



## Report on Antisemitic Activity in 2015 at U.S. Colleges and Universities With the Largest Jewish Undergraduate Populations

### Executive Summary

Recent studies – Trinity College and the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law survey of U.S. Jewish college students, Brandeis University study of North American Jewish college students, and an AMCHA Initiative survey of University of California Jewish students -- have suggested alarming rates of antisemitic activity on college and university campuses across the country.

To understand more fully the nature and scope of campus antisemitism on U.S. campuses, as well as the factors influencing it, AMCHA Initiative investigated antisemitic activity over the last year on more than 100 public and private colleges and universities with the largest Jewish undergraduate populations. Unlike previous studies, which assessed levels of campus antisemitism by measuring student attitudes and subjective reports, the current study assessed antisemitic activity by focusing on verifiable incidents compiled from media accounts and eyewitness reports.

When examining the data, three different kinds of activity were distinguished:

- **Antisemitic Expression** – Incidents with language or imagery that used one or more of eight tropes included in the U.S. State Department definition of antisemitism.
- **Targeting of Jewish Students** – Incidents involving behavior that targeted Jewish students for particular harm including physical assault, harassment, destruction of property, discrimination and suppression of speech.
- **BDS Activity** – Promotion or endorsement of an anti-Israel boycott, divestment or sanction effort. Campus BDS campaigns routinely employ rhetoric and imagery intended to demonize and delegitimize Israel, expression which is consistent with the U.S. State Department definition of antisemitism.

Our major findings include the following:

**1) Campus antisemitism is highly prevalent in public and private schools with significant Jewish undergraduate populations, irrespective of school size.**

- More than 300 antisemitic incidents occurred at top Jewish schools in 2015.
- 70% of schools played host to one or more kinds of antisemitic activity.
- Schools with the highest incidence of each kind of antisemitic activity:

Highest Incidence Targeting	Highest Incidence of Antisemitic Expression	Highest Incidence of BDS Activity	Highest Overall Antisemitic Activity
*** UC Santa Cruz (7)	*** Northwestern U. (10)	*** UC Santa Cruz (6)	*** Northwestern U. (16)
*** Northwestern U. (6)	*** UC Santa Cruz (9)	*** Northwestern U. (6)	*** UC Santa Cruz (13)
*** UC Berkeley (4)	*** UC Berkeley (8)	*** San Diego State U. (6)	*** UC Berkeley (11)
*** UC Davis (4)	*** UCLA (8)	*** Stanford Univ. (6)	*** UC Davis (9)
*** Northeastern U. (3)	*** Columbia U. (6)	** Oberlin College (6)	*** UCLA (9)
** Hunter College (3)	** UC Santa Barbara (6)	Princeton Univ. (6)	*** Northeastern U. (8)
* UCLA (2)	** Drexel U. (6)	*** UC Berkeley (5)	*** San Diego State U. (8)

**** Columbia U. (2)	Boston U. (6)	**** UC Davis (5)	**** Stanford U. (8)
**** Stanford U. (2)	**** UC Davis (5)	**** Northeastern U. (5)	**** U. of Michigan (7)
** Pace U. (2)	**** Stanford U. (5)	*** Univ. of Michigan (5)	** UC Santa Barbara (7)
** Brooklyn College (2)	** Pace U. (5)	** UC Santa Barbara (5)	** Oberlin College (7)
**** San Diego State U. (2)	** Brooklyn College (5)	Brown U. (5)	** Hunter College (6)
** Tufts U. (2)	U. of Chicago (5)	**** UCLA (4)	**** Columbia U. (6)
U. of Minnesota (2)	U. of Washington (5)	**** Columbia U. (4)	** Tufts U. (6)
*** U. of Illinois UC (2)	Emory U. (5)	*** U. of Illinois UC (4)	*** U. of Illinois UC (6)
U. of Maryland (2)	**** Northeastern U. (4)	** Pace U. (4)	** Drexel U. (6)
**** U. of Michigan (2)	** Hunter College (4)	** U. of Texas Austin (4)	** U. of Texas Austin (6)
Cornell U. (2)	**** San Diego State U. (4)	** Vassar College (4)	** Vassar College (6)

\*\* School occurs on two lists      \*\*\* School occurs on three lists.      \*\*\*\* School occurs on four lists.

