

“A climate of fear and exclusion”: Antisemitism at European universities

**A look at
select countries**

democ.



**B'NAI B'RITH
INTERNATIONAL**

*** * ***
*** EUJS ***
European Union
of Jewish Students



“A climate of fear and exclusion”: Antisemitism at European universities

A look at select countries

A report by

B'nai B'rith International

Established in 1843, B'nai B'rith International is committed to safeguarding Jewish life; tackling antisemitism; ensuring Holocaust remembrance, restitution and education and tackling denial and distortion; advancing relations with Israel; providing safe and affordable housing for low-income seniors; championing diversity and helping communities in crisis. As the oldest Jewish advocacy and service organization operating today, through engagement with the United Nations, European Union institutions, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States, governments, and other relevant stakeholders, we promote human dignity and combat all forms of discrimination. B'nai B'rith pursues both legislative and non-legislative tools to safeguard Jewish life and build more tolerant, inclusive societies. The B'nai B'rith Office of European Union Affairs advances these objectives in Brussels around the European Union institutions.

democ

Democ is a non-profit association of journalists, academics and media professionals who work together to observe, document and analyze anti-democratic movements. The organization analyzes how these forces operate, why they are gaining strength, and how they can be countered. Its observations and reflections are made accessible to the public through articles, videos, web documentaries, workshops, and lectures. Based in Germany, democ engages with German and European stakeholders to raise awareness and provide policymakers and civil society with firsthand, raw documentation.

European Union of Jewish Students

The European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) is a pluralistic, inclusive and non-partisan umbrella organization representing Jewish student unions across 36 countries in Europe. EUJS supports Jewish students and represents them in front of international institutions and Jewish communal bodies. Founded in 1978, EUJS organizes capacity-building and awareness-raising trainings and seminars, produces research and reports on issues affecting young Jews in Europe and engages in advocacy efforts to inform and shape policy related to antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.

The country reports were submitted in January 2025 and reflect developments up to that date.

Foreword

Katharina von Schnurbein

European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life

Dear reader,

Education is a fundamental right and it is the responsibility of school and university leadership to ensure that all students can enjoy it fully.

The global rise in antisemitism observed since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks on Israeli citizens and the war that ensued, has severely affected Jewish communities world-wide, reminiscent of some of the darkest times in history. Jewish students have been especially targeted by this explosion of antisemitism.

As stated in the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021–2030), antisemitism is incompatible with European values. It has an adverse effect not only on Jewish communities and on Jewish life, but on our common democratic and diverse societies.

Debate, even heated disagreement, protest and other political manifestations are a part of university life. An important part. Yet protest should never veer into hatred, ostracization, discrimination and even violence.

However, this has been the experience of many Jewish students in university spaces both in Europe and around the world. European Jewish students have at times opted to hide their identity or in some cases abandon in-person learning altogether due to the environment of hatred that has surrounded them.

As this report shows, antisemitism on campus manifests in forms both evident and insidious – from vandalism of university spaces, to threatening messages, the normalization of Holocaust distortion as part of political discourse, physical attacks against individual Jewish students, disruptions of classes, all against a background of insufficient administrative action, and even perceived lenience in addressing antisemitism by university structures.

These manifestations affect not only Jewish students, but the entire university corpus. Therefore in the interest of the next generation and society-at-large, antisemitism in universities cannot be left unchecked.

As prescribed in the EU's Strategy: every child should learn about Jewish life and antisemitism as an integral part of Europe's history. Education can strengthen young people's resilience to antisemitic ideas and ideologies and to all forms of intolerance and discrimination.

Teachers should be empowered to address antisemitism, the Holocaust, Jewish life and history in the classrooms.

Universities should adopt and use the IHRA definition to identify antisemitic bias and make Jewish participation on campus safer. Universities should also adopt protocols on how to react when an antisemitic incident takes place, as they do for cases of harassment.

Decisive action, and where necessary prosecution, is needed to prevent further poisoning of the public space.

The present report is an important documentation of the lived realities on university campuses that should inform immediate action by university administrators and policy-makers alike. Its recommendations are a valuable contribution to efforts to secure university spaces free from antisemitism and hatred. It contributes to creating a European Union free from antisemitism and any form of hatred, intolerance and discrimination.

Brussels, June 2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Schuler'.

About the authors and contributors

PROJECT LEAD – B’nai B’rith International

Alina Bricman is the Director of EU Affairs of B’nai B’rith International. Alina coordinates B’nai B’rith’s work with the European Union institutions as well as civil society and industry experts to tackle antisemitism and promote Holocaust remembrance. She is a member of Romania’s delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the Chair of its Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial (2025–2026).

PROJECT LEAD – democ

Grischa Stanjek is a co-founder and co-managing director of democ. Previously, he was Director of Communications at the International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism (IIBSA) and Head of the Media Department of the Jewish Forum for Democracy and against Antisemitism (JFDA). He studied Communication Design (BA) and Art in Context (MA) and has worked as an educational consultant, programmer and photographer in Berlin, New York and Tel Aviv.

AUTHORS

Alon Ishay is the president of the Austrian Union of Jewish Students (JöH) since October 2023. He previously served on the organization’s board since 2021. He holds a BA in Computer Science and is currently studying Psychology and Language arts in Vienna. He is originally from Frankfurt, Germany.

Daniel Janouch is since 2024 president of the Swedish union of Jewish Youth (JUS) and young professional. JUS is an umbrella organization aimed at strengthening Jewish youth all over Sweden through financial aid to member organizations, as well as political representation. JUS currently has 2000 members spread over 19 member organizations, many of which are Jewish academic organizations.

Erica Zingher is a journalist, freelance writer, presenter, and podcast host at ZEIT ONLINE. Her column “Grauzone” appears every two weeks in the TAZ newspaper. In her work, Zingher focuses on antisemitism, Jewish life, post-Soviet migration, Eastern Europe, and Israel.

Ethan Lierens is an Investigations Officer at the Community Security Trust (CST). He completed his MA in Intelligence and International Security at King's College London. His current research areas include: terrorism, disinformation, radicalisation and antisemitism. He is also the author of CST's Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2022–2024 report.

Gadi Luzzatto Voghera is the Director of the Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC) in Milan, Italy. He is a scholar of contemporary history, and a specialist in the history of Jews and antisemitism. He is a member of the Italian delegation in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Among his most significant publications are: *Antisemitism. Domande e Risposte* (Fentrinelli, 1994), *Il Prezzo dellequaglianza*, (FrancoAgeli, 1998), *Antisemitismo a sinistra* (Einaudi, 2007), *Rabbini* (Laterza, 2011), *No distinction of race or religion. Rotary in Italy, Jews and the antisemitic persecution (1923–1938)* (Erredi Grafiche editoriali, 2013), *Antisemitismo* (Editrice Bibliografica, 2018), *Sugli ebrei* (Bollati Boringhieri, 2024).

Dr. Prof. Joël Kotek holds a doctorate in political science from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris. He is a emeritus professor but continues to teach on genocide and antisemitism at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). He also taught at Sciences Po Paris from 2002 to 2021. Joël Kotek is also chairman of the fledgling Institut Jonathas, a centre for study and action dedicated to combating antisemitism. He is member of the Academic committee of ISGAP (New York/Cambridge UK). He is the author of around a hundred scientific articles and books, notably on antisemitism and mass crime.

Jonathan Hayoun is a documentary filmmaker, author and essayist. Among his most notable achievements is the documentary series *Anti-semitism, 2000 years of History*, broadcast on Arte, in over twenty countries, and which received an enthusiastic critical reception. His work explores questions of identity, cultural heritage and collective memory. He is also the author of the books: *The hand of the devil: How the far right tried to seduce the Jews in France* (Grasset, 2019), *Farewell to the Général* (Robert Laffont, 2020), *Zemmour and us* (Books 2022), *Joseph Kessel* (Steinkis 2023) and *The Book of Jewish humor* (Coll.Books 2023) co-written with Judith Cohen Solal.

Linn Vertein studied history (M.A.) and Latin American studies at the University of Hamburg and the University of Havana (Cuba). She wrote her master's thesis on Jewish exile in Cuba. She is an editor at the weekly newspaper *Jungle World*, where she publishes articles on international politics with a focus on Latin America, antisemitism, right-wing extremism, and cultural issues.



Table Of Contents

- 3** A report by
- 4** Foreword
- 6** About the authors and contributors
- 10** Introduction and executive summary

PART I

- 17** **Country reports**
- 18** AUSTRIA
- 31** BELGIUM
- 40** FRANCE
- 46** GERMANY
- 53** ITALY
- 57** THE NETHERLANDS
- 64** SPAIN
- 70** SWEDEN
- 75** UNITED KINGDOM

- 85** Conclusions

PART II

- 89** Recommendations

Introduction and executive summary

The surge of antisemitism on university campuses across Europe in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023 Hamas terrorist attack in Israel represents a profound challenge to the safety, inclusion, and academic freedom of Jewish students and faculty, and to the broader academic environment, affecting all students and university communities.

While institutions of higher learning are traditionally regarded as bastions of intellectual exploration, diversity, and critical discourse, recent developments suggest that some campuses have instead become arenas where antisemitic rhetoric, discrimination, and even acts of violence have become increasingly prevalent.

The incremental normalization of antisemitic attitudes within academic settings has been an observable phenomenon even prior to the October 7 attacks, but has since exponentially amplified.

This surge had been documented in multiple national and Europe-wide reports, individual student complaints filed with partner organizations, in media news stories and on social media, including posts by perpetrators themselves – indicating blind-spots and indifference to anti-Jewish bias.

Driving factors have included the presence on university campuses of radical student groups, many of which, in the aftermath of the attacks lauded the Hamas massacre as an expression of “liberation” or “justice”; the replication of protest models from North America and especially the United States; the consistent mainstreaming – long before October 7, 2023 – of professors and courses advocating one-sided anti-Israel perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often framed in an anticolonial and anti-imperialist context; a reluctance to acknowledge Jewish students’ lived experience of antisemitism and failures to address antisemitism by university administrators.

Outright antisemitic incidents, extreme anti-Israelism and mainstreamed anti-Zionist sentiment have intertwined and fuelled an overall environment of ambient, atmospheric antisemitism in which Jewish students find themselves marginalized, silenced, or even targeted for their religious and cultural identity.

While European universities often uphold policies against discrimination, enforcement has been inconsistent, leaving Jewish students vulnerable to intimidation, exclusion, and harassment.

To be sure, protest is an intrinsic and valuable part of student life, a manifestation of active citizenship and a formative activity for students to engage in. Universities will most often have frameworks for protest activities – guidelines as to how such events can take place.

Nonetheless, the increase in campus protests, encampments, and demonstrations following the October 7, 2023 attacks, has, in many cases, escalated into incidents of harassment and violence, raising serious concerns about the ability of universities to ensure the safety and well-being of their students.

Similarly, social media platforms affiliated with university networks have been used to spread hateful content, exacerbating tensions and further alienating Jewish students.

In certain instances, professors have contributed to this increasingly tense environment, either themselves spewing antisemitic content, or rallying in solidarity with students espousing such behaviour to the detriment of concerned Jewish students.

This report documents and analyses the state of antisemitism in academic institutions across eight EU member states – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden – as well as the United Kingdom – a non-exhaustive list that should nevertheless offer telling insight about the wider situation on the ground. It is important to note that incidents have occurred in most, if not all EU member states at both major and smaller universities.

To collect and assess incidents, the report uses as a reference point and useful tool the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

Part I of this report documents individual country profiles by offering overviews of the overall national atmosphere and contexts, key incidents on campus, organizing bodies driving disturbances, responses from universities and governments as well as evaluations and insight into the impact on Jewish students.

From across country reports, clear and repeated patterns of antisemitic or otherwise harmful behaviours emerge. They are noted below with a few illustrative examples, further detailed and supplemented in the report:

Threats and physical violence directed towards individual Jewish students or staff

In a general environment of normalized anti-Israel rhetoric and amid a growing number of antisemitic incidents, attacks targeting individual Jewish students have been among the most worrying.

At the Faculty of Health at Toulouse-III-Paul-Sabatier University in France, the words “Sale juive crève” (“Dirty Jewess die”) accompanied by a swastika were found on a student’s personal belongings.

A Jewish German-Israeli student was beaten by a fellow student of the Free University of Berlin (FU Berlin). He was hospitalized with facial fractures.

The co-president of the Union of Jewish Students of Belgium (UEJB), was physically assaulted near the campus building occupied by pro-Palestinian protesters, while retrieving his car. As a passer-by tried to intervene, the assailant claimed the attack was necessary because the UEJB president was Jewish. Also in Belgium, at the College of Europe in Bruges, a Jewish student’s dorm room was vandalized with antisemitic graffiti and swastikas.

On the campus of the University of Strasbourg, three Jewish students were verbally threatened, then hit and knocked to the ground by six people shouting “Zionist fascists”. These Jewish students, who are active members of the Union of Jewish Students of France (UEJF), were putting up posters calling for the release of Hamas hostages and bearing the words “No to antisemitism”.

The Jewish Chaplain at the University of Leeds faced a targeted campaign of threats, including messages such as: “Find him and bring him to me [knife emoji]”, “Why are people not hunting him down and 3xecuting him? [sic]” and “Bros know what to do when they see this nazi Neutralise!”. As a result of numerous death threats and security concerns, police put extensive security measures in place and advised the chaplaincy family to temporarily move out of Leeds.

Calls to violence and the legitimization of violence as appropriate protest action

For instance, an “Intifada Camp” as was organized at the University of Vienna; at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, an “Intifada Festival” took place; at the University of Granada (UGR), student encampments took place under the motto “From the UGR to Gaza, Student Intifada.”

At one encampment in the United Kingdom, encampment members were required to sign a form expressing support for the “Thawabit”, the stated ideology of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) which includes the right to ‘armed resistance’.

Slogans such as “Globalize the intifada,” “Student intifada,” “There is only one solution, intifada, revolution,” “Yalla Intifada” have been regularly featured in protests and demonstrations.

Solidarity with Hamas and its violent massacre on October 7, 2023, portrayed as “liberation” or righteous resistance

For instance, the student encampment at the University of Madrid featured speakers who, referring to the Hamas attack of October 7 stated that “We have to thank them for putting the Palestinian question at the centre, for leaving the two-state framework”.

In the UK, the Palestine and Ahlul-Bayt student societies glorified Yahya Sinwar (former Hamas leader) and Hassan Nasrallah (former Hezbollah leader) respectively, and lecturers have engaged in rhetoric explicitly glorifying and/or legitimising the October 7 Hamas massacre. In one instance, the President of a university “Friends of Palestine” society stated that “we are full of pride and joy for what has happened.” At the 2024 Conference of the National Union of Students, support for Hamas was explicitly declared by some delegates.

In Austria, the organizations “Dar al Janub” “wholeheartedly welcomed” what they characterized as a “large-scale military campaign” of “Palestinian resistance forces.” A leading BDS activist in Austria also noted that the “Islamic resistance” in Gaza is the “defender of humanity and persecutor of justice.”

A film screening at the Université Libre de Bruxelles glorified the armed resistance acts of Hamas, and presented the terrorist group as a “national liberation movement.”

In Germany, the feminist group “Zora”, involved in the student protest movement, described the October 7 terrorist attack as an “act of self-defense”.

Holocaust distortion and instrumentalization

The portrayal of Jews as perpetrators of a Holocaust and the false equivalence between the Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a particularly pernicious form of the Holocaust distortion seen throughout anti-Israel campus manifestations. For instance the student encampment at the University of Madrid, which featured lectures from the author of the historically revisionist text “From the Nazi to the Zionist Holocaust”; the chants at the Wageningen University in the Netherlands: “Zionists are all the same, Nazis by a different name”; the case of the president of Gothenburg University’s student union who resigned in November 2023 after comparing Israel to Nazi Germany; or the defamation hurled at the President of the University of Lille by French far-left politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who compared the University head to the Nazi official Adolf Eichmann for cancelling a conference due to the risk of disturbing public order.

The use of Nazi symbols has also made its way into protest actions, as was the case when swastikas were found in October 2023 at the University of Caen or in March 2024 at the University of Lyon II in France.

Holocaust distortion has also manifested in the form of attempts at historical erasure: See in this regard a widely covered decision by the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (HU) in February 2024 to cancel a lecture series on the Holocaust and antisemitism. Or the (ultimately cancelled) lecture series “Palestine in Global Context”, at the Institute for African Studies at the University of Vienna which was scheduled to feature Sarah El-Bulbeisi, who stated in an interview that “now is also not the time to reflect on the Shoah and think about antisemitism.”

Calls for the destruction of Israel

Violent calls for the destruction of Israel have become a regular part of the zeitgeist on university campuses. One week after October 7, “Kill Israhell” was written on a sign at the Library for Jewish Studies at the University of Vienna. In November 2023, ‘Death to Israel, death to the Jews’ and ‘Death, hell, suits them so well’ graffiti were

discovered in the library of the Paris 8 University. At the University of Amsterdam Gaza Solidarity Encampment protesters used banners and graffiti with statements like “Israel is an illegal state since 1948”, “Destroy what destroys”, “Fuck Zionism”, “Fuck Israel” and burned Israeli flags.

Such calls came not only in the form of protest slogans, but also as supposed academic reflections. Take the case of a senior professor at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, who stated that “anyone who recognizes Israel’s right to exist recognizes imperialism, colonialism and racism.” or the former doctoral fellow at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and PhD candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna who shared the following on their social media: “Death to Israel is not just a threat. It is a moral imperative and the only acceptable solution. May the entire colony burn to the ground for good.”

The holding up as heroes of individuals with a terrorist background

For instance, the case of Belgium, where in May 2024 students at the Solbosch campus of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, renamed the building in which they were protesting, the “Walid Daqqa Building” in honour of a Palestinian terrorist charged with leading a PFLP-affiliated group that abducted and killed an Israeli soldier. A massive banner calling for the release of Georges Abdallah, a Lebanese terrorist convicted of terrorism in France, was also displayed on the building’s facade.

Widespread vandalism following protests, sit-ins and encampments as well as targeted vandalism of Jewish premises.

The Université Libre Bruxelles reported considerable damage, estimated between 500,000 and 700,000 euros, including tagged walls, destroyed technical equipment, and ravaged lecture halls.

Protesters occupying the Institute for Social Sciences at Humboldt University in Berlin barricaded themselves in the building and damaged windows, walls and furniture. They left behind tags of red triangles used by Hamas to mark their targets, as well as graffiti calling for “Intifada”.

At Linnaeus University in Sweden, the office of Professor Anders Persson was vandalized with antisemitic expressions, following his publication of a study titled “Antisemitism, Gray Area or Legitimate Criticism of Israel?”.

The Community Security Trust UK (CST) recorded 17 instances of “Damage and Desecration” in the academic year 2023/24, occurring in Nottingham, Birmingham, Leeds, Kent, Norwich, London, Sussex, Oxford, Sheffield, Brighton, and Canterbury as opposed to only 4 the prior year. This included for instance the Jewish student

hub at the Hillel house being vandalized with graffiti or the bathrooms at the National Union of Students conference being tagged with swastikas.

At the University of Genoa in Italy, students from various collectives broke down the door to the room where the Academic Senate was meeting, seeking university action against Israel.

Also emerging are elucidating insights into structures and groups driving action on campus:

As is the case in Austria, Germany or Spain, protests are supported by organizations known to have **ties to terrorist activity** such as *Samidoun*—the Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, or *Masar Badil*—the Palestinian Alternative Revolutionary Path Movement both known for their links to the *PFLP*—the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, an EU-designated terrorist organization. Other organizations, such as *Dar al Janub* or *BDS* in Austria have direct documented links to Hamas.

In certain instances reports document the **involvement of umbrella groups that are external and unrelated to university** clubs, student unions or societies in driving campus protest action, supplying materials, as well as coordinating slogans, demands, social media presence and speakers. This includes various national and local branches of BDS groups, or newly formed groups such as the umbrella movement in Catalonia, “Ciudadants per Palestina” (“Citizens for Palestine”), or the Swedish chapter of the environmental movement “Fridays for Future” with the prominent participation of climate activist Greta Thunberg.

A recurring element is the involvement of **communist groups and party branches**. The *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RKP) of Austria is regularly present in front of universities, staging protests, recruiting members and distributing materials. Similarly, the group *Young Struggle*, the youth organization of the Turkish Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), active in both Germany and Austria, and the German group *Kommunistischer Aufbau* (“Communist Construction”) have been involved in university protests, promoting antisemitic narratives.

The **prominent participation of professors in demonstrations**, or their vocal support and unequivocal solidarity with the protest movement has further contributed to an environment of tension and exclusion of Jewish students. Professors have also contributed to shaping a virulently anti-Israel narrative that has at times veered into outright antisemitism, as exemplified by a senior professor in Austria who stated that “anyone who recognizes Israel’s right to exist recognizes imperialism, colonialism and racism.” or a professor in the UK who posted on their social media platforms: “Hebrew propaganda reveals some very devious lies. The ease with which the Jew, whether ordinary or influential, describes the mutilations of war is indicative of a placid cruelty.”

As relates to responses in the face of the challenges above, **many university administrations have failed to take strong stances against antisemitic incidents**, allowing an environment of intimidation and hostility toward Jewish students to persist under the guise of political activism.

In certain cases, university administrators have been forced to rely on police intervention.

The impact on Jewish students as a result of the hostile environments captured across the national entries is significant. Jewish students report feelings of fear, isolation, and disenfranchisement within academic spaces that should otherwise serve as environments of mutual respect and open discussion.

In Part II, the report offers a set of recommendations aimed primarily at university leadership to counteract the documented trends and ensure that academic institutions remain spaces of inclusion, safety, and intellectual integrity.

Recommendations refer to both concrete measures, such as the introduction of codes of conduct to address antisemitism or the appointment of contact points for Jewish students, as well as broader, long-term, sustained trust-building measures.

Throughout its individual entries, the report brings to light the interplay between open antisemitism; extreme hatred of Israel; and legitimate anti-Israel campaigning. These different types of behaviours do not always exist in neatly separate categories, but rather, in practice, combine to contribute towards a hostile environment of ambient antisemitism in which the entire Jewish student body is affected.

By shedding light on the current situation, this study hopes to contribute to a broader conversation on protecting the rights and dignity of Jewish students while upholding the principles of academic freedom and respectful discourse.

PART I

Country Reports

AUSTRIA

WRITTEN BY ALON ISHAY

1 Overview of national environment

In Austria, almost the entirety of the Jewish community (around 95%) lives in the capital city of Vienna. Thus, although antisemitism is present throughout the country, Vienna is where most Jews experience antisemitic incidents.

Reports of antisemitic incidents at universities outside of Vienna are rare, which can in part be attributed to a lack of infrastructure and personnel required to report and document antisemitic incidents in these areas. With close to 200,000 students enrolled in the numerous universities throughout the city, Vienna holds individual significance as being, along with Berlin, the largest German-speaking student city in the world.

It is worth noting that the antisemitic incidents that gained public visibility occurred at a handful of universities, most notably at the University of Vienna, University of Applied Arts Vienna (Angewandte), Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (AkBild) and the Central European University – the latter three of which boast a large proportion of international students.

When reading about the incidents and organizations described below, proportionality is an important aspect to keep in mind. The vast majority of the 200,000 students enrolled at universities in Vienna are not politically involved in student activism or debate surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While at least 28% of 16 to 27-year-olds hold various forms of antisemitic attitudes, believing that, for example, Jews have a special influence on politics and international media,¹ these attitudes do not normally translate into antise-



Graffiti at the Technical University of Vienna, including tags equating Zionism and Fascism and calling for Intifada

1 <https://religion.orf.at/stories/3227072>

mitic incidents on campus. Rather, individuals and organizations responsible for almost all (reported) antisemitic incidents at universities, make up only a small fraction of the entire student body.

Finally, this report does not provide a definitive insight into antisemitic incidents, narratives or curricula issues within university courses. Although uncertain how frequent these are, they undoubtedly occur: Throughout the year, several Jewish students have approached the *Austrian Union of Jewish Students* (JöH) to, for instance, report remarks by their lecturers (In one instance a student at the University of Applied Arts filed a complaint regarding a lecturer who had said “The real Jews hate the Zionists”).

Constructive initiatives to critically discuss antisemitism in the art field are worth highlighting. One such case is a talk on “Engaging with Complexities / The Need for Antisemitism” between Jewish artist and curator Sheri Avraham and clinical psychologist Daniel Sanin, organized by a group of students, teachers, alumni and artists at AkBild.² In an effort to encourage a differentiated discourse at Angewandte, German literary and social scientist Jan Philipp Reemtsma was invited in January 2024 to give a lecture on the mechanisms of antisemitism called “Antisemitism – what is there to explain?”³ Such events offer crucial oxygen for discussions and intellectual exchanges in a space suffocated by polarization on campus.

2 Main organizing groups

There are a plethora of organizations active in the Austrian student space, most of which have a track-record of interest and understanding regarding the importance of addressing antisemitism. This applies in particular to the major student branches of political parties (Greens, Socialists, Conservatives, Independents, Liberals and the Communist student association KSV-LiLi), which formally provide the elected student representatives. Without a doubt, the overwhelming majority of decision-makers in the student political arena in Austria stand in solidarity with Jewish students against antisemitism. The following list therefore focuses on the most present and relevant organizations around campuses that support views and act in ways that could be categorized as antisemitic. As these belong to the left side of the political spectrum, they presumably do not identify with the concept of explicit Jew-hatred. However, this does not shield or immunize them from harmful or antisemitic actions or views.

