Case No. 25-2230

In the United States Court of Appeals
For the First Circuit

PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE,
Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH; ROBERT F. KENNEDY, in his official capacity as Secretary of the United States Department Health and Human Services; **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**; **TODD BLANCHE**, in his official capacity as Attorney General of the United States; **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**; **LINDA MCMAHON,** in her official capacity as Secretary of the United States Department of Education; **GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION; EDWARD FORST,** in his official capacity as Administrator of the United States General Services Administration; **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY; CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT,** in his official capacity as Secretary of the Department of Education; **NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION; BRIAN STONE,** in his official capacity Acting Director of the United States National Science Foundation; **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; PETER HEGSETH,** in his official capacity as Secretary of the United States Department of Defense; **NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION; JARED ISAACMAN,** in his official capacity as Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT; SCOTT TURNER,** in his official capacity as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; BROOKE L. ROLLINS,** in her official capacity as Secretary of Agriculture,
Defendants-Appellants.

On Appeal from the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts; Judge Allison Burroughs, Case No. 1:25-cv-11048-ABD

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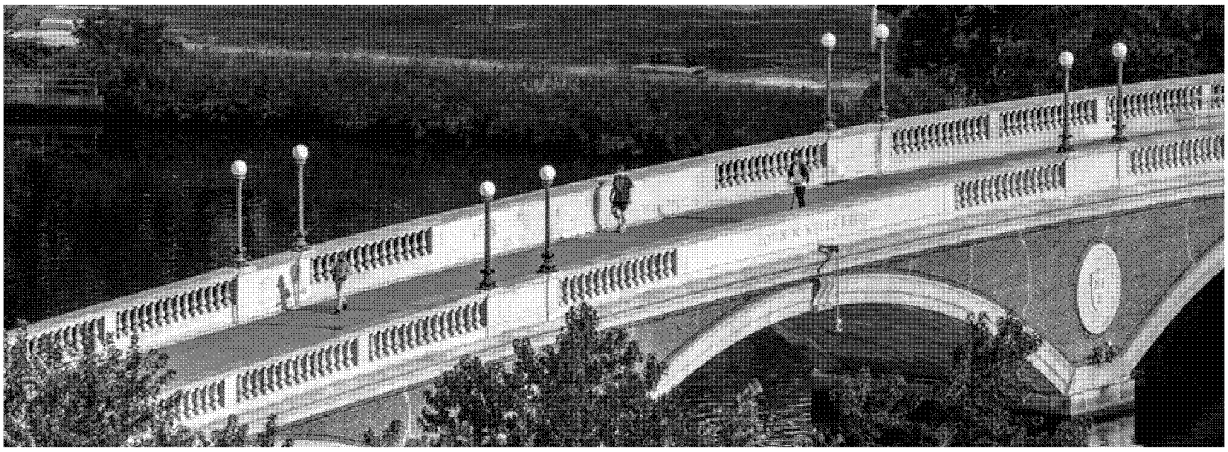

FINAL REPORT

Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias

April 29, 2025

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY

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A Note to Our Readers

We recognize that we are releasing this report at a particularly challenging time, and we have significant concerns that the important work that was entrusted to us will be undermined.

We want to be clear. The adoption of the recommendations of this report, born of the experiences of our Jewish and Israeli community, are of the utmost importance to us. So is the way they are adopted.

These significant reforms must be adopted through internal processes that have widespread buy-in within the Harvard community. We are concerned that external parties, even if well-intentioned, will seek to compel adoption of some of our proposed reforms. If they do so, they will make it more difficult for Harvard to fix itself.

The experiences set out in this report and its recommendations come from Harvard. So, too, must the resolutions and the reforms. Our Jewish and Israeli community deserves nothing less.

— *The Members of the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias*

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Introduction

Each year, a program at Harvard University hosts a forum in which student fellowship recipients share their stories in short speeches. In the 2023-24 academic year, one of these recipients, a Jewish Harvard student, planned to describe how their experiences as a grandchild of Holocaust survivors inspired their career goals. In prepared remarks shared with the forum's student organizers, the student speaker described how their grandfather survived the Holocaust by migrating to the then-British Mandate of Palestine, and ultimately helped tens of thousands of others find refuge in territory that is now part of the modern State of Israel. The student recounted what happened next:

> The [student] directors of the conference pulled me aside and said that I cannot mention my grandfather's rescue missions in my speech, because his rescue missions involve Israel. Nowhere does my speech mention the current war or Zionism. It is strictly about the Holocaust. [The two student organizers] told me that my family's Holocaust narrative is not "tasteful" and … I asked "what is not tasteful?" [One of the students] laughed in my face and said, "oh my God." This response was incredibly hurtful and inappropriate. They told me that my family history is inherently one-sided because it does not acknowledge the displacements of Palestinian populations, and I believe this accusation is an antisemitic double standard.

According to the student speaker, while the forum organizers eventually allowed the speaker to mention their grandfather's rescue mission, they insisted that the speaker omit reference to the British Mandate of Palestine as their grandfather's destination.

In many ways, this story epitomizes what we heard about the experiences of numerous Jewish and Israeli students at Harvard in the period after the October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel. Some Jewish students were informed by peers, teaching fellows, and in some cases, faculty, that they were associated with something offensive, and, in some cases, that their very presence was an offense. Perhaps the best way to describe the existence of many Jewish and Israeli students at Harvard in the 2023-24 academic year is that their presence had become triggering, or the subject of political controversy, and the students found themselves, as with the student above, on the wrong side of a political binary that provided no room for the complexity of history or current politics. Many Jewish Harvard affiliates were routinely asked to clarify that they were "one of the good ones" by denouncing the State of Israel and renouncing any attachment to it.

This is the Final Report of the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias. When established in January of 2024,[1] then-Interim President Alan Garber charged the Task Force to:

> Examine the recent history of antisemitism and its current manifestations on the Harvard campus. It will identify causes of and contributing factors to anti-Jewish behaviors on campus; evaluate evidence regarding the characteristics and frequency of these behaviors; and recommend approaches to combat antisemitism and its impact on campus.

[1] The Task Force first convened under the name "Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism," with "Anti-Israeli Bias" added in June 2024 to better reflect the Task Force's charge.

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Our work was preceded by a letter from 33 Harvard student groups that held Israel "entirely responsible" for the October 7th Hamas attacks on Israel. The letter, which was made public as the Hamas invasion of Israel was still underway, caught Harvard's Jewish community in a moment of intense vulnerability and grief and created a horrifying split screen, as community members juxtaposed horrific videos of violence and assault on Israeli civilians, all while encountering media reports in which fellow Harvard community members appeared to be blaming the victims, whose blood was not yet dry, for their own deaths.

This event marked the beginning of what history may remember as the "American campus front" in the hostilities between Israel and Hamas beginning in October 2023 and, as of the date of writing, still ongoing. These hostilities have expanded to include conflicts in several neighboring countries in the Middle East. As students on all sides of the issue have organized demonstrations and sought support from outside groups, Harvard, like other elite universities, has faced a profound crisis.

Since Fall 2023, different factions at Harvard have fought to force various University leaders to make statements, invest, divest, hire, fire, doxx, un-doxx, discipline students and undiscipline them. Without a doubt, the 2023-24 academic year was one of the most challenging years in recent history in American higher education. Campuses found themselves struggling to understand how to handle wide differences of opinion across and within educational communities. By January 2024, the situation at Harvard was particularly difficult, as the institution contended with the sudden departure of its recently installed president and faced legal challenges alleging systematic antisemitism and anti-Arab bias within the University.

This current crisis would have been unimaginable just a few years ago. To illustrate the stark departure from past practices, we heard from a firsthand observer that, as recently as 2017, a co-president of the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee occasionally attended dinners at Harvard Hillel. While disagreements undoubtedly arose, this student and their Zionist peers engaged with each other as fellow members of a shared academic community — and as friends — recognizing the value of dialogue and understanding across differences. This period reflects a different era in intergroup relations at Harvard — one in which students appeared to take more seriously their good fortune in being at Harvard and the opportunities this afforded them to bridge divides and engage constructively with diverse viewpoints, even across well-known and deeply felt disagreements.

This report summarizes the findings of the Task Force's study of conditions at Harvard University. We gathered oral and written documentation between March and September 2024, and we devoted the rest of 2024 and beginning of 2025 to writing the report. Our work involved meeting with hundreds of students, faculty, and staff in listening sessions for specific segments of the campus community as well as private conversations with individuals. We also met with members of the wider Harvard community, including alumni. In our outreach, we spoke with non-Jews, American Jews, and Jewish and Arab citizens of the State of Israel within the Harvard community. Additionally, we reviewed a substantial volume of materials provided by Harvard affiliates and received valuable feedback from members of Jewish organizations both on campus and in the alumni community. The work of former President Claudine Gay's Antisemitism Advisory Group also proved beneficial.[2]

Our Task Force, comprised of faculty and students, views this report as a starting point rather than a definitive conclusion, laying the groundwork for wide-ranging recommendations essential in our view for the future of our campus community. We each come to this work with our own experiences here at Harvard, and while those may inform our individual perspectives, our work over the past year relies

[2] Harvard's Antisemitism Advisory Group was formed in October 2023 by then-President Claudine Gay in response to rising concerns about antisemitism on campus, particularly after the Hamas attack on Israel. Its stated purpose was to "work closely with [the president], guided by [the provost] and with the help of the School deans, to develop a robust strategy for confronting antisemitism on campus." The group's work concluded at the end of President Gay's tenure. While the Task Force that produced this report benefited from receiving the Advisory Group's report, the two groups are otherwise unrelated. The Task Force is a separate entity, established by a different president, with a distinct mandate and almost entirely different membership (only one member in common).

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principally on the experiences of others. We are not dispassionate in these efforts. We have found many of the narratives we heard upsetting, at times deplorable, often heartbreaking, but we have sought in this report to share what we were told generally without overlay or gloss, leaving to the readers of this report their own conclusions about what has transpired over the past year at a university we cherish.

In keeping with our charge, we did not conduct our work as if we were a court or a jury. While our doors (and inboxes) were open to all, and we made extensive efforts to reach out and listen broadly, we do not assert that we heard from every person or perspective at Harvard on these issues. We listened carefully to the accounts and personal narratives shared with us and have presented them here as they were conveyed, recognizing the possibility of selection bias, among other limitations, inherent in our approach. While in some instances we received corroborating evidence for the narratives shared, we did not require such evidence. We do not claim that these experiences expressed in these narratives are universal or uniformly felt within the University. However, as detailed below, throughout countless interactions with community members during the course of our work, we encountered certain themes and patterns repeatedly. What we describe in this report reflects the experiences related to us by many members of the Harvard community through listening sessions, discussions with student groups, individual reports, and feedback from the open responses offered through an online survey.

As the Task Force went about its work, it was aware of historic continuities between the current moment and past crises that have affected the Jewish people. The lives of Jews in one part of the world have always been liable to affect Jews living elsewhere. When Jews at Harvard and elsewhere in 2023 placed posters and held rallies to raise awareness of Israelis held hostage, they were following the same religious and cultural prerogative to redeem hostages as the global Jewish community in the 17th century that banded together to rescue refugees from Ukrainian pogroms who had been taken captive and put up for sale in the slave markets of Istanbul.[3] Our Jewish community's concern for Israel was a continuation of a tradition of American Jewish philanthropic solidarity for persecuted Jews throughout the world and, in the 20th century, for the establishment and nurturing of a Jewish state. In 2023, Hamas' invasion of Israel led to a moment of intense vulnerability for Jews in America, thousands of miles away. Many Jews at Harvard felt this vulnerability with a particular intensity. Due to constant media coverage, Harvard became a focal point among many college and university campuses in the greatest wave of global antisemitism and anti-Jewish political mobilization since the 1930s. These challenges were deeply traumatic for many Jews both on and off campus. The events and experiences of this period on campus confounded the expectations of Harvard's Jewish alumni community, which had assumed that the largely robust and barrier-free Jewish life that they had known as students was a norm that would continue indefinitely. Many Jewish and Israeli students (Jewish and non-Jewish Israelis alike) recounted a year in which events in Israel and reactions to those events here constituted obstacles to their ability to engage fully in academic and co-curricular life at Harvard.

We learned through our work that the crisis of 2023 did not arrive in a vacuum. At the turn of the millennium, changes in American demographics and Harvard's admissions policies meant that by 2023 the Jewish student community was much smaller than it had been in the early 2010s. The discussion of Israel-Palestine on campus had also become much more extreme. In the 1980s and 1990s, pro-Israel organizers and pro-Palestinian organizers had disagreed strongly yet often worked together to build bridges and to imagine jointly a better future for the region. Those efforts started to fade in the 2000s amidst the Second Intifada and through the Israel-Hamas wars of the 2010s, and by the time Hamas crashed through the Israeli border fence in 2023 the conditions at Harvard (as in the Middle East itself) were very different.

[3] Teller, A., and Project Muse. *Rescue the Surviving Souls: The Great Jewish Refugee Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*. Princeton University Press (2020).

A new politics of some pro-Palestinian organizing appears to view bridge-building activities as a form of betrayal, and a new generation of student activists seems to have begun to perceive Israel as a symbol and vehicle of the evils of the United States and the rest of the Western world. As one Harvard student wrote to their classmates shortly after October 7th in an email we reviewed, the student could not reverse the partition of India that had traumatized their grandparents, but they could organize other students to help free Palestine. A central feature of this politics is arguably the notion that despite its military strength, Israel is nonetheless vulnerable and dependent, that it can be affected by marches on American campuses and divestment and boycott campaigns in a way that could not apply to, say, China, Russia, or America itself. It is precisely this sense of vulnerability that many Israelis and American Jews at Harvard felt so intensely in the aftermath of the October 7th attacks, and which often created a wide gap between how Jewish and Israeli students experienced campus protests and what some of the protestors told us they thought they were protesting for.

The protests of academic year 2023-24 appeared to have had diverse motives. For many students, including Jewish ones, sympathy with the Palestinians was a natural response to Israel's massive military response to the October 7th attacks and a rapidly mounting toll of death and destruction. This sympathy did not mean that each and every participating student was calling for Israel's violent downfall or hatred of Jews worldwide. Yet for some protestors, at times the anti-Zionism enunciated in the student protests crossed a line from a call for freedom and security for Palestinians and Jews alike to a stereotyped notion: that Israel is not a state, but rather a "settler colony" of white Europeans who have no real connection with the land they had stolen, that epitomized aggression, and was bereft of virtues. This view had support among segments of Harvard's faculty, staff, and students, including a small but vocal segment of Jewish students. It can also be found in some Harvard curricula and study abroad programs.[4] As we describe in greater detail in Chapter 4, some curricula, study abroad programs, and parts of degree programs have offered a disturbingly one-sided education on Israel-Palestine.[5] However, these programs are not the only places where problems have emerged. They may have received the bulk of the attention during the 2023-24 academic year, but at the end of the day they provide a window into a set of wider problems at the University and in academia writ large.

As we document concretely throughout this report, many Jewish students, staff, and faculty, as well as non-Jewish Israelis, often find this intensely politicized environment difficult to navigate. Many non-Israeli Jews told us they just prefer to avoid the topic of Israel, which is generally not a choice that Israeli students can make. A Harvard faculty member who works closely with students reported to us that some Jewish students choose to hide their identities on campus, which was something the faculty member could not have imagined would ever be the case at Harvard. Many of the most engaged Jews

[4] While this may seem surprising to the reader — it was to us before we began this work — the organizers of the programs that we discuss at greater length in Chapter 4 have published articles explaining their views and pedagogical goals, see e.g.: 1. "Touring Absences, Erasures, and Futures in the Unholy Land: A Religiously Literate Diasporic Reading of Palestine/Israel," Palestine/Israel Rev. Oct. 1, 2024; 1 (2): 313-342, https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/psup/pir/article/1/2/313/390095/Touring-Absences-Erasures-and-Futures-in-the (an article from organizers of an Israel/Palestine-focused program at the Harvard Divinity School explaining their goal of training pro-Palestine activists); 2. "Social medicine education towards structural transformation in Palestine," Soc. Sci. & Med. vol. 361, 2024, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027795362400786X/pdfft?md5=6c1eb9b462216d207ced14742d8862fc&pid=1-s2.0-S027795362400786X-main.pdf (an article from organizers of programming at the FXB Center and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health); 3. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s13031-024-00634-0 (an article from organizers of the FXB Center Palestine Program in Health and Human Rights (with co-authors) dismissing calls for "political neutrality" for humanitarian health centers at universities as "curtailing thought" in light of "genocide, colonialism and imperialism" and urging "unwavering demands for justice and disruptive action."); 4. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9790940/pdf/hhr-24-02-229.pdf. (an editorial from organizers of the FXB Center Palestine Program in Health and Human Rights).

[5] We wish to acknowledge that both Harvard Divinity School and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health had decanal transitions during the 2023-24 academic year. The incoming deans inherited many of the challenges outlined in this report. Notably, at HDS, the program we consider most problematic, has since undergone a leadership change, suggesting a potential for considerable improvement.

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on campus, who often have deep knowledge of the history of the region and, in many cases, a heartfelt commitment to Palestinian rights, also told us that they found dialogue on campus to be exhausting because their own histories and narratives were dismissed as either offensive or false.

Returning to the opening story about the student at the Harvard forum, the student organizers who reportedly refused to allow the sharing of a peer's family story allegedly did so in the name of inclusivity. In telling their fellow student that their family history was unspeakable at Harvard in 2023, these students were expressing an inability to deal with historical complexities, precisely the opposite of what a Harvard education should make possible. The message in our view seemed to be that the student's story of their family finding refuge in what is now the modern State of Israel cannot be spoken because to consider Jews as victims of persecution and to bring attention to the fact that the ancestors of many Israelis arrived as refugees would be to justify oppression. And, as such, a student's true story about their ancestor's heroic rescue of thousands of people becomes at best unspeakable, at worst a lie, and in either case the attempt to portray Jews and Israelis as anything other than malefactors is somehow a threat to others.

The hostility about which we heard has had significant consequences that are degrading to the University. Some Jewish students told us they turned down offers of admission at Harvard Schools. Some Jewish students completing PhDs said they decided to leave for private industry because of the perception and experience of academia being unfriendly to Jews. Some non-Jewish faculty told us that Jewish candidates turned down post-doctoral fellowships at Harvard. We also heard from Jewish medical school students that they shied away from residencies at Harvard's hospitals because of the deep politicization of the climate. We have heard from many dozens of non-Jewish students, faculty, and staff who were profoundly troubled at what they described as an intolerance that has crept into higher education and that is also on display at Harvard.

We heard a common question from a wide range of interlocutors: If Harvard cannot preserve a welcoming, pluralistic community of excellence for teaching and research, then who can? And what does the current state of higher education, particularly in the wake of the 2023-24 academic year, say about its future?

A question we have often been asked to consider is whether anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism. Anti-Zionist students vow that they oppose Israel, not Jews. Zionist students usually grant that certain criticisms of Israel are not antisemitic but claim that opposing Israel as a Jewish state is antisemitic. Both statements require clarification.

Harvard students, like everyone in this country, have rights to freedom of conscience. Those rights include a right to think critically of Israel and to express that criticism, even in ways that people who identify as Israeli or Zionist may find discomfiting. The State of Israel, like other nations, engages in behaviors that members of our community may find objectionable, even deplorable, and students and others have the right to say as much, subject to the University's policies and rules. However, "criticism" does not justify intimidation, exclusion, bullying, or harassment of members of our community, nor does it justify disruption of the University's functioning. It is disingenuous to use a mild word like "criticism" to describe raucous, aggressive, and inflammatory protest activity on our campus. Nor is it mere "criticism" when Harvard faculty take Jewish students on study abroad trips to bear witness to alleged crimes the students are told they share in; as the organizers of a study abroad program offered at one School described it:

> [Jewish American students on the trip] became overwhelmed with their sorrow at how the Jewish tradition has become indistinct from a settler colonial nation-state project. They aspire to extricate themselves from such a conflation, which implicates them in atrocities.[6]

[6] See https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/psup/pir/article/1/2/313/390095/Touring-Absences-Erasures-and-Futures-in-the (describing a Harvard study abroad sponsored by the Religion and Public Life program at the Divinity School).

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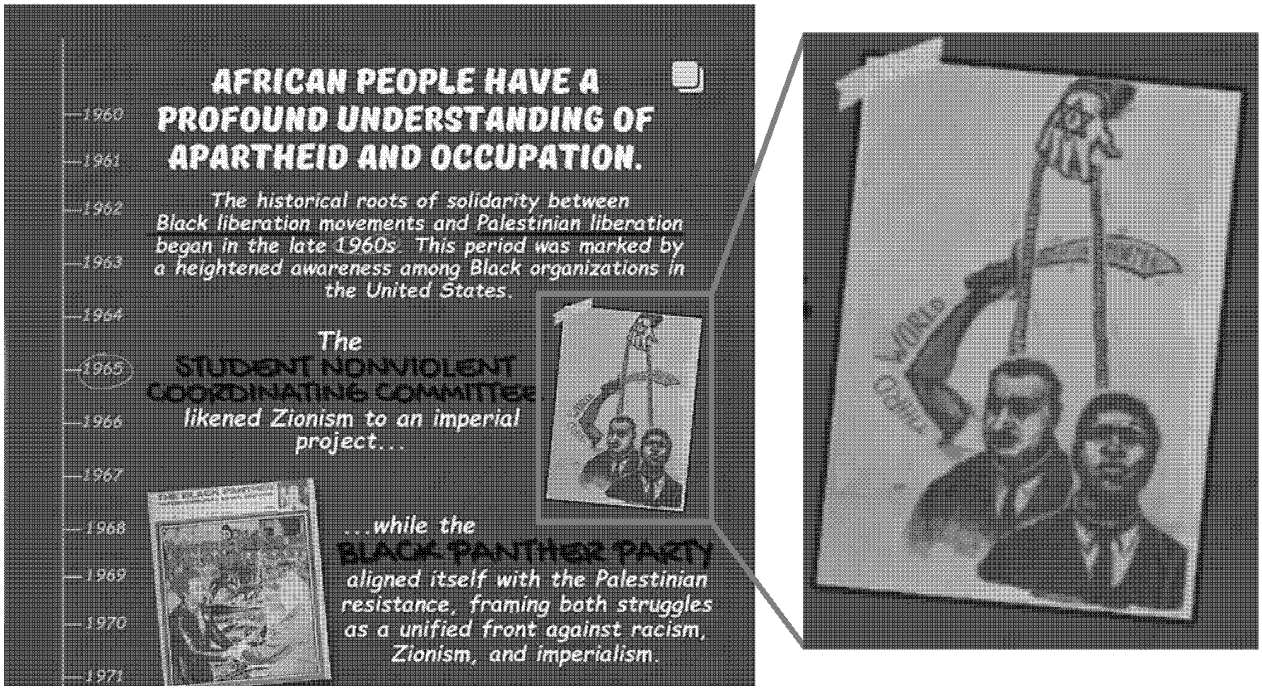
This is describing a form of hereditary and collective guilt, where American Jews are guilty of alleged crimes committed in some cases generations ago by other people. In this formulation, American Jews are guilty of "atrocities" unless they distance themselves from the State of Israel. This is not simply "criticism of Israel" — except insomuch as "Israel" is the ancient sobriquet of the Jewish people.

Moreover, even if hostility towards Israel is not necessarily antisemitic, it is unacceptable when its expression violates our community's fundamental values. The exclusion of Israeli or Zionist students from social spaces and extracurricular activities; the posting of threatening messages regarding Israel on social media; the attempts to persuade Jewish students not to enroll or to continue their education at Harvard; and the failure of some of our instructors to teach about Israel/Palestine with academic breadth and rigor are shameful acts. The fact that their ostensible target is Israel and not Jews as a collective is irrelevant. Last but certainly not least, the slippage between "Israel" and "Jews" is widespread, as demonstrated by the increase since October 2023 in classic antisemitic beliefs among the American public and attacks against Jewish individuals and institutions throughout the world.

The ease with which "anti-Zionism" slips into what is effectively antisemitism can be illustrated by two events on Harvard's campus.

The first was an antisemitic cartoon circulated in February 2024 by groups of pro-Palestinian Harvard students, staff, and faculty on social media. The cartoon, depicting a white hand with a Jewish star holding a noose around the heads of a Black man (Muhammad Ali) and an Arab man (Gamal Abdel Nasser), came from 1960s Black student activism, and it was widely condemned as antisemitic by Black leaders at that time. In a joint statement in 1967, prominent civil rights activists Whitney M. Young Jr., A. Philip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin condemned the image as "filled with antisemitic venom."[7]



So why would antisemitic content from the 1960s re-appear on the social media feed of Harvard students and faculty in 2024? One answer may be that many campus activists do not know much about antisemitism, which makes it harder for them to "walk the line" between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. Another answer may be that antisemitism is still present and has in recent years continued to be used as

[7] "SNCC Attack Draws Attacks: Group Repeats Attack on Jews." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 19, 1967.

a political organizing tool in societies as different as the United Kingdom and Pakistan, and the parties involved are engaged in an ideological project to re-inject antisemitism into American politics in the hopes that doing so will weaken American support for Israel. We are not in a position to know which of these two causal forces or other factors is at work. Either way the consequences are unacceptable.

A second example came at Harvard's 2024 Commencement. The University invited a prominent humanitarian, Maria Ressa, to be the keynote speaker. After her invitation was announced, she was attacked on social media by a group of right-wing commentators, including some who were Jewish. We understand why she viewed the attacks as unfair. And we know she was aware of giving her speech on a campus that was, at the time of Commencement, in turmoil, as some pro-Palestinian protestors had been subjected to discipline that kept them from graduating with their class. Large numbers of students and faculty objected to those disciplinary measures. At Commencement, many graduates wore visible symbols of their pro-Palestinian politics. (Jeannie Suk Gersen, the John H. Watson, Jr. Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, memorably described the experience of Harvard's graduation this past year as being like looking at "representatives of rival armies," clad in stoles and other clothing signaling identity and tribal affiliation.)[8] As we explain in greater detail in Chapter 2, Ressa chose not to deliver prepared remarks that were meant to urge pro-Israel and pro-Palestine students to reconcile. Instead, she substituted new remarks praising the student protestors and delivered off-the-cuff comments that appeared to echo traditional conspiracy theories about Jews, money, and power. Why did a renowned humanitarian ad-lib seemingly antisemitic remarks against her Jewish critics at a highly scripted Harvard graduation ceremony? We do not know. To speculate, one answer may be that standing astride visible political opposition to Israelis may make it easier for a speaker to slip into political opposition to Jews and say hostile things about the Jewish people who had attacked her. In the Harvard audience she addressed, it may have seemed there was no cost to offending Jews. Elsewhere on Harvard's campus that week, a different graduation speaker claimed that Israel was committing genocide against people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, underscoring the concerning climate surrounding discussions of Israel and Jewish identity at Harvard.

The more time we spent on this problem, the more we learned about how demonization of Israel has impacted a much wider swath of campus life than we would have imagined. Friend groups broke down in the wake of October 7th as students traded recriminations or, in some cases, just stopped speaking to one another on the assumption that they did not agree on important things. The bullying and attempts to intimidate Jewish students were in some places successful. We were informed that a Jewish student took a leave of absence after the chants from the protests shattered their sense of safety, and others with a wide range of opinions on Israel reported they largely withdrew from campus life. We met an Israeli graduate student who related being the subject of relentless bullying by pro-Palestinian activists who knew nothing of the student or their past or politics but were pressuring their friends to stop talking to this student. To our understanding, the activists did not have any kind of political conversation with the Israeli student that might have occasioned this shunning; they simply saw an Israeli as an enemy and treated this fellow student accordingly. One of the Israeli student's non-Jewish friends also told us of being personally impacted by the relentless harassment of the Israeli student, as the bullies proclaimed that they would not be friends with any student who was friends with a Zionist. As a result of this ordeal, both the Israeli student and the non-Jewish friend, who had no connection to or knowledge of Middle Eastern politics, said they struggled to participate in many aspects of their Harvard degree program.

In another revealing account, we were told that a few years ago — long before October 7th — an Israeli student in a Harvard degree program had been paired for group work with another student. The other student informed the faculty member that they had pro-Palestinian politics that required them to avoid normal relations, such as collaborating on a school group project, with an Israeli. This student asked the

[8] https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/speech-under-the-shadow-of-punishment.

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faculty member for a new partner, noting that they had no objection to the Israeli student's personality and no critique of their academic work but that as a matter of political principle they would not work with the Israeli. The instructor granted the request.

This course had nothing to do with the Middle East. The instructor, we were told, decided to grant the request for a different work-partner because in their view a student who supported the cause of an oppressed group should not be forced to work with a student identified as a member of an "oppressor group." We believe that this example illustrates a yawning gap between the University's goal of an inclusive, pluralistic, and interactive community of learning and academic excellence and how it is being interpreted on the ground.

While Harvard publicly champions inclusion and pluralism, these values are not consistently upheld by all of Harvard's teachers, and, consequently, are not consistently encouraged among Harvard's students. This lack of common values is challenging for the University, which, as an entity committed to free inquiry, is not designed for policing and disciplining its employees or its students. Discriminatory incidents like these are hard to monitor, as the students who are victims of discrimination often prefer to avoid any kind of administrative process that they may fear is designed to protect the instructor, not the complainant.

For the record, we are not claiming here that Harvard's processes are unfair; however, they are often seen as obscure and very slow, and we understand why students say they sometimes are afraid, in seeking enforcement of policies and discipline, of what seems like a huge distraction that may be unlikely to yield a good result.

One faculty member expressed concern to the Task Force that:

> The general shift of power from regular faculty and to para-academic administrators has played an outsized role in the politicization and radicalization of academia and its intellectual and reputational decline. In the case at hand, it is hard to believe that years of one-sided programming by such appointees has not played a role in "hatred of the Jewish state" [becoming] the default position across campus.

While this perspective reflects the view of one faculty member, the Task Force acknowledges the potential influence of such a power shift on campus climate. In this regard, we heard from students expressing concerns about prejudiced behavior among some teaching fellows and junior personnel. Additionally, the Task Force has received reports alleging that some senior faculty members espouse anti-Israeli biases and express suspicion toward the Jewish community, suggesting their potential influence in shaping campus climate should not be disregarded.

In this report, we will outline severe problems that will be hard to solve. We provide a detailed description of the history of Jews at Harvard that may help illuminate some of the features that make this new era, which started in the 2010s, a break from the past. We depict the profound difficulties that many Jewish students report having encountered since October 2023.

We do not want to overstate the challenges, as Harvard also has much to be proud of and has a thriving, albeit diminished and stressed, Jewish community. But it is also clear that significant trends within the University seem at odds with the University's stated values (which were summarized in 2018 by the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging), where pluralistic excellence is at the heart of what Harvard aims for:

> Harvard University aspires to provide education and scholarship of the highest quality — to advance the frontiers of knowledge; to equip students, staff, and faculty and academic personnel for fulfilling experiences of life, work, and inclusive leadership in a complex world; and to provide all members of our diverse community with opportunities for growth.

The 2018 statement goes on to maintain that achieving these goals requires affirming five values on campus: "respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others"; "honesty and integrity in all dealings"; "conscientious pursuit of excellence in our work"; "accountability for actions and conduct in the community"; and "responsibility for the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another."

This is what Harvard wants. Our final chapter on recommendations describes how Harvard can pursue its stated goals more fully and successfully. (In Appendix 1, we outline some improvements that the University and the Schools reported they have made in recent months.) We must undo an environment at Harvard where, as an Israeli Arab student told us:

> Instead of diversity moderating people, people become more extreme. One Palestinian student showed up [at Harvard], talking with Israelis. By the end [of their time at Harvard, the student] cut off ties with Israelis and posted [on social media] in favor of Hamas.

We heard similar statements from many other people, including faculty and staff who work closely with students. They saw Harvard as a place where, over time, many students' politics become more radical and where students become less tolerant of people who disagree with them. Faculty who work closely with students told us that in this generation, students too often feel they are carrying the weight of their identities, since they say that is how they sold themselves to Harvard in the application process. This positioning contributes to a kind of affective polarization that, we believe, Harvard has neither anticipated nor developed a set of tools to counteract. Reversing this polarization will require hard decisions and strong leadership. The Israeli Arab student we spoke with provided a suggestion that we think is crucial for moving forward:

> Harvard should change [its] admissions policy to reflect what campus should look like: people listening to each other.

We agree, and we think Harvard has sufficient influence within the world of higher education to lead the field into a better place. To be sure, we believe that the way forward will be very challenging. But the work is important and the vision of higher education that Harvard encapsulates at its very best is worth fighting for. During the course of the Task Force's work, we did see that better version of Harvard on display throughout the University as well. The University has summarized some of the actions they have taken since our Task Force released our Preliminary Recommendations in June 2024.[9] Here are a few examples:

- In our work, we found courses and programming at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government where students had meaningful and significant conversations about the Middle East, with guests representing a wide range of experiences and perspectives — for example, in the public conversations facilitated by Professor Tarek Masoud and in similarly wide-ranging, high-quality, and respectful conversations sponsored by the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs under the directorship of Professor Melani Cammett.
- We discovered classes at Harvard Law School that students praised for offering thoughtful discussion of contentious issues, such as a law of war class taught by Professor of Practice Naz K. Modirzadeh where veterans of the Israeli and American militaries and those who had lived through Middle Eastern conflicts as civilians had difficult and thoughtful exchanges on supremely challenging issues.
- Harvard College has, for its most recent admissions cycle, added a question for all applicants asking them to describe a time when they strongly disagreed with someone, about an idea or issue, how they communicated or engaged with this person, and what they learned from this experience.
- A Jewish Harvard College student organized an Israel-Palestine hotline, staffed by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish volunteers, that offers informative and nonpartisan answers to questions posed by the general public.
- The Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics has been running the Intercollegiate Civil Disagreement Fellowship Program since 2020, which provides students with training in moderating conversations with peers on difficult subjects, and which also sponsors public dialogue events on controversial topics with speakers who represent multiple viewpoints.

[9] https://www.harvard.edu/task-force-on-antisemitism/#implementationupdates.

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- The annual student-conceived and student-run Harvard College Israel Trek, founded in 2014, which has included Arab as well as Jewish Israeli student leaders from its inception, takes Harvard undergraduates to both Israel and Palestine, introduces them to Israeli and Palestinian political, cultural, and intellectual leaders, and encourages participants to think broadly and critically about their experience. There are many recorded testimonials from non-Jewish participants describing the trip as their "best experience at Harvard" and as what they imagined Harvard community and a Harvard education would be like.
- At Harvard Business School, the Jewish Students Association and the Middle East and North Africa Club co-sponsored a faculty panel on "Geopolitical Implications of the Israel/Gaza Conflict," with a student from each organization moderating. For their leadership and community contributions throughout the year, the co-presidents of both student organizations were recognized at the 2024 Commencement with the prestigious Dean's Award.
- Perhaps most encouraging of all, some students do continue to reach out substantively to one another across the differences that so often divide many others. Students at Harvard College launched a group that hosts conversations between Jewish, Israeli, Arab, Muslim and Palestinian students. This group, which formally started in 2022 prior to October 7th, worked with Harvard professors such as Arthur Segel and Michael Sandel to host notable Palestinian and Israeli guests. Additionally, some members of this group jointly visited Israel and Palestine. This student group continued meeting after October 7th and, despite political differences, established deep trust and got to know each other's backgrounds and perspectives.
- The President's Building Bridges Fund, created in response to interim recommendations of this Task Force and its sibling Task Force, was launched in Fall 2024. It made its first awards in Spring 2025, supporting student-initiated programming designed to encourage constructive dialogue across groups with fundamental areas of disagreement. These efforts will complement programming offered across the College and the graduate and professional Schools with similar objectives.

A more extensive list of illustrative examples from School and University initiatives appears in Appendix 1.

Examples like the ones above show Harvard at its best. Given the nature of our task, the remainder of our report mostly discusses what may be Harvard at its worst. But these examples show that there is another Harvard besides the one we describe, and that something different is possible. To be clear, we believe that Harvard's positives, including for Jewish students, far outweigh the negatives. But Harvard, by its nature, is never comfortable with anything but the superlative, and we approached our task with that yardstick in mind.

We also feel the need to re-emphasize that Harvard is home to a dazzlingly talented and thriving Jewish community that perseveres even in the face of challenges. Jewish Harvard affiliates often expressed to us their frustration that the public discussion of Harvard focused only on the negatives. We recognize that this report and the public discussion that we hope it sparks will be frustrating for some of them, but we believe this will begin a discussion that will lead to a better Harvard, and hopefully a better higher education, for all students.

Executive Summary

Our report is the product of a process that began when our Task Force started meeting in February 2024. After Spring Recess, the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and anti-Israeli Bias convened some 50 listening sessions that reached approximately 500 students, faculty, and staff. The listening sessions took place over a period of two months. After the completion of the sessions, the Task Force worked in subcommittees on the history of the Jewish experience at Harvard; current Jewish student life; University policies and procedures on complaints, protest, and discipline; and the particular challenges at the locationally distinct Longwood Medical Area. Our Task Force also featured two subcommittees formed jointly with our colleagues on the Presidential Task Force on Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias. One joint subcommittee designed and implemented a University-wide survey of student, faculty, and staff opinion about their sense of belonging and comfort expressing their identities and political views. The other joint subcommittee drew up proposals to foster a more pluralistic environment conducive to respectful engagement and disagreement — something that both Task Forces believe to be imperative.

The subcommittees worked over Summer and early Fall 2024 before submitting their reports to the Task Force co-chairs, who drew on them along with other materials when writing this final report.

Background

To understand the events at Harvard in Fall 2023 and thereafter, it is helpful to appreciate them against the backdrop of changes within pro-Palestinian organizing strategies and the University and its students. These changes were already present long before October 7th, but the Hamas attack and its aftermath appear to have accelerated and intensified pre-existing trends.

1. Changes in Pro-Palestine Organizing

In the history section in Chapter 1, we cover the history of pro-Palestinian organizing at Harvard University along with the history of the University's Jewish community, as the two are highly intertwined. As we show, pro-Palestinian organizing at Harvard used to look quite different than it does today. When Dina Abu-Ghaida '91 co-founded the Palestine Solidarity Committee on campus in 1990, she created a group that aimed for engagement with sympathetic Jewish organizations on campus and a two-state solution. During the 1980s and 1990s, it was not unusual for pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian students on campus, as well as their supporters, to hold joint events that very much reflected and supported the Oslo peace process of the time. This is not to say all was well — we document several incidents of intense disagreement between students over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — but the issue was characterized by engagement and joint work towards justice, freedom, and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

This hopeful environment began to sour in the 2000s, as the Second Intifada and the Israeli military response to it shattered the Oslo peace process and moderates in both Israel and Palestine lost power. In 2005, pro-Palestinian activists worldwide founded the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which condemned the kind of joint programming that had characterized earlier periods at Harvard as

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"normalization." The BDS movement quickly migrated into American higher education, where pro-Palestinian organizers (including at Harvard) urged their universities to divest endowment assets from Israel and companies seen as supporting either the Israeli settlement enterprise in the Occupied Territories or, in some cases, Israel as such.

Further changes in the campus atmosphere regarding Israel came in the 2010s, partly in response to what was a disastrous decade for the Palestinian cause and for the lives of many Palestinians. The period was punctuated by periodic violence between Israel and Palestinian militant groups, especially in Gaza, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. The political process that Oslo had set in motion, and that optimists hoped would lead to Palestinian statehood, collapsed. In its place, Israel began making one-off peace deals with regional Arab powers under the U.S.-sponsored Abraham Accords, putting the Palestinians in peril of disappearing into a region that appeared to be losing interest in their plight and a world that appeared to view the Palestinians as "inconvenient." If in the 1990s, many Palestinians dreamed of an independent state with a capital in East Jerusalem, the acceleration of the Israeli settlement movement over the 2010s appeared to leave the Palestinians closer to losing the land they continued to hold than regaining any territory lost in the Israeli-Arab wars of the 20th century. In our work, the spillover from the Abraham Accords onto the Harvard campus was notable for not only bitterness on the part of pro-Palestinian students, but also the optimism of Arab students from the Gulf states that had recently normalized relations with Israel. Some of these students were excited about the possibilities of peace between Israel and the Arab world and expressed deep sympathy in discussions with the Task Force for what they saw as the unfair treatment of Jewish students at Harvard.

In partial response to the collapse of the path of peace in the late 2010s, pro-Palestinian organizing on campus took on a more aggressive tenor. Gone were the unity events with Israeli and Jewish students that were common 20 years before, and what replaced them were protests, arguably far more aggressive, that aimed to build awareness for the Palestinian cause in many corners, including at Harvard. As universities are always being re-invented by new students, the current generation participating in pro-Palestinian advocacy may or may not have an understanding of how the political movement was changing, but these changes are observable over time in the history section we present in Chapter 1.

This new era of pro-Palestine organizing has brought new tactics to the table. One tactic focuses on identifying and leveraging organizations and structures that were susceptible to pro-Palestinian messaging and could be mobilized against Israel. Initially, scholarly associations were a common target of this tactic. For example, around 2010 a group of anti-Israel academics worked to take control of the board of the American Studies Association with the apparent goal of (among other things) issuing a statement supporting the boycott of Israeli universities.[10] At Harvard, such tactics were echoed by activists in the local graduate student labor union who, after October 7th, issued their own statement condemning Israel, prompting the resignation of many Jewish members and their allies. Similarly, as we will describe in Chapter 4, some Harvard instructors appear in recent years to have used courses and academic programs at certain Harvard Schools as focal points for a particular type of pro-Palestine politics and activism.

