

WHY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SHOULD ADOPT THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT DEFINITION OF ANTI-SEMITISM

THE PROBLEM: Alarming escalation of anti-Semitism at the University of California

- Divisive anti-Israel rhetoric on UC campuses is increasingly morphing into anti-Semitism, for example:
 - At **UC Berkeley**, “Zionists should be sent to the gas chamber” was scrawled on a bathroom wall in the wake of a contentious BDS campaign.
 - At **UC Los Angeles**, a candidate for student government’s eligibility was questioned by anti-Israel divestment activists simply because she was Jewish. The four student senators who challenged the candidate for the judicial board based on her Jewishness and Jewish affiliations were authors, sponsors and supporters of the most recent anti-Israel divestment bill at UCLA.
 - At **UC Santa Cruz**, anti-Israel faculty and students used threats and intimidation to try to shut down a Hillel-sponsored LGBT event.
 - At **UC Santa Barbara**, after years of divisive anti-Israel divestment campaigns, flyers blaming Jews for 9/11 were posted on campus.
 - At **UC Davis**, only days before and after a recent bitter divestment vote, the university’s Hillel House was defaced with “grout out the Jews,” and a Jewish fraternity was spray-painted with swastikas.

- UC Jewish students report feeling frightened, singled out, harassed and unsafe:
 - At a recent UC Santa Barbara student senate meeting a Jewish student stated, “For the first time in my life, I felt that my identity, an unchangeable part of who I am, was under attack... I don’t wear that star of David necklace anymore. I don’t tell most people that I’m Jewish, and I definitely don’t tell them that I’m pro-Israel...I’m scared for my safety.”
 - A Jewish student leader at UCLA recently shared: “People say that being anti-Israel is not the same as being anti-Semitic. The problem is the anti-Israel culture in which we are singling out only the Jewish state creates an environment where it is ok to single out Jewish students.”

A NECESSARY RESPONSE: Adopting the U.S. State Department definition of anti-Semitism is critical

- Provides necessary identification tool: ADL: "In order to adequately address any problem, one must be able to accurately identify its elements...A clear and uniform definition of anti-Semitism will provide the UC system with a critically important tool to aid in counteracting anti-Semitism on campuses." Adopting the State Department definition “will heighten awareness and increase understanding of anti-Jewish expressions and behaviors, and will assist students, administrators and faculty on campuses to more effectively address anti-Semitic incidents when they occur.”

- Addresses contemporary anti-Semitism: The State Department definition addresses the unique nature of contemporary Jew hatred by recognizing that comparing Israelis to Nazis,

holding Israel to standards not expected of other countries and denying Israel's right to exist is anti-Semitic. Pope Francis and President Obama recently stated publicly, for the first time, that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism.

- Establishes uniform standard: The State Department definition should be used as a standard to identify when scholarly criticism, which is welcomed on all issues, crosses the line into anti-Semitism.
- Deters future incidents: Adopting the State Department definition will raise awareness about anti-Semitism, provide a tool for identifying and discussing anti-Semitic incidents and assist in anti-discrimination education.

UNFOUNDED CONCERNS: Adopting the State Department definition does not by any means curtail free speech and it is not intended to silence criticism of Israel.

- Argument 1: UC's adoption of the State Department definition will violate the First Amendment.
 - Adopting the State Department will not restrict speech or behavior. Its sole purpose is to properly identify anti-Semitic behavior and allow UC administrators to treat anti-Semitism as they do all other bigotries, presumably without violating the First Amendment.
 - Anti-Semitic rhetoric is not against the law, but it *is* bigotry, and it must be identified and called out with the same promptness and vigor as all forms of discrimination.
 - Denying University administrators the right to adopt a definition and use that definition to condemn anti-Semitism is itself unconstitutional.
- Argument 2: The State Department definition will be used to shut down all criticism of Israel.
 - The State Department definition does not consider criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country as anti-Semitic.
 - Even speech identified as anti-Semitic under the State Department definition is, in most cases, protected under the First Amendment and cannot be legally shut down.
- Argument 3: The State Department definition does not accurately identify anti-Semitism; anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism.
 - Scholars of contemporary anti-Semitism, all mainstream Jewish communal organizations, and most Jews agree with the State Department definition.
 - In the same way as other racial, ethnic and gender minorities are afforded the right to define bigotry directed against their communities as *they* understand and experience it, so, too, should the Jewish community be allowed to define anti-Semitism as *most Jews* understand and experience it. Indeed, denying the Jewish people a right afforded to all other minorities is itself an expression of anti-Jewish bigotry.

For more information or to speak to any of the 32 organizations supporting this effort, please contact Nicole Rosen at 202-309-5724 or Nicole@rosencomm.com.