



**Written Testimony and Appendices for NYC Council Higher Education Committee Oversight Hearing:  
“Examining Antisemitism on College Campuses”  
June 30, 2022**

**Tammi Rossman-Benjamin**  
**AMCHA Initiative, Director**  
[Tammi@AMCHAinitiative.org](mailto:Tammi@AMCHAinitiative.org)

My name is Tammi Rossman-Benjamin. I am a former University of California faculty member and co-founder and director of [AMCHA Initiative](#), an organization that investigates and combats antisemitism on U.S. campuses.

I heartily commend you for holding this extremely timely and important hearing and greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify about AMCHA’s research on campus antisemitism, with a specific focus on CUNY.

Here are some important national trends that our [recent studies](#) have revealed, all of them relevant to CUNY:

- First, the majority of incidents that target Jewish students – including acts of assault, vandalism, harassment and cyberbullying – are related to the victim’s support, or perceived support, for Israel, and this number is increasing annually at an alarming rate.
  - On CUNY campuses, most of the acts targeting Jewish students for harassment have been Israel-related, and these acts have more than doubled over the last year.
- Second, there are very strong correlations between anti-Zionist rhetoric and activity, including the promotion of anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns, and the incidence of acts targeting Jewish students for harm. For example, schools with BDS promotion are about 3 times more likely to have such acts of aggression against Jewish and pro-Israel students. The vast majority of these incidents have been consistent with the [demands](#) of the Palestinian Campaign for an academic boycott of Israel, or Academic BDS, which seeks to ensure that Israel is not “normalized” on college campuses. Academic BDS targets Israel for demonization and delegitimization and calls for the boycotting of Israel-related exchange programs and events, yet it also involves sustained efforts to denigrate, marginalize and exclude Jewish and pro-Israel students and student groups from campus life.
  - At CUNY, recent incidents include viral social media campaigns demanding “Zionism out of CUNY,” rallies including chants of “we don’t want no Zionists here” and “Zionism is not welcome on our campus,” and numerous letters, petitions and student government and faculty statements and resolutions demanding the shutting down of CUNY’s popular education programs in Israel and singling out for denigration Jewish and pro-Israel organizations serving CUNY’s Jewish students.

- Our research has isolated two major sources of campus antisemitism:
  - The first are anti-Zionist student groups such as Students for Justice in Palestine. Schools with an anti-Zionist student group are 7 to 8 times more likely to have acts targeting Jewish and pro-Israel students.
    - At CUNY, Anti-Zionist student groups on several CUNY campuses have been responsible for nearly all the BDS activity at the University, which in turn has been linked to most of the acts targeting Jewish and pro-Israel students for harm.
  - A less well-known, but frankly far more dangerous and long-lasting source of campus antisemitism – and one which we believe deserves your immediate attention - are faculty who use their academic positions and the prestige and resources of their institutions to carry out the anti-normalization campaigns demanded by Academic BDS. While faculty have a right to support a boycott of Israel as private citizens, our studies provide strong evidence that Academic BDS-supporting faculty are increasingly bringing the boycott’s anti-normalization campaigns into their classrooms and departmentally sponsored events, which in turn incites acts targeting Jewish and pro-Israel students for harm. In fact, our studies have consistently shown that schools with Academic BDS-supporting faculty are 5 to 6 times more likely to have acts targeting Jewish students for harm.
    - Many of the nearly 300 CUNY faculty who openly support Academic BDS have participated in student and faculty union BDS efforts, and just last month the CUNY Law Faculty formally adopted a resolution calling for Academic BDS. These faculty efforts not only directly limit the educational opportunities of all CUNY students, they add academic legitimacy to the anti-normalization efforts that seriously threaten the safety and well-being of Jewish and pro-Israel students on CUNY campuses.

Given the clear evidence that there is an increasing number of CUNY faculty who use their taxpayer funded positions to promote Academic BDS-compliant, anti-normalization efforts that directly and indirectly harm students, we strongly recommend CUNY immediately institute measures that prohibit faculty from using their positions and public funds for the purpose of political advocacy and activism, including the implementation of Academic BDS.