A second tactic that some pro-Palestinian organizers have adopted is trying to inject discussion of the Palestinian cause wherever possible and to use disruptive tactics to raise awareness of the cause. At Harvard, student lifecycle events that are meant to build a common civic identity as Harvard students (such as

[10] We know much about what transpired at the American Studies Association because one of us closely followed and wrote about the case brought by several ASA members against the ASA and its directors for alleged violations of corporate law in the adoption of a BDS resolution. See e.g. https://www.wsj.com/articles/anti-israel-activists-subvert-a-scholarly-group-1512337924. Emails and other documents turned over in discovery indicated that an anti-Israel activist joined the nominating committee in 2010 and then worked over the course of several years to add pro-Palestine activists to the leadership of the ASA. Emails indicate that the activists seeking election to the board wrote to each other about the importance of hiding from members their plans to support a boycott of Israeli universities, and other documents and testimony suggest that member voting was manipulated to increase the likelihood that the BDS resolution would (appear to) pass.

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First-Year Convocation at Harvard College, and residency "Match Day" at Harvard Medical School) have become sites of pro-Palestinian protests as protestors seek to inject "the question of Palestine" into areas of student life. At a student-led conference in 2024, pro-Palestinian students at one School ensured that Palestine was a major topic, and the pro-Palestinian "virtual tote bag" given to participants contained an "action toolkit." (This School's leadership responded admirably to this event, acting promptly and decisively to remove the irrelevant material and re-focusing the event on its intended purpose.) Some faculty at Harvard and elsewhere have sought to support and inspire students to engage in these types of protests by excusing them from class, by signaling support with symbolic clothing, or by saying so directly or indirectly. As we discuss in Chapter 4, we found evidence that certain faculty were injecting highly partisan discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of American Jewish groups in courses that had no direct connection with these subjects, apparently even before October 7th.

These tactics seem to reflect a type of politics of protest, and an echo of the dire state of the Palestinian cause in the Middle East. Because of the principle of academic freedom, faculty also have unusual power over their classrooms and over students, and thus there may be a relatively low cost to using part of their authority in the service of pro-Palestinian organizing, whereas a mid-level manager at a major company could risk summary termination if they engaged in political organizing at work.

At their most extreme these tactics tend to reflect a conceptual framework that can be summarized as follows: Israel is not a sovereign state so much as a "settler colony" created and sustained by Western colonial powers and that, for all its military strength, can be broken and dismembered. As Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine (HOOP), a pro-Palestinian student group at Harvard that is not recognized by the University, said on October 8, 2024, a year after the Hamas invasion of Israel, "[Israel] is a genocidal regime [that] has exposed itself as an illegitimate state with no concern for life, its very foundation being the dehumanization and subjugation of Palestinians, aided and abetted by our own government's and University's callous disregard for Palestinian life … Make no mistake: The Zionist entity is crumbling and grasping for regional war as its only path towards survival."

Pro-Palestinian activists often target what they see as key planks in Western support for Israel:

1. the belief that Israeli Jews have a historic connection to the territory of the modern State of Israel;
2. a view of Israel as a Western liberal democracy; and
3. the post-Holocaust social prohibition on antisemitism, whether expressed as outright Jew-hatred or the denial of the State of Israel's legitimacy.

The apparent hope is that, over time, by attacking the connections between Israel and Israelis and the United States, they believe — echoing the words of HOOP — the "Zionist entity [will] crumbl[e]."

This political project is often advanced through activism in universities, including Harvard. In our work, we found this activism negatively affecting the academic mission of Harvard in three ways:

1. Some across academia, including at Harvard, have been engaged in a broad effort to show (as an article recently assigned to students in an elective course at one School said) that the relationship between modern Jews and any origin story in the territory of the British Mandate of Palestine is ahistorical.[11] A cluster of academics elsewhere promote this theory, disputing any link between the Jewish population in the ancient Middle East, Jews in the modern Western world, and the Land of Israel (as it is known in the Jewish tradition). This polemical literature is contradicted by scholarship demonstrating longstanding connections between ancient Middle Eastern and modern Jewish populations as well as the religious concepts, charitable networks, and migration flows that have long

[11] See pages 158-159. We note that the article was assigned in one semester of the class in 2022. The instructor removed it from the assigned reading in future versions of the course after a student complaint prompted an internal review of the course by the School's education committee.

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connected Jews to the Land of Israel, distinct though those bonds may be from modern Zionism. However, some have succeeded in turning this subject into an academic debate, and faculty assigning these materials may do so without also assigning readings that offer differing perspectives.

2. Some across academia, including at Harvard, are engaged in an effort to convince Americans (both Jewish and non-Jewish) that Israelis are only "Western" in the sense of being colonial masters and rapacious oppressors. At one School, there seems to have been a sizable volume of programs over the past few years accusing Israelis of engaging in willful mass killing, with limited context about how relations between Israel and Hamas-run Gaza deteriorated to the point that such violence is possible and what actions Hamas fighters may have taken to prompt Israel's military conduct in Gaza. The deaths and carnage that the School's events discuss are very real, and the horrific civilian death toll in Gaza since late 2023 dwarfs the already disastrous casualty figures from prior Israel-Hamas conflicts in the 2000s and 2010s. This sort of totalizing rhetoric, however, according to which Israelis exist only as abstract figures intent on genocide, risks stymieing in-depth understanding of Israeli politics, policy, and society, as well as an understanding of Hamas and Palestinian politics.

   This rhetoric can be, moreover, particularly harmful when applied to Israeli students at Harvard, whose own views about the political situation in Israel/Palestine, we should note, vary widely.

   A deeply troubling application of this strategy we have heard about across Harvard is an attempt by student activists to drive Israeli students (and Jewish students who feel connected to Israel) out of student life. This often takes the form of "shunning." Israeli Jewish students complained to our Task Force of great difficulties participating in student organizational and club life, for example, and told us alarming stories of people walking away from them mid-conversation as soon as it came up that they were from, for instance, Tel Aviv. As American Jews at Harvard often have Israeli immigrant heritage or other connections to Israel, this type of organizing often undermines the ability of Jewish students to participate in Harvard's learning environment. We also learned of Israeli Muslim and Israeli Christian students and staff who experienced social discrimination because of their Israeli national identity.

   An Israeli Arab student told us:

   > You get used to social discrimination from [the] first day at Harvard by people of Arab descent. People refusing to speak to you. Not even pretending to be nice. Some people pretend to be nice and end conversation in [a] polite manner when they find out [I am] Israeli and then don't talk to [me] again.

   Faculty in some parts of Harvard also expressed fear that their colleagues would not vote to appoint a Zionist or an Israeli to a faculty position in their departments.

   We came to understand that this effort by some students to block Israelis at Harvard from building bridges and friendships could be seen as an attempt to practice what pro-Palestine activists have termed "anti-normalization." Across Harvard, non-Jewish students unconnected to Israel told our Task Force that they had come under social pressure to end friendships with Israeli students. American Jewish students told us similar stories, where they felt pressure to condemn Israel to prove they were "one of the good ones" (meaning, an "anti-Zionist Jew"), and faced social consequences when they refused. This is best understood as an attempt to deny the humanity of Israelis, by treating them as pariahs unworthy of respect as fellow humans rather than fellow Harvard affiliates.

3. There is an ideological effort underway to weaken the post-World War II social consensus that antisemitism is a form of bias, like anti-Black racism or xenophobia, that society should stigmatize and guard against. In the US, this effort has taken the form of pushing mainstream Jewish organizations out of progressive coalitions as "unworthy interlocutors" on civil rights issues.

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Harvard's campus may be particularly susceptible to this trend. While the University has expressed a growing institutional commitment to combating bias, antisemitism has historically been absent from the forms of prejudice addressed in student orientation programs and other platforms where Harvard communicates its values; we understand that efforts to rectify this deficiency are underway. This omission may stem from a misperception that Jewish success at Harvard negates the existence of antisemitism. But other factors may also contribute to this gap.

Jewish students told us stories of Harvard-run "privilege trainings" where they were told that they were deemed to be privileged not only by dint of being identified as White but also because of their Jewishness, which allegedly endowed them with an even higher level of privilege. This discourse creates absurd situations in which Jewish students from working class backgrounds are told by authority figures that they are oppressing classmates from much wealthier backgrounds and with stronger preparation for academic and social life at Harvard. These sorts of exercises are deeply poisonous and risk creating barriers between students who often naturally seek to connect through common interests.

We also encountered an effort by some to redefine antisemitism in a way that drains the term of meaning. For example, while we were writing this report a prominent Jewish leader on campus made public statements about what this person saw as antisemitism in a University program. We then received complaints from Jewish and non-Jewish Harvard affiliates that essentially inverted the accusation, claiming that the prominent Jewish leader was antisemitic and that the program the individual had criticized was the only unit on campus in their view fighting antisemitism. This position changes antisemitism from a serious bias worth combating into an accusation that is strategically deployed in order to obfuscate legitimate concerns. Similarly, 500 Harvard affiliates wrote a letter in Fall 2024 condemning an outside Jewish organization's scheduled antisemitism training session at Harvard. Such a pre-emptive response towards anti-bias education would be hard to imagine if the topic were bias against any other group.

In practice, we found that Jewish Harvard affiliates do not think in terms of clear, formal definitions of antisemitism: they were likely to complain about antisemitism when they felt that people were treating them differently because they were Jewish. For example, when other students (Jewish or not) told them that what they were experiencing was not antisemitism, Jewish students often felt this negation of their actual experiences and perceptions as a form of bias that was inconsistent with the prevailing anti-bias framework that prioritizes "lived experiences" and "discriminatory impact." Some Jewish students experienced this dissonance, frequently and acutely, as a widespread and sometimes institutionalized double standard.

Many Jewish Harvard affiliates expressed that implementing any or all three of the above-mentioned strategies — denying spiritual and historical connections between Jews and historic Palestine, presenting Israel entirely within a framework of rapacious settler-colonialism, and refusing to consider Jews to be members of a historically vulnerable minority group — constituted antisemitism, which we define in this report as an identity-based bias that has kept Jewish Harvard affiliates from fully participating in Harvard's educational, co-curricular, and social life. Many perceived attempts by others to revise their history or to introduce unfounded "debates" about established facts — not legitimate subjects of academic discourse — as forms of antisemitism. Even many non-Israeli Jews (and at this point in Harvard's history it is likelier that a higher percentage of Harvard's Jewish students have some Israeli connection than ever before) often view attempts to demonize Israelis as one-sided and antisemitic. Notably, we spoke with both Zionist and anti-Zionist Jewish students who expressed discomfort with, and identified elements of antisemitism in, the pro-Palestine protest movement on Harvard's campus.

During the 2023-24 academic year, some Jewish staff, faculty, and students felt that injecting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into unrelated contexts and events at Harvard was effectively an attempt to make them feel uncomfortable or exclude them from educational, co-curricular, or social programs. As previously

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mentioned, many Jewish students described being pressured by classmates to condemn Israel, with some also feeling pushed to wear clothing that signified solidarity with pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli efforts. Some Jewish staff described feeling pressured by pro-Palestinian coworkers to take political positions they found uncomfortable yet also feeling uneasy refusing when confronted by groups of coworkers. And many Jewish Harvard affiliates expressed profound dislike for being told they cannot label something antisemitic when they experience it as such.

Similarly, both Israeli Jews and Arabs experience anti-Israeli bias, defined in this report as an identity-based bias that has kept Harvard affiliates with Israeli nationality or background from fully participating in Harvard's educational, co-curricular, or social life. It is a form of national origin discrimination.

During our work, we were aware of three formal definitions of antisemitism developed or endorsed by NGOs over the past two decades. The first, developed by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, was crafted, in the words of the American Jewish Committee, as a "'working definition' to help government and civil society monitors as well as law enforcement in their work."[12] Made public in 2005, it was endorsed 11 years later by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and is now commonly known as the IHRA definition. Two others were published in 2021 in *Nexus White Paper: Understanding Antisemitism at its Nexus with Israel and Zionism* and the *Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism*. As we carefully reviewed the situation at Harvard, speaking with hundreds of individuals and poring over the historic record of the position of Jewish and Israeli students at Harvard, and recognizing that no one definition can be applied to all contexts, the Task Force opted to prioritize faculty, staff, and students' actual experiences over definitions developed by outside parties. When members of the Harvard community experience hateful conduct and exclusion, the problem is the conduct and the exclusion — not whether it maps onto a lengthy definition of antisemitism or any other form of bias.

As we were completing this report, Harvard University settled two lawsuits. The settlement conditions included Harvard's recognition for certain purposes of the IHRA definition, aligning with IHRA's 2019 acceptance by the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights for the purpose of Title VI enforcement.[13] While this Task Force was not involved in the settlement negotiations, we hope this development encourages greater investment at Harvard in building a more robust pluralistic atmosphere, and enhancing opportunities for substantive study of antisemitism, the history of Israel, and the Middle East.

Jewish and Israeli affiliates also told us that they felt their experience on campus was unique, and that no other group was constantly told that their history was a sham, that they or their co-religionists or co-ethnics were supremacists and oppressors, and that they had no right to the protections offered by antibias norms. Many Jewish students told us they feel that they are objects of suspicion. Some Jewish students with historical literacy complained that the world was full of "ethnostates" created in the first half of the 20th century through partition and population transfers, but only one was the focus of intense activist attention (usually without reference to examples that would place the Israel/Palestine conflict in any kind of context). We are not aware of any other group on campus that is subject to social exclusion as part of an intentional campaign by political organizers. One Jewish graduate student who had been at Harvard as an undergraduate years before told us that "Jews are now being treated like Republicans were when I was in college," which of course points to another problem with which elite universities have been struggling.

We observed that some Jewish students in programs at the Harvard Schools ostensibly most committed to social justice seemed to struggle to navigate environments they perceived as systemically antisemitic. This struggle appeared particularly acute when they encountered what they believed to be one-sided programming that portrayed Israelis as uniquely villainous. Indeed, a Jewish student at one School, recently interviewed by

[12] American Jewish Committee, "The Working Definition of Antisemitism: What Does it Mean, Why is it Important, and What Should We Do With It?" https://www.ajc.org/the-working-definition-of-antisemitism
[13] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2024/05/02/house-passes-new-bill-codify-antisemitism-definition

The New York Times, expressed surprise upon rereading some of her work from the 2023-24 academic year for her professors at HDS. She was dismayed by how insensitive her writing had been to the Israeli perspective. According to the article, she said that "anti-Zionist views seem built into some classes."[14]

The three strategies described above, which many members of our community consider to be antisemitic, present significant challenges for universities that aim to empower faculty and student creativity. While the Task Force shares the view that courses at Harvard should strive for both creativity and academic integrity, efforts to assure quality control may encounter resistance from faculty and staff justly concerned about censorship and threats to academic freedom. However, an academic venue such as a publication or class is no guarantee of integrity. The proliferation of scholarly journals creates opportunities for motivated actors to publish polemics without adhering to objective standards of evidence. While this outlet for creativity represents a core strength of academia, it can also undermine academic integrity. Moreover, if a faculty member teaching a course unrelated to Israel/Palestine incorporates derogatory references to "Israelis" and "Zionists," as we were told happened at multiple Harvard Schools over the course of the 2023-24 academic year, the University is likely to respond with some frustration, even exasperation, but may, nonetheless, strive to defend the academic freedom of its instructors.

These strategies also may place the universities in a highly vulnerable position, because "Israel" is not an abstract idea — it is a real country that exists, whose citizens are students, faculty, and staff on American campuses, including at Harvard. Universities relate to those Israeli community members not through the prism of political questions about the biblical narrative or settler colonialism but instead through the laws that require universities to ensure an educational environment free of national origin discrimination. Politically driven research and one-sided programming present brand and reputation risks that American universities need to take seriously. Whenever student governments in various Harvard Schools have voted to call for a boycott of Israel or to end student exchange programs, numerous Israeli and Jewish students have written to the Task Force about what they feel is an act by some students to protest the existence of other students in their own community.

2. Changes in the University and its Students

Key features of Harvard, as it was on the eve of October 7, 2023, help us better understand what happened to Harvard after October 7th and why. In Fall 2023, Harvard was in many ways in a state of flux, undergoing multiple changes that altered life on campus:

- Harvard's student body globalized over the course of the early 21st century. As the University expanded both internationally and across a wider range of high schools and regions within the United States, incoming Harvard students probably had less familiarity with Jews than they did in, say, 1990. There are few Jews outside of Israel and major American, European, and Latin American cities.
- The students at the University often had their education and personal development significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In its conversations with staff, the Task Force learned that the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the safety measures in place at its peak — such as suspending in-person classes and shifting to online learning — probably disrupted continuity and institutional memory across Harvard's student organizations. This period appears to have greatly impacted extracurricular life, leaving a void of experience with established norms and expectations that continued to affect student organizations into the 2023-24 academic year.
- Over the past few years, Harvard College students have, we were told, become more likely to segregate, socially and residentially, into narrowly defined identity groups and to engage in in-group policing than

[14] See https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/14/us/college-campuses-gaza-conversations.html.

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in the past, which some faculty and staff who interact intensively with College students believe is a source of polarization.

- In 2017, Harvard College reportedly rescinded admissions offers to several prospective students due to their alleged involvement in sharing racist, antisemitic, and sexually offensive messages on social media.[15] This action, we were told, led some students to believe that the College and other parts of the University would continue to monitor and take action against similar expressions of prejudice on social media within the student body.
- While social media is not a new phenomenon at this point, its pervasive presence means that, compared to previous generations of students, a far greater portion of students' exchanges of thoughts and opinions now occur outside of Harvard's classrooms and other traditional campus spaces.
- In our work, we observed that many students expected the various equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) offices created in the Central Administration and the Schools in the last decade to resolve instances of identity-based bias, which then led to frequent appeals for intervention and classification regarding a wide range of student grievances. We found that some students may have had an inflated view about the EDIB office's authority and capacity to address such matters.
- The University's 2021 creation of an Anti-Bullying Working Group[16] — tasked with recommending University-wide policies and procedures to address potentially abusive and intimidating misconduct, recommendations that later informed the 2023 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying (NDAB) Policies — may have inadvertently led some students to misunderstand the University's capacity to address a wide range of student concerns that, while important, fall outside the scope of these policies.
- Beginning in the mid-2010s, University leaders increasingly commented on matters of public controversy — including geopolitical developments and U.S. social and political issues — even when those matters were not directly related to the University's core functions of research, teaching, and learning. These statements, which took various forms, may have fostered an expectation among some members of the Harvard community that the University would always take their side on political and social matters of concern to them.[17]
- In the Task Force's view, University leaders made significant concessions in response to various protest campaigns throughout the 2010s, including, for example, those advocating for fossil fuel divestment. The relative success of these earlier protest movements — compared to the pro-Palestinian protest movement in Fall 2023 — may have fueled both a degree of hope and then frustration among pro-Palestinian protestors, who may have perceived these past successes as a potential roadmap for their own efforts.[18]

In addition to these broader University trends and developments, several others specific to Jewish life at Harvard emerged during our conversations:

- Though the University does not collect statistics on the religious affiliation of students, the Task Force, based on a variety of factors, surmises that the Jewish population at Harvard in Fall 2023 was probably considerably smaller than in previous decades.

[15] Rebecca Heilweil, "Harvard Rescinds Admissions To 10 Students For Offensive Facebook Memes," Forbes, June 5, 2017,
[16] https://communitymisconductpolicies.harvard.edu/.
[17] In April 2024, the Institutional Voice Working Group, co-chaired by Professors Noah Feldman and Alison Simmons, was formed by then-interim President Alan Garber and then-interim Provost John Manning to address when and how Harvard should speak on public matters. This group's core recommendation, accepted by University leadership, was that Harvard should exercise restraint in issuing official statements on matters outside its core functions of research, teaching, and learning. As a result, this behavior will presumably now be different.
[18] See e.g. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/8/30/rakesh-khurana-photo-essay, about then-College Dean Rakesh Khurana trying to quiet a crowd to create space for a moment of silence in honor of victims of police violence.

- Given broader demographic changes within the American Jewish community, as well as the University's increasing globalization, the Task Force infers that among Jewish students at Harvard, a larger proportion than in previous decades may have Israeli nationality, be Israeli-Americans, have family in Israel, or have studied in Israel as part of high school or gap-year programs.
- As pro-Palestinian student organizers and their sympathetic peers have assumed a more visible role on Harvard's campus in recent decades, their activism has become increasingly disruptive, including more frequent interruptions of University events, such as the College's First-Year Convocation. This development has contributed to some Jewish students feeling alienated from central aspects of student life.
- Two academic programs at Harvard Schools, detailed in Chapter 4, stand out as focal points for concerns about one-sided approaches to Israel/Palestine topics within their coursework, experiential learning offerings, and, in one case, a degree program.
- In the three years preceding October 7, 2023, the Task Force found, there was a scarcity of instruction on the history and politics of Israel/Palestine at the University, aside from the two academic programs mentioned in the previous bullet, which students who spoke with us criticized for presenting one-sided or distorted perspectives.
- During the latter half of the 2010s, in the view of some in the Harvard community, anti-Israel bias had become normalized, especially within politically progressive spaces. This normalization, we were told, put pressure on Jewish students to disavow Israel and are especially difficult for Jewish students with progressive politics who wanted to inhabit those spaces. Norms about non-discrimination and equal treatment among Harvard students appear to have faded, or at the very least, we were told there is an "Israel exception" to those rules (or an equally pernicious notion that anti-discrimination norms apply unevenly to Harvard affiliates based on supposed relative privilege).

While we cannot make a causal claim about any of the changes at Harvard, it is notable that October 7th arrived on a campus with growing animosity against Israel and suspicion, if not downright hostility, towards Israelis, Jews, and others sympathetic to Israel.

This Executive Summary continues below with brief overviews of Chapters 1-5, offering a concise introduction to the report's key findings and recommendations. However, for a full and comprehensive treatment of the topics, readers should refer to the chapters themselves.

Chapter Overviews

OVERVIEW

Chapter 1
Historical Context: the Jewish Experience at Harvard up to October 7, 2023

The origins of the crisis that Harvard currently faces precede October 7, 2023. During the 1960s, longstanding barriers to the admission of Jews to Harvard fell away, and for a half century Harvard had by all accounts a large and flourishing Jewish student body. This is the Harvard that many of our Jewish alumni attended and remember with great affection. Heated campus debates about Israel/Palestine go back to the 1980s, but until a few years ago, students with differing political perspectives on the issue were in conversation and did not on the whole demean each other. Because of that ongoing dialogue and fundamental sense of community, most Jewish students at Harvard continued to feel at home on campus.

In the mid-2010s, Harvard's atmosphere began to change. The Israel/Palestine issue became more divisive and polarizing within the campus community. In the early 2020s, there were signs of decline in constructive conversation, respectful disagreement, and mutual respect between students regarding many issues, including Israel/Palestine. And after October 7th, our Harvard community fell apart.

Chapter 1 of this report draws upon substantial research to trace the rise and fall at Harvard of respectful engagement regarding Israel/Palestine, how these processes have affected our Jewish students, and how we can learn from them in order to repair what our colleague Professor Ali Asani, one of the co-chairs of the Task Force on Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias, has called "Harvard's broken community."

In this chapter, we also demonstrate how, after several decades of relatively healthy interactions between students with differing views regarding Israel/Palestine, certain negative trends developed in the 2010s and 2020s:

- Growing polarization, "anti-normalization" with regard to Israel, and diminished willingness to seek compromise positions.
- Targeting of pro-Israel events, learning opportunities, and campus guests.
- Intensified debate about defining antisemitism and determining the line between discomforting and hateful speech.
- Growing acceptance of stances once seen as outside mainstream debate.
- Social exclusion of some Jewish students and a resulting reluctance on their part to fully express Jewish or Israeli identities or pro-Israel views.
- Complaints of alienation and marginalization on the part of some Jewish students with pro-Palestinian sympathies.
- Growing reliance on the University to manage and protect against offensive behavior.

Underneath all of these developments was a notion of a "Palestine Exception" to free speech on campus. This term, which was popularized by a Palestinian NGO in 2015, alleged widespread censorship, self-censorship, and chilling of critical discourse about Israel. Some Harvard students and faculty claimed that the Palestine Exception operated on campus, when in fact, as this report shows in detail, at Harvard over the past decade pro-Palestinian perspectives have been frequently offered in University programs and centers, courses, and events. These perspectives rarely made room for nuanced and in-depth understanding of Israel.

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The academic climate at Harvard during the 2010s and 2020s reflected social and political changes on a national level. We believe, however, that Harvard must not be passive in the face of such changes. The University, in our view, has the ability — and indeed the responsibility — to restore and re-imagine the best aspects of earlier forms of student interaction regarding difficult political issues.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 2
Historical Context: Harvard Since October 7, 2023

A Harvard Kennedy School of Government study showed that, during the 2023-24 academic year, Harvard had the second-highest number of days with protest activity among major U.S. universities. While most of Harvard's peer institutions experienced approximately 40 days of protest, Harvard saw roughly 70 — though still less than one-third of Stanford's total. Chapter 2 narrates the events of that tumultuous year at Harvard with concluding remarks about the situation in Fall 2024. The chapter's major points are as follows:

- Over the course of the Fall 2023 term, the Central Administration faced widespread criticism from many Harvard affiliates and alumni for what they saw as its lack of a firm or effective response to the Hamas massacre and the ensuing pro-Palestine protests on campus, which were frequent and raucous. Many Jewish and Israeli students reported experiencing social shunning, verbal abuse, intimidation, and bullying. In November 2023 there were reports of pro-Palestine activists disrupting classes in Harvard Yard. The defacing of hostage posters around campus with antisemitic slogans in January 2024, and the posting in February of a classic antisemitic cartoon on social media by the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee and the African and African American Resistance Organization — along with the resharing of it by Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine — kept many Jewish students on edge.
- After the resignation of President Claudine Gay in early January 2024, the University, under the leadership of then-Interim President Alan Garber, began to take measures to strengthen policies regarding protest. Turmoil continued, however, culminating in a three-week encampment in April and May. It resulted in no violence or arrests and was one of the shortest-lived in the country. Yet the penumbra of the year of disturbances was apparent at Commencement, where hundreds of graduates staged a mass walkout. They were protesting the imposition of disciplinary measures on 13 seniors — barred from graduating with their class for their alleged participation in the encampment. Moreover, there were two controversial Commencement Week addresses (one at Commencement itself) whose remarks appeared to engage with antisemitic themes. Controversies about student discipline continued into the summer. In July, administrative boards at the College and various Schools eliminated or reduced penalties that they had imposed on undergraduate and graduate students in connection with various protests and related events of the previous year, and in the same month the Harvard Corporation conferred degrees on 11 of the 13 seniors whose degrees had been withheld.
- During Summer 2024, the University administration issued revised policies[19] regarding the use of campus grounds and buildings. Additionally, it announced that the University Committee on Rights and Responsibilities would engage in standardized fact-finding procedures for disciplinary cases involving more than one unit. These measures signaled the administration's awareness of the need to institute major reforms in Harvard's policies regarding protest and its disciplinary procedures.

[19] https://evp.harvard.edu/campus-use-rules?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EVP%20Campus%20Use%20Announcement%208.1.24%20(1).

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Fall 2024 lacked the large-scale protests that had marked the previous year. Pro-Palestinian activism mainly took the form of silent demonstrations in the University's libraries,[20] though there were scattered instances of vandalism on campus[21] and the posting of swastika stickers near Harvard Hillel's Rosovsky Hall.[22] Notably, the College's First-Year Convocation, which pro-Palestinian demonstrators had interrupted for several consecutive years, proceeded smoothly in September 2024. This relative quiet on campus, however, concealed ongoing tensions within our community that manifested themselves throughout the Fall 2024 term and in the first weeks of the Spring 2025 term.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 3
Findings

In Chapter 3, we summarize what the Task Force learned about the alienating and hostile atmosphere that many Jewish and Israeli students at Harvard described experiencing, particularly in the 2023-24 academic year.

The Task Forces on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias and Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias collaborated on an online survey, conducted between May and August 2024. This survey attracted some 2,295 responses from students, faculty, and staff, with likely high levels of participation among Jewish, Israeli, Muslim, and Arab affiliates relative to their numbers within the Harvard community.[23] The survey revealed extensive levels of discomfort, alienation, and fear among students who identify with one or more of these categories.

In virtually every category, Jewish students reported more negative experiences than their Christian or atheist/agnostic peers, though Muslim students reported even greater negative experiences than Jewish students. It is not the goal of this Task Force, nor of the parallel Task Force on Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias, to engage in a contest to prove which group has suffered more. Rather, like our sibling Task Force, we aim to understand how the students within our Task Force's purview have perceived events over the past year, identify the sources of their pain, and use that knowledge to formulate strategies for fostering a sense of community and mutual respect at Harvard.

Among Jewish students, substantial numbers reported having the following feelings to at least some extent:

- Not at home at Harvard (39%).
- Physically unsafe (26%).
- Mentally unsafe (44%).
- Unsupported in their well-being at Harvard (49%).

[20] Max J. Krupnick, "Silent Study-Ins: Harvard Library Protests Challenge University Regulations," *Harvard Magazine*, November 14, 2024.
[21] Michelle N. Amponsah and Joyce E. Kim, "Windows Smashed, John Harvard Statue Vandalized in Act of 'Palestinian Resistance,'" *The Harvard Crimson*, October 9, 2024.
[22] "Stickers of Swastikas on Israeli Flag Posted Around Harvard Square, Police Say," *Boston Globe*, October 15, 2024.
[23] The survey was distributed to faculty, staff, and students using various channels that ranged from emails with an embedded survey link to sharing with relevant affinity groups and mentions in *The Harvard Gazette* and *The Harvard Crimson*. The intent was to complement the listening sessions and provide a convenient and anonymous survey that could be taken by Harvard campus community members who were impacted by and/or had views on the issues related to the two Task Forces' mandate. Since this population is not readily identifiable a priori, and also because the survey was not administered or marketed as a University-wide survey (such as the 2019 Pulse survey), it is not as feasible to provide accurate response rates. While we do provide relative demographic coverage comparisons to the 2019 Pulse survey, the Task Force joint survey is best viewed as a way to incorporate more opinions from those community members who wanted to weigh in on their experiences on campus and observations during the Fall 2023 to Summer 2024 period.

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- Uncomfortable expressing their beliefs or opinions to people "whose political views may be in conflict with mine and/or go against my sense of identity/nationality" (46%).

By comparison, students who identify as neither Jewish nor Muslim reported significantly lower percentages when asked the same questions as above — 21%, 12%, 24%, 33%, and 32%, respectively. In other words, Jewish students were twice as likely as their non-Jewish, non-Muslim peers to feel unwelcome and unsafe at Harvard.

Responding to a slightly differently worded question, even larger percentages of Jewish students (67%) expressed discomfort sharing their opinions in general, with that number rising to 73% when it came to expressing political opinions. Students who are neither Muslim nor Jewish were 20 percentage points less likely to express such discomfort.

Almost 60% of Jewish students reported experiencing "discrimination, stereotyping, or negative bias on campus due to [their] views on current events," and only 25% believed that there was no "academic or professional penalty" at Harvard for expressing their views.

The survey's quantitative findings were further corroborated by qualitative data collected during a series of listening sessions held between March 21 and May 20, 2024. Members of our Task Force held approximately 50 sessions, engaging with more than 500 members of the Harvard community. While most participants were students, there were also some staff- and faculty-focused sessions as well as a session with Resident Deans.

These listening sessions were tailored to different segments of the Harvard community. Sessions were held for undergraduate students in the College as well as for students in Harvard's 12 graduate and professional Schools. Additional sessions were organized within undergraduate students' residential Houses and with various Jewish student groups, such as Hillel and Chabad.

In these sessions, the participants' views were documented via typed notes in which all identifying features of the speaker were anonymized except for the nature of their affiliation (e.g., undergraduate, graduate student, faculty, staff, School). Participation in the sessions was lively, with many, most, or all participants sharing their views. Our documentation of the sessions therefore reflects the contributions of hundreds of individuals.

Several major themes emerged from the listening sessions:

- Substantial numbers of Jewish students feel that since October 7th they have lived in an increasingly hostile atmosphere in their residences, classes, organizations, and clubs, as well as in the public spaces of Harvard Yard and the Science Center Plaza.
- Many Israeli students have felt particularly victimized, often in the form of social shunning.
- Fear of encountering hostility has led some Jewish students to conceal their Jewish identity from classmates.
- Certain Harvard Schools, departments, institutes, centers, and instructors were described as promoting or tolerating anti-Israeli critiques that blend into animosity towards Jews.
- Many students described administrative responses to student complaints as unclear and unconscionably slow.
- There were widespread perceptions that anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish expression are tolerated in a way that hostile rhetoric towards other groups would not be; that some of Harvard's offices for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging have not taken antisemitism seriously; and that discipline against students who engaged in bullying, harassment, and intimidation has been lax.
- Social media has worsened the well-being of many Jewish students by enabling the rapid and repeated production of cruel and hateful messages, often anonymously.
- Some Jewish students who identify as anti-Zionist report the same sort of bullying and shunning that other Jewish students describe encountering from pro-Palestinian students.
- Harvard lacks relevant courses and programming to address the campus climate and discuss events in Israel/Palestine in a constructive, informed, and non-threatening way.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 4
Case Studies from Harvard's Schools

Chapter 4 examines instances where administrators and faculty at certain Harvard Schools seemingly fell short in their responsibility to uphold principles of open inquiry, civility, and respectful disagreement within specific courses, programs, and events. The chapter focuses on four Schools, and presents accounts and illustrative case studies based on feedback from students, faculty, and staff who reported experiences of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias, particularly during the 2023-24 academic year. These experiences manifested as:

- Ostracism of many Zionist and Israeli students that adversely affected their participation in both classroom and co-curricular settings.
- Politicization of instruction or academic settings that effectively made a specific view on the Israel-Hamas conflict a litmus test for full classroom participation and ended up disparately impacting many Jewish and Israeli students.
- Politicized instruction that mainstreamed and normalized what many Jewish and Israeli students experience as antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.

The chapter identifies a lack of rigorous academic oversight in program design and instruction, particularly for courses taught by non-ladder faculty, as a contributing factor. The Task Force expresses concern that the prestige associated with teaching at Harvard might be leveraged to advance partisan agendas, potentially compromising academic integrity, and contributing to a climate of hostility and exclusion.

The chapter concludes by calling for:

- Increased leadership and supervision from ladder faculty for courses and programming offered by centers, including faculty participation in related events.
- Realignment of center missions to prioritize advancing the frontiers of knowledge, with governance structures refocused on academic integrity.
- Cultivation of respect for viewpoint diversity and a norm of respectful engagement, relation, and cooperation, even with those with whom we vehemently disagree.
- An expectation that programming engaging controversial subjects will feature viewpoint diversity.
- Increased depth of high-caliber scholarly expertise on campus concerning the modern Middle East, including Israel/Palestine.

Chapter 4 underscores the urgent need for Harvard to uphold its core values and ensure a learning environment free from bias and discrimination, where all members of the community feel safe, respected, and empowered to thrive. The chapter provides specific examples from our work that illustrate these points.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

In Chapter 5 of the report, we call for comprehensive, integrated, and sustained changes in how the University operates.

First, we call for changes in admissions and student life that align with the report of the Joint Task Force Subcommittee on Pluralism. This subcommittee emphasizes:

> The promotion of a culture of pluralism, defined as recognizing the diversity of identities and ideologies on campus; respecting, relating, and cooperating with one another; and connecting personal and campus civic values to advance our educational and research mission. These campus civic values are anchored in the University's Values Statement advancing respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others; honesty and integrity in all dealings; conscientious pursuit of excellence in our work; accountability for actions and conduct in the community; and responsibility for the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another.

To achieve these goals, we specifically call for changes in:

- **Admissions** We believe classes at Harvard should consist of students who are eager to contribute to a learning community grounded in open inquiry and mutual respect.
- **Early student experiences** Early student experiences, especially for undergraduates, should focus on establishing norms that reflect Harvard's aspirations for its learning community.
- **Academics** Students deserve a classroom experience that embodies the desired learning community — one free from antisemitism, anti-Israeli bias, and all other forms of discrimination — and supported by enhanced course opportunities offered by Harvard's Schools and faculty.
- **Academic offerings** Academic offerings should provide significantly more plentiful and diverse opportunities for the study of Jewish civilization, antisemitism and the Holocaust, Israel, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **Co-curricular activities and residential life** Student organizations need support and guidance to ensure their activities do not have antisemitic or anti-Israeli impacts, so they can effectively contribute to the kind of learning community Harvard aspires to beyond the classroom.
- **Building a pluralistic community** To foster a campus culture of pluralism at Harvard, a central hub should be established.
- **Religious life** We believe that faith can be an important source of support for Harvard's students and an integral part of the learning community, and that steps can be taken to strengthen this aspect of campus life.
- **Administrative infrastructure** A robust administrative infrastructure is needed to support, coordinate, and sustain the efforts outlined above. This infrastructure should include substantive, equitable disciplinary procedures to the greatest extent possible, across Harvard's Schools.
- **Complaint mechanisms** Complaint mechanisms should be aligned across Harvard's Schools to the greatest extent possible, and should be easily accessed, user-friendly, efficient, and capable of generating publicly reportable aggregate data.

We also call for changes that touch on governance issues to strengthen ladder faculty oversight of educational programs and instructor training across Harvard's Schools.

As noted above, Harvard has recently entered into legal settlements and resolutions. While these are still very new, we note that they may address — and potentially even obviate the need for — some of the recommendations set forth in this report. Additionally, the University has publicly summarized some of the actions it has taken since our Task Force released its Preliminary Recommendations in June 2024.[24]

Finally, we urge the University and its Schools to take on the mantle of moral leadership in the fight against antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias. We are deeply concerned that these forms of bigotry are becoming increasingly normalized in academia, particularly within what seem to be highly politicized disciplines such as public health, medicine, and education. Harvard has a responsibility to actively counter this trend and serve as a model for higher education institutions nationwide.

[24] https://www.harvard.edu/task-force-on-antisemitism/#implementationupdates.

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Full Report

CHAPTER 1

Historical Context: the Jewish Experience at Harvard up to October 7, 2023

Introduction

Questions regarding what constitutes antisemitism and the overall situation for Jewish students at Harvard came to the forefront after the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. The attack had an immediate and profound effect on our campus. On October 8, a statement from the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee, along with more than 30 other student organizations, held "Israel responsible for all unfolding violence …. The apartheid regime is the only one to blame."[25]

The statement triggered harsh backlash, which took the form of online denunciations, doxxing, and public criticism from alumni and the national media. The administration's responses to ensure student safety amid threats and harassment were widely seen as insufficient. The campus atmosphere grew tense, featuring polarizing events, accusations of both antisemitism and Islamophobia, and considerable distress among many Jewish students. Voices on one side demanded more decisive actions by Harvard to address antisemitism, while those on the other side argued that claims of antisemitism were being used to suppress critiques of Israel.

Events at Harvard after October 7th did not emerge from a vacuum. Rather, we saw an acceleration of trends within our community dating back to the early 2000s. These trends stand in sharp contrast with how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had previously been represented at Harvard and how previous generations of Harvard's Jewish students had experienced campus life.

This chapter traces the history of the Jewish community at Harvard from the early 20th century up to the end of 2023. It focuses on the years since the 1980s, when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began to visibly influence campus life. The chapter examines Jewish social and organizational life at Harvard, interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish students, and the effects of social and cultural changes on the national level on campus dynamics and Harvard's Jewish community. One primary focus is to understand how Jewish student life at Harvard has been influenced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We have relied upon primary sources like *The Harvard Crimson* and materials from the Harvard University archives, along with interviews with alumni and secondary sources on admissions and student life.

[25] "Joint Statement by Harvard Palestine Solidarity Groups on the Situation in Palestine," *The Harvard Crimson,* October 10, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/widget/2023/10/10/psc-statement/

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Summary and Overview

After auspicious beginnings in the late 1800s, Harvard's Jewish community experienced significant challenges in the 1920s with the imposition of admissions quotas. Although the number of Jews at Harvard increased after World War II, only in the 1960s did Harvard fully overcome its exclusionist past and admit Jews on a prejudice-free basis. The full opening of Harvard to Jews, the incorporation of Radcliffe into Harvard, and the growth in admission of Black students were coterminous, suggesting that the position of Jews at Harvard was directly related to that of other historically marginalized groups, e.g., women and Black Americans.

The period from the 1960s until the 2010s was a golden age for Jews at Harvard. They constituted a substantial percentage of the undergraduate student body (between 20 - 25%), and based on what we heard, encountered little prejudice and were well-integrated into everyday campus life. Harvard Hillel provided a welcoming and warm environment for Jewish students. Major events in the Middle East like the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars were discussed on campus, but they did not evoke intense activism.

In the 1980s the First Lebanon War and First Intifada catalyzed an escalation in student activism at Harvard. Comparisons between Israel and apartheid South Africa became more common. Critiques of Israeli policies, however, rarely employed antisemitic rhetoric. Both sides in these debates invited controversial speakers to campus, but there were also sincere attempts to engage in reasoned dialogue and to propose limits of valid criticisms of Israel.

