

Testimony Submitted for the Record
House Judiciary Committee
Hearing on Free Speech on College Campuses
Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director
Anti-Defamation League
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Since 1913, the mission of ADL has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL is a global leader in fighting antisemitism, exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and monitoring and fighting the spread of hate in our communities and online.

The Jewish community faced an unthinkable tragedy on October 7th, when the terrorist group Hamas committed mass atrocities against thousands of Israelis, including murder, torture, dismemberment and rape. As the global Jewish community mourns our collective trauma, one could imagine a world in which Jewish students on college campuses were comforted with supportive words, candlelight vigils, and an understanding community mobilizing to support their needs. Unfortunately, in many cases, they have faced just the opposite. Instead of being supported by their peers, Jewish and Israeli students have confronted harassment, anti-Israel demonstrations glorifying terrorism, and even threats of violence.

Even before Hamas’s attack on Israel, ADL had been tracking disturbing trends on campus related to rising antisemitism, including the targeting of Jewish students and faculty who publicly express support for Israel’s existence as a Jewish state. For the overwhelming majority of Jews, their connection to the Jewish state is a core component of their Jewish identity. According to ADL’s annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, antisemitic activity on college and university campuses increased by 41% in 2022. And according to ADL’s most recent [Anti-Israel Activism on U.S. Campuses](#) report, there were 665 anti-Israel incidents on campus during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Since the October 7th attack, there has been yet another surge in incidents on campus, this time garnering national attention. ADL has recorded a total of 202 anti-Israel rallies on U.S. campuses to date, including at least 33 which included expressions of support for terrorism. ADL has also recorded 97 antisemitic incidents on campuses since October 7th, 76 of which can be directly linked to the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel.

Student groups like [Students for Justice in Palestine](#) (SJP), whose antisemitic campaign against the “normalization of Zionism” has been used to exclude and marginalize Jewish students, have been particularly active, ratcheting up their rhetoric. Now, the national group is endorsing and glorifying terrorism as legitimate “resistance” and claiming that to “Free Palestine” will require “Not just slogans and rallies, but armed confrontation with the oppressors.”

There is no question that Jewish students, faculty, and their parents are scared. Antisemitism has been allowed to fester on campus for years, and now it has reached a boiling point.

Our hope was that professors would be a moderating force in response, providing support to students directly impacted and using their own voice to speak out against terrorism, antisemitism, and hate. Unfortunately, that's not always the case, as we have seen teachers supporting similar inflammatory and divisive rhetoric, endorsing SJP chapter behavior and even offering extra credit for participation in anti-Israel protests and rallies.

Across the country, there are multiple examples of university professors condoning Hamas's actions. At Cornell University, for example, a [professor](#) publicly declared during a rally that Hamas's attack was "exhilarating" and "energizing."

At [Stanford University](#), an instructor reportedly asked Jewish and Israeli students to identify themselves during class and told those students to stand in the corner, while telling other students that "This is what Israel does to the Palestinians . . . Israel is a colonizer." The University removed the instructor from teaching responsibilities, and an investigation is ongoing.

Over 50 members of Georgetown University's faculty joined a statement on the "[Situation in Gaza](#)", which included language rejecting the Jewish people's connection to Israel and rejecting Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. The statement continued, "We watch as Israeli politicians brag about the atrocities they plan to commit and are shocked to see many US leaders showing support for Netanyahu's plans, some even cheering on the bloodletting" -- a false claim employing language which can be perceived as a veiled invocation of the blood libel, an age-old antisemitic conspiracy theory.

An Assistant Professor at UC Davis [tweeted](#) that, "One group of ppl we have easy access to in the US is all these zionist journalists who spread propaganda & misinformation," and that, "They have houses w addresses, kids in schools . . . they can fear their bosses, but they should fear us more" alongside a knife, hatchet, and three blood drop emojis. UC Davis's Chancellor has since condemned the post, and the University is investigating whether this post violates campus policies.

