

# The Top Ten Anti-Israel Groups in America

## INTRODUCTION

The ten years since the September 2000 outbreak of the second intifada have been marked by a period of highly charged anti-Israel and anti-Zionist activity in the U.S. In the last decade, hundreds of groups around the country have renewed and increased their efforts to castigate and condemn Israel through a variety of campaigns, initiatives and events.

Israel's detractors use a plethora of weapons to assault Israel's legitimacy, including drawing parallels between Israel and Nazi Germany and alleging that Israel is akin to apartheid South Africa and that its policies toward the Palestinians are motivated by racism.

They hold Israel to a different standard than other countries, condemning it for implementing policies to protect its citizens, and pursuing boycott, divestment and sanctions ("BDS") campaigns. These accusations are rarely mitigated by acknowledgement of Israel's right to protect its citizens from the constant threat of Palestinian terrorism.

While Israel and its policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians have been scrutinized since the creation of the Jewish State, the recent intensification of the American anti-Israel movement can be specifically attributed to two key factors:

- The strategy of the anti-Israel movement to point to the U.S.'s alliance with Israel as a primary factor motivating the American-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This has encouraged many in the anti-war movement to adopt a core anti-Israel position and condemn the special relationship between Israel and the U.S. In addition, the anti-war movement has forged an alliance with Muslim and Arab community groups seeking to cast Israel as anathema to American interests, which had led to increased coordination and greater participation in anti-Israel activity.
- The advent and widespread popularity of user-generated content, including various social networking sites and blogs, which have provided anti-Israel individuals with the space to

express and promote their views. These new media outlets have created a unique opportunity for like-minded individuals and groups to mobilize, coordinate and spread their campaigns and messages to larger audiences, thereby de-legitimizing Israel with greater ease.

Anti-Israel sentiments play out through various events and campaigns. These range from grassroots street protests against Israeli military action, to strategy conferences on college campuses that advance BDS initiatives, to widely circulated petitions calling on the U.S. to cut military aid to Israel.

Of the hundreds of groups that organize and participate in various anti-Israel activities, there are many small, local organizations that have little national reach and others that are large and well-coordinated, with an ability to organize significant campaigns with international impact.

The recent Free Gaza [flotilla](#) is perhaps the prime example of what can happen when an anti-Israel group has sufficient resources, appeal, convictions and connections to carry out its agenda. In May 2010, leaders of the Free Gaza Movement, which had the backing of many anti-Israel organizations around the U.S., joined forces with [Insani Yardim Vakfi \(IHH\)](#), a wealthy pro-Hamas Turkish organization, and sent six ships to Gaza to "break the blockade." The Israeli Navy raided the ships before they could reach the Gaza port and nine flotilla participants were killed in the ensuing confrontation, prompting widespread condemnation of Israel from many countries around the world and an enormous propaganda victory for the anti-Israel movement.

The Free Gaza Movement, however, is just one of a number of groups that play a pivotal role in the American anti-Israel movement. Spearheading this movement are ten organizations whose influence lies in their ability to coordinate events, reach thousands of supporters, forge relationships with other like-minded groups and employ various propaganda tools to influence mainstream opinion.

## THE TOP TEN

The following groups (in alphabetical order) are the ten most influential anti-Israel groups in the United States today. They stand out in that they are able to organize a significant number of events, have a national reach, use particularly vitriolic language against Israel and its supporters, attract people to their cause and affect the mainstream discussion about Israel.

