



**Congressional Testimony**

**The Rise of Anti-Israel Extremist Groups and Their Threat to U.S.  
National Security**

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Chairman Pfluger, Ranking Member Magaziner, esteemed Members of the Homeland Security Committee, it is a pleasure to be before you this morning to testify on “*The Rise of Anti-Israel Extremist Groups and Their Threat to U.S. National Security*.” I appreciate the convening of the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee for today’s important hearing, and I am grateful for your bipartisan leadership in addressing the antisemitism crisis facing our country.

I am here in my capacity as Senior Vice President of Policy and Political Affairs at American Jewish Committee (AJC), a global, non-partisan advocacy organization that stands up for Israel’s right to exist in peace and security; confronts antisemitism, no matter the source; and upholds the democratic values that unite Jews and our allies.

This hearing occurs on the heels of two deeply disturbing antisemitic attacks that have shaken the American Jewish community to its core.

Tragically, almost one month ago, not one mile from this very room, AJC lost two cherished members of our community – they were assassinated outside of the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C., following our annual Young Diplomats reception.

Our event this year was about turning pain into purpose and featured members of the Multifaith Alliance and IsraeAID for a discussion on humanitarian diplomacy and how a coalition of organizations, including interfaith partners, are working together in response to humanitarian crises throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

However, at an event intended to build a stronger, more peaceful world, the mere presence of Jewish participants turned it into a night of hate-based violence and tragedy.

As the event concluded, Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky were gunned down, and their attacker yelled “Free Palestine” as he was taken away by law enforcement. Sarah and Yaron were assassinated in our nation’s capital, murdered while leaving a Jewish event, at a Jewish museum hosted by AJC, a Jewish organization. What warranted their murder? It was simply because their attacker considered all those who support Israel’s existence, perhaps even all Jews, to be the proxies of the Jewish state.

Just last week, American Jews were again attacked for their support of Israel. Molotov cocktails were hurled at peaceful protestors calling for the return of the remaining 55 hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, including an 88-year-old Holocaust survivor. Was this an attack on an Israeli military target? No – It was an attack on peaceful Jewish demonstrators focused on the most basic of human rights: freedom from captivity.

It is past time for society to finally acknowledge and address what Jews have always known, and especially in the wake of the October 7, 2023, Hamas terror attack: that antisemitic and anti-Zionist language is dangerous, and when left unchecked, can be deadly.

Throughout the course of the investigations for these two attacks, we will learn how or whether the perpetrators engaged or were inspired by anti-Israel extremist groups. I want to be very clear – despite this exceptional threat environment, which is further evidenced by the recent Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Public Service Announcement highlighting potential threats to Jewish and Israeli communities, there is a line between those who espouse antisemitic or anti-Israel rhetoric and those who act violently. The two cannot be treated the same.

When such violence does occur, we must ensure the response is consistent with the rule of law and democratic values. Let me be clear: terrorism and providing material support for terrorism are illegal. Similarly, illegal conduct under the guise of political activism is not protected under the Constitution and demands consequences. Yet as we seek to curtail these harmful behaviors, we must be steadfast in affording the guarantees of free speech and due process that apply to all people in the United States. Responsible enforcement and due process are fundamental.

Speech alone, no matter how offensive some may find it, is nonetheless protected. Public protest, when it does not jeopardize the safety of others or violate the law, is a form of speech that is vital for democracy and a sign of its health. Law-breaking or violating the rights of others are not legitimate forms of protest.

Public leaders on both sides of the aisle have an obligation to respond promptly and strongly to repugnant anti-Israel and antisemitic language; however, when overbroad tools are used against those who espouse it, we will see the discourse necessarily shift away from condemning speech that crosses the line and endangers Jews and to whether those sanctioned were victims of censorship.

### **The State of Antisemitism in the Last Year**

Through our annual State of Antisemitism in America Report, AJC has collected five years of comparative data from American Jews and the general public on their perceptions of and experiences with antisemitism. We've seen how the number of respondents who say antisemitism is a serious problem and has increased a lot has grown significantly over the last five years. This data demonstrates that all Americans, Jewish and non-Jewish, are aware of the growing severity of the issue. Of the almost six in ten Americans who say antisemitism has increased over the past five years, 88% say they are concerned by this increase.

