

MAY 2023

CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM ON AMERICAN COLLEGE CAMPUSES

ANTI-ZIONISM:
THE MOST "ACCEPTABLE" MODERN-DAY
FORM OF ANTISEMITISM IN THE U.S.

BY COMBAT ANTISEMITISM MOVEMENT (CAM)
ANTISEMITISM RESEARCH CENTER
ISRAEL ON CAMPUS COALITION



INTRODUCTION

This report examines Israel Apartheid Weeks across college campuses in the United States in 2023. The report provides an overview of the weaponization of the apartheid claim by anti-Zionists, its role in fueling antisemitism on college campuses, and the manner in which it negatively impacts Jewish students. Rooted in the delegitimization of the Jewish people's right to self-determination, anti-Zionism is proliferating now as perhaps the most pernicious form of modern-day antisemitism, oftentimes entering mainstream political and social discourse disguised in a language of intellectualism and liberal values. This manifestation of Jew-hatred has had a particularly detrimental impact on college campuses all over the United States, insidiously influencing the thinking and worldviews of future generations of political leaders, professionals, and activists. These efforts, culminating annually in Israeli Apartheid Weeks on campuses around the country, seek to both isolate Jewish students and faculty and promote a revisionist narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that whitewashes Palestinian terrorism and institutionalized antisemitism in Palestinian schools, and absolves Palestinian leaders of egregious human rights violations committed against both Israelis and Palestinians, including the violent thwarting of numerous peace initiatives that sought to answer Palestinian national aspirations.

APARTHEID LABEL AND CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM

The Apartheid Convention was enshrined into international law in 1984 and it [defines](#) the crime of apartheid as “inhuman acts resulting from the policies and practices of apartheid and similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination.” The accusation was first leveled against Israel during the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa. At this forum, non-government organizations, in conjunction with the Palestinian leadership and the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation, introduced the alleged crime against Israel as a method to delegitimize the world's only sovereign Jewish state.

Relying on a distortion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's history, misinformation, and misapplication of international law, proponents of the apartheid label seek to undermine Israel's international standing by falsely accusing it of a heinous crime against humanity – the same transgression that was [perpetrated](#) by the South African regime from 1948 through 1994. These strategically-deployed accusations not only minimize the crime of apartheid, but also perpetuate antisemitism in their attempts to ostracize the Jewish state. The apartheid label fuels antisemitic sentiment around the world through two different means. First, the label demonizes the Jewish state through libelous claims, akin to those leveled against Jewish individuals throughout the centuries in Europe. Second, the use of the label seeks to advance an agenda that ultimately aims to dismantle the Jewish state. In 2021, Omar Barghouti, a co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, [stated](#):

“If the refugees return to their homes [in Israel] as the BDS movement calls for, if we bring an end to Israel's apartheid regime and if we end the occupation on lands occupied



University of California San Diego Israel Apartheid Week
May 2023

in 1967, including Jerusalem, what will be left of the Zionist regime?"

Among other purported crimes that have been refuted by major think tanks, top scholars, and national governments, including accusations of Israeli ethnic cleansing, colonialism, and the purposeful targeting of civilians during armed conflicts, the apartheid label is often used by advocates of BDS, which is a means of economic and diplomatic warfare against Israel. Proponents of this libelous assertion disseminate classic antisemitic tropes under the veneer of "political discourse." By accusing Israel of engaging in apartheid practices, the existence of the Jewish state is framed as the obstacle to the establishment of a Palestinian state; an assertion that is repudiated by the 1947 UN Partition Plan and numerous subsequent peace offers made by Israel.

ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Taking place during spring semesters annually, Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) is a strategic misinformation campaign usually sponsored and organized by notorious anti-Israel groups on college campuses throughout the West. These groups include Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR), and Palestinian Societies (PalSocs), among others. Taking advantage of general apathy on campuses toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, IAW seeks to shape malleable public opinion among students and faculty by heightening negative perceptions of Israel.

These campaigns often rely on marketing strategies that seek to whitewash Palestinian terrorism, erase Jewish connection to the Land of Israel, and distort the history of critical chapters of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often outright omitting peace offers made by multiple Israeli governments. Across the United States, Israeli Apartheid Week took place on 48 college campuses in 2023.

WHAT GROUPS ARE INVOLVED AND WHAT DO THEY SEEK TO ACCOMPLISH?

