

A GUIDE TO RECOGNIZING WHEN ANTI-ISRAEL ACTIONS BECOME ANTISEMITIC

Often, hostility toward Jews is easy to recognize. We know calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology is antisemitism. When Hamas, a U.S. and EU designated terrorist organization, calls for the killing of Jews, it is antisemitism. When Jews are attacked on American streets, it is antisemitism.

Sometimes antisemitism is not easy to recognize—especially when it involves Israel, when it’s spoken softly, when it’s peddled by celebrities, influencers, and those we trust.

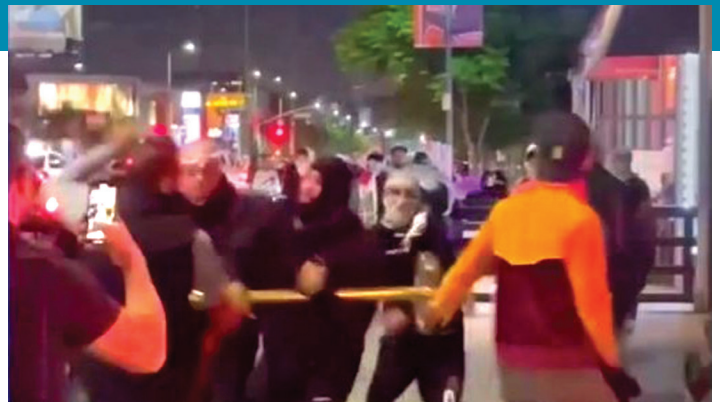
Political protests are an essential part of our democracy, and criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country is perfectly acceptable. But when Jews are targeted and attacked and Jewish institutions are vandalized for Israeli policies and actions, it is unacceptable. It is antisemitism.

During and following the Hamas-incited flare-up in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May 2021, antisemitic incidents surged in the United States and around the world. The following examples—all taken from May 2021—show when anti-Israel statements and actions can become antisemitic. They all evoke antisemitic themes that must be recognized and condemned.

ARE YOU JEWISH?:

Holding Jews Accountable for Israeli Actions

On May 18, 2021, in Los Angeles, a mob in Hamas-inspired garb asked patrons at a sushi restaurant, “Are you Jewish?” before launching a violent attack. They chanted: “Death to Jews” and “Free Palestine.” Holding Jews worldwide accountable for the actions of the State of Israel is antisemitic.



GO BACK TO ISRAEL:

Dual Loyalty

On May 20, 2021 in New York, a man wearing a yarmulke was punched, kicked, and sprayed with pepper spray by several men who yelled: “Dirty Jew. Filthy Jew. F*ck Israel. Hamas is going to kill you. Go back to Israel.” Telling an American Jew to “go back to Israel” is a form of [dual loyalty](#), accusing a Jewish person of being a disloyal citizen whose true allegiance is to Israel.

EVOKING THE BLOOD LIBEL:

Israelis kill babies, and sometimes eat them.

The [Blood Libel](#) accuses Jews of murdering non-Jewish children to use their blood for ritual purposes, such as making Passover matzah. Blood libel charges have evolved from Medieval times into a widespread blame of Jews or Israelis for horrific crimes against Palestinian children, such as eating Palestinian children and drinking their blood, or purposefully targeting and killing them.



At a protest in Los Angeles, CA on May 15, 2021, protestors held a sign [brandishing Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu with a Hitler moustache eating a Palestinian child](#) that is beyond offensive. The antisemitism conveyed in this image is centuries in the making.



At a protest in Miami, FL on May 16, 2021, a sign says ["Jesus was Palestinian and you killed him too!"](#) The [Deicide](#) charge was also seen on signs and on social media.

RELITIGATING DEICIDE:

Jesus was Palestinian and Jews killed him too.

While blaming Jews for Jesus' death has been refuted by the Catholic Church, antisemites continue to make this charge to justify their anti-Jewish hatred. The same wrongful accusation and imagery connected with Jews as Christ killers has been recycled in the Middle East, often in the form of Jesus representing Palestinians who are "crucified" by the Israeli Defense Forces or the Israeli Government.