It's not just the rhetoric that ADL is concerned about. At [Cooper Union in New York City](#), a group of protesters reportedly bypassed the point where entrants are supposed to scan their IDs and subsequently [began banging on the windows and doors](#) of the library while shouting, "Free Palestine!" The visibly Jewish students inside were terrified and were forced to call upon the NYPD to help escort them out of the building. The following day, a demonstration [near Tulane University's campus](#) spiraled out of control when protesters clashed in a physical altercation and multiple Jewish students were assaulted. The fight appeared to have stemmed from an attempt to light an Israeli flag on fire. At [Cornell University](#), law enforcement and the FBI were called in response to violent online threats targeting Cornell Jewish students as well as the center for Jewish life on campus. And just down the street from the U.S. Capitol, at George Washington University, messaging that called for the dissolution of Israel as a Jewish state was projected on to campus buildings.

Universities cannot meet this moment by simple fidelity to principles of academic freedom and full and free debate. They must recognize that neither academic freedom nor freedom-of-speech

principles prevent university presidents from using their own voices to distance universities from any attempt to justify, glorify, and gloss over terrorist attacks targeting civilians. And they must recognize that there are times when speech crosses a line and is no longer protected. Campus leadership must make clear now that they will use all tools at their disposal to keep their students safe. Students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and partners deserve clear assurances and plans. Anything less is irresponsible.

ADL is first and foremost calling on university leadership to distance schools from dangerous, antisemitic rhetoric and to investigate whether SJP and other student groups' conduct is in violation of university codes of conduct or any other relevant laws or policies.

Alongside our campus partners, we are also urging campus leadership to proactively use all tools at their disposal to ensure there is a safe and welcoming climate on campus, including by taking the steps outlined in the [recommendations](#) prepared by ADL, consistent with the [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#).

At a time when Jewish students are feeling increasingly vulnerable, ADL is urging universities to:

1. Ensure that antisemitism awareness education is included in new student orientation programming, DEI programming, and training on discrimination and harassment.
2. Define antisemitism on campus by embracing the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \("IHRA"\) Working Definition of Antisemitism](#) and relying on it when investigating reports of antisemitic harassment and discrimination on campus. The definition has been adopted by more than 40 countries, more than 30 states and hundreds of universities, non-profits, and other key institutions, and was embraced by the White House's U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.
3. Create an ongoing Task Force or Advisory Group to review, address, and improve Jewish life on campus. Ensure that Hillel and Chabad leadership are included and consulted.
4. Review and update policies and protocols as needed on how best to support students when there are antisemitic or other hateful speakers and/or events on campus.

ADL is also urging campus law enforcement to:

1. Reach out to Jewish student leaders and/or local Hillel and Chabad chapters on campus, to ensure a point of contact in the event of an emergency, and to convey that campus law enforcement and public safety is available in a time of crisis.
2. Plan ahead by making sure there is an adequate public safety presence during protests and demonstrations and an immediate response in cases where there is harassment, violence, or any other criminal activity.
3. Ensure all college/university processes are followed so that students can safely congregate to express their viewpoints.

ADL is urging Congress to:

1. Pass House Resolution 839, introduced by Representatives Kustoff and Wasserman Schultz, which condemns antisemitism at institutions of higher education in the United States and encourages college and university leaders, administrators, and faculty to speak out against antisemitism. The Senate already passed an identical resolution that was introduced by Senators Blackburn and Rosen.
2. Support implementation of the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism by passing comprehensive legislation appropriating funding to implement the plan, holding the White House accountable to its commitments and ensuring that the fight against antisemitism lasts beyond any one administration.
3. Fund the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) in the national security supplemental appropriations package. Nonprofits and Jewish student organizations must have access to these resources to protect themselves from the rising threats.
4. Speak out against antisemitism on campuses across the country. Jewish and pro-Israel students have been intimidated, targeted, and even assaulted at their schools. Many are left feeling so vulnerable they are now afraid to come to campus and attend classes. They need to know they are supported by leaders at the highest levels of government.

We are at a moment where long simmering tensions on campus are starting to boil over; our students are feeling threatened and intimidated; and parents are questioning whether it's safe to send their kids to certain schools. ADL and our campus partners are working hard to improve campus climate and ensure that students are safe, but we cannot do it alone. This moment calls for direct action by university leadership and by those in a position to influence university leadership – including elected officials and members of Congress, who must also take immediate action to send an unequivocal message that antisemitism and hate in all forms will be rejected.