- **Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER):** In an effort to attract a wide range of support, the anti-Israel movement has long sought to frame its ideology as "anti-war" and

make common cause with the far Left and anti-war movements. Anti-Israel activists regularly describe Israel's policies as "imperialist" or "colonialist," terms that the anti-war movement can readily oppose as well. In many ways, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER), a large anti-war group that focuses much of its energy on protesting Israel, represents the success of that effort. Established in 2001 by the [International Action Center](#), ANSWER's supporters regularly link the anti-war and anti-Israel movements at rallies, including chanting the slogan "Occupation is a Crime: Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine" and accusing the U.S. military and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of being the "real terrorists in the Middle East." Because of its organizing prowess and ability to partner with a wide array of anti-Israel groups, ANSWER has positioned itself as one of the leading coordinators of rallies against Israel, many of which take place during periods of heightened tension, including the summer 2006 war against [Hezbollah](#) in Lebanon, [the Gaza War](#) in the winter of 2008-2009 and the May 2010 [flotilla](#) that was raided by the Israeli navy. In the days following the flotilla incident, ANSWER chapters around the country helped organize anti-Israel protests in San Diego, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington, D.C. At the rally in Chicago on June 1, 2010, protesters burned a homemade Israeli flag that featured a Star of David and a swastika and many of the approximately 1000 demonstrators held signs that read, "Stop Funding Israeli Apartheid," "Gaza Ghetto Genocide," "Starving Palestinians is Not a Jewish Value" and "Stop Israel's Slaughter in Gaza."

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Act Now to Stop War and End Racism Coalition](#)

- **Al-Awda:** As the largest Palestinian-American grassroots organization, Al-Awda, which is based in California, has significant impact on the national stage, including several active chapters around the country and various national and regional e-mail listserves. It is one of the primary organizers of grassroots anti-Israel rallies to protest Israel's policies, and hosts an annual conference that draws several hundred anti-Israel activists to strategize about ways to oppose Israel. While Al-Awda champions itself as a Palestinian rights group that advocates for "right of return," its core ideology is predicated on the notion that Israel's existence is illegitimate, Zionism is racism and resistance against Israel is justified. Many of Al-Awda's supporters readily express support for terrorist groups, including waving [Hamas](#) and [Hezbollah](#) flags at anti-Israel rallies and posting messages to Al-Awda's listserves demanding violent resistance against Israel. Al-Awda's most recent conference, held in May

2010 in Garden Grove, California, featured a "who's who" of anti-Israel activists, including Norman Finkelstein, former PLO lawyer Diana Buttu and Ali Abunimah, creator of an online Web site called Electronic Intifada. During her presentation, Buttu called for Israeli citizens to be "held accountable" for Israel's policies, recommended making it difficult for Israelis to travel abroad, and advocated for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel. Abunimah, in a presentation about BDS strategies, stated that he wants a museum dedicated to the end of Zionism to be built and called Gaza a "concentration camp."

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Al-Awda](#)

- **Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR):** Along with advocacy for fair treatment of Muslims in the United States, some of the largest Muslim American organizations commit significant resources and attention to condemning various Israeli policies toward the Palestinians. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington D.C.-based non-profit with offices around the U.S., has a long record of anti-Israel rhetoric, which has, at times, crossed the line into anti-Semitism. Their rhetoric has included public statements casting Jews and Israelis as corrupt agents who control U.S. policy and are responsible for the persecution of Muslims in the U.S. CAIR has also accused Israel of genocide, described Israel as a terrorist state and portrayed terror-related trials in the U.S. as evidence of undue Israeli political influence. CAIR was founded in 1994 by leaders of the Islamic Association for Palestine, a Hamas-affiliated anti-Semitic organization, and has been linked to the [Muslim Brotherhood](#)'s efforts in the U.S. to support Hamas. In 2007, CAIR was listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in the [Holy Land Foundation \(HLF\)](#) trial, during which evidence was produced by the Federal prosecutors demonstrating that CAIR and its founders were part of a group set up by the Muslim Brotherhood to support Hamas. CAIR has participated in and endorsed many rallies where support for terrorist organizations was expressed, and continues to offer a platform to conspiratorial Israel-bashers through its affiliated California-based publication, *InFocus News*. In response to the Israeli Navy's raid of a flotilla of ships heading to Gaza in May 2010, the executive director of CAIR-Chicago accused Israel of a "failure to apply Jewish values" and CAIR's Southern California executive director, Hussam Ayloush, posted a message on Facebook calling for "ending this failed destructive and racist experiment called Zionism."

