



HOW ISRAEL'S DEFENDERS USE FALSE CHARGES OF ANTI-SEMITISM TO LIMIT THE DEBATE OVER ISRAEL ON CAMPUS

REPORT OVERVIEW

The report *Stifling Dissent* describes a long-standing pattern of activities by Israel advocacy organizations to intervene in the debate over Israel on campuses, revealing how individual incidents are part of a larger strategy to silence legitimate political critique of Israel.

While Israel advocacy organizations claim to be concerned primarily with Jewish students' safety, the report documents numerous ways these efforts exclude from Jewish campus spaces the many Jewish students and faculty who question Israeli policies, further marginalizing dissenting Jewish voices and Palestinian, Arab and Muslim voices from public debate.

What is in the Report?

The report includes case studies describing a variety of tactics used by Israel advocacy groups to limit the debate over Israel on campuses. These tactics include:

- misusing charges of anti-Semitism to apply it to criticism of Israel,
- intimidating faculty and students through blacklists and letters to administrators,
- enforcing the boundaries of political debate both in and outside Jewish campus spaces,
- restricting freedom of speech and academic inquiry,
- intervening in campus politics, including directing external funds to pro-Israel student government candidates,
- pursuing legal action against student activists.

The report also details efforts to pressure universities and campus institutions to implement policies designed to censor the political expression of students and faculty, including Hillel International's enforcement of its 'Standards of Partnership,' Title IV complaints, and efforts to codify criticism of the state of Israel as anti-Semitic.

Who Does This Effect?

Undergraduate and graduate students, tenured and untenured faculty and adjuncts, campus administrators, and anyone who supports the right to freely engage in exploring political ideas and activism on college campuses.

What are the Key Points to Take Away?

Abusing charges of anti-Semitism for political purposes:

Criticizing the state of Israel is not anti-Semitic. By branding activism on behalf of Palestinian rights as "anti-Semitic," Israel's defenders reinforce a false and dangerous conflation of the state of Israel with the Jewish people. Activism for Palestinian rights does not inherently threaten Jewish identity, and political use of the charge of anti-Semitism threatens to void the term of any meaning at all. By filing complaints with the federal government that campuses are "hostile environments" for Jewish students, Israel-aligned groups conflate some Jewish students' emotional discomfort with physical safety and targeted harassment.

Intimidating students and faculty to silence political opinions:

By blacklisting professors, contacting administrators in an effort to have events cancelled and speakers disinvited, launching public campaigns around faculty hires, and naming and shaming student activists, Israel-advocacy groups intimidate students and faculty, including Jewish students and faculty, who speak out for Palestinian rights.

Bullying inside the Jewish community:

Jewish institutions like Hillel International police the limits of the debate over Israel both *internally*, by setting arbitrary boundaries of the acceptable discourse around Israel for speakers, Hillel affiliate groups, and programming, and *externally* by intervening in student government. This results in the exclusion and marginalization of progressive Jewish students from Jewish community spaces, and transforms what should be a welcoming home for all Jewish life on campus into a political advocacy group opposing a movement for freedom and equality for Palestinians.

Restricting freedom of speech:

The intent of these tactics is to shut down conversation before it can even

begin, limiting the range of political inquiry, expression and debate on campuses. The effect is a chill on political speech: students and faculty who are targeted for their political beliefs hesitate to participate in public discourse out of fear for the consequences of exercising their right to free speech.

Encouraging a climate of harassment and discrimination towards minority communities:

Communities that are already most vulnerable and marginalized, including Palestinians, Arabs and/or Muslims, as well as adjunct and untenured faculty and progressive Jewish students, bear the brunt of this intimidation. For example, Canary Mission, a website that profiles activists for Palestinian rights, names as its intent to 'name and shame' activists in order to blacklist them for future employment. Israel advocacy groups claim that Palestinian rights activism creates a "hostile environment" for Jewish students on campuses, but the reality is that their tactics are further marginalizing people who are already vulnerable to heightened bigotry, discrimination and surveillance in post-9/11 America.

What are Jewish Voice for Peace's Recommendations?

1. Strive to create an open campus climate that is inclusive of all student perspectives, including Palestinian, Muslim, Arab American, and progressive Jewish students.
2. When incidents occur, take the time to talk in person to all involved parties.
3. Opt for more, rather than less, speech.
4. Remind students of the value of expressing critique, even when political opinions make some people feel uncomfortable.
5. Avoid policies that conflate the state of Israel with Judaism or the Jewish people. Remember that Israel is a state, not a person.
6. Remember that there is an incredibly diverse range of Jewish opinions on Israel, and that no one group can fairly claim to represent Jewish opinion.
7. Avoid implying that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and also Students for Justice in Palestine are anti-Semitic.