In the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel, the world witnessed a dramatic surge in antisemitic and anti-Israel violence. Reactionary emotions to the horrors of war, anti-Israel sentiments fell prey to a slippery slope. Rather than serving as a moment of solidarity to mourn those killed in terror attacks — an opportunity to unite in the face of hate — alongside the Jewish community, rhetoric boiled over, and rallies and demonstrations quickly devolved into open celebrations of antisemitism. Protesters did not merely voice criticism of Israeli policy: they glorified Hamas a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, lauded the tactics used to rape and murder civilians, and chanted slogans such as “burn the Jews” in the streets of capitals the world over. This outpouring of hate was not limited to the Middle East or to Israel itself — it erupted globally, targeting Jewish communities from synagogues and schools to sporting events and residential neighborhoods.

According to AJC's [\*State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report\*](#), antisemitism reached shocking levels following the October 7 Hamas attacks, affecting American Jewish behavior and sense of security on a level that we haven't witnessed before. A staggering 90% of American Jews said antisemitism has increased in the United States since the Hamas terrorist attacks, while 77% of American Jews report feeling less safe as a Jewish person in the U.S. because of these attacks. In consequence, the majority of American Jews are afraid to be themselves, and many are intentionally concealing aspects of their identities to avoid being identified as Jewish. For the first time in the history of AJC's report, the majority of American Jews (56%) changed their behavior in one of three ways out of fear of antisemitism. Perhaps most concerning is that one-third (33%) of American Jews say they have been the personal target of antisemitism – in person or virtually – at least once over the last year. Antisemitism not only targets American Jewish individuals but also Jewish institutions and businesses as well. Thirty percent of American Jews say their institutions were the target of antisemitism in the past five years, and 25% say that local businesses where they live have been the targets of antisemitism in the past year.

Hearteningly, 9 in 10 Americans, both Jews and non-Jews, believe antisemitism affects our society as a whole; everyone is responsible for combating it.

### **Understanding Antisemitism**

A comprehensive and nuanced understanding of antisemitism is key to confronting anti-Jewish and anti-Israel violence. AJC's [\*State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report\*](#) revealed that almost one-third (30%) of Americans are not familiar with the term antisemitism and what it means. This raises concerns because individuals cannot respond to or prevent something that they do not understand.

That is why the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, which provides a clear and concise description of antisemitism in its various forms, is an educational tool to help individuals and entities understand how antisemitism is defined and manifests. And, this is why **Congress should swiftly pass the Antisemitism Awareness Act (H.R.1007), legislation with strong bipartisan support, that would ensure the Department of Education continues to consider IHRA as a useful tool when it seeks to protect students in educational spaces.**

Antisemitism is often described as the world's oldest hatred. While antisemitism can often be traced back to Christian anti-Judaism, in which Jews were accused of killing Jesus Christ (deicide charge), kidnapping and murdering Christian children to use their blood in rituals (blood libel), and spreading the Black Plague through common drinking wells, contemporary antisemitism in the United States can be found across the political spectrum and attributed to various sources.

Antisemitism stems from the far-right, including white supremacy, white nationalism, and neo-Nazi antisemitism; the far-left, arising from identity-based politics or anti-Israel antisemitism, including denying Israel's right to exist; religious extremism such as ISIS, Black Hebrew Israelites, and Nation of Islam; and from fringe segments of minority communities, as a form of scapegoating or seeing Jews as an outgroup or a competitive threat, including competition of victimhood.

### **When Anti-Zionism Becomes Antisemitism**

Following the October 7 Hamas attacks, we have witnessed a disturbing surge in antisemitic violence and rhetoric across the United States, often masquerading as anti-Zionist activism. The anti-Israel rhetoric that fueled the demonstrations after October 7 has frequently crossed the line into classic antisemitism. Protesters and public figures have revived ancient tropes, commonly including ludicrous accusations of Jewish control over governments and economies, and compared Israel's actions to those of Nazi Germany — a particularly pernicious form of Holocaust inversion that trivializes Jewish suffering and history. These comparisons and conspiracies, when voiced by public officials, lend legitimacy to antisemitism and embolden extremists, leaving Jewish communities increasingly vulnerable.

This global wave of antisemitism, catalyzed and justified by anti-Israel extremism, has not only endangered Jewish communities but threatens the very fabric of democratic societies. Antisemitism, no matter the source, weakens our social cohesion and undermines the values that bind us together. The conspiracy theories and hate that animate anti-Israel extremism are the same ones that have fueled antisemitism for centuries, and are now being amplified by social media and legitimized by public figures who should know better. When anti-Israel activism

crosses the line into demonization, delegitimization, or collective blame of Jews, it threatens not only the safety of Jewish Americans but also the foundational principles of equality and civil rights for all.