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#)

- **Friends of Sabeel-North America (FOSNA):** As part of the anti-Israel movement's effort to attract support from the mainstream, Friends of Sabeel—North America (FOSNA), the U.S. affiliate of Sabeel, a Jerusalem-based Palestinian Christian organization, has been particularly effective at forging alliances with a number of mainline Protestant churches. FOSNA-organized events, including multiple U.S. conferences and organized trips to Israel, regularly feature speakers who accuse Israel of racism, oppression and human rights violations. With a presence in two dozen U.S. states, FOSNA has played a central role in bridging the anti-Israel movement with mainstream American Christian groups. Some of these have responded to FOSNA's outreach by integrating anti-Israel efforts into their broader social causes, bolstering the anti-Israel movement's ability to spread its messages to wider and otherwise untapped audiences. In 2009 and 2010, Sabeel conferences from Hawaii to Washington, DC, attracted hundreds of participants, and smaller, local events take place throughout the year.

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Friends of Sabeel—North America](#)

- **If Americans Knew (IAK):** A rallying cry of the anti-Israel movement has long been that the American media presents a biased and distorted view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If Americans Knew (IAK), founded in 2001 by [Alison Weir](#), aims to dispel the media's allegedly favorable depiction of Israel and to mobilize people to demand an end to U.S. support for Israel. IAK's materials, which are widely circulated at anti-Israel events and cited in anti-Israel articles, claim that the special relationship between the U.S. and Israel is detrimental to American interests and is driven by a subversive pro-Israel lobby. Weir, who serves as IAK's executive director and has recently been named the next president of the [Council for the National Interest](#), frequently speaks on college campuses and other venues around the United States. In her presentations and articles, Weir advances wild conspiracies about Israel, like the widely debunked [USS Liberty](#) theory and, more recently, the anti-Semitic allegation that Israel engages in the harvesting and trafficking of Palestinian organs. In response to an August 2009 article [published](#) in a Swedish newspaper advancing theories about alleged Israeli organ harvesting, Weir wrote several articles asserting that Israeli organ traffickers "coerce people into giving up their organs," that the Israeli government

has enabled a "transplant tourism" industry that exploits poor and needy individuals overseas, and that Israeli authorities have "targeted" Palestinians for autopsies and organ harvesting performed without permission.

For more information, see ADL's report here: [If Americans Knew](#)

- **International Solidarity Movement (ISM):** Following Israel's imposition of an economic blockade on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip in 2007, calls for "solidarity with Gaza" and efforts to "break the siege" have become significant themes of the anti-Israel movement. The International Solidarity Movement (ISM), founded in 2001, has played a uniquely important role promoting this agenda. Since its inception, ISM has brought volunteers to Israel to protest against the Israeli military's presence and operations in the Palestinian territories, including weekly protests alongside Palestinians against Israel's construction of the security fence. Despite its claims of "non-violent" tactics, protest actions organized by ISM sometimes escalate into violent confrontation and ISM has not shied away from putting its volunteers in harm's way, which has had fatal consequences. ISM has also expressed support for the efforts of terrorist organizations that target Israel, and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has warned that its activity "at times" is "under the auspices of Palestinian terrorist organizations." In 2007, ISM leaders launched the [Free Gaza Movement](#), a campaign that has since sent eight boat missions to Gaza in an effort to "break the siege." Its latest boat mission, a flotilla of six ships that attempted to reach Gaza in May 2010, was coordinated with [Insani Yardim Vakfi \(IHH\)](#), a pro-Hamas Turkish group, and resulted in a violent clash between the Israeli Navy that raided the ships and the activists on board.

