Project Shema

ADDRESSING ANTISEMITISM
A GUIDE FOR ALLIES

Identifying, Understanding, and
Addressing Anti-Jewish Harm

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ALLYSHIP IN ACTION

ANTI-JEWISH INCIDENTS ARE RISING GLOBALLY
Historically, when there are escalations in violence between Hamas and Israel, antisemitism spikes globally.

OUR GOAL IS TO HELP NON-JEWISH ALLIES SLOW THE SPREAD OF ANTISEMITISM
We are not asking anyone to "choose sides" between two historically marginalized and vulnerable peoples. Antisemitism and Islamophobia have no place in our communities. Implicating Jews and Palestinians worldwide for the actions of Israel or Hamas is dangerous.

KEY IDEAS
WHAT WE NEED OUR ALLIES TO KNOW

01 **We are not okay,** but are grateful for allyship and support.

02 We are concerned about how many people **condoned the October 7th massacre** by Hamas.

03 Attacking Jews for the actions of other Jews, or of the Jewish State, is **antisemitism**. Jews won't feel or be safe when this idea is normalized.

04 Antisemitism usually presents as **anti-Jew or Jew hatred, not anti-Judaism**. Jews are often attacked for who we are and what people accuse us of doing or being responsible for (e.g. uniquely evil), not how we pray.

05 When antisemitism is normalized, **Jewish safety can change rapidly**

06 We're also concerned about **normalizing violence at a time of polarization**, rising white supremacy, and attacks on democracy in our country.

07 **We're not asking you to choose sides.** Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Muslims, all deserve empathy and need support right now. We must avoid 'othering' or causing harm to any vulnerable communities.

OUR CONCERNS

01 Tokenizing
unrepresentative voices to dismiss the consensus concerns of our community

02 Silencing
those who express empathy for the Israeli people and/or the Jewish community

03 Erasure
of Jewish identity, history and connection to the land of Israel

04 Demonizing
Jews, the Jewish State, or Zionism as inherently and/or uniquely evil

05 Dehumanizing
Jews who have a relationship with the people, land, or state of Israel

06 Historic tropes
which spread classical antisemitic ideas alongside the language of justice

07 Justifying violence
through calls to dismantle the state of Israel or engage in violence against Jews

WHAT WE NEED FROM ALLIES

AFFIRM WE CANNOT NORMALIZE ATTACKS ON JEWS

If you haven't yet done so, publicly affirm that we cannot normalize the idea that it's ok to attack some Jews for the actions of other Jews or the Jewish state. And do the same for our Palestinian and Muslim siblings so we don't allow Islamophobia to spread.

PUSH BACK WHEN YOU SEE & HEAR ANY OF THE ABOVE

Push back privately and publicly when you see and hear any of the things above happening. Again, we cannot normalize these ideas and we need allies to speak up.

SPEAK WITH NUANCE AND EMPATHY

Speak with nuance and empathy. It's easy to use loaded, simplified language right now. The complexity of the situation requires us to be specific and speak empathetically for all. Differentiate between governments and citizens/diaspora communities at all times.

FOR ALLIES WHO LEAD
INSTITUTIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

▶ **Issue public and internal messages of support** for Jewish staff explicitly affirming that we cannot normalize antisemitism or tolerate attacks on Jews for the actions of the Israeli government. And please do the same for our Palestinian and Muslim siblings so we do not allow Islamophobia to spread.

▶ **Jewish identity and antisemitism must become structurally ingrained into all DEI programming and strategy.** This must include how anti-Jewish ideas can manifest around Israel-Palestine discourse. Further, Jewish identity must be understood and defined as a federally recognized ethnic minority.

▶ **When identifying DEI consultants and trainings, make sure an accurate understanding of Jewish identity and antisemitism** is incorporated into the materials provided.

▶ If your organization has **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), Jewish employees need to be allowed to form an ERG as an ethnic group**, not just a faith group**.** The White House has specifically called for this as well. You can find an ERG guidance document <u>here.</u>

▶ **Provide antisemitism education for your DEI team, administration or executive leadership, and staff** that includes information on how anti-Jewish ideas can be carried alongside Israel-Palestine discourse.