Activism on both sides increased in the 1990s, mirroring both the growing violence in the Middle East and — conversely — the peace efforts that occurred in this decade. There were robust debates on campus about balancing free speech and harassment, informed by University-wide attempts to manage such tensions by publishing guidelines for free speech on campus. Pro-Palestinian activism grew with the establishment of the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) and increased activity by the Society of Arab Students (SAS). Despite these tensions, there were efforts to foster dialogue and reconciliation, including joint events between Hillel and the SAS and broader campus initiatives. Tensions between Black and Jewish students also surfaced, notably in controversies involving speakers like Anthony Martin and Leonard Jeffries, yet conciliatory efforts persisted through organized discussions and mutual activities.

Discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict heightened further in the 2000s, shaped significantly by escalating violence in the region and controversial international events. Student activism intensified with groups like Hillel, SAS, and Harvard Students for Israel (HSI) organizing vigils, rallies, and discussions. When accusations of antisemitism surfaced, they were articulated publicly by faculty such as Lawrence Summers, Ruth Wisse, and Alan Dershowitz, rather than the student groups themselves. Students typically aimed to clarify that their critiques focused on policies rather than Israel's legitimacy. Efforts at dialogue continued despite divisions, with separate and joint events highlighting attempts at understanding. Prominent debates included a controversial divestment campaign and its subsequent rebuttals, raising questions about the fine line between criticism of Israel and antisemitism. Despite these tensions, there were also moments of constructive engagement through student-led dialogues and initiatives aimed at finding common ground.

A gradual though significant change in the experience of Jewish students at Harvard began around 2010. Discussions about Israel and Palestine became increasingly confrontational. While some efforts to foster dialogue persisted, student activism became more assertive, directly challenging Israel-related activities on campus. Organizations like the PSC and Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine (HOOP) led protests against Israeli products like SodaStream and Sabra hummus, and disrupted events hosted by pro-Israel

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groups.[26,27] Campaigns for divestment and the boycotting of trips to Israel, such as Birthright and Harvard College Israel Trek, also intensified. Consequently, conversations about antisemitism grew more contentious, with frequent debates over when criticism of Israeli policies crossed into antisemitism. While early voices warned that confrontational tactics were polarizing debates, these assertive approaches became more normative over time, diminishing opportunities for balanced discussions. Controversial events like Israeli Apartheid Week further highlighted the divided campus climate. A pro-Palestinian discourse equating Zionism with racism and likening Israel to Nazi Germany was deeply disturbing to many Jewish students. Efforts to find common ground and appreciate differing perspectives waned, reflecting broader social and political dynamics that influenced campus activism during this period.

Over this same time, the number of Jewish students at Harvard declined, most likely due to changes in admissions practices that sought greater racial and ethnic diversity. The decline in Jewish enrollments exacerbated feelings of vulnerability among Jewish students, especially those who identified with progressive politics and felt unwelcome in progressive-oriented campus clubs and activities unless they disavowed attachments to Israel.

Harvard's campus met the October 7th attack in an already divided state. Following the attack, pro-Palestinian activism surged. The Harvard PSC and more than 30 other student groups attributed blame for the violence solely to Israel, provoking significant backlash including online denunciations and doxxing. The administration faced criticism for perceived inadequate responses to threats and harassment against students. In mid-October, a PSC panel condemned Israel without presenting counterarguments, further inflaming campus debate. Social media posts expressing violent hostility to Israel and threats to Jews contributed to Jewish students' distress.[28,29] In early November, Harvard President Claudine Gay's condemnation of the "from the river to the sea" chant as antisemitic received mixed reactions.[30] Protests and criticism persisted throughout November, culminating in increased unrest and safety concerns. In late 2023 and early 2024, the climate intensified with ongoing protests, contentious events, and disciplinary actions. President Gay faced scrutiny over allegedly insufficient responses to antisemitism, and in January 2024 Harvard was sued for failing to act appropriately against antisemitism on campus, and Title VI complaints about anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-Palestinian bias were filed to the US Department of Education.[31,32] Pro-Palestinian activism continued, with significant protests and controversial imagery exacerbating feelings of marginalization among many Jewish students.[33]

[26] "HUDS Suspends Purchases from Israeli Soda Company," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 17, 2014. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2014/12/17/huds-soda-stream-suspend-purchase/

[27] "Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine Protests Sabra Hummus in Harvard Yard," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 9, 2022. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/2/9/students-protest-sabra-hummus/

[28] "Harvard Asks Sidechat to Enforce Content Moderation as Jewish Students Decry 'Vicious' Antisemitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 22, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/22/sidechat-antisemitism-enforce-moderation/

[29] https://www.adl.org/resources/article/hamas-attack-draws-cheers-extremists-spurs-antisemitism-and-conspiracies-online

[30] "More than 100 Harvard Faculty Sign Letter Criticizing President Gay's Censure of Pro-Palestine Slogan," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 15, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/15/faculty-condemn-president-gay-statement/

[31] "Harvard Students Allege Anti-Palestinian Discrimination in Complaint to U.S. Ed Department," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 30, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/30/antipalestinian-discrimination-education-complaint/

[32] "Jewish Students Sue Harvard University, Allege 'Severe' Antisemitism on Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 12, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/12/harvard-lawsuit-campus-antisemitism/

[33] "As Harvard Warns of Disciplinary Action, Groups Apologize for Antisemitic Image," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 20, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/2/20/harvard-antisemitic-image-apology/

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Over the past 10 to 15 years, several common themes affecting the experience of Jewish members of the Harvard community have emerged:

Growing polarization and diminished willingness to seek dialogue, compromise, and understanding of opposed positions As activism adopted more assertive stances rejecting compromise, and opposing "normalization" of Israel, over the past decade, moderate positions received less support. It became significantly more difficult for Jewish students with nuanced views to feel their perspectives were respected or welcomed.

Targeting of pro-Israel events and guests Regular disruptions, protests, and calls to boycott pro-Israel activities like Birthright and Israel Trek presented challenges for students wanting to engage with those opportunities or express support for Israel's right to exist.

Intensified debate about defining antisemitism and determining the line between discomforting and hateful speech As discussions about when criticism crosses that line became more contentious, Jewish students came to feel that their concerns were not taken seriously by peers, faculty, and administrators.

Growing acceptance of stances once seen as outside mainstream debate Assertive tactics and rhetoric rejecting compromise between opposing viewpoints became more widely accepted and normalized.

Social exclusion of Jewish students and their reluctance to fully express Jewish/pro-Israel identities As compromise became more difficult and dissent risked social consequences, some Jewish students reported growing pressure to censor themselves. Concurrently, Orthodox Jewish students felt that their personal safety was jeopardized by visible signifiers of their identity like a kippa (yarmulke).

Complaints of alienation and marginalization on the part of Jewish students with pro-Palestinian sympathies These students felt rejected by Hillel, Chabad, and other Jewish spaces. These students struggled to find a community that fully embraced their views and identities.

Growing reliance on the University to manage offensive behavior and provide protection Over the years, as campus debates became more heated and instances of targeted behavior became more commonplace, students increasingly looked to the University administration to intervene and ensure a safer environment. Students expected the University to address hate speech, provide clear guidelines on acceptable discourse, and enforce measures to prevent harassment and discrimination. The need for administrative support grew as students sought institutional backing to shield them from offensive actions and rhetoric.

Events in the Middle East likely have influenced the tone of campus activism around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and debates about antisemitism at Harvard, but it is a mistake to imply a direct correlation between what has happened "there" and "here." Certainly, Harvard has seen periods of relative congruence between increased intensity of conflict in the region and campus activism. During the period of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, Harvard students and faculty often engaged in constructive and peaceful dialogue, reflecting a broad hope for regional peace. Similarly, during the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, heightened violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories was mirrored by increased polarization and activism on campus. However, there were also instances of incongruence: during the 2000s, despite significant violence and turmoil in the Middle East, political discourse at Harvard sometimes remained respectful and focused on inclusive debate. Additionally, even in times of faltering peace efforts or rampant violence, student initiatives sought to foster understanding and dialogue (e.g., after the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995). While students certainly responded to events occurring in the Middle East, the tone and forms of engagement should not be assumed to be wholly analogous to dynamics in the region.

The National Context

Changes in Jewish student experiences at Harvard reflect national trends. Several broad social movements emerging in the early 2000s affected dynamics on campus. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which was founded in 2005, ushered in a confrontational style that differed from previous

forms of pro-Palestinian activism on campuses. In 2011, the Occupy movement inspired students with its emphasis on direct action and public confrontations, further shaping the tenor of campus engagement. Over the 2010s, postcolonial approaches in the humanities and interpretive social sciences were routinely applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an example of a settler-colonial movement subjugating or expelling an indigenous people. This way of thinking discouraged engagement with people who had attachments to Israel.

Another contextual factor is the generational shift in students' sensitivities. Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff have pointed to the rise of fragility, emotional (rather than intellectual) reasoning, and a polarized "us vs. them" mentality among college students, all of which began to significantly shape campus dynamics around 2013-2014.[34] These changes have been mirrored in the increasingly divisive environment at Harvard, where discussions about Israel and the Palestinians have become more contentious and uncompromising. Haidt and Lukianoff also pointed to a culture of safetyism precipitating the decline of open debate on campus. This cultural shift helps explain why assertive activism has gained traction and Jewish students, regardless of their positions on Israel, have felt more insecure. While some have criticized Haidt and Lukianoff for focusing on group psychology and neglecting the sociopolitical dimensions of problems on college campuses,[35] the processes they describe align well with the decline in constructive interaction and rising divide between students at campuses nationwide.

A related phenomenon is the rise over the past three decades of affective polarization — that is, the intensification of hostility and intolerance as political emotions, influenced by social media and the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon has affected young people more than their elders and has risen more rapidly in the United States than in most other Western countries.[36] Affective polarization has influenced many aspects of student interaction, including activism on a wide variety of issues beyond Israel/Palestine.

Sociologists Amy J. Binder and Jeffrey L. Kidder have discovered growing differences between the ways student groups on the left and on the right develop their strategies and tactics. Binder and Kidder show that conservative students are finding less purchase on campus due to largely unsympathetic administrators and faculty, and ultimately rely on external organizations for support, where they can also translate their campus activism to a post-graduation career. While most pro-Israel students at Harvard do not identify as conservative, many of them have become frustrated by a perceived lack of sympathy on campus and are relying instead on outside funding and networks to bolster their activism.

Conversely, progressive students often have better access to campus resources and can gain on-campus success more easily (e.g., renaming buildings, establishing cultural centers) but have less external support. Thus, over the past several decades, progressive activism has tended to remain confined to campuses, while conservative activism has tended to provide more career pathways after graduation.[37] These strategic differences in approach, depending on support structures and institutional contexts,

[34] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting up a Generation for Failure* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018).

[35] E.g., Howard A. Doughty, "The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure," (Ottawa: The Innovation Journal, 2018); Jonathan Marks, "Bad Therapy: The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure," Commentary 146, no. 2 (2018).

[36] Noam Gidron, James Adams, and Will Horne, *American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Elizabeth C. Connors, "Social Desirability and Affective Polarization," Public Opinion Quarterly 87, no. 4 (2023), 911–34; Christian Staal Bruun Overgaard, "Perceiving Affective Polarization in the United States: How Social Media Shape Meta-Perceptions and Affective Polarization," Social Media + Society 10, no. 1 (2024). https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20563051241232662

[37] Amy J. Binder and Jeffrey L. Kidder, *The channels of student activism: how the left and right are winning (and losing) in campus politics today*, ed. Jeffrey L. Kidder (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2022).

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mirror some aspects of the interplay of support and opposition that characterizes activism around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at Harvard. Indeed, in a controversial June 2024 op-ed, Dean of Social Science Lawrence D. Bobo observed:

> Modern student protest appears less and less likely to target major non-University events, businesses, or government bodies. Rather, they're comfortably situated in the confines of college campuses, directing demands for change at university administrators and boards of directors.[38]

The changing composition of student bodies may also partially explain the growing polarization on campus around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Over the past thirty years, colleges throughout the United States have diversified their student bodies, partly to reflect demographic changes in the country, and in part to redress past discrimination against underrepresented minorities. Students of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African heritage have been in the forefront of support for the Palestinian cause nationwide.

Striving for Belonging: Jewish Life and Challenges at Harvard, 1900-1979

The early to mid-20th century saw significant growth and institutionalization of the Jewish presence at Harvard. Despite the imposition of quotas intended to limit Jewish admissions, Jewish students established a strong sense of community by creating and expanding organizations dedicated to their support. Groups such as the Harvard Menorah Society and Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel became central to Jewish identity and communal life.

Although the formal quotas disappeared after World War II, Jewish students continued to experience some antisemitic discrimination. Jewish students responded in contrary ways; some felt a need to assimilate, while others aimed to strengthen their Jewish identity. During the 1960s and 1970s, antisemitism diminished markedly, and Jewish students became fully integrated into the University community.

Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict entered Harvard's discourse in the late 1940s, sparking diverse reactions ranging from fervent support to pointed criticism of Israel. Debates about the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 typically centered on Cold War dynamics and other geopolitical concerns. They rarely linked conflicts in the Middle East or critiques of Israel with negative judgments of Jewish students, who in turn had little concern about attachment to Israel serving as a source of antisemitism.

From the Era of Quotas to a "Golden Age" for Jews at Harvard

In the early 20th century, an influx of Jewish immigrants highly valuing education led to growing numbers of Jewish students at top universities like Harvard. By 1925, Jews made up more than a quarter of Harvard's student body. While some Christian administrators, faculty, and students appreciated Jewish academic dedication, others held negative stereotypes. Antisemitism had risen nationwide since the start of World War I. National anxieties surrounding immigration led Ivy League institutions to adopt restrictive admissions practices in order to maintain social homogeneity amidst demographic changes.[39]

By the 1920s, most Jewish applicants to Harvard were American born, but they were also seen as stamped by an East European immigrant background and undesirable social traits. In response, President A. Lawrence Lowell pursued policies to limit Jewish admissions through selective admission processes that

[38] Lawrence D. Bobo, "Faculty Speech Must Have Limits," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 15, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/6/15/bobo-faculty-speech-limits/

[39] Strauss, Valerie. "Analysis | a Brief History of Antisemitism in U.S. Higher Education," *Washington Post*, November 14, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/11/13/how-restricting-jews-created-modern-college-admissions/

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emphasized criteria that could disadvantage them, such as character assessments and interviews, which were more subjective than academic qualifications alone.[40] These practices brought the percentage of Jews at Harvard down to a range of between 10 - 15%. Moreover, Jews admitted to Harvard were expected to conform to standards of gentility set by elite Protestant society. Radcliffe was different, as it was about one-fifth Jewish during the 1930s. Radcliffe also had a substantial Catholic population, and most of its Jewish and Catholic students were commuters. They were not part of the male, Protestant, and affluent elite that comprised Harvard's core constituency.

The implementation of quotas for Jewish students at Harvard in the early 20th century sparked significant debate both within and outside the University. Alumni expressed disappointment and support. Within the student body, quotas stimulated intense discussion. Jewish students who felt targeted advocated for admissions based on merit alone rather than attributes like religion or ethnicity. The faculty and administration were also divided on this issue. Some supported the president's stance, viewing the quotas as a pragmatic response to worrying social and demographic changes in American society. Others, however, strongly opposed the quotas, arguing that they compromised academic integrity and fairness.[41]

Despite quotas and other challenges, the Jewish organizational presence at Harvard experienced significant growth and diversification over the first half of the 20th century. Before World War I, Harvard's Menorah Society provided students with a place to celebrate their cultural identity and history, to educate members about Judaism, and to provide a supportive community.[42] The Menorah Society spawned the intercollegiate Menorah Association, which by 1917 had chapters throughout North America and published a periodical devoted to Jewish history and thought, *The Menorah Journal*.[43] The Menorah Society demonstrated the vibrancy and commitment of Harvard's Jewish community despite the challenges it confronted in the interwar era.

In 1941, the Harvard Hillel Foundation was established to provide more structured programming for Jewish students. Over time, as Hillel expanded its campus involvement, it hired full-time leadership and acquired additional space in Harvard Square. As the postwar years saw growing numbers of Jewish students, Hillel became an important place for fostering a sense of connection and belonging on campus. Its expanded facilities and dedicated staff helped many new students find friendship, guidance, and spiritual enrichment during their time at the University. Hillel organized cultural and religious programming like Shabbat dinners and holiday celebrations to connect Jewish students with their heritage and each other.[44]

In its founding documents, combating antisemitism was not mentioned as a key aim of the new organization.[45] Nevertheless, Hillel sent delegates to a Seminar on Anti-Semitism for Student Leaders at Andover Newton Theological School in 1945. The seminar offered suggestions for addressing issues facing Jews on campus, e.g.:

> Make a survey of your campus to find out the people holding offices in campus organizations, the extent to which offices are open to all groups on campus.

[40] "Retrospection: President Lowell's Quotas," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 26, 2015. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/3/26/retrospection-president-lowells-quotas/

[41] Nitza Rosovsky, *The Jewish Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe* (Cambridge, MA, 1986).

[42] "Menorah Society Will Meet: Intercollegiate Quinquennial Convention to be Held in New York," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 19, 1917. "MENORAH SOCIETY TO GIVE FIRST SHOWING OF 'ADAM'," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 18, 1930.

[43] Pearl K. Bell, "The Harvard Menorah Society," in Rosovsky.

[44] Henry Rosovsky, "From Periphery to Center,"; Maurice L. Zigmond, "The Early Days of Hillel," ibid.

[45] Society Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, "Records of the Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel Society, 1943-1994," manuscript.

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> Discover the reactions and feelings of key students to "social distances". Enlist the help of your sociology or psychology faculty for this. You'll need it! ...
>
> Promote interest groups on your campus built up on lines other than religion or race.[46]

These goals reflected a desire for the integration into campus, the promotion of access for Jewish students, and the breaking down of social barriers. Reminiscences of alumni who were at Harvard during the interwar years also speak of a patrician and exclusionary atmosphere. No Jew, even the most aristocratic and wealthy, was admitted to a final club. (Sherman Starr '46 was accidentally invited to a final club interview because no one could tell that he was Jewish from his name.). "No Christian ever came to my room — nor did I go to any Christian's room," recalled the future judge Charles Wyzanski, Jr. '27, JD '30.[47] Albert Cohen '38 had grown up in a neighborhood where "antisemitism was very unsubtle" and "tended to be loud, verbal and physical."[48] At Harvard, there was a chasm between him and the "Gold Coast" students from wealthy families. Robert Riesman '40 took it for granted that Jews had no access to prestigious activities like writing for the *Crimson* or the *Harvard Lampoon*. He found camaraderie with Gentiles in the dramatics society and in boxing. At Radcliffe, Jewish women like Pearl Andelman Brown '34, Hadassah Waldman Blocker '35, and Lucille Gray '39 had generally good relationships with their Catholic counterparts, who were commuters like themselves, but they had their share of encounters with antisemitic administrators.[49] At this time Harvard's Jewish students did not expect, let alone demand, equal treatment and opportunity. Leonard Wolsky '44, MD '46 went into Harvard knowing he would have to work harder than Gentile students.

After World War II, Harvard began to overcome its aversion to admitting Jewish students. Henry Rosovsky, who received a doctorate in economics from Harvard in 1959 and in 1973 became Harvard's first Jewish Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, claimed that the common fight by all Americans against Hitler caused Harvard to "welcome … us with open arms, as students and teachers in all its varied faculties."[50] Nonetheless, shortly after the end of the war Provost Paul Buck was worried about the influx into Harvard of "sensitive, neurotic boys" from heavily Jewish public high schools in New York City and New Jersey. The 15% quota from the Lowell era was relaxed, but the Harvard admissions office feared that wealthy Gentile youth would choose to attend Yale or Princeton if Harvard was seen as admitting too many Jews. This ongoing prejudice flew in the face of postwar expansion throughout America of legislation mandating fair employment and fair education practices as well as the 1947 United States presidential commission denouncing quotas on Jewish and Black Americans. By 1952, Harvard's freshman class was one-quarter Jewish, but the Dean of Admissions, Wilburt Bender, was not at ease with these numbers, warning that if admissions were based on intelligence alone, there would be too many Jews at Harvard.[51] In 1960, about three-fourths of applicants from the heavily Jewish secondary schools Bronx Science and Stuyvesant were rejected, while only 30% applying from elite boarding schools like Andover and Exeter were turned away.

Ongoing discomfort experienced by Jews at Harvard after 1945 is described by the future journalist Anthony Lewis '48, who recalled Boston and Cambridge as antisemitic environments and Harvard as a place with few Jewish professors. In general, he wrote, Jews were still not "wholly at ease." Joan Bolker '60 (MAT '62, Ed.

[46] "FINDINGS: SEMINAR ON ANTI-SEMITISM held at Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Center, Mass. February 9-11, 1945," in Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, "Records of the Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel Society, 1943-1994."
[47] Rosovsky, 86.
[48] Ibid, 91.
[49] Ibid, 89-91, 93.
[50] Ibid, 56.
[51] Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 253.

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D.) wrote in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Nov. 13, 1979): "When I first came here, my being a Jew made me feel outrageously, uncomfortably different … There was much in the college … that made me feel that way." Nonetheless she wrote of the possibility to "come through Harvard, to live in comfort in one's own skin, as one of one's own people."

In a senior thesis from 1961, Elliott Gershon interviewed 27 self-identified Jewish students and asked them about their sense of what being Jewish meant, their ideological beliefs, and their interactions related to their Jewish identity. Many of Gershon's respondents expressed a desire for assimilation and appreciated that Harvard did not emphasize their Jewish identity, which made their campus experience feel undifferentiated from that of other students. However, a smaller group of respondents articulated an awareness of antisemitism as a salient threat and a general sense of being different from other students because they were Jewish. The students' perception of antisemitism seemed to encapsulate both direct discrimination and subtler forms of social exclusion or stereotyping. Fourteen students reported experiencing direct discrimination because they were Jewish, and 19 anticipated encountering antisemitism in the future, although they generally viewed such instances as isolated rather than pervasive. Despite these concerns, most students found the Harvard environment largely congenial, with minimal emphasis on their Jewish identity compared to other campuses perceived as more hostile, such as Princeton.[52]

During the postwar years, one source of concern about antisemitism was the invitation of controversial speakers to campus. In early 1948, the right-wing extremist Merwin K. Hart '04 was brought to campus by the Free Enterprise Society. During his speech, Hart made several remarks that undeniably showcased his antisemitic views, including assertions that "an international Jewish organization" wielded significant influence over the Truman administration, the Marshall Plan, and the United Nations. His controversial opinions sparked outrage. A *Crimson* article criticized Hart's "untenable, enigmatic nature" and his defense of Franco Spain.[53] The Harvard Liberal Union (H.L.U.), led by Frederic D. Houghteling '50, expressed disappointment in a letter criticizing the Free Enterprise Society for its poor judgment and lack of due diligence. Houghteling rejected the Society's claim that Hart's economic views could be seen in isolation from his fascistic and antisemitic ideologies, emphasizing that "bringing him here despite their knowledge of his record, they were adding to his prestige and thus aiding him in his undercover warfare against the principles of democracy."[54] A decade later, the White supremacist and segregationist speaker David Wang was invited by the Liberal Union and the Young Republican Club to speak at Harvard. Wang's rhetoric, often conveyed through poetry, included virulently racist and antisemitic views. For instance, he claimed that "Rooshun filth [is] worse than talmudic filth."[55]

The use of religious spaces on campus was another issue that affected Jews' sense of inclusion on campus. In Spring 1958, controversy erupted at Harvard over the prohibition against using Memorial Church for non-Protestant ceremonies. The issue became public when it was revealed that a Jewish couple had been prevented from marrying in Memorial Church a few years earlier. Psychology Professor Jerome S. Bruner criticized the Church's policy, arguing that it contradicted the inclusive spirit of the University.[56] In an April 15, 1958 letter to the *Crimson*, Bruner wrote, "I cannot avoid the feeling that matters of sectarian religious doctrine have been put ahead of concern for the Harvard community." He argued that Memorial Church had become a "symbol of disunity," undermining Harvard's solidarity.[57]

[52] Elliot S. Gershon, "The Experience of Being Jewish in Harvard Students" (Senior Thesis, Harvard University, 1961).
[53] "Hart in the Right Place?" *The Harvard Crimson*, February 5, 1948.
[54] "Answers to Free Enterprise Society." *The Harvard Crimson*, February 7, 1948.
[55] "Wang Speaks In Cambridge February 14: Avid Racist Heckled After Penn Speech," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 22, 1958.
[56] Charles J. Wells, "Opening the Doors to a Pluralistic Church," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 1 2008. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2008/6/1/opening-the-doors-to-a-pluralistic/
[57] Jerome S. Bruner, "THE SECULAR TRADITION," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 15, 1958. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1958/4/15/the-secular-tradition-pto-the-editors/

Opponents of opening the Church to non-Protestant services, such as philosophy professors Raphael Demos and Donald C. Williams, defended the Church's traditional usage. In an April 21 letter to the *Crimson*, they wrote, "A church is not a cafeteria in which all religions may be served to all comers," highlighting concerns about maintaining religious sanctity.[58] However, the Harvard Corporation decided to open Memorial Church to private services for all non-Protestant religions, stating that "the Harvard community is today a mixed society."[59] This decision generated further debate, with supporters like Bruner advocating for a "secular university" and opponents like Williams arguing that such a move diluted religious traditions. The decision marked a significant shift towards religious inclusivity and pluralism on Harvard's campus.[60]

Harvard put antisemitism aside only in the 1960s and early 1970s as part of the transformative movements that integrated women into Harvard and saw substantial increases in the admission of Black Americans to Harvard College. In 1963, Radcliffe women began to receive Harvard degrees, and the two institutions formally amalgamated in 1975. In 1960, less than 1% of Harvard's freshman class was Black; a decade later, it was 8%. As Jerome Karabel has written, by the mid-1970s there was no more formal discrimination against women or Jews at Harvard.[61] The connection between the improvement of the positions of Black and Jewish students at Harvard was embodied by Henry Rosovsky. According to Larry Summers, under Rosovsky's deanship of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) (1973-84), Harvard finally completed "the transition from being a WASP redoubt to being a truly open gatherer of extraordinarily talented future leaders."[62] In 1969, Rosovsky had concurred with Black student activists about the need for a degree-granting program in Afro-American Studies. Six years later, when Rosovsky was Dean, the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research (later incorporated within the newer and larger Hutchins Center) was founded. And in 1978 Rosovsky oversaw the establishment of the Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) at Harvard University under the directorship of Professor Isadore Twersky.

CJS coordinated a wide range of courses related to Judaism offered across various departments, including History, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Philosophy, Literature, and Government. Prior to the 20th century, the study of Hebrew and Judaism at Harvard had been limited and was taught from a Christian perspective. The appointment in 1925 of Harry Austryn Wolfson '11 (MA '12, PhD '15) as the inaugural Lucius Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy marked the founding of Jewish Studies at Harvard (and indeed in the United States, as he was the first scholar to hold a chaired position in Jewish Studies). The establishment of CJS marked a major expansion of Jewish Studies at Harvard. As an academic unit catering to the entire student body, CJS was of benefit to more than the Harvard Jewish community, but its courses, lectures, and other activities strengthened Jewish students' knowledge of their tradition and comfort with their Jewish identity.[63]

[58] Raphael Demos and Donald C. Williams, "On the church issue," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 21, 1958.
[59] "Religion: God & Man at Harvard," *TIME*, May 5, 1958. https://time.com/archive/6800797/religion-god-man-at-harvard-2/
[60] Wells, "Opening the Doors to a Pluralistic Church." Beyond Harvard's community, figures from the surrounding community occasionally caused controversy and compromised Jewish Harvardians' sense of security and belonging. Father Leonard J. Feeney was once a prominent Catholic poet and a popular figure among Harvard and Radcliffe students. He founded St. Benedict's Center in 1943. Originally established as an information center for Catholic students, it became the home of "the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary," a group known for its virulently antisemitic stance. In his publication, *The Point*, Feeney claimed that Harvard was corrupted by "an enemy far more dangerous than McCarthy—the Jews in attendance there." He also suggested that President Pusey was brought in to "pry the Jews loose gently." In addition, Feeney denigrated Harvard as "a place filled with sissies and psychotics, a breeding ground of depravity, disloyalty, and despair." Feeney's stance reached a breaking point in 1953 when the Vatican excommunicated him and his followers for heresy. In 1958, Feeney and his group, numbering approximately 50 individuals, departed from Cambridge. Bernard M. Gwertzman, "Father Feeney Attacks College, Buildings, Jews, Time Magazine," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 29, 1954. John E. Mcnees, "Father Feeny Quits Cambridge; St. Benedict's Center Up for Sale," ibid., January 17, 1958.
[61] Karabel, 483.
[62] *The New York Times*, November 16, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/education/henry-rosovsky-dead.html
[63] Nitza Rosovsky, "The Center for Jewish Studies," in *The Jewish Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

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That feeling of comfort was expressed by David Guberman '71 JD/MBA '74 (75) who related that although most of his friends were Jewish, being Jewish was "unremarkable" and "not an issue" at Harvard at the time. Marc Granetz '78, JD '86 "reveled in the sheer number of Jews at Harvard" in both the College and at Harvard Law School. On occasion he encountered swastikas in men's bathrooms and heard antisemitic comments, "but for the most part Harvard [was] a place where Jews [felt] much less like a minority."[64] Students were largely united by opposition to the Vietnam War; anti-war solidarity coalesced with a strong American economy and excitement about the achievements and promise of the civil rights movement. Jewish students engaged with Hillel and the Havurah movement (small, intimate prayer and social communities influenced by 1960s counterculture). They also became involved in the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, which had been founded in 1964, and in journalistic ventures like the newspaper *Genesis 2*.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Harvard Community Up to 1979

Anthony Lewis' testimony about his time at Harvard mentioned the founding of Israel in 1948 as marking a divide in Jewish self-awareness and self-confidence on campus. David Guberman's testimony described the relief and joy that Jewish students felt across the University after Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War: "Just as Israel was a natural, albeit special, fact of our existence, so was being Jewish." Nor did Israel present a problem for Jewish students who wanted to feel fully accepted at Harvard. Discussions of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 1960s and 1970s were engaged and multifaceted, but they were relatively subdued compared to the fervent debates of later years. The intensity of discourse did not remotely match that surrounding civil rights or the Vietnam War.

Debates on Harvard's campus went back to the early 1950s, when, at a Law School Forum in October 1952, columnist Dorothy Thompson and Boston attorney Faris Malouf criticized Israel for being financially supported by American dollars and condemned the Balfour Declaration as "the most double-faced document ever issued by anyone."[65] In response, the prominent attorney Bartley Crum and Rev. Karl Baehr defended Israel's existence and actions. Crum argued that Israel could potentially be "the greatest friend the Arabs ever had" and urged them to accept a cooperative and beneficial relationship.[66] In 1964, Elmer Berger, an anti-Zionist leader and executive vice-president of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism, accused Israel of seeking to be recognized as a normal nation while leveraging Zionism to gain international sympathy. Berger believed this approach fostered suspicion and hostility among Arab nations and called for Israel to clarify its position on the global stage, arguing that the United States needed to judge Israel "either as a Middle Eastern state or as a humanitarian venture, but not as both."[67]

Harvard students responded to the June 1967 war between Israel and its neighbors with a mixture of support for Israel, criticism of Arab leaders, and little examination of the war's potential ramifications. Several articles in the *Crimson* highlighted the resolve of Harvard and Radcliffe students who joined the Israel Summer Work Program to support Israeli agriculture and industry during the war. Susan A. Kotlier '70, noted, "It is not a romantic cause…but a matter of conscience" to aid Israel during its time of need.[68] A year after the war, however, Yehudi Lindeman offered a more critical assessment of the war, noting

[64] Rosovsky, 105.
[65] "Dorothy Thompson Debates Israel's past at Law Forum," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11, 1952.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "Anti-Zionist Leader Accuses Israel Of Creating Tension in Middle East," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 10, 1964.
[68] Anne De Saint Phalle, "Area Students to Aid Israeli Harvest; Volunteers Will Ease Manpower Crisis," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 5, 1967. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1967/6/5/area-students-to-aid-israeli-harvest/. See also David Blumenthal, "Israel: Three Voices of Ayeleth: Second of two parts," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 19, 1967. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1967/10/19/israel-three-voices-of-ayeleth-pthere/

Palestinian disillusionment and anger over living under an oppressive occupation. Lindeman painted a somber picture of coexistence marked more by tension than by attempts at mutual understanding.[69]

The relative absence of Palestine from Harvard student discourse in the mid to late 1960s may seem surprising given the emergence at the time of a new left movement that was notably more outspoken and radical than preceding leftist groups. This new wave was emblematic of a generation of students galvanized by the election of President John F. Kennedy and the gradual loosening of McCarthy-era constraints on radical politics. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at Harvard and nationwide epitomized this New Left. The movement resonated deeply within the student body, eventually attracting large crowds to anti-Vietnam War protests.[70]

SDS at Harvard aimed to change American society through participatory democracy and "direct action" on a variety of pressing issues such as labor rights and civil rights.[71] Unlike previous movements that relied on structured leadership, SDS fostered an egalitarian atmosphere with democratic decision-making processes. Despite their radical stance, the group refrained from endorsing violence.[72] When "Proud Eagle Tribe," a revolutionary women's organization, bombed the Center for International Affairs (CFIA), SDS strongly criticized the act despite their criticism of CFIA.[73] Nevertheless, the SDS' activism often brought them into direct conflict with University authorities. One of the most intense confrontations occurred on April 10, 1969, when more than 400 police officers forcibly removed several hundred students occupying University Hall. The raid resulted in the arrest of between 250 and 300 students, with nearly 75 sustaining injuries.[74]

Despite the high level of anti-war and civil rights activism on campus, there was minimal public outcry regarding the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza following the Six-Day War in 1967. While SDS and other groups were vocal about Vietnam and domestic socio-political issues, the plight of Palestinians did not appear prominently on their agenda. This silence could be attributed to a variety of factors, including low numbers of students from the Global South and a primary focus on Vietnam.[75]

Not unlike the Six-Day War, public responses at Harvard to the 1973 Yom Kippur War — while involving debate on the ramifications of the war and some pro-Israel activism — were muted in comparison with responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in following decades. Several Harvard faculty members, including Nathan Glazer, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Martin Peretz, signed statements advocating for increased support for Israel, expressing concerns about Israel's security, and calling for a comprehensive peace involving all parties in the conflict.[76] However, there were also calls for understanding and addressing Palestinian grievances. A student journalist named Renate Lehmann wrote

[69] Yehudy Lindeman, "Bogeymen in the Mid-East," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 9, 1968.
[70] Daniel J. Singal, "SDS — Harvard's New Left — Feels 'Underprivileged' In Generation Which Prizes Making Own Decisions," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 3, 1966. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1966/6/3/sds-harvards-new-left-feels-underprivileged-in/
[71] Ibid.
[72] For example, in 1969, a splinter group called the "Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM)" apparently "broke into the Center for the Study of International Affairs (CIA) [sic] painted the walls with slogans signed SDS, put up a banner identified with SDS, beat up someone, and threw rocks through the windows of the secretaries' offices." SDS denied responsibility for this attack. Beth Harvey, "SDS Not Involved," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 27, 1969. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1969/9/27/sds-not-involved-pto-the-editors/
[73] "CFIA Bombed," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 17, 1971. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1971/6/17/cfia-bombed-pat-1238-am-on/. See also "Explosion goes off on Harvard campus," *The New York Times*, October 14, 1970.
[74] "Police Raid Sit-In at Dawn; 250 Arrested, Dozens Injured. Pusey Says Decision Reached at 10 p.m.," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 10, 1969. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1969/4/10/police-raid-sit-in-at-dawn-250/
[75] Richard Blumenthal, "SDS Shifting From Protest to Organizing," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 15, 1967. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1967/6/15/sds-shifting-from-protest-to-organizing/
[76] "Several Faculty Members Ask Increased Support for Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 20, 1973. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1973/10/20/several-faculty-members-ask-increased-support/

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movingly about the Palestinians' plight, and this view resonated among parts of the Harvard community, although it was framed as an acknowledgment of the suffering of both sides rather than a unilateral condemnation of Israel.[77] During the war, student activism was overwhelmingly supportive of Israel, taking the form of student volunteering and fundraising.[78]

Conclusion

Throughout the early to mid-20th century, the Jewish presence at Harvard grew and became institutionalized despite the imposition of quotas and ongoing antisemitism. Organizations like the Harvard Menorah Society, Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, and the Center for Jewish Studies played pivotal roles in fostering a sense of community and belonging for Jewish students. By the 1970s, although antisemitism did not disappear altogether, Jewish student life flourished. Discussions around Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict were present but did not yet bring that conflict to the campus itself, nor did Jewish students feel that they were victims of antisemitism in the form of anti-Israeli critique.

Israel/Palestine at Harvard During the 1980s: Regional Escalation and On-Campus Tension

The 1980s saw violence increase between Israel and its neighbors, in particular in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Lebanon. The escalation in the Middle East also impacted campus debates over Israel, Palestine, and antisemitism. Among the key developments in this period were:

- The 1982 Israel-Lebanon War, which began as Israel — responding to repeated cross-border attacks by militant groups — invaded Lebanon with the stated aim of expelling the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from the country. The Israeli siege of West Beirut in Summer 1982 and the Sabra and Shatila Massacre of Palestinians in September of that year — executed by Christian Phalangists and backed by Israeli forces — garnered severe censure both internationally and within Israel.
- The first Palestinian uprising — the First Intifada — erupted at the end of 1987 with widespread strikes, demonstrations, and civil disobedience across the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians also attacked Israeli military targets and Jewish civilians. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) responded harshly with mass arrests, teargas, and live ammunition.
- Terrorist attacks by Palestinian militant groups spanned the decade and the globe.

Debates at Harvard grew more polarized over this period compared to preceding decades. Student and faculty on both sides organized protests and panels. Despite the increased politicization of the campus, however, discussions of Israel/Palestine tended to focus on specific policies and events rather than champion or condemn an ideological stance. Students and faculty alike distinguished between criticism of Israel's actions and targeting Israel as a whole. Efforts at understanding different perspectives through respectful — if heated — dialogue were prominent and appeared in the form of exchanges in the *Crimson*.

[77] Renate Lehmann, "The Dispossessed in Palestine: The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile by Fawaz Turki, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972," *The Harvard Crimson*, August 7, 1973. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1973/8/7/the-dispossessed-in-palestine-pbbbefore-the/. Peter Shapiro, "The Middle-East: Do The Arabs Really Want Peace?," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 7, 1974. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1974/2/7/do-the-arabs-really-want-peace/

[78] Nicholas Lemann, "Answering Israel's Call," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 19, 1973. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1973/10/19/answering-israels-call-pbradley-bloom-75/. "Harvard Begins Israeli Fund Drive In the Wake of New Mideast Conflict," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 10, 1973. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1973/10/10/harvard-begins-israeli-fund-drive-in/

While antisemitic incidents did occur at Harvard and in Cambridge, Jewish students did not speak of a general pattern of antisemitism, intimidation, or exclusion. Activism targeted particular speakers or initiatives, not the legitimacy of engaging with opposing views. Students whose sympathies lay primarily with Israel or the Palestinians both attempted to acknowledge complexity and find common ground amid disagreement. Allegations of antisemitism were at times associated with debates over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but came as well within a different context, that of relations between Black and Jewish students.

The Early 1980s: Responses to the Lebanon War and the Sabra and Shatila Massacre

The Lebanon War, and in particular the Sabra and Shatila Massacre, deeply affected students and communities around Harvard's campus. In the aftermath of the events in the refugee camps in Beirut, several protests and rallies were held.

On September 22, 1982, around 300 people gathered at Holyoke Center for a candlelight vigil organized by the Boston-based Lebanon-Palestine Crisis Coalition. The vigil condemned the "butchery" of Palestinians in Lebanon by Israeli forces and called for an end to US aid to Israel.[79] Meanwhile, about 15 members of the Spartacus Youth League held a smaller protest outside of the Freshman Union, also decrying Israel's involvement in the killings in Lebanon. A counter-protest of about 75 ensued.[80]

Palestinian students at Harvard in particular saw the events in personal terms: Bishara Bahbah, a graduate student from East Jerusalem, referred to the situation in Lebanon as "Holocaust II" and noted that his sister in Beirut had gone missing when Israeli forces surrounded the city.[81] George Bisharat, the president of the Arab Students Society, said there was "deep outrage" among Harvard's Arab community against the Phalange (a Lebanese Christian political party and paramilitary organization), Israel, and the US.[82] Two days later, the Harvard-Radcliffe Zionist Alliance and the Boston-based Lebanon-Palestine Crisis Coalition held rival demonstrations outside the Holyoke Center. Protesters from the Zionist Alliance told the *Crimson* that they themselves were distraught about the events in Lebanon, but they objected to the use of these events to challenge Israel's right to exist and the constant comparison of Israel with the Nazis through references to "genocide".[83] The *Crimson* noted the outrage among Israelis in response to the massacre, and called for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon,[84] whereas a dissenting opinion accused the IDF of complicity with the massacre.[85]

In campus debate, some students tried to distinguish between Prime Minister Begin's administration and Israel itself. Organizers of a rally at the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government (HKS) protesting an address by the Israeli Ambassador to the US, Moshe Arens, wrote to the *Crimson*:

> Concurrently [to Arens' speech] there will be a vigil outside of Harvard students, faculty and employees who support an equitable and just peace in the Middle East. We wish to make very clear

[79] Adam S. Cohen, "Anti-Israeli Protest Draws 300 To Candlelight Vigil at Holyoke," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 22, 1982.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Bahbah eventually became national chairman of "Arab Americans for Trump." Bishara A. Bahbah, "Arab and Muslim Americans could hand Trump a victory," *The Times of Israel*, June 30, 2024. https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/arab-and-muslim-americans-could-hand-trump-a-victory/
[82] Adam S. Cohen and John D. Solomon, "Conflicting Rallies Highlight Lebanon," *The Harvard Crimson* 1982. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1982/9/24/conflicting-rallies-highlight-lebanon-pwith-two/. Bisharat eventually became a UC Law San Francisco professor and a prominent supporter of the BDS movement. E.g., George E. Bisharat, "Israel Is Committing War Crimes," *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2009. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123154826952369919?mod=googlenews_wsj
[83] Cohen and Solomon, "Conflicting Rallies Highlight Lebanon."
[84] "Time to Question," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 29, 1982.
[85] Michael S. Terris, "Beyond Questions," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 29, 1982.