LOOK AT THE MAP:

"From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free"

["From the River to the Sea"](#) is a catch-all phrase that symbolizes Palestinian control over the entirety of Israel's borders, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. This saying seeks to eliminate the State of Israel and is a historic call-to-arms for terrorist groups and their sympathizers, from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to Hamas.

RIGHT: In San Francisco, CA on May 18, 2021, a sign says: "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free!"



ZIONISM IS RACISM:

Self-determination is a right for all people, except the Jews.

Zionism is the national liberation of the Jewish people to reestablish a state in their ancient homeland. Jews around the world are connected to Israel whether culturally, religiously, or historically. There is nothing inherent to Zionism that contradicts support for Palestinian self-determination; indeed, many individuals who identify as Zionists support Palestinian aspirations to achieve statehood.

LEFT: Sign at a protest in Dearborn, MI on May 18, 2021, reads, "It wasn't ok in Nazi Germany, why is it ok in Palestine?"

Those who say [“Zionism is racism,”](#) a phrase which itself is a racist and religious distortion, convey that the Jewish people—unlike all other people in the world—do not have a right to self-determination. The phrase also denigrates the Jewish State and belittles the diversity of Jewish life in Israel.

Rejecting Israel’s right to exist is textbook antisemitism and is regarded as such by 85% of American Jews, according to [AJC’s 2020 State of Antisemitism in America](#) report.

HOLDING ISRAEL TO A DIFFERENT STANDARD:

The Jewish state is... Different.

Expecting Israel to refrain from defending itself against terrorist attacks is a double standard that would not be expected of any other democratic country.

The Israeli Defense Forces selectively strikes military targets focused on Hamas weapons caches, military command centers, and terror tunnels. It takes extreme precautions to avoid civilian casualties, including dropping leaflets, sending SMS messages, and making phone calls to evacuate targeted sites. Nonetheless, Israel is disproportionately criticized, and Hamas is often left out of the picture or is seen as “the underdog.”

We can, and must, decry the loss of life in Gaza, but solely blaming Israel (omitting the fact that Hamas instigated, used human shields, and that its rockets also killed Palestinians) is a double standard.



On May 11, 2021 on the Daily Show, host Trevor Noah spoke about Israel’s military might, comparing Israel to himself, as a big brother, fighting with his younger brother: “As a person who has immensely more power, I had to ask myself whether my response to this child was just or necessary,” he said. “Could I find different ways to deal with this?” Noah is suggesting that because Israel “has more power,” it should not respond as forcefully when a terrorist organization—which is on record saying its primary goal is the destruction of Israel—is bombarding it with rockets.



ABOVE: White supremacists in Boca Raton, FL on May 12, 2021, drove a van saying “Holocaust never happened” and “Hitler was right” while waving a Palestinian flag, to provoke Jews who were peacefully demonstrating in support of Israel.

BELOW: A sign at a rally in Seattle, WA on May 16, 2021 shows Adolf Hitler side-by-side Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying “Zionism=Nazism.”



HOLOCAUST DENIAL OR DISTORTION:

Comparing Israeli leaders to Hitler or the conflict with Palestinians to the Holocaust

Equating Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to Hitler is a graphic and offensive form of [Holocaust distortion](#). The Nazis attempted to annihilate all of Europe’s Jews. This is not what is happening between Israel and the Palestinians, and saying it is, is a false and slanderous attack on Jews, Jewish memory, and Jewish identity. One can disagree with Israeli policy, but saying Israel is perpetrating a “second Holocaust” against the Palestinians is not only factually wrong, it is antisemitic.

Those who say the Holocaust did not happen or deny the scope, mechanisms used (e.g., gas chambers), or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people, to provoke Jews and/or use the false claim as an argument for why Israel should not exist, are peddling in antisemitism.