FOR ALLIES ON
CAMPUS OR IN
THE CLASSROOM

▶ **Provide antisemitism education for your DEI staff, administration, staff and students** that includes information on how anti-Jewish ideas can be carried alongside Israel-Palestine discourse.

▶ In K-12 schools, administrators should **prioritize safety and inclusion** for all and educators should **avoid offering personal analysis that might contribute to a climate that "others"** Jews, Muslims, Israelis, and/or Palestinians. Instead, we must nurture empathetic conversations that ensure everyone's psychological safety.

▶ **Protect free speech on campus and call out harmful speech.** We are asking leaders to speak out when people celebrate Hamas or engage in the harmful actions outlined in this resource, and to signal to all that this behavior is harmful to the Jewish community. We are not asking anyone to silence any voices, though. Leaders must also recognize that protests that intentionally target Jewish students and facilities should not be tolerated. We must also call out behavior and language that is harmful to Palestinians and/or Muslim students and faculty as well.

DIVING DEEPER

The harms we need you to be aware of and help prevent

Antisemitism often operates as a conspiracy theory that describes Jews as uniquely evil and responsible for the ills of society.

The effect of antisemitism is to define Jews as sub-human or evil. This serves to define Jews as outside of the "community of the good," justifying the ostracization of individual Jews and normalizing violence against Jews collectively.

We must focus on impact, not intent, and ideas, not people. Rather than define antisemitism, we think it is more productive to describe what anti-Jewish harm looks like. We also recognize that **antisemitism is systemic and impacts all of us.** This is to say, people often perpetuate anti-Jewish harm accidentally and without having any conscious malice toward Jews.

DIVING DEEPER ON THE HARMS

JEWISH IDENTITY & ANTISEMITISM

01 WHO ARE THE JEWISH PEOPLE?

what people **assume**
Most people **think of** Jews as a **white, religious community**

who we **are**
- **Jews identify as a people or nation,** now and long before there was a religion called Judaism.
- Many Jews do not consider themselves to be religious.
- Jewish people are **multi-racial and multi-ethnic,** with diaspora communities **all over the world.**

02 WHY THIS PERCEPTION?

Erasure of a complex identity
The Jewish diaspora has been shaped by a history of persecution and expulsions, leading to the dispersion of Jewish communities across the world and to much of our diversity. But, despite prevailing social constructs around race and identity, Jews are primarily categorized as a religious group, erasing the complexity of our identity.
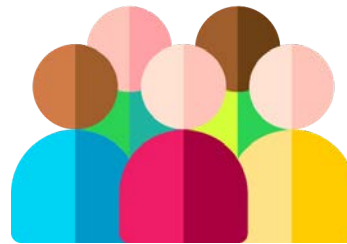
Safety through assimilation
In the U.S., many Jewish immigrants actively sought safety through assimilation into whiteness (changing names, adapting cultural practices, etc.). Images of Jews in media & popular culture are typically centered around white-eligible Jews. This centering of one Jewish narrative erases the complexity, beauty, and diversity of our global peoplehood.

JEWISH IDENTITY & ANTISEMITISM

03 WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM?

MOST THINK ANTISEMITISM IS ABOUT **RELIGION**

BUT ANTISEMITISM IS ABOUT **PEOPLE**

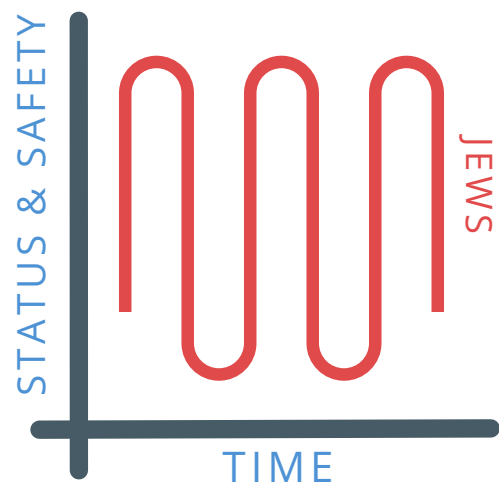Jews are typically attacked for **who we are**, not how we pray.

CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM IS USUALLY ANTI-JEW, NOT ANTI-JUDAISM

04 HOW DOES ANTISEMITISM WORK?

JEWISH SAFETY CAN CHANGE RAPIDLY

- **Antisemitism functions differently than other systemic bigotries**, which are typically fixed in a given society.
- There are many examples of Jews living safely and thriving in a society, only for this status to shift rapidly, leading to systemic violence and mass expulsions.
- **Throughout Jewish history, skin color & status have not guaranteed safety in any society.**

STATUS & SAFETY

JEWS

TIME

TOKENIZATION

Tokenization occurs when an individual or set of individuals is held up as representative of a group as a whole. This is especially problematic when the voice being tokenized is used to confirm the biases or prejudices of those platforming them. It's often a tool to ignore or dismiss antisemitism and other bigotries.

Tokenization — whether of Jews or Palestinians — is always **dehumanizing** & **inappropriate**.

ERASING JEWISH VOICES

While it is never okay to demonize individuals with divergent opinions, it is also never okay to platform marginal voices in a community in order to dismiss the critical consensus within that community. We must acknowledge the potential for harm when individual Jews who do not represent the vast majority of Jews are leveraged to avoid responsibility for rhetoric that most Jews experience as harmful. This is also true when anti-Zionist Jews are elevated to erase the truth that the vast majority of Jews worldwide believe in the right to and need for Jewish self-determination (what most Jews understand as Zionism).

Examples

to help you better spot this issue

*However, in these examples, we need to be clear we're **not making any assumptions about intent**. People can and are saying harmful things without intending to harm Jews.*

1 "Well, my Jewish friend said the same thing on social media yesterday so it can't be antisemitic."

2 "There are Jews who are anti-Zionists so calling to dismantle the State of Israel can't be antisemitic."

CHILLING EFFECT

The chilling effect is a phenomenon where **individuals or groups are silenced or afraid to speak up because of the perceived risk of expressing their beliefs or identity.** For example, people who publicly express sympathy with Palestinians or Israelis may be harassed or condemned in a way that discourages them and others from expressing similar sentiments. This undermines our efforts for allyship and solidarity. It also inhibits healthy discourse and empathy. In some circles, people who express empathy for Jews and Israelis/Israel are harassed online and offline.

This silence **leads to deeper feelings of isolation and fear** within the Jewish community and among allies, which **enables anti-Jewish ideas** to spread with greater speed.

Examples

to help you better spot this issue

*However, in these examples, we need to be clear we're **not making any assumptions about intent**. People can and are saying harmful things without intending to harm Jews.*

1 People who express empathy for Israelis are being called "genocide supporters" and attacked on social media.

2 "You cannot be progressive or advocate for social justice if you support the existence of Israel."

ERASURE

Erasure is the **systematic removal or marginalization of a particular group's history, identity, or lived experiences.** It may also refer to the suppression of the culture or heritage of a particular group.

RIGHT NOW

There are various ways in which Palestinians and Israelis/Jews experience erasure right now. For example, there is discourse that denies the existence of a unique Palestinian national identity or denies the lived experiences of Palestinians in Gaza. In some spaces, people are legitimizing the erasure of Jewish identity, lived experiences, and connection to the land, which can enable the spread of anti-Jewish ideas.

Key Issues

1. ERASURE OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Many are denying or redefining what it means to be Jewish, claiming we are only a religious community. But **Jews do not identify just as a religious group; we are a people or nation.**

2. ERASURE OF LIVED EXPERIENCES

Antisemitism is real and on the rise. Like other forms of systemic bigotry, we are all socialized into ideas about antisemitism in ways that we might not notice. **Denying Jewish fears about the reality of rising antisemitism**, or claiming that Jews are or have been existentially safe, denies the lived experiences, trauma, and history of Jews.

