikas on Prime Minister Netanyahu’s forehead and a mustache meant to represent that of Adolf Hitler.
A pattern emerged at some rallies co-sponsored by SJP, JVP, PYM and aligned groups of equating Nazis with Zionists and Israel and drawing comparisons to the Holocaust. Such rhetoric is extraordinarily offensive and trivializes the horrors of the murder of six million Jews and millions of others by the Nazi regime. Others compared Zionists to terrorists or claimed Zionism is inherently linked to nefarious ideologies. It is unknown if many of the protestors who engaged in such rhetoric were affiliated with official groups:
At a May 23 rally in Dallas, Texas co-sponsored by PYM, SJP UT Dallas, AMP Texas and Dallas Palestine Coalition, a protestors held a sign referencing “Zionist Nazis.”[99]

May 12: A rally in Chicago hosted by SJP Chicago, AMP and others featured a sign referencing “Nazi Zionist Jews.”[100]
May 15: At a rally in New York City hosted by JVP, AMP, PYM, Palestine Solidarity Alliance of Hunter College, NY4Palestine (a collection of groups in which John Jay College SJP is a member) and others, a protestor held a sign reading: “The Nazis are still around, they just call themselves Zionists now.”
May 18: A rally in Dearborn, Michigan co-sponsored by the Detroit chapter of the Palestinian Youth Movement, Yemeni Liberation Movement and U.S. Palestinian Community Network featured a protester carrying a sign reading "Zionists R Modern Day Nazis."[104]

May 18: At a rally in Houston hosted by PYM, one individual held a sign accusing Israel of committing another Holocaust and another held a sign referencing "Zionist media lies."[105]
May 18: At another rally in Dallas, Texas co-sponsored by PYM, SJP UT Dallas and others, a speaker described Zionism as "the political ideology that posits that one group should have the right to create a homeland through the ethnic cleansing, the expulsion, and the erasure of another group."[106]

May 18: At a rally in Washington, D.C. co-sponsored by SJP, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and JVP-DC, an activist told the crowd: "As Muslims, as Arabs, we condemn ISIS because they operate under the guise of Islam...Zionists are likewise fucking terrorists because they operate under the guise of Judaism. They're not Jewish." The crowd responded by chanting "Zionists are terrorists."[107]

May 8, 2021: SJP -founder, UC Berkeley Lecturer and AMP board chairman Hatem Bazian tweeted: "Zionist Jews are so over taken[ sic] and blinded by power, might and control over Palestine that they don’t have the capacity to look in the mirror and ask the question of what role they are playing and how they became a powerful instrument in Western imperialism."[108]

A zine published by SJP at University of Chicago in May warned students not to travel to Israel or “take those shitty Zionist classes.”[109]

- “Don’t travel to Israel, at all (Unless you yourself are Palestinian) This includes Birthright trips!” (Birthright is a program that offers free trips to Israel to Jews.)
- “DON’T TAKE THOSE SHITTY ZIONIST CLASSES.” They expound: “An easy way to support Palestinians on campus is to boycott Israeli-
Rhetoric in support of violence or terror groups was expressed in a variety of forums by a small but notable segment of anti-Israel activists:

- May 24: On a webinar livestreamed on YouTube and hosted by the left-wing publisher Haymarket Books, CUNY Law SJP leader Nerdeen Kiswani expressed support for all Hamas action.[110]

- May 22: A speaker stated[111] at a rally organized by the Philadelphia Free Palestine Coalition,[112] which includes JVP, SJP and YDSA: “We have to be willing to do anything for Palestine, not just in words. We have to be like our brothers, our soldiers of Gaza, our soldiers of the resistance. You have to start[sic] and when you start to understand those words you will start becoming less afraid of saying the H word, [Hamas] what is the H word? They are the only ones that’s fighting for Palestinians.”