2.1 Student Organizations

Students of the Palestinian Cause in Austria (SPC)

The SPC first appeared on Instagram in November 2023, announcing an “International Day of Solidarity with Palestine March”. Since then, they have been the main driving force behind protests in solidarity with Palestinians on Viennese campuses – events which have often contained antisemitic incidents in various forms (e.g. speeches, chants, signs). SPC is the self-described “Umbrella organization of self-organized students from various universities across Austria”, referring to the *Free Palestine Collectives* at the different universities, mentioned throughout this report.⁴

2 https://www.akbild.ac.at/en/institutes/fine-arts/events/lectures-events/2024/engaging-with-complexities-the-need-for-antisemitism?set_language=en

3 https://www.dieangewandte.at/termine/antisemitismus_was_gibt_es_da_zu_erklaeren_15-01-2024

4 https://www.instagram.com/spc_austria/

Beyond the specific SPC sub-group acting as the main organizer of an event or protest, there is a clear overlap in personnel between the different groups, with often the same people in attendance (appr. 50–100). Documentations and speeches of these events and protests also underline that a significant portion of attendees (and presumably organizers) are not students. An investigative report by the Austrian news outlet *Falter* about the SPC further showed that ideologically, they align with the vehemently anti-Israel sentiment noticeable since October 7 at universities across the globe, for example categorizing Israel as the “white” colonial power.⁵

Their protests on campuses regularly included calls for “Intifada”⁶ and delegitimization and demonization of Israel, e.g. viewing Israel as the imperialist bridgehead of the US.⁷ More troubling is that they regularly cooperate with Austrian organizations that are known to be associated with Hamas, such as *BDS Austria*⁸ or *Dar al Janub* [SEE SECTION 2.2].⁹ One of the group’s rallies, organized in front of the University of Vienna in January 2024, featured, alongside calls of boycott, instances of trivialization of the Nazis.¹⁰

Together with these and other political groups that in the past have attracted attention for antisemitic incidents and rhetoric, the SPC organized the “Intifada Camp” on the campus of the University of Vienna in May 2024, which was disbanded by the police three days after its inception. Generally, the SPC doesn’t shy away from relativizing the October 7 massacre. This is exemplified by the SPC “Resist and Fight Back” rally planned for the anniversary of the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2024. The description in the announcement for the rally (which was ultimately banned by the police) showed the (conspiratorial) antisemitic tendencies in SPC’s rhetoric, speaking of the fight against “zionist entities and their networks reaching from tel aviv to the european capitals. [sic]”¹¹ The SPC has also recurrently publicly attacked the Austrian Union of Jewish Students (JöH) and their representatives. During a demonstration against the far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the speech of the JöH representative was interrupted with chants of “Fascists go Home”.¹² Alon Ishay, president of the JöH and author of this report entry, was accused of “currently adapting his language to recent humanitarian and legalistic discourse, trying to wash himself of his past”.¹³

Communist Student Union-Communist Youth of Austria (KSV-KJÖ) / Communist Youth of Austria (KJÖ)

The Communist Student Union of Austria split up in the wake of the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, due to differing positions within the union with regard to (terrorist actions against) Israel. While the *Communist Student Association – Left List* (KSV-LiLi) has been at the forefront of the fight against antisemitism ever since, the *Communist Student Union-Communist Youth of Austria* (KSV-KJÖ) is until this day only one of two student parties (the other being the extreme-right *RFS*) with which the JöH has categorically ruled-out any cooperation. While they have refrained from commenting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for most of the time since October 7, 2023, they have shown solidarity with the “Intifada Camp” at the University of Vienna¹⁴ and sent emails to the entire student body

5 <https://www.falter.at/morgen/20231219/antisemitismus-an-der-angewandten-wer-steckt-hinter-der-pro-palaestinensischen-studentengruppe>

6 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1729894013707104551>

7 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1731275089218330725>

8 <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2vUE9uBxFu/>

9 <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3U5WjutJ2X/>

10 https://www.instagram.com/share/BA_8wRuMaX

11 https://www.instagram.com/p/DAQdx1zMzTO/?img_index=1

12 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1841908857783664851>

13 https://www.instagram.com/p/DDe_etrMDiJ/?img_index=7

14 <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7jhFzstbfg/>

of Vienna in late October 2024, inviting them to a panel discussion entitled “Palestine, Militarization and Our University”.¹⁵ The two speakers who were invited to the event, that was ultimately cancelled by the administration at the University of Vienna, were Fritz Edlinger, the editor of the diatribe “Flowers from Galilee” by Holocaust denier Israel Shamir, as well as lawyer Astrid Wagner, who has repeatedly attracted attention for her problematic comparisons between Israel and Nazism. Furthermore, after the ceasefire and hostage deal was agreed upon in January 2025, the KSV-KJÖ released a statement called “Peace or Farce?” in which they wrote about “Israel’s genocidal war of annihilation”, that “Israel has turned Gaza into hell on earth.” and “has dropped more than 70,000 tons of bombs on Gaza, more than on London, Hamburg and Dresden combined (WW2).”¹⁶ The latter reference to Dresden is reminiscent of the neo-Nazi slogan “Gestern Dresden, Heute Gaza” (“Yesterday Dresden, Today Gaza”). Nevertheless, the KSV-KJÖ’s discursive influence across Austrian campuses remains reduced.

The *Communist Youth of Austria* (KJÖ), which used to be the KPÖ’s (Communist Party of Austria) youth organization up until the early 2000s, is closely associated with the KSV-KJÖ, often co-posting on social media and co-organizing events. Their ideological alignment also results in the propagation of similar antisemitic views and attitudes in their conception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On October 9, 2023, only two days after the Hamas massacre, the KJÖ wrote a statement titled “For an end to the crimes against the civilian population! For a free and independent Palestine” – a masterclass in terror-relativization and antisemitic undertones. They describe the events of October 7 as “Palestinian combat units” that launched a “surprise attack on Israeli military posts and Zionist settlements”. The statement also refers to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), which is classified as a terrorist organization by the EU, as a revolutionary organization part of the pluralistic Palestinian resistance. Together with the *Judeobolschewiener*innen* (JBW) [SEE SECTION 2.2], the KJÖ organized a commemorative event in front of the University of Vienna on November 9, 2024, the anniversary of the Nazi November Pogroms, entitled “Against Genocide Today.”¹⁷ After being criticized for Holocaust relativization, the KJÖ removed its posts and no longer openly appeared as a co-organizer. From then on, the JBW reframed the event as “Antizionist Commemoration of the Jewish Victims of the November pogroms” but continued to mention that the event was taking place in the context of the “genocide in Gaza”. The rally itself also included a speech by *Dar al Janub*¹⁸ and a banner reading “right to resist” in the colours of the Palestinian flag, highlighting the relativization of both the Holocaust and the October 7 massacre as a recurring theme of the event.¹⁹

2.2 Non-Student Organizations active in student spaces

The following organizations are not student organizations per se, but groups that engage with the student body. These organizations and their representatives regularly express calls for the destruction of Israel, (coded) solidarity with Islamist terror militias (e.g. Hamas, Houthis), a dichotomous world view (oppressor vs. oppressed) and an individualist criticism of capitalism, which together form a combination of attitudes that have often resulted in left-wing antisemitism.

15 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1848697239155122456>

16 <https://www.instagram.com/p/DFLHRtgIvA/>

17 https://x.com/Bini_Guttmann/status/1854165873176510514

18 https://www.instagram.com/reel/DCKIS_ssTW8/?igsh=Z3FrdGp2OTNSNmZ0

19 <https://x.com/alonishay/status/1855580923414102417>

RKP/Der Funke

A week after October 7 the *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RKP) of Austria, together with its magazine *Der Funke*, published a post on their social media in solidarity with “the oppressed against the oppressor” and “Intifada until Victory”.²⁰ A representative of *Der Funke* stated on the same day, that if an “Israeli civilian wants to know how this situation can end, it is only when this terror and apartheid state is gone”²¹, essentially calling for the destruction of Israel. Nowadays, the RKP is present at many left-wing rallies and demonstrations, but also in front of universities, where it tries to recruit members and distribute its magazine.

Young Struggle Vienna

Young Struggle is the youth organization of the Turkish Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP). While supporting the Kurdish resistance is their main interest, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is another focus for the group, especially after October 7. Examples of antisemitic rhetoric include a speech in which a representative relativized the Hamas massacre by stating that on October 7, “countless civilian Palestinians were able to step onto the soil of their homeland with tears of joy”.

Dar al Janub/BDS Austria

The association Dar al Janub, whose personnel overlaps to a degree with BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) Austria, is the successor organization to “*Sedunia*”, an organization that fell into disrepute after attacking and disrupting a rally to commemorate the November pogroms in 2003. Since its inception, Dar al Janub has been a propagator of (Israel-related) antisemitism in Austria. In the past, rallies that were (co-)organized by Dar al Janub resulted in antisemitic chants such as “Khaybar Khaybar Ya Yahud”²² – an antisemitic chant referring to a historic battle in Khaybar where the Jewish population was defeated. According to a report by the *Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam* in 2023²³, Dar al Janub has maintained links to the terrorist organization Hamas for years. Their statement regarding the Hamas massacre, published on October 8, 2023, is steeped in terror glorification, speaking of a “large-scale military campaign” of “Palestinian resistance forces”, which they “wholeheartedly welcome” as well as calls for the expulsion of Jews “send the settlers back to Europe and the USA”.²⁴ There are numerous examples of antisemitic statements and solidarity shown with terrorist groups by Dar al Janub, e.g. reposting a quote of Abu Obaida, the military spokesperson for Hamas, on its social media account.²⁵ The organization generally belongs to the political “left” spectrum, although it remains largely isolated in the Austrian left. Nevertheless, alliances have been formed in the past with left-wing groups such as the KJÖ or the JBW. Dar al Janub also participated in the “Intifada Camp” at the University of Vienna and is frequently invited to speak at Palestine solidarity rallies, including those organized by the SPC on campus.²⁶

BDS Austria

In Austria, the antisemitic Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has been condemned as antisemitic by the Austrian government in general,²⁷ but also the government of Vienna in particular. Consequently, any institutional support for the campaign has

20 https://www.instagram.com/share/p/_bEp3_5wm

21 <https://x.com/serbinnen/status/1713592566254391756>

22 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1392753467438010378>

23 https://www.dokumentationsstelle.at/fileadmin/dpi/publikationen/DPI_Focus_Dar-al-Janub.pdf; <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3235039/>

24 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyJGYB8MVv1/?igsh=a3lvZmJxN2R2cW1y>

25 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1721273597279293866>

26 <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3U5WjutJ2X/?igsh=dng1NzZINGI2a2Zu>

27 https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2020/PK0125/index.shtml

been ruled out by these governments. As universities are public institutions, neither BDS nor associated groups such as Dar al Janub can host events on campus. Attempts to do so have been cancelled by university administrations in the past. BDS Austria also maintains ties to Hamas: In a picture posted on Facebook by Oliver Hashemizadeh, the spokesperson²⁸ of BDS Austria, he can be seen shaking the hand of Ismail Haniyeh, a former leader of Hamas.²⁹

Accordingly, BDS's activities on campus are limited to tabling events and holding speeches at SPC rallies. Otherwise, they focus less on student spaces, but organize demonstrations and events aimed at the general public, such as the illegal demonstration on October 11, 2023, where participants chanted "Millions of us will go as martyrs to Jerusalem".³⁰ One of the most visible figures of BDS Austria is Nicole Schöndorfer, who initially gathered a large following of over 20,000 followers as a feminist influencer, but has shifted focus in recent years. As recently as January 2025, Schöndorfer wrote in an Instagram story that "all the wisest men know their real allies. [green heart emoji]" and that the "Islamic resistance" in Gaza is the "defender of humanity and persecutor of justice", over a picture citing Abu Obaida thanking Hezbollah for their support.

Queers for Palestine Austria

Queers for Palestine Austria show personnel overlaps with SPC, but are generally less active. They also took part in the "Intifada Camp" at the University of Vienna and attended Palestine rallies that were also attended by Islamists and the Turkish far-right Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar). When the JöH organized a movie screening on campus about a love story between an Israeli and a Palestinian man, Queers for Palestine antisemitically analogized the movie to being a "lovestory between a Nazi and a Jew".

Judeobolschewiener:innen (JBW)

The Judeobolschewiener:innen (JBW) are ideologically the Austrian offshoot of the American organization Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). As such, they act as a fig leaf for a majority of the above-mentioned organizations, who tokenize the JBW to justify their antisemitic views and attitudes. For instance, JBW has expressed its solidarity with Dar al Janub, following media reports about its links to Hamas.³¹ Their positions include the belief that "the Holocaust is being used to justify the genocide of the Palestinians."³² and that Israel is a "settler-colonial project" responsible for the Hamas massacre of October 7.³³ Combining Holocaust- and terror-relativization, the JBW (together with the KJÖ) organized the above-mentioned commemoration of the November Pogroms entitled "Against Genocide Today", at which a "Right To Resist" banner was displayed in the colours of the Palestinian flag. The head of JBW is also active in BDS Austria,³⁴ resulting in a close connection and frequent cooperation between the two. Additionally, they have (co-)written two statements against the JöH, both after the JöH had documented and published antisemitic incidents occurring at universities (see below).³⁵

28 <https://www.tageins.at/nicole-schoendorfer-antisemitismus-instagram-influencer-hamas-israel-radikalisierung/>

29 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1722285329300766921>

30 <https://www.instagram.com/share/BAOLBvB2GE>

31 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C0jJcFs a/>

32 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2nb8rQsY6q/>

33 https://www.instagram.com/p/CyilLkcNTT9/?img_index=2

34 https://www.instagram.com/p/CzY8mslMYlm/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFWZA==

35 https://www.instagram.com/p/CzWqtABMCid/?img_index=1; https://www.instagram.com/p/C04977Ss_z2/?img_index=1

3 Antisemitic incidents on campuses

3.1 University of Vienna

The University of Vienna immediately condemned the Hamas massacre after October 7, 2023.³⁶ Since then, its campus has been smeared with antisemitic graffiti several times. A week after October 7, “Kill Israhell” was written on a sign at the Library for Jewish Studies.³⁷ At the end of October, more than a dozen messages were spray-painted on campus overnight, including “Free Palestine from German and Austrian Guilt” and “End Settler Colonialism”.³⁸ The publication of these graffiti was picked up by Austrian media,³⁹ and the University of Vienna responded the same day by condemning and removing the graffiti and filing a complaint with the police.⁴⁰ Identical graffiti (“Apartheid”, “End Genocide”, Red Triangle, “Intifada”), which were subsequently condemned and removed by the University of Vienna, occurred in January and September 2024.⁴¹

A number of departments at the University of Vienna have taken up the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after October 7. One of these is the Cultural and Social Anthropology department (KSA). Following the Hamas attacks, posters and messages demonizing Israel were anonymously displayed in the department’s premises. The statement written in October 2023 by staff members, students and the elected student representatives of the institute (IG KSA), that has since been removed from the official website, condemned Hamas, but blamed Israel throughout most of the text, citing a potential “textbook case of genocide” in Gaza.⁴² The following month (November 2023), the KSA organized a teach-in series “Against the Present: Past and Future Perspectives on Palestine” where scholars associated with the BDS movement were invited to speak on topics such as “Settler Colonial Rule in Palestine” (November 9, 2023).⁴³ After the content and speakers of the teach-in became known, the University of



Tagged property on the campus of the University of Vienna

36 <https://www.univie.ac.at/en/about-us/further-information/13102023/>

37 <https://x.com/AMeldestelle/status/1713867241899372787>

38 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1718631633555751401>

39 <https://www.heute.at/s/uni-campus-mit-antisemitischen-parolen-beschmiert-120002025>

40 <https://x.com/univienne/status/1718932807978770765>

41 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1746902402651824249/photo/2;>
<https://x.com/joehwien/status/1834236252884770996>

42 https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vSPIRMvGAomEj_wlUiNacxxMzjXpprMMfoyltvVFKmlNp57B_JUQF_10QW5-xZ_TLqTavZ9Hcx9DzQI/pub

43 <https://x.com/msulzbacher/status/1720412771848720723>

Vienna cancelled the event on the ground that it “is open to factual discussions, including on controversial topics from a variety of perspectives. One-sided representations, intolerance, racism and antisemitism have no place at the University of Vienna.”⁴⁴ The media also reported on this cancellation.⁴⁵ However, the teach-in was still able to take place at the *Central European University* (CEU) which offered to host it.

After October 7, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, was invited twice by a lecturer of the Institute of International Development (*IE*). Albanese has a track record of biased, antisemitic statements as well as misconduct.⁴⁶ While the first lecture (“Genocidal War and Complicity?”) was held online in April 2024,⁴⁷ Albanese was present for the second lecture (“Israel’s War: Genocide as Colonial Erasure?”) in December 2024.⁴⁸ Both lectures, which were also promoted by the Institute’s elected student representatives (*Bagru IE*), were met with public criticism.⁴⁹ In protest against the second event, the JöH set up a Shabbat table with empty chairs right next to the lecture hall, advocating for the release of the hostages.⁵⁰ The co-organizers of the event later attacked the JöH on social media for “attempting to cancel the event”, calling the organization “the Zionist student association”.

The *Institute for African Studies* offered the course “Palestine in global contexts – on mobilities, solidarities and memory cultures” for the summer semester 2024, which was intended to include lectures such as “Palestinians in the anti-Zionist Jewish discourse” and “Taboo and Trauma: Palestinians in Post-Holocaust states”.⁵¹ After the administration of the University of Vienna demanded a seminar-like format for the course instead, as well as the exclusion of some of the invited scholars, the Institute for African Studies announced the cancellation of the lecture series as it refused to meet these requirements.⁵² Organizers included activists associated with the BDS movement, the JBW, Sarah El-Bulbeisi, Nour Shantout and others. El-Bulbeisi had stated in an interview in January 2024 that “now is also not the time to reflect on the Shoah and think about antisemitism” as well as that “the Jewish trauma” is being “instrumentalized [...] to legitimize Israeli state violence.”⁵³ As for Shantout, both her doctoral fellowship at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (*ÖAW*) and her employment as a PhD candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (*AkBild*) were terminated in December 2024,⁵⁴ after Shantout shared on Instagram: “Death to Israel is not just a threat. It is a moral imperative and the only acceptable solution. May the entire colony burn to the ground for good.”

3.1.1 Solidarity Encampment

On May 6, 2024, which fell on Yom HaShoah, Israel’s memorial day for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, a new Instagram account called *@camp4palestine_vienna*, together with JBW and SPC, announced the establishment of a “Palestine Solidarity Encampment” on the campus of the University of Vienna. Flyers titled “Join the Global Student Intifada” were distributed by the camp, calling for the academic boycott of Israeli universities, among other things.

44 <https://x.com/univienna/status/1720443849586192755>

45 <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000193723/uni-wien-zieht-reissleine-und-sagt-palestine-vortragsreihe-ab>

46 <https://unwatch.org/tag/francesca-albanese/>

47 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1783442580136444117>

48 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1865020840682590345>

49 <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3284309/>

50 https://www.instagram.com/p/DDPubOPON3_/?igsh=MWc5bnp0MmZydyYybw==

51 https://afrika.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/i_afrika/AG_Rassismus/Palestine_in_Global_Contexts_-_programme_of_removed_lecture_series.pdf

52 <https://afrika.univie.ac.at/ueber-uns/rassismuskritische-ag/proteste/>

53 <https://www.mena-watch.com/uni-wien-israelfeindliche-propaganda-hoersaal/>

54 <https://www.akbild.ac.at/en/news/2024/rectorate-statement>

A student who wanted to protest against the encampment was reportedly harassed and pushed, with his Israel flag being snatched from him and thrown in the trash.⁵⁵ Among other groups such as Der Funke/RKP, KJÖ, Dar al Janub and BDS who attended and co-organized the encampment, Dieter Reinisch, an Austrian journalist who works for the Iranian state news organization *PressTV*, reported from the camp and broadcasted live to Tehran.⁵⁶ Excerpts of speakers calling for “a new Intifada” and declaring that “antisemitism is used as a cover for colonial violence in Palestine and elsewhere to distract from the crimes of the Zionist entity” emerged on social media.⁵⁷

The situation on campus was reported in all of Austria’s large media outlets, particularly after the publication of testimonials of Jewish students [SEE SECTION 4.2 AND 4.3], and the counter-rally “Against all antisemitism on the university campus!” organized by the JöH together with the Alliance against Antisemitism Vienna (*BGA Wien*) on the following day.⁵⁸ Subsequently, high-ranking politicians from across the political landscape (e.g. the mayor of Vienna), the administration of the University of Vienna⁵⁹ and the elected student representatives of the University of Vienna (*ÖH Uni Wien*) condemned the encampment.

After the police initially saw no reason for its dissolution,⁶⁰ law enforcement eventually disbanded the camp the following night, as the Austrian Agency for the Security of the Interior (*DSN*) concluded that the purpose of the encampment was “likely to show solidarity with the goals of Hamas” and was therefore “not covered by the right to freedom of expression.”⁶¹ After the disbandment, Dieter Reinisch read out a declaration of solidarity to the camp by the *Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (DFLP), which was also involved in the massacre on October 7.⁶² An attempt to rebuild the camp at the Technical University of Vienna (*TU Wien*) left “Intifada” graffiti on the facilities of the TU⁶³ and was immediately broken up by the police.⁶⁴

3.2 Academy of Fine Arts Vienna

Immediately after the attacks of October 7, a planned lecture with former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (*AkBild*) was postponed indefinitely. This came after a former rector of the Academy, the Green Student Party (*GRAS*), the JöH and others expressed concerns regarding Varoufakis’ statement that he would not condemn Hamas.⁶⁵ In a public statement, the Academy announced that it would postpone the lecture and “reopen the debate space as soon as the political situation allows for constructive-confrontational dialogues again.”⁶⁶

55 https://x.com/Bini_Guttmann/status/1787882197224997299

56 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6oWB1dN-Tw/?igsh=MWZsc3dieHN2aTd1ZQ==>

57 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1787564613388644756>

58 https://www.instagram.com/p/C6tohRTNyQi/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

59 <https://www.univie.ac.at/ueber-uns/weitere-informationen/israel-statement/>

60 <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/pro-palaestina-camp-zelte-vor-der-uni-wien-und-im-alten-akh/402885794>

61 <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3256331/>

62 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1788577927027642504>

63 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1797931148057907498>

64 <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000222153/polizei-l246st-neues-pal228stina-protestcamp-vor-tu-wien-auf>

65 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpiU2uO4OBA>

66 <https://www.akbild.ac.at/en/institutes/art-and-architecture/events/lectures-events/2023/the-new-enclosures-from-tall-border-fences-to-our-new-technofeudal-order>

A similar invitation for French political scientist Françoise Vergès, who relativized the Hamas massacre,⁶⁷ was nevertheless allowed to proceed, with Vergès giving a lecture on colonialism.⁶⁸

At the end of June 2024, on the last day of the summer semester, the *akbild_free_palestine* collective announced a series of mini-lectures called “Decolonial Encounters” which would have covered topics such as “Jewish anti-zionism against ethnic cleansing” and “pink-washing colonialism”. Although the rectorate was concerned about the clear indication of tokenism and antisemitic views that could be expressed at the event, it did not intervene as the event had been registered by the elected student representatives at AkBild (ÖH AkBild). Ultimately the mini-panel was cancelled by the ÖH AkBild, citing the limited information it had received about the contents of the panel and, in particular, a speech that expressed “very problematic positions”, as reasons for the cancellation.⁶⁹ The *akbild_free_palestine* collective replied with their own statement in which it describes the ÖH AkBild as “genocidal” and “succumbing to pressure of Zionist groups” that are “misusing their structural positions of power to host genocide-justifying events”.

Overall, the university stands by its statement titled “Stop the Violence” regarding the October 7 massacre and the subsequent war in Gaza, in which it sets itself the goal of “ensuring that there is no room for antisemitism, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian racism”.⁷⁰

3.3 University of Applied Arts Vienna (Die Angewandte)

A week after October 7, the rectorate issued a statement unequivocally condemning Hamas and any relativization of antisemitism or Israel’s right to exist.⁷¹ In November 2023, however, several departments at the Angewandte began jointly organizing “MOVIE NIGHTS_”, a series of screenings on the “current situation, focusing on Palestinian and Israeli films.”⁷² A Jewish student attending a MOVIE NIGHT_ event reported that during the event, the Hamas massacre was called a “logical reaction to the occupation” and that a senior professor at Angewandte stated that “anyone who recognizes Israel’s right to exist recognizes imperialism, colonialism and racism.” Despite this report and the concerns expressed to university administration about these antisemitic and terror-relativizing statements, MOVIE NIGHT_ screenings continued until the summer of 2024. In the week following the movie series, a guest lecture entitled “Trauma and Taboo – Palestinians and the politics of remembrance in post-Holocaust states”⁷³ was held at the Angewandte by the aforementioned Swiss-Palestinian scholar Sarah El-Bulbeisi, who had criticised attempts to address antisemitism and Holocaust remembrance.

The following month, on December 14, the SPC organized a rally together with *dieangewandte_free_palestine* at the entrance of the Angewandte. Due to antisemitic remarks at the rally, a Jewish student began filming. While a speaker can be heard relativizing the Hamas massacre, declaring that “there was no aggression on the 7th of October”, the participants of the rally try to knock the cell phone out of the Jewish student’s hands while collectively

67 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1765424103991754969>

68 https://www.akbild.ac.at/en/institutes/education-in-the-arts/events/lectures-events/2024/for-an-antiracist-decolonial-feminist-politics-of-protection?set_language=en

69 <https://www.oehakbild.info/2024/06/statement-on-organization-of-the-decolonial-encounters-panel-on-the-friday-28-6-2024/>

70 https://www.akbild.ac.at/en/news/2023/stop-the-violence?set_language=en

71 https://www.dieangewandte.at/news_detail?news_id=1697251337917

72 <https://kkp.uni-ak.ac.at/movie-nights/>

73 https://www.dieangewandte.at/termine/guest_lecture_by_sarah_el_bulbeisi_trauma_and_taboo_24-11-2023

shouting “Leave Now”.⁷⁴ The video of the incident was viewed over 1 million times on X and sparked widespread media coverage and outrage across Austria, with senior government officials describing the incident as “shameful”.⁷⁵ The rector described the views expressed at the rally as “completely unacceptable”⁷⁶ and published a lengthy commentary reflecting on the situation on campus since October 7.⁷⁷ Since the incident, no further rallies were held at the Angewandte.

3.4 Central European University (CEU)

Immediately after October 7, a sit-in was held in the entrance area of the CEU to protest against the “genocide against the Palestinian people”. Student chats were flooded with hundreds of dehumanizing, antisemitic and terror-relativizing messages such as “you are not innocent if you have a music festival literally right next to the world’s largest open air prison” and “there is no substantiated evidence of sexual violence conducted by Hamas”. A Jewish student reported to the JöH that students who raised counter-arguments were “overrun with aggressive messages”, “verbal attacks and threats”, that their messages were being deleted and that one Jewish student was even kicked out of the group chat.

To make matters worse, at the end of October 2023, the elected student representatives at the CEU (*ÖH CEU*) forwarded a letter written by the *Free Palestine Collective CEU* to the entire student body, in which the Hamas massacre was described as legitimate means of resistance while sharing heaps of antisemitic conspiracy theories.⁷⁸ After the federal ÖH (*Bundes ÖH*) condemned the letter,⁷⁹ the ÖH CEU apologized in a follow-up email for the careless forwarding of the letter.

Other incidents at CEU include an Israeli professor being screamed out of a lecture hall, students shouting “Zionist get the fuck out” and exposing a Jewish student wearing a Star of David necklace at a party funded by the ÖH CEU [SEE SECTION 4.1], and the hosting of the above-mentioned teach-in (“Past and Future Perspectives on Palestine”), despite reported concerns.⁸⁰

Jewish students who approached the rectorate and later filed complaints with the university’s disciplinary committee were met with apathy and the cataloguing of their complaints of antisemitism as permissible forms of “freedom of expression”. After the CEU rectorate rejected meeting with JöH representatives for two months, the JöH issued a press statement summarizing all incidents, calling instances of antisemitism at CEU “out of control”.⁸¹ Subsequently, the CEU Rectorate responded by dismissing the criticism as “misrepresentations” and “misunderstandings”⁸² while at the same time reaching out to the organization to discuss improvements for the situation on campus.