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> from the outset that this is not an anti-Israeli rally — on the contrary, it is because of our strong commitment to the secure existence of the state of Israel that we must join the over 400,000 Israelis — both Jews and Arabs — who joined the Israeli Peace Now movement (a movement led by Israeli army reserve officers) in expressing their revulsion, as loyal Israelis, to their government's role in the brutal Phalangist massacre of Palestinian civilians at the Shatila and Sabra refugee camps in Beirut.[86]

Some signers of a faculty petition asking for US aid to Israel to be cut back expressed similar sentiments. Approximately 50 Harvard professors joined more than 450 academics signing this nationwide petition.[87] Harvard historian John Womack Jr. said that they "don't want a cut off all aid… [but rather] to stop aid that Congress itself decides is promoting the aggressive policies" in Lebanon, and Harvard Divinity School (HDS) professor Harvey G. Cox said that his signature "is definitely not an anti-Israel statement" but is "supporting the anti-Begin people in Israel".[88]

The Sabra and Shatila Massacre continued to preoccupy the Harvard community, especially once the Israeli Commission of Inquiry for the events, the Kahan Commission, published its conclusions in February of 1983. George Bisharat '86, the president of the Harvard Arab Student Society, strongly criticized Israel's actions in Lebanon, citing the findings of the Kahan Commission report on the Sabra and Shatila massacres.[89] Conversely, William Marks '83 counter-argued that Bisharat committed "many factual errors through omission and distortion."[90] Eric Stecket '84 then wrote a letter defending Israel and claiming that Bisharat suffered from "muddled thinking."[91] Antony Blinken '84 noted that critiques of Israel do sometimes verge on being "venomous" and "hateful, "such as comparisons of Israelis to Nazis. However, he recognized that some criticism comes from Jews who support Israel.[92]

Comparisons Between Israel and South Africa

During the 1980s tensions arose between Black and Jewish student organizations over how to address the ongoing conflict. The early 1980s saw growing debates about the military and economic ties between Israel and an increasingly isolated South Africa. In 1983, Jesse M. Fried '86 critiqued a planned U.N. conference examining alleged ties between Israel and South Africa.[93] He argued that at the U.N. "anything associated with Israel's existence — from her founding ideology of Zionism to the manner in which she carries out public works projects — tends to prove an acceptable target." Fried claimed that Israel's economic ties to South Africa were relatively small, and that many other countries had stronger economic links yet faced less scrutiny.[94] Later that year, a two-part article by Errol T. Louis '84 presented a different image of close military and economic ties, including extensive arms sales, between Israel and South Africa.[95] Louis suggested that these ties played a role in propping up South Africa's apartheid system. He wrote, "should

[86] Joseph M. Schwartz and Thomas Canel, "Oppose Begin, Not Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 19, 1982. For more about Ahrens's visit see Robert Levey, "Israeli rules out annexing of W. Bank," *The Boston Globe*, October 20, 1982.
[87] Muriel Cohen, "Professors ask halt in US aid to Israel," *The Boston Globe*, November 16, 1982.
[88] Martin F. Cohen, "Professors' Petition Asks U.S. To Cut Back Aid to Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 18, 1982. Eight faculty members also took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* protesting actions by the Israeli government that they said suppressed the academic freedom of Palestinian universities. Their representatives said this action was meant to raise awareness, and they had no further plans at this time. "Petition," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 5, 1983.
[89] George E. Bisharat, "Questioning Israel's Morality," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 5, 1983.
[90] William Marks, "Israel's Morality," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 8, 1983.
[91] Eric Stecket, "Defending Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 19, 1983.
[92] Antony J. Blinken, "Israel's Saving Grace," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 23, 1982.
[93] UN Centre against Apartheid, "International Conference on the Alliance between South Africa and Israel, Vienna, 11 to 13 July 1983," (New York: UN, October 1983).
[94] Jesse M. Fried, "The Same Old Song," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 27, 1983.
[95] Errol T. Louis, "Close Ties," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 1, 1983.

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Israel not successfully separate herself from the apartheid state, it may in the long run risk sharing the fate of South Africa."[96]

Louis's article received some support, with Robert A. Watts '84 praising Louis for "making it clear to all who oppose the apartheid regime in South Africa that they must also begin to oppose the foreign and military policies of Israel, the strongest ally of the white supremacist government."[97] However, the article also prompted rebuttals.[98] Jordan B. Millstein '85 questioned the evidentiary basis for Louis's claims and conclusions. He wrote, "Louis … puts together a list of alleged economic and military connections between Israel for its ties with the racist state [and] attempts to justify singling out Israel over other countries for having these relations. This justification fails miserably as his evidence disappears in a cloud of unproven assertions."[99] The controversy continued in the *Crimson* throughout the 1980s.[100]

Tensions increased in 1989 around plans for a conference on "Apartheid's Arc and the Palestinian Uprising," to be held at the Harvard Divinity School.[101] Associate Dean Timothy Cross denied access to the space, citing logistical reasons related to renovations requiring power shutdowns on the proposed date. This decision rekindled the debate in the *Crimson*. Some students and faculty argued the conference should have been allowed in the interest of open discussion and free speech. Others felt comparisons between Israel and apartheid South Africa were misleading and intended to delegitimize Israel rather than enable an honest debate.[102] While one student argued that equations of Israel and South Africa amounted to a form of "Jewish McCarthyism," others maintained the need for open-ended debate allowing speech from various viewpoints.[103]

Debates Over Antisemitism and Criticism of Israel

These conversations raised questions about whether criticisms of Israel's policies, as well as more general anti-Zionist stances, amount to antisemitism. Alan Dershowitz argued that the 1980s had seen "the most pervasive and dangerous proliferation of anti-Semitism in history." While acknowledging that a recent bombing of a Paris synagogue had been attributed to neo-fascists, Dershowitz identified "leftist anti-Semitism" as posing the greater threat. Speaking at Hillel, he claimed the "old poison" of antisemitism had been "rebottled" and relabeled as "anti-Zionism" by leftist groups. Dershowitz singled out the Soviet Union as a major source of this "new propaganda." He said various leftist groups, including some Black, pro-Palestinian, and pro-Iranian organizations, were promoting their causes by attacking Israel. Dershowitz also condemned the UN General Assembly for "sanctioning anti-Zionism under international law" and suggested resolutions critical of Israel would pass the Assembly regardless of their factual veracity.[104]

[96] Errol T. Louis, "Too Close for Comfort," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 2, 1983.
[97] Robert A. Watts, "Israel & South Africa: 'Remarkable'," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 10, 1983.
[98] E.g., Jonathan David, "'Questionable'," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 10, 1983.
[99] Jordan B Millstein, "'Half-Truths' About Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 14, 1983.
[100] Charles T. Kurzman, "No More Excuses," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 10, 1984.
[101] L. Humphrey Walz, "Harvard Divinity School Backs Away from Examination of Israel-South Africa Ties," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, no. January (1990). https://www.wrmea.org/1990-january/harvard-divinity-school-backs-away-from-examination-of-israel-south-africa-ties.html
Joshua M. Sharfstein, "Talking Israel and South Africa," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 1, 1989; Edmund R. Hanauer, "Defending Chomsky's Views on Israeli Policies," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 29, 1989.
[102] Lori E. Fein, "Don't Legitimate Propaganda," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 2, 1989; Ivan Dominguez and Louis Green, "Israel-S.Africa," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 4, 1989; Glen I. A. Schwaber, "Delink Israel and South Africa," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 16, 1989.
[103] Daniel B. Baer, "Israel's Next Plan of Attack," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 7, 1989.
[104] "Anti-Semitism Threat," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 4, 1980.

This sentiment was shared by at least some students. Allen S. Weiner '82, for example, published an article discussing how the Israel-Lebanon conflict in 1982 had increased tensions and anti-Israel/antisemitic sentiments. He argued that at least some criticism of Israel stemmed from underlying antisemitic views:

> Many might balk at the claim that political condemnation of Israel signals the presence of anti-Semitism. Of course, the relationship is by no means categorical — many Jews and Judeophiles themselves, for example, have vehemently attacked Tel Aviv's foreign policy in recent months. And the idea that anti-Semitism could warp people's views on political issues seem distant to most. It's easy to forget that only 40 years ago, one of the most civilized nations on the globe carried out the systematic slaughter of six million people out of pure anti-Semitism. The frequent and sometimes offhand mention of the Holocaust obscures how real, timely, and savage hatred for Jews can be. Hitler's genocide has become just another landmark event, and when someone mentions it, instead of gasping "The Horror!" we chronicle it with the Norman Conquest, the Reformation, and other distant historical happenings.[105]

Scott A. Rosenberg '81 wrote in response that Weiner conflated different identities and groups, such as Jews and Zionists, Israelis and their government. For Rosenberg, equating criticism of Israel and antisemitism injects "extremist rhetoric" into the debate over Israel, Palestinians, and Lebanon. According to Rosenberg, much criticism of Israel is based on legitimate concerns about the policies of then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin's government. Rosenberg also chided Weiner for using "self-pity" in his article, saying that while it may be difficult being Jewish, it has been much harder recently for Palestinians and Lebanese impacted by the conflict.[106]

The Poster Wars

Debates over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict played out through "poster wars" on Harvard's campus in the 1980s. Tensions over text and imagery on material distributed by opposing student groups spurred heated debate over the accuracy and appropriateness of speech.

In April 1981, opponents and supporters of American aid to Israel distributed competing leaflets around Harvard's campus. Members of the Harvard-Radcliffe Zionist League (HRZL) responded to leaflets criticizing unconditional US aid to Israel that had been distributed by a group calling itself the Committee of Concerned Americans (CCA). The CCA leaflets stated that American aid had "subsidized Israeli policies that are stumbling blocks to peace." In response, HRZL members including Rona G. Shapiro '83 and Peter A. Bronstein '82 held an "emergency meeting" where they drafted pro-Israel pamphlets entitled "Israel Represents Our Best Interests in the Middle East." The pamphlets aimed to "inform people how important Israel is to American foreign policy," according to Bronstein. When asked, CCA representatives refused to provide information about the nature and views of their organization.[107]

In March 1988, the Harvard-Israel Public Affairs Committee (HIPAC) began posting pro-Israeli fact sheets around campus to provide context for news coverage of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank. However, Adam Sabra '90, president of the Society of Arab Students (SAS), called the posters "almost racist" and criticized their assertions that the conflict in Lebanon showed "Arab intolerance toward non-Islamic religious groups" and the "impossibility of a [Palestinian Liberation Organization] democratic, secular state."[108] Dina Abu-Ghaida — future co-founder of the Palestine Solidarity

[105] Allen S. Weiner, "Behind the Mask," *e Harvard Crimson*, November 8, 1982, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1982/11/8/behind-the-mask-pbibt-hasnt-been/

[106] Scott A. Rosenberg, "A Matter of De nition," *e Harvard Crimson*, November 18, 1982.

[107] Jacob M. Schlesinger, "Leaflet Conflict Outside Yard Centers on U.S. Aid to Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 4, 1981.

[108] Spencer S. Hsu, "Pro-Israeli Posters Stir Debate," *e Harvard Crimson*, March 10, 1988.

Committee at Harvard — asked "What has to happen for them to understand us [Palestinians]? ... Yet again, the Jews and the Arabs seem not able to talk to one another."[109]

HIPAC apologized "for the poor wording of the remark" about Arab governance, and highlighted that "the purpose of these pamphlets is not to promote controversy or stifle debate, but to encourage meaningful intellectual discussion on the subject."[110] The SAS then posted fact sheets of their own, including one listing Palestinian grievances and one depicting an Israeli soldier slapping an unarmed Palestinian woman.[111] When challenged by pro-Israel students, the SAS clarified they opposed only the Israeli occupation, not Israel's existence, and depicted scenes solely from occupied lands. The SAS insisted that they sought open discussion rather than condemnation and accused pro-Israeli students of employing "hackneyed arguments" and "accusations prey[ing] on base assumptions."[112]

The Late 1980s: Debates Expand to Local Politics

When the first Intifada flared, debate about Israel intensified both at Harvard and in Cambridge. In Fall 1988, a debate emerged over "Question 5" on the Cambridge ballot for forthcoming elections. Question 5 called for US Representatives to vote "in favor of a resolution calling upon Congress to stop all expenditure of US funds for Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza." The resolution also demanded that Israel end its violations of Palestinian human rights and advocated the establishment of an independent Palestinian state "with peace for all states in the region, including Israel."[113]

The issue sharply divided opinion. Michael "Trig" Tarazi '89, president of the SAS, supported Question 5, saying "The United States does determine what is going on when they give $45 billion to one side in a conflict and not the other."[114] However, others like Ellen L. Chubin from Americans for Peace in the Middle East opposed it, arguing the referendum "simplifies a very complex situation." She said, "I think the phrase 'peace in the Middle East' was distorted in the question", adding that most voters likely agreed with the question's peaceful-sounding intentions, but also "didn't go so far as to analyze the specific program that was proposed."[115] A debate was held between James J. Zogby of the Arab-American Institute and Alan Dershowitz, with both sides accusing the other of bias. The debate, held in the Science Center, was closed to the public and limited to members of the Harvard Community and invited guests. It included hisses and shouts from audience members, along with insults between Zogby and Dershowitz.[116] Question 5 was endorsed by faculty like biologists Ruth Hubbard, Richard Lewontin, and George Wald and historian Everett Mendelsohn, who wrote that "having campaigned against racism in our country, apartheid in South Africa, the iron fist of Pinochet, the atrocities of the Khomeni regime and against funding of Contra terror and death squads in Central America, [they] cannot turn a blind eye to the oppression visited upon the Palestinian people as they try to end Israeli occupation."[117]

[109] Hsu, "Pro-Israeli Posters Stir Debate."
[110] Glen I. A. Schwaber, Joseph Enis, and Laura E. Fein, "HIPAC," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 14, 1988.
[111] Matthew M. Hoffman, "Posters Spur New Debate Over Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 6, 1988.
[112] Trig Tarazi et al., "No Anti-Israel Campaign," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 13, 1988.
[113] Madhavi Sunder, "Aid to Israel Debated; Forum Closed to Public," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 4, 1988. The referendum came under attack from Jewish groups who claimed Israel is being singled out compared to its neighboring countries. Phillip van Niekerk, "Middle East issues come to ballot box," *The Boston Globe*, September 20, 1988.
[114] Sean P. Mclaughlin, "Congress Members Lead Opposition to Question 5," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 1, 1988. Tarazi ultimately became a legal adviser to the PLO. Michael Tarazi, "Two Peoples, One State," *The New York Times*, October 4, 2004. https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/04/opinion/two-peoples-one-state.html?searchResultPosition=7
[115] Kelly A. Matthews, "Cambridge Votes Yes on 5," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 9, 1988.
[116] Sunder, "Aid to Israel Debated; Forum Closed to Public."
[117] Ruth Hubbard et al., "Condemning Oppression," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 5, 1988.

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On November 8, Cambridge residents voted on Question 5. It narrowly passed by a margin of 19,173 to 17,441.[118] Supporters like Tarazi saw this as the "first time anything questioning Israel's politics has passed on the grass-roots level."[119] Others like Jonathan Savett '90 lamented the tenor of the debate on campus and expressed the wish that the community continue "discussion — exchanges of opinions through letters, yes, but better yet through personal contact, and even better yet everyone should take a break from opinion-ramming and just concentrate closely on what actually happens during the coming weeks."[120]

Antisemitic Incidents on Campus and Beyond

Over this decade, antisemitic incidents like threatening graffiti and vandalism against Jewish structures appeared sporadically on Harvard's campus and in the surrounding area. For example, in 1980, Hillel posters in Pennypacker Hall dormitory at Harvard were defaced with swastikas and antisemitic graffiti, according to Rabbi Ben Zion Gold, who noted that "prejudices are part of the human situation" and such incidents "hurt many segments of this country."[121] In 1982 and 1983 swastikas occasionally appeared on the Jewish Law Students Association's (JLSA) bulletin boards and announcements. JLSA member David M. Mirchin speculated that " a lot of the inhibitions about being insensitive to Jews that existed for a long time after World War II no longer exist," and that "In a certain way, anti-Semitism is okay."[122] In 1984, Ellen Resnick discovered that her mezuzah had been removed from her door at Currier House. She was disturbed by the possibility that a member of the Harvard community deliberately removed it due to antisemitic sentiment. She found it particularly troubling that this could have happened during the Christmas season, which historically has been a time of increased ill will towards Jews in Europe. Resnick said Harvard deserves its reputation for tolerance, but this "subtle gesture" showed an "appalling and unacceptable private prejudice" that she had not previously observed. She worried that if such sentiments remain private and hidden, manifesting only in isolated acts, it would be difficult to rationally challenge them.[123]

This increase in antisemitic incidents was part of a regional trend. In 1982, a sukkah built by Yale students in New Haven was destroyed by vandals, though Judah Shechter '85 dismissed the idea of active antisemitism, suggesting it was "probably just drunken vandalism."[124] In the same year, a sukkah at Brown University was vandalized in what administrative assistant Sharon E. Cohen considered "a deliberate and partially anti-Semitic act."[125] Boston University experienced several other instances of anti-Jewish graffiti and vandalism.[126]

As disturbing as these events were, the reaction from students known for being highly critical of Israel was supportive of their Jewish classmates. In 1983, 16 student organizations (including the Arab Student Society, the Black Law Students Association, and the Third World Coalition) issued a statement condemning an antisemitic incident at Harvard Law School (HLS):

> A couple of weeks ago, swastikas, the symbol of Hitler's Third Reich, were scrawled across three posters advertising Jewish activities at Harvard Law School. Last fall, someone etched a swastika into the Jewish Law Student Association Bulletin Board. As members of the Harvard Law School

[118] Matthews, "Cambridge Votes Yes on 5."
[119] Ibid.
[120] Jonathan Savett, "Question 5," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 19, 1988.
[121] Stacey L. Mandelbaum, "Pennypacker Meets To Discuss Recent Anti-Semitic Graffiti," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 13, 1980.
[122] "Swastikas," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 3, 1983.
[123] Ellen Resnick, "Bigotry," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 23, 1984.
[124] "Sukkah Destroyed," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 16, 1982.
[125] "Jewish Structures Vandalized At Three Ivy League Schools," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 23, 1982.
[126] "Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 8, 1987.

> Community, we are outraged by these abhorrent expressions of anti Semitism. We join together in condemning the intolerance and hatred that motivated these acts of vandalism.[127]

Controversial Visitors on Campus

Some of the more fervent debates of the 1980s emerged around controversial speakers, both on the Palestinian and the Israeli side. A 1983 visit by Hassan Abdul Rahman of the PLO at HLS sparked significant tensions. While initial reporting suggested that pro-Israel students attempted to prevent the talk from taking place, William Marks '83 argued that around 200 students demonstrated "to oppose the PLO's tactics and ideology, not to prevent Rahman from speaking."[128] Organizers of the event critiqued the news coverage of the event as an endorsement of PLO tactics, arguing that Abdul-Rahman's invitation "represents no statement of approval or disapproval of the aims and methods of the PLO, about which the respective organizations have differing views. But it does represent our firm affirmation of the right of representatives of the PLO to engage in direct dialogue with the American public, and to represent its aspirations and policies in its own terms."[129]

Rona Shapiro '84 of the Harvard-Radcliffe Zionist Alliance expressed dissatisfaction with how the talk by PLO official Hassan Abdul-Rahman was carried out. She argued Jewish students were not given adequate notice and questions from the floor were not allowed, "stacking the cards" against alternative viewpoints. About the atmosphere at the talk, she wrote:

> I arrived with my appropriate placard and screamed my position while inside. Rahman and his supporters screamed theirs. Our individual identities were subsumed in our flags and titles, leaving no room for a common ground or the search for one. What we witnessed instead was a debate of hatred. I would argue that we learn very little from such screaming, that we merely reinforce established prejudices.[130]

Shapiro proposed that a series of co-sponsored speakers from different perspectives could have fostered mutual understanding.[131]

However, members of the Hillel Steering Committee claimed that the heckling "was not a planned part of the protest but stemmed from the emotional pride of the anti-PLO students" and admitted that "the audience should have ideally exercised more self-control."[132] Furthermore, the Committee pointed out that their objection was to Rachman and the PLO specifically, but not to Palestinian rights:

> During the protest outside the marchers held signs that said "Palestinians — Yes, PLO — No" and the only full round of applause that Rachmun received followed his remarks that the rights of all people in the region should be respected. We protested the PLO's maximalism and rejectionism, not the human rights of Palestinians. The two should not be confused. The Middle East problem is horribly complex and no simple solutions will solve it, and there is no room for an organization predicated on the destruction of Israel.[133]

[127] American Indian Law Students Association et al., "Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 4, 1983.
[128] William Marks, "'Anti-Jewish'," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 29, 1983.
[129] George E. Bisharat, "Rahmun's Speech," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 4, 1983.
https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1983/5/4/rahmuns-speech-pbto-the-editors-of/
[130] Rona Shapiro, "Stacked Cards," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 29, 1983.
https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1983/4/29/stacked-cards-pbto-the-editors-of/
[131] Ibid.
[132] Jeffrey R. Mendelsohn et al., "Another View," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 4, 1983.
https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1983/5/4/another-view-pbto-the-editors-of/.
[133] Ibid.

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The Committee expressed the wish for better dialogue and understanding between the sides on campus: "We must not allow an artificial division to develop between the groups who protested and those that sponsored the speech … Misunderstandings grow all too easily in an environment of mutual ignorance. To avoid this, we must be willing to talk and listen to each other as students and as peers."[134]

In 1984, the Harvard Black American Law Students Association (BALSA) also hosted a panel discussion featuring a representative from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). When Jewish students from the Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA) attended, outnumbering BALSA members, the BALSA moderator Muhammad Kenyatta refused to recognize any questions from White or Jewish students.[135] This led professors Martin Kilson and Orlando Patterson to argue that BALSA had violated norms of free speech and fairness. They wrote:

> The ugliness of Mr. Kenyatta's behavior, cowardly acquiesced in by Afro-American students associated with BALSA, is especially shocking, in light of Black Americans long and bitter experience with racist victimization and brutalization. It is hard to believe that Mr. Kenyatta's and BALSA's knowledge of this experience is so shallow and unsophisticated that they could transform the occasion of the PLO's UN representative's talk into one of the vilest assaults on the norms of fairness and free speech to occur at Harvard in many years.[136]

Along with Alan Dershowitz, Kilson and Patterson asked President Derek Bok and HLS to condemn and censure Muhammad Kenyatta and BALSA.[137] BALSA defended the event as private, in order to minimize counterprotests, though they acknowledged inviting JLSA to observe. They rejected the notion that inviting a PLO representative was tantamount to supporting terrorist acts.[138] Kilson continued arguing that discussion of Palestinian issues at Harvard must respect norms of fairness and free speech.[139]

Tensions rose further in 1985 when a letter criticized the Harvard Radcliffe Black Students Association (HRBSA) for having invited a Libyan official to a conference on campus, describing it as an "outrage" given Libya's oppression.[140] The letter accused Black students of supporting Muslim oppression of Jews by sympathizing with Palestinians. Accusations of "Black racist intellectual anti-Semitism" were levied against HRBSA. Joachim Cario Santos Martillo-Ajami '78 argued Jewish groups should deny assistance to all Black groups until HRBSA "cleans up its act."[141]

Jewish and Israeli speakers were also a source of controversy. In 1985, Meir Kahane threatened to sue Harvard Hillel if he was not allowed to speak on campus. Kahane, who advocated expelling Israel's Arab citizens, was told he was not welcome at Hillel due to the organization's refusal to engage with the racist and violent views of Kahane's Jewish Defense League. However, Hillel later changed its decision, allowing Kahane to enter the building and speak.[142]

Four years later, pro-Palestinian demonstrators protested the presence of Israeli Major General Amram Mitzna as a fellow at Harvard's Center for International Affairs (CFIA). Mitzna had overseen Israeli military operations in the West Bank from 1987-1989. The protesters, organized by the Cambridge

[134] Ibid.
[135] "Minority Priority," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 26, 1984.
[136] Martin Kilson and Orlando Patterson, "Condemnation," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 25, 1984.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Black Law Students Association, "HJLSA: Wrong," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 28, 1984.
[139] Martin Kilson, "BLSA," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 1, 1984.
[140] Mohammed Abdul-Assiz, third secretary to the Libyan mission, had been invited to the Third World Conference on Human Rights, which took place in February 17, 1979. Sarah M. Mcgillis, "Third World Conference Criticizes U.S.," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 17, 1979. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1979/2/17/third-world-conference-criticizes-us-pspeakers/
[141] Joachim Cario Santos Martillo-Ajami, "Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 2, 1985.
[142] Gil Citro, "Hillel to Allow Talk By Uninvited Rabbi," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 7, 1986.

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Coalition for Palestinian Rights, accused Mitzna of human rights abuses and considered him a "war criminal."[143] HIPAC argued that criticism of Mitzna, seen as a moderate in Israel, was unfounded and that denying him the fellowship would amount to censorship.[144] The anti-Mitzna protesters said their goal was to get Mitzna to leave Harvard, end US aid for alleged "Israeli oppression," and pressure Israel to stop "atrocities" in the occupied territories. Counter-protesters said the Coalition aimed to impose censorship and discourage dialogue.[145]

Being Jewish and Zionist at Harvard

During the late 1980s, debates around Jewish identity and support for Israel were at times fierce. In a November 1989 op-ed in the *Crimson*, John Larew '91 criticized what he termed "Zealots," whom he defined as American Jews who supported Israel unconditionally and rationalized alleged human rights violations. Bemoaning the "poster wars" on campus, he described "Zealot" behavior thus:

> Once during my first year, a Palestinian student posted a sign on the entryway bulletin board that showed an Israeli soldier beating an unarmed Palestinian woman with the butt of his rifle. Within hours, a Jewish student in the entryway had torn the poster down. When the Palestinian confronted her about the incident, the Jewish student responded, "I'm sorry, but I just couldn't bear to see it there." During my sophomore year, I saw a similar reaction in Winthrop House. Another bulletin board, another poster, the same photo. Someone had written across the photograph in huge letters: "BULLSHIT!" The gesture was more pathetic than vexing. Some poor student wore ideological blinders so thick that he or she dismissed an indisputable photographic record of Israeli brutality as "bullshit." Those who took Psychology 1 may recognize this phenomenon as the mental defense mechanism known as "denial." The facts conflict with their beliefs, therefore the facts do not exist.[146]

In response, Donald Seeman '89 argued that Israeli policymakers often faced a difficult choice between "evils" and felt a military occupation, though "evil," was preferable to threats against Israel's existence from groups like the PLO.[147] Glen I.A. Schwaber '91 rebutted Larew in a letter affirming his support of Israel and accusing Larew of twisting the words of others to suit his arguments.[148]

More general questions about Jewish identity and integration into campus also emerged in the late 1980s. In 1989, Jonathan S. Cohn criticized the newly formed Jewish fraternity Sigma Alpha Mu at Harvard. In an article called "Life Isn't a Kosher Deli", Cohn argued the fraternity went against Harvard's goal of diversity, saying it promoted the idea that "Jews should only socialize with other Jews."[149] In response a student of South Asian background wrote that Cohn's criticism was unfairly harsh and "hinted at antisemitism." It presented student-driven social organization as a wellspring of diversity, not an obstacle to it. In this view, minority students have a natural need to engage with others from their own backgrounds as part of their integration into broader social networks.[150]

Amidst the flare-ups of tension regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict came attempts to facilitate respectful exchanges of perspectives on the topic. In 1984, Harvard hosted an Israeli-Palestinian symposium organized by Professor Herbert C. Kelman, who had been working on Israeli-Palestinian

[143] "News Briefs," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 28, 1989.
[144] "Israeli General Sparks Protest: Demonstrators Divided on Mitzna's Fellowship at CFIA," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 7, 1989.
[145] Ibid.
[146] John L. Larew, "Israel's Worst Best Friends," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 29, 1989.
[147] Donald Seeman, "Israel Chooses the Lesser of Two Evils," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 30, 1989.
[148] Glen I. A. Schwaber, "The Defense of Israel Is No Vice," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 2, 1989.
[149] Jonathan S. Cohn, "Life Isn't a Kosher Deli," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11, 1989.
[150] Madhavi Sunder, "Need to Go National?," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 17, 1989.

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issues for over a decade. The symposium brought together a high-level delegation from Israel, including Knesset member Yossi Sarid, the leader of the delegation and a prominent dove in Israel's Labor party. On the Palestinian side, the delegation included Professor Walid Khalidi, a renowned scholar and founder of the Institute of Palestinian Studies in Beirut, as well as scholars from the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli journalist Dalia Shehori, who attended the symposium, saw it as "one of the most encouraging gatherings ever" in the history of Israeli-Palestinian conferences. Shehori noted Professor Khalidi's relief upon accepting the political framework presented by Sarid. Shehori saw the symposium as "a reminder that there are still in Israel people who hold the right direction" toward peace.[151]

In November 1989, Palestinian academic and activist Taysir Aruri spoke at Harvard's Jefferson Hall. Aruri, who had been deported from the West Bank by Israeli authorities earlier that year, told the 80 attendees that residents in Israel, the occupied territories, and the broader Middle East increasingly supported a resolution involving two independent states. Aruri, who was touring the US sponsored by Amnesty International, noted that the Intifada had shifted attitudes toward a separate Palestinian state and changed the dynamics of the Israeli occupation. He believed that under a peace agreement, the independent Palestinian state and Israel could develop economic and diplomatic ties that would benefit both peoples. The Progressive Jewish Alliance and Harvard's Society of Arab Students organized the event.[152]

In December 1989, Arab and Jewish students at Harvard sought to find common ground and ease tensions through open discussion. Students from, among other groups, the New Jewish Agenda and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee came together for a conference in Boylston Hall, After splitting into small groups, participants reconvened for a larger discussion. They agreed the best path forward was through education — creating a joint task force to increase understanding between their communities. Ideas proposed included hosting lectures at local high schools and pairing Jewish and Arab-American community members. The students also discussed jointly lobbying the US government to redefine its aid to Israel. "I think it's something very helpful, the fact that 40 Jews showed up to talk about this issue," said Majed Tomeh of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.[153]

Conclusion

Debates around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at Harvard in the 1980s reflected the rising tensions and polarization occurring regionally during the period. The discourse on campus featured debates over specific Israeli policies and attempted to distinguish appropriate criticism from a blanket delegitimization of Israel and criticism of the PLO from discussion of Palestinian rights. While tensions occasionally flared between Jewish and Arab student groups, efforts also emerged to develop understanding through dialogue.

While concerns about antisemitism did arise during the 1980s, they did not dominate the public discourse surrounding Middle East discussions. Instead, many speakers critical of Israel strove to distinguish their critiques of specific policies from broader condemnations of Israel as a whole. Individuals and groups were often careful to clarify their points if there was a risk of misinterpretation. The decade saw a concerted push toward informed debates that sought to draw clear lines between policy critique and antisemitic rhetoric.

[151] Dalia Shehori, "Mid-East at Harvard," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 27, 1984.
[152] Francesca E. Bignami, "Middle East Peace Possible," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 21, 1989.
[153] "Arab and Jewish Groups Talk of Common Ground," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 4, 1989.

Jews at Harvard in the 1990s: Tension and Dialogue with Pro-Palestinian and Black Student Groups

> TO THE EDITORS
>
> February 26, 1994
>
> We were shocked and appalled to hear of the horrific tragedy that occurred yesterday when an Israeli settler brutally massacred more than 40 people in a mosque in Hebron. The killings occurred during the holy month of Ramadan and were directed against innocent people in prayer. It is hard to conceive that one human being is capable of such unthinkable evil. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those murdered and to the entire Arab and Islamic community. We pray for a world free from such violence.
>
> — *Elie G. Kaunfer '95 Chair, Coordinating Council Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel*[154]

> TO THE EDITORS
>
> March 6, 1996
>
> The Harvard/Radcliffe Society of Arab Students would like to express its deep regret for the loss of innocent civilian lives during the latest attacks in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. We sincerely hope that the Palestinians and Israelis will continue their quest for a just and lasting peace.
>
> — *Ramy M. Tadros '97, President Harvard/Radcliffe Society of Arab Students*[155]

These two letters, written by Jewish and Arab students respectively in response to murderous violence in the West Bank and Israel, demonstrate the capacity of Harvard students during the 1990s for mutual sympathy and understanding despite political differences. For Jewish students, the decade was marked less by concern about antisemitism from pro-Palestinian students than by broader debates over free speech — what kinds of statements might be deemed offensive to the Jewish community, and who had the right to make that determination. To be sure, events in the Middle East directly impacted the Harvard campus, e.g., the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the 1993/1995 Oslo Accords, the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; numerous terrorist attacks in Israel; the 1996 opening of the Temple Mount Tunnel and the ensuing riots and severe Israeli response; and the negotiations of the Wye River Memorandum in 1998. These occurrences reverberated on Harvard's campus, stimulating debates and student activism. But relations between Jewish and Black students were especially fraught and more likely to elicit accusations of antisemitism.

Balancing Free Speech with Protection from Harassment

Harvard took part in the national controversy of the late 1980s and early 1990s about ensuring free speech on campus while protecting students from harassment.[156] In September 1988, HLS adopted new free speech guidelines in response to previous disruptions of talks by controversial speakers.[157] HLS described the guidelines as an attempt to balance future opportunities for speakers to present their worldviews and

[154] Elie G. Kaunfer, "Appalled at the Hebron Killings," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 26, 1994. (The actual number of Muslims murdered by the perpetrator, Baruch Goldstein, was 29.)
[155] Ramy M. Tadros, "Arabs Regret Loss," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 6, 1996.
[156] At Yale, for example, Yale President Benno C. Schmidt asserted that defacing a Jewish student's door with swastikas was "unlawful harassment," whereas Yale College Dean Donald Kagan initially said that the defacers were protected by freedom of expression. John L. Johnson, "Anti-Semitism, Free Speech Controversy Erupts at Yale," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 5, 1991.
[157] Crystal Nix, "Contra Chief's Harvard Appearance Disrupted," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1987, 1.

allow protesters the right of dissent.[158] In 1990, FAS followed suit and approved comprehensive Free Speech Guidelines aimed at safeguarding the principles of free expression within the academic community. The guidelines emphasized that the long-term benefits of a robust marketplace of ideas outweighed the short-term discomfort of potentially offensive views. They outlined procedures for managing disruptions, including issuing warnings and removing individuals who persist in disruptive behavior, and acknowledged the need for security measures to protect these freedoms. In order to maximize freedom of expression, the guidelines made clear that sanctions for violations would be based on the nature of the infraction rather than the content of speech.[159]

As the Faculty considered how to implement the guidelines, some argued that speech amounting to the harassment of minorities needed to be curtailed for the benefit of the academic environment. Daniel E. Mufson, for example, asked the University to assert "the importance of academic freedom as well as the need for an educational environment in which that freedom can be enjoyed."[160] The president of the *Crimson* pointed out that "harassment of minorities is a detriment rather than an addition to the 'marketplace of ideas.'"[161] Conversely, critics of these restrictions described them as overreaches that stifled free expression.[162]

The debate over free speech versus protection from harassment was evident in campus discussions on antisemitism and controversies over activism connected to the Israel/Palestine activism. Tensions surfaced over the freedom to invite controversial speakers to campus and the publication of materials critiquing Israel, which some perceived as bordering on antisemitism.

The Pro-Israeli and Pro-Palestinian Communities at Harvard

In the 1990s, Harvard's Jewish community was thriving in every respect. On the organizational side, Hillel functioned as not only a religious space but also a cultural and social hub for Jewish life on campus. Rabbi Sally Finestone, acting chair of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, noted that Jewish students felt integrated into campus life, stating, "I don't think Jews feel like guests at Harvard anymore."[163]

In 1997, a Chabad House was established at Harvard. It sought to provide an informal, welcoming environment for Jewish students to explore their heritage through classes, discussions, and Shabbat experiences. Chabad reached out to Jewish students who were not already involved in campus Jewish life.[164] Leaders Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi and Elkie Zarchi reported that students appreciated the opportunity to take a break from the competitive campus environment and engage with Judaism in a meaningful way. Within six years, Rabbi Zarchi attained official Jewish chaplain status on campus.[165]

[158] Seth A. Gitell, "Harvard Law School adopts new 'free speech' guidelines," *The Boston Globe*, September 25, 1988.
[159] Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, *Free Speech Guidelines, as adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences on February 13 and May 15, 1990* (1990). https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/facultyresources/files/fs_guidelines_1990.pdf
[160] Daniel E. Mufson, "Free Speech Stops at Harrassment," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 7, 1990.
[161] Julian E. Barnes, "PRESIDENT'S NOTE: An Open Letter," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 4, 1992. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1992/5/4/an-open-letter-pearly-this-morning/
[162] Lori E. Smith, "Frank Defends Free Speech: Comments Draw Fire at Law School Seminar on Bigotry," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 12, 1990; "Nye Free Speech Report: Censure, Don't Censor," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 13, 1990.
[163] Anna D. Wilde, "Harvard Is A 'Home' For Jewish Students: Students Say Past Prejudice Is No Longer a Barrier," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 16, 1992.
[164] "Introducing the Leaders of the Future to their Past: A new Chabad House opens its doors to the Harvard community," *Chabad.Org News*, March 5, 1999. https://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/407/jewish/Introducing-the-Leaders-of-the-Future-to-their-Past.htm
[165] Sue Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009), 101-05; Samuel C. Heilman, *The Rebbe: The life and afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 7.

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Throughout the 1990s Harvard featured a lively pro-Israel community that put on events and advocated on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The events ranged from rallies and demonstrations to cultural celebrations and visits by high-profile politicians. In response to SCUD missile attacks on Israel in January 1991, some 200 people gathered in front of Widener Library to show solidarity with Israel. In October 1994, Harvard Hillel held a vigil on the steps of Widener Library to mourn the victims of a terrorist bombing in Tel Aviv. Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres spoke to an audience of some one thousand at Memorial Hall in February 1994.[166] In October 1996, Harvard Students for Israel held a demonstration advocating for negotiations amidst Israeli-Palestinian violence sparked by the opening of the Temple Mount Tunnel in Jerusalem.[167] A 1999 conference on "Boston, Israel, and YOU!," co-sponsored by the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and Harvard Students for Israel (HSI), provided advice from lobbyists, analysis, and politicians on how Harvard's Jewish students could become future leaders.

These acts of celebration and advocacy did not go unanswered. When Einat Wilf, the HSI chair, wrote a piece for the *Crimson* defending Israel and its efforts to attain peace with its neighbors, she received criticism as well as support from fellow affiliates.[168] The criticism reflected mounting frustration with Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, frustration that led three undergraduate students to establish the Palestine Solidarity Committee. According to one of the organizers, Dina N. Abu-Ghaida '91, this new group aimed to be "very visible on campus" and actively supported a two-state solution, differing from the Society of Arab Students (SAS), which Abu-Ghaida noted was "primarily a cultural group."[169] Abu-Ghaida, a Palestinian born in Damascus and who had lived in Beirut, Amman, and Vienna before coming to Harvard, said that the outbreak of the intifada and the Gulf War left her with "no choice but to respond." She referred to both hostility from Jewish students and positive experiences with the Progressive Jewish Alliance, with whom she worked to build bridges between concerned Arabs and Jews.[170] Other pro-Palestinian activists, including Imraan Coovadia '92, reported facing hostility on campus, and Rhoda A. Kanaaneh '92 noted frequent removal of PSC posters. Lucas P. Barr '91 described a hostile atmosphere where actions like spitting at pro-Palestinian demonstrators reflected an "anti-Arab sentiment" among the community.[171]

Like pro-Israel students, supporters of the Palestinian cause organized rallies, issued public statements, and held conferences. In October 1991, some 35 people gathered in front of Widener Library to protest the killing of 19 Palestinians by Israeli police. The event was led by members of SAS and the Subterranean Review, a leftist campus publication. Imraan Coovadia '92, a protest organizer, described the incident as "an inexcusable massacre." Protestors carried signs saying, "Economic sanctions on Israel now," "Stop Israeli genocide against Palestinians" and "End the Israeli occupation now."[172] In October 1996, more than 80 people participated in a vigil in front of Holyoke Center to protest Israeli violence against Palestinians. Participants chanted slogans like "Self-determination, end the occupation!" Ramy M. Adeeb '00, a member of the Harvard-Radcliffe Society of Arab Students said: "As a human being, I am here to say I

[166] Sarah J. Schaffer, "Israel's Peres to Visit Harvard Next Week," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 24, 1994; Sarah J. Schaffer, "Peres Stresses Peace, Security," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 19, 1994.
[167] "Pro-Israel Students Rally for Peace," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 4, 1996. For background, see Serge Schmemann, "10 MORE DIE IN MIDEAST RIOTS AS VIOLENCE ENTERS 3D DAY; MOSQUE IS SCENE OF A CLASH," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1996, 1.
[168] Einat Wilf, "Israel's Independence Day," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 5, 1995.
[169] Tracy Kramer, "Pro-Palestinian Group Planned: Campus Organization Will Focus on Political Agenda," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 25, 1990. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1990/10/25/pro-palestinian-group-planned-pfrustrated-by-the/
[170] Seth A. Gitell, "Searching for an Identity and a Homeland: Dina N. Abu-Ghaida '91," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 6, 1991.
[171] Kramer, "Pro-Palestinian Group Planned: Campus Organization Will Focus on Political Agenda."
[172] Jonathan Samuels, "Students Protest Israeli Killings," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11, 1990.