In May 2021, anti-Israel activists engaged in graffiti and vandalism at a much higher frequency than the rest of the year: while there were four instances of vandalism of Jewish institutions from June 2020 through April 2021, during May 2021 there were at least three such incidents. There is no evidence students engaged in such activity on official orders of campus groups. These actions, which included the targeting of Hillel houses, are intimidating to much of the...
Jewish community and can create an environment in which Jewish students may feel unsafe:

- The Bates Leftist Coalition (BLC) posted photos on Instagram that included the messages “Free Palestine,” “Fuck Zionists,” and “Fuck Zionism” graffitied on campus grounds. In accompanying text, BLC attempted to pressure Bates College into a more anti-Israel stance. They added: “[BLC has no knowledge of the circumstances by which these acts occurred].”[113][114] A group of Jewish students at Bowdoin college released a statement in support of BLC’s actions.[115]

- Graffiti was discovered on a campus building at Western Michigan University that read, “Free Palestine! From the river to the sea.”[116]
- An Israeli flag was stolen[^17] from the grounds of the Hillel at Virginia Tech.  
[^18]

- At a protest against Israel in part led by CUNY Law School SJP leader Nerdeen Kiswani, several demonstrators burned an Israeli flag in an intersection in midtown Manhattan. At least one SJP chapter “liked” video of the flag burning.[^19]

[^17]: An Israeli flag was stolen
[^18]: from the grounds of the Hillel at Virginia Tech.
[^19]: At a protest against Israel in part led by CUNY Law School SJP leader Nerdeen Kiswani, several demonstrators burned an Israeli flag in an intersection in midtown Manhattan. At least one SJP chapter “liked” video of the flag burning.
May 2021: Harvard Hillel was vandalized twice during a two-week period. In the first incident, a Palestinian flag was zip-tied to the doors of the Hillel building. In the second incident, a window was broken from a thrown object.

FUNDING FOR ANTI-ISRAEL GROUPS

As official student clubs, SJP and JVP receive much of their funding from student government resources, which generally are funded by student activity fees. They also are supported by outside donors, including foundations. JVP receives significant funding from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF). SJP’s fiscal sponsor is the Westchester Peace Action Committee (WESPAC) Foundation. SJP also continues to be advised and supported by American Muslims for Palestine (AMP).

While funding many laudable causes, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund continues to fund JVP, despite the anti-Israel group's pattern of concerning and at times outrageous rhetoric and action. RBF funds other anti-Zionist groups that engage in similar rhetoric. WESPAC’s website contains language that at times veers into antisemitism (see below). And the rhetoric of some of the leadership of American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) all too often descends into inflammatory tropes.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) is one of the most prominent private foundations in the U.S. RBF grants constitute some of the most significant institutional giving to Jewish Voice for Peace. They provide the organization with an image of mainstream activism despite its pattern of alarming rhetoric and actions. Bewilderingly, RBF categorizes its grants to JVP under “peacebuilding.”

As reported in 2020, ADL leadership has directly engaged RBF staff on these issues. These efforts at dialogue continue to yield no tangible results.
JVP has been granted $620,000 from RBF since 2015. Since ADL’s last campus report was issued in May 2020, JVP was granted a biannual gift of $165,000 in July 2021 (slightly less than its previous grant in 2019 of $175,000).[122]

It appears that in 2020 RBF dialed down its funding of anti-Israel groups, with only a couple such organizations receiving gifts. In September 2020, RBF granted the Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU) $120,000 over two years.[123] Since 2013, the group has been awarded $540,000 by RBF. ADL’s 2019 campus report documented its history of inflammatory rhetoric.

According to available records, RBF awarded a grant to Adalah Justice Project for the first time (Adalah has worked with SJP and JVP):

- In June 2020, RBF awarded a one-year grant of $100,000 to the Tides Center, to be gifted to the Adalah Justice Project. The pro-BDS advocacy group Adalah has a pattern of engaging in rhetoric that is prejudicial toward Zionists or plays into violent or antisemitic tropes.
  