Veronika Kaup-Hasler, Vienna’s City Councillor for Science, stated in a separate press statement, that she took the JöH’s accusations very seriously and has therefore reached out to the CEU rector emphasizing “that antisemitism and Islamophobia have no place in

74 <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C014iufMNY7/?hl=en>

75 <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3236852/>

76 <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/angewandte-rektorat-findet-inhalte-der-palaestina-kundgebung-inakzeptabel/402709507>

77 <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000200206/universitaet-im-nahostkonflikt-8211-polarisierung-entgegentreten>

78 <https://x.com/joehwien/status/1719333779427282991>

79 https://www.instagram.com/p/CzHK2sLRI-t/?img_index=1

80 <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000193723/uni-wien-zieht-reissleine-und-sagt-palastine-vortragsreihe-ab>

81 https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20231205_OTS0014/ausser-kontrolle-antisemitismus-an-der-central-european-university

82 <https://www.ceu.edu/article/2023-12-05/ceu-stands-against-antisemitism-and-defends-academic-freedom>

the City of Vienna.”⁸³ A couple of days later, the Bundes ÖH together with the ÖH CEU issued a joint statement in support of the Jewish students on campus.⁸⁴ As a result of these incidents at CEU, university leadership took measures such as banning unsigned leaflets and posters, and prohibiting the group chats in which antisemitic messages had been posted, of using CEU’s name and logo.

To date, all complaints issued by Jewish students have been dismissed and no structural measures have been taken to directly combat antisemitism on campus. Nevertheless, after the dramatic rise in antisemitism at CEU was made public and has been reported in the media,⁸⁵ the situation on campus seems to have calmed down.

4 Impact on Jewish Students – testimonials

4.1 Jewish student at Central European University (CEU):

“We got to the university party at 11pm and for the most part just smoked in front of the place. The first time when I went to the dancefloor the first thing I saw were three people raising a Palestine flag scarf and screaming “If you’re a Zionist get the fuck out of here!”, so I left for a while as it didn’t seem too welcoming. Then I went to get a drink, for which you have to get to the middle of the room. While I was moving inward, I heard after a song was over, a really loud and aggressive “Free free Palestine” track started and people started chanting with it. The woman standing on the stage looked at me and then at my Star of David and decided to try to give me the microphone, saying something like “Wanna join?” while stretching out the microphone towards my face. This was specifically a reaction to her seeing my Star of David. Everybody around the stage stared at me. I was just holding the glass to my mouth until she gave up and moved away. Then I just left the place and didn’t go back to the dancefloor room but only to the toilet. Honestly, the whole incident was not very long but just terribly uncomfortable...”

4.2 Jewish students at the University of Vienna:

(1) *“Due to the “protest” and the shouts, as well as the mood at the camp, I am now restricted in my everyday university life. When I was five, my family emigrated from Israel for a few years to escape the situation there. We lived in the centre of the country and were constantly haunted by exploding stores and buses and to this day it is a pure trigger. The calls for a worldwide intifada trigger panic attacks and anxiety in me, I can barely concentrate, I’m afraid to walk past this camp and am currently avoiding courtyard 1 of the old AKH at all costs, but have to pass through to get to work. I’m currently thinking about simply not going to uni for the next few months and am thinking twice before I leave the house so as not to show my face, because I no longer feel like I’m in a safe place at uni.”*

(2) *“It’s a strange feeling-I was at the demonstration in Auschwitz and people were carrying Palestine flags and Jewish stars there. Now I notice the same rhetoric on uni campus with intifada shouts, I can’t wear my David Star visibly because I’m afraid something will happen to me at uni”*

83 https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20231205_OTS0150/wissenschaftsstadtraetin-kaup-hasler-zu-antisemitismusvorwurfen-gegenueber-der-central-european-university

84 https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20231208_OTS0006/oeh-kein-platz-fuer-antisemitismus-an-der-ceu

85 <https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000198601/nahostdiskurs-an-unis-amerikanisierung-der-anderen-art;>
<https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000198609/antizionismus-und-academia-das-beispiel-central-european-university>

(3) *"I don't think people feel comfortable at the University of Vienna anymore. On the one hand, because the toilets in the New Institute building have been smeared with blatant statements since October 7. And before that, a person from my group-work for a seminar said that she wanted to cancel our meeting because she wanted to go to the camp on campus in solidarity instead, because the police apparently wanted to clear it. Sitting with this person for an hour and doing the group assignment honestly feels impossible when you know that this person is participating in a protest where protesters are calling for an intifada. So I just definitely don't feel comfortable day-to-day anymore."*

(4) *"Even if nothing has happened to me directly, as a Jewish student I still go to the campus with an uneasy and queasy feeling or, to be honest, I wouldn't necessarily dare to go to the campus with my Star of David necklace or in a generally Jewishly recognizable way, especially now with the camp there and with the slogans that are shouted or the ideas that prevail there. It makes you think twice about whether you really have to go there, to the campus, or simply not go and not put yourself in a situation where antisemitic slogans are being shouted and antisemitic ideas are simply being spread. And if you look at the pictures from other cities where students have already been physically attacked and injured, you ask yourself: could it happen to me or other students soon? It could happen here any second."*

(5) *"As a Jewish student, I would personally say that you don't feel comfortable at all, even if you don't walk through campus as a [visibly] Jewish person, it still has a psychological impact on you. So overall, on the one hand, I just feel fear and anger towards the people who no longer allow Jewish students to feel safe and comfortable on campus and as a Jewish student in general. Although it's primarily about the students, I also believe that many parents and grandparents simply have a very strong fear and concern when their children and grandchildren go to university and that right now this transgenerational transmission is very strongly "triggered" (unfortunately I can't think of a better word at the moment) by the events and I am also told every day, for example, "Please take off your necklace. Please don't tell anyone that you're Jewish and don't start any discussions". It's not just us students who have this fear, but also our parents and grandparents, perhaps even more so."*

BELGIUM

WRITTEN BY DR. PROF. JOËL KOTEK

1 Overview of national environment

In Belgium, it is reasonable to speak of an atmosphere of radical anti-Zionism that sets the country apart from its closest European neighbours. This opposition to the State of Israel permeates the political, media, and cultural spheres, finding particularly fertile ground within universities.

The reactions to the tragic events of October 7, 2023, further exacerbated this trend, revealing a lack of compassion for Israeli victims and, on the contrary, a radicalization of anti-Israeli rhetoric – as if Hamas had not committed the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. This dynamic has translated into an increasingly marked exclusion of Israel from academic spaces, a process that began in the 1980s and has been continuously strengthened ever since. In this regard, the response of Belgian universities to the Hamas attacks was revealing.

On the evening of October 7, the French-speaking public broadcaster RTBF featured François Dubuisson, an international law professor known for his radical anti-Israeli positions and support for the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement. In his intervention, he implicitly justified the Hamas attacks, presenting them as a reaction to Israel's occupation policy, as if Gaza were still occupied and the kibbutzim were on occupied territory.

This rhetoric was not isolated, but fit into a broader climate where support for the Palestinian cause often conflates with a deliberate rejection of Israel. It is worth noting that Dubuisson's alma mater, the Free University of Brussels (ULB), along with Ghent University, is one of the most hostile institutions to Israel: It is at this university that Ken Loach (anti-Zionist filmmaker with a portfolio of allegations of antisemitism), Simon Gronowski (a Holocaust survivor close to the communist PTB), and Didier Fassin, all known for their vehement opposition to Israel, were awarded honorary doctorates.

Today, the Free University of Brussels and Ghent University are two of the leading European universities promoting the boycott of Israel, notably through the *Belgian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (BACBI)*. Therefore, it is not surprising that the anti-Israeli protest movement began almost simultaneously at these two institutions.

2 Chronicle of key university events

2.1 Ghent University

Pro-Palestinian actions began at Ghent University (UGent) on May 5, 2024, with the occupation of the UFO (Universiteitsforum) by about three hundred students. The movement leading the events, *Ghent Students for Palestine*, had been active within the university for many years. The protesters set up tents on campus and organized daily activities to raise awareness about their supported cause. The movement quickly gained support from around sixty professors and university staff members.

The rector of UGent, Rik Van de Walle, was invited to sever all institutional ties with Israel. On May 17, after an assessment by the university's Human Rights Policy Committee, the rector announced that some Israeli institutions no longer met UGent's human rights standards. Ghent University thus announced the termination of its collaborations with three specific Israeli institutions: Holon Institute of Technology, IGAL Galilee Research Institute and Volcani Center, specializing in agricultural research.

Advocating for a complete break with all Israeli universities, the pro-Palestinian activists refused to end their occupation: *"In our struggle for solidarity with a free Palestine, our demand for a total academic boycott is non-negotiable."* In the face of this prolonged occupation, the university sought legal action to evict the protesters. Initially, the Flanders East Court rejected this request, considering it a peaceful protest by students. However, the Ghent Court of Appeal overturned this decision, ruling that the occupation went beyond a mere peaceful protest. The court ordered the eviction of the occupiers.



Ghent University premises vandalised with red paint

On May 26, 2024, the university requested police intervention to evacuate the protesters. During this operation, about ten people were arrested. However, despite this intervention, the students continued their occupation. While deciding to maintain collaborations with six Israeli non-university research institutions and businesses, UGent decided, on May 31, 2024, to sever all institutional ties with Israeli universities, further intensifying its stance. Moreover, it committed to advocating for the suspension of Israel's participation in European research and education programs as part of a coordinated effort involving other Belgian universities. Bolstered by their victory, the pro-Palestinian students ended their occupation of the UFO building on June 25, 2024.

2.2 Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

On May 7, 2024, following actions initiated in Ghent, a group of students occupied a building on the Solbosch campus of ULB. Renamed by protesters the "Walid Daqqa Building", in honour of a Palestinian terrorist who died in Israeli custody, this location quickly became the centre of pro-Palestinian mobilization.

A massive banner calling for the release of Georges Abdallah, a Lebanese terrorist convicted of terrorism offences in France, was also displayed on the building's facade. The occupation collective, which referred to itself as the "Popular University of Brussels," organized protests in front of the rectorate demanding that ULB "cease all partnerships and ties with Zionist universities and companies." The occupation quickly put the academic authorities in a difficult position. Their initial and publicly declared sympathy for the pro-Palestinian activists did not change this. They were soon confronted with acts of vandalism and violence.

A serious incident occurred on the very day the occupation began: Gad Deshayes, President of the Union of Jewish Students of Belgium (UEJB), was physically assaulted near the occupied building while retrieving his car. Deshayes stated: "Someone rushed at me saying he recognized me as the vice-president of the Jewish students. He punched me in the face and threw me to the ground. Another person tried to intervene, but my attacker stopped them by claiming it was necessary to continue hitting me because I was Jewish." Thanks to the quick intervention of the university's security guards, the co-president of UEJB avoided serious injuries. In response, Rector Annemie Schaus announced that ULB was filing a complaint. The incident sparked strong emotions, particularly within the Jewish community, which organized a rally in front of the rectorate to condemn the assault and demand protective measures for Jewish students.

A Radicalized Occupation

Despite the outcry, no measures were taken. The collective continued its actions by organizing, on May 23, 2024, an "Intifada Festival," bringing together students, activists, families, and teachers around the Palestinian cause. The festivities included debates, screenings of militant films, and speeches by controversial figures known for their vehement rhetoric against Israel. A particularly shocking moment was the screening of a documentary glorifying the armed resistance acts of Hamas, presented as a "national liberation movement." This screening caused outrage among some faculty members and students, but the university authorities refused to intervene. Rector Annemie Schaus, while acknowledging that some of the activities organized by the protesters were "controversial," stated that it was "an expression of academic freedom."

The atmosphere deteriorated further when openly antisemitic slogans were chanted during protests organized on campus. Witnesses reported chants such as: "*Khaybar, Khaybar, ya Yahud*" (a reference to a historic battle where Jews were defeated) and explicit calls for the disappearance of Israel. These incidents, although denounced by Jewish student associations and organizations combating antisemitism, were largely ignored by academic authorities.

ULB's Ambiguous Stance

With the support of many faculty members, especially from the fields of International Law and Social Sciences, the Academic Council (CoA) gave in to some of the activists' demands. On May 27, it announced the suspension of all research projects involving Israeli universities until Israel committed to respecting the requirements of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It is worth noting that this suspension did not affect individual academic collaborations, and it also applied to Palestinian universities as long as the hostages were not released. This decision angered the activists, who intensified their campaign to demand a complete break with Israel and the establishment of partnerships with Palestinian institutions.

The Elie Barnavi Case

Another event illustrated the radicalization of the movement: On June 3, 2024, a debate organized by the rectorate with Elie Barnavi, an Israeli historian and former ambassador to Israel, had to be moved off-campus due to security concerns. The activists had posted a statement on X demanding the cancellation of his visit, labelling Barnavi as a "*representative of a fascist, supremacist, and apartheid state*." In the context of the true climate of intimidation prevailing on campus, four professors wrote a column condemning the timid, if not complicit, attitude of the university authorities. The statement was, in turn, immediately denounced by a collective of pro-occupation teachers, researchers, and students. These four professors were called out and threatened on social media.

The occupation lasted for several weeks, forcing the rectorate to react under growing media pressure. In a press conference held on May 30, Annemie Schaus tried to defend the university's handling of the situation: *"We strongly condemn any form of antisemitism or calls for violence. However, we must also guarantee freedom of expression and assembly, which are at the core of our academic values. We are actively dialoguing with the occupiers to find a peaceful solution."* This statement, deemed tepid by many observers, was perceived as an attempt to ease tensions without taking concrete measures. In reality, ULB seemed paralysed, hesitant to expel the occupiers for fear of provoking an escalation.

A Late and Controversial Evacuation

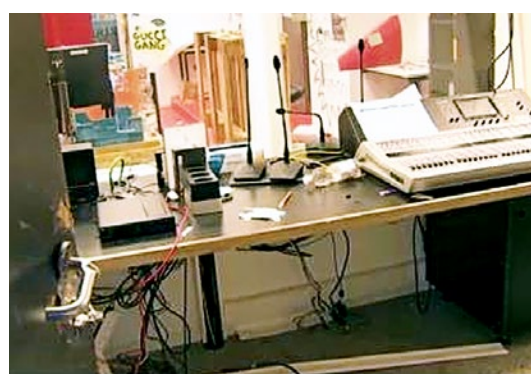
Finally, after more than a month of occupation, lamenting an increasingly degraded situation, notably due to the vandalism committed, the rectorate decided to request police intervention. Building B was finally evacuated by the police on June 25.

The activists condemned *"a brutal repression orchestrated by a rectorate under Zionist pressures,"* while the Jewish community regretted that this decision had been made so late, after increasing tension and numerous incidents. ULB announced the establishment of a working group to reflect on the future of academic collaborations with Israeli institutions, while reaffirming its commitment to freedom of expression.

University authorities reported considerable damage, estimated between 500,000 and 700,000 euros, including tagged walls, destroyed technical equipment, and ravaged lecture halls.

Yet, despite this, some professors and observers stubbornly praised the "good conduct" of the occupation. This is evidenced by the below excerpt from an article published by the League of Education, which, due to ideological bias, denies the obvious damage and the atmosphere of violence:

"Crossing in front of the building, focused on a yogurt offered by an association in support of the occupation, a security guard gave us the opportunity to take the pulse of the situation: 'Yes, everything is going well, the young people respect us and engage calmly. I am not aware of any excesses. What I fear are the far-right activists who may become violent.' I am very



Vandalism and graffiti at the Université Libre de Bruxelles

impressed by the organization of these students,' commented someone from the academic community, 'it is the first time I see a student movement with such an inclusive and democratic form. Some students will learn more from these weeks of occupation than in five years of study.'

This angelic vision is certainly at odds with that of the Brussels Prosecutor's Office, which confirmed the existence of complaints against several participants for "belonging to a group promoting racial hatred," "assault and battery," and "property damage." This explains why the evacuation did not resolve the underlying problems within the university. The atmosphere of intimidation persists on campus, particularly for Jewish students. The two co-presidents of the Jewish student union are advised not to frequent the ULB campus. Pro-Palestinian activists continue to oppose events, even those with no direct link to Israel, due to the perceived connections of participants with Israel. Not without reason, Jewish students on campus continue to feel marginalized, even threatened, especially in a climate where radically anti-Israeli and antisemitic movements dominate the scene.

2.3 University of Liège

On May 10, 2024, pro-Palestinian students occupied the entrance hall of the Place du Vingt-Août building of the University of Liège, demanding the severing of ties with Israeli universities and businesses. After verifying their claims, ULiège confirmed that it did not have any active partnerships with Israeli universities. While the university had committed to suspending any cooperation with institutions involved in severe human rights violations, it refused to break all scientific relations with Israel, much to the dismay of the activists, who labelled Rector Anne-Sophie Nyssen as "pro-genocide". Nyssen described the situation as a "hostage-taking of the university." In response to the radicalization of the movement, the university pledged not to establish any bilateral partnerships with Israel as long as manifest violations of international law were observed. It also decided to suspend collaborations with two companies active in the military sector: PB Clermont and Mecar.

Claiming several victories, including the creation of a Participatory Ethical Council and the expansion of an existing committee to review the compliance of partnerships with international law, the protesters left the central hall of the university after 40 days of occupation, on June 21. Rector Anne-Sophie Nyssen emphasized the negotiated management of the occupation, which avoided the violence seen at other universities.

2.4 Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

On May 13, 2024, about 40 activists from the student group *Palestine Solidarity Network* occupied the STOA building, renaming it "Jabalia Hall" after the largest Palestinian refugee camp. Their main objective was to demand the end of collaborations between the VUB and Israeli institutions. In an open letter addressed to Rector Jan Danckaert, 291 VUB staff members, including fifty-one professors, doctoral students, assistants, and other personnel, requested a clear response regarding the measures to address the students' demands. The letter also urged the rector, who was also the president of the Flemish Inter-University Council, to lead an effort to end academic and commercial relations with Israel. In the following days, an agreement was reached between the students and the university administration.

In a statement, Rector Jan Danckaert praised "the perseverance of the occupying students" and expressed his willingness to assess collaborations with Israeli institutions, particularly in the context of EU-funded research projects. An internal investigation revealed that the

VUB did not have any direct bilateral partnerships with Israeli universities but participated in European projects involving Israeli partners.

Finally, the VUB also demanded the end of the student occupation following incidents deemed “unacceptable.” The university had reached agreements with the student movement, which were largely respected at first. “But recent incidents have violated these agreements and are unacceptable and intolerable for the university,” reads the statement. For example, a

guest of the VUB was “*pursued, harassed, and intimidated*” by pro-Palestinian activists, and there were also deliberate acts of vandalism. The student restaurant of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), located on the Etterbeek campus, was vandalized overnight with several pro-Palestinian slogans painted on the walls and tables. The VUB filed a complaint against unknown perpetrators and noted it “expects” the student occupation movement supporting Palestine to publicly distance itself from the incident, said the spokesperson for rector Jan Danckaert, Peter Van Rompaey. After extensive discussions between the rectorate, staff, and students, a new agreement was reached on July 9, 2024, and the occupiers evacuated the STOA building on July 10.



University property at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) covered in graffiti

2.5 Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven)

In 2024, pro-Palestinian activists organized several actions at KU Leuven to protest the university’s collaborations with Israeli institutions. On February 18, about two hundred students and staff gathered on Ladeuzeplein, chanting slogans such as “Shame on KU Leuven”. On May 13, activists occupied the “de Nieuwe Valk” building, belonging to the law faculty. Their goal was to impose an academic boycott of Israeli institutions.

University authorities threatened to evacuate the premises through policy intervention, but the mayor of the city, Mohamed Ridouani (Vooruit), decided not to deploy the police, preventing the action. A few days later, the students extended their mobilization by occupying the Rector’s Office located on Waaistraat, from which they were removed by the police. In response to these events, KU Leuven Rector Luc Sels sent a message to staff, offering psychological support for Palestinian professors and students affected by the situation. However, this initiative was criticized by activists, who denounced a contradiction. “The CE DMM and the university administration want to alleviate the suffering of the victims but refuse to end their cooperation with the perpetrators,” they stated. “Is it acceptable to collaborate with a murderer while trying to comfort the bereaved families?”

The reality was that KU Leuven had no structural ties with any Israeli university, but participated in about fifteen collaborative projects with Israeli partners, mainly funded by the European Horizon program. Refusing any idea of a blanket boycott, Rector Luc Sels assured that each project had been carefully reviewed to ensure it could not be used for military or abusive purposes. After several attempts at mediation and legal proceedings, a judge in Louvain ordered the evacuation of the premises on September 6, 2024. The students left the building shortly after this decision, thus ending the occupation.

2.6 University of Antwerp

On May 13, 2024, in response to protests on other campuses, students from the University of Antwerp called for the end of collaborations with Israeli universities. In response to these demands, Rector Herman Van Goethem engaged in a dialogue with the occupying students. In response to criticism, the university suspended its general cooperation agreements with Israeli institutions linked to military authorities. However, ongoing research projects were allowed to continue, subject to additional review by the ethics committee. In some specific cases, collaborations were even maintained after thorough analysis. For example, cooperation with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, initially deemed problematic due to its ties to military training programs, was reevaluated. After detailed discussions with the Israeli administration, it was concluded that no risk of involvement in serious human rights violations existed, thus allowing the continuation of this collaboration. Rector Herman Van Goethem emphasized the importance of respecting human rights and international decisions. He called on his academic colleagues in Israel and Gaza to urge their respective governments to comply with the decisions of the International Court of Justice. Activists praised the concessions made, but criticized the rector's actions, especially for not yielding on cooperation with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Threatened with expulsion, the activists left the university building on June 25, 2024, after six weeks of occupation. *"We have won several victories, but this is not the end of the UAntwerp for Palestine movement,"* they declared.

2.7 Catholic University of Louvain (UCLouvain)

The historic Catholic university was also the site of an occupation. Already in 2018, it had been at the centre of controversy due to its presumed opposition to a campaign calling for a boycott of Israel. Although the university clarified that it did not take an official position on the boycott, this episode sparked a public debate about the involvement of Belgian academic institutions in such initiatives. On May 15, pro-Palestinian students occupied the Coubertin building at UCLouvain, an occupation that lasted several days. Like in Brussels and Liège, the activists demanded a boycott of Israel. In response to this mobilization, UCLouvain reaffirmed its condemnation of attacks on Palestinian educational institutions. The university clarified that it had no institutional collaborations with Israeli universities and that the few ongoing student exchange agreements had been immediately suspended. Moreover, academic authorities announced that a thorough analysis of individual scientific collaborations would be conducted to avoid any links with organizations involved in violations of international law and human rights. Finally, after a series of meetings involving the rectorate, staff, and students, the decision to end the occupation was made on June 26, 2024.

3 Conclusion – Belgium: A Toxic University Climate

Recent events at Belgium's seven largest universities – ULB, VUB, UCLouvain, KULeuven, UGent, ULiège, and UAntwerp – testify to a concerning phenomenon: under increasing pressure from pro-Palestinian movements, academic authorities have, for the most part, yielded. Compromise, cowardice, or complicity? The question deserves to be asked. Indeed, these institutions quickly denounced their agreements with Israel, the only democratic state in its region, bowing to the demands for an academic boycott under pressure from protesters.

It is striking to note that these universities made this decision, even though the real ties between Belgian and Israeli institutions were, in fact, minimal. With the exception of

UAntwerp, collaborations often involved only occasional exchanges or European research projects, typically in very specific fields. Yet, faced with political rhetoric and a climate of pressure, these authorities chose to sacrifice their autonomy and commitment to academic freedom, relinquishing insignificant partnerships and sometimes reluctantly siding with an unfounded contestation. The prevailing cultural progressivism in these universities is likely not unrelated. In an open letter, a group of ULB professors, not without relevance, evoked the Munich precedent (1938) to characterise their university's cowardly attitude.

The consequences of this cowardice are manifold. First, the legitimacy of academic solidarity between Belgian and Israeli universities has been called into question based on prejudices and unfounded ideological pressures.

Secondly, the dominant discourse in these universities has been shaped by a Manichean view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, relegating the need for balanced and objective reflection to the background.

Finally, the submission of academic authorities to these demands has contributed to a situation where freedom of expression and student safety, particularly for Jewish students, are now at risk. This choice has fostered a climate of division on campuses, especially at ULB, where attacks on Jewish students occurred, with inadequate responses from authorities to ensure their safety.

It should be noted that university authorities often first tried to engage in dialogue with the students and understand their demands, even supporting them in some cases. However, with the escalation of actions, such as assaults and property damage, all universities were forced to demand the departure of the occupiers, resorting to expulsion measures. By renouncing limited partnerships with Israel, the authorities not only gave in to political pressures but also endangered freedom of expression and the diversity of ideas on their campuses. This attitude, far from protecting academic values, allowed ideologies to take precedence over fundamental principles of research and academic freedom.

The coordination and preparation of pro-Palestinian activists: The near simultaneity of the occupations shows a centralization of the various movements, likely orchestrated by the Palestinian organization with ties to terrorist activity, Samidoun and its Belgian left-wing allies, including communist, socialist, and ecologist groups. A key element in understanding this is the CGSP, the ULB's majority staff union, which, in an open letter dated December 2024, complained, on the one hand, about the lack of money for scientific research but, on the other, organized a fund-raising campaign to pay the legal fees of the occupants of building B who were prosecuted for ransacking the building. All this considering that the damage they caused to ULB corresponds roughly to a month's pay of 15 full-time jobs.

Finally, these events are not isolated acts. They reflect a climate of siege-like hostility towards Israel that now permeates Belgium, from the media to universities, from the north to the south, and from the right to the left. The Palestinian cause has gradually become the core of a genuine "civil religion" or "secular religion," to borrow the analysis of Pierre-André Taguieff. The position of Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, who did not hesitate to state that he would likely have joined the protests as a student, is a striking illustration of this evolution.

In an unprecedented initiative, nearly 6,700 members of Belgian academic circles from the two main language groups sent on January 15, 2025 an open letter on the situation

in Gaza to CREF, the French-speaking Council of Rectors, and VLIR, its Dutch-speaking equivalent. The letter expressed their “deep concern” and the “urgent need” to assume their “social and legal responsibility as a university community”. The signatories: 32 deans of faculties, 1,279 professors, 1,574 researchers, 657 members of administrative staff and 3,343 students. Deeply concerned by what they libelously deem a “genocide” committed by Israel, they ask for the suspension of Israel’s participation in European research and education programmes, referencing the EU-Israel Cooperation Agreement, which sets respect for and protection of human rights as a basic condition. Among the signatories, Petra De Sutter, Deputy Prime Minister (Groen) and a graduate of Ghent University, commented: “It is our moral and legal duty to do what is necessary to put an end to the violence of the war in Gaza as soon as possible. Business as usual is tantamount to complicity in one of the greatest violations of international humanitarian law of our time.”

FRANCE

WRITTEN BY JONATHAN HAYOUN

1 Overview of national environment

Since October 7, 2023, antisemitic acts have been drastically on the rise in France. The Jewish community, and young Jews in particular, have been deeply affected. Between shock, isolation and incomprehension, many feel a sense of loneliness, a particularly worrying trend, given that France is home to the largest Jewish community in Europe.