Please see the appendices below for an overview of antisemitic activity on CUNY campuses from 2015 to present, as well as a [letter](#) from 106 civil rights, religious and education organizations that describes the harms of faculty-endorsed Academic BDS for the CUNY community and urges you to address the problem.

Thank you again for your leadership and courage in tackling this deeply disturbing problem, and for your genuine concern for the safety and well-being of Jewish students – and all students – at CUNY.

## Appendix 1:

### **Overview of Antisemitic Activity throughout CUNY System 2015-2022**

More information on AMCHA's categorization of antisemitic activity is available [here](#).

Note: *One incident can encompass different sub-classifications depending on the nature of the incident.* For example, a protest that crosses the line into taking away the freedom of speech and assembly of Jewish students *and also* involves chants that denigrate Jewish students and demonize Israel would be classified as Suppression of Speech, Denigration, and Demonization.

Since 2015, AMCHA Initiative has [logged](#) **159** incidents of antisemitic activity throughout the CUNY system, including **11** incidents involving genocidal expression, such as swastikas. A large majority of the incidents were Israel-related and consistent with the [demands](#) of the Palestinian Call for an academic boycott of Israel, or Academic BDS, whose goal is to ensure that Israel is not "normalized" on college campuses. Although Academic BDS ostensibly targets Israel for demonization and delegitimization and calls for the boycotting of Israel-related exchange programs and events, **the boycott's "anti-normalization" goal also involves the denigration, marginalization and exclusion from campus life of Jewish and pro-Israel students.**

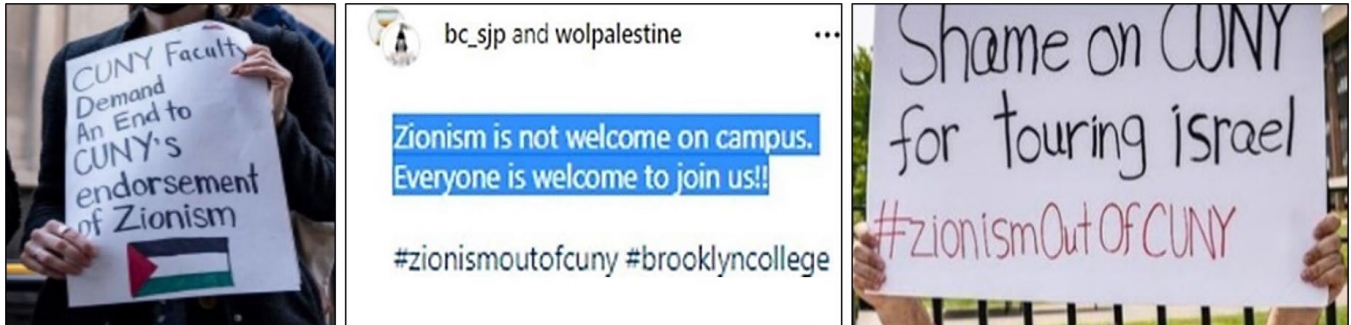
Antisemitic activity at CUNY has included:

- **64** incidents involving the direct targeting of Jewish students on campus or other Jewish members of the campus community for harmful or hateful action based on their Jewishness or perceived support for Israel, including:
  - **28** Incidents involving **Bullying of Jewish and/or Pro-Israel Supporters**
  - **24** Incidents involving the **Suppression of Speech/Movement/Assembly of Jewish and/or Pro-Israel Supporters**
  - **34** Incidents involving the **Denigration of Jewish and/or Pro-Israel Supporters**
- **116** incidents involving anti-Zionist rhetoric that goes beyond criticism of Israel and meets the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, including:
  - **102** incidents involving the **Demonization of Israel**
  - **42** incidents involving the **Denial of Jewish Self-Determination** or the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state
  - **15** Incidents involving the **Condoning of Terrorism against Jewish Israeli Civilians**
- **69** Incidents involving **Calls for BDS**
  - **13** incidents involving specific calls for **Academic BDS**