I mentioned the incidents here and in Colorado, but they are merely the most recent escalation in a long line of growing violence Jews have been subjected to since the start of the most recent Israel-Hamas conflict. In November 2023, protesters in Washington, D.C., displayed signs equating Prime Minister Netanyahu to Hitler, with one depicting him “eating a Palestinian child”. These comparisons distort Holocaust history, framing Jews as perpetrators of genocide rather than victims.

In 2024, as the conflict dragged on, synagogues like Park Avenue in New York City and Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel in Philadelphia were repeatedly defaced with slogans such as “From the river to the sea” – a phrase that can be used to call for the elimination of the State of Israel and/or ethnic cleansing of Jews living there – and swastikas, conflating opposition to Israeli policies with attacks on Jewish identity.

In April 2025, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro’s home was set ablaze with him and his family inside, just hours after their Seder celebrating the first night of Passover. His crime? Being Jewish and caring about Israel. These incidents, alongside daily harassment of Jewish-owned businesses and neighborhoods, show how anti-Zionist rhetoric has been weaponized to justify violence against Jews as a collective.

The distinction between legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy and the demonization or delegitimization of Israel and Jews has been systematically eroded. For instance, when protests against Israeli policies turn into chants of “Death to Jews” or when academic discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict devolve into personal attacks on Jewish students, it becomes clear that a troubling new landscape is emerging. This is a landscape where antisemitism often masquerades as political activism. The rhetoric and actions go far beyond legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy; they represent a concerted effort to marginalize and erase Jewish life from academic and public spaces, often substituting “Zionist” or “Israel” for “Jew” as a socially acceptable form of bigotry. This phenomenon has resulted in Jews reporting increased fear, behavioral changes, and a growing sense of isolation as they navigate environments where anti-Israel sentiment frequently crosses the line into anti-Jewish hostility.

What must be acknowledged is that alongside distorted, hyperbolic, and even false anti-Israel narratives and calls for or justifications of political violence, we are seeing many actors also advance these in ways and forums that specifically endanger Jews. The challenge now facing us is to confront this new antisemitism — one that wears the mask of anti-Israel activism while upholding the principles of free expression and human rights for all, recognizing that protecting

Jewish communities from discrimination is essential to maintaining democratic values and genuine dialogue about Middle Eastern politics.

### **Antisemitism Must Be Fought in a Bipartisan Manner**

This is an all-hands-on-deck moment we find ourselves in – American Jews and Americans of all religious and political backgrounds alike. It does not matter who is perpetrating antisemitism and targeting Jews. We will be under attack no matter if it is from those on the far-left or the far-right; as they will find a way to make the Jews the culprits of whatever they deem to be the ultimate evil in their philosophy. Whether it is a far-left protester calling us “baby killers” while we are on our way to synagogue, or if neo-Nazis deface a synagogue with swastikas and other hate symbols, for us the hatred and fear we experience are the same. Anytime a Jewish person is targeted, it affects every Jew, because we are all interconnected. But the rising tide of antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem. It is a threat to our national security, democracy, and our society.

According to AJC’s [\*State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report\*](#), 79% of American Jews say the extreme political right represents an antisemitic threat in the United States today, and 78% express the same sentiment about the extreme political left in the United States today. Thirty-three percent of American Jews find that the extreme political right, the extreme political left, Christian nationalism, and extremism in the name of Islam represent a very serious antisemitic threat in the United States today.

Fighting antisemitism requires a unified, bipartisan approach that transcends political divisions and partisan considerations. Antisemitism affects all Americans regardless of political affiliation, and the hatred directed at Jewish communities comes from extremists across the political spectrum – both far-left and far-right actors who target Jews for different ideological reasons. The charge for elected officials lies not only in condemning antisemitism when it comes from political opponents, but also in having the courage to call out antisemitic rhetoric and actions from within their own parties, recognizing that such principled stands ultimately strengthen both their constituencies and democratic institutions. Bipartisan initiatives, like the **House Task Force for Combating Antisemitism**, demonstrate how lawmakers can effectively collaborate across party lines to address this ancient hatred, ensuring that antisemitism does not become weaponized as a political wedge issue that further divides communities. When political leaders unite against antisemitism, they send a powerful message that protecting vulnerable communities and upholding democratic values transcends partisan politics and strengthens our national security. **I encourage all members of this body to join this important task force.**

**AJC also encourages Members of Congress to engage directly with Jewish organizations to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the many forms antisemitism takes in**

**today's society.** Essential resources, such as AJC's [Translate Hate glossary](#), which helps decode antisemitic tropes and coded language, make it substantially easier to recognize the historical context of modern manifestations of antisemitism. We are here to help! By partnering with Jewish advocacy organizations, lawmakers can learn to better recognize and address antisemitism's complex roots — from subtle bias to overt hostility, whether in schools, online, or in the streets of our nation's Capital. Through open dialogue and collaboration, Congress can more effectively support Jewish communities, promote understanding, and uphold the core values of inclusion and respect that strengthen our democracy.