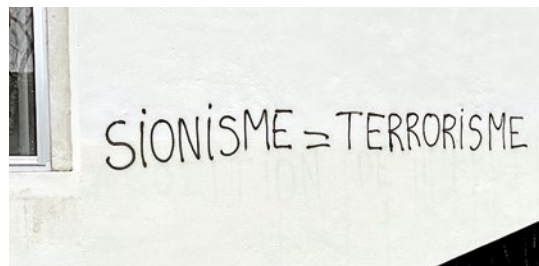
In 2023, the Ministry of the Interior's Central Territorial Intelligence Service (*Service central du renseignement territorial – SCRT*) and the Security Service of the Jewish community (*Service de protection de la communauté juive – SPCJ*) identified a fourfold increase in antisemitic acts in one year, with 1,676 acts compared with 436 in 2022. More than 1,200 antisemitic acts were reported between October 7 and the end of 2023, and 366 in the first three months of 2024 alone.

Moreover, confusion in public discourse about the very definition of the term “antisemitism” and the historic strong consensus that had helped to denounce it has been eroded. The characterization of antisemitic acts has been increasingly open to debate.

In the student world, *France Universités* reported in April 2024, on the basis of a survey completed by 82 university presidents, that 67 antisemitic acts had been recorded since October 7, 2023, compared to 33 over the whole of the 2022–2023 academic year, i.e. a twofold increase in just half a year.⁸⁶

In June 2024, a Senate committee concluded that universities were facing a growing climate of widespread antisemitism. The report drew up “an alarming overview of the detection and monitoring of antisemitic acts and remarks in institutions.”⁸⁷

A survey carried out in September 2023 by the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) at the request of the Union of Jewish Students in France (UEJF) shed light on the feelings of



Graffiti inciting to violence at Strasbourg University – “1 Zionist, 1 bullet,” “Long live the armed fight,” “Zionism = terrorism” · From: UEJF on X

⁸⁶ <https://franceuniversites.fr/actualite/dire-que-les-universites-ne-combattent-pas-lantisemitisme-releve-de-la-propagande/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r23-705/r23-7051.html>

Jewish students. According to the survey, 91% of Jewish students in France had already experienced at the time at least one antisemitic incident – 7% a physical attack, 43% attacks related to Israel (either verbal threats or physical assaults), and 45% antisemitic insults.⁸⁸

2 Main organizing groups

It is difficult to specifically identify the groups behind the acts recorded. However, it is undeniable that existing anti-Israeli movements, presenting themselves as supporters of the Palestinian cause, fuelled antisemitic discourse on campus. It should also be noted that the demonstrations could have been organised by university students or activists from organizations unaffiliated to the respective universities where events and incidents took place. Demonstrations where disturbances were recorded took place in emblematic locations such as Sciences Po Paris and Sorbonne Nouvelle University.

Among the organizations and currents that can be named are: the *New Anti-Capitalist party* (NPA) and the *Parti des indigènes de la République* (PIR). In addition to numerous pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist organizations, a number of self-defined Jewish organizations have taken part in rallies, including the *French Jewish Union for Peace* (UJFP) and the *Tsedek!* Collective, often used as a fig-leaf and tokenized by other organizers.

It is also interesting to look at the reaction of groups from which a number of influential far-right figures have emerged. On the very day of the October 7 attacks, the *Gruppe Union Défense Paris* (GUD) – a historically well-known ultra-right student organization, banned by French authorities in June 2024 – posted on X: “Ni kippa, ni kippa” (“No yarmulke, no yarmulke”), in reference to the slogan of another far-right group, *Bloc identitaire*, which uses the chant: “Ni kippa, ni keffieh” (“No yarmulke, no keffiyeh”). On October 8, the *Vox National Revolutionary* (NR) website published: “The military actions of the Palestinians have confirmed a well-known fact: behind every NR, there is a pro-Palestinian.”

Finally, it is necessary to recall the positions of several personalities from the left-wing political party *La France Insoumise* (LFI), the most represented in the National Assembly, whose excesses on the subject of antisemitism by several high-level figures have made headlines. Above all, in the wake of the Israeli reprisals, this party saw actions and statements against antisemitism as support for the ‘murder of Palestinian civilians’. This is the position of leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who in a tweet described participants in the national march against antisemitism as “friends of unconditional support for the massacre”, an indirect way of stigmatizing the fight against antisemitism. In another example, LFI MP David Guiraud said, “It is this attack of unprecedented cruelty and scale, followed by the massive military response in Gaza, that has led to an explosion in the number of acts hostile to Jews in France.”

3 Antisemitic incidents

In many towns and cities, antisemitic acts have been on the rise. The most notable incidents include the antisemitic rape of a young girl in Courbevoie on June 15, 2024⁸⁹ the burning of a synagogue in Rouen on May 17, 2024⁹⁰ and the attack on the synagogue in La Grande-Motte on August 24, 2024.

88 <https://www.leparisien.fr/societe/antisemitisme-9-etudiants-juifs-sur-10-en-ont-ete-victimes-a-luniversite-28-09-2023-FNXXFR32H5E73IFOZIAADJ4XTQ.php?ts=1733594045760>

89 https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/harcèlement-sexuel/viol-a-courbevoie-les-derniers-elements-de-l-enquete_6620157.html

90 https://www.liberation.fr/societe/religions/rouen-un-homme-arme-qui-tentait-de-mettre-le-feu-a-une-synagogue-tue-par-la-police-annonce-darmanin-20240517_BUCUGHV7ANH4VJ4NNK6PSEDEMM/

On university campuses, the most severe cases are those involving physical assaults on students. On the night of January 28–29, 2024 three Jewish students were verbally threatened and then physically attacked by six individuals at the campus of the University of Strasbourg. The attackers, shouting “Zionist fascists,” hit the students and knocked them to the ground. These students, active members of the *Union of Jewish Students of France* (UEJF), were posting flyers calling for the release of Hamas hostages and bearing the message “No to antisemitism.” Additionally, antisemitic graffiti appeared daily at the university throughout January 2024, as reported by the university president.

Another significant incident that made headlines occurred on March 12, 2024, at Sciences Po Paris, where a Jewish student was denied entry to an amphitheater occupied by pro-Palestinian demonstrators.



Jewish and Zionist students denied entry in amphitheatres at Science Po Lyon (left) and Science Po Paris (right) · From: UEJF on X

On November 3, 2023, antisemitic graffiti reading “Death to Israel, death to the Jews” and “Death, hell, suits them so well” was discovered in the library of the University of Paris 8. On March 26, 2024, antisemitic tags were found on the Tertre campus of Nantes Universités. Similar inscriptions, including swastikas, were discovered on March 4, 2024, at the University of Lyon II and in October 2023 at the University of Caen.

According to a collection of testimonies collected by the UEJF and the aforementioned Senate committee report, incidents of targeted intimidation, harassment and ostracization have also been observed. For example, on November 15, 2023, at the Faculty of Health at Toulouse-III-Paul-Sabatier University, the words “Sale juive crève” (“Dirty Jewess die”) accompanied by a swastika were found on a student’s personal belongings.



Mark reading "Dirty Jew, die" accompanied by swastika, found at Faculty of Health at Toulouse-III-Paul-Sabatier University in France

In the faculties of medicine and pharmacy, several examples of insulting messages posted on social networks or student chat applications have been reported. In January 2024, the Association of Jewish Doctors in France (*Association des Médecins Israélites de France – AMIF*) stated that "some medical students of the Jewish faith do not feel safe to continue their studies".

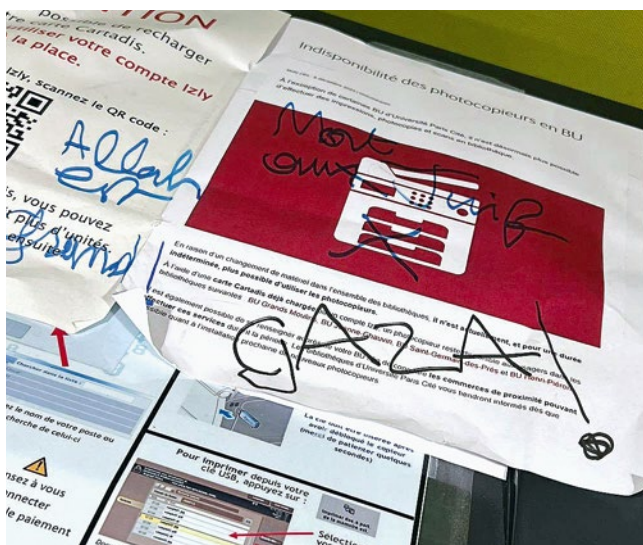
At the end of 2023, the school's management was informed that a student at Sciences Po Paris had posted several antisemitic messages online. Toulouse is the city where the first antisemitic attack of the 21st century took place in France, on 12 March 2012, at a Jewish school. The university there, Toulouse-Capitole, also reported being informed of antisemitic remarks made in October 2023 by a student in a group of first-year undergraduate students on a social network.

This situation is leading more and more Jewish students to hide their identity in their university environment.

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, boycotts against Israeli academics have increased. Numerous organised actions have been taken to encourage French universities to sever all ties with Israeli universities, with varying degrees of success. While Sciences Po Paris did not respond favorably to pressure from both students and professors, Sciences Po Strasbourg did: at the end of June 2024, the university voted to end its partnership with the Israeli Reichman University.

4 Reactions from universities

University administrations' responses have varied, ranging from calls for dialogue to internal investigations, bans on conferences and demonstrations and legal action.



"Death to Jews" written on a poster at the university library Malakoff at Paris Cité

The most notable case is that of Sciences Po Paris, which had to issue a series of bans on demonstrations and open an internal investigation following the exclusion of a Jewish student from a lecture hall.

On April 25, 2024, 70 presidents of higher education institutions signed an article in the leading newspaper *Le Monde*. They wrote: "To claim that universities do not combat antisemitism is propaganda. It is a lie to say that the presidents of higher education establishments are in denial about this scourge, which is first and foremost a crime". They also denounced the "despicable accusations made when a president is compared to a collaborator of

the Nazi regime". They referred to comments made by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of LFI, who compared the president of the University of Lille to Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann for banning a pro-Palestinian conference due to the risk of disturbing public order.⁹¹

Following their meeting with the Senate, several school heads said they felt "at a loss" as to the legal classification of certain acts. They reported difficulty in addressing "grey areas" between criticism of Israeli policy and anti-Zionist or antisemitic rhetoric. They also identified the difficulty of taking action with regard to comments and acts occurring during student parties or on online messaging services.

On April 18, 2024, Guillaume Gellé, President of *France Universités*, said: "We are also asking to have direct channels of communication with the Ministry of Justice in order to be more effective. *France Universités* is proposing that a higher education and research liaison officer be appointed to each public prosecutor's office".

5 Reaction from authorities

Public authorities responded to events following the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack promptly, banned a large number of demonstrations, while also initiating criminal proceedings. On February 27, 2024, the Minister of the Interior defended this record: "I explained why we had banned these demonstrations, and the bans were all upheld by the administrative courts. I note that there were no demonstrations like those in London, Berlin or Sydney, with calls for the death of Jews and burnt effigies."⁹²

However, the antisemitic acts that have occurred at universities have sparked considerable controversy and public debate. At a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 French president Emmanuel Macron condemned incidents that occurred at the pro-Palestinian demonstration at Sciences Po Paris on March 12, the prior day, as "unspeakable and utterly intolerable."

A few days later, a Senate information mission was established to examine antisemitism in higher education. After more than sixty hearings, the report deplored the "largely ineffective" system for reporting antisemitic acts in universities. It called for urgent action to improve the detection of antisemitic acts, prevent abuses and prosecute and punish perpetrators. The report was adopted unanimously on June 26, 2024.⁹³

At the end of May, the Minister for Higher Education, Sylvie Retailleau, announced the launch of a platform⁹⁴ meant to allow "real-time" monitoring of acts reported to public prosecutors and their legal consequences.

6 Reactions from the public

A number of academics and intellectuals have called for antisemitism to be condemned, as well as calls for boycotts of Israeli universities to be opposed.⁹⁵

91 <https://www.publicsenat.fr/actualites/education/les-presidents-duniversites-denoncent-une-instrumentalisation-les-senateurs-partages>

92 <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/293340-gerald-darmanin-27022024-antisemitisme>

93 <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r23-705/r23-7051.html>

94 <https://www.publicsenat.fr/actualites/education/antisemitisme-dans-lenseignement-superieur-17-procedures-disciplinaires-pour-actes-ou-propos-antisemites-sont-en-cours-precise-sylvie-retailleau>

95 https://www.liberation.fr/idees-et-debats/refusons-le-boycott-des-universitaires-israeliens-20240531_V4UNHLHGG5GOHFUF23MHLEKFDI/

The French Union of Jewish Students has repeatedly stated that “antisemitism in universities is fueled by hatred of Israel.” The organization is intensifying its awareness-raising efforts in universities and specific faculties dominated by anti-Zionist discourse, events and organized student groups.

Civil society groups advocating for the release of Israeli hostages as well as fighting antisemitism, emerged after October 7, and have also been active on university campuses. These include groups such as ‘Collectif du 7 octobre’ and “Nous Vivrons”, which have visited Sciences Po and the University of Créteil several times, organising sit-ins to denounce antisemitism with some success.

Following worrying incidents at universities, the *Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France* (CRIF) declared: “The misuse of support for the Palestinian cause cannot justify the stigmatisation of Jewish students. The antisemitic atmosphere in certain universities must be firmly combated or our democracy will suffocate. Higher education institutions must become republican sanctuaries against antisemitism, identity-based discrimination and all forms of hatred”. At its annual dinner in May, 2024, it specifically denounced the role played by *La France Insoumise* (LFI) in a pro-Palestinian movement that aims to “intimidate Jewish students and silence all divergent opinions.”

GERMANY

WRITTEN BY ERICA ZINGHER & GRISCHA STANJEK

1 Overview of national environment

Since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack in Israel, antisemitic incidents at universities in Germany have increased significantly. An increasingly heated atmosphere, squatting and acts of vandalism, as well as threats and attacks against Jewish students have been widely documented in the media. Incidents have affected students as well as university staff. In 2023, the *Research and Information Centre on Antisemitism* (RIAS) – the country’s premier monitoring body – recorded 113 antisemitic incidents at German universities nationwide. According to RIAS, the number of incidents increased dramatically after October 7.⁹⁶

A study by the University of Konstanz in Baden-Württemberg, commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education in December 2023 concluded that around a third of Jewish students experienced discrimination themselves, and more than half of those surveyed had observed instances of discrimination. In addition, 8% of the students interviewed showed “general antisemitic attitudes”. These include prejudices and discriminatory attitudes against Jews. Israel-related antisemitism was also exhibited by 8% of the students.⁹⁷

Anti-Israel protests veering into antisemitic outbursts have occurred throughout the country, especially in major cities and cities with larger campuses. Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia, Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig and Berlin, including the Free University Berlin (FU), Humboldt University (HU) and the University of the Arts (UdK), have particularly stood out in this regard. Similar protests took place at universities in at least 12 other cities in different federal states.

2 Main organizing groups

Protests and other university actions resulting in incidents were carried out by numerous, partly newly formed alliances and groups, with similar dynamics being observed in cities across the country. In addition to numerous individuals and already existing anti-Israel groups within the Palestinian solidarity movement, radical groups from the left-wing anti-imperialist milieu were particularly involved in the formation of coalitions in different cities.

Often it has been obscured which specific groups formed the new alliances. Newly chosen names such as “Students for Palestine [City]”, “Student Coalition [City]” or “Student Collective [City]” disguised the fact that the groups or activists behind the names were not directly connected to the local universities and were linked in some cases to larger international left-wing groups. The student protests and sit-ins were in large part organized by activists who had no direct connection to the respective university.

Several small left-wing communist groups became noticeable through their direct involvement in several cities. For example, branches of the *Young Struggle* group, which is tied

96 Antisemitische Vorfälle in Deutschland 2023 – Jahresbericht

97 Studentisches Meinungsklima zur Gewalteskalation in Israel und Gaza und Antisemitismus an deutschen Hochschulen – BMBF



In Munich, protesters celebrate Intifada

to the Turkish Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), actively participated in campaigns and alliances. The group describes the attack by Hamas on October 7 as “liberation”. In different cities, they formed alliances with other left-wing fringe groups, such as the feminist organizations *Zora* and the communist *Kommunistischer Aufbau* (“Communist Construction”). The group *Zora* described the terrorist attack of October 7 as an “act of self-defence”.⁹⁸

Some protests were supported, among others, by pre-existing local branches of BDS successor organizations like *Palästina Spricht* (“Palestine Speaks”) and the German branch of the anti-Israel group “Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East”. Activists from the said groups appeared as guest speakers in events taking place in various cities.

Activists associated with the international organizations *Samidoun* and *Masar Badil* were involved in the occupation of a building of the Humboldt University in Berlin and subsequent protests in front of the building. *Samidoun* has well-documented ties to the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (PFLP), considered a terror group by the EU. *Samidoun* itself was banned in Germany in November 2023, and is also a designated terror group in Canada, the United States and Israel. *Masar Badil*, another group close to the PFLP, organized numerous online seminars after October 7, 2023 with high-ranking representatives of Hamas, Houthi rebels and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The events were explicitly aimed at a Western audience and encouraged participants to protest at university campuses.

While registered protest actions such as demonstrations and encampments were publicized in advance via social media channels such as Instagram and Telegram, closed chat groups were used for the clandestine coordination of illegal actions such as unauthorized encampments.

Most of the actions and the subsequent reactions of the authorities were filmed by the activists themselves and posted live or later on social media, thus reaching large audiences. In some cases, the footage filmed by the activists was first published on *Red*, a social media channel that is said to be linked to Russian state media.⁹⁹ The videos were then shared on social media by other activists and widely disseminated.

As has become clear, these protests are part of an international movement; in Germany they developed with a short delay to those in the United States and other European countries, including France and the United Kingdom. In particular, the form and organization of the protests at elite US universities such as Columbia University in New York served as a

⁹⁸ <https://archive.is/eb4ms>

⁹⁹ Verbindungen nach Moskau?: Wer hinter den Videos von den Protesten gegen Israel steckt

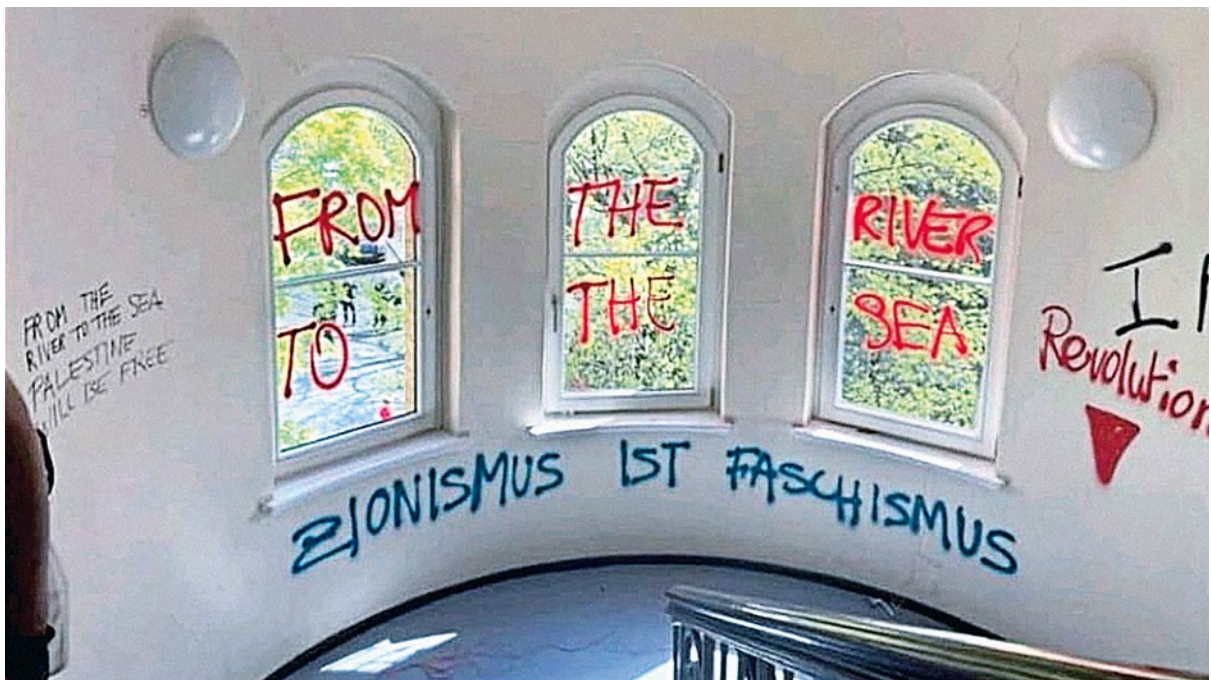
model for protesters in Germany. Demonstrators in Hamburg, for example, told the press that they regarded themselves as part of an international protest movement.¹⁰⁰

3 Antisemitic incidents on campus

In numerous German cities, there have been calls for the destruction of the State of Israel or to boycott Israeli universities and research institutions. Protesters have glorified Hamas terror, relativized the Holocaust, and in some instances expressed a desire for the annihilation Jewish life in Germany.^{101,102,103,104,105,106}

This general atmosphere began to be visible already in the first few weeks after October 7, 2023. In late October, the *General Students Committee* (AStA) of the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne shared a call on Instagram from the group *Palästina spricht* for a “global strike for Palestine”.¹⁰⁷ Among other things, the call refers to “the genocide in Gaza”. The group had repeatedly glorified and celebrated October 7 as an act of resistance.¹⁰⁸

When Israel launched its ground offensive in Gaza at the end of October 2023, the military response to the terrorist attack by Hamas, protests intensified in Germany. On November 13, a political performance was staged at the Berlin University of the Arts: participants dressed in black, with matching face masks and red-coloured hands, gathered in the university’s



Vandalism at Humoldt University, including calls for intifada and the use of the Hamas inverted red triangle

100 Nahostkonflikt an deutschen Universitäten: Hass und Hafermilch – DER SPIEGEL

101 <https://www.fnp.de/frankfurt/angst-bekommen-nach-protest-camp-an-goethe-uni-ich-kann-verstehen-dass-menschen-93101480.html>

102 <https://taz.de/Palaestina-Demo-an-TU-Berlin/16007551/>

103 <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/gesellschaft/propalaestina-proteste-unis-100.html>

104 https://t.me/palestinecampus_leipzig/70

105 <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/universitaeten-antisemitismus-deutschland-israel-gaza-krieg-100.html>

106 <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/muenchen-nahostkonflikt-palaestina-camp-hamas-terror-antisemitismus-firm-lux.Qegy4B26haaHXbX6aVF5t?reduced=true>

107 KHM Köln: Asta verbreitet Streikaufruf von als antisemitisch geltender Organisation – Rundschau Online

108 <https://www.rundschau-online.de/koeln/khm-koeln-asta-verbreitet-streikaufruf-von-als-antisemitisch-geltender-organisation-668476>

entrance hall around lunchtime. They held banners with messages such as “Condemn genocide”, “Stop colonialism” and “Free Palestine”. The red-painted hands meant to symbolize the blood allegedly on the hands of German politicians are nonetheless reminiscent of a gruesome episode that occurred in 2000 – the so-called *Ramallah lynching*, when two Israeli military reservists were lynched by a Palestinian mob while detained at the el-Bireh police station in Ramallah after accidentally entering the Palestinian Authority-controlled city. Famously, after the lynching, one of the murderers showed their bloodied hands to the gathered crowds. Despite this association, since October 7, the red hands symbol has been regularly used by supporters of the Palestinian cause.

The most significant protest action to date took place in Berlin. In May, around 120 people occupied the Institute for Social Sciences at Humboldt University in Berlin.¹⁰⁹ The protesters barricaded themselves in the building and damaged windows, walls, and furniture. At the same time, rallies were held in front of the Institute. Prior to this, around 320 people had gathered for an unregistered rally in front of the institute. They chanted anti-Israel slogans, including those legitimizing violence such as “Intifada Revolution, there is only one solution”, “Resistance is justified”, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”.¹¹⁰ The occupiers left graffiti in the building, such as “Yalla Intifada”, and “Fuck Israhell”, as well as red triangles, which Hamas terrorists use to mark enemy targets in propaganda videos.¹¹¹

The most prominent antisemitic incident was an attack on a Jewish student, Lahav Shapira, in Berlin. In February, he was beaten by a fellow student of the Free University of Berlin (FU Berlin). Shapira was hospitalized with facial fractures. The public prosecutor opened a case against the suspect. He is said to have previously been involved in occupying a lecture hall at the FU Berlin with pro-Palestinian activists.

Four months after the incident, Shapira filed a lawsuit against the university, arguing that it had allowed “antisemitic language to be transformed into action” and had “not taken adequate measures to prevent or structurally eliminate antisemitic discrimination against the plaintiff, as well as against other Jewish students.”¹¹² Shapira is referring here to the Berlin Higher Education Act, which obliges universities to prevent discrimination – including that “based on antisemitic attributions”.

4 Impact on Jewish students

Calls for violence in the form of slogans or symbols, including ones not punishable by law, have had a powerful negative effect on Jewish students.¹¹³ In cities like Frankfurt am Main, Jewish students report to have chosen to stay away from campus on occasions. In numerous instances, Jewish students decide to hide their Jewish identity, and any visible identifiable symbols.^{114,115}

Associations of Jewish students in Germany (e.g. Jewish Student Union of Germany and Jewish university groups) have been pointing out the danger for Jewish students at universities ever since October 7 and calling for university administrations to take a firm stand

109 Statement zum Ende der Besetzung des Instituts für Sozialwissenschaften der HU am 23. Mai 2024

110 Nach Besetzung: Humboldt-Uni verbietet Mitarbeitern Fotoaufnahmen von Anti-Israel-Parolen – WELT

111 <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/nahostkonflikt-an-deutschen-universitaeten-hass-und-hafermilch-a-9ea8bf09-bd12-462d-8050-8f71273a4db1>

112 Antisemitismus: Jüdischer Student verklagt FU Berlin – ZDFheute

113 JSUD-Präsidentin Hanna Veiler: Junge Jüdinnen und Juden hinterfragen ihre Zukunft in Deutschland und Europa – SWR Kultur

114 Nach Protest-Camp an Goethe-Uni: „Ich kann verstehen, dass Menschen Angst bekommen“

115 Antisemitismus an Unis: Juden fühlen sich an deutschen Hochschulen nicht sicher, sagt der HRK-Präsident – WELT

on antisemitic incidents. In February 2024, student associations such as the Jewish Student Union of Germany (JSUD) and the Christian-conservative RCDS issued a joint statement warning of a “radicalization” at universities.¹¹⁶ The statement also said: “Exclusions of democratic advocates from events, counter-demonstrations that question Israel’s right to exist, as well as physical attacks on Jewish students shape the everyday discourse at universities.”

5 Reactions from universities

The reactions of the university administrations ranged from offers of dialogue and talks, temporary toleration of encampments, to evictions and criminal charges. Particularly at the beginning of the protests, the protesters were perceived as peace activists with legitimate demands to be heard. After the occupation of the Institute of Social Sciences at Humboldt University in Berlin, the numerous calls for violence and Hamas-style triangles left behind to intimidate and mark “the enemy” some advocates of the protesters reviewed their position.¹¹⁷



Following the murder of two staff of the Israeli embassy in Washington D.C. a poster celebrating the killing, and noting “Make zionists afraid” appeared at Humboldt University

The president of Humboldt University Berlin, Julia von Blumenthal, tolerated the occupation of the Institute for Social Sciences for one day, and linked this approach with the expectation that the occupiers would then voluntarily end the action. It was also agreed with the occupiers that a dialogue would take place the following day. When only some protesters voluntarily left the building, the police was called to clear the occupied area.