While anti-Zionist student groups are responsible for the majority of antisemitic activity on CUNY campuses, CUNY faculty committed to the anti-normalization goals of Academic BDS have played a crucial role in fomenting campus antisemitism. For example: many of the nearly 300 CUNY faculty who openly support Academic BDS have participated in student and faculty union BDS efforts, pushed their departments to sign onto formal statements demonizing Israel and condoning its elimination as a Jewish state, and played a role in the unprecedented decision of the CUNY Law Faculty to formally adopt a

resolution calling for Academic BDS. Academic BDS-supporting faculty have contributed significantly to the hostile environment for many Jewish and pro-Israel students on CUNY campuses.

**Examples of Antisemitic Expression at CUNY Involving the Harassment of Jewish  
and Pro-Israel Individuals**



- "We don't want no Zionists here!"
- "Demand that Zionist Professors are not welcome on your campus."
- "Demand that Zionist students are not in spaces where Palestinian students are."
- "We showed Brooklyn College that Zionism is not welcome on our campus!"
- "CUNY Faculty Demand an End to CUNY'S Endorsement of Zionism."
- "Zionism is not welcome on campus. Everyone is welcome to join us!!"
- "#ZionismOUTofCUNY"
- "Demand that our individual campuses, and CUNY as a whole, endorse and support the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel."
- "There is only one solution, intifada revolution. The intifada does not have to be in Gaza or Palestine. We're going to have an intifada in every classroom. We're going to have an intifada on every college campus. We're going to shut down all the Zionist events. Let's shut down all the Zionists, and let's start an intifada where we are." [Representative of SJP from CUNY City College at an off-campus rally]
- "Whereas, CUNY, including the Law School, is further directly complicit in the ongoing apartheid, genocide, and war crimes perpetrated by the state of Israel against the Palestinian people through collaboration with and yielding to pressure from organizations... a number of student organizations across CUNY... whose mission includes support for the State of Israel... These organizations include Hillel, CAMERA, StandWithUs, Bulldogs for Israel, Israel Independence Day Committee, United 4 Israel, Israel Student Association, Students Supporting Israel at City College of New York." [From CUNY School of Law BDS Resolution endorsed by 22 student organizations, and later by CUNY Faculty of Law]

- “[A]s part of our broader support for implementing BDS at CUNY, we demand that CUNY suspend all study abroad programs in Israel and other forms of institutional collaboration with Israeli institutions.”
- “We urge students and staff at CUNY to pressure the university to cut institutional ties to Israel’s apartheid regime.”
- “A number of CUNY schools participate in Israel exchange programs, including the Brooklyn College Program Study in Israel (PSI), in collaboration with Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Haifa University, Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University, as well as the City College of New York’s student exchange program with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, all of which are a form of propaganda, and normalize settler colonial and apartheid rule... Be it Further Resolved, that CUNY Law Student Government calls on the institution to end all Israel exchange programs.” [From CUNY School of Law BDS Resolution endorsed by 22 student organizations, and later by CUNY Faculty of Law]
- “Shame on CUNY for Touring Israel, #zionismOutofCUNY”
- “Judaism yes, Zionism no!”
- “CUNY Out of Israel.”
- “Join us to demand a shutdown of FIDF and all Zionist settler orgs in our [New York] city and worldwide.”
- “Ban all former and current Israeli army associations on campus. We demand [CUNY] Hunter College ban and terminate invitations to or reservations by the Israeli military, its members, and/or affiliates... Israeli state officials should not be welcome on our campuses.”
- “Defense tactics developed by the IDF should not be spread and promoted among [CUNY] Hunter students.”
- “If anyone today is responsible for stoking the flames of it [anti-Semitism] it’s Israel itself. It’s Zionism itself.”