### **Antisemitism Online**

Antisemitic and anti-Israel rhetoric have exploded online. Online and more specifically, on social media, continues to be the place where most American Jews experience antisemitism. According to AJC's [State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report](#), 67% of Jewish adults have seen antisemitic content online or on social media at least once in the past 12 months, of which 20% report that these incidents made them feel physically threatened. Unfortunately, many do not report the incidents. The number one reason given by Jewish respondents as to why they chose not to report antisemitism online or on social media was that *they did not believe any action would be taken*.

Antisemitic content on social media platforms regularly surges after attacks on the Jewish community, as it did after October 7. Immediately following the antisemitic attacks in Boulder and Washington, celebration of these attacks, including comments such as “what goes around comes around,” “long live the intifada,” and “resistance” appeared in posts and in the comments sections across all major social media platforms such as Meta, X, TikTok, and YouTube, according to AJC partner, CyberWell – the world's first live database of online antisemitism.

Additionally, it is important to note that the online manifestos of shooters at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where 11 worshipers were murdered; mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, where 51 were killed; a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, where 23 people were killed; and a supermarket in a predominantly Black neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, where 10 people were killed, were inspired by the "Great Replacement Theory" – a conspiracy theory rooted in the belief that the white race is under threat of extinction at the hands of Jews and other minorities. Internet sites such as 4Chan, Reddit, and Discord have allowed those who hold these extremist views to come together and be inspired by these conspiracy theories to hold Jewish people responsible for the world's problems.

In his manifesto to explain the attack, the Buffalo shooter blamed Jews for pushing out whites and accused Jews of believing they were superior because they called themselves “God's chosen



people.” “Why attack immigrants when the Jews are the issue?” the suspect asks rhetorically. His answer: “They can be dealt with in time.”

To mitigate these issues and strengthen our national security, there are several avenues Congress can take. **Congress should pass fundamental reforms to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act and hold social media companies accountable for the spread of antisemitic and hate-fueled violence on their platforms. Congress should ensure online platforms lose their special immunity if they utilize an algorithm to amplify or recommend content to a user that promotes violence and impose stronger transparency requirements on online platforms to prevent algorithmic bias, improve moderation systems, and enforce community standards.** And finally, **Congress should pass legislation requiring social media companies to allow researchers access to the platform’s data, while maintaining users’ privacy.** Qualified, independent researchers can help Congress — and the social media companies themselves — better understand how the platform’s algorithms are spreading antisemitism.

**Congress should also continue to publicly hold social media platforms accountable with enforcing and strengthening their existing anti-terrorism and incitement to violence policies.**

Experts at AJC regularly engage with social media companies on these issues, provide briefings and policy recommendations, and serve as a trusted flagger or early warning partner, which allows us to escalate harmful content and alert the companies to changing trends in antisemitism. AJC would be happy to brief Members of Congress to ensure you remain updated on the latest data and can develop comprehensive policies that can make these platforms safer for all users.

### **Addressing Security Threats**

Just as we can do more to educate and train people to understand antisemitism and anti-Zionism, more also needs to be done to protect Jewish communities from physical threats. Our [\*State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report\*](#) data found that, for American Jews who are affiliated with a Jewish institution, 30% said their institutions were targeted by graffiti, threats, or attacks in the last five years. Nearly one-third of a minority group’s institutions have been threatened. And as alarming as that number is, even more American Jews think their synagogue, their campus Hillel, their JCC, or their kosher market might be next. For American Jews who are affiliated with a Jewish institution, 70% said their institutions have increased security measures since October 7, 2023.

**Congress should support community-based violence prevention programs and encourage local law enforcement to build stronger ties with synagogues, Jewish community centers, Jewish day schools, and other Jewish institutions and organizations — and vice versa.**

Through these relationships, Jewish communities can avail themselves of state and local-level training, technical assistance, and resources to bolster their security. These local efforts should work in conjunction with federal programs such as the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP).

