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Southern Poverty Law Center refuses to call Hamas a terrorist group despite invasion of Israel

by KRISTINA WATROBSKI | The National Desk

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WASHINGTON (TND) — The Southern Poverty Law Center is refusing to say whether it believes Hamas is a terrorist organization following the group's invasion of Israel and killing of more than 1,000 citizens.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) broke its public silence on the Israel-Hamas war three weeks after the Oct. 7 invasion. In its Oct. 28 [statement](#), the center, which describes itself as working to "advance the human rights of all people," wrote that it condemns "hate and violence in every form."

"Earlier this month, we watched in horror as Hamas led an unconscionable attack against Israeli citizens, killing more than 1,000 people and kidnapping hundreds," the statement reads. "The tragedy has only continued as Palestinian civilians in Gaza — many of whom are children — have been killed by airstrikes and cut off from food, clean water, medical care and life-saving supplies."

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...is known as primarily [anti-Muslim](#) and [anti-Semitic](#) groups are carrying out acts of hate or discrimination, including through its "Hate Map," which [features](#) more than 1,000 U.S. organizations.

The center does not directly refer to Hamas as a terrorist or extremist organization in its Oct. 28 statement, instead writing "we denounce all acts of terrorism."

“*While the SPLC supports the advancement and protection of the human rights of all people, we focus our work within the Deep South and the United States,*” the statement continues. *"It is outside of our purview and expertise to comment on international events."*

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Despite its statement asserting the contrary, SPLC has previously weighed in on international events. In March 2019, the center published an [article](#) decrying a manifesto written by Brenton Tarrant, who carried out mass shootings at two New Zealand mosques. In the article, SPLC refers to Tarrant as an "accused terrorist."

The center also [condemned](#) a slew of European "hate groups" in a 2018 article, referring to some as "right-wing terrorists." The groups, which SPLC said are "linked" to American organizations and personalities, are based in Germany, France and Russia, as well as other countries.

SPLC doubled down on its "purview" when repeatedly asked by The National Desk (TND) whether it considers Hamas to be a terrorist organization. Evan Nowell, SPLC's Deputy Director of Media Relations, said in a statement that SPLC does not "designate terrorist organizations" and only "designates an organization or a collection of individuals operating in the United States as either a hate group or an antigovernment extremist group."

TND then asked SPLC whether it is the center's opinion that Hamas is a terrorist or extremist organization. The center has not responded to repeated inquiries.

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“ The SPLC response to Hamas terrorist attacks comes up short on many levels, but none more than in its inability to uphold its stated values,” Gregory T. Angelo, the president of the New Tolerance Campaign, told TND. “According to the SPLC, it’s wrong to use the phrase ‘All Lives Matter,’ but in the wake of a targeted attack on Jewish people, it’s perfectly acceptable to issue a blanket condemnation of ‘all acts of terrorism,’ ‘all acts of hate,’ and ‘all violent extremism.”

Tyler O’Neil of The Heritage Foundation argued to TND that SPLC also failed to “criticize the pro-Palestine student groups” that have “engaged in antisemitic harassment against Jewish students” since the invasion of Israel.

However, others have applauded SPLC’s statement, noting the support it displays for citizens in both Israel and the Gaza Strip.

“ It’s not actually hard to condemn Hamas’ terrorism and also call for protection of Palestinian civilians and to fight both antisemitism and Islamophobia in the U.S.,” Rabbi Jill Jacobs, the CEO of Jewish nonprofit T’ruah, [said](#). “Thank you [SPLC] for showing how it’s done.”

TND reached out to learn whether Jacobs supports SPLC’s decision not to directly call Hamas terrorists, but did not receive a response prior to publication. This story will be updated if a response is received.

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SPLC’s statement came nearly two weeks after the center’s union issued one of its own on the Israel-Hamas war. The SPLC union [wrote](#) that it is standing “strongly in solidarity with the Palestinian people” while leaving out any direction mention of Israel or Hamas.

“ SPLC Union is and will always be rooted in the legacy of anti-oppression and decolonization led by Black and Indigenous leaders,” the union’s statement reads. “What we see in Gaza is the violent imperialist desecration of a people -- the beginnings of a genocide.”



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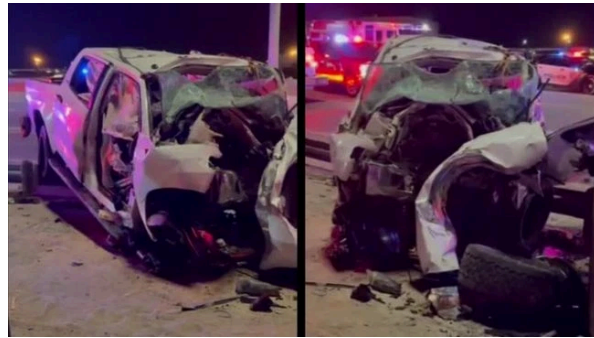


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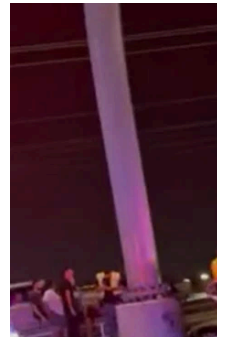
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