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don't agree with this destruction of the peace process."[173] Complaints about anti-Palestinian media bias were published in the *Crimson*.[174]

Not only speech but also imagery was a source of contention between students in rival political camps. After an early 1990 incident where posters supporting Palestinian university students in the West Bank were removed or defaced on campus, economist David S. Landes argued that while the posters were provocative to some, their removal violated principles of free speech. While acknowledging both the concerns of pro-Israel students and the right to express support for Palestinians, he questioned how universities should handle such contentious displays.[175]

Another controversy erupted around a poster campaign by the Harvard-Radcliffe Committee on Palestine (COP) in December 1990, commemorating the third anniversary of the outbreak of the intifada. On December 10, COP placed posters around Harvard Yard and student Houses with messages like "As a center of protest this university has been closed. — Israeli Military Command" and "You have 48 hours to evacuate before this house is demolished. — Israeli Military Command." Within hours, most of these posters were removed. COP members Dina Abu-Ghaida '91 and Rhoda Kanaaneh '92 wrote to the *Crimson*, claiming this was a "stark violation of [their] freedom of speech on campus" and an attempt to "stifle any Palestinian self-expression or form of protest."[176] Adam Taxin '93 responded, arguing that the posters were "vicious propaganda" designed to "defame the Jewish state and its supporters." He suggested that COP intended for the posters to be removed quickly so they could "gain martyr status" and draw parallels between Harvard and Palestinian universities.[177]

In April 1992, SAS reported that posters advertising their event about the psychological effects on Palestinian children under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were repeatedly removed shortly after being put up. This incident, along with similar occurrences over the past two years, prompted SAS to place an advertisement in the *Crimson* to announce their event. Laila Sahyoun '94 and Leith Masri '94, representing SAS, expressed concern about this "disturbing violation of its freedom of expression" and called on those responsible to "reconsider their actions." The letter writers viewed these incidents as deliberate attempts to suppress their voice on campus.[178]

Cartoons in the *Crimson* also set off controversies. On October 16, 1990, the paper published a cartoon by Oliver Chin titled "Wailing Wall Indeed ...", depicting an Israeli soldier with an M-16 rifle standing unmoved next to a dying Palestinian at the Western Wall. In a letter dated October 18, Glen Schwaber '91 argued that the cartoon perpetuates harmful stereotypes about Jews and trivializes both the sanctity of the religious site and the loss of life in the conflict. Schwaber contended that the cartoon oversimplifies a complex situation and unfairly places blame on one side. To illustrate his point, he asked readers to imagine a hypothetical cartoon showing Palestinians attacking Jewish worshippers, suggesting that such an image would be considered offensive if directed at Muslims or Islam.[179]

Conversely, a cartoon by Paul Tarr, published on February 13, 1991, depicted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestinians, and Arabs in a manner that some readers found offensive. Samia Mora '92, Dina N. Abu-Ghaida '91, and Shaden M. Tageldin '92 criticized the cartoon for portraying Palestinians as "either raving, maniacal monsters or weak, flailing dim-wits, or both," depicting the PLO

[173] "At Vigil, 80 Protesters Decry Israel's Actions," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 3, 1996.
[174] Rhoda Kanaaneh, "Pro-Israel Bias," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11, 1990; Leila Suwwan de Felipe and Waqaas Fahmawi, "U.S. Media Misrepresent Palestinians," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 22, 1996.
[175] David S. Landes, "Palestinian Posters," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 4, 1990.
[176] Dina Abu-Ghaida and Rhoda Kanaaneh, "Palestinian Group's Rights Violated," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 17, 1990.
[177] Adam Taxin, "Posters Were Vicious Propaganda," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 17, 1990.
[178] Laila Sahyoun and Leith Masri, "SAS Posters Were Removed," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 10, 1992.
[179] Glen Schwaber, "Cartoon Offends," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 1990.

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as "a modern Nazi equivalent" that wishes to "gas the Israelis," misrepresenting the goals of the PLO and the nature of the Palestinian intifada, and portraying Palestinians as "two-faced hypocrites." They argued that Tarr's cartoon promoted "Orientalist attitudes" and hindered a deeper understanding of the region's issues.[180] Tarr later reflected on the challenges cartoonists face when addressing sensitive topics, noting that "even the most delicate cartoon on racial issues has the potential to offend someone." He acknowledged the historical context of racist stereotyping in media while defending his right to critique political positions, including those of the PLO.[181]

Given the divisions between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian student organizations and individuals on campus, it is not surprising that there were confrontations between them. However, confrontations were often accompanied by gestures of correction, apology, and sympathy towards the opposing side. Three episodes — the debate over the revocation of UNGA Resolution 3379 in 1991, the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in 1994, and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 — illustrate how, despite deep-seated differences, both groups also made steps to understand and address each other's perspectives in moments of conflict and tragedy.

In December 1991, there were heated debates over the question whether Zionism constitutes racism, mirroring the contentious global discussion ignited by the move to repeal the 1975 U.N. Resolution 3379 that had equated Zionism with racism.[182] The SAS distributed flyers describing Zionism as racism, to which several Jewish students responded. Richard A. Primus '92 wrote, "Being a Zionist, I was upset that someone else had decided to define my political ideology for me. Being an anti-racist, I was upset that someone had attributed an odious mindset like racism to me … Zionism is a part of my identity. To call it racism is to call my identity racist."[183] He argued against non-Jews making proclamations about Jews' beliefs, as well as SAS members' apparent refusal to dialogue with campus Jews. The Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel Coordinating Council echoed Primus's sentiments. Daniel J. Libenson '92 and Shai A. Held '94 voiced the Jewish community's concerns, with Held emphasizing that equating Zionism with racism wrongfully labels an entire cultural and religious identity. They found it particularly troubling that, amid a broader push for dialogue and understanding between identity groups on campus, other groups would circulate materials that they perceived as equating their identity with racism. "This is not to say that all Jews feel equally passionate about Israel or nationalism in general", the wrote. "As in any free society, we all have different feelings about the extent to which the national part of our ethnicity is important in our lives. Still, a yearning for Zion (a Biblical name for the land we now call Israel) permeates every level of Jewish worship and community."[184] Members of the Harvard Radcliffe Zionist Alliance, the Harvard Israel Political Affairs Committee, and the Progressive Jewish Alliance jointly issued a condemnation as well. They wrote that "it is insulting to have to defend one's nationalism, especially to people who cannot find a harsh word to say about Arab countries which torture and kill their own people, and do not let Jews into (Saudi Arabia) or out of (Syria) their countries. But because the SAS has decided to undermine the

[180] Samia Mora, Dina Abu-Ghaida, and Shaden M. Tageldin, "Tarr's Message Was Offensive," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 16, 1991.
[181] Paul Tarr, "Race, Rats and political Cartoons," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 6, 1991.
https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1991/5/6/race-rats-and-political-cartoons-pbab/
[182] Paul Lewis, "U.N. Repeals Its '75 Resolution Equating Zionism With Racism," *The New York Times*, December 17, 1991.
[183] Richard A. Primus, "Zionism isn't racism," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 17, 1991.
[184] Daniel J. Libenson and Shai A. Held, "SAS's Attack on Judaism," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 19, 1991. Additionally, the Harvard Gulf Arab Alliance similarly criticized SAS for endorsing the belief that Zionism is a form of racism, calling it a "fossilized belief." They criticized the society more generally for having extreme political positions and suggested that its homogeneously Palestinian makeup has diverted it from its original purpose of promoting Arab culture and serving the Arab community at Harvard. Bader A. El-Jeaan, "A Society of Pan-Arabists," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 19, 1991.

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peace process and further the dreams of destroying Israel at a time when our thoughts should be of peace and mutual understanding, we are forced to respond."[185]

SAS members responded in two separate letters. Three members wrote a letter claiming they had been misunderstood: "The aim of this fact sheet was to present to the Harvard community the adverse consequences of the policies stemming from the Zionist ideology. These policies have undeniably resulted in discrimination against the Palestinian people."[186] They reiterated that their intent was not to attack Judaism or Jewish people and expressed disappointment that their own attempts at fostering dialogue and mutual understanding had been overlooked.[187] These SAS members further explained that Zionism, in their view, has led to two diverging outcomes: the establishment of a Jewish homeland, which they support, and the simultaneous displacement of Palestinians, which they oppose. "We do not believe that a people's rights should be sacrificed in order to grant a different people the same rights," they stated.[188] They expressed their ongoing commitment to Palestinian rights, emphasizing that their opposition to Zionism does not equate to opposing Jewish people.

A second group of SAS members wrote a more confrontational letter describing Zionism as a political ideology distinctly separate from Judaism and as inherently discriminatory. They argued that opposing Zionism does not equate to antisemitism, likening it to opposing Nazis without being anti-German. This second group maintained that their distribution of fliers was undertaken to defend principles of truth, morality, and justice. They cited an example involving Ethiopian Jews being evacuated to Israel during the civil war, contrasting with non-Jewish Ethiopians left behind, to argue that Zionism discriminates based on religion.[189]

The 1994 Hebron massacre, where an Israeli settler killed 29 Muslim worshippers and injured many more at the Cave of the Patriarchs,[190] deeply shocked Harvard students across campus. The incident, occurring during Ramadan, drew immediate condemnations from both Jewish and Arab student organizations. Elie G. Kaunfer '95, chair of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, expressed the collective distress, stating, "We were shocked and appalled to hear of the horrific tragedy ... it is hard to conceive that one human being is capable of such unthinkable evil."[191] Similarly, Martin Lebwohl '96 and Mayer Bick '95, co-chairs of Harvard Students for Israel, emphasized their condemnation of the violence and reaffirmed Israel's dedication to peace.[192]

Students on campus engaged in exchanges to understand and address the implications of the massacre. "Everyone in the room was incredibly upset, very angry, and just shocked at the actions of this crazy man in Hebron," noted Kaunfer, highlighting the atmosphere at a Hillel gathering.[193] Meanwhile, Hashen E. Montasser '97, an Egyptian Muslim, remarked, "Obviously your sentiments are shocked when this happens, whether the [victims] are Muslim, Jewish, or Christian."[194]

Following the massacre, Harvard students participated in various initiatives to foster solidarity and communication. At the Cultural Rhythms festival, dancers from Hillel wore black armbands to signal

[185] Sharon Fenick et al., "SAS Flier Offends Jews," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 17, 1991.
[186] Hazem Ben-Gacem, Naseem Tuffaha, and Joana Samhoun, "Our Letter Was Misinterpreted," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 19, 1991.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Mohammed Yassin, Leith M. Masri, and Radi Annab, "Zionism Is Racism," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 19, 1991.
[190] Clyde Haberman, "AT LEAST 40 SLAIN IN WEST BANK AS ISRAELI FIRES INTO MOSQUE," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1994.
[191] Kaunfer, "Appalled at the Hebron Killings."
[192] Martin Lebwohl and Mayer Bick, "Act Was Meant to Derail Peace," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 26, 1994.
[193] Geoffrey C. Hsu, "Hebron Attack Stuns Students: Violence Dismays Undergrads," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 28, 1994.
[194] Hsu, "Hebron Attack Stuns Students: Violence Dismays Undergrads."

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solidarity. Additionally, intergroup events and discussions were arranged to bridge the divide. Kaunfer mentioned that Hillel reached out to offer support to any memorial services planned by the Islamic Society, emphasizing, "No one at Hillel feels the way this man felt."[195]

Despite divergent perspectives, students largely focused on the need for continued dialogue and mutual understanding. Radi M. Annab '95, president of the SAS, pointed out systemic issues, stating, "It's one thing to have peace between leaders, but it's different having peace in the actual territories."[196] Others highlighted the shared hope for a better future, with Zainab Khan '96 noting her personal fear that such violence could happen anywhere, underscoring the need for empathy and solidarity.[197]

Alongside articles criticizing the media for portraying Arabs as terrorists when clearly fundamentalists of other religion engage in violence,[198] criticizing Israel for allowing settler violence to permeate,[199] and criticizing public speakers for demonizing Israel due to one person's actions,[200] a *Crimson* editorial called for the sides to continue dialogue toward peace. "The peace process has been put in danger by the action of one fanatic. Salvaging it must be the work of many, reasonable people from all sides."[201]

In January 1997, when an Israeli soldier fired his assault rifle at a crowd of Palestinians in Hebron, injuring seven people, students expressed a shared condemnation of violence and reinforced a commitment to the peace process, while also expressing a desire to address and understand the underlying issues while fostering dialogue and cooperation between the communities. David Andorsky '97, Adam Kleinbaum '98, and Yuval Segal '97 of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel and HSI condemned the act, expressing outrage and emphasizing that such violence opposed the principles of Jewish tradition. They also praised Israeli and Palestinian efforts to manage the situation and underscored the importance of cooperation for peace.[202]

In the aftermath of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, the Harvard community displayed a boundary-crossing grief. Many expressed hopes for peace, transcending the polarized environment surrounding discussions on Israel and Palestine. The immediate response featured reactions from different student groups who expressed condolences and a desire to continue Rabin's peace initiatives. For example, the SAS, led by Muna Sukhnan, expressed "deep regret for the loss of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin," and hoped his legacy would be one of peace.[203] Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel echoed the sentiment, condemning the violence that led to Rabin's death but maintaining hope that his dream of peace would not be in vain.[204]

[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Rami A. Thabet, "Palestinian Anxiety Is Warranted: Even before the Hebron massacre, Palestinians had reason to distrust the Israeli government," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 4, 1994.
[199] Jonathan F. Dresner, "Israel Should Disarm Settlers," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 5, 1994; Hassen A. Sayeed, "Israel Not Without Responsibility," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 7, 1994.
[200] David J. Andorsky, "Knowing Where to Place Blame: One Man Committed a Heinous Act; Why is All Israel Paying the Price?," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 10, 1994. See also "Salvage the Mideast Peace Process," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 1, 1994; Robert Ditzion, "Massacre Must Not Stop Peace," March 11, 1994; Roy Astrachan, "A Patriotic Peace: For Israelis, Avoiding Peace Would Be Treasonous," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 16, 1994; Mayer Bick, "Speed Up the Peace Process," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 13, 1994.
[201] The *Crimson* Staff, "Salvage the Mideast Peace Process," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 1, 1994. Similar sentiments were expressed in some letters to the *Crimson*. E.g., Robert Ditzion, "Massacre Must Not Stop Peace," March 11, 1994; Roy Astrachan, "A Patriotic Peace: For Israelis, Avoiding Peace Would Be Treasonous," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 16, 1994; Mayer Bick, "Speed Up the Peace Process," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 13, 1994.
[202] David J. Andorsky, Adam Kleinbaum, and Yuval Segal, "Jewish World Outraged by Recent Hebron Shootings," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 6, 1997.
[203] Muna Sukhnan, "Arab Students Express Regret," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 6, 1995.
[204] Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel Coordinating Council, "Hillel Mourns Loss of Rabin," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 6, 1995.

Events were held to commemorate Rabin and process the tragedy collectively. Hillel organized a memorial service where more than 500 Harvard community members, including Hillel Director Bernard Steinberg, gathered on the Widener steps and shared their grief. Steinberg described the community's sadness and called for unity.[205]

The assassination also prompted reflective discussions about Israeli society and the implications for peace. Some op-eds pointed to Rabin's death as a turning point, stressing the need to confront violent rhetoric and political extremism within Israel. Samuel J. Rascoff, in his *Crimson* columns, discussed the deeper societal fragmentation that the assassination highlighted and the urgent need for internal peace in Israel. He urged that Israel's path towards peace must also address internal divisions to prevent future tragedies.[206] However, this view was met with criticism from Einat Wilf '96, who argued that Rascoff's perspective questioned the very legitimacy of the Israeli state. Wilf called for a strong reassertion of democratic values rather than reviving external threats like antisemitism to strengthen Israeli society. She emphasized that "Israeli civic society must rest on shared common values such as the agreement to disagree within acceptable boundaries," advocating for unity and responsibility in public discourse.[207]

Commemorative events continued a year after Rabin's death, with students gathering again to reflect on his contributions. Poems and songs by students such as Marnie A. Friedman '99 and Julie B. Geller '97 encapsulated the emotional weight and continued hope for peace that Rabin's life symbolized.[208] Dalia Rabin Pelosoff and Camelia Sadat, the daughters of Rabin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, respectively, paid tribute to their fathers' legacies in a poignant forum at HKS, reinforcing the vision for peace that both leaders pursued.[209] Rabin's death thus not only elicited sorrow but also bridged divides, encouraging a collective reaffirmation of peace efforts in his memory.

In these episodes and others, clashes between the communities were also opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding. Acts of condemnation, regret, and collaboration reflected a shared commitment to peace and reconciliation amid deeply contentious issues. In the *Crimson* on October 18, 1990, Hazem Ben-Gacem '92 of SAS called for peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. He emphasized the importance of breaking "the psychological barrier between Jews and Arabs on campus" and working collaboratively to advance peace in the Middle East.[210] Efforts towards cooperation were also evident in cultural and artistic endeavors. For instance, in November 1994, Israeli and Palestinian artists collaborated on an art exhibit titled "Prelude to Peace, Israeli and Palestinian Artists Build Bridges" at Dudley House. The initiative was fostered by Ivonne A-Baki, who highlighted the unifying power of art, stating, "I have always tried to unite politics and art for the purpose of furthering peace." Despite the existing tensions, such gatherings were presented by organizers as a testament to the possibility of finding common ground, as organizer Hoda Abou-Jamra pointed out, "We can't let differences in the past ruin the opportunities for the future."[211]

Moreover, there were multiple structured dialogues between groups like the Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel and the SAS. For example, a brunch discussion was held on May 6, 1996, to address the conflict in southern Lebanon. Despite the emotionally charged nature of the topic, Shahm M. Alwir '98 characterized the

[205] Alexander T. Nguyen, "Slain Israeli Leader Eulogized," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 7, 1995.
[206] Samuel J. Rascoff, "Reflecting on a Hero's Death: Rabin's Assassination Raises Questions About Israel, Peace," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 6, 1995.
[207] Einat Wilf, "Rascoff Proposes Odd Solutions," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 13, 1995.
[208] "Speakers Pay Tribute to Rabin," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 4, 1996.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Hazem Ben-Gacem, "A Call for Cooperation," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 1990.
[211] Wilson J. Liao, "Israelis, Palestinians Collaborate On New Dudley House Art Exhibit," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 9, 1994.

meeting as constructive and civil, noting that "all in all, people tried to be very scientific about it."[212] Such dialogues continued throughout the decade, with leaders like Ramy M. Tadros '97 and Yuval Segal '97 expressing a commitment to these discussions despite rising tensions in the Middle East.[213] Students took direct leadership of these meetings. Tadros said in preparation for a meeting, "Last year, [Assistant Professor of Government Eva] Bellin was the mediator, but this year, we decided to have a member from each group chair the meeting."[214] After a 1999 dialogue event, a co-organizer said such meeting will "form the foundation for a positive relationship between Hillel and SAS."[215]

Beyond student groups, the broader Harvard community also engaged in numerous initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue and promoting cooperation in the Middle East. Faculty members played a significant role in these efforts. For over 20 years, Cabot Professor of Social Ethics Herbert C. Kelman led workshops, many of them held at Harvard's Center for International Affairs, aimed at facilitating understanding between Arab and Israeli leaders. Kelman described these sessions as a way to cultivate "the sense of possibility, the idea that problems can be bridged." William A. Graham Jr., a professor of the history of religion and Islamic studies, recognized Kelman's influential role in the peace process, noting, "No one who knows him could be surprised that he would have a hand, direct or indirect, in any eventual solution."[216]

Black and Jewish Relations Throughout the 1990s

There was significant tension between the Black and Jewish communities at Harvard, often centered around issues of free speech and offensive rhetoric in the context of high-profile controversies involving figures such as Leonard Jeffries and Noam Chomsky. These tensions mirrored national issues, including antisemitic statements from the Nation of Islam and conflicts like the Crown Heights riots of 1991. However, both communities made efforts to engage in dialogue and bridge the gaps between them.

In 1992, Jeffries, a professor at the City University of New York, was invited to speak at Harvard by the Black Students Association (BSA), the Black Law Students Association, and the Dubois Graduate Society.[217] Jeffries was well known for making statements perceived as antisemitic and promulgating theories about Jews' world domination.[218] His invitation drew criticism, particularly within Harvard's Jewish community.[219] J. Eliot Morgan '92, a Black Jew,[220] said "it's really important to note just how serious bigotry and anti-Semitism are on Harvard's campus." Morgan attributed the motivation of the BSA to extend the invitation to "the Black student-intellectuals' fascination with racial mythology and their insensitivity toward other oppressed peoples."[221] Morgan, a *Crimson* editor, claimed that during an interview Jeffries "ordered his bodyguards to take Morgan's tapes, when [he] found out that many *Crimson*

[212] "Hillel, SAS Hold Brunch Discussion on Conflict in Lebanon," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 6, 1996.
[213] Nicole W. Green, "Jewish and Arab Groups Continue Discussions," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 30, 1996.
[214] "Student Leaders Will Discuss Violence in Israel: Meeting Will Be Held Between HSI and SAS to Express Views on Netanyahu's Decision," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 8, 1996.
[215] Kyle D. Hawkins, "Hillel, SAS Discuss Middle East Conflict," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 5, 1999.
[216] Ryan A. Hackney, "Prof. Assists Mideast Peace: For 20 Years, Kelman Has Quietly Promoted Negotiation," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 2, 1993.
[217] Stephen E. Frank, "CUNY Professor Leonard Jeffries To Give Lecture," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 1, 1992.
[218] Among other conspiracy theories regarding Jews, Jeffries maintained that Jewish businessmen ran the Slave Trade. Richard M. Benjamin, "The Bizarre Classroom of Dr. Leonard Jeffries," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 2 (1993). http://www.jstor.org/stable/2962577
[219] Anna D. Wilde, "FBT Discusses Jeffries: Table Hosts Black-Jewish Dialogue," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 10, 1992.
[220] J. Eliot Morgan, "Now is the Time to Protest," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 5, 1992.
[221] Frank, "CUNY Professor Leonard Jeffries To Give Lecture."

executives have Jewish surnames." Then, according to Morgan, Jeffries "threatened to kill Morgan if the interview were published."[222] Jeffries later denied this incident occurred.[223]

Conversely, Hillel Chair Shai A. Held '93 believed that the invitation was not extended with an intention to harm or offend others. He acknowledged that the event "will obviously still be offensive to a great many people" and hoped that it would not affect "the developing dialogue and cooperation" between Hillel and BSA.[224] BSA President Art A. Hall '93 pushed back against criticism, arguing that "by inviting any Black speaker there is the potential of offending somebody because of the fact that these are Black individuals who are making statements that not everybody within the Black community agrees with." Hall said that "even the fact that a Black individual is succeeding, that in itself has been seen in the past as offensive to some people." Hall maintained that BSA does not endorse Jeffries' positions, but rather endorses "his Blackness as a Black individual and a Black intellectual."[225]

During the speech, Jeffries made several controversial remarks, which were met with applause from some Black students — in particular BSA members.[226] *Crimson* editors Allan S. Galper '93 and Kenneth A. Katz '93 wondered why "no Black Harvard student … denounced Jeffries' views in public, and only a handful of Black students were among the 450 demonstrators [against Jeffries' talk] at the protest Wednesday night. If Harvard's Black community is really as diverse as BSA claims, then where are those opposed to Jeffries' views?"[227] A Black student responded by drawing a parallel to the lack of criticism surrounding celebrations of historical figures who were slave owners.[228]

Several days after the speech, the Freshman Black Table (FBT) hosted a discussion on Black-Jewish relations at Harvard.[229] White students emphasized the severity of Jeffries' rhetoric. One said that "there are lots of code words that have been used to insult Jews that are part of [his] consciousness" and that perhaps not everyone would see these "code words" as biased. Another student said he thinks " you have to take the Jewish community's word for it that Jeffries is extremely, extremely offensive."[230]

Only two months later, in April 1992, another significant controversy unfolded involving S. Allen Counter, the Director of the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations. The controversy was sparked by a letter he co-authored with Harvard Foundation Student Committee Co-chair Natosha Reid '93 and published in the *Crimson*. The letter criticized the newspaper's coverage on race relations, accusing it of being biased and unfair and not representing the broader student consensus. It specifically pointed out that "*Crimson* writers active in Hillel have written extensively" on Black-Jewish relations and argued that the *Crimson* frequently cited Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel as being dissatisfied with the Foundation's work. "Recently, students from Hillel have protested Harvard Foundation support of guest speakers such as MIT professor Noam Chomsky who was called "too political " for the Foundation's mandate (Professor Chomsky was invited to the University by the Society of Arab Students) and popular Black 'rap' recording star, 'Chuck D.'"[231]

The letter further claimed that the "most intractable racial conflict has been between Jewish and Black students." It mentioned complaints from Black students who felt that Jewish students attempted to

[222] "BSA Hypocrisy: THE JEFFRIES LECTURE," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 3, 1992.
[223] Kenneth A. Katz, "Revenge of the Ice People," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 7, 2024, 1992.
[224] Frank, "CUNY Professor Leonard Jeffries To Give Lecture."
[225] Ibid.
[226] Wilde, "FBT Discusses Jeffries: Table Hosts Black-Jewish Dialogue."
[227] Katz, "Revenge of the Ice People."
[228] Wilde, "FBT Discusses Jeffries: Table Hosts Black-Jewish Dialogue."
[229] Anna D. Wilde, "Campus Notebook," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 6, 1992, 1992.
[230] Wilde, "FBT Discusses Jeffries: Table Hosts Black-Jewish Dialogue."
[231] S. Allen Counter and Natosha O. Reid, "The Crimson Misrepresented the Harvard Foundation," *The Harvard Crimson.*

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"abridge their freedom of choice in speakers" and "manipulate them."[232] This assertion was contentious and led to a strong backlash from Hillel members and other Jewish students. Shai A. Held characterized the letter as "filled with misrepresentations, distortions, and outright lies." He contended that it made "insinuations and accusations which certainly smack of standard anti-Semitic fare," implying a false conspiracy between Hillel and the *Crimson*.

The reaction to the letter led to demands for Counter's resignation, arguing that his role should require greater sensitivity and impartiality in handling intercultural and race relations.[233] Conversely, Matthew C. Weiner defended Counter and criticized those who had, in his view, overstated discrimination against Jews, as such comparisons trivialized the significant discrimination faced by Black students.[234] In response to the backlash, Counter apologized for any misunderstanding caused by his letter,[235] but despite the apologies, a formal complaint was filed, leading to an investigation into Counter's conduct by the University administration.[236]

In December 1994, additional controversy arose at Harvard when BSA invited Anthony Martin, a Wellesley College Africana Studies professor, to speak on "*The Bell Curve* and Other Issues of Racism."[237] Martin, author of *The Jewish Onslaught*, a book alleging Jewish organization attacks on Black leaders and scholars, denying the notion of a Black-Jewish alliance, and claiming Jews played a key role in the slave trade, was a particularly divisive figure.[238] His invitation sparked strong reactions from Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, whose leaders distributed a letter at Martin's speech denouncing his book as "viciously anti-Semitic."[239]

BSA President Kristen M. Clarke '97 defended the choice, calling Martin "an intelligent, well-versed Black intellectual who bases his information on indisputable fact."[240] BSA Treasurer Joshua D. Bloodworth '97 added that "in inviting him we [BA] were not trying to push the campus to one view, but to open it up to a variety of views."[241] This endorsement intensified the backlash from Jewish students, who felt that Martin's views were not only offensive but also academically unsound. Hillel Coordinating Council Chair Elie G. Kaunfer '95 emphasized that Martin's claims, especially those targeting Jewish texts such as the Talmud, were baseless and promoted antisemitic stereotypes.[242]

The relationship between the BSA and Hillel became strained as a result of the controversy. Many Hillel members were dismayed by the choice of Martin, arguing that there were better-qualified scholars to critique *The Bell Curve*. They viewed the invitation of Martin, who had a history of promoting divisive rhetoric, as an unnecessary provocation.[243] Despite this, both BSA and Hillel leaders expressed a commitment to dialogue.[244]

[232] Counter and Reid, "The Crimson Misrepresented the Harvard Foundation."
[233] Gordon Lederman, "Dissent: Counter Is an Anti-Semite," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 27, 1992.
[234] Matthew C. Weiner, "Counter Is Correct," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 20, 1992.
[235] Wilde, "Counter Apologizes for Offending Hillel: Foundation Director Says He Is Sorry for Misunderstanding Caused by Letter."
[236] Joanna M. Weiss, "University to Investigate Charges Against Counter," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 1, 1992.
[237] Jeff Beals, "Martin Speaks At BSA Event: Hillel Distributes Letter of Protest," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 1, 1994.
[238] Wellesley College publicly repudiated Martin's book and refused to offer history credit for his courses in which this book was assigned. Stephanie P. Wexler, "Anti-Semitic Courses Won't Count," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 18, 1994. See also Alice Dembner, "At Wellesley, a war of words," *The Boston Globe*, January 29, 1994.
[239] Beals, "Martin Speaks At BSA Event: Hillel Distributes Letter of Protest."
[240] Jeff Beals, "Martin Speech Tests Hillel-BSA Relationship: Wellesley Prof. Viewed as Anti-Semitic," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 2, 1994.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Beals, "Martin Speaks At BSA Event: Hillel Distributes Letter of Protest." See also Elie G. Kaunfer, "The Real Reason Martin Is a Bigot," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 5, 1994.
[243] Beals, "Martin Speech Tests Hillel-BSA Relationship: Wellesley Prof. Viewed as Anti-Semitic."
[244] Ibid.

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To address the fallout, members of BSA and Hillel organized a meeting to ameliorate tensions and improve communication. During the session, participants were divided into smaller groups led by representatives from both organizations to ensure a balanced dialogue. "I thought I got a better understanding of where the problems arose," said BSA Vice President Alison L. Moore '97. "I think we found several ways the communication could be improved."[245] Co-organizer Michael H. Price '95, former interethnic chair of Hillel, described the discussions as "open and helpful," noting, that in his group "there was definitely interaction. It was not rhetoric, but frank and open conversation." Both Moore and Price emphasized that the event fostered a deeper mutual understanding, with Moore remarking, "I think each side got a better sense of where the other side was coming from." Price also highlighted the commitment of both the BSA and Hillel to continue such dialogues, saying, "I think it's significant that events like this have been occurring quite often in the last two semesters. That is very much due to commitment on the parts of both the BSA and Hillel."[246]

This meeting was only one of several efforts to improve relations between Black and Jewish students. In February 1993 there was a public screening and discussion of the movie "Liberators," which tells the story of Black American soldiers who helped liberate Nazi concentration camps. Dean of Students Archie C. Epps III praised the event, saying, "I think we achieved a level of discussion I could not have imagined. The impact on people was extremely great." He hoped it would help the two communities "retrieve the nature of these interactions" and cooperate as they had during World War II. Hillel Chair Jeremy A. Dauber '95 viewed the event positively, stating, "I'm hoping that we don't define race relations in terms of conflict anymore. We should define it in terms of cooperation."[247] However, some students, like former Hillel chair Shai A. Held '94, cautioned against overemphasizing Black-Jewish relations as a stand-in for all interracial dialogue, saying it "may burden the start of the open discussion between the two communities."[248]

In February 1998, BSA and Hillel co-sponsored an "inter-ethnic discussion" attended by over 100 students. Noah Oppenheim '98, who attended the event, reported that during small group discussions, significant progress was made. He recounted one exchange: "Why don't Jews do more to help other struggling minorities? You of all peoples should understand what struggle is like," a student asked. A Jewish student countered, "Why doesn't your community take more responsibility for its own plight?" Oppenheim described a moment of shared understanding: "The eyes of the black students lit up as they explained that they felt the same uneasiness about their future in this country. As we bonded over our shared sense of exile, one black student did point out a crucial difference: if blacks are ever kicked out, or even just socially marginalized into oblivion, they have no homeland to which to turn."[249]

Thus, despite the significant tensions, the 1990s at Harvard also saw concerted efforts towards reconciliation and dialogue between Black and Jewish students through organized discussions and mutual initiatives like co-sponsored events.

Other Sources of Controversy and Their Effect on Jewish Students

Beyond the specific incidents highlighted earlier, Harvard's campus in the 1990s grappled with broader questions related to antisemitism, free speech, and diversity. Various controversies, such as the Confederate flag and swastika debates, challenges to Hillel's stance on LGBTQ rights, vandalism of

[245] The Crimson Staff, "BSA, Hillel Discuss Groups' Relationship: Organizations Scrutinize Race Issues," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 15, 1994.
[246] The Crimson Staff, "BSA, Hillel Discuss Groups' Relationship: Organizations Scrutinize Race Issues."
[247] Melissa Lee, "How real are Black-Jewish tensions?," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 8, 1993.
[248] Melissa Lee, "Reflect on the Future Of Black-Jewish Relations," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 12, 1993.
[249] Noah Oppenheim, "Between Blacks and Jews," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 27, 1998.

religious structures, and allegations of editorial discrimination at the *Crimson*, underscored the environment of contention and dialogue.

In February 1990, sophomore Jon P. Jiles hung a Confederate flag in the window of his room in Leverett House tower. This act sparked a debate on free speech, tolerance, and racial sensitivity. Initially, the *Crimson*'s editorial team argued that the flag's display was a legitimate, if insensitive, exercise of free speech. The editors advocated for community dialogue to encourage the flag's voluntary removal, stating that "voluntary removal of the flag, not administrative coercion, is the optimal resolution."[250] In contrast, a dissenting opinion by Paul Leonard contended that the Confederate flag represents racial harassment similar to a Nazi swastika. Leonard insisted that the College should compel its removal to maintain an environment free from harassment.[251] Despite a long history of disagreements with Black students at Harvard, in this case Hillel and the BSA were on the same side.

Bowing to pressure, Jiles decided to take down the flag. He acknowledged that the flag, which symbolized Southern friendliness and hospitality to him, had been widely misinterpreted. "Removing the flag seemed like a better way" to represent his values, he stated.[252] Ultimately, Jiles rehung the flag inside his room, out of public view. He lamented that "there's room for a lot more tolerance instead of just talk about tolerance at Harvard." Jiles also emphasized that his intention was never to offend but to showcase the positive aspects of his Southern culture.[253]

Shortly after Jiles, Brigid L. Thomas '92, a transfer student from the University of Virginia, displayed a Confederate flag in her Kirkland House bedroom.[254] She said she was disappointed by Jiles' change of heart, labeling the flag's removal a defeat for free speech and a triumph of "small-minded liberalism."[255] Nigel W. Jones '91, a Black student, contested, "I wasn't going to walk into the Kirkland quad and walk by the Confederate flag every day." Thomas defended her actions as an expression of Southern heritage and free speech, but the controversy intensified as other Confederate flags appeared across campus.[256]

Taking a provocative counter-stance, Jacinda T. Townsend '92, a Black student from Kentucky, crafted a swastika flag with the words "Racism, no" to underscore what she perceived as the flawed free speech argument defending the Confederate flags. Townsend explained her rationale: "If that's not racism, if that's just 'free speech,' then I guess I can hang a swastika."[257] Her display garnered mixed reactions; some viewed it as a powerful statement while others, including members of the Jewish community, found it offensive. Townsend eventually removed the swastika but expressed frustration with Harvard Hillel and the wider Jewish community in a *Crimson* letter: "Harvard Hillel and other members of the Jewish community have chosen not to see the more important goal ... they have chosen not to unite with other communities to eliminate the displays of such racist and odious symbols."[258]

In response, Hillel defended its efforts, emphasizing their alignment with the BSA. Daniel J. Libenson '92, Chair of Harvard/Radcliffe Hillel, clarified, "Hillel has been the most active group on this campus, aside from the BSA, in the protest against the Confederate flags ... As our namesake, the great sage Hillel,

[250] The Crimson Staff, "STARS AND BARS AT LEVERETT: When Free Speech Hurts," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 20, 1990.
[251] Paul Leonard, "The Flag is Harassment," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 20, 1990.
[252] Peter R. Silver, "Student Removes Rebel Flag: Leverett House Free Speech Controversy Comes to a Close," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 22, 1990.
[253] Jon P. Jiles, "Why I Moved the Flag," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 22, 1990.
[254] Gayla and Yared, "Our Own Little War."
[255] Silver, "Student Removes Rebel Flag: Leverett House Free Speech Controversy Comes to a Close."
[256] Gayla and Yared, "Our Own Little War."
[257] Ibid.
[258] Jacinda T. Townsend, "Silencing Speech," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 24, 1991.

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said, 'If I am for myself alone, what am I?' We continue to work with the BSA and other minority groups to address issues of sensitivity on this campus."

Most of the issues confronting Jewish students at Harvard during the 1990s involved Israel/Palestine or Black-Jewish relations. But a third problem emerged in 1991, when a conservative Harvard student group called the Association Against Learning in the Absence of Religion and Morality (AALARM) took a hostile stand towards diversity in sexual orientation and, through a chain of circumstances, Harvard Hillel. Responding to AALARM's postering campaign denouncing homosexuality, the Coordinating Council of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel condemned AALARM's "implied contempt for homosexuals and all attacks on homosexual members of the undergraduate community."[259] In response, AALARM publicly condemned Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel for supporting LGBTQ rights, arguing that such support contradicts Jewish religious teachings. In their words, since "Hillel claims to represent one segment of the Judeo-Christian moral and ethical tradition upon which our society and many others are based," its support of LGBTQ rights is hypocritical. AALARM's co-presidents, E. Adam Webb '93 and Kenneth DeGiorgio '93, asserted in a letter to the *Crimson* that their organization better represented Jewish values than Hillel did, referencing the Bible and the Talmud to support their claim: "The very idea of homosexuality is anathema to the Jewish faith," they wrote. "If AALARM is to be condemned for its belief in the immorality of homosexuality and sodomy, then we merely request that Hillel ascend from shallow hypocrisy and admonish all groups and institutions espousing similar beliefs", they concluded.[260] Richard A. Primus '92, a member of Hillel's Coordinating Council, responded by pointing out the diversity of Jewish beliefs regarding homosexuality and highlighting the historical and cultural context within which Jewish values evolve. He contended that AALARM's approach was fundamentally un-Jewish, reminiscent of "certain Protestant sects" rather than Jewish tradition, which values exegesis and adaptation. He affirmed that Hillel, not AALARM, appropriately represented the Jewish community at Harvard. Primus also critiqued AALARM's claim that Hillel had been "subverted by a radical faction," noting that Hillel's decision to oppose attacks on gay and lesbian students enjoyed overwhelming internal support.[261]

More blatant forms of antisemitism included the vandalism in October 1991 of the Hillel Sukkah. The vandals spent at least an hour removing over 50 bolts, making the structure unstable yet outwardly intact. According to Lori Fein, "Jews who used the sukkah without noticing the damage, such as the children who were the first to enter the sukkah Saturday morning, could have been gravely injured or killed." She concluded that the malicious nature of the act, aimed at causing harm without visible hate symbols, made it "far more hateful and pernicious."[262] Also, in September 1997, an antisemitic poster was found on a kiosk behind Sever Hall at Harvard University, just days after White supremacist flyers had appeared in Harvard Yard. The poster, titled "Harvard Notice," claimed that 40% of Harvard graduate students were Jewish, compared to 2.5% of the US population, and labeled this a "Community Concern."[263]

A final incident worth noting foreshadowed future Jewish student concerns about reverse discrimination on account of perceived Whiteness. In 1998, a controversy erupted regarding the editorial practices and diversity policies at the *Crimson*. The catalyst was an article titled "Counting Noses at *The Harvard Crimson*," written by Justin C. Danilewitz '99 and published in *Commentary* magazine.[264] Danilewitz alleged that he was denied positions on the editorial board and as a columnist due to discriminatory

[259] Richard A. Primus, "Whose Religion Is It, Anyway?," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 17, 1991.
[260] E. Adam Webb and Kenneth DiGiorgio, "AALARM: Hillel Is Hypocritical," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 16, 1991.
[261] Primus, "Whose Religion Is It, Anyway?"
[262] Lori E. Fein, "An Act of Racism," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 3, 1991.
[263] Ethan M. Katz, "Anti-Semitic Poster Found Behind Sever," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 23, 1997.
[264] Justin C. Danilewitz, "Counting noses at the 'Harvard Crimson'," *Commentary*, 1998, Gale.
https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A20437689/LitRC?u=mlin_oweb&sid=sitemap&xid=68b70e78

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practices targeting Jewish students. He described an interview with Valerie MacMillan, a former managing editor of the *Crimson*, where she allegedly remarked that the high percentage of Jewish columnists represented a "problem." Danilewitz cited the position papers of soon-to-be editorial chairs Daniel M. Suleiman '99 and Geoffrey C. Upton '99, who both addressed the need to diversify the staff. Suleiman highlighted that "seven out of ten are white Jews from the tri-state area" while Upton emphasized that "eight of ten columnists are Jewish and just one is not white." Both sought to introduce greater ethnic and ideological diversity.[265]

In response to these allegations, former and current leaders of the *Crimson* defended their editorial decisions. Joshua J. Schanker '98, a former *Crimson* president, responded sharply to Danilewitz's claims: "I feel sorry for [Danilewitz] that he has to make up fictitious quota systems to justify his not getting a position."[266] MacMillan, while acknowledging that the predominance of Jewish columnists had been discussed, asserted that the *Crimson*'s diversity efforts were inclusively aimed at broadening the range of voices, stating, "The *Crimson*'s efforts to diversify are at rock bottom inclusive in nature."[267]

Suleiman and Upton, who took over the editorial board, further defended their actions by pointing out that the number of Jewish columnists actually increased that semester, rising from eight to ten due to the expansion in the total number of columnists. Suleiman also commented on their commitment to varied perspectives: "We need to work harder on ideological diversity, but we're trying hard."[268] The controversy didn't remain confined to campus discussions; it quickly caught the attention of major media outlets, being reported on by the Associated Press, Fox News Channel, and The Washington Post.[269] The editorial chairs, Suleiman and Upton, later issued a printed response in the *Crimson* to counteract Danilewitz's claims, asserting that no antisemitic policies existed and that their focus was on inclusivity and engaging the campus with diverse perspectives.[270]

Conclusion

The 1990s at Harvard witnessed two competing trends. The campus featured both considerable tension between Jewish and pro-Palestinian students, but those students also endeavored to moderate those tensions.