For more information, see ADL's report here: [International Solidarity Movement](#)

- **Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP):** A central feature of the American anti-Israel movement has long been the role of Jewish anti-Zionist individuals and groups. Among them, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is the most active and influential, with at least eleven chapters around the U.S. JVP, founded in Berkeley, California, in 1996, calls for an end to U.S. aid to Israel, accuses Israel of "apartheid" policies, and supports divestment campaigns against Israel. Like other Jewish anti-Zionist groups, JVP uses its Jewish identity to shield the anti-Israel movement from allegations of anti-Semitism and provide a greater degree of credibility to the anti-Israel movement. JVP recognizes its role as such, specifically noting

that the group's Jewish nature gives it a "particular legitimacy in voicing an alternative view of American and Israeli actions and policies" and the ability to distinguish "between real anti-Semitism and the cynical manipulation of that issue." JVP activists regularly attend anti-Israel events wearing t-shirts and holding signs proudly broadcasting their Jewish identity. In March-April 2010, leaders of JVP unsuccessfully lobbied for the passage of a [divestment resolution](#) at the University of California, Berkeley, targeting companies that do business with Israel. Sydney Levy, the Director of Campaigns for JVP, wrote a letter on behalf of the group to the Student Senate and described the bill as an "inspiration" and "in line with JVP's current campaigns to support divestment." Members of JVP, in a further show of support, attended the student senate meeting where the resolution was being considered.

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Backgrounder: Jewish Voice for Peace](#)

- **Muslim American Society (MAS):** As the leading Muslim organization promoting and coordinating anti-Israel activity in the U.S., the Muslim American Society (MAS) attracts sizable audiences to its anti-Israel demonstrations due in part to its affiliation with some of the largest mosques in the country. MAS-sponsored anti-Israel rallies in the U.S. regularly feature virulently anti-Jewish rhetoric and expressions of support for terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Hamas. Since its establishment, MAS has drawn its ideological inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic extremist movement founded in Egypt that has spawned and inspired several terrorist groups. In 2009, MAS leaders raised funds to support a convoy to Gaza called [Viva Palestina](#), which had previously donated cash and vehicles to representatives of the Hamas government. MAS annual conventions, which are attended by thousands of participants, attract speakers who justify armed resistance against Israel and delve into anti-Semitic prevarications. These supplications are often couched in religious language, such as the notion that the eradication of the state of Israel is a religious duty incumbent upon all Muslims. In December 2009, MAS co-sponsored a [conference in Chicago](#) that attracted more than 1000 participants and served as a forum for religious scholars and political activists to rail against Jews, call for the eradication of the state of Israel, and accuse the United States government of waging a war against Muslims at home and abroad. Hamed Ghazali, Chairman of the MAS Council of Islamic Schools and professor at the Islamic American University in Michigan, told the audience that "Allah gave

us the Jews" as the primary historical and religious example of those who "take the wrong path."

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Muslim American Society](#)

- **Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP):** College campuses in the United States are perhaps the most well-known venues and platforms for anti-Israel events and campaigns. Many universities have one or more groups that organize anti-Israel activity, the most ubiquitous of which is Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), with chapters at close to 75 American universities. SJP chapters regularly organize activities presenting a biased view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including mock "apartheid walls" and "checkpoint" displays, presentations by sensationalistic anti-Israel speakers and longer programs like Palestine Awareness and [Israeli Apartheid](#) weeks. SJP chapters often partner with the local Muslim Student Association (MSA), a large umbrella group with chapters at several dozen universities, and other Muslim, left-wing and anti-war groups on campus to enhance their anti-Israel efforts. In the past year, several SJP chapters have initiated [divestment campaigns](#) against Israel and are petitioning their universities to cease their investments with companies that do business with Israel. While SJP promotes its programs as a way for students to learn about the "other side" of the conflict, these events are often less educational opportunities than efforts to vilify Israel and Zionism. In March 2010, for example, SJP chapters at several universities organized events in conjunction with Israeli Apartheid Week that featured speakers who described Israel as an "ethnocentric racist society" and Zionism as "inherently undemocratic."