The main group responsible for the organization of Israeli Apartheid Weeks on college campuses is Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). As a leading student actor in advocating for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS), SJP has adopted a policy of "non-normalization." This policy commits to ostracizing and excluding students, academic bodies, and campus groups that identify as Zionist – impacting the majority of students involved in campus Jewish life.

According to a 2016 Congressional [testimony](#) by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, SJP founders and patrons have been ideologically and financially [linked](#) to U.S.-designated terror organizations, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. A main objective of SJP is to lobby student governments to adopt BDS resolutions, seeking to advance the alienation of Israel on campuses. A study conducted by the AMCHA Initiative in 2019 [found](#) a strong correlation between campus BDS activities and increased levels of antisemitism.

Ultimately, these groups have two key goals: isolating and intimidating the majority of Jewish students, who regard Zionism as a key component of their Jewish identities, and ideologically influencing the next generation of policymakers, academics, and activists. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often receives disproportionate attention in both media outlets and academic institutions, the majority of a campus student bodies remain rather indifferent to the subject. Strategically targeting this apathy, anti-Israel groups on campus

seek to build broad coalitions of student groups – aiming, for example, to pass anti-Israel resolutions in student councils endorsing the BDS movement or rejecting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA).

WHAT DO ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK ACTIVITIES LOOK LIKE?

Across the United States, Israeli Apartheid Weeks feature hateful rhetoric, displays containing revisionist historical messaging aimed at demonizing Israel, and hostile environments that intimidate Jewish students. For example, during the second week of March 2023, Arizona State University’s SJP chapter erected an “apartheid wall,” featuring calls for the demographic destruction of the Jewish state. In addition to regurgitating the same slanderous accusations spewed by SJP chapters around the country, hosts for this event pushed the false and provocative claim that Israel has engaged in genocide against the Palestinians, despite various studies highlighting the clear rise in the Palestinian population in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

During the third week of March 2023, Philadelphia’s Temple University hosted a panel discussion titled “Viewing the Palestinian Struggle Through Different Eyes.” The event featured Marc Lamont Hill and Susan Abulhawa, both of whom have called for the destruction of Israel. For example, Abulhawa, an American-Palestinian author, [published](#) tweets labeling Israel a “Nazi state” and a “racist colonial Zionist military ‘state’” that will “someday be demolished.” Hill has received significant backlash for repeated statements calling for the destruction of Israel and condoning Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians. This backlash included a powerful [rebuttal](#) by Temple University in 2018.

On March 28th 2023, SJP and the fringe group Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) at George Washington University held a panel discussion titled “The Palestine Exception” with GWU Professors Williams Youmans and Dr. Lara Sheehi, currently under investigation for a Title VI complaint to the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights for allegedly creating a “hostile environment” to Jewish and Israeli students in her courses. This event falsely sought to establish that the “weaponization” of antisemitism (in reference to attempts at recognizing anti-Zionism as a contemporary form of antisemitism) is a form of anti-Palestinian sentiment. On March 30th, as part of “Israel Apartheid Week,” the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) at Harvard University hosted “South African Palestinian Solidarity,” a panel discussion with Omar



Arizona State University Israel Apartheid Week
March 2023



Temple University Israel Apartheid Week
March 2023

Barghouti, the BDS movement co-founder. Despite acquiring his graduate degree in Israel, Barghouti's entire platform has been based on false allegations of Israeli apartheid and the justification of Palestinian terrorism. The aforementioned examples are just a few out of the 48 colleges and universities throughout the country that experienced Israeli Apartheid Weeks throughout the Spring 2023 semester. With tens of thousands of Jewish students exposed to this virulent form of contemporary antisemitism, administrations must take stronger measures to safeguard the principles of tolerance, respect, and non-discrimination.

HOW DO ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEKS IMPACT JEWISH STUDENTS ON CAMPUSES?

