



## **While global anti-Semitism surges, don't forget U.S. campuses**

By Tammi Rossman-Benjamin/JNS.org

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Amid the current unrest in Israel and Gaza, Jews around the world have been targeted for attack. Virulently anti-Israel demonstrations and activities in cities across Europe and around the world have resulted in frightening anti-Jewish violence.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. right now, school is out and students are safe. But there is little doubt that when the academic year commences, Jewish students on American college and university campuses will be targeted for harassment, intimidation, bullying, and worse, solely because of their actual or perceived identification with the Jewish state.

First, let's take stock of the global picture for Israel. In Paris, a synagogue was firebombed while hundreds of worshippers were inside. And in a Paris suburb, anti-Israel rioters torched a synagogue, Jewish school, businesses, and cars. In Berlin, demonstrators charged a Jewish couple and shouted "Jew, we'll get you" after seeing that the man was wearing a yarmulke.

In the Netherlands, the chief rabbi's home was attacked with stones twice in one week. In Turkey, the Israeli Consulate in Istanbul and the embassy in Ankara were attacked, and an Islamist close to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged Muslims to target the country's 15,000 Jews and warned that Jewish tourists to Turkey would be attacked. In Morocco, a rabbi was badly beaten in retaliation for Israel's airstrikes on Gaza. In Australia, a Jew was punched by men screaming "Jewish dog" in Arabic as he walked in a Jewish neighborhood.

In Canada, at an anti-Israel rally organized by the President of the University of Calgary pro-Palestinian club, two Jewish women were kicked and punched by a large group of angry men, and portions of the crowd chanted "Kill Jews" and "Hitler was right." In Los Angeles, Jews at a pro-Israel rally were assaulted with sticks wielded by four men waving pro-Palestinian flags. In Boston, Jewish students had to be extracted by police from a pro-Hamas rally, at which demonstrators chanted "Jews back to Birkenau."

Now back to American campuses. As we all know, the college campus is a hotbed for anti-Israel sentiment. Is there any reason to believe that the global anti-Zionist surge won't permeate U.S. campuses once the school year starts? This new flood of anti-Jewish sentiment will come to campuses already racked by the virulently anti-Israel actions of student groups such as Students

for Justice in Palestine (SJP), whose members are often aided and abetted by anti-Israel faculty. Last semester alone, numerous Jewish students across the country reported feeling unsafe on their campuses. Here are their firsthand accounts:

**At DePaul University:** “This entire campaign and entire sit-in going on in the SAC (Schmitt Academic Center) is totally unsafe for Jewish students and I have had a lot of Jewish students text me and call me today and tell me they are not comfortable walking through that part of our campus, which is really disheartening... About two months ago when SJP started the ‘DePaul Divest’ campaign, I no longer felt safe on this campus and I no longer felt I could be a proud Jewish student.”

**At New York University:** “Being very straightforward, [the slipping of anti-Israel eviction notices under dorm-room doors by SJP members] made me feel targeted and unsafe in my own dorm room, and I know others feel exactly the same as myself.”

**At the University of California, Los Angeles:** “For myself and other Jewish and pro-Israel students, the atmosphere is poisonous. We feel attacked, ostracized, and threatened. Our identities are being rejected and our right to express our beliefs endangered. Our academic performance is being harmed unjustly; and our supporters are now targets of hate campaigns, baseless accusations, and unfair political and social retaliation.”

**At the University of Michigan:** “It was not just individual students who were the victims of violent threats and intimidation by pro-Palestinian forces. Student government representatives were similarly targeted and, most telling, called ‘kike’ and a ‘dirty Jew.’ Both CSG (Central Student Government) representatives and ordinary students were afraid to attend their classes because they felt unsafe.”

**At Vassar College:** “This year, SJP has made Vassar an unsafe environment for me and for other Jewish students. From their harassment of students participating in the spring break trip, to the Nazi incident and anti-Zionist rhetoric about ethnic cleansing that verges on blood libel, SJP has done everything in its power to make Vassar an unsafe space for Jews.”

Despite the clear and present danger for Jewish students on U.S. campuses, in most cases university administrators have been unwilling to address the problem, preferring instead to defend the freedom of speech or academic freedom of the student and faculty perpetrators. Moreover, Jewish students are well aware that hateful behavior which would never be tolerated by university administrators if directed at other minority groups is perfectly acceptable when directed against Jews, and they experience this blatant double standard as yet another form of anti-Jewish bigotry.

The vulnerability of Jewish students on U.S. campuses is further compounded by the unwillingness of the federal government to protect them from the hostile environment they are experiencing. Seth Galanter, the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights who was responsible for dismissing several federal anti-discrimination complaints filed on behalf of Jewish students who were being severely harassed, intimidated, and bullied by their fellow students and faculty, has stated that the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights will not even consider complaints in

which “offensive conduct [is] based on an individual’s support for... the policies of a particular nation.” In other words, if Jewish students are being harassed because of their real or perceived identification with the Jewish state, no matter how severe the harassment—even to the point of physical assault—they cannot count on protection under federal anti-discrimination law.

In light of the alarming rise in global anti-Semitism and the unwillingness of university or government officials to protect Jewish students from campus-based anti-Semitic activity, it is fair to say that when Jewish students return to school in the fall, they will be the single-most vulnerable students on campus.

The Jewish community must act now. As university stakeholders—students, parents, alumni, donors, and taxpayers—members of the Jewish community and their supporters have every right to use their influence as consumers and funders to demand that Jewish students are protected from the growing scourge of Jew-hatred on U.S. college campuses.

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