The NSGP provides funding for nonprofits at high risk of terrorist threats and attacks to increase their preparedness and support security needs. This essential program has been severely underfunded for years, only fulfilling 42% of requests in 2023. Since October 7, 2023, Jewish institutional applicants to the NSGP have increased as antisemitic attacks have surged, and fears about attacks have become pervasive. **Congress should provide funding for this vital program by providing at least \$500 million in fiscal year 2026.** I want to thank Congress for its continued bipartisan support for this program, which strengthens our national security, and is more vital now than ever before.

More broadly, the threat to Jews and Jewish institutions is not confined to the U.S., it [transcends national borders](#). Groups like Samidoun, which the Treasury Department sanctioned in October 2024 for channelling funds to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, carried out a reenactment of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel in Brussels this past weekend. Similarly, organizations such as the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and members of its leadership were designated by the Trump Administration as Specially Designated Global Terrorists in 2020. Disinformation and propaganda aimed at inciting anti-Jewish hatred is prevalent in RIM's digital content, ranging from centuries-old conspiracies such as the anti-Jewish blood libel trope claiming Jews kill Christian children and drink their blood to antisemitic lies tied to current events. This was the first time in history that the Department of State designated a white supremacist extremist group. **Congress can press the U.S. Departments of State and the Treasury to designate transnational violent extremist groups as terrorist organizations in order to limit their ability to recruit online and raise funds.**

### **Prevention Programs**

Law enforcement and security agencies alone are not sufficient to address the needs of the Jewish community. Efforts to ensure security for Jewish individuals and institutions must work in conjunction with broader multidisciplinary efforts to prevent extremist and targeted violence from further spreading throughout the United States. Intervention and deradicalization are key to comprehensive preventative approaches. The Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is one such program that strengthens our abilities to prevent terrorism and targeted violence through education, partnerships, and training. Critical to our own national security interests, the Federal Government's approach must not only be responsive but also proactive in addressing terrorism, which is why preventative agencies such as CP3 are integral to countering antisemitic and anti-Israel violence.

**Congress should support the mission of the Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) as outlined when the division was established in 2021, ensure sufficient funding, and support individuals with robust knowledge, extensive experience, and deep connectivity to communities, private partners, and federal entities that work in counterterrorism.**

Local partners, like AJC, must also contribute to informing communities about how to prevent ideologically-based violent extremism. In 2020, AJC, in partnership with Muflehun, a resource center that designs programs to address complex social challenges, created a training program that took a community-based approach to confronting threats motivated by extremism or bigotry. The training was funded in part by a grant from the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention within the DHS.

### **The Need For a National Coordinator to Counter Antisemitism**

In the United States, while we have a Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism in the U.S. Department of State, their focus is abroad. The efforts of the Federal Task Force to Combat Antisemitism can be streamlined and amplified by including all federal agencies. Additionally, having a point person solely focused on leading interagency coordination and building infrastructure around combating antisemitism, including leading and maintaining the process of sharing federal government efforts across agencies and with the Jewish community, will make countering antisemitism more efficient and effective.

**Congress should work with the Administration to appoint a National Coordinator to Counter Antisemitism so that our government continues to take a whole-of-government approach to fight the scourge of antisemitism. Congress should also call on the Administration to create a U.S. Government action plan to combat antisemitism and foster Jewish life.**

### **Closing: Fighting Antisemitism Will Strengthen Our National Security and Democracy**

This moment is not only about the Jewish community, but also about the society we live in, and we must find ways to work together in a bipartisan manner to combat antisemitism and create a better future for our children and grandchildren. Antisemitism has plagued our world for thousands of years. It has led to Jews being vilified, isolated, harassed, chased, expelled, hunted, and murdered. At its core, antisemitism is a symptom of extremism and the fraying of our shared social cohesion. When antisemitism is tolerated, it means conspiracy theories have the air to bloom into something more dangerous and sinister. It means there is a rot gnawing at the foundation of our society and that we are at risk of democratic backsliding, extremism, and

dehumanization. And it means that every one of us, not just the Jewish community, is worse off. Fighting antisemitism will not only protect the Jewish community in America but also protect our democracy and national security.

We must be vigilant in distinguishing when anti-Israel activities cross into antisemitism and have the courage to call them out, issuing unambiguous and unwavering condemnations. Our government and law enforcement must take a firm stand against antisemitic hate crimes and violence, upholding the law without infringing on individuals' rights afforded by the U.S. Constitution. To achieve this, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the nature of antisemitism, its various manifestations, and its impact on society. Congress plays a vital role in fostering this understanding, ensuring that hate is not allowed to proliferate online, safeguarding Jewish communities, and investing in programs that strengthen our society. AJC looks forward to partnering with you in stamping out this hate once and for all.