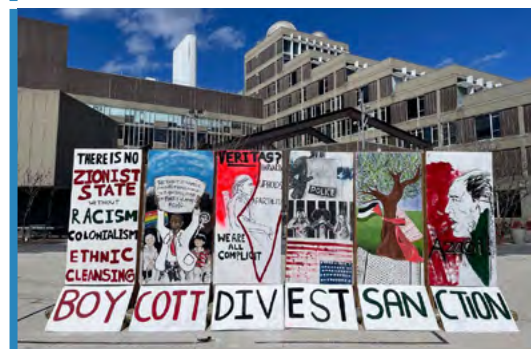
Across campuses in the U.S., Jewish students are annually subjected to an appalling visual display of contemporary antisemitism in their own academic communities. These displays do not seek to celebrate Palestinian identity or push for for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but rather call for the eradication of the Jewish state, and demonize its supporters through the promulgation of anti-Zionist ideology based on historical revisionism. Furthermore, these displays of antisemitism seek to blame Israel and Zionists for all of the ills American society is facing. A clear example of this was seen in Tufts University's Israeli Apartheid Week, where a horrific and blatantly antisemitic display blamed "Zionists" for the police brutality that led to the deaths of individuals such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

These anti-Zionist activists often act with the purpose to intimidate Jewish students on campus. A 2021 [study](#) by the Pew Research Center found that eight-in-ten Jewish Americans say caring about Israel is an essential or important part of what being Jewish means to them. Zionism, indisputably, is a key component of Jewish identity. By advancing narratives that seek to delegitimize the Jewish people's right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland, anti-Israel groups responsible for demonstrations during Israeli Apartheid Week seek to make Jewish students on campus uncomfortable and isolated.

The strategy for these groups has been quite clear for some time: creating a litmus test on



George Washington University Israel Apartheid Week
March 2023



Harvard University Israel Apartheid Week
March 2023

morality and ethics based on the renunciation of support for Zionism. As such, Jewish students on campus are often pressured to either abandon or diminish public support of a key component of their own identities. Allowing this virulent form of discrimination to persist under the auspices of academic freedom is simply intolerable during a time where antisemitism is rising. If such hateful displays would not be tolerated when directed at other ethnic or religious minorities, Jewish students should not be an exception.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROTECT JEWISH STUDENTS ON CAMPUS?

To address this virulent form of antisemitism, three recommendations should be immediately accepted and implemented by campus administrators. First, they must pursue university-wide adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. In recognizing that contemporary antisemitism is rooted in calls for the dismantling of the world's only Jewish state, or by comparing Israeli Jews to Nazis, administrations can be trained to recognize this virulent form of Jew-hatred and respond appropriately when they see it on campus.

Second, university administrations ought not to provide activity funds to student groups that participate in such hateful activities. While universities have an obligation to promote a diverse marketplace of ideas, they also must ensure principles of tolerance and respect for diversity are upheld. Given that it would certainly be deemed inappropriate to set up a week-long demonstration on campus calling for the destruction of another sovereign state, such as Italy, then Israel cannot be the outlier.

Lastly, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices must no longer ignore rising campus Jew-hatred and should prioritize antisemitism training programs for faculty, students, and administrators. Increasing training on antisemitism will better equip these offices with the tools to identify and denounce classical and contemporary forms of Jewish hatred. Entrusted with maintaining an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment on college campuses, DEI offices have an opportunity to foster a culture of acceptance and non-discrimination. Most importantly, DEI offices must begin to operate with an understanding that in spaces where antisemitism is allowed to exist, other forms of discrimination will fester and grow.

Additional incidents related to Israeli Apartheid Week can be seen in Appendix A. To learn more about Israeli Apartheid Week in 2023, visit our working database [here](#).



Tufts University Israel Apartheid Week
April 2023

APPENDIX A



University of Michigan, 02/06/2023

Students Allied for Freedom and Equality (SAFE) at University of Michigan held "Palestine Awareness Week" from February 6 - 17, whose advertisement included: "Power to our Freedom Fighters, Glory to our Martyrs," "Palestine Awareness Week (PAW). A clear act of justifying Palestinian terrorism directed at Israeli civilians.



Rutgers University, 3/21/2023

SJP held "Israeli Apartheid Week" with a virtual session on boycotting Israeli products as well as two back-to-back general body meetings.





**Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
03/14/2023**

MIT Coalition Against Apartheid (CAA) held "Israeli Apartheid Week", which included the event, "Modern Israeli Apartheid: Chat with Human Rights Watch Director"



**George Mason University,
3/28/2023**

As part of "Israeli Apartheid Week," SJP held the event "First Aid & Medical Emergencies in Palestine" for first aid and medical emergency training with certified EMTs and "a discussion on the presence of medical emergencies in Palestine." In addition, As part of "Israeli Apartheid Week," SJP erected an "Apartheid Wall Display" including the phrase "from the river to the sea" and name tags with keys attached for every "Palestinian/Palestinian family martyred at the hands of the Zionist state during the Unity Intifada in 2021."