Employees of Berlin universities had previously demanded in an open letter that the protest camps at universities not be cleared by police. “Regardless of whether we agree with the specific demands of the protest camp, we stand before our students and defend their right to peaceful protest, which also includes the occupation of university premises,” they wrote in early May 2024.¹¹⁸ The letter explains the “urgency of the protesters’ cause” as being “understandable” in view of Israel’s actions in the Gaza Strip and the humanitarian situation in the area. However, they did not mention Hamas’ terror. The faculty demanded that the university management refrain from “police operations against their own students”.

In the wake of the attack on Jewish student Lahav Shapira, FU President Günter Ziegler announced a “spectrum of measures” for a “safe and respectful campus”. The university banned the suspect from the premises¹¹⁹. Ziegler also named points of contact, encouraged events and an action week against antisemitism as a response to the events.

¹¹⁶ Studentenverbände beklagen Radikalisierung an Unis | tagesschau.de

¹¹⁷ Zum Geschehen am besetzten sozialwiss. Institut der Humboldt-Universität am 23. Mai 2024 – Prof. Dr. Michael Wildt

¹¹⁸ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfVy2D5Xy_DMiaMx2TsE7YediR6qifxoLDP1zljKzEI9t1LWw/viewform

¹¹⁹ https://www.fu-berlin.de/presse/informationen/fup/2024/fup_24_031-hausverbot-erlassen/index.html

In Düsseldorf, university rector Anja Steinbeck refused a request to display an Israeli flag in solidarity with October 7 victims – as had been done in support of Ukraine – and explained her decision to the press by saying, “we also have a large number of Muslim students on campus who clearly distance themselves from Hamas. They would have come and said, ‘Can’t we also hang the Palestinian flag?’” She noted her desire to ensure “peace” on campus.¹²⁰

In addition, presidents and university administrations at numerous German universities published statements in which they asserted that antisemitism had no place at their institutions. In most cases, this happened after antisemitic incidents or instances of hostility towards Israel had already occurred.

In certain cases, municipal authorities imposed conditions on demonstrations, such as banning certain slogans, following assessments by authorities as to the security risks posed by demonstrators. This was the case in Frankfurt am Main, for example.¹²¹

6 Reaction from authorities

The attack on Lahav Shapira in Berlin sparked a debate about the Berlin Higher Education Act. Calls for the alleged perpetrator to be expelled from the university quickly emerged. However, since an amendment in 2021, the law stipulates that expelling students as a means of “regulatory law” is not possible in Berlin. Before 2021, expulsions due to various criminal offences were indeed anchored in the law. This regulation on administrative law was seen at the time as impracticable, and was for this reason abolished by the Senate of Berlin.

In Germany, the Higher Education Act is a matter for the federal states. Accordingly, expelling an antisemitic perpetrator of violence would be possible in all other federal states.¹²² The Berlin Higher Education Act, which had previously not allowed the de-registration of students, has now been reformed to allow for exmatriculation. Depending on the type and severity of the disruption, these would range from a reprimand to exmatriculation as a last resort. Critics of this amendment to the higher education law argue it constitutes a form of parallel justice.¹²³ They fear that the law could be misused to expel students for political reasons.

Federal Education Minister Bettina Stark-Watzinger (FDP) called on university leaders to intervene more consistently against antisemitism.¹²⁴ She said that the fact that Jewish students are afraid of being recognized in everyday university life should not become the norm. In its meeting on October 12, 2023, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs decided that all federal states would respond with an action plan against antisemitism^{125,126}. Among other things, contact points are to be created for those affected.

North Rhine-Westphalia was first to establish a central contact point for victims of antisemitism at universities on August 15, 2024. The contact point was set up by the universities,

120 Antisemitismus an NRW-Unis – Videos – Westpol – Fernsehen – WDR

121 Auf dem Gelände der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt: Pro-Palästina-Protestcamp darf bleiben

122 Exmatrikulation bei antisemitischem Übergriff möglich?

123 Angriff auf Juden: Warum Berlin Exmatrikulationen erleichtert – ZDFheute

124 <https://www.fdp.de/hochschulen-sind-keine-rechtsfreien-raeume>

125 <https://www.kmk.org/aktuelles/artikelansicht/aktionsplan-gegen-antisemitismus-und-israelfeindlichkeit-verabschiedet.html>

126 https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2023/2023_12_07-Aktionsplan-gegen_Antisemitismus-und-Israelfeindlichkeit.pdf

universities of applied sciences, and state art and music universities of the region, led by the University of Münster and in collaboration with the Research and Information Center on Antisemitism North Rhine-Westphalia (RIAS NRW). This initiative is financially supported by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia.

In connection with the protests at universities, the police have issued bans, broken up rallies, evicted squatters and initiated criminal proceedings. For instance, after protests at Humboldt University in Berlin in May 2023, the police initiated 37 investigations.¹²⁷ These concern, among other things, possible cases of incitement to hatred and resistance against law enforcement officers, the police reported. In Leipzig, the police also repeatedly initiated investigations against protest participants after they had cleared protest camps several times.¹²⁸

After protests at Alice Salomon University (ASH) in Berlin in January 2025, the police started investigating six individuals. The charges include assaulting law enforcement officers, insult, resistance, and attempted prisoner rescue.¹²⁹

7 Reactions from the public

Regarding the social debates on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and antisemitism in Germany, public figures repeatedly positioned themselves in their roles as academics in open letters. In doing so, they helped shape the discourse in university spaces. In March 2024, for example, more than 300 academics, including numerous renowned professors, signed a letter claiming that “a striking number of Jewish voices that express criticism of German politics” were being marginalized.¹³⁰

In response to anti-Israel and antisemitic incidents and activities, groups such as “Fridays for Israel” regularly organize protests in front of Berlin universities. Such activities are also organized by campus coalitions against antisemitism, such as in Frankfurt am Main.¹³¹

Josef Schuster, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, lamented that hatred of Israel was often behind the protests at universities. He called for structural changes at universities that could effectively protect against hatred and agitation against Jews and against Israel on campus.¹³²

¹²⁷ <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/ausland/protest-studierende-uni-ermittlungen-israel-100.html>

¹²⁸ <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/polizei-eroeffnet-zahlreiche-ermittlungsverfahren-100.html>

¹²⁹ <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/bildung/berlin-polizei-ermittelt-nach-antiisraelischer-hoersaalbesetzung-a-9310f598-d1c8-4e9c-ac23-661f2ebcce25>

¹³⁰ Deutschlands Reaktionen auf den Israel-Gaza Krieg

¹³¹ Konfrontation auf dem Campus der Goethe-Uni verläuft weitgehend friedlich

¹³² Zentralrat der Juden: Statement Antisemitismus an Hochschulen

ITALY

WRITTEN BY GADI LUZZATTO VOGHERA

1 Overview of national environment

In the months before and after October 7, 2023, the Cattaneo Institute of Bologna conducted a survey on antisemitism and anti-Zionism among students at several universities in Milan, Bologna, and Padua. The survey involved 2,579 students. Among the alarming results, the survey revealed that 46.3% of students believed the Israeli government treated Palestinians in the same way the Nazis treated Jews; 30.6% thought Jews exploited the Nazi genocide to justify Israeli policies; 29.6% believed Jews had transformed from victims into aggressors – all forms of gross Holocaust distortion and trivialization and, depending on context, antisemitic attitudes as per the IHRA working definition of the phenomenon.¹³³

After October 7, numerous hostile incidents toward Israel and/or the Jewish community were reported within Italian universities. The first call for suspending cooperation with Israeli universities came in November 2023, signed by over 4,000 Italian academics.¹³⁴ Following this call, many Italian universities began procedures to request the revocation of agreements. These pressures were often accompanied by protests inside and outside the universities, with significant participation from faculty and students.

2 Main organizing groups

The main organizations behind the protests and occupations of universities in Italy include: Cambiare rotta¹³⁵, Assopace Palestina¹³⁶, Movimento degli Studenti Palestinesi in Italia¹³⁷ and BDS Italia¹³⁸.

Their stance supports the *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions* (BDS) movement. While formally emphasizing the distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, the groups often reject it or fail to meet it in practice, and often compare the Israeli military or government to Nazism. Antisemitic slogans in Arabic have been heard at protests, Israeli flags have been burned, and Hamas and Hezbollah symbols have been displayed. The most commonly used slogan is “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

3 Incidents on campus

- **February 2024, University for Foreigners of Siena:** Tomaso Montanari, the rector of the university, despite declaring support for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, was protested during the inauguration of the new academic year by a group of

133 Asher D. Colombo, Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna, Fabio Quassoli, Barbara Saracino, Manuela Scioni, *Studenti universitari, ebrei e Israele prima e dopo il 7/10/2023. Una rilevazione negli atenei del Nord*, “Istituto Cattaneo”, 20 novembre 2023

134 <https://appellouniversitaitaliane.blogspot.com/>

135 www.cambiare-rotta.org

136 www.assopacepalestina.org

137 https://www.facebook.com/p/Movimento-Studenti-Palestinesi-in-Italia-61550884088108/?locale=it_IT

138 AA. VV., *Relazione annuale sull'antisemitismo in Italia 2023*, “Osservatorio antisemitismo”, pp. 41–42

pro-Palestinian activists. Earlier, the group had interrupted the speech of the Minister of Universities and Research, Anna Maria Bernini.

- **March 2024, University of Turin:** A meeting of the Academic Senate was interrupted by representatives of the student movements “Progetto Palestina” and “Cambiare Rotta”. All members of the Senate voted to suspend future projects with Israel, with only one dissenting vote from a Jewish professor. The decision was contested by a group of associations that organized a sit-in in the square, which was attacked by about 200 students affiliated with far-left organizations like “Cambiare Rotta” and “Askatasuna”.



Protest action at the University of Turin, interrupting a meeting of the Academic Senate

- **March 2024, University of Pisa:** During the inauguration of the academic year, Rector Riccardo Zucchi allowed an Italian-Palestinian student, Anas Khalil, to address the public. He called for the cancellation of agreements with Israeli universities, describing Israel as “a regime of permanent occupation as a vehicle for colonization.” In March, the Academic Senate of the Scuola Normale Superiore approved a document rejecting the 2024 Scientific Ban issued on November 21, 2023, under the Italy-Israel cooperation agreement.¹³⁹
- **March 2024, University of Genoa:** Students from various collectives broke down the door to the room where the Academic Senate was meeting. When Rector Federico Delfino refused to yield to pressure to declare a boycott of Israel, they shouted “genocidal” and “murderer” at him, physically assaulting and pushing him.¹⁴⁰
- **March 2024, La Sapienza University of Rome:** Jewish journalist David Parenzo, invited to an event organized by the right-wing student association Azione Universitaria, was protested by numerous left-wing activists who prevented the meeting from taking place, calling him “fascist” and “racist”.¹⁴¹
- **March 2024, University Federico II of Naples:** Maurizio Molinari, director of *La Repubblica* (of Jewish faith), was protested by pro-Palestinian demonstrators. The event, “The Role of Culture in the Context of a Contested Mediterranean”, was suspended due to clashes between students and police, with protesters chanting “Out with the Zionists from the university”.¹⁴²
- **April 2024, University of Bari “Aldo Moro”:** The Academic Senate announced, “We will not submit projects for the cooperation agreement between Israel and Italy.”

¹³⁹ Luca Lunedì, *La Normale: no al bando di ricerca in collaborazione con Israele*, “Corriere della Sera”, 29 marzo 2024

¹⁴⁰ Francesca Galici, *Tensioni pure all'università di Genova, il blitz dei collettivi: insulti e spintoni al rettore*, “Il Giornale”, 27 marzo 2024.

¹⁴¹ *Non posso parlare*, Parenzo contestato alla Sapienza, “Ansa”, 8 marzo 2024

¹⁴² *Protesta degli studenti, salta il dibattito con Molinari all'Università Federico II a Napoli*, “Ansa”, 16 marzo 2024

- **May 2024, University of Turin:** Imam Brahim Baya, founder of the youth center “Yalla Aurora” and a member of the “Torino for Gaza” group, organized an Islamic prayer at the university, during which he gave a speech supporting Jihad.¹⁴³
- **May 2024, University of Milan:** The Italy-Israel Association of Savona organized a conference titled “Israel: History of a Democracy Under Attack. Terrorism, Propaganda, and Antisemitism 4.0. The Challenge to the West”, which was to include the screening of the documentary #NOVA about the massacre committed by Hamas terrorists at the Nova Music Festival on October 7. Just days before the event, organizers were forced to cancel it after receiving threats and intimidation from anti-Israel collectives.¹⁴⁴
- **June 2024, University of Palermo:** Agreements with Israeli universities were suspended. However, the university maintained collaborations with Al-Quds University in Ramallah, where a Christmas tree had been set up in December adorned with images of Palestinian “martyrs” killed while attempting to kill Israeli citizens, and with Mustafa International University in Qom, Iran.
- **June 2024, Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna:** The majority of faculty voted in favour of suspending Erasmus exchanges with Israel, specifically deciding to terminate an agreement with an Israeli design institute, Shenkar – Engineering Design Art in Tel Aviv, starting in the 2024/2025 academic year.
- **October 2024, University of Milan:** Rector Marina Brambilla announced plans to freeze an Erasmus exchange agreement with Reichman University of Herzliya.
- **October 2024, University of Milan:** On the first anniversary of October 7, artist Alessandro Palombo created a painting in memory of the victims titled “October 7th, Escape”, depicting Vlada Patapov, an Israeli girl with a red shawl who survived the Nova Festival massacre. Her face was erased, and Israeli flags on white t-shirts worn by teddy bears in the artwork were defaced.¹⁴⁵

4 Impact on Jewish students

Due to the climate emerging following October 7, 2023 Israeli and Jewish students in Italy have found themselves increasingly isolated. A survey conducted at the end of 2023 by the CDEC Foundation’s Observatory on Antisemitism in Milan revealed that 80% of Israeli students concealed Jewish symbols or their Israeli identity at university; 75% avoid speaking Hebrew aloud on campus or in public; nearly half refrained from attending Jewish community events, synagogues, or Chabad centres due to fear; 60% skipped a class in the week leading up to the survey for fear of going to university; 32% expressed fear of another student in their class; and about 35% had encountered a neo-Nazi, antisemitic, or violent post published by another student.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ La “jihad” e la preghiera nell’università occupata diventano un caso, “La Repubblica”, 24 maggio 2024

¹⁴⁴ Giulio Meotti, *Stalemate contro Israele*, “Il Foglio”, 3 maggio 2024

¹⁴⁵ Milano, sfregiato murale di Alessandro Palombo dedicato alle vittime di Hamas, “Sky tg24”, 7 ottobre 2024

¹⁴⁶ AA. VV., *Relazione annuale sull’antisemitismo in Italia 2023*, “Osservatorio antisemitismo”, pp. 41–42

The Union of Young Italian Jews (UGEI) conducted a survey among young Jews aged 18–35 in Italy between November 2023 and May 2024: 83% believed antisemitism was on the rise. In the university environment, 71% of Jewish students reported feeling unsafe in expressing their Jewish identity, and 86% did not openly express opinions about Israel. 68% had been victims or witnesses of antisemitic attitudes from their classmates, while 35% reported hostile behaviour from faculty members.¹⁴⁷

5 Reactions from universities

Despite significant pressure from the media and protests, some dissent emerged within universities regarding aggressive, anti-Israel, and at times antisemitic demonstrations. Antonella Polimeni, Rector of La Sapienza University of Rome, decided to continue collaborations with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and emphasized the importance of democratic debate in university spaces. Daniela Mapelli, Rector of the University of Padua, condemned the occupation of part of the university and issued a statement condemning “the atrocities committed by the terrorist organization Hamas against the State of Israel, with the killing of innocent civilians and the abduction of hundreds of people now held hostage” shortly after October 7.¹⁴⁸ In May 2024, three student associations at the University of Milan and other universities (Students for Freedom, Liberal University Students, Siamo Futuro) signed an open letter with UGEI: “Hatred and intolerance should have no place in our universities. Discriminatory episodes of any kind, particularly against Jewish students as those that have occurred in recent weeks, are totally unacceptable and must be prosecuted”.¹⁴⁹

In June, a National Manifesto for the Right to Study was presented by Pietro Balzano and signed by the three student associations and UGEI. An initiative against academic boycotts titled *An Important Challenge: Italian Research Should Build Bridges Between Israelis and Palestinians* was also organized.¹⁵⁰

147 Rapporto UGEI rivela profonda preoccupazione tra i giovani ebrei, “HaTikva”, 11 luglio 2024

148 Luca Roberto, *Dalla Sapienza all'Università di Padova: chi non ci sta a demonizzare Israele*, “Il Foglio”, 20 aprile 2024

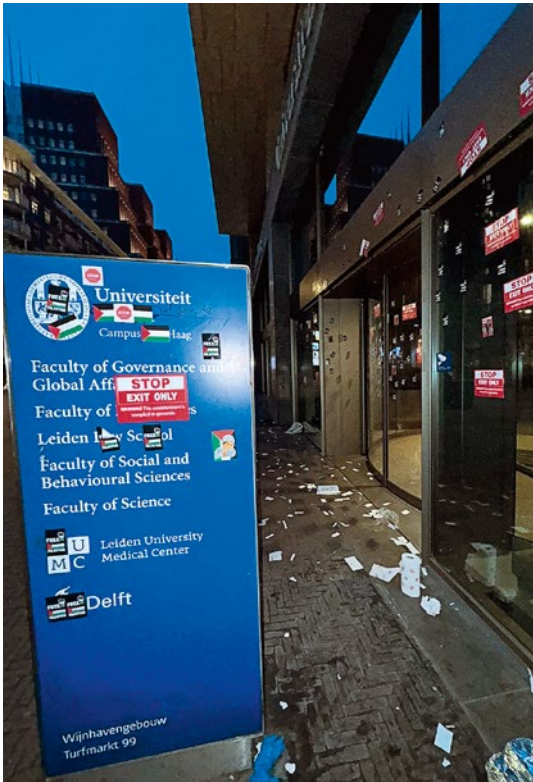
149 *Occupazione pro-Palestina alla Statale di Milano, gli studenti smobilitano*, “rainews.it”, 27 maggio 2024

150 Nathan Greppi, *Giovani universitari per il diritto allo studio, contro le occupazioni*, “Bet Magazine Mosaico”, 20 giugno 2024

THE NETHERLANDS

WRITTEN BY PROJECT TEAM

1 Overview of national environment



Vandalism at the University of Leiden

The terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas and the ensuing war in Gaza have had a severe impact on Dutch society, leading to social tensions, heated public debates and polarization, extensively covered by national media. Moreover, antisemitism, already on the rise before October 7, 2023, has increased significantly, as was reported by the Netherlands Public Prosecution Service, the Netherlands Police, the Center for Information and Documentation Israel (CIDI), and the Dutch National Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism (NCAB).¹⁵¹ This has included numerous incidents of hatred against Jews on Dutch university campuses.¹⁵²

The only report focused specifically on the experiences of Jewish and Israeli students and academics on Dutch campuses since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war was published in October 2024 and written by Eliyahu Sapir and Amanda Kluveld, two employees of Maastricht University acting in a personal capacity. Based on the responses of a (statistically unrepresentative) sample of 165 respondents, Sapir and Kluveld observed an “alarming increase of hostility and

hate in Dutch higher education” as well as an inadequate response of universities and universities of applied sciences to “a climate of fear and exclusion.” Although their survey demonstrates a clear variation between institutions, a common thread running through the answers of the respondents are experiences with Israel-related antisemitism or anti-Zionism, social exclusion, and intimidation.¹⁵³

Student (and staff) protests demanding universities cut ties with Israeli institutions have included petitions and open letters, posters, flyers, plastering, teach-ins, demonstrations, encampments, (hunger) strikes, die-ins, walk-outs, and the squatting of university buildings. Although the campuses of the University of Amsterdam have been the most prominent sites of unrest, protests were also held at, among others, Erasmus University

¹⁵¹ Meer discriminatie-incidenten geregistreerd – Politie | Geregistreerde discriminatiefeiten in 2023 gestegen – Openbaar Ministerie | Sterke stijging online antisemitisme sinds 7 oktober – NCAB | Monitor antisemitische incidenten. Nederland 2023 – CIDI & English summary

¹⁵² Antisemitic incidents up 800% in the Netherlands since Oct. 7, Dutch watchdog reports – JTA | Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism – EU Survey of Jewish People

¹⁵³ Onveilige ruimtes. De opgang van antisemitisme in de Nederlandse academische wereld. Bevindingen van een studie naar de ervaringen van Joodse en Israëlische studenten en medewerkers tijdens de protesten na 7 oktober – Eliyahu Sapir and Amanda Kluveld

Rotterdam, Utrecht University, the University of Groningen, Radboud University Nijmegen, Leiden University (Leiden and The Hague), Delft University of Technology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Maastricht University, Tilburg University, Wageningen University & Research, and Eindhoven University of Technology.

2 Main organizing groups

The main organizers of the protests, purportedly intended to achieve an academic boycott, are young people guided, on an intellectual level, by post-colonial and intersectional theory. For them, support of the Palestinian people is part of a “package” that also includes, among other things, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, climate activism, and the advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights. On a functional level, they are influenced by the aims and the know-how of international student and general protest movements, such as *Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions* (BDS) and *Extinction Rebellion* (XR), with the encampments established on campuses from the spring of 2024 being inspired by those in the United States. Protest actions at Dutch universities against Israel were initiated already before the war in Gaza, as well as soon after October 7, 2023, and they continue to this day.

The most prominent organizing groups behind the campus protests in the Netherlands are *Students for Palestine* (SfP), operating from The Hague and Leiden, *Students for Justice in Palestine* (SJP), a local branch of the international organization of the same name, and *AUFreePalestine* (AUFP), both operating from Amsterdam. These organizations are supported and often also joined at protests by representatives of other national and transnational pro-Palestinian and protest organizations, not dedicated solely to students, such as members of *Dutch Scholars for Palestine* (DSP), *Nederlands Palestina Komitee* (NPK), and *Palestine Action NL*.

3 Antisemitic incidents on campus

The 2023 monitor on antisemitism published by the CIDI mentions several antisemitic incidents at Dutch universities after the start of the Israel-Hamas war: On October 27, a Jewish student at an unspecified university was told by a fellow student that “Cancer Zionists [*kankerzionisten*] always lie”, while they wrote “6 million” at the same time. On November 4, a Jewish couple attending their child’s graduation ceremony at the University of Amsterdam, who reacted to the speech of a Palestinian student using part of the slogan “From the river to the sea” with “Fuck you”, heard other people calling them “Fucking Jews” – the incident was also covered in the press.¹⁵⁴ Again in Amsterdam, on October 19, a Jewish student was told by a fellow student that they loved it when “Jews are killed and beheaded.” On November 28, another Jewish student at the University of Amsterdam was repeatedly accused of being a “terrorist” because they were Jewish.¹⁵⁵

The above-named survey of the experiences of Jewish and Israeli students and academics by Sapir and Kluvelde lists 13% of the respondents as having encountered hostile reactions to visible markers of a Jewish identity between October 2023 and October 2024. In addition, 8.5% indicated they had been subjected to collective accusations for the actions of the Israeli government, and 7% to the denial of Jewish self-determination. Some respondents mentioned “cyberattacks, Nazi analogies, and clear forms of hate speech” (5%), “dehu-

154 E.g. Pijnlijke ervaring voor Joods gezin op UvA: “Publiek joelde ‘Fucking Jews’” – *De Telegraaf* | Student UvA: “Omstreken pro-Palestina leus niet letterlijk gebruikt, wel persoonlijke variant” – AT5

155 Monitor antisemitische incidenten. Nederland 2023 – CIDI & English summary

manizing and discriminatory practices” (3%), “accusations of dual loyalty and antisemitic humour” (slightly more than 1%), and “religious intolerance” (1%).¹⁵⁶

In certain cases, the anti-Israel discourse of the organized protests demanding an academic boycott has veered into group defamation or rhetoric that calls for violence and/or delegitimizes Israel’s right to exist. For example, offline and online manifestations have included statements such as “One solution, intifada revolution,” “Globalise the intifada,” and



Banner glorifying violent resistance at demonstration in the Netherlands

“Silence is violence,” placed “Israel” in quotation marks, or wrote that “Israel does not have the right to exist.” In May 2024, Wageningen University & Research pressed charges for the slogan “Zionists are all the same, Nazis by a different name”, which had been chanted during a demonstration.¹⁵⁷

Another example is the much-covered Gaza Solidarity Encampment which started earlier that same month at the University of Amsterdam and ended in the occupation of part of the Roeterseiland campus and the Oudemanhuispoort in the city center. The protesters used banners and graffiti with statements like “Israel is an illegal state since 1948”, “Destroy what destroys”, “Fuck Zionism”, “Fuck Israel,” and “Intifada.” An Israeli flag, probably belonging to counterprotesters who entered into the encampment, was burned.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Israelis who participated in these demonstrations with banners stating “Israelis against genocide” and “Justice for Palestine” were told they were not welcome, because they legitimized the existence of Israel with their mere attendance and identification as Israeli (“Everyone from Israel is from another country! You are not Israeli. Your blood is not Israeli!”).

The incidents in which protesters have involved themselves with organizations such as Samidoun have raised concern. For example, in May 2024, Mohammed Khatib, the European

¹⁵⁶ Onveilige ruimtes. De opgang van antisemitisme in de Nederlandse academische wereld. Bevindingen van een studie naar de ervaringen van Joodse en Israëliëse studenten en medewerkers tijdens de protesten na 7 oktober – Eliyahu Sapir and Amanda Kluvel

¹⁵⁷ Universiteit Wageningen doet aangifte van leus bij pro-Palestijns protest – NOS

¹⁵⁸ Universiteit Wageningen doet aangifte van leus bij pro-Palestijns protest – NOS

coordinator of Samidoun, gave a lecture at the encampment on the campus of Radboud University Nijmegen. Another invited lecturer in Nijmegen in October 2024 was prevented at the last minute by government intervention, following upheaval in the Dutch press.¹⁵⁹ Samidoun has ties with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), designated a terrorist organization by the European Union, among others.

4 Impact on Jewish students

Of the respondents to the Sapir and Kluveland survey, 36.6% indicated feeling safe at their respective universities, whereas 63.4% declared to feel moderately (the majority) to considerably (one in twenty) unsafe.¹⁶⁰ Feelings of insecurity of Jewish and Israeli students and staff at university campuses since October 7, 2023 have also been reported by the Dutch media, including in op-eds.¹⁶¹

Although they do not form a homogeneous group with a shared, common experience, many students and staff members do not feel free to express their Jewish or Israeli identities or engage in dialogue or debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in an academic environment that is predominantly anti-Israel, within a wider society in which individual Jews are often expected to condemn or sometimes even held accountable for the actions of the Israeli government.