**Appendix 2:**

**Letter from 106 Civil Rights, Religious and Education Organizations  
Regarding Faculty Antisemitism at CUNY**

New York City Council  
Committee on Higher Education  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

*SENT VIA EMAIL*

June 28, 2022

**RE: Over 100 Organizations Urge Council Members to Address CUNY Faculty Antisemitism**

Dear NYC Council Committee on Higher Education Chair Eric Dinowitz and Members Gale A. Brewer, Oswald Feliz, Charles Barron and Inna Vernikov:

We are 106 civil rights, religious and education organizations representing hundreds of thousands of individuals who are deeply concerned about the alarming rise of antisemitism on campuses across the country, and at CUNY in particular, and heartily commend you for holding this very timely and important oversight hearing to examine the problem.

Our letter concerns one significant aspect of the problem that was highlighted by the recent vote of the CUNY School of Law Faculty to endorse a [resolution](#) of the CUNY Law Student Government Association (LSGA) that “unapologetically endorses the Palestinian-led call for Boycott Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel” and demands that CUNY sever its financial and academic ties to Israel. We believe the CUNY Law Faculty’s unprecedented endorsement of the students’ resolution, particularly its call for an academic boycott of Israel, is likely to have disastrous consequences not only for Jewish and pro-Israel students at the CUNY Law School, but for students on every CUNY campus.

It’s crucial to understand that although an academic boycott of Israel claims to target Israeli universities and scholars, its implementation on U.S. campuses, such as CUNY, will directly harm students on U.S. campuses, especially those who are Jewish and pro-Israel.

First, the implementation of an academic boycott can’t help but violate the academic and civil rights of students. For example, the official academic boycott [guidelines](#) call for boycotters to work towards closing their own institution’s academic exchange programs in Israel; refuse to write letters of recommendation for their students who want to study in Israel; and disrupt or shut down educational activities about Israel or featuring Israeli scholars or leaders at their own schools. All of these actions directly subvert the educational opportunities and academic freedom of undergraduate students who want to study about or in Israel.

Second, an academic boycott of Israel directly fuels antisemitism on campus. The academic boycott guidelines call on faculty to fight against “the normalization of Israel in the global academy.” Courses taught by faculty adhering to this anti-normalization principle not only pervert a school’s academic mission by substituting anti-Israel indoctrination for education, but also foment hatred towards Israel and its supporters, a hatred that easily translates into acts of aggression towards Jewish and pro-Israel students on campus. Indeed, recent studies [corroborate](#) the fact that faculty who support an academic boycott of Israel are far more likely to include anti-Israel content in their courses, and they show a strong [correlation](#) between anti-Zionist instruction and acts targeting Jewish and pro-Israel students for harm, including assault, intimidation, destruction of property and suppression of speech.

Yet the CUNY Law Faculty, callously indifferent to how Academic BDS will subvert the educational opportunities and threaten the safety of CUNY students, has endorsed a resolution wholly consistent with the boycott’s guidelines. The LSGA resolution calls for ending popular Israel exchange programs enjoyed by many CUNY students, including the Brooklyn College Program Study in Israel and the City College of New York’s student exchange program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, as well as shutting down collaborative research projects with Israeli academic institutions that benefit students and faculty on [ten](#) CUNY campuses. The CUNY Law Faculty-backed resolution also singles out for denigration and censure eight specific Jewish and pro-Israel organizations that serve CUNY’s more than 15,000 Jewish students. Accusing the groups of being “directly complicit in the ongoing apartheid, genocide, and war crimes perpetrated by the state of Israel... in order to generate support for [Z]ionism amongst Jewish students in the US,” the resolution draws upon blatantly antisemitic tropes to defame both Israel and the CUNY students associated with these Jewish and pro-Israel organizations.

Even before the CUNY Law Faculty voted to endorse the LSGA resolution, the anti-Israel rhetoric and BDS promotion of anti-Zionist students and student groups had created a toxic environment for many Jewish and pro-Israel students at CUNY, with some reporting they had been harassed and even assaulted on campus because of their presumed support for Israel. Now that the CUNY Law Faculty has given its full-throated support to a boycott of Israel that not only violates students’ educational rights but incites hatred towards the Jewish state and its on-campus supporters, antisemitism is likely to skyrocket on CUNY campuses.