  - May 14, 2021: Adalah posted the following quote on Twitter: “The youth movement, the people on our streets defending their homes know that it’s one struggle and one battle because in all Palestine it is one ideology that is occupying and oppressing us and that is Zionism. “[124]
  - May 13, 2021: “You can’t reform Zionism. It must be abolished.”[125]
  - May 6, 2021: “Visiting Palestine while millions of Palestinians remain exiled is Jewish privilege”[126]
  - April 30, 2021: Tweeted the following quote from an article in Jacobin co-authored by Adalah employee Sumaya Awad: “Any solution that maintains the state of Israel as a Jewish state violates the individual and collective democratic, civil, and human rights of Palestinians.”[127]

In 2020, RBF also continued to give to other groups that maintain a neutral or even pro-Israel stance on the conflict, including the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and J Street.
Each donation to National SJP goes through its fiscal sponsor, WESPAC, which keeps a percentage of the gift and gives the remainder to NSJP. According to the National SJP website, these donations help fund the group's annual conferences and its “Right to Education Tour,” which takes students to visit college campuses in the West Bank to see their Palestinian counterparts “living under Israeli occupation and apartheid.” It is unclear whether a percentage of the gifts to NSJP are distributed to SJP chapters throughout the U.S.

WESPAC appears to have a similar relationship to PYM as it does with SJP. On PYM's website, donors are directed to make checks payable to WESPAC and mailed to their offices in White Plains, New York.

ADL's 2019 campus report showed that WESPAC's website contains content calling Zionism a “sickness” or inherently racist, including an article by noted antisemite James Petras. All but one of these pages remains on the WESPAC website.

The views of SJP and PYM appear to be roughly reflected by WESPAC and its director Nada Khader, who has led the foundation since 2001. For instance, in April 2021, Khader made the unsubstantiated claim that “Israeli law defines Palestinians as inferior human beings to Jews.” And a May 2021 photo posted by the group on its Instagram account shows members standing next to an individual with a sign equating the Israeli flag with a swastika. While it is unclear whether the intent was to publicize such a message, this theme remains an affront to the survivors of the Holocaust and trivializes its horrors.
American Muslims for Palestine

For many years after AMP was established in 2005, it was a major driver of SJP activism. From approximately 2010 through 2019, AMP regularly posted pieces on its website about working with, advising or otherwise supporting SJP. Since 2020, this has all but stopped,[131] and SJP appears to be organizing to a greater extent on the national level. Still, AMP’s website states AMP “work[s] in broad-based coalitions and support campus activism through Students for Justice in Palestine...”[132]

Much of AMP’s leadership has a history of making inflammatory statements that veer into antisemitic tropes or support for violence. This continued in 2020-2021:

- March 10, 2021: Discussing Saladin’s conquering of Jerusalem from the Crusaders on joint programming with Friends of Al-Aqsa UK, American Muslims for Palestine’s Taher Herzallah stated.[133] “The parallels between then and now are unbelievably similar, and albeit we may not have a single individual who may rise to the occasion to defeat Zionism and end the occupation, we hope that Muslims around the world seek this opportunity during this, particularly this Aqsa Week...”
• February 2021: On a webinar[^134] on YouTube with UK-based Friends of al Aqsa, AMP Executive Director Osama Abuirshaid stated, “It’s not Judaism; our issue is with a colonial enterprise, with an ideology, the Zionist ideology, that hijacked a religion [Judaism]...”

• July 2020: At a Days of Rage rally to protest the apparent impending Israeli annexation of the West Bank, Abuirshaid stated:[^135] “Zionism is not Judaism. A distorted fascist ideology is not synonymous to a great religion.” He later compared Zionism to white supremacy.

• January 2021: In a Facebook post[^136] commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, Herzallah described the violent takeover[^137] of the Israeli embassy in Cairo, during which Israeli personnel needed to be rescued and airlifted to safety, as “too good to be true.”

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**ENDNOTES**


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