

# Countering Campus Antisemitism

10 Key Commitments Universities Can Make in the Wake of the Hamas-Israel War



In the wake of Hamas's mass atrocities against Israeli civilians — which included murder, torture, dismemberment, rape, and hostage taking — one could imagine a world in which Jewish and Israeli students on campuses across the United States were comforted with supportive words, candlelight vigils, and an understanding community mobilizing to support their needs. Instead, we have watched in horror as antisemitism has spiraled out of control in higher education. Jewish and Israeli students have been [harassed, threatened, spat on, and physically assaulted](#). They have also seen their classmates [glorifying Hamas's terrorism as a legitimate form of "resistance"](#) and using chants and slogans calling for the destruction of the State of Israel. According to ADL research and data, [antisemitism](#) and the [vilification of Zionism](#) have been allowed to simmer on campus for years, and now these incidents are approaching a boiling point, leaving some students afraid to express their Jewish identity in public. This is simply unacceptable.

As the U.S. Department of Education has made clear in this moment of crisis, colleges and universities that receive federal funding [have an obligation under Title VI](#) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect Jewish and Israeli students against antisemitic harassment and discrimination when it is based on their shared ancestry and/or ethnic characteristics. But, it shouldn't take the threat of an Office for Civil Rights Title VI investigation for schools to do the right thing. ADL is urging all colleges and universities to urgently take the following [proactive steps](#), consistent with the [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#), to help address the hostile environments that are increasingly taking hold on campuses across the country.

## 1 Speak Up Forcefully in Condemnation of Antisemitism

The U.S. National Strategy calls upon colleges to “issue clear and unwavering statements condemning all forms of hate, including antisemitism, especially in the wake of antisemitic incidents” and to “treat antisemitism with the same seriousness as other forms of hate.” In some cases, speaking up [may be required](#) to meet Title VI obligations.

## 2 Rigorously Enforce Student Disciplinary Rules

At a time when we are seeing harassment, intimidation, threats of violence, and physical assaults on college campuses, there must be consequences. Schools should follow the lead of [New York University](#), making clear that non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, student codes of conduct, and residential life policies will be strictly enforced, and disciplinary measures taken in appropriate cases, up to and including suspension and expulsion.

## 3 Investigate Anti-Israel and Anti-Zionist Student Groups Glorifying Terrorism

Schools should also follow [Brandeis University's example](#) and investigate whether anti-Israel and anti-Zionist student groups on campus that are openly glorifying terrorism or calling for eliminationist or violent actions, including but not limited to Students for Justice in Palestine, may be violating student codes of conduct or other applicable laws. Where warranted, universities should revoke official recognition and funding of such groups, making clear that university logos, facilities and other resources will not be used to further these activities.

## 4 Create a Task Force or Advisory Group Focused on Campus Antisemitism

If your campus does not have one already, follow the lead of [Columbia University](#), [University of Pennsylvania](#), and [Harvard University](#) by creating a Task Force or Advisory Group to review, address, and improve Jewish life on campus. This Task Force or Advisory Group should be composed of Jewish student leaders, faculty, staff, and other concerned stakeholders, including but not limited to representatives from [Hillel](#) and [Chabad](#). Participate in [Hillel's Campus Climate Initiative](#) as a key component of this work.

## 5 Make Sure that Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policies Fully Protect Jewish Students

Colleges and universities must recognize that for many Jewish students, Zionism is a core part of their Jewish ethnic and ancestral identity. When Jewish students are subjected to anti-Zionist harassment or discrimination based on their shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, schools have an obligation to respond, [including under Title VI](#). Schools should publicly and proactively support students in understanding these legal protections and how they can file complaints.

## 6 Update Security Protocols to Keep Jewish Students Safe

Schools must review and update security protocols on campus to ensure that there is adequate staffing during student protests, and that criminal acts of harassment, vandalism, and assault are immediately investigated. In the wake of October 7th, and concerns regarding student safety, [University of California, Berkeley](#) announced that campus leadership, in partnership with campus law enforcement, “has ramped up security in response to tensions on campus. In addition to maintaining a strong presence of uniformed and plainclothes UCPD officers at campus rallies and protests, the campus has hired private security for these events, and staff from the Division of Student Affairs regularly attend and monitor all rallies.” This approach can serve as a model for other schools.

## 7 Conduct Mandatory Trainings Regarding Antisemitism on Campus

Antisemitism awareness education must be incorporated as a mandatory component of new student orientation, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programming, and all trainings regarding discrimination and harassment for faculty, staff and students. The [University of Pennsylvania](#) has committed to taking this critically important step, and other schools must do the same.

## 8 Define Antisemitism on Campus (the IHRA Definition)

Colleges and universities should follow the lead of over 340 institutions of higher education worldwide, including, by way of example only, [Florida State University](#), [New York University](#), [University of Pittsburgh](#), and [University of Pennsylvania](#), by adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (“IHRA”) [Working Definition of Antisemitism](#) and acknowledging the [complex ways in which antisemitism can manifest](#). Ensure that all faculty, staff, campus security, and administrators charged with investigating complaints of harassment and discrimination are educated on the IHRA definition and understand its applications.

## 9 Issue Clear Guidance and Enforce Disciplinary Rules Regarding Faculty Conduct

While instructors enjoy considerable leeway in the classroom from an academic freedom perspective, universities can impose limits. Universities should follow [University of California, Berkeley's](#) lead in releasing clear guidance regarding the parameters of acceptable faculty conduct.

## 10 Oppose Harmful Calls for Your College or University to Boycott Israel

The [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions \(BDS\)](#) Movement is an international campaign aimed at delegitimizing and pressuring Israel, through diplomatic, financial, professional, academic, and cultural isolation of Israel and Israeli institutions. At some college campuses, students are using the recent conflict to revive previous calls for universities to divest from Israel and/or boycott Israeli academic institutions. Many of the founding goals of the BDS movement, which effectively reject or ignore the Jewish people's right of self-determination — or that, if implemented, would result in the eradication of the world's only Jewish state — are antisemitic. We urge colleges and universities to reject these efforts as directly contrary to principles of academic freedom and your school's values.

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