Jewish students continued to feel integrated into the Harvard community. Joey Shabot '01 recalled in an interview a sense that the historical presence of Jews at Harvard was better known and recognized than was the case for students of Muslim or Arab origin:

> I felt like sort of Jewish identity and sort of pro-Israel was the norm in terms of, like, you know, the political norms of the time ... I just felt very accepted … Whereas I don't know that my friends in the Arab or Muslim community felt the same way. It seemed to me that they were relatively more marginalized and less well-understood.[271]

Shabot also acknowledged occasional antisemitic incidents but denied the presence of a consistent pattern of antisemitic behaviors or sentiments:

> And if we saw something like that, or heard that something like that [happened]… I think our reaction would have been like, "what a bunch of wackos," you know? [Our response] wouldn't be a

[265] Ibid.
[266] James Y. Stern, "*Crimson* Criticized In Magazine Article," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 2, 1998.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Harvard *Crimson* Editorial Chairs, "To Our Readers: Setting the Record Straight," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 13, 1998.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Interview with Shai Dromi, 8/13/2024.

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> defensive one or one where we felt we had to start to educate the campus that this was just, you know, bad and false and anti-Semitic.[272]

Many potential clashes between the sides were moderated by the level of restraint student activists exhibited. For example, during a 1990 pro-Palestinian demonstration protesting the killing of 19 Palestinians during the Intifada, HIPAC stood by to offer passers-by information about the Israeli side but chose not to counter-demonstrate. HIPAC co-chair Yvette C. Alt '92 explained this decision:

> [HIPAC] felt it was inappropriate to counter-protest … We don't fundamentally disagree with the view that Arabs shouldn't be killed. But through our flyers, we just want to make sure people realize that the Arabs' attack on the Jews at the Wall was premeditated, and that's why we are upset.[273]

One significant concern among the Jewish community was whether outsiders had the authority to determine what constitutes offensive behavior. This issue came to the forefront in various controversies throughout the decade, such as AALARM's condemnation of Hillel's support for LGBTQ rights and the controversy over Leonard Jeffries' speech. But despite these tensions, the 1990s at Harvard also saw concerted efforts toward reconciliation and dialogue. Student groups and administrators organized initiatives like the 1998 inter-ethnic discussion co-sponsored by the BSA and Hillel, which aimed to bridge gaps and foster better understanding among diverse campus communities.

While the next decade saw ongoing efforts toward peacebuilding and bridging differences, these tendencies competed with growing polarization and a declining interest in fostering dialogue among growing factions on campus.

The 2000s: The Second Intifada's Effects on Harvard

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict took a sharp turn for the worse in the early 2000s. Violence within and around Israel and changes in global perceptions about these events energized student activism on US college campuses. Notable episodes include the 2000-2005 Al-Aqsa Intifada/Second Palestinian Uprising; the 2006 Hamas takeover of Gaza; the 2006 Lebanon War; and the Israeli 2008-2009 "Cast Lead" military operation in Gaza.

Two international events also had a great impact on representations of Israel on American campuses. First, the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa focused intensively on Israel/Palestine. The conference's likening of Israel to apartheid South Africa and Nazi Germany infuriated Israelis and supporters of Israel, and the US and Israel withdrew from the conference in response.[274] For pro-Palestinian actors, however, the conference conveyed legitimate criticisms of Israel's treatment of Palestinians.[275] Second, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, established in 2005, hoped to pressure Israel to end the occupation of territories captured in 1967, recognize Palestinian national rights, and allow Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to lands that are now part of Israel.[276] The BDS movement issued guidelines on "anti-normalization," which conditioned joint projects between Israelis and Palestinians on a focus on Palestinian national aspirations and resistance, rather than presenting the situation as a discourse between equal partners. Therefore, projects presenting both

[272] Ibid.
[273] Samuels, "Students Protest Israeli Killings."
[274] Kenneth S. Stern, *The Conflict over the Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate*, ed. Nadine Strossen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 77-80.
[275] Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Abigail B. Bakan, *Israel, Palestine and the politics of race: exploring identity and power in a global context*, ed. Abigail B. Bakan, First edition. ed. (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 2-4.
[276] For a more recent statement of the BDS movement's goals and tactics, see, "Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS," *BDS Movement*, July 9, 2005. https://bdsmovement.net/call

Palestinians and Israelis as sharing grief or loss were deemed unacceptable since rather than further the goal of Palestinian liberation, they were perceived as normalizing the current situation.[277]

This global environment affected Harvard as it did other college campuses. Nonetheless, although there were antisemitic incidents at Harvard to which Jewish students responded with concern, antisemitism was not central to how Jewish students framed debates about Israel. Often, accusations of antisemitism were publicly expressed by faculty members such as Lawrence Summers, Ruth Wisse, and Alan Dershowitz rather than the student groups themselves. Pro-Palestinian student organizations often insisted that their critiques targeted Israel's policies and not Israel's existence, distanced themselves from controversial rhetoric or actions, and emphasized the substantive matters fueling tensions in the conflict. Although student groups became more divided regarding Israel/Palestine, attempts at constructive dialogue and understanding differing perspectives also continued.

Protesting Separately, Mourning Together?

As violence escalated in the Middle East during the early 2000s, student activism and debate around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict intensified. Groups like Hillel, the Society of Arab Students (SAS), and Harvard Students for Israel (HSI) held vigils, rallies, and discussions to express their views and mourn casualties on both sides. However, tensions frequently flared as these events took opposite stances. While disagreements were often articulated publicly, concerns about antisemitism were rarely expressed overtly in these contexts. In fact, student groups exhibited caution at various junctures — for example, clarifying that their critiques were aimed at Israeli policies but not at Israel's existence, distancing themselves from activists deemed to be extreme, and seeking understanding and humanization of opposing groups.

Initial student group responses to the Al Aqsa Intifada are a case in point. Over 200 people gathered on the steps of Widener Library on October 9, 2000 — the afternoon of Yom Kippur — for a vigil organized by Hillel's main Jewish denominations. Bernard Steinberg, executive director of Hillel, began by reading a statement co-signed by the rabbis and student leaders mourning the loss of both Israeli and Palestinian lives while supporting Israel's right to self-defense. Rabbi Shai A. Held '94 and Tova A. Serkin '02 recited Psalms, followed by a moment of silent meditation. Rabbi Robert D. Klapper emphasized that vigil organizers took "every precaution not to make this political."[278] Michael Rosenberg '01 noted that "people who gathered here represent a wide spectrum of religious political views. We all share a desire to see prisoners of war returned and to mourn the loss of lives."[279] The vigil concluded with a prayer for the State of Israel, aiming to express Jewish solidarity in the face of violence through communal mourning and calls for peace.[280]

The next day, the Society of Arab Students (SAS) at Harvard University organized a vigil on the steps of Memorial Church to mourn victims of ongoing violence between Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East. Around 150 people gathered on the steps holding candles to listen to speakers describe the experiences of those affected by the conflict. According to SAS President Rayd K. Abu-Ayyash '01, this event was not intended to be political. A human rights lawyer gave a speech describing a "chain of suffering and violence", and Jane L. Risen '01 read messages from friends of a youth killed in the violence who was quoted as saying "What has the world come to — there are no answers."[281] SAS students also read letters from witnesses including a Palestinian girl in Jerusalem who said she saw a child shot and

[277] BDS Movement, "Anti-Normalization," *BDS Movement*. https://bdsmovement.net/ar/tags/anti-normalization
[278] Melissa R. Brewster, "Yom Kippur Vigil Calls for Peace in Middle East," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 10, 2000.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Margaretta E. Homsey, "Vigil Mourns Mideast Victims," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11 2000.

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expressed hope for "one generation of Palestinian children [to] have a normal childhood."[282] Organizers felt the vigil "brought the Harvard community together" and participant Andrew F. Khouri '03 said that "the most important responsibility is to be 100% objective" and that "both sides must admit that each side has made mistakes."[283] The *Crimson* reported, however, that "Israel supporters" were "distributing inflammatory fliers" in the vicinity of this vigil.[284]

Responding to questions about why the two groups mourned separately, rather than together, Abu-Ayyash said: "It is not because we do not stand together, but simply that different people need a different outlet to mourn." The key stumbling block, he claimed, was Hillel wishing to mourn all killed, including Israeli soldiers. Abu-Ayyash said: "I cannot mourn for an Israeli defense soldier in the same vigil in which I mourn for a 12-year old child ... or a friend of mine who got killed ..."[285] Rita Hamad '03, also of SAS, said that "both groups deserve to be mourned, but not at the same time" and that "that might not be appropriate, but we are all praying for peace." She hoped the crisis would not damage Arab-Jewish relations at Harvard, since if students there could not resolve their differences, it would be unrealistic to expect Arabs and Jews experiencing the crisis itself to do so.[286]

Several people were critical of the decision for Hillel and the SAS to hold separate events rather than a joint one. Specifically, the *Crimson* reported that members of Hillel's Interethnic Committee had sought to hold a joint vigil but that discussions broke down over the delimitation of who, as per Abu-Ayyash's comment above, would be mourned. Nathan Perl-Rosenthal '04, who later became co-chair of Hillel's Interethnic Committee, thought the separate vigils were a "hideous picture" and "unnecessarily and incredibly divisive."[287] Joey Shabot, the former co-chair of Hillel's Interethnic Committee, said he felt "really disappointed" that the groups could not agree on a joint vigil, calling it "a waste of an opportunity."[288] In its editorial, the *Crimson* lamented the decision as unproductive toward the desirable goal of achieving peace in the Middle East.[289] Both Hillel and SAS maintained that the separate vigils did not indicate antagonism between the groups.[290]

Tensions rose further on October 24, when two simultaneous events were held in Tercentenary Theater. HSI held a "Rally in Solidarity with the State of Israel" on the steps of Memorial Church to show support for Israel's handling of the renewed violence and "overtures for peace" that they felt had been "utterly rejected."[291] HSI Vice President Myles Brody '01 said "In general, we felt disappointment that Israel had made overtures for peace, and they had been utterly rejected. So, we felt it was very important to have a really powerful and thoughtful rally to show our support for Israel in a public manner."[292] At the same time, members of the SAS, dressed in black, silently stood on the steps of Widener Library holding signs bearing the names of victims of the recent violence. SAS rally organizer Darryl Li '01 rejected the idea that Israel had made fair overtures for peace, arguing in an editorial that "everyone wants peace, but an unjust peace is both unfair and impractical."[293] Some SAS members took offense to the "overtly political" nature of the HSI event, which featured speeches that SAS took to place blame on the Palestinian population for

[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] The *Crimson* Staff, "Let Us Unite for Peace," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 13, 2000.
[285] Sarah A. Dolgonos and Mildred M. Yuan, "Harvard Reacts to Killings in Middle East," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 13, 2000.
[286] Brewster, "Yom Kippur Vigil Calls for Peace in Middle East."
[287] Imtiyaz H. Delawala, "Middle East Tensions Flare Up on Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 7, 2001.
[288] Dolgonos and Yuan, "Harvard Reacts to Killings in Middle East."
[289] The *Crimson* Staff, "Let Us Unite for Peace."
[290] Dolgonos and Yuan, "Harvard Reacts to Killings in Middle East."
[291] Delawala, "Middle East Tensions Flare Up on Campus."
[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.

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deaths, including a quote from US Representative Barney Frank '61 saying "It is wholly irresponsible to tell young people to destroy a nation — Israel — and then be surprised when their lives are taken."[294] The political and ideological divisions between the different groups were also expressed in a flurry of opinion articles published in the *Crimson*.

Harvard Hillel's Coordinating Committee also issued a statement on October 18, 2000, calling for an end to the violence, expressing solidarity with Israel, and supporting Israel's right to defend itself. Zayed M. Yasin '01, president of the Harvard Islamic Society, responded while they "agree on several core things" and specifically "that peace is essential", they also maintained that "peace will not be possible without a just peace and without an understanding of the inequities and injustices that have dominated recent Middle East history."[295]

Members of Harvard's Hillel Interethnic Committee continued working to bring the separate Jewish and Arab student groups together for discussion. While HSI members argued that they were always willing to co-sponsor discussion events, SAS refused to hold events directly with HSI due to their ideological differences on the conflict.[296] In an attempt to foster dialogue, the committee organized a private roundtable discussion between about 30 members of Hillel, the Harvard Islamic Society (HIS), HSI and SAS at Adams House to discuss the events of the previous month and how they had played out on campus. However, Rita Hamad '03, then-president of SAS, acknowledged that "It's hard to say your opinion honestly because there are so many people who are going to interpret it as a political agenda. Anything anyone does in this situation can be interpreted as political." "Many people had basically gone into the room knowing what they know and believing what they believe, and nothing really changed," said Zayed M. Yasin '02, president of HIS. Echoing the disappointed tones, Perl-Rosenthal said: "There wasn't some blindingly clear light where we said, 'Oh, God, we've all been so wrong.'" But Myles Brody '01 of HSI said the discussion helped make the "competing claims more than just a distant, ideological battle" by putting "a face and heart behind the opinions with which you disagree." However, Perl-Rosenthal acknowledged that "a lot of it is mistrust" between the groups, and that trust must first be formed for any positive relationship to begin.[297]

Student groups at Harvard attempted to foster constructive exchanges between Jewish and Arab students, but they encountered major obstacles. At dialogue sessions held in Lowell House and Mather House in late 2003, strong disagreements and heated rhetoric often flared up between participants. Rami Sarafa '07 of the Palestine Solidarity Committee felt figures like pro-Palestinian Joachim Martillo, a former Harvard student, and Eric Trager '05, then president of Harvard Students for Israel, expressed directly opposed views that made constructive dialogue challenging. Conversely, others — in particular, graduate students — felt unable to speak freely, believing that sharing pro-Israel views could hurt their careers.[298] The cancellation of a planned visit by former Israeli Air Force commander Dan Halutz to campus further risked escalating tensions. Sarafa noted that "Imagine if PSC and SAS and HIPJ [the Harvard Initiative on Peace and Justice] wanted to bring a Hezbollah military commander … Do you think Harvard would allow that?"[299] As Nayla

[294] Ibid.
[295] Benjamin D. Grizzle, "Hillel Issues Its Stance on Mideast," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 2000.
[296] Delawala, "Middle East Tensions Flare Up on Campus."
[297] Ibid.
[298] Daniel J. Hemel, "You Say You Want a Resolution?," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 4, 2003. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/12/4/you-say-you-want-a-resolution/
[299] Another controversial incident centered around Major General Doron Almog, a senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center. A private British lawyer, Daniel Machover, initiated legal proceedings in the UK on behalf of a Palestinian human rights group seeking the arrest of Almog for alleged war crimes committed during his command in Gaza. Machover applied to a British judge, who approved an arrest warrant for Almog. Although the warrant was not executed before Almog left the UK, Machover later gave a talk at HKS criticizing the University for providing a haven for suspected war criminals like Almog. Machover

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Hamdi '05 of the student dialogue efforts observed, "there was definitely a lot of tension" at events, though most participants remained willing to continue civil discussions even outside of sessions.

Others had a more optimistic view of the potential presented by these dialogues. Jessica Marglin '06 maintained that "the more dialogue, the merrier."[300] HSI President Joshua Suskewicz '05 said that the student-led dialogues provided "a means of communication to ensure that we [pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian activists] are not being offensive to one another." As examples of mutually offensive actions, pro-Palestinian students mentioned a beer mug distributed by HSI that said "Party like it's 1948" which they saw as celebrating the suffering of Palestinians in that year. Pro-Israeli students, in turn, referred to a link shared on a HIPJ blog comparing the Israeli Defense Forces to the Nazi military, or Suvrat Raju, a HIPJ member, enthusiastically chanting slogans like "long live the intifada" at a protest. While citing these instances, numerous students emphasized that they sought to understand what was offensive to the other group and to maintain respectful dialogue. David Weinfeld '05 and Nayla Hamdi '05, the student moderators of the dialogue sessions, said their goal was the "humanization" of the conflict through relationship-building between participants.

Nevertheless, attempts to commemorate casualties jointly continued to falter. In December 2006, during the Second Israel-Lebanon War, HSI held a "solidarity gathering" of about 50 people in the Yard to show support for civilian victims of violence in Israel and voice opinions about the conflict. This came in response to weekly vigils organized by the Palestinian Solidarity Committee (PSC) mourning Palestinian deaths in recent violence in the Middle East. Jewish and pro-Israel groups said they had approached the PSC to organize joint vigils mourning both Palestinian and Israeli civilian casualties, but according to HSI President Rebecca M. Rohr '08, the PSC refused and insisted on proceeding with another "politically charged" vigil. In turn, HSI organized the gathering, where demonstrators waved Israeli flags and held signs demanding peace and the release of imprisoned Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. The Progressive Jewish Alliance had proposed a joint statement of commitment to a "just peace" between HSI and PSC, but the PSC said this was "inappropriate" as the term was not clearly defined and their vigils were not meant to be confrontational. Several PSC members said the politics could not be avoided in mourning Palestinian deaths.[301]

Conversations between Jewish, Arab, and Muslim students continued, but in an informal way. As an active student member of Hillel in this period, recalled:

> Most of the exchange between Jews and non-Jews happened in relatively informal groups. So, the main group was this dialogue group that existed, a Jewish Muslim dialogue group. It felt [there] like you could just do your thing. And if you were interested in kind of building bridges, you would join this group and then you would have these kinds of dialogues, which, you know, were in the form of inter-religious dialogue, Jewish-Muslim dialogue, a little bit tense sometimes … but mostly, I think they were pretty calm. But that was partly because the people who joined these groups were the ones who were the furthest to the left on Israel [at] Hillel.[302]

Despite the increasingly challenging atmosphere, other events promoting dialogue took place over this decade. Examples include:

- Students debated potential solutions for dividing control of Jerusalem's Old City as part of a national "Day of Action" organized by the Union of Progressive Zionists to support the 2007 Annapolis Conference between Middle Eastern leaders. As Harvard College Progressive Jewish Alliance Chair

indicated his intent to make the warrant international. Alexander B. Cohn, "Lawyer Defends Israeli Major's Arrest at KSG," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 20, 2006. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2006/10/20/lawyer-defends-israeli-majors-arrest-at/

[300] Hemel, "You Say You Want a Resolution?."

[301] Alexander B. Cohn and Siodhbhra M. Parkin, "Mideast Groups Clash Over Vigils," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 7, 2006.

[302] Interview with Shai Dromi, 7/16/2024.

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Jaclyn B. Granick '08 noted, the discussion "gave us a taste of what diplomats are going through" in trying to resolve the difficult issues surrounding Jerusalem. Earlier in the day, a game of "Final Status Taboo" held outside the Science Center also aimed to challenge Jewish groups on campus to discuss the hard issues involved in achieving a final peace agreement.[303]

- In January 2009, during operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), around 70 members of the Harvard community gathered for a candlelight vigil mourning the loss of life in Gaza and Israel. The vigil aimed to promote peace and understanding between groups with differing opinions on the conflict. Speakers like Shifra B. Mincer '09 and Sadia Ahsanuddin '09 called for listening to different perspectives and recognizing the humanity on both sides. Mincer stated "The more we ignore others' stories, the more the violence. We have to listen." Ahsanuddin said "It means a lot to see so many groups with so many different opinions and ideas come together. Human life is sacred, and we must remind ourselves that the other side is just as human and as vulnerable as we are." Attendees like Yonit D. Lavin '09 and Alexandra A. Rahman '12 felt the vigil demonstrated support for peace, with Lavin saying "It doesn't mean people don't have very different opinions, but our ultimate goals for peace are the same" and Rahman stating "There is very little a Harvard student can do to help the situation over there politically, but attending the vigil is one of the things we can do."[304]

Few incidents over this decade involved comparisons to Nazism or vandalism of Jewish or pro-Israel signage. In July 2002, Len Meyers of the Boston Spartacist League, a communist organization, gave a speech to fewer than 20 people in a Science Center classroom comparing Israeli leaders to "Nazis" and "terrorists" and calling for socialist revolutions in the Middle East to resolve regional conflicts.[305] In December of the same year, posters in the Science Center put up by HSI promoting pro-Israel views were defaced with slogans like "Palastine [sic] 300 Years."[306] HIPJ and PSC repeatedly distanced themselves from such rhetoric and action.

The Divestment Campaign at Harvard and Larry Summers' Speech

The debate around divestment from Israel at Harvard in the early 2000s exacerbated divisions over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and raised questions about what constitutes legitimate criticism of Israel and when it crosses the line into antisemitism.

In Spring 2002, a petition was circulated at Harvard calling on the University to divest from companies with holdings in Israel. The petition demanded that Israel evacuate military forces from the occupied territories, end torture, cease building and begin dismantling settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and allow return or compensation for Palestinian refugees. It called for pressure on Israel through making US military aid conditional on these demands and divesting from US companies that sell arms to Israel and from Israel directly.[307] Eventually, 65 Harvard faculty members signed the petition.[308]

The petition drew strong criticism from some in the Harvard community. Avram Heilman '03, then president of Harvard Students for Israel, described the petition as making "people who support Israel deeply uncomfortable." Heilman called the divestment campaign "unbalanced in such an extreme way that it sickens anyone who is intellectually honest."[309] Hillel student president Benjamin Solomon-Schwartz '03, also of HSI, said that by signing the petition, the house masters had created an uncomfortable

[303] Lucas A. Paul, "Students Debate Israel-Palestine Plan," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 29, 2007.
[304] Shan Wang, "Candlelight Vigil Held For Victims of Gaza Violence," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 9, 2009.
[305] Stephanie M. Skier, "News Brief: Marxists Decry Israeli Policy," *The Harvard Crimson*, July 26, 2002.
[306] Lauren A. E. Schuker, "Israel Posters Vandalized in Science Centers," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 9, 2002.
[307] George Bradt, "Hundreds Support Call For Divestment," May 8, 2002.
[308] David H. Gellis, "Anti-Divestment Drive Gains Steam," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 15, 2002.
[309] Bradt, "Hundreds Support Call For Divestment."

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atmosphere for residents in their houses who supported Israel.[310] Students criticized Master Hanson's handling of the situation within Winthrop House, due to the power imbalance inherent in any conversation between him and students.[311]

On September 19, 2002, President Lawrence Summers gave a speech at the first Morning Prayers of the term. Summers warned that antisemitism appeared to be on the rise globally in recent years. He expressed concern that Harvard's campus had not been immune to this trend. Summers cited two specific examples from the previous year. First, he noted the Spring 2002 divestment call. While acknowledging criticism of some of Israel's foreign policies, Summers argued the divestment campaign unfairly singled out Israel. He argued that efforts associated with the petition were "anti-Semitic in their effect if not in their intent."[312] Second, Summers referred to a November 2000 fundraising event held by the Harvard Islamic Society (HIS) to support charities in Palestine. The event had initially planned to donate proceeds to the Holy Land Foundation, but ultimately gave to the International Red Crescent instead due to the US government's claims about Holy Land Foundation's ties to Hamas.[313]

Summers' remarks divided the campus. David B. Adelman '04, president of HSI, praised the speech, saying "Larry Summers has a lot of credibility — a lot of people will listen to him." Robert Leikind of the Anti-Defamation League also welcomed Summers addressing campus antisemitism.

However, Professor Richard G. Heck, a supporter of divestment, criticized Summers, saying that "to lump people who are working for peace in Israel [in] with racists is really unfair." Winthrop House Master Paul D. Hanson, another divestment backer, agreed with Summers on antisemitism but argued the divestment campaign targeted Israeli government policies, not Israel itself. "This is in no way a protest against the State of Israel, but against the Sharon government, the Bush government and their policies," Hanson said.[314,315] Two psychology professors wrote that the petition's goal was to pressure Israel into complying with international conventions on human rights and ending the occupation of Palestinian territories, which they believed would lead to peace.

Supporters argued the petition addressed policy issues rather than making a broader condemnation of Israel, with the petition aiming "to create a secure Israel beside a secure Palestine."[316] "I think we feel that it's self-evident that peace will come with the end of occupation," said Najeeb N. Khoury, a law student who helped organize the petition.[317] Rejecting the accusation of antisemitism, graduate student Taha Abdul-Basser said she "was saddened to see that evidently support of the divestment campaign was being

[310] Gellis, "Anti-Divestment Drive Gains Steam."
[311] Tova A. Serkin, May 22, 2002.
[312] While Summers saw singling out or delegitimizing Israel in a way that increases isolation as a form of antisemitism, his concerns were more broadly physical attacks on Jews, Holocaust denial, and propaganda that promotes prejudice, which anti-Israel activism enhances and legitimates (even if unintentionally). Lawrence H. Summers, "Address at morning prayers," *Harvard Memorial Church*, September 17, 2002. https://www.harvard.edu/president/news-speeches-summers/2002/address-at-morning-prayers/
[313] David H. Gellis, "Summers Says Anti-Semitism Lurks Locally," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 19, 2002; see also Judith Miller, "U.S. Contends Muslim Charity Is Tied to Hamas," *The New York Times*, August 25, 2000.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid. Additionally, some argued that the petition was relatively obscure, and that Summers inadvertently propelled it to the pages of *The New York Times* by mentioning it in his address. Emma S. MacKinnon, "Playing the Divestment Card," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 17, 2006. Heck, who signed the petition, and said he was "very disappointed" that the University president would make such accusations.
[316] Ken Nakayama and Elizabeth S. Spelke, "For Human Rights," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 23, 2022.
[317] Gellis, "Anti-Divestment Drive Gains Steam."

equated with something as ugly as anti-Semitism. Some of the professors who supported the campaign said they saw a difference between the two," and Abdul-Basser said she certainly did, too.[318]

Summers formally dismissed demands for divestment from Israel. In May 2003 he stated, "Members of our community are free as individuals to express their diverse views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The University protects that freedom, and affirms its proper role, by resisting calls to issue institutional judgments on that conflict through the act of divestment."[319] Nonetheless, advocates of the 2002 divestment petition claimed victory in raising awareness of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.[320]

The Israel-divestment debates persisted into 2005-2006. At Harvard, the issue was discussed in a heated 2006 faculty meeting at which Professor Professor Ruth R. Wisse asserted that antisemitism and anti-Zionism were inseparable phenomena.[321] Professors like J. Lorand Matory criticized this stance, arguing that criticism of Israel should be permitted and that "all racism and anti-Semitism — whether against Semitic Jews, Semitic Christians, Semitic Druzes or Semitic Muslims — is equally impermissible."[322]

Summers' successor, Drew Faust, maintained a strong stance against sanctioning Israel. In response to the British University and College Union's call to boycott Israeli universities, President Faust strongly condemned the proposed boycott in September 2007. Though 286 other university presidents publicly signed a statement in *The New York Times* denouncing the boycott, Faust wrote her own private letter to the UCU expressing her "strong opposition" on her second day as president. She argued that a boycott would undermine important academic values of open exchange and collaboration. Faust did not sign the public statement due to Harvard's tradition of presidents not signing petitions. However, she made clear that she agreed with the opposition to the boycott and said she joined others in the international academic community in "unequivocally" denouncing an action that would serve no useful purpose.[323]

Over the course of debates around divestment, supporters took care to distance themselves from initiatives that challenged Israel's right to exist or called for its destruction. While the issue remained divisive, with accusations of antisemitism on one side and censorship of debate on the other, most participants focused their arguments on Israel's policies rather than making broader condemnations of it as a state.

Free Speech, Antisemitism and Criticism of Israel on Campus

The Harvard community experienced and engaged with antisemitic incidents throughout the decade. For example:

- In January 2000, antisemitic graffiti reading "Jews own the media" and a swastika were found on street signs near the Freshman Dean's Office and Lamont Library at Harvard.[324]
- In April 2002, a Harvard Law School student sent an anonymous email defending the use of the n-word in response to a complaint about a racial slur used online.[325] This email was then reprinted in an antisemitic flier distributed to law students.[326]

[318] Karen W. Arenson, "Harvard President Sees Rise In Anti-Semitism on Campus," *The New York Times*, September 21 2002. https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/21/us/harvard-president-sees-rise-in-anti-semitism-on-campus.html
[319] David H. Gellis, "Summers Rules Out Divestment," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 17, 2002.
[320] Ibid.
[321] J. Lorand Matory, "Israel and Censorship at Harvard," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 14, 2007.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Paras D. Bhayani and Claire M. Guehenno, "Faust Condemns Boycott of Israeli Universities," *The Harvard Crimson*, August 14, 2007.
[324] Imtiyaz H. Delawala, "Anti-Semitic Graffiti Surfaces Near FDO," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 12, 2000.
[325] Jenifer L. Steinhardt, "Incidents Draw Law School Response," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 10, 2002.
[326] Stephanie M. Skier, "Letter Bearing Swastika Shocks HLS First-Years," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 3, 2002.

- Leaflets appeared outside some Harvard dorms in 2006, reproducing an essay by Mark Weber arguing that "the crucial factor in President Bush's decision to attack [Iraq] was to help Israel." Weber, a Holocaust denier, confirmed he wrote the essay but said he had no role in distributing the leaflets. However, he was "glad to see them distributed" alongside another leaflet promoting a White nationalist group.[327]
- In May 2005, several hundred Harvard students and other protesters confronted members of the White supremacist group White Revolution outside Faneuil Hall in Boston.[328]
- The *Crimson* faced backlash after running a controversial Holocaust-denying advertisement in their September 8, 2009, issue. The ad, submitted by Bradley Smith of the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust,[329] questioned the veracity of the Holocaust by asking readers to provide proof of one person killed in a gas chamber at Auschwitz.[330] The ad sparked outrage across campus, with over 20 emails and a joint letter signed by more than 30 undergraduate students expressing their shock and anger over the implication that Holocaust victims' stories were lies. *Crimson* President Maxwell L. Child '10 acknowledged the mistake, but some students wanted him to offer a more robust apology.[331]

These were isolated incidents without lasting effect. Pro-Israel students at Harvard tended to characterize the campus environment as generally supportive of Zionist viewpoints. As Daniel Shoag '06, senior editor of the *Harvard Israel Review*, stated, "We have strong faculty support." He pointed to professors like Alan Dershowitz and Ruth Wisse as examples. Joshua Suskewiczv '05, president of Harvard Students for Israel, credited Summers' 2002 speech with helping make debate more moderate on campus. As Suskewicz said, "I think that activists on both sides at Harvard have worked to keep [debate] civil and fair-minded."[332] On the other hand, students said they faced intimidation for voicing pro-Palestinian political views. Students pointed out that, while over 300 college presidents signed a letter calling for "intimidation-free campuses," more than 1,700 others opted not to sign due to concerns the letter only mentioned Jewish students and Israel's supporters as facing threats. Conversely, they argued, students of Arab descent also faced hate crimes and censorship — in particular in the aftermath of 9/11[333] (including near Harvard's campus[334]).

Debate over the distinction between free speech and hate speech flared up in response to a planned visit by Tom Paulin, an acclaimed Irish poet and lecturer at Oxford. In early November 2002, the Harvard English department announced that Paulin had been invited to deliver the annual Morris Gray Lecture at Harvard that month. The invitation was extended because of Paulin's accomplishments and standing as a poet and, at the time, the department said they were unaware of Paulin's political views.[335] However, Paulin had made controversial statements in the past regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram Weekly* in April, he had called Israel "a historical obscenity." He also said that

[327] John R. Macartney, "Author of Leaflet Comes Forward," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 11 2006.
[328] Kristin E. Blagg, "Students Join Protest of Neo-Nazi Rally," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 9, 2005.
[329] As the Southern Poverty Law Center described it, "Founded in 1987 by Bradley Smith, the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH) has promoted and published antisemitic and revisionist conspiracy theories under the guise of intellectual authenticity and free speech." Southern Poverty Law Center, "Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust," *Southern Poverty Law Center*. https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/committee-open-debate-holocaust
[330] June Q. Wu, "Holocaust Ad Printed in The *Crimson* Elicits Outrage," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 9, 2009.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Daniel J. Hemel, "Campus Zionists Face Threats, Israeli Warns," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 12, 2003.
[333] Rita Hamad, Shadi Hamid, and Yousef Munayyer, "Free Speech or Intimidation?," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 4, 2002.
[334] e.g., Juliet J. Chung, "Grad Student Assaulted in Alleged Hate Crime," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 1 2001.
[335] Alexandra N. Atiya, "Controversial Poet Will Not Give Lecture," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 13, 2002.

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Brooklyn-born Jews who move to Israeli settlements in disputed territories "should be shot."[336] Paulin's poem "Killed in the Crossfire" describes "Zionist SS" shooting "another little Palestinian boy."[337]

When news of Paulin's invitation and these statements spread around campus in early November, over 100 students, alumni and faculty protested. Rita Goldberg, a literature lecturer, began gathering protesters and by email encouraged students not to attend, saying "An audience is oxygen to a poet, and the most effective way of showing your feelings is to deprive him of air."[338] The controversy garnered considerable attention beyond Harvard as well and articles appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*.[339]

Under pressure, the English department initially decided on November 12 that Paulin's lecture would go ahead but there would be a post-lecture forum to challenge him. However, Professor Helen Vendler claims that she and Paulin mutually agreed that his reading would not take place due to concerns that his poetry would not get a fair hearing.[340] This mutual withdrawal was then interpreted as a unilateral departmental cancellation.[341] (The department then announced on November 13 that they had asked him not to come at all, citing concerns about "undue consternation and divisiveness."[342]) President Summers was reported to have privately expressed disapproval of the invitation, while endorsing the Department's freedom to decide who to invite.[343]

Numerous letters to the *Crimson* protested the decision to cancel the forum as a violation of free speech. Particular vitriol was aimed at Summers, who was perceived as pressuring the English department to cancel the event (including a letter by psychology professor Patrick Cavanagh calling him 'Ayatollah' Summers).[344] Then, on November 20, the full English department faculty met and voted unanimously, with two abstentions, to re-invite Paulin, citing concerns that canceling him could undermine free speech.[345] Summers then released a written statement supporting the exchange of ideas at Harvard.[346] Paulin reportedly told the department he was receptive to the renewed invitation, but his visit ultimately did not materialize.

Other controversial events garnered negative attention. In March 2008, Harvard Hillel hosted a "Breaking the Silence" exhibit, which showed photos and testimonies from IDF soldiers about their experiences in the occupied Palestinian territories.[347] Hillel also hosted a panel discussion with four Harvard students who had served in the IDF, along with Oded Na'aman, a former IDF soldier representing "Breaking the Silence." Some of the students were critical of the exhibit. Shira Kaplan '08, who had served in Israeli intelligence, said the exhibit added to anti-Israeli rhetoric and "it just misses the point and creates a

[336] Alexander J. Blenkinsopp, "Poet Flap Drew Summers' Input," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 14, 2002.
[337] Alexander J. Blenkinsopp, "Paulin Likely To Speak in Spring," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 21 2002; Atiya, "Controversial Poet Will Not Give Lecture."
[338] Atiya, "Controversial Poet Will Not Give Lecture."
[339] Edward Rothstein, "CONNECTIONS; Hateful Name-Calling Vs. Calling for Hateful Action," *The New York Times*, November 23, 2002, B; Patrick Healy, "Unwelcome at Harvard," *The Boston Globe*, November 17, 2002.
[340] Helen Vendler, "To the Editor," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2002.
[341] e.g., Atiya, "Controversial Poet Will Not Give Lecture."
[342] Blenkinsopp, "Poet Flap Drew Summers' Input."
[343] The *Crimson* reported that Summers was privately "horrified" by the invitation. Alexander J. Blenkinsopp, "In About-Face, English Dept. Re-Invites Anti-Israeli Poet," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 20, 1002. Conversely, *The New Yorker* wrote that when Buell sought Summers' guidance on the issue, Summers responded that the English Department should do what it sees fit to do, while personally he also thought that "it would look bad to withdraw the invitation," and that if the lecture proceeded, "the department should find a way to dissociate itself from Paulin's views about Israel." Jeffrey Toobin, "Speechless," *The New Yorker* 78, no. 44 (January 27, 2003).
[344] Patrick Cavanagh, "'Ayatollah' Summers' Remarks Show Bigotry," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 14, 2002.
[345] Blenkinsopp, "In About-Face, English Dept. Re-Invites Anti-Israeli Poet."
[346] Blenkinsopp, "Paulin Likely To Speak in Spring."
[347] Bita M. Assad, "Hillel Exhibit Draws National Criticism," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 10, 2008.

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negative image."[348] Asher A. Fredman '08 said the exhibit's website focused on "killing" and "murder" without proper context.[349] However, Mishy Harman '08 defended the exhibit, saying "To me, there's no greater expression of Zionism today than saying that Israel should be held to the highest moral standards possible." He said that the exhibit did not criticize Israel's existence, but rather its policies and conduct.[350]

Debates about the limits of acceptable criticism of Israel fueled a broader conversation about the relationship between antisemitism and anti-Zionism (a term that, according to a search in Google Ngram Viewer, became popular after 2000 and especially so after 2010). In 2007, Matory argued that accusations of antisemitism were intended to stifle anti-Zionist speech.[351] Several students strongly opposed Matory's arguments and characterizations. For example, Douglas Lieb '07 wrote:

> The truly dangerous false equation is Matory's conflation of "criticism of Israeli policy" with anti-Zionism. By encouraging a state to improve its behavior rather than go away, real policy criticism assumes a state's legitimate existence. But anti-Zionism, by definition, negates the Jewish — and only the Jewish — national right to self-determination. The former is part of a healthy debate in a free society. The latter is usually a coded expression of anti-Semitism, since it denies Jews what it rightly grants to all other nations.[352]

Other prominent Harvard faculty took clear-cut positions on Israel/Palestine and engaged in high-profile events, with Alan Dershowitz passionately defending Israel and Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer criticizing it, or, more accurately, what they saw as an unhealthy level of American diplomatic and military support for the country.[353] Guest speakers on campus also attracted considerable attention for their views about the conflict. For example, a minister in the Palestinian Authority, speaking at an Institute of Politics Forum event in November 2001, dismissed accusations of antisemitism by arguing Palestinians cannot be antisemitic as they themselves are also Semites. Jonathan M. Gribetz '02 objected, noting that antisemitism refers specifically to prejudice against Jews. Moreover, Gribetz critiqued antisemitic text and imagery in Palestinian textbooks and urged the Palestinian leadership to acknowledge and address antisemitism in Palestinian society rather than deny it, as this propaganda was an obstacle impeding peace with Israel.[354]

To summarize, while student groups and faculty sought to promote open debate, the highly polarized climate both on campus and in the broader conflict often made constructive dialogue difficult. However, through student-led efforts at discussion and understanding different perspectives, as well as events that brought groups together in support of finding common ground, it was still possible to have respectful exchanges that moved discussions forward in a positive direction. The 2000s saw only a few instances of public outrage over a speaker or disinvitation. While initial reactions to controversial works were sometimes harsh, later discussions tended to focus more constructively on their substantive arguments.