For more information, see ADL's report here: [Students for Justice in Palestine](#)

- **US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation (USCEIO):** The primary organizer of efforts to persuade the U.S. government to cut off aid to Israel is the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation (USCEIO), a Washington, D.C.-based coalition of more than 200 national and local anti-Israel groups. USCEIO organizes a variety of campaigns and petitions toward this end, alleging that the U.S. is complicit in Israel's "crimes" because of its fiscal support for Israel. USCEIO's function as an umbrella organization boosts cooperation among various anti-Israel groups and its annual conferences serve as a forum for representatives of its member groups to discuss strategy, formulate policy and highlight recent successes. The



group consistently focuses its efforts on lobbying Congress, often dedicating the last day of its Annual National Organizers' Conference as a lobbying day on Capitol Hill. USCEIO has had some success in attracting the support of left-of-center politicians, including Representatives Dennis Kucinich (OH) and Brian Baird (WA), who have spoken at various USCEIO events. At its most recent conference, which was held in July 2010 in Kansas City, Missouri, Congressman Baird received a "Courage in Congress" award for his efforts to oppose the blockade on the Gaza Strip and delivered the keynote address at the conference's dinner. Baird described the 2008-2009 Gaza war as a "horrible, catastrophic destruction of a civilian population" and condemned the situation in Gaza as "collective punishment." When asked about the political landscape regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Baird claimed that some politicians side with Israel purely for political and financial gain: "If you watch Eric Cantor and some of the folks on the Republican side, they're trying to basically peel off the Jewish financial and political support."

For more information, see ADL's report here: [US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation](#)

There are many anti-Israel groups that did not make the above list. Many of these groups satisfy some but not all of the criteria. For example, there are groups that advance overt anti-Israel positions and organize events in their regions but do not have a national presence, such as Adalah-NY, [Neturei Karta](#) and the Middle East Children's Alliance. Similarly, while many individual chapters of the Muslim Student Association (a national organization founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood) organize anti-Israel events, some of its chapters, as well as the national organization itself, are not primarily driven by an anti-Israel agenda. Other groups, like the [Council for the National Interest \(CNI\)](#), the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network and the [US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel](#), have important roles in creating policy and setting anti-Israel agendas but do not organize a significant number of events. Still others have anti-Israel views but also focus on many other issues, such as the American Friends Service Committee, CODEPINK, and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

## CRITERIA

Five crucial factors, or criteria, were used to determine which groups to include on the top ten list:

- **Organization, sponsorship and endorsement of events and campaigns.** These activities include various boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel or companies that do business with Israel; anti-Israel rallies, panel discussions, conferences;

anti-Israel policy initiatives and lobbying efforts against Israel.

- **National impact.** This includes an organizational framework with multiple chapters around the U.S., conferences that draw supporters from around the country, far-reaching campaigns and anti-Israel demonstrations in a range of cities.
- **Rhetoric that is extremely hostile to Israel, Zionists and/or Jews.** This includes allegations that Israel or Jews control the U.S. government or the media, drawing parallels to the Holocaust (by comparing Israeli leaders to Nazis or describing Gaza as the "new Auschwitz"), accusing Israel of "apartheid," calling for the dismantlement of the state of Israel, advocating for a one-state solution and expressing support for terrorist groups that seek Israel's destruction.
- **Recruitment of supporters.** Includes grassroots supporters involved in other anti-war or social justice initiatives and participants in conferences, demonstrations and other events.
- **Influence on the mainstream conversation about Israel.** Includes publishing anti-Israel opinion pieces in newspapers, blogs and other media; condemning Israel in interviews with mainstream media and recruiting well-known figures, such as international leaders, celebrities, academics and others, to attend anti-Israel events or join boycott campaigns against Israel.