Moreover, those leaning to the political right feel their opinions are unwelcome, whereas left-leaning Jewish students and academics feel isolated and unsupported by the group they believed they belonged to. As a result of animosity, peer pressure/intimidation, and social and scholarly exclusion, many Jewish and Israeli students have turned inward, for example by organizing informal gatherings or by institutionalizing Jewish student bodies and academic communities. Some hide visual affirmations of their Jewish identity, such as kippahs and Magen David necklaces, others are afraid of coming to campus at all and stay away, particularly from the lectures of scholars who publicly identify as anti-Israel and at times of protest actions.



Social media post showing (with approval) a banner from the Rotterdam student encampment calling for “death to Israel”

159 E.g. Gemeente niet op de hoogte van “extremistische haatprediker” op Radboud-protest, die in buurlanden niet welkom is – *De Gelderlander* | Ophief over komst omstreken Pro-Palestijnse spreker naar Radboud Universiteit – VOX | Voor geweerde spreker Khatib is Palestijns geweld tegen Israël gerechtvaardigd – NOS

160 Onveilige ruimtes. De opgang van antisemitisme in de Nederlandse academische wereld. Bevindingen van een studie naar de ervaringen van Joodse en Israëliëse studenten en medewerkers tijdens de protesten na 7 oktober – Eliyahu Sapir and Amanda Kluveland

161 E.g. “Je kunt hier niet zeggen dat Israël zich mag verdedigen” – *Trouw* | At academia, “the Left” is a very uncomfortable place to be in now – *De Vrijdagavond* | Joodse studenten in Nederland zijn continu op hun hoede. “Sommigen durven geen keppeltje meer te dragen” – *Nederlands Dagblad* | Studentenrabbijn Yanki Jacobs: “De universiteit is voor Joodse studenten nu geen veilige plek” – *de Volkskrant* | Universiteit is voor Joden nu erg onveilig; elke nuance ontbreekt – *NRC* | Joodse studenten voelen zich bedreigd op Universiteit Leiden door pro-Palestijnse activisten: “Wij zijn vogelvrij” – *De Telegraaf* | Altijd op je hoede: Joden voelen zich steeds minder veilig in Nederland – *EW* | Zeventien aanhoudingen in vier dagen bij pro-Palestijnademo op Amsterdam University College: “Verschrikkelijk, wat nu gebeurt is ongekend” – *Het Parool* | Israëliëse UvA-studente Tamar: “Weet niet meer of ik welkom ben op de campus” – *AT5* | Opinie: Als Joodse studenten de universiteit niet meer durven te bezoeken, faalt het bestuur – *de Volkskrant* | “Joden zijn de enige minderheid die echt onder vuur ligt” – *EW*

5 Reaction from universities

Dutch university administrators have repeatedly condemned antisemitism in general terms and made statements emphasizing that everyone should be welcome on campus, including Jewish and Israeli students.¹⁶² Throughout the country, they have had conversations with Jewish and Israeli students and sometimes taken preventive measures regarding their safety, such as additional security at certain events. However, almost 30% of the respondents to the Sapir and Kluveland report indicated they felt their universities did not take effective action to combat antisemitism, whereas 20% felt the action that was taken came too late or was ineffective, and 10% experienced unsatisfying declarations of support after incidents. Only 10% of the Jewish and Israeli students and staff who responded to the survey, though the action taken was indeed effective.¹⁶³

Presumably because of lack of knowledge and out of fear of disturbances, the conduct of university boards and employees across Dutch universities has increasingly led to situations where Jewish students and staff members feel compelled to make themselves as invisible as possible. A public example of this is the fact that the University of Amsterdam tried to initiate a mailing list including the names of Jewish students, to be able to warn them about demonstrations on campus.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the anxiety surrounding Jews and Jewish matters on campus affects students and scholars within the academic fields of Jewish studies and Holocaust studies. An incident covered widely in the press was the cancellation of a lecture series on the Holocaust and antisemitism by the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (HU) in February 2024.¹⁶⁵

Regarding the response of Dutch universities to the demand to cut ties with Israeli institutions, for a long time administrators did not engage in conversations with the protesters. In the first months after October 7, 2023, university boards refused to become political and take a stand regarding the situation in the Middle East, and were adamant they would uphold academic freedom. However, this position started to shift in the spring of 2024, after rising tensions and a wave of demonstrations, encampments, and squatting actions on university campuses, resulting in police arrests in, among others, Nijmegen, Utrecht, Delft, and Amsterdam, and culminating in violence between protesters and the police in Amsterdam's city centre in mid-May 2024.¹⁶⁶ After these events, the sentiment that the protesters need to be heard gained the upper hand. Various universities disclosed their ties with Israeli institutions and announced the establishment of ethics committees to investigate existing and future collaborations.¹⁶⁷ Some institutions were quick to declare partial or complete boycotts of Israeli institutions, such as the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague, the Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE), and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) based in Amsterdam.¹⁶⁸

162 E.g. De oorlog in Gaza wordt ook op de universiteiten steeds sterker gevoeld – Ukrant | Interview met rector Hester Bijl: "Voor antisemitisme is hier geen plaats" – Leiden University | Verklaring college van bestuur over academische vrijheid en veiligheid – Radboud University Nijmegen

163 Onveilige ruimtes. De opgang van antisemitisme in de Nederlandse academische wereld. Bevindingen van een studie naar de ervaringen van Joodse en Israëlische studenten en medewerkers tijdens de protesten na 7 oktober – Eliyahu Sapir and Amanda Kluveland

164 Een mailinglijst voor Joden aan UvA bij dreigende demonstraties – Folia

165 E.g. Een lezing over de Holocaust is geen politiek statement – NRC | De Holocaust-lezingen die na kritiek werden uitgesteld, en toen toch niet – *de Volkskrant*

166 Reconstructie: hoe de UvA anderhalve week lang maar geen grip kreeg op het Gazaprotest – *Het Parool*

167 E.g. Adjusted statement Executive Board and deans – Utrecht University | Our ties with Israeli universities – Leiden University | Our collaborations with Israeli organisations – University of Amsterdam

168 KABK stopt samenwerking met Israëlische kunstacademie na aandringen studenten – NRC | "Banden met scholen in Israël voorlopig verbroken door Design Academy – Omroep Brabant | NIAS and Equal Rights for all Scholars: Standing up for academic freedoms for all scholars – NIAS

In June 2024, the chancellors of Tilburg University, Leiden University, the University of Amsterdam, the Open University, Wageningen University & Research, the University of Groningen, Eindhoven University of Technology, Radboud University Nijmegen, Utrecht University, the University of Humanistic Studies Utrecht, Maastricht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Twente, Delft University of Technology, and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam stated that they would not sever ties with Israeli universities, emphasizing the importance of academic freedom.¹⁶⁹ In early July, Wageningen University & Research issued a statement that after extensive deliberation and dialogues with different stakeholders, they decided to not give in to the demands for a boycott.¹⁷⁰ However, in the second half of 2024, influenced by the ongoing war in Gaza, the war in Lebanon, extensive dialogue sessions with protesters, and Maya Wind's book *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom*, it became clear that university boards, for example those of Erasmus University Rotterdam and Tilburg University, are increasingly advised and/or considering freezing, halting, or preventing collaborations with individual Israeli universities.¹⁷¹

6 Reaction from authorities

Certain politicians, mainly from right-wing parties, have been very vocal in their condemnation of antisemitism on Dutch university campuses on social media, particularly in the context of the demonstrations and squatting actions. These actions have led to debates within the House of Representatives, in which a majority voted for criminalization of the slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" after the demonstrations at universities in May 2024.¹⁷² Then Prime Minister Mark Rutte issued a statement during the demonstrations in Amsterdam, warning against equating Dutch Jews and the Israeli government, which he described as a form of antisemitism.¹⁷³ In November 2024, the government led by Prime Minister Dick Schoof presented its Strategy to Combat Antisemitism for the period 2024–2030. The strategy includes the creation of a Taskforce on Combating Antisemitism, aimed at improving the social safety of Jews and Israelis at Dutch universities and universities of applied sciences. Moreover, the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, Eppo Bruins, emphasized the importance of filing a report when witnessing antisemitism on campus.¹⁷⁴

The mayors of various university cities have also spoken out against antisemitism in general and antisemitism on campus in particular, individually as well as in an open letter signed by the mayors of 331 municipalities throughout the Netherlands in April 2024.¹⁷⁵ Femke Halsema, the mayor of Amsterdam, has been especially articulate in combatting polarization, antisemitism, as well as other forms of racism, including on the campuses of Amsterdam's universities.¹⁷⁶

7 Reactions from the public

Public reaction to the experiences of Jewish and Israeli students and staff on campus mostly focused on the situation during anti-Israel protests. The vast majority of the academic

169 Universiteiten: "Wij willen Israëlische wetenschappers niet isoleren" – *Trouw*

170 Update 6: Protesten op de campus – Hoe nu verder? – WUR

171 E.g. Erasmus Universiteit bevestigt nieuwe Israëlische en Palestijnse samenwerkingen: "Eerst vooraf toetsen" – Erasmus Magazine | Advies: Universiteit Tilburg moet banden met Israël opschorten – *NRC*

172 Kamer wil leus "From the river to the sea" strafbaar stellen, motie aangenomen – *NU.nl*

173 Premier Rutte spreekt zich uit over studentenprotesten Amsterdam – *NRC*

174 Strategie Bestrijding Antisemitisme 2024–2030 – Overheid | Brief regering – Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal

175 Open brief burgemeesters: "Wij accepteren geen antisemitisme" – *NOS*

176 E.g. Burgemeester Halsema bezorgd om polarisatie: "Machteloosheid en verdriet groot" – *NOS* | Burgemeester Femke Halsema blijft in debat over demonstraties het politieoptreden steunen: "Ik sta voor de operatie die daar is uitgevoerd" – *Het Parool* | Halsema: "Het antisemitismeverwijt wordt nu ook gebruikt door politici die niet terugdeinzen voor andere vormen van racisme" – *de Volkskrant*

community in the Netherlands does not publicly comment on either the supposed stance of universities regarding the war in Gaza or antisemitism on university campuses. However, a vocal minority demands that university boards condemn Israel's actions against Palestinians and severs all ties with Israeli institutions.¹⁷⁷ Among them are also Jewish students and academics.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, Jewish as well as non-Jewish academics have issued criticism about an academic boycott.¹⁷⁹ A survey among the general public by Dutch broadcast *EenVandaag* during the large-scale campus demonstrations in May 2024 showed that 83% of the respondents disapproved of the methods of the protesters, while 63% also condemned the demands for an academic boycott.¹⁸⁰ An investigation by market research firm Ipsos I&O conducted in the same month showed similar results, and also revealed that right-wing voters were more likely to condemn the protests than left-wing voters.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, these surveys highlight generational differences within Dutch society with regarding Israel/Palestine, with younger generations more inclined to support the Palestinian people.

The students (and staff) demanding an academic boycott of Israel have repeatedly stated that they protest against Zionism as a political ideology and that they reject antisemitism. Jewish public figures inside and outside academia, have also stressed the danger of dismissing the protesters as antisemites.¹⁸² The NCAB, however, has warned that on university campuses "We cannot turn a blind eye to antisemitism that is disguised as criticism of Israel."¹⁸³ The chair of the Centraal Joods Overleg (CJO), an umbrella organization for several major Jewish organizations in the Netherlands, has even stated that "Our universities are hotbeds of antisemitism."¹⁸⁴ Although the war in Gaza has caused harsh divides within departments, research groups, and at faculty level throughout the Netherlands, in the public arena, Dutch academia has sought to maintain dialogue, particularly after the violent events of November 2024 in Amsterdam surrounding the football match Ajax/Maccabi Tel Aviv. This is exemplified by a controversy involving the (Jewish) president of the Dutch Research Council (NWO), who accused a Leiden University scholar with a Moroccan background of downplaying the severity of antisemitism.¹⁸⁵ After public outcry, the two gave a joint interview to the press in which they attempted to reconcile their positions of antisemitism and Islamophobia.¹⁸⁶

177 E.g. DSP Statement: Palestine. A letter of solidarity; a call for action – Dutch Scholars for Palestine | Honderden UvA'ers ontevreden over opstelling UvA rondom Gaza – Folia | Open letter TU Delft | De ondraaglijke lichtheid van UvA's neutraliteit – Folia | KNAW: Steun Palestina | Opinie: Anders dan de rectoren betogen, zijn er zeker morele grenzen te stellen aan de academische vrijheid – *de Volkskrant* | "Universiteiten durven echt debat over de situatie in Gaza niet aan" – *Trouw* | Het programma van de UvA-stakingsdagen: doe mee! – FNV | UvA-docent Martijn Dekker was intensief betrokken bij de pro-Palestijnse demonstraties: "Door in actie te komen, blijf ik zelf overeind" – *Het Parool*

178 E.g. Joodse academici en studenten: "Universiteiten moeten stelling nemen tegen Israël" – *NRC* | Als het over Gaza gaat, is de universiteitsbestuurder ineens niet meer zo sociaal rechtvaardig – *NRC* | Opinie: Universiteiten, kom tot dialoog met studenten en trap niet in het frame van antisemitisme – *de Volkskrant* | Opinie: "De keuze om met Israëlische partners samen te werken ligt wel degelijk bij universiteiten zelf" – *Het Parool*

179 E.g. Opinie: Boycot van Israëlische universiteiten belemmert de vrede – *Trouw* | Gaza aan de Boelelaan – *De Groene Amsterdammer* | Opiniestuk van bijna 50 Joodse medewerkers universiteiten: "Als je samenwerkingen met Israël evalueert, doe dat dan overal" – *Het Parool* | Waarom de protesten voor Palestina en niet voor de slachtoffers in Jemen, Soedan of Congo? – Folia | Student Zep is voor verbreken UvA-band met Israël, hoogleraar Jan wil ze behouden: "Meewerken aan genocide, zeg jij?" – *Het Parool* | "College van Bestuur moet rapport Adviescommissie Samenwerkingsverbanden naast zich neerleggen" – *Univers*

180 Meerderheid keurt doel en manier van protesteren door studenten af: "Dit soort mensen is gewoon tuig" – *EenVandaag*

181 Weinig steun voor studentenprotesten – *IPSOS I&O*

182 E.g. Opinie: Universiteiten in Israël zijn juist dé plekken waar Israëliërs en Palestijnen elkaar ontmoeten en samenwerken – *de Volkskrant* | Elk weldenkend mens is moedeloos en wanhopig over de gruwelijke situatie in Gaza – *Het Parool* | Emile Schrijver over UvA-protesten: "Open discussie is veel vruchtbaarder dan deze onverzoenlijke opstelling" – *Het Parool*

183 NCAB waakzaam voor antisemitisme bij start nieuw academisch jaar – *NCAB*

184 CJO: Strategieplan kabinet goed uitgangspunt in bestrijding antisemitisme – *CJO*

185 Antisemitisme, je ziet het pas als je het doorhebt – *Het Parool*

186 Nadia Bouras en Marcel Levi voeren pittig gesprek: "Antisemitisme bestrijd je niet met racisme" – *de Volkskrant*

SPAIN

WRITTEN BY LINN VERTEIN

1 Overview of national environment

Spain is one of three European countries that have recognized a Palestinian state amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. The country has stood out among EU member states through the harsh rhetoric towards Israel by many of its political leaders. Several government members have made defamatory and one-sided comments about Israel, leading to diplomatic turmoil between Spain and Israel. On May 22, 2024, Spain's Second Deputy Prime Minister, Yolanda Díaz, from the government's junior partner, *Sumar*, commented on the official recognition of the Palestinian State, saying that this was just one step towards a bigger goal: "From the river to the sea – Palestine will be free",¹⁸⁷ invoking the eliminatory slogan that calls for the extinction of the Jewish state.¹⁸⁸

This incident was followed by Defence Minister Margarita Robles of the ruling Social Democrat Party (PSOE), who called Israel's military actions in the Gaza Strip an "authentic genocide".¹⁸⁹

In Spain, parties involved in the government as part of Sumar (including Podemos, which left the government in December 2023), can be linked directly to the anti-Israel protests. These parties traditionally maintain close ties with organizations like the PFLP-linked Samidoun and the Israel Boycott Organization, BDS. One prominent example for these connections is Jaldía Abubakra, founder of Samidoun Spain and terror-propagandist group Masar Badil, who was a candidate for Izquierda Unida in the 2015 Madrid Senate elections and for Unidos Podemos in 2016.¹⁹⁰ The consequences of the close ties between political parties and the most extreme elements of the protests against Israel are reflected in the fact that many of the protesters' demands were met by government officials, congressional delegates, local politicians and leading figures in academic institutions.



"Access denied to Zionists," Zionists dehumanized as dogs

2 Main organizing groups

Inspired by the encampments at Columbia University in April 2024, Spanish students also began camping at their universities. Encampments in Spain took place at the University of Valencia (UV) on April 29, followed by encampments at universities in Barcelona, Navarra,

187 The Spanish "Desde el río hasta el mar, Palestina vencerá" actually translates to "From the river to the sea Palestine will overcome"

188 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdJwQc1qwtS&ab_channel=ELPA%C3%8DS

189 <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20240525/robles-reconocimiento-estado-palestino-apuesta-por-paz-no-va-contra-israel/16119357.shtml>

190 <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2016/05/25/pdfs/BOE-A-2016-4970.pdf>, https://elpais.com/politica/2015/12/11/actualidad/1449789866_697389.html

and the Basque Country. By mid-May, 21 campus encampments were counted, with the ones at the Complutense University of Madrid, the University of Salamanca and the University of Barcelona (UB) attracting the most participants.¹⁹¹

The initiative for the encampment at UV came from BDS País Valencià.¹⁹² The Spokesperson for the encampment was BDS activist and political science student Esther Monge Hernández.¹⁹³ In their manifesto, the activists called “for an end to the genocide that is perpetrated by the colonizer state of Israel in Gaza” and urged UV to end all cooperation with Israeli institutions and companies. They also demanded the Spanish government cease military trade with Israel, join the South African trial against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and to call for “the liberation of all people imprisoned for ethnic or political motives by the State of Israel”.¹⁹⁴

The groups connected to the encampments only differed slightly, according to the local political landscape. This was also reflected in the similarities between the encampment’s political outputs, as well as in the design of their social media content and the speakers they invited to events, with local BDS groups being often involved.¹⁹⁵

At the University of Granada (UGR), students camped under the slogan “From the UGR to Gaza, Student Intifada”, including Al-Yurdur member Bethlehem Habboob.¹⁹⁶ The Palestinian youth movement Al-Yurdur occupies the extremist end of Palestinian activism. On October 7, 2023, Al-Yurdur’s Instagram featured a picture of Palestinians on a tank, stating “Long live the Palestinian resistance! The armed struggle is the right of every people oppressed by colonial yoke and foreign rule.”¹⁹⁷ UGR protesters held a Muslim prayer,¹⁹⁸ and on May 8, they engaged in a performance during which they taped their mouths with stickers of the flags of Israel and the United States and displayed their hands covered in red paint.¹⁹⁹ This can be interpreted as a reference to the Ramallah lynching of two Israeli Jews.²⁰⁰

In Madrid, where the most active networker of Palestinian extremism, Jaldía Abubakra, is based, the connection of Samidoun to the encampment is obvious. More than 500 people participated in the encampment of Madrid’s Complutense University, which featured a huge banner saying, “Zionists out of the University”. The same banner was used on February 8, 2023, during a Samidoun-led protest with Abubakra against the presence of Israeli ambassador Rodica Radian-Gordon at Complutense.²⁰¹

The students declared themselves part of an international solidarity movement “against the genocide in Gaza and against Israeli colonialism”,²⁰² demanding that Spain cut diplomatic ties with Israel. The assembly ended with chants of “From the river to the sea – Palestine will be free”.²⁰³ During the encampment’s first week, self-organized lectures featured Walid

191 <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20240520/mapa-acampadas-propalestinas-universidades-espanolas/16110567.shtml>

192 <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/bds-israel/estudiantes-organizaciones-pro-palestinas-acampan-universidad-valencia>

193 <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/bds-israel/estudiantes-organizaciones-pro-palestinas-acampan-universidad-valencia>

194 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EkKN5qabrcQV_zBdBOqRq-wd8KAMJhYH/view?pli=1

195 https://www.instagram.com/p/C6pAhWELo5q/?img_index=1

196 https://www.instagram.com/p/C6oM7w8qYSD/?img_index=1

197 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyGEdPXq9xD/>

198 <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17940117449819640/>

199 <https://efe.com/comunidad-valenciana/2024-05-08/estudiantes-de-la-universidad-de-alicante-arrancan-una-acampada-por-gaza/>

200 <https://efe.com/comunidad-valenciana/2024-05-08/estudiantes-de-la-universidad-de-alicante-arrancan-una-acampada-por-gaza/>

201 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CoZQkw9qH64/>

202 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tJhRus44Eo&t=302s

203 <https://www.europapress.es/sociedad/noticia-200-estudiantes-universidades-madrilenas-inician-acampada-indefinida-exigir-fin-conflicto-gaza-20240507135812.html>

Saleh on “Falsities and manipulation from the Zionist state” and historical revisionist Najib Abu Warda²⁰⁴ on the “History and actuality of the conflict”, who published the essay “From the Nazi to the Zionist Holocaust” in 2014.²⁰⁵

On May 23, a “Day of fight for Palestine” took place, featuring Abubakra and Míriam Ojeda, affiliated with Samidoun.²⁰⁶ Both publicly justified Hamas massacres of October 7. Ojeda later thanked Hamas for the October 7 attack when invited, together with Abubakra, by Podemos to speak at the Congress of Deputies on October 29, 2024: “We have to thank them for putting the Palestinian question at the center, for leaving the two-state framework.”²⁰⁷

The University of Barcelona encampment differed slightly, reflecting the city’s role as centre of an explicit Catalan boycott movement against Israel under the banner of the *Prou Complicitat amb Israel* (“Against complicity with Israel”). Prou Complicitat includes Catalan BDS groups, the Palestinian and Lebanese communities of Catalonia, the Lebanese Community of Catalonia, leftist anti-imperialist and anti-war groups, as well as Palestinian extremist groups like *Unadikum* and *Rumbo por Gaza*.

An encampment at the University of the Balears began in Palma de Mallorca as late as May 16, organized by the new anti-imperialist group called *Ciudadants per Palestina* (“Citizens for Palestine”), which opened an X account in October 2023. The group had already sparked controversy with an April event at the Faculty of Education titled “How to combat Zionist propaganda” during which the Holocaust was distorted, and Hamas was described as an “anticolonial resistance” group.²⁰⁸

3 Antisemitic incidents on campus

That these different political formations have been part of the same political struggle—even before the encampments—is exemplified by a conference held at the University of Alicante on March 1 and 2, 2024. The event, titled “The Nakba continues. Context, Zionism and Resistance in Palestine” was organized by the local BDS group and advertised on the university’s website. Invited speakers included Professor Jorge Ramos (BDS Valencia), Abubakra (Masar Badil), Liliana Córdova (Samidoun) and Habboob (Al-Yurdur).²⁰⁹

Weeks before the Madrid encampment, the Faculty of Political Science at Complutense passed a declaration calling for the suspension of the university’s account with Banco Santander “for funding the fossil fuel industry and the arms industry involved in the genocide in Gaza”.²¹⁰ This illustrates how established BDS and its agenda for an academic boycott against Israel had already become.

As soon as October 26, 2023, Spanish student unions called for a nationwide strike against “the genocidal state of Israel”²¹¹ and for an “end of the genocide in Gaza”²¹² in universities and schools. Several universities saw antisemitic graffiti in the following months. At the

204 <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4562/spanish-antisemitism>

205 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6t1HVkoDgb/?hl=de>

206 https://www.instagram.com/p/C7R2_E2KGsU/?hl=de

207 https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2024-10-16/audiencia-nacional-cita-activistas-acusadas-enaltecer-hamas-congreso_3983911/

208 <https://observatorioantisemitismo.fcje.org/acto-de-apoyo-a-hamas-en-la-universidad-publica-de-las-islas-baleares/>

209 <https://web.ua.es/zh/sedealicante/boletin-semanal/2023-2024/boletin-quincenal-del-26-de-febrero-al-9-de-marzo-de-2024.html>

210 <https://politicasysociologia.ucm.es/noticias/declaracion-sobre-el-banco-santander>

211 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyyRhQbMWHw/>

212 <https://www.sindicatodeestudiantes.net/index.php/noticias/movimiento-estudiantil/26-de-octubre-huelga-estudiantil-solidaridad-con-el-pueblo-palestino-alto-al-genocidio-en-gaza>

University of Barcelona, the *Comité Estudiantil en Solidaritat amb el Poble Palestí* (Students Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian People) was formed on October 17, 2023, and organized various protest activities, often in cooperation with Prou Complicitat.

Across Spain, general demonstrations against Israel were held right after the Hamas massacre in southern Israel on October 7, 2023. Several thousand people followed the call of Samidoun, Unadikum, Al-Yurdur and Masar Badil to “Protest against Israeli Colonialism” on the streets of Madrid.²¹³ On October 21, 2023, about 19,000 people in Barcelona followed the call of the Prou Complicitat to “Stop the genocide in Palestine”. Protesters at the Barcelona rally held signs that read “Stop the Holocaust in Gaza”. “Zionist state, terrorist state” or “Who would have thought that the descendants of the holocaust (sic) would provoke a genocide”.

A minute of silence for Palestinian “martyrs” was held, and queer activist Nour Torrelló of Comunitat Palestina de Catalunya read the manifesto calling for direct action against “the economic interests of the Israeli regime.”²¹⁴ Just hours before the protest, about 50 to 100 people invaded the Israeli-owned Hotel Cortes in Santa Anna street. The group belonged to an anti-gentrification group called Sindicat de Llogateres, consisting of students and university academics with close ties to BDS. They climbed the balconies and replaced the international flags on the facade with Palestinian flags. These protests were often attended by politicians of Sumar and Podemos, as well as students and student organizations.

4 Reactions from universities

The student encampments received significant support from professors. Some even organized nationally within the *Red Universitaria por Palestina* (RUxP) (Academic Network for Palestine) and hosted events, such as screening UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese’s talk “The University in the face of a genocide” at about 40 universities. Albanese has a track-record of antisemitic statements and inflammatory anti-Zionist positions. At the University of Zaragoza, RUxP hosted a discussion titled “Understand Colonialism Today”, featuring Daniel Lobato (affiliated with Samidoun) and Saad Youssef from Al-Yurdur and Samidoun, who also took part in the Encampment at Complutense. Professors, themselves sometimes affiliated with BDS, such as Jorge Ramos Tolosa, Professor of Contemporary History, actively participated in the encampment at UV.

At Complutense, Victor Alonso Rocafort, Vice Dean of the Political Science faculty, and other staff attended the encampment in support of the students and delivered lectures on-site. Media department teachers provided workshops on organizing press conferences.²¹⁵ Complutense’s president also received a statement from professors demanding an official condemnation of the Israeli military actions, an immediate ceasefire, and the suspension of collaborations with Israeli universities and companies “that give direct support to the genocide in Gaza”.