Conclusion

The 2000s witnessed increased tensions between pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian activists on campus. These came alongside considerable efforts by student groups to find common grounds and to come to a respectful dialogue. While the topic of antisemitism did arise, it was not employed as a lens through which

[348] Vidya B. Viswanathan, "Israeli Soldiers Discuss Exhibit," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 18, 2008.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Matory, "Israel and Censorship at Harvard."
[352] Douglas E. Lieb, "Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 21 2007.
[353] Cormac A. Early, "Dershowitz Discusses Middle East," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 1 2005.; Evan H, Jacobs, "Prominent Profs Spar Over Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 30, 2005; Paras D. Byayani and Rebecca R. Friedman, "Dean Attacks 'Israel Lobby,' *The Harvard Crimson*, March 21, 2006.
[354] Jonathan M. Gribetz, "Anti-Semitism Among Semites," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 19, 2001.

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students described pro-Palestinian activism. An active student member of Hillel in the early 2000s commented on the atmosphere at the time:

> I don't remember people complaining of antisemitism … If people had, we would have treated it as completely beyond the pale. The debate that I saw happening was about politics, really about the politics of the state, which was always debatable … there were very heated feelings about it, but antisemitism is just no ... there's nothing to discuss. You can't do that. So, I don't recall there being [incidents of antisemitism] … I think it would have been weird for someone to post … 'I had an antisemitic incident on this [Hillel] listserv.' I think they would have gone straight to Bernie [Steinberg, Former Harvard Hillel Director]. Bernie was very good at … containing trouble … and then trying to project a sense of calm around [it].[355]

Additionally, contention between students over Israel/Palestine appeared to be compartmentalized to specific contexts and did not spill over into personal relationships. Shai D. Bronshtein '09, a former member of the *Crimson*'s editorial board, recalled:

> One of the women on the editorial board … was Egyptian, and … she and I had several disagreements, but it was never … personal, and it was never, you know, it never went beyond those meetings … I [completed] a concurrent AM in Middle Eastern studies while I was there, and … almost the entire [class] was … Arab Americans or Arab international students. So that was, you know, a place where certainly those sorts of [issues] came up … We had one professor who was very anti-Israel come in … and we had an Iranian in the class. It was a mix, but … it was not hostile. It was not angry. It was not personal. Even [my classmate of Iranian descent] with whom … I'm diametrically opposed in terms of my views on the Israel issues … we still were able, even on Facebook, to have reasonable conversations, even though we very much disagreed. [Differences of opinion] didn't feel personal, and I didn't feel attacked, even when there was heated disagreement.[356]

Three themes emerged over this decade that bore relevance for discussions that continued into subsequent years: the challenge of achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the relevance of examining the conflict through a racial lens, and questions surrounding the positioning of liberal Jewish voices in relation to the political left. Regarding the first theme, Harvard students continued to make good-faith efforts to cross political lines and engage each other in discussion about how to attain a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The other two themes, however, were more ominous and boded ill for student relations during the following decade.

Race began to enter conversation as a lens through which to view the Israel-Palestine conflict. At first, the conflation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with racial thinking and racism in America was raised only to be rejected, as when Charles Cheever '03 wrote that viewing the conflict as one between races misses the fact that Israelis and Palestinians are racially diverse, and that countries in the Middle East each have distinct cultures and histories.[357] Shira Fischer '01 also noted that describing the conflict as one of racial oppression was wrong.[358] Towards the end of the decade, however, Nimer Sultany argued that prominent Israeli politicians, including foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, expressed views that were discriminatory against Palestinians in a way reminiscent of American Jim Crow laws. Their views, Sultany wrote, indicated the presence of a bigoted undercurrent in Israeli society that chose Jewish supremacy over equal rights for all citizens.[359]

[355] Interview with Shai Dromi, 7/16/2024.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Charles D. Cheever, "Native Americans and Native Palestinians," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 15, 2001.
[358] Shira H. Fischer, "Middle East Crisis Does Not Constitute Race War," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 15, 2002.
[359] Nimer Sultany, "U.S. Lessons for Israel's Jim Crow," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 3, 2009.

Moreover, in the early 2000s Jewish students with liberal social and political values began to feel isolated from left-oriented communities on campus. For example, Tova Serkin '02 expressed disillusionment with some elements of the liberal left at Harvard, saying they have "ceased to mean standing for equality, upholding human rights for all, or fighting against all forms of racism." As a proud Democrat who previously considered some Republicans "crazy right-wingers," Serkin said she had been "dismayed by some of the 'liberal' rhetoric on campus." In particular, she criticized the hypocrisy they see regarding views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying "I have always been quick to criticize Israel for its treatment of Israeli Arabs and the Palestinian people, but over the last few years, I have realized that those critiques could not be made in isolation." Serkin took issue with calls on campus for Israel to withdraw from territories "in exchange for nothing, not even the security necessary for its people to live normal lives," arguing only by "ignoring the facts and the history of the region could one blame the entire conflict on Israel, and yet that is precisely what many students and professors on the left have done." Most strongly, she expressed feeling "isolated and alienated from supposedly 'liberal' parts of the University" due to the latest campaign calling on Harvard and MIT to divest from Israel, saying "Israel is not perfect and has certainly made mistakes, but if anything, now it needs our support as it fights for security."[360]

Both of these issues — the rise of an intersectional taxonomy that linked the plight of the Palestinians with racial injustice in America, and the growing intolerance of the campus' progressive left towards Jews who do not abjure Israel, became increasingly prominent over the 2010s and set the stage for the campus reaction to October 7th and its aftermath.

Widening Fissures and Diminished Dialogue, 2010-2023

Between 2010 and 2023, discussions about Israel and Palestine at Harvard focused more and more on confrontation rather than compromise. While efforts to promote dialogue and understanding between opposing viewpoints did not disappear, student activists were less willing to search for middle ground. As chances for peace between Israel and the Palestinians faded, so did the cooperative and constructive aspects of exchange between students with differing viewpoints. As the campus climate became more divided, students on both sides of the issue felt ignored or silenced.[361] Jewish students became more concerned about antisemitism on campus, and they began to claim that whether speech is antisemitic should be determined more by impact than intent.

Early in this period, there were voices within the Harvard community that cautioned against moving away from dialogue and toward more confrontational tactics in discussions of Israel and Palestine. Over time, more assertive approaches gained acceptance, and by the end of the period positions once seen as outside the campus mainstream became more common. At Harvard, as at other universities, the BDS movement promoted anti-normalization guidelines that advised against joint projects or activities between Palestinians and Israelis unless they entailed *a priori* public recognition of Palestinian rights and a commitment to Palestinian liberation.[362] Anti-normalization posed strict conditions for engagement between opposing viewpoints and rejected interactions that did not frame the conflict in terms of

[360] Tova A. Serkin, "Leaving the Left Behind," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 3, 2002.
[361] *The Boston Globe* claimed, based on interviews with students, that "people on either side feel their voices are being quieted: Palestinians and those who sympathize with their plight speak of an institutional force arrayed against them; supporters of Israel contend critical peers dismiss their perspectives before they can voice them". Hilary Burns, "On campuses, a tension over the Mideast," *The Boston Globe*, January 31 2023.
[362] BDS Movement Anti-Normalization.

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resistance to these inequalities. Anti-normalization made open dialogue and exchange of differing perspectives between Palestinians and Israelis ever more difficult.[363]

Pro-Palestinian activism was galvanized by the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, beginning in 2010 and 2011, respectively. These movements led students to draw parallels between oppressive conditions faced by Palestinians and popular movements resisting inequality and lack of political freedom.[364] Just a few years later, a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents nationwide — the Anti-Defamation League reported a 57% increase in antisemitic incidents between 2016 and 2017, and an 89% surge on college campuses — caused off-campus actors like the Anti-Defamation League, StandWithUs, Israel on Campus Coalition, and Students Supporting Israel to become more vocal about and involved in campus life.[365] Such organizations supported pro-Israel groups on campuses and provided resources, training, funding, and strategic counsel to student leaders.

In addition to these nationwide trends, Harvard itself underwent major demographic, political, and social changes in the early twenty first century. These changes directly affected the experience of Jewish students at Harvard in numerous ways:

Growing Demographic Diversity Within the Student Body In 1980, the student body at Harvard and other top Ivy League universities was about 80% White. In 2019, 47% of Harvard's entering first-year class identified as White, and by 2024, the figure had declined to 33%.[366] During the final four decades of the 20th century, Jews made up 20-25% of the University's enrollment, but in the 21st century the numbers went down, and as of 2023, the figure was just below 10%.[367] It is difficult to account precisely for the declining number of Jewish students, as there is anecdotal evidence that Jews were choosing to attend a wider range of universities than in the past. But the correlation between the increased number of non-White students and the shrinking number of Jews in the student body was striking. Although Jews belong to all racial groups, most are demographically classified as White, be they of eastern European (Ashkenazi), Iberian/Balkan (Sephardi), or Middle Eastern (Mizrachi) origin. If students who identify or who are designated as White compete for fewer admissions slots, it follows that Jewish students would be affected.

Widening Political Diversity Among Jewish students In 2010, the journalist Peter Beinart published a widely read article (expanded two years later into a book) on a generational change in American Jewish attitudes towards Israel, with younger Jews, particularly those enrolled in elite universities, becoming more critical of or indifferent to the country. Survey research confirmed the generational shift, and although on a national level the changes were not as stark as Beinart depicted, it was indeed prominent at Harvard and its peer institutions.[368] Well before October 7, 2023, Harvard's Jewish students were manifesting a wide

[363] E.g., "A Strategy of Rejection: The Anti-Normalization Campaign," *Anti-Defamation League*, May 25, 2012. https://www.adl.org/resources/news/strategy-rejection-anti-normalization-campaign#:~:text=Anti%2Dnormalization%20policies%20are%20also,legitimacy%20and%20should%20be%20suppressed

[364] E.g., Indiana T. Seresin, "Palestinian Activists Evoke Occupy," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 15, 2011.

[365] "Think. Plan. Act. Tools for Dealing with Antisemitic and Anti-Israel Incidents on Campus," accessed July 22, 2024. https://www.adl.org/think-plan-act. "About," accessed July 22, 2024. https://israelcc.org/about-us/. "Mission and History," accessed July 22, 2024. https://www.ssimovement.org/mission-and-history.html. "About Us," accessed July 22, 2024. https://www.standwithus.com/about

[366] Derek Thompson, "How America's Top Colleges Reflect (and Massively Distort) the Country's Racial Evolution." https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/01/how-americas-top-colleges-reflect-and-massively-distort-the-countrys-racial-evolution/267415/. "Meet the Class of 2023," *The Harvard Crimson,* n.d. https://features.thecrimson.com/2019/freshman-survey/makeup-narrative/ - :~:text=Among participants who answered a,0.8 percent as Pacific Islander. "A Brief Profile of the Class of 2028," https://college.harvard.edu/admissions/admissions-statistics

[367] Sarah Weismann, "Jewish Student Enrollment Is Down at Many Ivies," https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/2023/05/08/jewish-student-enrollment-down-many-ivies

[368] Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (2012); https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/u-s-jews-connections-with-and-attitudes-toward-israel/

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spectrum of feelings about Israel, from passionate identification to a no less ardent rejection of Zionism and embrace of a reconfigured Jewish identity in which support for Palestine became a supreme Jewish value.

Changing Roles and Views of Arab and Muslim Students Prior to the 2010s, Black students featured among the most critical voices regarding Israel, while Arab and Muslim students were more likely to champion Palestinian freedom, liberty, and dignity without denying Israel's right to exist. Over the course of the 2010s a growing number of students identifying as BIPOC regarded the partition of Mandatory Palestine in 1947 as a gross injustice, demanded the dismantling of Israel as a precondition for Palestinian liberation, and distanced themselves from Jewish interlocutors on campus unless the latter shared their political views.

A "Palestine exception" and an "Israel exception" In 2015, the NGO Palestine Legal issued a report titled "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech." The report depicted wide-ranging efforts throughout American society to "stifle criticism" of Israel and "censor or punish advocacy in support of Palestinian rights." These efforts were particularly noticeable in universities because of "their increasingly central role … in the movement for Palestinian rights":

> Activists and their protected speech are routinely maligned as uncivil, divisive, antisemitic, or supportive of terrorism. Institutional actors — primarily in response to pressure from Israel advocacy groups — erect bureaucratic barriers that thwart efforts to discuss abuses of Palestinian rights and occasionally even cancel events or programs altogether. Sometimes the consequences are more severe: universities suspend student groups, deny tenure to faculty, or fire them outright in response to their criticism of Israel.[369]

In the early 2020s, discussion of the "Palestine exception" became ubiquitous at Harvard. It was invoked to condemn restrictions on protests, disciplinary measures against students, and decisions to cancel or withdraw sponsorship from events focused on Palestine.

No less exceptional, however, was the frequency and intensity of treatment of Israel as an oppressor state and the Palestinians as an oppressed people in courses and public events throughout the campus. From 2019 and 2022 respectively, the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Program on Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School focused heavily on Palestinians in their course offerings and guest lectures, which also rarely presented Israeli points of view except those of the state's harshest critics. Seminars organized by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies frequently addressed Palestinian history and politics from a strongly sympathetic perspective and rarely reflecting other points of view.

In contrast, there was no program devoted to the study of Israel. The Center for Jewish Studies hosted events about Israeli politics and society within its broader mission to promote knowledge about the entirety of Jewish civilization from antiquity to the present. Similarly, in 2016 the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard Law School was founded to promote the scholarly study of Jewish law, including that of the State of Israel. From 2017, courses on Israel/Palestine with a non-partisan approach were taught by Derek Penslar in the Department of History, and in 2022 a visiting professor taught courses on Israel in the Department of Government. But these offerings paled in comparison with the number of courses, programs, and events that concentrated on Palestine, sympathized wholeheartedly with the Palestinian cause, and, as demonstrated later in this report, created classroom atmospheres that were distressing to Jewish students who had attachments to Israel.

The prominence of Palestine in student political life, co-curricular activities, and social interactions was striking. Never before in Harvard's history did a conflict in a distant land, in which no American troops

[369] "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US." https://static1.squarespace.com/static/548748b1e4b083fc03ebf70e/t/560c2e0ae4b083d9c363801d/1443638794172/Palestine+Exception+Report+Final.pdf

were serving, attract such attention. Within the Harvard community, the concentration on Israel as a distinctly egregious malefactor and on the Palestinians as a distinctly victimized people preceded the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre, Israel's massive response, and the spread of hostilities to a regional level. This "Israel exception" led to condemnation of Israel among a growing swath of the student body, an intersectional conflation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with racial injustice in the United States, and social exclusion of Israeli and Jewish students who did not identify as anti-Zionist. In contrast, there were few complaints of such shunning behavior from students of Russian or Chinese origin whose homelands' governments practiced widespread violations of human rights.

A Decline of Community and Retreat into Ideological Enclaves Political polarization, as well as heightened awareness of racial identities and the ongoing legacies of racism, degraded the sense of community identity that is a hallmark of a residential college experience. A further dilution of local, face-to-face community in favor of virtual and global occurred at the hands of social media, which became hegemonic following the founding of Facebook in 2004 and Instagram in 2010. Social media made it easier for students to not only dwell in virtual communities of the like-minded but also to shame and exclude peers without having to confront them in person. Social media had a poisonous effect on many dimensions of campus life, including the well-being of Jewish and especially Israeli students, who were exposed to abusive and threatening messages on platforms like Sidechat and Instagram or excluded from WhatsApp groups within classes or co-curricular groups.

Targeting Israel on Campus

Over this period, groups like the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) and Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine (HOOP) organized campaigns pressing the administration to remove certain products from dining halls like SodaStream and Sabra hummus and advocating for students to decline opportunities to travel to Israel such as Birthright and Israel Trek. They also disrupted pro-Israel events hosted by Hillel and featuring former Israeli officials. In addition, PSC staged annual Israeli Apartheid Weeks that included tactics like distributing mock eviction notices and erecting an "apartheid wall" display, generating controversy each year. The 2012 One State Conference at HKS also sparked debate around its discussions of alternatives to the two-state solution and analogies to apartheid.

These actions generated intense debate within the Harvard community. Jewish students who found them offensive received little sympathy from pro-Palestinian activists, who believed in the justice of their actions and accused their critics of weaponizing antisemitism for political gain.

ACTION AGAINST ISRAELI ACTIVITIES, GUESTS, AND PRODUCTS

The PSC and HOOP — a student group calling for divestment, established in 2020[370] — organized numerous campaigns and protests targeting specific Israeli activities, guests, and products.

SodaStream In Spring 2014, Palestinian students and members of the Palestine Solidarity Committee protested that some dining halls had carbonated water machines manufactured by SodaStream, an Israeli company with a plant in a large Jewish settlement in the West Bank.[371] Rachel J. Sandalow-Ash '15, a member of Harvard College's Progressive Jewish Alliance agreed that "these machines can be seen as a microaggression to Palestinian students and their families and like the University doesn't care about

[370] Juliet E. Isselbacher and Amanda Y. Su, "Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine Holds Inaugural Event, Invites BDS Founder," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 21 2020. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/2/21/hoop-inaugural-event-bds-founder/

[371] SodaStream announced a relocation to Southern Israel in October 2014. Ian Black, "SodaStream to move factory out of West Bank Israeli settlement," *The Guardian*, October 29, 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/oct/29/sodastream-move-factory-west-bank-israel-slash-forecast

Palestinian human rights." Following discussions, in Fall 2014, HUDS agreed to remove SodaStream labels from existing machines and purchase appliances from other companies going forward. PSC member Tez M. Clark '17 said he hoped that "Harvard's effort to hear the concerns of Palestinian students and make a meaningful change in response to these concerns will inspire further support for and discussion on Palestinian rights, both on this campus and around the world."[372]

However, in December 2014, President Drew Faust requested an investigation of the decision.[373] HUDS spokesperson Crista Martin wrote that HUDS has "mistakenly factored political concerns" into its decision.[374] Provost Alan M. Garber '76 wrote that "Harvard University's procurement decisions should not and will not be driven by individuals' views of highly contested matters of political controversy."[375] Leaders of Jewish and pro-Israel groups like Harvard Hillel President Samuel M. Fisher '15 supported the investigation.[376]

Sabra Hummus In early 2022, the PSC posted stickers on containers of Sabra hummus in Harvard dining halls. According to Nadine S. Bahour '22, a representative from the PSC, the stickers urged students not to eat Sabra hummus and as its parent company, the Strauss Group, "invests money in the [Israel Defense Force's] Golani Brigade," which she claimed was responsible for "the oppression of Palestinians."[377] The hummus stickers action, she said, aimed to encourage students to make conscious choices about which companies they support with their food purchases. Conversely, Rebecca S. Araten '23, a leader of the Harvard Israel Initiative, said the stickers' claims misrepresented "what is actually happening on the ground." She maintained that the PSC action was one of many attempts "to prevent people from going" on activities like Israel Trek based on "extreme things that aren't based at all in fact."[378]

Birthright and Israel Trek Pro-Palestinian activists advocated for students to decline opportunities to travel to Israel on Birthright Israel and Israel Trek, the former being an all-expenses-paid trip to Israel for Jewish young adults and the latter being an Israeli-student-led trip to Israel offered to non-Jews.[379] Activists described Israel Trek as complicit in "apartheid and settler colonialism."[380]

Trek leader Ty L. Geri '23 defended the program, saying it aimed to expose participants to diverse viewpoints through meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.[381] "Reducing people to conflict and to hate is dehumanizing, and I think that when you're thousands of miles away, it's easy to dehumanize people. But when you're there, it's much harder," Geri said. "We'll always get some criticism, but we'll

[372] Kamara A. Swaby, "HUDS Suspends Purchases from Israeli Soda Company," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 17, 2014.
[373] Theodore R. Delwiche and Mariel A. Klein, "University To Investigate Dining Services Decision To Suspend Purchases from Israeli Company," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 18, 2014. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2014/12/18/huds-sodastream-garber-response/
[374] Meg P. Bernhard, "Dining Services 'Mistakenly' Factored Politics into SodaStream Decision, Spokesperson Says," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 18, 2014.
[375] Delwiche and Klein, "University To Investigate Dining Services Decision To Suspend Purchases from Israeli Company."
[376] Ibid.
[377] Sophia C. Scott, "For Some Palestinian Organizers, the Israel Trek is a Microcosm of a Broader 'Power Imbalance," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 21 2022.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Nadine S. Bahour, "Visit Israel, Just Not on Birthright," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 2019; Sandra Y. L. Korn, "The Illuminations of Birthright," *The Harvard Crimson*, July 6, 2012; see response: Daniel Frim, "Some Other "Illuminations of Birthright"," *The Harvard Crimson*, July 18, 2012.
[380] Vivi E. Lu and Leah J. Teichholtz, "Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine Urges Undergrads to Boycott Israel Trek," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 25, 2022.
[381] Shera S. Avi-Yonah and Delano R. Franklin, "Palestine Solidarity Committee Circulates Pledge Urging Undergrads to Boycott Israel Trek," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 7, 2019.

always continue engaging in open dialogue."[382] Other Jewish and pro-Israel students strongly opposed the boycott campaign. Rebecca S. Araten '23, a leader of the Harvard Israel Initiative, felt the PSC mischaracterized what happened on Trek. As she explained, the PSC's rhetoric was "not based at all in fact" and "the reality is that if people actually go on this trip, they'll realize that those words — those terms — are not at all representative of what is actually happening in Israeli society."[383] The student president of Harvard Hillel at the time, Natalie L. Kahn '23, said the PSC disregarded "any possibility of dialogue." According to Kahn, if people examined Trek's "itinerary and agenda," they would see it "really does try to balance both sides."[384] The Trek's organizers reported receiving severe social backlash and hate mail.[385]

However, the PSC maintained their concerns about Trek were valid. Organizer Joshua D. Willcox '23-'24 maintained that Palestinians experienced "an apartheid regime" and that the Trek did not adequately represent Palestinians' perspective.[386] Nadine S. Bahour '22 felt Trek presented an experience that was not reflective of the "reality on the ground" for Palestinians.

Rabbi Jonah C. Steinberg, Hillel Executive Director and Harvard Chaplain addressed the worryingly polarized atmosphere on campus in a sermon at Harvard Memorial Church:

> We live in that world even here at Harvard — I don't know if you have been following the war of words on campus — the anti-Israel stickers appearing on Sabra hummus in the dining halls, the tearing down of Harvard Hillel posters all over campus, about which the Dean of Students Office had to issue a statement just this past week, and the black-colored posters everywhere against the Harvard College Israel Trek … But maybe you saw the posters on the way here this morning: "How about Spring Break without Breaking International Law?" "Your Trip Is Free; Palestine Isn't" and "Would you go on a trip funded by South-African Apartheid?" So far as I know, not one of those posters has been torn down — and let me take a moment here to say that reflects some admirable restraint on the part of Harvard Hillel students, when posters with a QR code offering a chance to learn why many in our community care about Israel have been torn up all over campus and the torn pieces tacked back to the walls.[387]

After the 2023 Trek, the PSC held "Office Hours" for participants to share their experiences. Around 20 students attended the event in Claverly Hall to discuss issues like whether Trek exposed students to diverse viewpoints. One Trek participant, Ibrahim Mammadov '23, felt the trip provided a valuable perspective. "These IDF soldiers are just people like us, they're not anything special. And that's an important piece of perspective that you don't get on campus." Mammadov said that the labeling of oppressor and victim prevents more nuanced and fair perspectives.[388] Nevertheless, Bahour urged trekkers to consider Harvard's "complicity in the struggles Palestinians face." When Geri extended an invitation to PSC leaders to discuss their concerns directly, Bahour declined, citing safety concerns and arguing that dialogue was not possible until Trek leaders acknowledged "ethnic cleansing" and "apartheid" in Palestine.[389]

[382] Vivi E. Lu, "Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee Calls for Boycott of Israel Trek, Drawing Backlash from Pro-Israel Students," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 24, 2022.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Sabrina Paris Goldfischer, "The Death of Discourse: Antisemitism at Harvard College" (Harvard University, 2023), 57.
[386] Lu, "Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee Calls for Boycott of Israel Trek, Drawing Backlash from Pro-Israel Students."
[387] Jonah C. Steinberg, "The Face Behind the Veil," *Harvard Memorial Church*, March 2, 2022.
[388] Adam Pearl, "The Trek Back From Israel: Tensions on campus spark an uncomfortable silence," *The Harvard Independent*, April 27, 2023. https://harvardindependent.com/the-trek-back-from-israel/
[389] Ibid.

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Disruptions and Walkouts Disruptions of Israel-related events became a common occurrence over this period. PSC Harvard staged a "die-in" outside of Harvard Hillel in October 2015 in response to an event hosted by Hillel featuring Gedalia Gillis, a former Israeli military commander. The PSC protest involved signs displaying the names of Palestinians killed during the previous summer's conflict in Gaza. According to Fatima Bishtawi '17, a co-president of the PSC at the time, the protest aimed to express that hosting Gillis was "very estranging and creates a hostile environment for these students on campus."[390] Explaining why PSC chose not to come to the event and express their criticisms directly to Gillis and Hillel leadership, Halah Ahmad '17 explained:

> Palestinians and friends on campus cannot be expected to partake in that conversation while knowing that the person they are speaking to is actively engaged in a military operation that occupies their land and oppresses and kills their people. We should not be asked to face a soldier who, regardless of engagement in dialogue and affiliation with a member of the Harvard community, would nonetheless administer violent action against us as Palestinians.[391]

Additionally, HOOP staged numerous protests. In 2022, the group disrupted a talk by Israel's ambassador at HKS.[392] HOOP also regularly protested events featuring retired Israeli military officials, describing them as perpetuating oppression.[393]

Campaigns to Boycott and Divest from Israel

Academic Boycott Campaign In April 2011, Omar Barghouti, a founder of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, spoke at an event sponsored by the PSC and the Institute of Politics. Barghouti argued that Israel was functioning under a system of apartheid and challenged the idea that it should be considered a respected democracy on the international stage. He advocated for the global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, of which boycotting Israeli universities was a core element.[394]

A November 2011 panel event was held at HKS titled "Boycott from Within: American and Israeli Voices Against Apartheid."[395] The discussion featured two speakers, Jeff Pickert, an American activist living in the West Bank, and Dalit Baum, an Israeli activist and divestment proponent.[396] Pickert framed the Palestinian protest movement in the context of related movements like the Arab Spring and global Occupy movement.[397] Audience reaction varied. Leah C. Vincent, a master's student, said Baum was "articulate and composed." However, Yoav B.G. Schaefer '15 noted the discussion did not sufficiently acknowledge the complexity of the issues. "Everything that tries to make (the conflict) black and white is a disservice to peace."[398]

In December 2013, the American Studies Association voted to endorse an academic boycott of Israeli universities, citing concerns about limitations on Palestinian education and academic freedom. President Faust condemned the boycott, saying "Academic boycotts subvert the academic freedoms and values

[390] Andrew M. Duehren, "Students Host 'Die-In' Outside of Hillel, Protesting Speaker," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 16, 2015.
[391] Halah Ahmad, "A Die-in for More Human Discourse at Harvard," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 23, 2015.
[392] Miles J. Herszenhorn, "Protesters Stage Walkout of Event with Israeli Ambassador at Harvard Kennedy School," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 12, 2022.
[393] Miles J. Herszenhorn, "Palestinian Advocacy Group Protests Former Israeli Military Official at Harvard Kennedy School," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 2, 2022.
[394] Monica M. Dodge, "Barghouti Urges Israel Boycott," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 14, 2011.
[395] Seresin, "Palestinian Activists Evoke Occupy."
[396] "Dalit Baum," accessed July 10, 2024. https://afsc.org/author/dalit-baum
[397] Seresin, "Palestinian Activists Evoke Occupy."
[398] Ibid.

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necessary to the free flow of ideas."[399] Sara Greenberg HBS'15 and HKS'15 and Yoav Schaefer '15 urged Harvard to withdraw from the ASA in response.[400] However, Asmaa Rimawi '14, chair of the Harvard PSC, supported the ASA decision, as did Alexander Abbasi, a Harvard Divinity School student, who argued that the boycott aims to "redress the injustices that face Palestinians."[401]

Divestment Campaign Calls for divestment from Israel and Israel-affiliated businesses also continued over the decade. Calling the situation "apartheid" and concluding that divestment was "probably the least radical cause in the world," Matthew B. McDole '18 wrote: "I used to find that word radical, but after visiting the West Bank and seeing the reality with my own eyes, it seems like a more than fair description for a half-century of occupation under these conditions."[402] A significant turning point was the establishment of HOOP in 2020, with the stated goal of pressuring Harvard to disclose and divest investments in companies connected to Israel's presence in the Palestinian territories.[403] At one of their protests at Harvard Yard, which drew over 200 people, Malaika K. Tapper '23 and Nadine S. Bahour '22 read from a letter criticizing Harvard for being "complicit" in supporting Israel.[404]

Some countered that divestment tactics were counterproductive. Gregory A. Briker '17 argued that the BDS movement "impedes meaningful dialogue" and is "an abhorrent tactic." For Briker, BDS "simultaneously groups all supporters of Israel together and rejects the fundamental legitimacy of their convictions." It also "places the onus of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict entirely on Israel's shoulders," without any attribution of responsibility to Palestinians. BDS' goal, Briker stated, is to "destroy Israel as a Jewish state."[405]

The One-State Conference Many of the ideas raised in the debates about soda water, hummus, trips to Israel, and BDS received in-depth attention at the One-State Conference, held at HKS in March 2012. The conference was organized by several Harvard student groups, including Justice for Palestine, the PSC, the Palestine Caucus, the Arab Caucus, and the Progressive Caucus. Ahmed Moor, an HKS student and organizer, said the aim was to "consider alternatives … that would achieve peace based on justice and equality for all." A more militant stand was taken by undergraduate students Eliza M. Nguyen '14, Lena K. Awwad '13, and A.M. candidate Alex R. Shams, who placed the conference's purview directly in the shadow of South Africa under apartheid:

> In the 1990s, White South Africans realized that they could not continue to control the indigenous people and dispossess them of their land against their will. Instead, they dismantled the system of apartheid and agreed to live as a minority with equal rights in a land that both they and South Africa's other minorities considered their homeland. Numerous veterans of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, including Bishop Desmond M. Tutu, have visited Palestine and made it clear that Israel's system is in fact "worse than apartheid" as it existed in South Africa.[406]

The conference created a storm of controversy before it was even held. A petition signed by over 2,000 people stated that the conference manifested "new antisemitism" and asked Harvard to withdraw financial support. The petition called on the University to prevent the conference from using University facilities

[399] Matthew Q. Clarida and Amna H. Hasmi, "Faust Condemns Academic Group's Boycott of Israeli Institutions," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 24, 2013.
[400] Sara K. Greenberg and Yoav Schaefer, "Boycott the ASA, Not Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 3, 2014.
[401] Alexander Abbasi, Giacomo Bagarella, and Asmaa Rimawi, "A Just Boycott for Palestinian Rights," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 21 2014.
[402] Matthew B. McDole, "The Least Radical Cause in the World," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 15, 2017.
[403] Isselbacher and Su, "Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine Holds Inaugural Event, Invites BDS Founder."
[404] Ibid.
[405] Gregory A. Briker, "Dialogue Over Divestment," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 10, 2014.
[406] A corrigendum clarifies that Tutu "cannot be found on record stating this" and corrects other factual errors stated in this op-ed. Lena K. Awwad, Eliza M. Nguyen, and Alex R. Shams, "Fighting Apartheid with Equality," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 27, 2012.

and remove Harvard logos from its website. Gabriel M. Scheinmann '08, one of the petition creators, said "People have a right to free expression. However, they do not have the right to do so using others' financial resources."[407] In response to the petition, the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs removed their logos from the website. A disclaimer was also added stating the conference views did not represent Harvard's.[408] Joshua B. Lipson '14, co-president of Harvard Students for Israel, agreed with objections in principle but did not sign the petition. He said "Ideally this discussion would not be held at Harvard. However, Harvard supports free expression for all student groups, even those with views some find objectionable or misinformed." Lipson felt calling to revoke the University's provision of space was an extreme measure.[409]

Outside commentators also opined. US Senator Scott Brown called on Harvard to cancel the conference,[410] and Dan Diker, Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress, condemned it, arguing that any one-state scenario effectively meant the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state.[411] However, in an editorial called "Deeply Wrong, But Not Anti-Semitic", the *Crimson* argued that charges of antisemitism went too far and defended the event's right to be held at Harvard. Opting for a more restrictive definition of antisemitism, the editorial board wrote:

> To call this conference, as the petition does, a forum for "one of the most ancient forms of racial hatred," is unwarranted and counterproductive. Allegations like these simply serve to stymie serious public discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is no evidence that the discussion at this conference expresses antipathy towards Jews as a people, which is the definition of anti-Semitism. There is definitely a line to be drawn regarding such sentiments, and we do not believe that this conference crosses it.[412]

The *Crimson* also objected to the rhetoric in Awwad, Nguyen, and Shams's earlier op-ed, comparing Israel to Apartheid South Africa: "Aside from its dishonesty, this kind of sophistry is deeply unproductive and fosters neither normalization nor dialogue between the two sides; indeed, it promotes mistrust and retrenchment."[413]

Representatives of the Progressive Jewish Alliance, Sandra Y. L. Korn '14[414] and Emily S. Unger '13, while supportive of the conference as a platform to raise the issue of equality and justice in Israel/Palestine, expressed concern about "some of the extreme rhetoric that it has triggered":

> While we would love to see a peaceful and egalitarian one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we think it only practical to continue working toward a two-state solution. It is unfair to ask the Israelis and Palestinians who dream of having their own ethnic nation-states to give up these aspirations without demanding the same of every country in the world. While we theoretically

[407] Aisling H. Crane and Melanie Guzman, "Students and Alumni Protest HKS Conference on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 28, 2012.
[408] Crane and Guzman, "Students and Alumni Protest HKS Conference on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."
[409] ibid.
[410] Noah Bierman, "Scott Brown calls on Harvard to cancel 'one state' conference," *The Boston Globe*, March 2, 2012. https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2012/03/02/Fg6zeyvcyr2vnVc7sit6sM/story.html?p1=BGSearch_Advanced_Results
[411] Dan Diker, "Laundering anti-Semitism at Harvard," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 29, 2012. https://www.jpost.com/opinion/op-ed-contributors/laundering-anti-semitism-at-harvard
[412] The *Crimson* Staff, "Deeply Wrong, But Not Anti-Semitic," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 2, 2012.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Korn would ultimately become a supporter of the BDS movement, and would advocate, as member of Jewish Voice for Peace's delegation to the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly, for divestment of the church from American companies with ties to Israel. Sandra Korn, "Why I Support Presbyterian Divestment as a Jew," *Tablet*, June 19, 2014. https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/why-i-support-presbyterian-divestment-as-a-jew

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> admire the ideals of a one-state solution, in practice, a single state seems an ineffective and dangerous policy solution — and so we cannot endorse or advocate for it in today's world."[415]

As for campus discussions on the topic, they wrote:

> No solution to the conflict will be possible unless people engage each other in meaningful dialogue instead of exchanging insults of "anti-Semitism" and "racism." Any statement that seeks mainly to demonize the other side and blame the entire conflict on one group is a step away from peace.[416]

Others lamented the lack of incentive for compromise and moderation in platforms such as this conference, and the push to take sides rather than find commonalities.[417]

While some viewed the conference as a platform to explore alternative perspectives on achieving justice and equality, others argued it aimed to deny Jewish self-determination and was thus antisemitic in effect, if not intent. Significantly, non-Jews on the editorial board of the *Crimson* took a middle path, challenging the most extremely pro-Palestinian rhetoric while asking Jews to reconsider their own concepts of what constitutes offensive speech.

Israeli Apartheid Week

Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) became a major point of contention regarding what types of speech and tactics were considered acceptable on campus. Over the years, IAW featured increasingly polarizing rhetoric and tactics that many Jewish students argued crossed a line. By the late 2010s, the week had become a difficult time for many Jewish students.

BACKGROUND

From 2013 the PSC hosted Israeli Apartheid Week, aiming to raise awareness about Palestine. IAW typically included panels, discussions, films, and art installations.[418] IAW programming expanded over the years. In 2019, the week featured a panel on Black-Palestinian solidarity with a talk by Cornel West as well as displays of art and film.[419] IAW went virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic, but in 2023, in-person events returned, highlighted by speeches by Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein. As usual, an art installation called the "Wall of Resistance" was displayed, though some Jewish students said they found phrases used on it to be offensive. Hillel and other groups held counter-programming in response.[420] In 2023, the week highlighted interlinks between the Palestinian struggle and other global struggles, and featured panels on student activism, LGBTQ+ Palestinians, and solidarity with South Africa and Kurdish groups.[421]

THE EVICTION NOTICES

Some of the specific tactics used as part of IAW drew particular controversy. Using fake eviction notices was one such tactic. Advertising the first Harvard Israeli Apartheid Week, PSC members distributed over

[415] Sandra Y. L. Korn, "Working Toward a Solution," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 5, 2012.
[416] Korn, "Working Toward a Solution."
[417] Eric T. Justin, "Two Sides, One Waste of Time," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 9, 2012.
[418] Grace Lin and Paul D. Tamburro, "Palestine Solidarity Committee Holds 'Israeli Apartheid Week'," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 16, 2018, 2018. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2018/4/16/Palestine-solidarity-committee-event/
[419] Elizabeth X. Guo and Amanda Y. Su, "Harvard Palestine Solidarity Committee Hosts Israeli Apartheid Week," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 8, 2019. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/4/8/palestinian-solidarity-committee-israeli-apartheid-week/
[420] Audrey M. Apollon and Christine Mui, "Palestine Solidarity Committee Hosts Annual Israeli Apartheid Week, Drawing Backlash from Harvard Hillel," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 22, 2022. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/4/22/israel-apartheid-week-2022/
[421] J. Sellers Hill and Nia L. Orakwue, "Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee Hosts Annual Israeli Apartheid Week," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 31 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/3/31/israel-apartheid-week-2023/

1,000 mock eviction notices on dormitory doors across campus in March 2013. The notices, which were posted to publicize Israeli Apartheid Week, informed residents that their rooms were "scheduled for demolition in the next three days." This referenced the demolitions of Palestinian homes that occur in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[422]

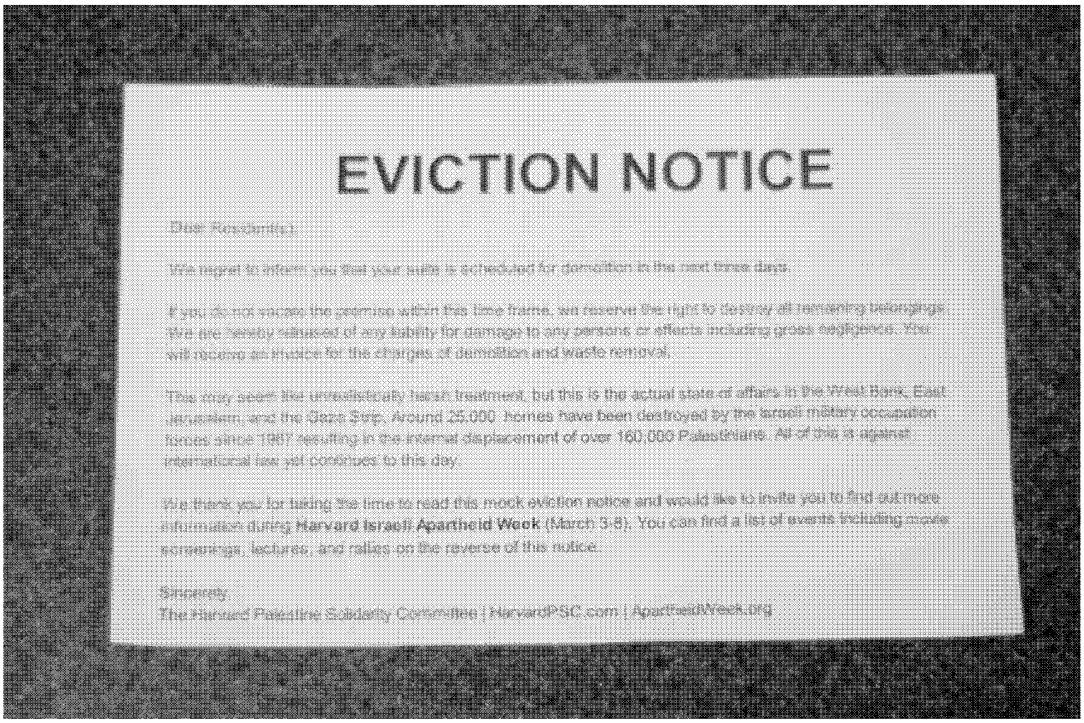

Figure 1. Mock eviction flyer posted by PSC on students' doors in March 2013.
The Harvard Crimson, *March 5, 2013.*

The mock eviction notices prompted mixed responses from students. Some felt the notices did not promote constructive debate. Steven J. Tricanowicz '13 said in an interview that he believed the PSC "did a very bad job" of promoting constructive debate and that the event went "against what Harvard stands for as a place for open academic dialogue, open thoughts, and open intellectual activity." He described Israeli Apartheid Week as an event "that promotes polarization and closed-mindedness."[423] Ariel Rubin '13 and Ariella Rotenberg '13 wrote:

> As two seniors writing theses on aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we have actively sought out views that oppose our own and continue to work in an effort to understand contradicting narratives … We realize the importance of employing a framework that engages with multiple perspectives. There are limits to this framework, however, when words are based in hatred rather than facts. The Palestinian Solidarity Committee has reached this limit in its portrayals of the conflict as one-sided, revealing either a lack of understanding of history or rejection of an honest, albeit challenging, conversation about the complicated reality. The PSC's use of the word "apartheid" is ahistorical, polarizing, and preventative of informed, fact-based dialogue. The implication of the comparison to "apartheid" is that the Israelis are racist totalitarians ruling over blameless Palestinians, with no consideration for the nuances and details of the conflict.[424]

[422] Anneli L. Tostar, "Mock Eviction Flyers Incite Debate," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 5, 2013.
[423] Ibid.
[424] Ariella Rotenberg and Ariel Rubin, "The Wrong Type of Engagement," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 9, 2013. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/3/9/israel-apartheid-week/

However, other students voiced support for the PSC's right to raise awareness about their events. When some notices were torn down, PSC organizer Yacoub H. Kureh '13 expressed dismay in an email to the Quincy House list.[425] PSC member Alexander R. Shams said organizers "weren't too worried [about offending people] because the kind of events we're hosting are the reality in Palestine."[426]

As in the case of the One-State Conference, actors outside of the University stepped in. The Anti-Defamation League said that the notices "crossed the line by causing supporters to feel isolated and intimidated." There was also a strong intramural response. The *Crimson* criticized Israeli Apartheid Week for using tactics that discouraged civil discourse and were unlikely to promote dialogue or peace. It noted the mock eviction notices taped to dorm doors and the separation wall display on campus may provoke thought for some, but were also likely to cause a "knee-jerk, negative reaction" from pro-Israel groups. The editorial also took issue with the analogy of comparing Israel to apartheid South Africa, saying it "ignores crucial complexities in Israel-Palestine."[427] It concluded that Israeli Apartheid Week does not further "open, respectful discourse" or constructive dialogue toward peace.[428]

THE APARTHEID WALL

Starting in 2019, during Israeli Apartheid Week, the Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) erected a multi-panel art installation called the Wall of Resistance in Harvard Yard. Installations featured phrases like "Free Palestine" and references to the BDS movement, as well as a quote from Audre Lorde that read "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." Dalal Hassane '26 explained the installation as representing "the apartheid wall that currently stands in Palestine" and inviting observers to "ask themselves, 'How does this wall affect Palestinians? How does this wall affect the people that it was built to oppress?'"[429] One panel of the installation stated that "Zionism is Racism Settler Colonialism White Supremacy Apartheid." Explaining the appeal of this display, Nadine Bahour drew directly on the concept of intersectionality, linking Palestinian plight with racial injustice in the United States:

> The panels are all very powerful and they really show a lot of solidarity, because they're not all about Palestine … Each one covers a different topic and is trying to show that the Palestinian cause doesn't exist in a bubble, but it's rather very interconnected with our everyday life here in the US.[430]

Thus, the PSC connected Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank with the long history of racial segregation in the United States.

