

10 Suggested Responses for University Administrators Who Care About their Campus Jewish Community

Anti-Zionism—a ubiquitous but “politically correct” form of antisemitism—is expected to target Jewish students on many college campuses this fall. Some campuses are already dealing with provocative and deeply offensive events. How should responsible university administrators respond to such events?

01 *Commit to free speech—and exercise it!*

Antisemitic speech, like all hate speech, is quintessentially protected in America. But while the speakers and organizers have First Amendment protected rights, the university does too! Administrators should condemn invited speakers who have in the past engaged in hate speech, incitement to violence, and/or endorsement of terrorism against Jews anywhere. Be explicit that the university does not support, condone, and certainly not endorse hate speech, even if it has an obligation to protect it.

02 *Expose and Disinfect!*

As Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis said, when it comes to terrible ideas, “sunlight is the best disinfectant.” By exposing these dangerous and hateful ideas, the university can, and should, create an opportunity for education, engagement, anti-bias work, and most importantly, the proliferation of truth.

03 *Anti-Normalize Hate Speech!*

While maintaining its obligation to allow vile ideas, the university must understand the event’s purpose: to normalize hate speech against Jewish students, the Jewish community, and the Jewish state, and give it the imprimatur of academia. By responding forcefully to antisemitic comments made during an event—without shutting it down—the university can intervene in this cynical effort, and refuse to allow the normalization of bigotry.

04 *Reserve the right to take legal action!*

The university should warn dangerous speakers and organizers in advance of a problematic event that incitement to imminent lawlessness is not protected speech, and if they engage in incitement of any kind, including and especially incitement to violence against Jews, the university will take action to the full extent of the law. (Of course, the university must mean it.)

05 *Understand Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964!*

Universities must protect students from a hostile campus environment based on their race, ethnicity, or national origin—including Jews and Israelis. The university must take steps to protect students by, for example, condemning bigoted speech, creating a plan for student safety, and ensuring that all students have equal access to campus spaces and educational resources and opportunities. The security of Hillel, Chabad, Jewish sororities/fraternities, and for students who may be targeted or harassed by event attendees across campus must be considered, and if history is a guide, these concerns should be taken very seriously.

10 Suggested Responses for University Administrators Who Care About their Campus Jewish Community

06 *Recognize that Anti-Zionism is, in almost all cases, Antisemitism!*

The demonization of Jews, presumed (usually correctly) to be Zionists, has almost no relationship to Israel or its government, but is felt by Jewish students as a direct threat and attack on their identities and their participation in campus life. “Anti-Zionism” has been invoked as the justification for behaviors and attitudes that have resulted in antisemitic bullying online, the exclusion of Jews from social justice spaces, attacks on Jewish members of student government, vandalism and desecration of Jewish religious institutions, and physical violence against innocent Jews in cities across the country and world. There is plenty to criticize about Israel’s government—like any government—but demonizing or delegitimizing the Jewish state, and demonizing or delegitimizing Jewish students on campus who support the state, is unambiguous antisemitism.

07 *Oppose BDS!*

The university must oppose, through words and actions, any and all efforts at “anti-normalization,” which is a central tenet of the BDS Movement and, in practice, means targeting or ostracizing anyone who acknowledges Israel’s actual existence—meaning anyone not committed to Israel’s destruction. The university must state clearly that Jewish students will not be marginalized on campus, and commit to academic exchanges, abroad programs in Israel, and any other investment, technology or research partnership that it has with Israeli institutions, academic or otherwise.

08 *Protect University IP!*

University logos and department names have no place on marketing materials for a hateful event of any kind. The university should make clear that marketing materials that include university intellectual property will be removed and/or responded to legally; the university should reserve its right to protect its IP from being associated with a display of gross bigotry. While it may have no choice but to allow this event, it should absolutely not be perceived to be a sponsor and should do what it can to limit the expenditure of campus resources to advance this event.

09 *Get Ahead by Following Precedent!*

In 2019, after years of federal and state litigation, San Francisco State University settled a lawsuit alleging pervasive antisemitism on campus. The CSU system declared that “CSU understands that, for many Jews, Zionism is an important part of their identity.” In so doing, they made clear that the campus community will not allow antisemitism in the name of “anti-Zionism” in any way that it would not allow any other form of bigotry or prejudice against any other community. Anti-Zionism on campus thus became intolerable, as it should, under applicable anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.

10 *Define It to Fight It!*

We can’t fight antisemitism, including anti-Zionism, without understanding it. The IHRA working definition has bipartisan, international consensus and was created exclusively for the purpose of protecting Jews from contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. It creates practical and straightforward guidelines for identifying and responding to real-life experiences of anti-Jewish hate and should be considered as a reference for anyone considering the application of campus anti-discrimination or anti-harassment policies to protect Jewish students.