Notably, all the student encampments were established with university permission and often with outspoken support from university heads. The University of Barcelona welcomed its encampment with a statement: “The encampment proves, once again, that the university

²¹³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyGEdPXq9xD/>

²¹⁴ <https://elpais.com/espana/catalunya/2023-10-21/miles-de-personas-se-manifiestan-en-barcelona-contra-la-ofensiva-de-israel-en-gaza.html>

²¹⁵ <https://elpais.com/espana/madrid/2024-05-08/frio-guitarras-cartas-y-pasta-en-la-primera-noche-de-la-acampada-por-palestina-en-la-complutense-de-madrid.html>

community is active, critical and committed.” Joan Guàrdia, rector of the UB stated in addition: “I am deeply moved by the disproportionate military response in recent months, and also by the punishment to which civil society is being subjected through actions such as the blocking of humanitarian aid”.²¹⁶ Early on, the Conference of University Rectors (CRUE) issued a joint statement, promising to “review and, if necessary, suspend collaboration agreements with Israeli universities and research centres that have not expressed a firm commitment to peace and compliance with international humanitarian law.”²¹⁷

Considering that the groups organizing large demonstrations were also involved in the university encampments, it followed that when most encampments announced their dissolution at the end of May and early June, the students declared their intention to continue their protests “on the streets”, contributing to the “broader internationalist, pro-Palestine movement.”²¹⁸

The dissolutions were not imposed by universities or public authorities, but presented as a tactical shift by the students themselves, who either achieved their goals or gave up in resignation. On May 17, 2024 protesters officially ended their encampment at the University of Valencia, admitting that the upcoming exams had influenced their decision to stop camping, as did the refusal of the University to cease cooperating with Israeli institutions.²¹⁹ In Granada, the campus encampment ended on May 20, three days after the university’s rectorate unanimously voted to cancel all ties to Israeli institutions. University of Barcelona’s encampment ended on May 23, after the University decided to take similar measures.²²⁰

5 Reaction from authorities

The encampments received support from several government officials and local politicians. María Teresa Pérez, Podemos Coordinator in Valencia, praised the encampment at UV on X, stating she was “proud” of the “youth of Valencia that show their Solidarity with the Palestinian people with the encampment at the University”.²²¹ Vice Prime Minister Díaz shared a picture of the UV encampment on X, writing: “Every day that passes without us recognizing the Palestinian state and breaking relations with Israel is one day less for Palestine. Student encampments around the world show us the way.”²²² On May 7, Diana Morant, Minister of Science, Innovation and Universities, stated that she was “proud” of the “country’s critically thinking university students” and highlighted that the students’ demands fully aligned with government policies.²²³

In contrast, Madrid’s mayor, José Luis Martínez-Almeida, from the conservative Partido Popular (PP) criticized the protests, saying he “would like them to be at least as firm in their condemnation of Hamas as they are in their condemnation of Israel”.²²⁴ His fellow party

216 <https://www.lavanguardia.com/sociedad/20240506/9617730/ub-permite-acampada-estudiantes-palestina-afirma-esta-comprometida-ep-agenciaslv20240506.html>

217 <https://www.crue.org/2024/05/comunicado-de-crue-sobre-la-situacion-en-la-franja-de-gaza/>

218 https://www.instagram.com/p/C76n4Z1KdFE/?img_index=1

219 <https://elpais.com/espana/comunidad-valenciana/2024-05-17/los-estudiantes-valencianos-propalestinos-levantan-la-acampada-la-primera-en-espana-tras-19-dias.html>

220 <https://elpais.com/espana/comunidad-valenciana/2024-05-17/los-estudiantes-valencianos-propalestinos-levantan-la-acampada-la-primera-en-espana-tras-19-dias.html>

221 https://x.com/m_tere_perez/status/1785054126969176264

222 https://x.com/Yolanda_Diaz_/status/1787834390375956874

223 <https://www.europapress.es/sociedad/educacion-00468/noticia-ministra-morant-orgullosa-universitarios-manifiestan-palestina-tienen-pensamiento-critico-20240507141019.html>

224 <https://elpais.com/espana/madrid/2024-05-08/frio-guitarras-cartas-y-pasta-en-la-primera-noche-de-la-acampada-por-palestina-en-la-complutense-de-madrid.html>



Banner calling for the destruction of the State of Israel, displayed at demonstration in Madrid

member and President of the Community of Madrid, Isabel Ayuso Díaz, urged rectors to “keep politics out of the classrooms”.²²⁵

On May 28, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) effectively recognized a Palestinian State, complying with a demand that the *Sumar* had initially posed as a condition to participate as Junior partner in yet another PSOE-led government, following the general elections in July 2023. Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares (PSOE) announced on June 6, 2024, that Spain would join South Africa’s ICJ case against Israel, thereby complying with another major demand of the students. In October 2024, Sánchez called on European countries to suspend arms trades with Israel on several occasions. The Spanish Government declared that it had halted new arms deals with Israel since October 7, 2023. By mid-October 2024, Spain formally requested that the European Commission suspend its association agreement with Israel. On October 29, Spain cancelled a purchase contract of police ammunition from Israel.

²²⁵ <https://elpais.com/espana/madrid/2024-05-07/ayuso-presiona-para-que-se-prohiba-un-campamento-propalestina-en-madrid-y-moreno-se-muestra-respetuoso-en-andalucia.html>

SWEDEN

WRITTEN BY DANIEL JANOUCH

1 Overview of national environment

Although flyers, posters, walkouts, sit-ins, and several other initiatives in solidarity with Palestine or against Israel began appearing at various Swedish universities shortly after October 7, 2023, it took a long time before Swedish universities experienced their own encampments. Despite the phenomenon emerging in the U.S. in early spring and subsequently inspiring similar setups at several universities around Europe, Swedish universities only joined the global protest movement on May 14, 2024. On this day, encampments were simultaneously established at KTH, Stockholm University, Lund University, Gothenburg University, Örebro University, and Uppsala University. Later, encampments also appeared at Linnaeus University, Karlstad University, and Umeå University. Over a month later, when many of the university encampments had been dismantled, a short-lived student-encampment was established outside the Swedish Parliament.²²⁶

Among the universities that were most heavily affected by the encampments were Lund, KTH, and Gothenburg University. At KTH and Lund University, police intervened on several occasions, resulting in arrests. This was the case during the dismantlement of the Lund encampment, or when KTH students barricaded themselves in a room, both in early June 2024. At Stockholm University, police intervention has happened sporadically. Gothenburg University hosted the only encampment that continued through both the summer and autumn, lasting just under 200 days before being dismantled between November 21 and 22.

Several other universities were targeted by extensive campaigns without hosting encampments. These activities varied but included installations, poster campaigns, and physical or digital flyer distributions across at least ten additional institutions. Among these were Konstfack (University of Arts, Crafts and Design), Karolinska University Hospital, Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg University of Arts, and HDK-Valand Academy of Art.

2 Main organizing groups

The organizers behind the demonstrations and encampments emerged only after October 7, 2023, as no pro-Palestinian groups were previously active in the university space. Initiatives formed within each university often included the city or the university name, such as “Umeå Students in Solidarity with Palestine,” “LSFP” (Lund Students for Palestine), “GU (Gothenburg University) Students for Palestine”, or “KTH for Palestine.” Later, the term “academics for/against” was also used, usually when the protesters were composed of both students and staff at universities.

However, demonstrators participating in the encampments were not exclusively students or university affiliates. Witnesses from Örebro University in May 2024 described how the encampments often doubled in size in the evenings, with families and children joining. Other testimonies by Jewish students from Stockholm University also emerged, where

²²⁶ Studentprotest om Gaza utanför Riksdagen

many people arrived by subway to “Student walk-outs” (where students left their classrooms simultaneously). Similarly, the prolonged encampment in Gothenburg saw a shift in media descriptions of participants, with the term “students” gradually being replaced by “demonstrators.”²²⁷

Many movements involved in the encampments and other campus-related actions used social media platforms to communicate their demands, needs, victories, and setbacks. For example, when the Lund University encampment, which had renamed the park “Lundagård” to “Palestinagård,” was dismantled to accommodate a traditional ceremony for doctoral degrees in the area, LSFP live-reported the police intervention that resulted in approximately 40 arrests. Similarly, “KTH students for Palestine” used their social media channels to communicate what resources they were lacking, and how these could be distributed to the camp.

The European Palestinian Youth Union (EPYU) has also influenced demonstrations at Swedish universities, though to what extent is unclear. However, it is evident that several local movements have referenced statements made by the umbrella organization, especially on social media.

Greta Thunberg and her movement “Fridays for Future” have also played a role in demonstrations and encampments on campuses, which will be addressed further in SECTION 7. REACTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC.

3 Antisemitic incidents on campus

Various disturbances related to campaigns and encampments have been reported. In Lund, for instance, demonstrators stormed a political meeting between the municipal executive committee and student representatives on May 23, 2024. They claimed they had exhausted official channels to raise their concerns, prompting their disruptive actions.²²⁸ Similarly, a room in KTH was occupied by students who claimed prior actions had not yielded results. Several students were arrested in both cases.²²⁹

Traditional antisemitic expressions have been less common in connection with these demonstrations, but have appeared occasionally. However, modern antisemitism, especially rhetoric tied to the events of October 7, 2023 and the war in Gaza, has recurred in various forms. In May 2024, Professor Anders Persson of Linnaeus University collaborated with the Segerstedt Institute at Gothenburg University on a study titled *Antisemitism, Gray Area or Legitimate Criticism of Israel?*. The study, part of a broader series, concluded that antisemitic expressions in Sweden have undergone “Israelification,” with Israel replacing “The Jew” as a historical scapegoat.²³⁰ Consequently, the study suggested that much of the vocal critique of Israel on campuses since October 7, 2023, had crossed a line and is, by many, considered antisemitic. Shortly after the study’s publication, Professor Persson’s office at Linnaeus University was vandalized with what can be viewed as traditional antisemitic expressions, which Persson himself described as an antisemitic attack against a non-Jewish researcher.²³¹

227 Polisen avhyser demonstranter i Göteborg

228 40-tal demonstranter trängde sig in i AF-borgen

229 Personer har barrikaderat sig på KTH

230 Antisemitism, Gråzon eller legitim kritik av Israel?

231 Kontor vandaliserat – Fick Hitler-mustasch

Common terms and slogans at Swedish universities include calls for “Intifada” and “Student Intifada,” portrayals of Israel as a colonial power, “From the River to the Sea,” and accusations of genocide. The Swedish Jewish Youth Union (JUS) has monitored the situation closely, and has reported several antisemitic incidents involving both students and faculty, mainly in dialogue with respective universities. In one case, a Jewish student at Stockholm University reported hearing demonstrators chant for a “Jew-Intifada” (“Jude-Intifada”), prompting JUS to file a police report.

4 Impact on Jewish students

Jewish students have overall conveyed a growing sense of fear to JUS, causing the union to on several occasions reach out to universities, student unions and the affected students to offer support.

5 Reactions from universities

Swedish universities responded relatively swiftly after the encampments appeared, allowing demonstrations that were in line with the strong freedom of speech focus that Sweden promotes, but refusing to meet demonstrators’ demands. University leaders emphasized academic freedom and freedom of speech while making it clear that they would not accede to the protests’ goals.²³² Despite this, some university administrations met with pro-Palestinian representatives to demonstrate their commitment to dialogue and their interest in student activism.²³³

On May 21, 2024, the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) issued a position statement clarifying that universities neither have the mandate nor the objective to address foreign political affairs. SUHF emphasized that demonstrations must comply with Swedish law and condemned the harassment of students or faculty.²³⁴ SUHF’s statement positioned all Swedish universities clearly on the matter, which helps explain why most of the student encampments disappeared in less than a month after their establishment.

Swedish universities, being state institutions directly linked to the Swedish government, likely acted directly under guidance from the Ministry of Education. By contrast, neighbouring Finland took a different approach. In



Protest in Sweden calls for Intifada and displays the red triangle used by Hamas to signal its targets

232 Tältläger i Lundagård

233 Universitetens roll

234 SUHF

May 2024, Helsinki University reassessed its collaboration with Israeli universities, ultimately suspending all exchange agreements.

Although universities managed the encampments decisively, less organized campaigns have since October 7, 2023, often remained on campuses with little intervention from the universities. On the anniversary of October 7, several campus initiatives disrupted Jewish students' sense of safety and the overall study environment, notably through marches and demonstrations at Stockholm University and Lund University.²³⁵ When JUS reached out to respective universities and called for clearer positioning, several universities responded by informing the Union that racism and harassment in any form would never be accepted. However, in most cases, further measures to secure Jewish students were not taken.

6 Reaction from authorities

Given that Swedish universities are state-funded, the encampments prompted a quick response from the former Minister of Education, Mats Persson. Persson expressed support for Jewish students during a meeting with the Jewish Central Council (JC) and JUS, emphasizing Sweden's intent to avoid repeating the perceived missteps made by universities in Europe and the U.S.²³⁶

In a May 30 article, Persson publicly condemned the protests, stating that while peaceful demonstrations were acceptable, threats and vandalism had crossed a line.²³⁷ Furthermore, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Ebba Busch also condemned the remaining encampment outside Gothenburg University in early September 2024, highlighting Gothenburg's struggles with antisemitism and drawing parallels to Malmö's challenges with similar issues.²³⁸

As mentioned earlier, police have played a pivotal role in breaking up encampments and demonstrations that disrupted order at universities.

7 Reactions from the public

Student unions at various universities have taken positions on the protests. For instance, Stockholm's Student Union (SUS) passed a motion in autumn 2024 calling for an academic boycott of Israel. The president of Gothenburg's student union resigned in November 2023 after comparing Israel to Nazi Germany.²³⁹

Professors and staff have occasionally contributed articles on the subject of academic boycotts, as seen at Uppsala University in late November 2024.²⁴⁰ The university principal responded by stating that academic boycotts were not a suitable method for achieving political aims, and that the university would not proceed with any academic boycott.²⁴¹

Notably, Greta Thunberg, a Stockholm University student and the founder of Fridays for Future, joined the encampment on its first day, May 14, drawing significant media attention.

²³⁵ Stockholms universitet – 7-10 manifestation mot gazakriget ; Lund students for Palestine

²³⁶ Mats Persson möte med JUS och JC

²³⁷ Utbildningsministern: Man har passerat en gräns

²³⁸ Ebba Busch om tältlägret Göteborg: Har problem med antisemitism

²³⁹ Studentförenings ordförande avgår: Jämförde Israel med Nazytyskland

²⁴⁰ Nu måste universiteten klippa banden till Israel

²⁴¹ En bojkott riskerar att tysta debatten

Thunberg's involvement amplified the pro-Palestinian message in Sweden and abroad. Other Fridays for Future members also participated in demonstrations, such as a protest at KTH during a panel discussion featuring Vice Prime Minister Busch. The protest was interrupted by police, resulting in arrests, including Thunberg's.²⁴² In September 2024, Thunberg participated in a sit-in at Stockholm University's main library, which was similarly manned by police.²⁴³

²⁴² Därför greps Greta vid Ebba Busch möte

²⁴³ Greta Thunberg bortförd av polis på Stockholms universitet

UNITED KINGDOM

WRITTEN BY ETHAN LIERENS

1 Overview of national environment including at main affected universities

Since October 7, 2023, the Community Security Trust (CST) has recorded an unprecedented increase of antisemitic incidents occurring at universities across the country during the academic year 2023/24, with 53 university related incidents occurring in the academic year 2022/23 and 272 occurring in the academic year 2023/24, which amounts to an increase of 413%. Despite the consistently higher rates of university-related antisemitism through the majority of the academic year, CST recorded the largest spike of incidents in the immediate aftermath of October 7, reflecting the larger national trend. In October 2023, CST recorded 85 incidents, which is the highest monthly figure for university-related incidents ever recorded by CST.

The 272 incidents recorded by CST throughout the academic year 2023/24 took place across 33 cities. The 10 cities with 5 or more recorded incidents during this period were: London (90), Leeds (27), Manchester (18), Birmingham (16), Nottingham (13), Cambridge (11), Oxford (9), Bristol (9), Coventry (9), and Exeter (7). This data must be viewed in the context of the number of Jewish students studying in each city. With the exception of Coventry, Cambridge and Oxford, the cities with 9 or more incidents, which include London, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham, are locations with large Jewish student populations, and therefore follow the national trend in which more incidents are reported in locations with larger Jewish populations.

CST recorded nine university-related incidents of assault in the academic year 2023/24, two in Cambridge and one each in Belfast, St Andrews, Exeter, Birmingham, Middlesex, Wandsworth and Hertfordshire each. In comparison CST recorded one instance of assault in the academic year 2022/23 in Leeds.

CST recorded 17 instances of Damage and Desecration in the academic year 2023/24, occurring in Nottingham, Birmingham, Leeds, Kent, Norwich, London, Sussex, Oxford, Sheffield, Brighton, and Canterbury. In comparison, CST recorded 4 instances in the academic year 2022/23, occurring in: Leeds, Nottingham, Liverpool and Sheffield.

CST recorded 23 incidents under this category in the academic year 2023/24, 15 of which occurred online and 8 occurred offline; and 3 incidents in the academic year 2022/23, 2 offline and 1 online.

CST recorded 221 abusive behaviour incidents in the academic year 2023/24, with 46 incidents being recorded just in the first 2 weeks following October 7th. In comparison, CST recorded 43 in the whole academic year 2022/23. This total of 264 abusive behaviour incidents for the past two academic years makes up 81% of the total number of recorded incidents over the period covered by this report.

CST recorded two incidents in this category in the academic year 2023/24 and two in the

academic year 2022/2023, totalling four university-related incidents of antisemitic literature during the past two academic years.

In the academic year 2023/24, CST recorded a total of 138 university-related online antisemitic incidents. In the academic year 2022/23, CST recorded a total of 14 online incidents, bringing the total number of online incidents over the past two academic years to 152, or 47% of the overall incident total across both years. The jump from 14 online incidents in 2022/23 to 138 in 2023/24 is an increase of 886% across the two academic years. 35 online incidents took place in the first two weeks following the October 7 attacks, when there was a national surge in anti-Jewish hate crime and hate incidents inspired by antisemitic responses in the UK to the Hamas terror attack in Israel. This accounts for 23% of all university-related online incidents over the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24.

In the academic year 2023/24, CST recorded a total of 103 offline incidents that occurred on campus or university property. CST recorded a total of 27 offline, on-campus incidents in the academic year 2022/23, bringing the total for the two academic years to 130 offline on-campus incidents.

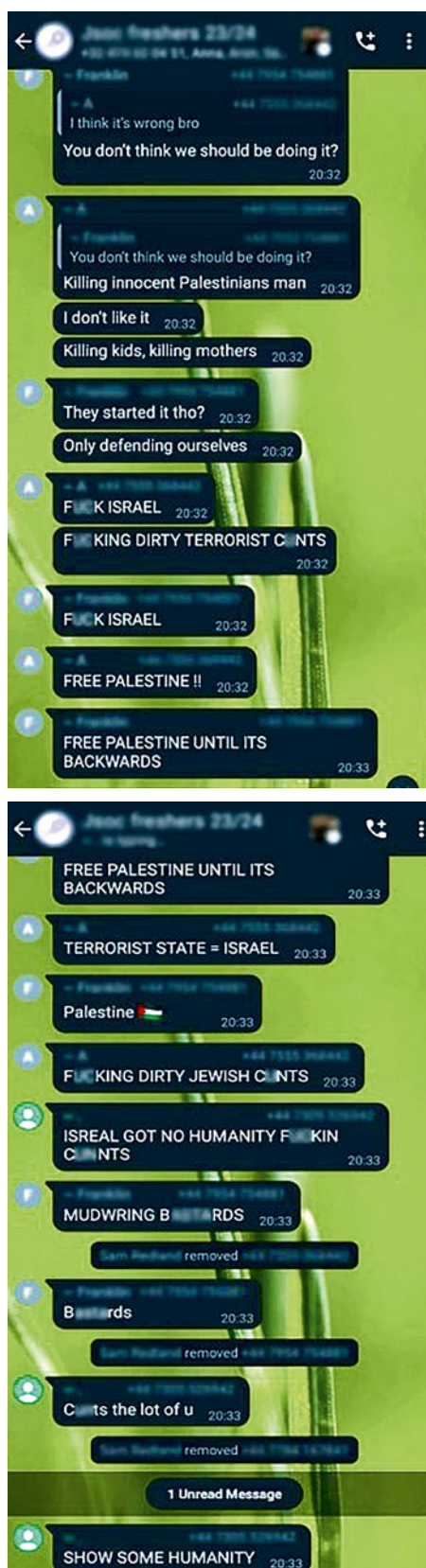
CST recorded 31 off-campus university-related antisemitic incidents in the academic year 2023/24, and 12 in the academic year 2022/23. This brings the total for the two academic years to 43 off-campus incidents.

2 Main organizing groups

The vast majority of categorically antisemitic incidents post-October 7 were perpetrated on an individual basis, however, various pre-established pro-Palestinian student activist groups (affiliated with their respective University student unions) quickly mobilised to demonstrate both implicit and explicit support for the attacks as well as the terror groups involved. In one instance, the President of a university *Friends of Palestine* society stated that “we are full of pride and joy for what has happened”. As well as demonstrating support for “resistance” and explicitly rejecting Zionism, several pro-Palestinian societies also began engaging in and promoting explicitly antisemitic rhetoric and beliefs in relation to the subsequent Israel-Gaza conflict. These included incidents involving blood libel, Holocaust inversion and allegations of conspiracy (claims October 7 was a “false flag” attack or a “psyop”).

As well as pre-established groups engaging in antisemitism and extreme anti-Zionism, numerous student encampments were also set-up following the establishment of U.S. college “Solidarity encampments” in Harvard and Columbia Universities. At its peak, 36 encampments were established across the country, made up of numerous student activist groups including socialist, communist, Palestinian and Islamic societies. In comparison to their U.S. counterparts, U.K. encampments were relatively calm and only a limited number of categorically antisemitic incidents were reported to CST regarding encampment messaging and rhetoric.

However, numerous reports were made to CST regarding concerns over radicalisation and support for terrorism at numerous encampments, due to discussions and messaging promoting the legitimacy of terrorist action in certain contexts, with Israel being viewed as an overwhelmingly acceptable target for terrorism. This was most explicitly expressed with one encampment requiring encampment members to sign a form expressing support for the “Thawabit”, which was the stated ideology of the Palestinian Liberation Organization



In October 2023 a university Jewish society Whatsapp group was joined by unknown individuals who sent a large amount of abusive and antisemitic messages.

(PLO) and includes the right to “armed resistance”. This was then adopted by a newly established group titled the Student Federation for the Liberation of Palestine (SFLP), which represents approximately 24 pro-Palestinian student groups across the UK.

3 Antisemitic incidents on campus

Case study: The 2024 National Union of Students (NUS) Conference saw hostility directed towards multiple Jewish delegates and attendees, explicit support for Hamas declared in group discussions, Holocaust inversion rhetoric and a consolidated effort on the part of delegates to propose a motion declaring the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) to be no longer representative of Jewish students in the U.K.

Over the three-day conference, delegates attended various sessions and policy workshops designed to facilitate student democracy and policy-making for the NUS. Many of the sessions offered at this conference focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and included numerous discussions about the sensitivities around the topic as well as policy-formulating discussions. It was during these sessions that Jewish delegates experienced hostile, abusive or extreme attitudes. One Jewish delegate reported that another delegate had expressed explicit support for Hamas. This was subsequently reported to NUS staff who temporarily banned the student from sessions the following day, later reversed their decision, and then banned them again due to further problematic and hostile behaviour at a different session the following day. Another Jewish delegate reported that in a session regarding problematic language to use in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a delegate disagreed that Holocaust inversion was a problem and stated: “If it’s the same, it’s the same”. UJS attendees reported this to NUS staff.

As well as two instances of swastika graffiti, there were also two reported occasions in which “Fuck Zios” (short for “Zionists”) was graffitied in the venue’s toilets. “Zio” is an insulting term that originated on the American far-right and has been adopted in more radical parts of the anti-Israel movement.

Case study: Perhaps the most telling case study illustrating the relationship between antisemitism and extreme anti-Israel rhetoric involved the Jewish Chaplain at the University of Leeds during the academic year 2023/24. This case study contains numerous university-related

incidents which CST categorised as antisemitic, including incidents of abusive behaviour, threats and damage and desecration to Jewish property. Although the direct target was the university Jewish chaplain, Jewish students were inevitably affected by the targeting of the chaplain and became the victims of antisemitic incidents themselves as it contributed towards an overall hostile environment towards the Jewish community at the University of Leeds.

Following the October 7 Hamas attack, the University of Leeds Jewish Chaplain, Rabbi Zecharia Deutsch, who has a dual Israel-British citizenship, was called up for reservist duty with the IDF as were many Israeli nationals living abroad. From Israel, he sent messages and videos of himself relaying pro-Israel messages to a chaplain WhatsApp group chat. In November 2023 these videos and messages were leaked to the Leeds Palestinian Solidarity Group (PSG) and were later shared widely on social media and publicised by numerous pro-Palestinian/anti-Israel news outlets. In response to this leak, the Leeds PSG issued a demand for his removal on social media, resulting in numerous abusive comments being directed towards the chaplain online.

In February 2023, on the arrival of the chaplain back from Israel to his position at Leeds University, several activist news outlets and prominent extremist accounts publicised and denounced his return to the university. Following these posts, numerous comments included threatening messages such as: "Find him and bring him to me [knife emoji]", "Why are people not hunting him down and 3xecuting him? [sic]" and "Bros know what to do when they see this nazi Neutralise!".

During this period the Chaplain and his wife, in one night, received approximately 400 phone calls and messages which included explicit antisemitism and graphic threats. In one call an unknown male declared: "You killed innocent Muslims, and they're going to get you. I promise you now, we're going to get you, I'm going to get you. We're going to follow you home from Leeds, you and your wife, and we're going to do the fucking same as you've been doing in Israel. Us Muslims are going to come for you, you dirty Zionist motherfucker." As a result of numerous death threats and security concerns, CST and West Yorkshire police put extensive security measures in place, including advising the chaplaincy family to temporarily stay with friends outside of Leeds.

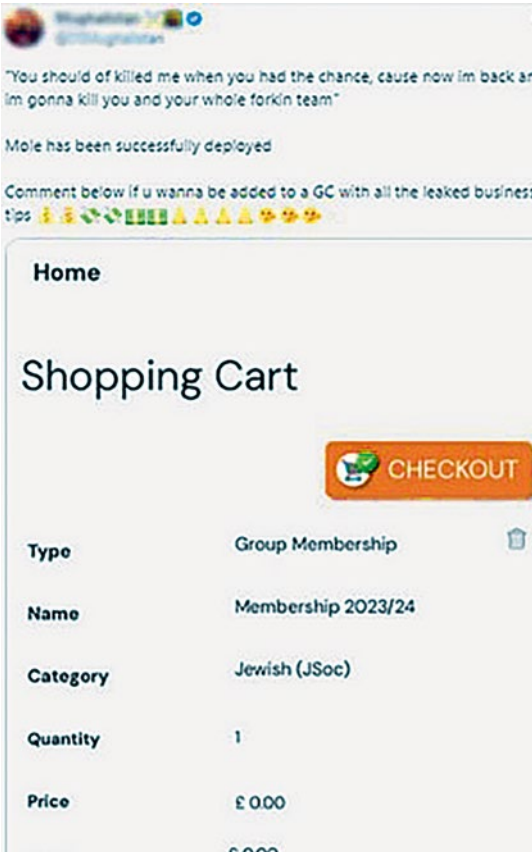
On February 9, 2023, it was reported to CST that the Leeds Hillel house (a Jewish student centre including student accommodation) had been vandalised in the early hours of the morning, with "Free Palestine" and "IDF off Campus" being graffitied onto the building. CST logged this as an incident of damage and desecration, due to activists targeting the Jewish student communal building as a protest against Israel and the chaplain.