3. ERASURE OF JEWISH CONNECTION TO THE LAND

The Jewish people have a thousands-year-old national, spiritual, and ancestral connection to the land of Israel. Denying this historical, lived, and felt connection is a form of erasure and is often used to demonize the **Jewish right to national self-determination.**

Demonizing Israel or Zionism
Dehumanizing Jews for our
Relationship
With Israel

DEMONIZING
THE JEWISH STATE

Some criticisms of Israel associate the state with the unique evils of human history. This was true even before the October 7th Hamas attack and its aftermath. As a result, many people also view Zionism as uniquely and inherently evil. While all governments are worthy of criticism, some criticisms of Israel paint the state and its supporters as uniquely evil, which mirrors ancient antisemitic ideas about Jews.

DEHUMANIZING JEWS

The impact of this discourse is the dehumanization of Jews who support the right to and need for a state in some portion of our ancestral homeland. This is what most Jews understand as Zionism and why most Jews would be considered Zionists - the vast majority of Jews worldwide believe Israel should exist.

There are many reasons why the vast majority of Jews - regardless of their concerns with the Israeli government - have a connection to the land, people, and state of Israel. **This growing discourse casts this relationship, regardless of context and nuance, as inherently immoral.**

Examples

1 **Defining Zionism or Zionists as racists, nazis, or white-supremacists** effectively demonizes and dehumanizes most Jews - who support Israel's right to exist - as racist and evil

2 **Calling Jews genocide supporters** for supporting the Israeli people and/or Israel's response to Hamas' attack dehumanizes most Jews

3 **Saying "Zionists aren't welcome here"** functionally ostracizes most Jews and plays into ancient antisemitic tropes that divide Jews between good and bad Jews

ANTI-JEWISH
CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Conspiracy theories have been used worldwide for thousands of years to condone violence against Jews. These anti-Jewish motifs typically describe **Jews as greedy, evil, all-powerful, untrustworthy, and/or corrupt.** These stories are deeply ingrained in the fabric of society. All people are socialized into anti-Jewish ideas without even realizing it. Certain rhetoric around Israel/Zionism perpetuates and builds upon these pre-existing and latent biases.

Key Motifs

There are three key motifs we are seeing spread rapidly right now

1 That Jews/Zionists **can't be trusted.**
2 That Jews/Zionists **are all powerful.**
3 That Jews/Zionists are **evil.**

Examples

1 Power

Jews/Zionists **control the media** and that's why you cannot trust the western media; Jews/Zionists are using their power to control major government policy.

2 Evil

Jews/Zionists are like Nazis; Jews support genocide; Zionists are racist.

3 Untrustworthy

Polite Zionists aren't your friend; Jews who talk about antisemitism are just trying to distract you from the crimes of Israel.

Diving Deeper
Justifying violence against Jews

DEMONIZING
LEADS TO BINARIES

Prior to October 7th, calls to dismantle the state of Israel were common in some spaces in the far left. Since October 7th, these calls have grown louder.

This is based on inaccurate frameworks that:
- erase Jewish history
- defines Israel as a white, European colonial entity

As **calls to decolonize Israel have grown more common**, colonialism accusations reinforce the idea that only one people (Palestinians) have legitimate claims and the other (Jews) do not. This implies that only one group can achieve liberation in their homeland. This erasure has harmful consequences. When Jews hear this, it causes great concern for our collective safety given the history of **systemic antisemitic violence** over millennia.

These ideas **demonize** and **dehumanize** Jews and legitimize the idea that it's okay to target some Jews for the actions of other Jews or the Jewish state.

Examples

to help you better spot this issue

1 "Palestine will be free from the river to the sea"

While this is not the intent of everyone who says this phrase, the practical outcome would be the end of the state of Israel. Jews hear this phrase as deeply harmful.

2 "Decolonize Palestine by any means necessary"

Calling for Israel to be literally **dismantled by any means necessary** is harmful and can even be used to condone violence. This statement has been used often and explicitly argues that murdering Israeli civilians in Israel is necessary to end the state of Israel.