**2) There is a strong correlation between the presence of an anti-Zionist student group such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and overall antisemitic activity, as well as strong associations with each kind of antisemitic activity independently.**

- 99% of schools with one or more active anti-Zionist groups had one or more incidents of antisemitic activity, whereas only 16% of schools with no active anti-Zionist student group had incidents of antisemitic activity. ( $\chi^2 = 25.66$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- 57% of the schools with one or more active anti-Zionist student groups had one or more incidents that targeted Jewish students for harm, whereas only 8% of schools with no active anti-Zionist student groups had incidents that targeted Jewish students. ( $\chi^2 = 25.66$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- 91% of the schools with one or more active anti-Zionist groups showed evidence of antisemitic expression, whereas only 16% of schools with no active anti-Zionist student groups showed evidence of antisemitic expression. ( $\chi^2 = 59.65$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- 80% of schools with one or more active anti-Zionist groups showed evidence of BDS activity, whereas only 3% of schools with no active anti-Zionist student groups showed evidence of BDS activity. ( $\chi^2 = 60.77$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**3) There is a strong correlation between the presence and number of faculty who have expressed public support for an academic boycott of Israel and the occurrence of overall antisemitism, as well as strong associations with each kind of antisemitic activity independently.**

- 81% of the schools with one or more faculty boycotters had one or more incidents of antisemitic activity, whereas only 17% of schools with no faculty boycotters had incidents of antisemitic activity. ( $\chi^2 = 30.34$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- In fact, 100% of the 33 schools with 10 or more faculty boycotters had one or more incidents of antisemitic activity.
- Furthermore, schools with more faculty boycotters tended to have more incidents of overall antisemitic activity. (Pearson  $r = .55$ ;  $n = 112$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
- 46% of schools with faculty members who endorsed the academic boycott of Israel showed evidence of targeting Jewish students for harm, whereas only 11% of schools with no faculty boycotters showed evidence of targeting Jewish students. ( $\chi^2 = 7.77$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .01$ ).
- Furthermore, schools with more faculty boycotters tended to have more incidents involving the targeting of Jewish students. (Pearson  $r = .51$ ;  $n = 112$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
- 74% of schools with faculty members who endorsed the academic boycott of Israel showed evidence of antisemitic expression, whereas only 17% of schools with no faculty boycotters showed evidence of antisemitic activity. ( $\chi^2 = 21.51$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- Furthermore, schools with more faculty boycotters tended to have more incidents that contained antisemitic expression. (Pearson  $r = .50$ ;  $n = 112$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

- 62% of schools with faculty members who endorsed the academic boycott of Israel showed evidence of BDS activity, whereas only 11% of schools with no faculty boycotters showed evidence of BDS activity. ( $\chi^2 = 15.84$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
  - Furthermore, schools with more faculty boycotters tended to have more incidents with BDS activity. (Pearson  $r = .51$ ;  $n = 112$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
- 4) **BDS activity strongly correlates with antisemitic expression and incidents which directly target Jewish students for harm.**
- 56% of schools with evidence of BDS activity had one or more incidents that targeted Jewish students for harm, whereas of the schools with no evidence of BDS activity, only 23% had incidents targeting Jewish students. ( $\chi^2 = 12.40$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
  - Furthermore, schools with more incidents of BDS activity tended to have more incidents that targeted Jewish students for harm (Pearson  $r = .59$ ;  $n = 112$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
  - 95% of schools with BDS activity had one or more incidents of antisemitic expression, whereas of the schools with no evidence of BDS activity, only 33% had antisemitic expression. ( $\chi^2 = 49.00$ ,  $n = 112$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
  - Furthermore, schools with more incidents of BDS activity tended to have more incidents of antisemitic expression (Pearson  $r = .70$ ;  $n = 112$ ;  $p < .001$ ).
- 5) **The presence of anti-Zionist student groups and the number of faculty who have publicly endorsed an academic boycott of Israel are, in combination, very strong predictors of overall antisemitic activity ( $R^2 = .49$ ;  $p < .001$ ). BDS activity is the strongest predictor of incidents that target Jewish students for harm, the factor with the most deleterious effect on campus climate.**
- 6) **Anti-Zionism permeates and is inseparable from contemporary campus antisemitism.**
- More than 150 talks, rallies, statements, films, displays, agitprop, op-eds and social media posts contained expression that demonized or delegitimized Israel by drawing on classic antisemitic tropes of Jewish evil, power and mendacity.
  - On more than 60 campuses, Israel was vilified with false accusations of racism, ethnic cleansing, genocide, crimes against humanity, brutal slaughter, state-sponsored terrorism, theft of land, water and human organs, settler-colonialism, apartheid, fascism, white supremacy and Nazism. A speaker at one school even called Israel “the embodiment of evil.”
  - At one-quarter of the schools most popular with Jewish students, speakers and writers were explicit about their anti-Zionist stance, indicating that they were not simply critical of Israel’s policies but opposed to the very existence of the Jewish state. In fact, there was often a clear conflation of classic antisemitic and anti-Zionist expression, indicating that the speaker or writer did not distinguish between the two.
  - A majority of incidents that threatened the safety or well-being of Jewish students or violated their civil rights were linked to Israel or Zionism.

These findings dovetail well with recent studies and provide, for the first time, objective confirmation of student reports of widespread antisemitic expression, BDS activity and behavior which targets Jewish students for harm, as well as confirmation of student perceptions that certain kinds of expression, especially those associated with BDS promotion, have created a hostile environment for Jewish students. The findings also clearly indicate that the primary agents of antisemitic activity are anti-Zionist students and faculty boycotters and that BDS is the strongest predictor of anti-Jewish hostility on campus.