While we acknowledge that academic freedom protects the right of individual faculty members to express extramural support for Academic BDS – and nearly 300 CUNY faculty members have done just that – the unprecedented decision of an entire faculty body at a publicly funded law school to privilege anti-Zionist advocacy and activism above concern for the educational welfare and physical and emotional safety of CUNY students crosses a line that should be absolutely unacceptable to university administrators and lawmakers.

We urge your committee to take action to ensure that CUNY adequately protects the educational and civil rights and ensures the safety and well-being of Jewish and pro-Israel students – and all students – by creating new legislative regulations and insisting CUNY institute measures that directly prohibit faculty from using their university positions and public funds for the purpose of political advocacy and activism, including the implementation of an academic boycott of Israel.

We thank you for your consideration of our concerns and for your leadership.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations:

Academic Council for Israel  
Alliance for Israel  
Alliance of Blacks and Jews  
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)  
Alums for Campus Fairness - Tufts  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA  
Amariah  
AMCHA Initiative  
America Israel Cooperative Enterprise  
American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists  
American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
American Friends of Tel Aviv University  
American Jewish Congress  
American Society of the University of Haifa  
American Truth Project  
American Values  
Americans Fighting Antisemitism  
Americans for Ben Gurion University  
Americans for Peace and Tolerance  
Atlanta Israel Coalition  
B'nai B'rith International  
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources  
Binghamton University Zionist Organization (BUZO)  
Boston Israel Action Committee  
Bulldogs for Israel (Brooklyn College)  
CAFI - CUNY Alliance for Inclusion  
California Association of Scholars  
CAMERA Education Institute  
CAMERA on Campus  
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore  
Chabad at Brooklyn College  
Christians and Jews United for Israel  
Club Z  
Coalition for Jewish Values  
Combat Anti-Semitism Movement  
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA)  
Creative Community for Peace  
Davis Faculty for Israel  
Eagles Wings  
Education Without Indoctrination  
#EndJewHatred  
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)  
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)  
Fight Back Now  
Five Synagogues of White Plains Israel Advocacy Committee  
Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors  
Herut North America, U.S. Division



Hillel at Baruch, City, John Jay, Pace, SVA, Fordham, FIT & The New School  
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel  
Iranian American Jewish Federation  
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization  
Israel in NYC  
Israel Matters  
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)  
Israeli-American Civic Action Network  
Israeli-American Civic Education Institute  
Ithaca Area United Jewish Community  
JAM  
Jerusalem Education Fund  
Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana  
Jewish Student Coalition of New York City (JSCNY)  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA  
Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa (JIMENA)  
Kehilat Rayim Ahuvim  
Michigan Jewish Action Council  
Middle East Forum  
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)  
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel  
National Council of Young Israel  
National Jewish Advocacy Center  
NH4Israel  
North Carolina Coalition for Israel  
PeerK12  
Philos Project  
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations  
Rabbinical Alliance of America  
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel  
Russian Jewish Community Foundation  
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East  
Simon Wiesenthal Center  
Stop Anti-Semitism Now  
Stop BDS on Campus  
StopAntisemitism  
Students and Faculty for Equality at CUNY (S.A.F.E. CUNY)  
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism  
Students Supporting Israel at City College of New York  
Students Supporting Israel at Columbia  
Students Supporting Israel National  
Swarthmore Alumni Against Antisemitism on Campus  
The Israel Christian Nexus  
The Jewish Center  
The Lawfare Project  
The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America  
The World Mizrahi Movement  
Women's League for Conservative Judaism  
World Jewish Congress North America

Young Israel of Avenue K  
Young Israel of Bedford  
Young Israel of Midwood  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of Scarsdale  
Young Israel of Staten Island  
Zachor Legal Institute  
Zionist Organization of America

Cc: New York Council Jewish Caucus  
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Incoming CUNY School of Law Dean Sudha Setty