The following day, CST received a report that a group of visibly Jewish students received death threats whilst walking to the Hillel house for Shabbat services. The incident involved a red van slowing down and the van occupants shouting: 'We're going to beat the sh*t out of you, you Jewish bastards', and then reversing back towards the students after the students had passed them.

The complexity of this case study demonstrates the interplay between open antisemitism; extreme hatred of Israel; and legitimate anti-Israel campaigning. These different types of behaviour do not always exist in neatly separate categories, but rather they can all combine to contribute towards the development of a hostile environment in which the entire Jewish student body is affected.

Case Study: In February 2024, Jewish students reported to CST that a lecturer disrupted a Jewish Society (JSoc) event regarding the persecution of Mizrachi Jews, through obstructive behaviour and continual interruptions. This included shouting over the speaker to deny several instances of anti-Jewish persecution in the Middle East prior to Israel's statehood. Upon arriving at the room the event was booked in, the president of the JSoc found that unknown individuals were already in the room and that the event's location had been leaked. She alerted security who subsequently asked for the names of the unknown individuals, who all complied barring a lecturer. This lecturer refused to provide his name twice and initially refused to provide his ID for security officers. He then asked to see the ID of the security officers and began to take a video of everyone in the room. When the Jewish Society event began, activists including this lecturer refused to leave and continuously interrupted speakers through shouting and heckling. Interruptions included the denial or revisionism of Mizrachi Jewish persecution in Iraq (Farhud pogrom) and Libya (Tripolitania pogrom). Due to the continued interruptions, security advised the event organisers to wrap up the event and move to the room next door. Following these events, despite a student complaint to the university no disciplinary action was taken against the lecturer.

Case study: On October 10, 2023, it was reported to CST that a faculty member of a university in the Midlands had posted explicitly antisemitic messages on X. His posts included "Hebrew propaganda reveals some very devious lies. The ease with which the Jew, whether ordinary or influential, describes the mutilations of war is indicative of a placid cruelty" and "Ethnic cleansing is their proven goal. Blood is their only guide, their master is the devil". On the same day he also posted a Martin Luther quote invoking blood libel stating: "The Jews have been the bloodthirsty sleuths and murderers of all Christendom for over fourteen hundred years".



X post from a student at a university in the north of England implying a death threat towards the university's Jewish Society

Case study: It was reported to CST in January 2024 via social media, that a PHD candidate shared a video on X titled "Humanity united against AshkeNAZI". The video includes extreme antisemitic conspiracy theories such as: the terror group ISIS secretly being "the Israeli secret intelligence service", claims that "the majority of Muslim terrorist leaders are actually Jewish", and that "the ADL covertly support so called American Nazi movements".

4 Impact on Jewish students

The impact on individuals affected by antisemitic abuse often varies depending on the severity and type of incident that occurred to them. For instance, an individual who is sent antisemitic content online rather than coming across it, is more likely to be emotionally affected by the incident due to the targeted nature of the abuse. Similarly, an antisemitic incident that occurs in-person is more likely to have a significant impact on an individual than an incident that occurs online due to the physical proximity to antisemitic abuse often being more intimidating.

Additionally, the type of incident is likely to affect the impact on individuals. For example, an individual that is subjected to direct threats, is likely to be much more impacted than an individual who was exposed to Holocaust distortion, due to the directly intimidatory nature of the incident. Furthermore, incidents involving the damage and desecration of Jewish property is more likely to impact the community as a whole, due to the targeting of explicitly Jewish property, often being communal buildings such as synagogues, schools, and Chabad and Hillel houses. In February 2024, it



Graffiti on the student Chabad house, an example of targeting Jewish institutions for vandalism related to the Middle East conflict

was reported to CST that a student Hillel house was vandalised with graffiti stating "IDF off campus" and "Free Palestine", which was understood to be a form of protest to the Universities Jewish chaplain being called up for IDF reservist duty following October 7, as well as a former IDF speaker being invited to address a Jewish society event. This led to the university's Jewish students having increased safety and security concerns and to a request for increased security for this communal building.

Moreover, the type of incident offender is also likely to change the impact of antisemitic incidents on individuals. For instance, incidents perpetrated by staff members can often be more concerning and intimidating for students to report and/or engage in a formal complaints process. This is because staff members may have direct authority over the student (i.e. if they are a lecturer, supervisor or personal tutor) and as staff members are part of the university institution, students can feel as if raising a complaint against a staff member may result in negative repercussions against the reporter. Students are often hesitant to report an incident if they are taught (or their work is marked) by the subject of their complaint, due to concerns regarding their grades being affected. Comparatively, incidents perpetrated by SU officers or affiliated society committee members can have a significant impact on the victims and/or the Jewish student community as a whole. This is due to SU officers being elected to represent specific aspects of, or identities within, the student body (i.e. Women's officer, Welfare officer, LGBTQ+ officer), or to perform specific functions serving the entire student body. Therefore, when an officer representing a specific aspect of student life or identity demonstrates antisemitism, Jewish students can often be reluctant to engage with this officer regarding their area of responsibility due to concerns that they may be treated in a discriminatory manner. Furthermore, when a committee member for an SU-affiliated society or club perpetrates an antisemitic incident in their role as a committee member, Jewish students are likely to avoid participating in that society due to concerns over the presence or acceptance of antisemitic attitudes within the culture of the society in question. As a result, Jewish students with a passion for the particular interests or activities of that society will be less likely to engage with that society, thereby limiting their student experience and potential extra-curricular activities.

In addition, students who suffer antisemitic abuse from housemates in student accommodation, are often placed in a position where they have to request the university for alternative accommodation in order to escape their current hostile living situation. This can lead to significant disruption to a student's social life, due to housemates often playing a

prominent role in a student's social life, and can also lead to academic disruption due to time taken to move accommodation during term time.

Some of the more severe incidents have resulted in Jewish students temporarily returning to their parental homes due to the significant anxiety caused by an incident or fear of further incidents or antisemitic targeting. In March 2024, it was reported to CST that a crowd of over 50 students surrounded an Israel Society stall, manned by 10 Jewish students, to object to its presence on campus. Despite this incident beginning with civil engagement and dialogue, the situation quickly escalated after a student falsely accused the stall participants of killing their brother. Following this, a crowd began forming, with several protesters becoming actively hostile and threatening towards the stall, ripping up leaflets, pouring juice over an Israeli flag, taking pictures and videos of the stall members and shouting at university security and staff to "Get them out" and "They are not welcome on this campus". Eight of the students at the stall, all of whom were Jewish, returned to their parental homes that week due to fears for their safety if they remained on campus attending seminars and lectures.

5 Reactions from universities

Universities in the UK have had a mixed record in tackling the unprecedented increase in university-related antisemitic incidents since October 7, 2023.

Although most universities have issued strong statements condemning antisemitism and stating their commitment to tackling it, several universities have failed to take action when appropriate and/or have failed to communicate with Jewish communal organizations that support Jewish students such as CST and UJS. There are a small number of universities that have on multiple occasions not responded to communications by CST and UJS requesting meetings about extreme antisemitism and an explicitly hostile environment for Jewish students at the university. In November 2023, CST received a report that the Students' Union passed a "Ceasefire Now" motion, which included an article calling for the Students' Union to invest educational resources into "How to spot lies, propaganda and Zionism". Jewish students who attempted to speak against this motion were reportedly intimidated and harassed, with one student who took the stage to speak being escorted out by security for his own safety. Two Jewish students who were present had panic attacks due to the intense hostility directed towards them by other student delegates.

6 Reaction from authorities

U.K. authorities were quick to condemn the rise of antisemitism in the immediate aftermath of October 7 and reiterate to senior management of universities their responsibility to protect Jewish students and staff. On November 5, 2023, the UK government announced that ministers had written to university leaders regarding the rise in antisemitism and reiterated the obligation for universities to report extremism and radicalisation under the U.K.'s *Prevent* counter-extremism programme.

Furthermore, in this announcement, the government set out a five-point plan focusing on how the U.K. government aimed to tackle antisemitism at universities. This included: "Call for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred"; "Write to Vice Chancellors asking that they act decisively against staff and students involved in antisemitism"; "Meet the Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator for higher education, to discuss its role in reviewing incidents and any potential action"; "Make it

clear in all discussions that acts that may be criminal should be referred to the police”; and “Explore establishing an antisemitism charter in Higher Education, signing up universities which demonstrate a commitment to tackling antisemitism”.

Following the U.K. elections, and the election of a new government, the Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, has declared that the government was continuing the “procurement of £7 million worth of funding to tackle antisemitism in schools, colleges and universities”. This included the provision of £500,000 to the University Jewish Chaplaincy, who provide welfare support for Jewish students.

In addition, the Education Secretary authored a strongly worded article in a national newspaper reiterating the government’s resolute commitment to tackling antisemitic abuse. This article outlined the opinion of the government that “It is completely unacceptable for Jewish students to feel they cannot fully participate in university life out of fear for their safety. All students, regardless of race or religion, should be free to focus on their studies rather than worry about their safety”. Moreover, it detailed that of the funding procured to tackle antisemitism, some will be dedicated to funding a project to “upskill teachers and university staff in tackling antisemitism” and an “Innovation fund” aimed at supporting projects and work that help to tackle antisemitism, with a wider emphasis on developing resilience to antisemitic misinformation.

7 Reactions from the public

There is a lack of focused polling regarding the public reaction to the rise of antisemitism and anti-Zionist activity/rhetoric on U.K. campuses. However, there have been numerous articles reporting on these issues published in a variety of national newspapers, which have given these trends public visibility. Articles have included summaries of CST’s biannual campus antisemitism report (2022–2024) detailing the unprecedented rise of university-related antisemitism, the social media rhetoric of Palestine and Ahlul-Bayt student societies glorifying Yahya Sinwar (former Hamas leader) and Hassan Nasrallah (former Hezbollah leader) respectively, and lecturers engaging in rhetoric explicitly glorifying and/or legitimising the October 7 Hamas attacks.

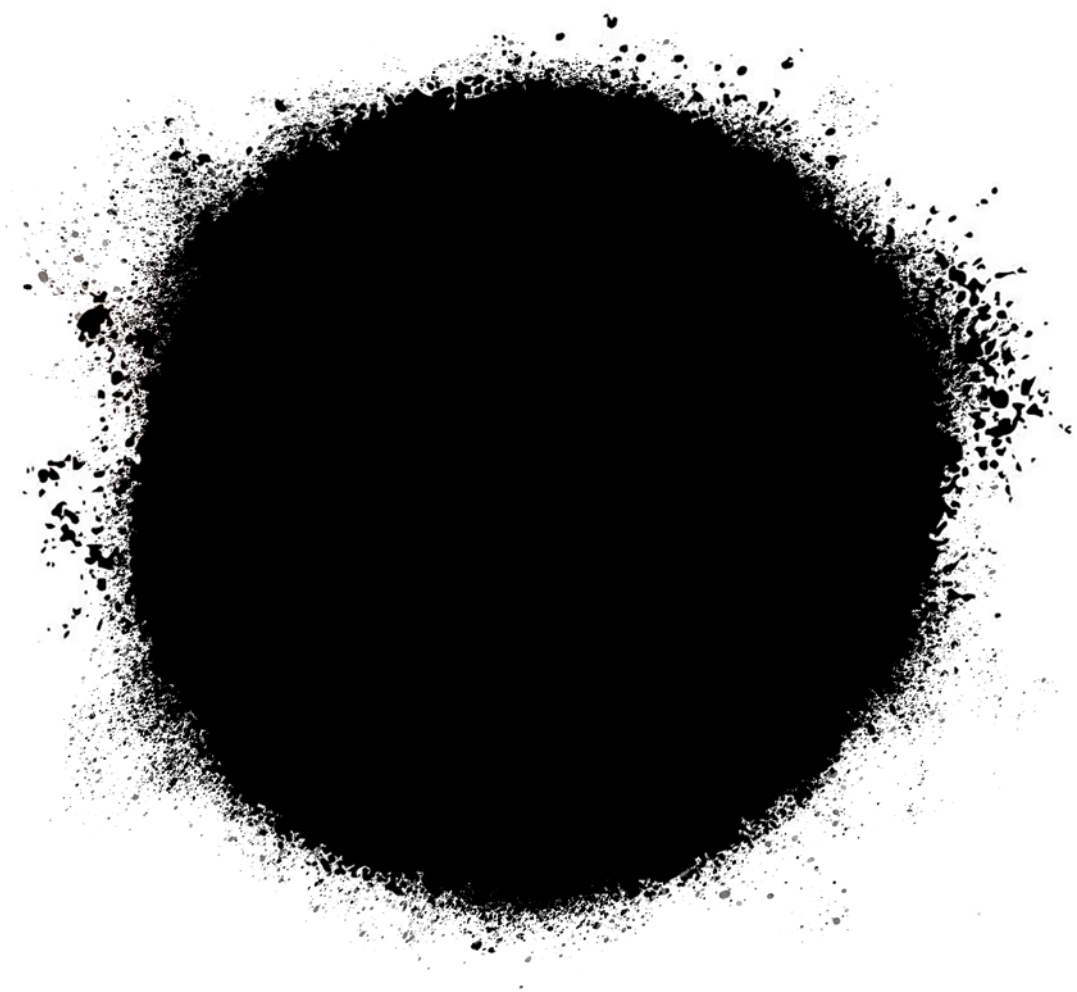
As a result of newspapers publishing these articles, the worrying trends of rising antisemitism and hostility towards Jewish students on campus have garnered national attention, supporting efforts to urge civil society and the government to take appropriate action to tackle these issues occurring on campuses across the country.

On the other hand, some activist groups have attempted to minimise the growth of antisemitism at universities and accuse Jewish students and community members of ‘weaponising’ and or ‘exaggerating’ antisemitism in order to silence and securitise pro-Palestinian



In March 2024, CST received a report that an unknown individual had scratched “Kikes Out” onto a toilet cubicle wall in a student union building in the North of England.

voices through the conflation of antisemitism and anti-Zionism. However, this ignores the fact that established Jewish community organizations are usually careful to avoid conflating ordinary political commentary or campaigning about Israel with antisemitic discourse or activism. Furthermore, claims that Jewish community members are exaggerating or weaponising antisemitism not only deny the experiences of Jewish community members, but also imply a nefarious conspiracy is occurring to achieve specific political objectives which in itself is an antisemitic trope. However, it is important to note that this rhetoric is most common amongst more extreme activist groups.



CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of university protests leading to antisemitic incidents around Europe shows significant similarities between the analysed countries, which are examined in detail in this section. However, with regard to the structure of the protests, the groups operating behind them and the handling of the protests, there are also notable differences between the European countries.

Beyond protests, the general atmosphere on campus and the narratives permeating the university space and in particular certain departments also constitutes part of the broader context for analysis.

Cross-border patterns

The developments show that a **normalization of antisemitic narratives** at universities can be observed across national borders. These are anchored in almost all countries under the guise of **anti-colonial, anti-imperialist or human rights narratives**. In this context, there is an increased **glorification of violence and terror**, justified in the context of narratives of decolonization and anti-imperialism. The Hamas attack on October 7 is dubbed “resistance” or “liberation” and convicted terrorists are celebrated as heroes (e.g. Walid Daqqa, Georges Abdallah). This is shown by examples from Spain, where Samidoun activists publicly thanked Hamas for their actions, or Germany, where activists from the group “Zora” described the attack as an act of self-defense.

A clear common feature of the demonstrations is also the increased emergence of **Holocaust distortion in the form of relativization and instrumentalization**. This is expressed, for example, in the equation of Israel with Nazi Germany, as seen for instance in Spain and Sweden, or in France and Belgium, where swastikas have appeared at universities and in the dormitories of Jewish students.

The protests are often either fueled or actively driven by broadly similar groups such as **Samidoun**, and **Masar Badil**, both organizations with ties to terror as well as the **BDS** campaign, all groups that are not directly affiliated with universities. Communist groups, either youth branches of parties or self-standing collectives have also been at the forefront of organizing actions. Links to Fridays for Future and local anti-imperialist and pro-Palestinian groups can also be observed in certain isolated cases.

The **reaction to and handling of the university protests** is another common feature of most of the countries analysed in this report. Universities often reacted hesitantly to the protests, sometimes with tacit approval or by invoking freedom of expression – in some cases, antisemitic actors were not sanctioned. The occupation of the Institute of Social Sciences in Berlin, which led to vandalism, shouts of “Intifada” and red Hamas triangles, was initially tolerated by Humboldt University Berlin President Julia von Blumenthal. Instead, an invitation to a dialogue was extended – a troubling sign towards all Jewish students.

Jewish students have felt the effects of the developments of the last year and a half in everyday university life. Many Jewish students report that they hide their identity and avoid the campus for fear of violence. The **psychological impact** of the protests is very alarming, with fear and panic playing a major role in everyday student life. As a result, Jewish students are withdrawing more and more and are less a part of public university life.

National differences

Country-specific differences and peculiarities should also be addressed at this point. Despite many parallels, the **reactions of the universities** differ in some respects:

- In France, a large number of pro-Palestinian demonstrations were banned shortly after October 7 and a central reporting platform for antisemitic incidents was announced.
- In Germany, a section of the Berlin Higher Education Act which previously prevented the de-registration of violent antisemitic students has been reformed to allow for exmatriculation.
- In Austria and Sweden, in certain instances encampments were cleared after police discovered that openly positive references were being made to Hamas.
- In the UK, a five-point government plan to better protect Jewish students has been launched.

The **role of professors** and their influence on the protests is particularly striking. In Italy, many professors and parts of the university administration have taken a very supportive stance, and the academic senates of multiple universities announced that they would no longer cooperate with Israel. In doing so, they are responding to a frequently voiced demand in university protests to sever all university ties with Israel. The calls for a boycott refer to academic cooperation, but also to exchange programs with Israel. In Spain, too, the protests have received explicit support from the university. Professors who are actively participating are often BDS activists themselves. In Austria and the UK, several lecturers have made explicitly antisemitic or terror-glorifying statements. This normalizes antisemitic narratives at an academic level and reinforces students' radical views.

Emerging dynamics

It is clear and acknowledged as well by organizers that the protests are **modelled on US university protests** in terms of their structure, course, and slogans. Names such as "Students for Palestine [city/university]," social media campaigns, and camps have been set up in Germany and Austria shortly after similar events in the U.S.

Furthermore, **ideological overlaps** across the political spectrum are visible. In France, both far-left and far-right actors participated in antisemitic rhetoric.

Left-wing Jewish groups Austria or “Jewish Voice for Peace” in the UK were often used as a fig leaf to **legitimize antisemitic positions**.

The mainstreaming of antisemitic or virulently anti-Zionist and anti-Israel positions has lowered the threshold towards **violence against Jews**. The report documents several instances of beatings, as well as the **targeting** of specific individuals with violent threats via messaging apps, or via **inscriptions** on their personal belongings, at times warranting police intervention and even hospitalization.

The **digital realm** has proven a powerful amplifier: Social media was used not only for coordination and mobilization, but also to spread antisemitic content – often by the activists themselves. In Austria, for instance, a protest camp was live-streamed to Iranian state media.

Ultimately, the question arises as to what significance these findings have for universities and political decision-makers.

An important focus-point that arises from the reports is that of the **long-term effects on Jewish students**. The reports show that Jews are increasingly withdrawing from campus life, hiding their identity, and suffering from fear and exclusion. These issues are addressed further in the Recommendations section.



A high-contrast, black and white graphic of a mouth. The upper lip is a bright white horizontal bar. The lower lip is a jagged, black silhouette. From the teeth, several thick, white paint-like drips hang down into the black space of the mouth. The background is black with some white speckles and noise.

PART II

Recommendations

As the entries in this report show, **concerted and determined short, medium and long-term action is necessary** on the part of universities to address the prevalence of antisemitic incidents on campus and ensure a safe learning space, free from discrimination and intimidation for Jewish students, faculty and staff. This is also important for the wellbeing of all other students and staff whose experience is impacted by the disruptive atmosphere and ambient antisemitism permeating universities since October 7, 2023.

1 Define antisemitism and call it out wherever you see it

In order to effectively address antisemitism, universities must have a clear standard definition by which to understand it. We urge universities to adopt and use the ***International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism*** as a clear and useful tool in identifying antisemitism on campus.

The definition should be incorporated into university codes of conduct and/or disciplinary guidelines and associated penalties for antisemitic behaviours/statements should be made clear.

Speaking out against antisemitism from the highest levels of university leadership is also an essential tone-setting and trust-building practice. We encourage leadership to promptly and unequivocally condemn antisemitism publicly, on personal and university social media channels and in mass communication to the student body.

2 Have clear reporting procedures for victims of antisemitism

Clear and robust reporting mechanisms are an important part of a comprehensive response to rising antisemitism on campus. This can consist of a designated reporting portal for incidents, to be processed by HR or DEI teams, a widely circulated email address, or a visible office to be accessed in person for filing a complaint.

Raising awareness about the possibility and the channel for filing a complaint is essential, as most antisemitic incidents go unreported. Visible promotion of such a channel builds confidence for the victim that their prospective report shall be taken seriously.

3 Build trust with Jewish students and their organizations

In the current environment, a majority of Jewish students report feelings of alienation, gas-lighting and loneliness as a result of perceived carelessness and inaction on the part of their professors and university leadership.

(Re-)building trust with Jewish students relies on ensuring they feel seen, and their lived experiences on campus are acknowledged. ***University leadership should proactively establish ties with Jewish student groups on campus,*** and rely on their insights to be aware of developments and trends in antisemitic incidents, rhetoric and more broadly in student dynamics that may adversely impact Jewish students.

University staff should seek their insights for practical solutions to better accommodate Jewish students. This may include ***facilitating spaces of dialogue,*** and ***providing mental health support.***

We encourage universities to use the “How to support your Jewish students” guide, developed by the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS).

4 Ensure, promote and enforce clear disciplinary rules and guidelines for protests

Beyond rules related specifically to antisemitism, the entries of this report reveal a lack of uniform action and a reluctance to enforce disciplinary rules in the face of prohibited actions taking place within student protests.

Protests, as a form of free speech, are important parts of academic culture and university life, within established parameters. ***Rules related to campus protests – including permissions, locations, timing, prohibited slogans or symbols, organizing bodies, must be clearly established, made known to the student body and rigorously enforced.*** A clear set of penalties for failing to submit to the pre-established protest rules is equally important to publicize and enforce.

These measures will both ensure the protest rights of students looking to make their voice heard, and that fellow students with differing views are not intimidated and silenced, and that other scheduled events are not disrupted.

5 Step up security, including vetting of groups allowed on campus

In the period following October 7, 2023 security concerns for Jewish students have included physical attacks, vandalism of dorm rooms or other Jewish premises on campus, posters or graffiti containing language inciting to violence, or threats on social media sent among students.

Ensuring a sense of safety for students is a primary responsibility for university leadership. We encourage coordinating with ***university security teams to assess the threat landscape and supplement available resources*** to address the reality on the ground.

This may entail ***coordinating with law enforcement authorities*** to ensure swift reaction in the case of illegal activity.

Special focus should be placed on ***vetting external groups and individuals*** that may have access to university premises, as it has been established that groups un-affiliated with universities have often been instigators of unauthorized encampments, and motors for antisemitic activity on multiple campuses.

6 Provide teachers with training opportunities, to better respond to tense situations in the classroom

Antisemitism training opportunities for teachers, as well as mediation training, Holocaust educational training, training on the history of the conflict in the Middle East or related to Jewish identity and Zionism can be useful tools for teachers to be able to navigate classroom tensions in a post-October 7 context.

We encourage universities to ***seek partnership with external civil society organizations and experts to provide either one-off sessions or modules on such topics as part of teachers' professional development opportunities.***

7 Ensure professors and course content meet academic standards and provide students with balanced perspectives

Universities set standards for academic content through a structured process that ensures consistency, quality, and alignment with institutional goals, accreditation requirements, and industry expectations.

Most universities have some form of curriculum committees composed of faculty members, administrators, and sometimes student representatives. These committees review and approve course syllabi, learning objectives, and instructional materials. Additionally, each department will usually set specific guidelines tailored to its discipline.

In a post-October 7 context, there have been a significant number of instances where faculty praised the Hamas massacre in Israel or justified the mass killing of Israelis. Speakers with a known track-record of antisemitic statements or sympathies towards terrorist organizations have been repeatedly invited to speak on university premises. Events such as teach-ins, or credits offered for attending anti-Israel demonstrations also occurred.

It is essential that programming happening under the aegis of the university and taking place on its premises remains aligned with academic standards. Courses related to the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, should be addressed in a balanced, panoramic and broad historical context.

In the context of DEI programming, ensure that Jewish identity, history and culture are reflected amongst subject matters addressed and that there is expertise among DEI staff to address related issues as they occur.

Consider, in Humanities faculties, ***including courses and supporting research related to antisemitism and Jewish life.***

8 Appoint a contact point or taskforce to address antisemitism

In certain instances, if antisemitic incidents become a recurrent challenge, or if Jewish students consistently report feeling unsafe or uncomfortable in their learning environment, **consider appointing a designated contact point or a specialized taskforce to address antisemitism on campus.**

Streamlining the implementation of measures to address anti-Jewish hate on campus through a specialized person or body may be an effective institutional set-up. This person, ideally a part of the university community, can serve as a bridge between the university (knowing its regulations and ethos) and the Jewish student community, to channel their concerns and implement relevant measures.

Investigations into campus antisemitism, to determine broader trends and perpetrators may be necessary in certain cases, and a designated person or body are the ideal initiators of such a process.

9 Make Jewish life and history visible and accessible to the campus community

Part of creating a safe and inviting space for Jewish students on campus, while offering culturally relevant experiences and learning opportunities to the whole student body centres around making Jewish life visible on campus.

Consider ways to mark or acknowledge key Jewish holidays or create the conditions for Jewish student groups to organize on such occasions.

Highlight Jewish contributions across subject matters, along with those of other marginalized communities.

Mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27), as a foundational shared European legacy. Particularly valuable ways of doing so are ***live testimonies from the few remaining survivors***, organized on university premises and open to all students.



This report was designed by Dicey Studios
Additional images: Freepik

Copyright © 2025 B'nai B'rith International
1120 20th Street NW, Suite 300N, Washington D.C. 20036
info@bnaibrith.org · bnaibrith.org
+1-202-857-6600