Many Jewish students found the barrier to be a source of both outrage and fear. Hillel's President at the time stated the wall was "offensive," "libelous," and "beneath the intelligence expected at Harvard."[431] Sarah Bolnick '23, co-president of Harvard Israel Initiative, described the installation as "a form of hate

[425] Tostar, "Mock Eviction Flyers Incite Debate."
[426] Ibid.
[427] The *Crimson* Staff, "Keeping Us Apart," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 8, 2013. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/3/8/israel-apartheid-notices/. There were additional objections to using the term "Apartheid. "For example, Marcus B. Montague-Mfuni '23, who is from South Africa, wrote an op-ed arguing that the term had a very different meaning for non-white South Africans due to their experience under apartheid rule. While he acknowledged the oppressive conditions Palestinians face rise to international legal definitions of apartheid, he argued for preserving the unique meaning of South African "apartheid," which represented a specific form of dehumanization and trauma inflicted on generations of South Africans. At the same time, the author noted that anti-apartheid activism in South Africa inspired the BDS movement in Palestine. Marcus B. Montague-Mfuni, "Don't Call What Israel is Doing Apartheid," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 27, 2021.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Hill and Orakwue, "Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee Hosts Annual Israeli Apartheid Week."
[430] Apollon and Mui, "Palestine Solidarity Committee Hosts Annual Israeli Apartheid Week, Drawing Backlash from Harvard Hillel."
[431] Ibid.

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speech."[432] On Hillel's website students wrote about their reactions to the wall, complaining not only about the display's contents but also about a perceived indifference to its impact on them:

> PSC's wall contained blatantly antisemitic rhetoric and imagery. It was not taken down by the administration and people walked by it for days with little outcry. Hatred towards any group of people should never tolerated, but when it's against Jews there is silence. —Jonah '24
>
> Every minority group is allowed to define what they consider to be discrimination, but when Jews deem something antisemitic, people don't take that seriously. It's saddening to see all these people who claim to be antiracist and anti-discrimination dictating to us when we are and aren't justified in feeling victimized. —Michael '23
>
> Slogans like "Zionism is White Supremacy" serve to erase the identities and experiences of the millions of Mizrahi Jews, myself included, whose ancestors never set foot in Europe, and for whom Israel provided a refuge after they were ethnically cleansed from their homes. —Michael '23[433]

The PSC rejected claims that criticism of Israel amounted to antisemitism. IAW organizer Michael A. Miccioli said, "They're trying to conflate criticism of the State of Israel with antisemitism. We have Jewish members in our organization. We had Jewish speakers come speak at our events, so I don't think that their response has been very convincing."[434] The presence of Jews in pro-Palestinian circles at Harvard would in time become an increasingly important defense against charges of antisemitism by pro-Israel activists at Harvard and beyond.

The *Crimson*'s Endorsement of BDS

After 2020, the *Crimson*'s stance on issues relating to the Israel and Palestine changed dramatically. Its previous measured criticism of Israeli policies and support for wide-ranging debate transformed into an unambiguous endorsement of BDS and Palestinian liberation.

In early 2020, the *Crimson* wrote in support of providing space for discussions of BDS on campus. The editors saw BDS as an imperfect tool but were sympathetic with the struggle for Palestinian rights. The *Crimson* editors wrote that circumstances in Israel and the Occupied Territories had changed since their predecessors came out against divestment strategies in 2002.[435] In the same editorial, the board condemned antisemitism while asserting that "blanket accusations of anti-Semitism towards BDS supporters are inappropriate and counterproductive." They acknowledged that comments at a HOOP event from BDS founder Omar Barghouti "could understandably make Jewish students uncomfortable." The board endorsed a boycott of products from West Bank settlements but said that portraying either side as wholly "evil" was unproductive.[436]

On April 29, 2022, the day after Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day, the *Crimson* went a step further and announced unambiguous support for Palestinian liberation and endorsement of the BDS movement against Israel. It stated that "support for Palestinian liberation is not antisemitic" and that the Board opposed antisemitism "in every form." However, the editorial endorsed BDS's calls for ending the occupation of territories captured in 1967, upholding Palestinian refugees' right of return, and ending what

[432] Ibid.
[433] "What The Wall Means To Me: Reflections on the Palestine Solidarity Committee's 'Wall of Resistance'," *Harvard Hillel.* https://hillel.harvard.edu/what-wall-means-me
[434] Apollon and Mui, "Palestine Solidarity Committee Hosts Annual Israeli Apartheid Week, Drawing Backlash from Harvard Hillel."
[435] The *Crimson* Editorial Board, "A Place for Discussing BDS on Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 28, 2020.
[436] Ibid.

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some BDS supporters called Israel's "regime of Jewish supremacy."[437] The board maintained that calls for divestment were not attempts to politicize institutions but rather to rectify past decisions to invest in companies complicit in human rights abuses towards Palestinians. It concluded that as a board, it was "proud to

finally lend our support to both Palestinian liberation and BDS."[438]

The *Crimson* editorial prompted widespread criticism from members of the Harvard community. At a meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), government department professor Eric M. Nelson '99 directly questioned President Lawrence S. Bacow about "the eruption of antisemitism on campus." Professor Nelson cited the *Crimson* editorial alongside the Israeli Apartheid Week mural, and a swastika symbol that had appeared in Currier House.[439] President Bacow declined to comment directly on the editorial itself in response and affirmed the *Crimson*'s editorial independence. Nonetheless, he said that "any suggestion of targeting or boycotting a particular group because of disagreements over the policies pursued by their governments is antithetical to what we stand for as a university."[440] Other faculty were much more outspoken. Psychology professor Steven A. Pinker and Lawrence H. Summers were among a group of high-profile academics who signed a faculty petition denouncing the editorial.[441] Alan Dershowitz argued that the editorial applied a "double standard" by singling out Israel while ignoring "the many Israeli children, women who have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists." He argued that publishing it risked normalizing growing antisemitism on college campuses.[442]

The editorial also received significant criticism from Harvard alumni. Ira E. Stoll '94, a former *Crimson* president, wrote that the editorial's call for a boycott of Israel singled it out from all other countries in a way that was "profoundly disappointing." He wrote that the editorial contradicted "every important Harvard, journalistic and human value."[443] Another letter signed by six alumni including former *Crimson* president Michael J. Abramowitz '85 criticized the editorial for endorsing a movement that was "not a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." They argued BDS aims to eliminate Israel entirely rather than achieve a two-state solution. The letter stated the editorial betrayed "its basic journalistic responsibility to ground arguments in facts."[444]

Hillel President and *Crimson* affiliate Natalie L. Kahn '23 also authored an op-ed saying she "stood with Israel." She argued that the editorial unfairly singled out Israel by not mentioning terrorist threats it faced, or peace offers rejected by Palestinian leadership. With regards to the BDS movement's intentions, she wrote:

> "BDS founders aim to eliminate Israel entirely. If you doubt me, ask its founders: "Definitely, most definitely, we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine," said co-founder Omar Barghouti, who also declared that Palestinians have a right to "resistance by any means, including armed resistance."[445]

[437] The *Crimson* Editorial Board, "In Support of Boycott, Divest, Sanctions and a Free Palestine," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 29, 2022.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Vivi E. Lu and Leah J. Teichholtz, "The *Crimson* Faces Backlash Over Editorial Endorsing BDS Movement," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 9, 2022.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid.
[442] Alan M. Dershowitz, "Letter to the Editor: Editorial Normalizes Growing Campus Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 6, 2022.
[443] Ira E. Stoll, "To the Editor: In Response to 'In Support of Boycott, Divest, Sanctions and a Free Palestine'," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 4, 2022.
[444] Michael J. Abramowitz et al., "To the Editor: From Six *Crimson* Alumni In Regard to BDS," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 9, 2022.
[445] Natalie L. Kahn, "I Am a *Crimson* Editor and I Stand with Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 4, 2022.

Following the publication of the editorial, some members of the newspaper's editorial board faced a significant amount of online doxxing, harassment, and threats.[446] As a result, the *Crimson*'s leadership "erase[ed] the names of Editorial editors who simply did not want to continue their affiliation at such high risk of harassment."[447] The University felt it was necessary to increase the Harvard Police's security presence to protect the newspaper's staff — "a sickening, jarring development."[448]

The editorial also received support. Daniel A. Swanson '74, a former president of the *Crimson,* applauded the editorial, saying it took "tremendous courage" and that he supported BDS.[449] Nadine S. Bahour '22 wrote that she was "proud to be at Harvard during this time" and felt that for the first time, Palestinians' voices were being heard on campus and that the *Crimson* board had offered "a defiant recognition of Israel's crimes against humanity."[450]

Over the course of the decade, discussions around Israel and Palestine at Harvard grew ever more polarized, confrontational, and divisive. Disagreements intensified around how to define antisemitism, determine what speech or tactics crossed lines, and weigh minority groups' perspectives on offense. As activism targeting Israel gained acceptance and the *Crimson* endorsed BDS, pro-Israel students felt further alienated and claims of antisemitism proliferated. By the late 2010s, campus debates had descended into personal attacks, with little consensus on basic facts or terms, demonstrating the challenges of navigating these complex issues in a way that is respectful to all communities.

The Progressive Jewish Alliance and Open Hillel

This decade also saw clashes within the Jewish community over the limits of debate at Harvard Hillel. Hillel had a history of internecine conflict. A Jewish student active at Hillel in this time period reported in an interview:

> Where the Israel stuff really felt intense, was actually inside Hillel. There was an extremely intense debate inside Hillel about Israel and about Israel politics … Hillel had an open listserv, you know, discussion listserv. And there would be these just endless … debates, the tone of which was just appalling, which were about American politics, but also about Israel politics, and … that's where I felt a tension about Israel politics was actually within the Hillel community, not between Jews and the outside … It was a bitter and unpleasant debate. I mean, people were like, angry at each other.[451]

Tensions rose in the 2010s around the Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA) and the Open Hillel campaign, which wanted Hillel to allow for a greater range of critical voices on Israel.[452] The PJA had been active at Hillel over a range of issues including LGBTQ+ inclusion, environmental justice, and labor rights. The group joined Hillel for Israel-related activities, such as the annual Israel Fest. PJA also spoke out alongside Hillel members when antisemitic events occurred on campus, as when a swastika appeared in 2013 on a Harvard building.[453]

Despite these areas of accord, in 2012 Hillel and PJA parted ways when PJA planned an event called "Jewish Voices Against the Occupation" to be co-sponsored with the Harvard College PSC. Due to

[446] The *Crimson* Editorial Board, "The Cost of Free Speech: On Wellesley, Palestine, and Student Journalist Solidarity," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 2, 2022. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/11/2/editorial-wellesley-bds/
[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Dan Swanson, "To the Editor: In Support of the BDS Editorial," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 6, 2022.
[450] Nadine S. Bahour, "I Am Palestinian and I Stand With The Crimson," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 11 2022.
[451] Interview with Shai Dromi, 7/16/2024.
[452] Yoav B.G. Schaefer, "Changing the Paradigm," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 12, 2013.
[453] Hana N. Rouse, "Swastika Graffiti Prompts Condemnation from Faith Leaders," *The Harvard Crimson* 2011. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/12/20/graffiti-swastika-building-hateful/

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pressure from Hillel International over the PSC's support for BDS, the event was not held at Hillel.[454] Hillel International's "Guidelines for Campus Israel Activities," created in 2010, stated that Hillel may not "partner with, house, or host organizations that … support boycott of, divestment from, or sanctions … against the State of Israel." As a result, during a visit to Harvard by Avraham Burg, former speaker of the Israeli Parliament, in 2013, students met him over dinner at Hillel but then walked over to Quincy House for Mr. Burg's speech, since the event was co-sponsored by the PSC, which endorsed BDS.[455]

In response to these incidents, the PJA and students from other colleges and universities launched the Open Hillel movement in 2013,[456] petitioning Hillel International to "abolish its Standards of Partnership and embrace political pluralism and open dialogue."[457] Open Hillel supporters saw the standards as limiting meaningful engagement and debate regarding Israel-Palestine. Swarthmore Hillel became the first "Open Hillel" in 2013, officially welcoming speakers who oppose Israel, going against Hillel International's rules.[458]

Debates around these issues continued at Harvard. In 2014, Ann H. Finkel '15, Nancy Ko '17 and Justin Z. Szasz '17 wrote an op-ed announcing an Open Hillel conference at Harvard to bring together 300 students from across the country "to create the open American Jewish community that we want to see." They felt Hillel's standards precluded "any meaningful engagement between Jewish and Palestinian student groups."[459] Conversely, Aaron J. Miller '18 argued in another 2014 op-ed that "Hillel is already open" and facilitates diverse programming and viewpoints. Miller felt that groups like PSC advocating BDS "pose existential threats to the state" and that Hillel has a "responsibility to maintain its integrity as a center for Jewish life."[460]

The 2020 formation of the Harvard Jewish Coalition for Peace continued the ongoing discussions around Israel and Palestine within Harvard Hillel. According to its statement, the coalition aimed to "build on a long history of Jewish anti-Zionism which teaches us that Jewish safety or liberation will never come at the expense of other people's lives and land."[461] The coalition said it hoped to offer "a space for those who agree with its mission and have felt 'alienated' by Harvard Hillel." Hillel President Rebecca S. Araten '22 emphasized Hillel's commitment to "inclusive, multi-vocal conversation about Israel" and representing "a diversity of voices and political opinions." Some Jewish students, like Caleb J. Esrig '20, criticized the timing

[454] Sasha Johnson-Freyd, Rachel J. Sandalow-Ash, and Emily S. Unger, "An Open Hillel," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 16, 2012; Giacomo Bagarella and Alex R. Shams, "Rising Palestinian Resistance," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 26, 2012.
[455] Laurie Goodstein, "Members of Jewish Student Group Test Permissible Discussion on Israel," *The New York Times*, December 28, 2013. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/29/us/members-of-jewish-student-group-test-permissible-discussion-on-israel.html. This came alongside more general calls to expand discussions on Israel within the Jewish community. For example, a 2013 op-ed by Yoav B.G. Schaefer '15 called for a "new paradigm" in supporting Israel among American Jews. Schaefer wrote that some progressive Jews were becoming more critical due to Israel's rightward shift and policies like settlement growth, which they saw as undermining peace efforts. The author argued the Jewish community should engage with such viewpoints rather than push them away. Schaefer, "Changing the Paradigm."
[456] "Press Release: PJA Launches Open Hillel Campaign," *Harvard College Progressive Jewish Alliance*, January 31, 2013. http://harvardpja.blogspot.com/2013/01/press-release-pja-launches-open-hillel.html
[457] Ann H. Finkel and Justin Z. Szasz, "The Time is Now: Open Hillel," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 10, 2014.
[458] Goodstein, "Members of Jewish Student Group Test Permissible Discussion on Israel." Swarthmore Hillel changed its name in 2015 to avoid a Hillel International lawsuit over its change of policy. Elizabeth Redden, "Not In Our Name," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 17, 2015. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/03/18/swarthmore-hillel-breaks-parent-organization-over-israel-issues
[459] Finkel and Szasz, "The Time is Now: Open Hillel."
[460] Aaron J. Miller, "Hillel's Already Open," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 15, 2014.
[461] Juliet E. Isselbacher and Amanda Y. Su, "Amid Criticism, Jewish Harvard Students Create Pro-Palestinian Rights Group," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 11 2020. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/2/11/jewish-coalition-for-peace/

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of the coalition's announcement over Hillel's open listserv on Shabbat and disagreed with their support for BDS, saying "BDS is not about human rights or social justice … It is about ending the Jewish state."[462]

Ever since the 1940s, Hillel has played an important community role for many Jewish students, but during the 2000s it struggled to accommodate the full diversity of political views around Israel among Harvard's Jewish students. A thesis based on interviews carried out in late 2022 and early 2023 found that approximately one-third of interviewees described feelings of discomfort at Hillel due to their beliefs related to Israel. Progressive Jewish students felt pressure in two directions — not to express pro-Israel views in progressive spaces on campus, but also to hold back from sharply criticizing Israel within Hillel. While Hillel claimed it represented a range of voices, some felt it had a disproportionately strong pro-Israel bent that left certain students feeling alienated from fully engaging in the community. Ongoing discussions within Hillel around events, partnerships with other groups, and responses to campus incidents revealed differences of opinion among students about the best approaches for building an inclusive space.

Heightened Challenges to Meaningful Dialogue

Discussions of Israel-Palestine at Harvard faced growing obstacles over the 2010s. Nonetheless, some initiatives and groups continued to seek opportunities for engagement, both over Israel-Palestine and, more generally, interfaith issues. Examples include:

- Sukkat Salaam: The intent of the organizers of Sukkat Salaam was to "foster interfaith understanding while celebrating the end of Ramadan … and the start of Sukkot." The event featured a kosher meal shared by students from Hillel and the Harvard Islamic Society in the sukkah structure and included "cultural performances, readings from religious texts, and discussion.[463] Over the years, the event evolved to incorporate more substantive dialogue based on passages from the Koran and Psalms and questions for discussion between students.[464]
- "here, without": Ethan Pierce '15 organized this year-long collaborative art project to explore narratives and tensions related to the region through workshops and exhibitions involving Harvard students and artists from the region. The goal was to foster discussion of contentious issues "in an 'alternative discursive space'" at Harvard. The final exhibition for the project was held at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts on May 4, 2015. It showcased works produced by the 35 participating "artist-residents" exploring life in the Middle East through varied creative media. English concentrator Josh Ascherman '17 contributed a mixed-media collage, and dancer Rossi Lamont Walter, Jr. '14 shared a poetic essay. Pierce saw the project as fostering "personal exploration and personal growth" for participants in addition to creating "an alternative discursive space at Harvard."[465]
- The Coalition at Harvard for Israel and Palestine (CHIP): This group was founded by Jacob Fortinsky '21 and others with the goal of promoting "a two-state solution, justice for Israelis and Palestinians, and a more nuanced discussion that acknowledges both sides' narratives on campus." CHIP is aligned with J Street U, the student organizing arm of J Street, a left-wing Israel advocacy organization.[466] Joshua B. Lipson '14 had previously advocated for J Street on campus after feeling pushed into being

[462] Isselbacher and Su, "Amid Criticism, Jewish Harvard Students Create Pro-Palestinian Rights Group."
[463] Jane Seo, "Students Celebrate Sukkat Salaam at Hillel," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 28, 2010.
[464] Katie R. Zavadski, "Muslims, Jews Eat in 'Shelter of Peace'," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 2011.
[465] Elizabeth Keto, "'here, without' Explores Israel-Palestine Relations Through Art." *The Harvard Crimson*, April 28, 2015. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/4/28/here-without/
[466] J Street U aims to provide "a home for students to hold nuanced views without compromising their pro-Israel values" by "educating, training, and mobilizing students" "J Street U," *J Street*. https://jstreet.org/j-street-u/. Hillel had previously held J Street events, but did not have a J Street U chapter. See Molly E. Kelly, "Hillel Event Bridges Israeli-Palestinian Gap," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 13, 2010.

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labeled an "Israel advocate" or "hasbarist [propagandist]-in-training" in his previous involvement with HSI. For Lipson, such labels did not fully capture a more nuanced and pragmatic views in support of a two-state solution, which drew him to J Street as a home for students who want to support Israel but also recognize Palestinian rights and interests.[467] Caleb Esrig '20 and Fortinsky published an op-ed in the *Crimson* expressing their belief that "the cause of peace requires this mutual understanding," while criticizing PSC-organized events like Israeli Apartheid Week that they felt failed to recognize the legitimacy of the other group's narrative. They wrote, "the cause of peace requires recognizing the Jewish narrative. It demands understanding that Israel is not an abstract idea but a real refuge."[468]

These initiatives encountered stiff headwinds. Over the 2010s, multiple outbursts of violence between Israel and the Hamas ruling regime in Gaza strengthened student support for the Palestinian cause. In the wake of violence in Gaza and Israel in Spring 2021, over 900 individuals and 92 student groups co-sponsored a statement calling on Harvard to divest from companies complicit in Israeli violence and settlements.[469] In a 2021 op-ed titled "Progressive, Except for Palestine," Asmer A. Safi '24 argued that the violence faced by Palestinians, including the killing of over 250 people in Gaza that spring, was the work of an "apartheid regime" practicing "systemic violence and dispossession" against Palestinians by Israel. Safi insisted that as students at Harvard with a duty to foster justice, "it is unjust of us to turn a blind eye towards incessant violence that has targeted innocents across generations."[470] In September 2023, as in previous years, the Convocation ceremony for first-year undergraduate students was disrupted by PSC members calling for Harvard to divest from and otherwise boycott Israel.

In this climate, attempts at conversation between the opposing sides on campus became increasingly challenging, as demonstrated by PSC's campaign against Israel Trek, which was discussed above. Trek leaders argued that they were supportive of dialogue with PSC and other pro-Palestinian groups on campus, but the PSC rejected the invitation.[471] Nadine Bahour of the PSC explained: "Israel Trek leaders refuse to admit that the reality on the ground is ethnic cleansing, is apartheid, and is directly killing people … These are some very basic understandings that need to be agreed on before any sort of conversation happens."[472] Conversations, in her view, were impossible when there was an unequal power dynamic at work: "I think when you have someone who served in the [IDF] military that was the oppressor when I was back home and I was standing on the checkpoint, that means that when they come here, we are not just two students."[473]

By 2023, some Jewish students had come to the conviction that conversations about Israel on campus led to a dead end and quickly descended into slogans. As a result, some Jewish students began to avoid engaging in discussions about Israel/Palestine in an attempt to prevent heated and divisive arguments.[474]

In the early 2020s, Israel/Palestine was inserted into controversies that ostensibly had nothing to do with it. In 2021, HDS and AAAS Professor of the Practice Cornel West claimed that the University denied his request for a tenured position due to his vocal criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians. He stated, "I do think the support of this critique of Israeli occupation is a plausible hypothesis, given what I know

[467] Joshua B. Lipson, "Why J Street?," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 8, 2013.
[468] Caleb J. Esrig and Jacob A. Fortinsky, "Silent No Longer," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 5, 2019. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/4/5/esrig-fortinsky-silent-no-longer/
[469] "Statement by Palestine Student Groups at Harvard University on Violence Against Palestinians," updated May 12, 2021. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NtNoEeGoHUFPhUJJxhw0EXKJTpC0n9fi_bXrx3YbVYU/edit
[470] Asmer A. Safi, "Progressive, Except for Palestine," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 24, 2021.
[471] Ibid
[472] Ibid
[473] Ibid
[474] Ibid, 73-77.

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about earlier candidates who have been denied."[475] (West had already been embroiled in accusations of antisemitism after calling President Summers a bully and "the Ariel Sharon of American higher education" in 2002).[476] Hillel Executive Director Jonah Steinberg criticized West as well as a student petition supporting West.[477] West defended his belief, saying that he "will not allow charges of anti-Semitism to somehow trump a serious discussion about the Israeli-Palestinian situation."[478] Jeremy Stepansky '21 — a member of the coalition that drafted the petition — defended the document and referred to what the coalition of West supporters understood to be the underlying issue at play: Harvard's treatment of Black scholars and academics who are critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians."[479]

The Cornel West affair, like the SodaStream and Sabra hummus controversies before it, demonstrate how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began to penetrate into the nooks and crannies of everyday life at Harvard, from the food and beverages consumed in the dining halls to the basic operational matters of hiring, tenure, and promotion. In this atmosphere, Jewish students felt growing unease, not only because of their religious or personal connections with Israel, but also because of the potential for critique of Israel to jump its banks and manifest itself as outright antisemitism.

Continuing Experiences of Antisemitism

Over the 2010s, Jewish students at Harvard experienced and reflected on antisemitism as they had not in previous decades. In 2012, three Jewish students wrote an opinion piece for the *Crimson* discussing the "history of persecution faced by Jews globally" and arguing that Israel provides "a haven for the most persecuted population in human history."[480] After the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, some at Harvard called for "more recognition of antisemitism on campus." David J. Benger argued in the *Crimson* that Harvard should formally adopt the definition of antisemitism endorsed by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).[481] In response to student concerns, Hillel hosted an event where Professor Jay Harris explored how antisemitism targeted Jews "from both political extremes." Undergraduate president Corey A. Gold '19 said it aimed to help understand antisemitism's rising prevalence.[482]

Additionally, the Harvard community experienced a wide range of antisemitic incidents ostensibly unrelated to Israel-Palestine:

- In 2010, the Westboro Baptist Church, known for anti-gay protests, planned to picket outside Harvard Hillel on December 3, to protest Jews as the killers of Jesus. In response, student groups organized a "Surprise Absurdity Protest"; around 200-300 counter-protesters gathered at Hillel with "whimsical" signs saying things like "God hates figs." The Westboro protesters ultimately stayed for only a short time. Lilli R. Margolin '11, Hillel's vice-president for community relations, said that the counter-protest "really outshone them."[483]

[475] Alex Koller and Taylor C. Peterman, "Harvard Hillel Executive Director Accuses Cornel West, Supporters of Furthering 'Anti-Jewish Conspiracy Theory' in Tenure Controversy," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 11 2021.
[476] Anemona Hartocollis, "Cornel West Is in a Fight With Harvard, Again," *The New York Times*, March 2, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/02/us/cornel-west-harvard-tenure.html
[477] Koller and Peterman, "Harvard Hillel Executive Director Accuses Cornel West, Supporters of Furthering 'Anti-Jewish Conspiracy Theory' in Tenure Controversy."
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid.
[480] Anna V. Gommerstadt, Yair Rosenberg, and Rachel E. Zax, "To Save The Jews," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 2, 2012.
[481] David J. Benger, "Recognize, Define, and Condemn Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 31 2018.
[482] Isabel L. Isselbacher, "In Wake of Pittsburgh Shooting, Jay Harris Speaks on Anti-Semitism in the U.S.," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 7, 2018.
[483] Kelly K. W. Lam, "Harvard Students Counter WBC with 'Absurdity'," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 6, 2010.

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- In late November 2012, flyers were distributed under doors at Harvard River Houses promoting a fake final club called "The Pigeon." The flyers contained the language "Jews need not apply" and "Coloreds OK." They also included a reference to the date-rape drug Rohypnol.[484]

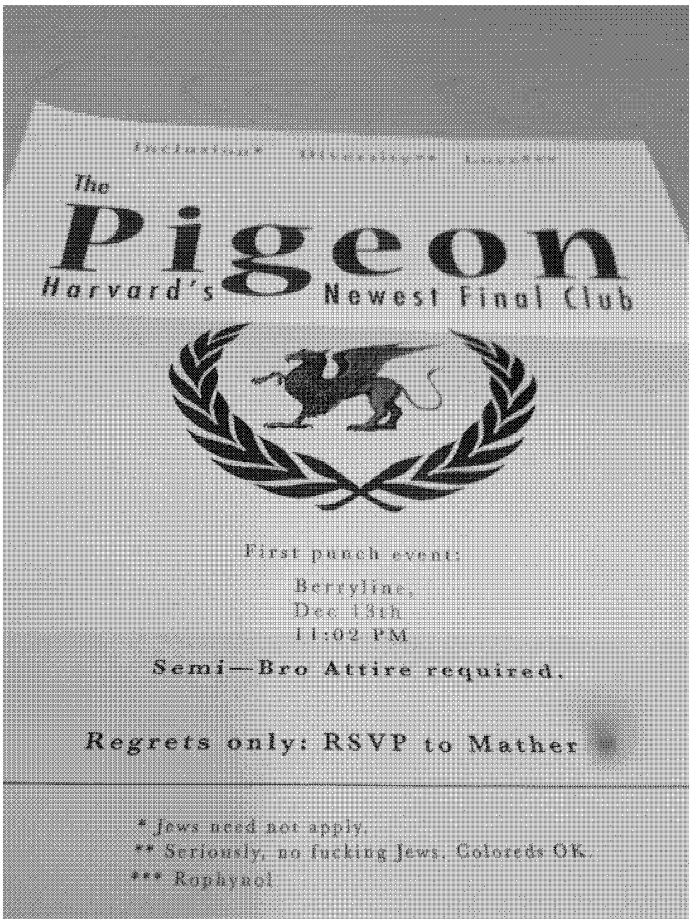

Figure 2. Flyer circulated to nine River Houses. The Harvard Crimson, *November 30, 2012.*

- In November 2013, the Harvard *Ichthus*, a Christian student journal, published a blog post implying Jews were responsible for Jesus' death. The post stated, "We, the Jews, collectively rejected God and hung Him up on a cross to die, and thus we deserved the punishments that were heaped on our heads over the last 2000 years." This blog post faced backlash from the Jewish community.[485]
- In November 2018, "deeply disturbing and offensive images" were found drawn on a public whiteboard in McKinlock Hall at Leverett House. A photo sent to the *Crimson* depicted faces labeled with racist terms alongside antisemitic comments referring to George Soros and using terms like "globalists" and "[migrant] caravan."[486]
- In the following month, a man toppled over a large menorah erected by Harvard Chabad on Cambridge Common.[487] In response to the incident, dozens of Harvard affiliates and local residents

[484] Rebecca D. Robbins, "Campus Reacts To Inflammatory Flyers," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 30, 2012.
[485] Anneli L. Tostar, "Harvard Christian Publication Apologizes for Blog Post Saying Jews 'Deserved' Punishments," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 24, 2013.
[486] Shera S. Avi-Yonah and Ruth A. Hailu, "Harvard Administrators Investigating Racist Drawings Found in Leverett House," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 20, 2018.
[487] Amanda Y. Su, "Harvard Hillel and Chabad to Increase Security Following Anti-Semitic Attacks," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 7, 2020.

gathered at the site to light candles on the menorah. Cambridge Mayor Marc C. McGovern spoke about the incident as "a time in which the fundamental principles of this country have been challenged." McGovern honored Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ron S. Suskind and others who had worked to restore the menorah after it was initially knocked over.[488]

- In May 2019, the Harvard *Lampoon* published a digitally manipulated image depicting Holocaust victim Anne Frank, leading students and the Harvard Hillel to condemn the image. The Lampoon leaders apologized.[489]
- HUPD investigated a July 2019 email containing racist and antisemitic content that was sent to Harvard students and President Bacow.[490]
- In 2021, two incidents of vandalism at Harvard Hillel were reported and investigated by HUPD.[491]
- In November 2022, members of the neo-Nazi group Nationalist Social Club 131 intimidated and threatened passers-by at Harvard Square.[492]

Traditional antisemitism based in bigotry, religious hatred, and economic resentment was a marginal, yet persistent and visible, issue at Harvard. Although probably unrelated to anger over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there was considerable risk for a blending of the two.

Conclusion

An interview-based senior thesis, using 2022-2023 data, found that a significant number of Jewish students experienced significant levels of discomfort, alienation, and in some cases discrimination in expressing their Jewish and pro-Israel identities at Harvard University. Specifically:

- 69% of the author's Harvard student interviewees claimed that at some point their Judaism or connections to Israel made them censor themselves in academic or social settings.
- 63% said that they or peers they knew had experienced antisemitism at Harvard. Incidents of antisemitism ranged from microaggressions and stereotyping to outright and intentional discrimination. This atmosphere led some student reticence to discuss or display their Jewish identity.
- 83% said they experienced anti-Zionism on campus. This rubric included employing the term "Zionist" as a slur rather than a neutral descriptor. Students felt that a double standard was being applied, as other countries such as China or Russia could be critiqued without suggesting that they should not exist as independent states. Pro-Israel students also expressed frustration at organizations such as the IOP and the *Crimson*, where they felt singled out and attacked.
- One-third felt uncomfortable expressing their views about Israel. This feeling was shared by students who spoke critically of Israel at Hillel as well as pro-Israel students elsewhere, as both groups feared negative social consequences for speaking their mind. Progressive students felt especially pressured not to express pro-Israel views.

[488] Shera S. Avi-Yonah, "After Menorah Knocked Down, Cambridge Residents Gather to Light Hanukkah Candles," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 7, 2018.
[489] Shera S. Avi-Yonah and Delano R. Franklin, "Students Criticize Harvard Lampoon for Anti-Semitic Image of Anne Frank," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 15, 2019.
[490] Molly C. McCafferty, "Harvard Police Investigating Racist, Anti-Semitic Email Sent to Students, Bacow," *The Harvard Crimson*, July 19, 2019.
[491] Alex Koller and Taylor C. Peterman, "HUPD Investigating Two Vandalism Incidents at Harvard Hillel Amid Nationwide Rise in Anti-Semitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 8, 2021.
[492] Sarah Girma and Brandon L. Kingdollar, "Neo-Nazi Group Threatens Residents in Harvard Square," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 16, 2022.

- Israeli students perceived significant discrimination, social alienation, and personal attacks due to their nationality.[493]

These findings align with several developments that this section has highlighted:

- By October 2023, discussions of Israel and Palestine at Harvard had become increasingly divisive. While some student initiatives continued seeking understanding through dialogue, assertive activism targeting Israeli activities on campus became more normative. With the growth of stronger pro-Palestinian position rejecting compromise, pro-Israel students reported feeling further alienated and silenced.
- A key development was the diminished ability to find common ground or acknowledge opposing perspectives. As anti-normalization stances discouraged engagement without preconditions, there was less opportunity and interest in discovering what speech or actions others found offensive and why that was the case.
- Jewish students described an increased willingness by classmates to discount their own testimony about offensive speech and to attribute claims of antisemitism to pro-Israel political motivations. Debates around antisemitism intensified, with multiple parties (Jewish and non-Jewish) feeling empowered to make claims about what is, is not, or should not be offensive to Jews. Dismissal of the salience of the impact of speech as opposed to its intent weakened the legitimacy of Jewish students' reports about their own experience. As Eric I. Kalimi '26 and Isaac Mansell '26 wrote at the end of 2023: "Even though we feel largely physically safe, we have noticed a disturbing, reductionist narrative at Harvard and beyond, which unilaterally invalidates the Jewish experience. We have witnessed the denial of genuine instances of antisemitism, paired with the subsequent invalidation of Jewish reactions and even emotions. This silencing is something that no group, least of all a historically marginalized group, should have to face."[494]

Progressive Jewish students faced particular challenges in finding a home for their views on campus. While some felt Hillel did not fully represent the diversity of political opinions around Israel among its members, progressive forums increasingly adopted stances rejecting compromise that left these students unable to fully express support for Israel's existence. As a result, progressive Jews reported pressure not to express pro-Israel views in progressive spaces, yet also faced obstacles bringing their critical position towards Israeli policies into Hillel. The lack of outlets accommodating Jews with views straddling the divide served to further isolate and alienate these students.

During the 15 years prior to October 7, 2023, the political atmosphere at Harvard became gradually but visibly more polarized. Over the same period, and particularly from the end of the 2010s, Israel/Palestine became a central issue of concern on campus — at least as great as America's political dysfunction and the global climate crisis, and certainly the greatest source of contention and controversy. The "Palestine exception" that received much attention within the Harvard community was predicated upon an "Israel exception" that of all states this one's actions, and perhaps its very existence, represented a distinctly grave injustice that must be reversed. All of these factors were in play before the Hamas massacre of October 7th and Israel's massive military response.

[493] Based on a qualitative methodology of 60 semi-structured interviews with 47 Harvard students. Goldfischer, "The Death of Discourse: Antisemitism at Harvard College."
[494] Eric I. Kalimi and Isaac Mansell, "The Disturbing Denial of Jewish Grief," *The Harvard Crimson* 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/12/29/kalimi-mansell-jewish-grief/

Conclusion

The history detailed in this report demonstrates that the current state of Jewish life at Harvard has roots reaching back to the 1980s. These enduring issues include the challenge of balancing rights of free expression with protection against hate speech and debates whether Jewish students' complaints of antisemitism should be accepted at face value or subject to critical scrutiny. One significant transformation over time has been a shift in Jewish students' concerns about their place in the Harvard community. In the early to mid-20th century, these concerns primarily centered on forms of unvarnished antisemitism such as discrimination and stereotyping. From the 1960s and 70s, older forms of antisemitism faded, the numbers of Jewish students at Harvard increased markedly, and Jews began to feel at home within the University. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, there were signs of new sources of tension — in part having to do with Israel, and in part linked with Black-Jewish relations, in the United States in general and at Harvard in particular. These tensions were mild and transient.

After 2000, Israel/Palestine became a central and contentious issue on campus. But in the early 2000s, as in previous decades, criticism of Israel centered around specific policies, pro-Palestinian students often called for a two-state solution that recognized Israel's right to exist, and students with varying viewpoints on the conflict sought out opportunities to learn about each other via respectful dialogue. Despite some rough patches, in general the experience of Jewish students at Harvard remained positive for a decade or more after the turn of the millennium.

The position of Jewish students became more difficult in the 2010s and 20s as encounters between students with differing perspectives regarding Israel/Palestinian have given way to statements and manifestos that reject compromise, favor boycotts of Israeli universities, and oppose "normalization" — that is, interacting publicly, or even privately, with Israelis or those who actively support the Jewish state. Debates about Israel have questioned Israel's legitimacy and identity. Challenging Israel's very existence or right to self-determination as a Jewish state has made many Jewish students feel that their own identities are under attack. Even before October 7th, Jewish students who identified both with Israel and with progressive political and social causes were made to feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in progressive spaces on campus if they did not embrace anti-Zionism. Also over the last several years, Harvard's Jewish community itself has become more divided, with a small but vocal minority defining itself in terms of support for Palestinian rights.

The Hamas massacre was a massively significant geopolitical event. At Harvard, it accelerated and intensified longstanding issues on campus, with Jewish students under ever greater challenges to navigate a landscape where their concerns about discrimination, hate speech, and communal harm are viewed with decreasing sympathy by many of their peers.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Context: Harvard Since October 7, 2023

This section narrates the events of the tumultuous period at Harvard from October 7, 2023, to the end of the Fall 2024 academic term. With the advantage of hindsight, we can better understand now which events of this period seem to have been the most damaging to our community and hypothesize why that was the case. That said, this narrative only partially captures the range of student experiences and perceptions of that period. Chapter 3 tells the story from the point of view shared with us by some of Harvard's Jewish students. Chapters 2 and 3 should therefore be read in tandem.

The National Context

Harvard does not dwell in a vacuum. Since October 7, 2023, its turmoil has resembled that experienced by dozens of other American colleges and universities. Disruptions on campuses, in turn, are reflections of broader tensions in American society. These tensions are evident in the prevalence of negative views about Jews. According to the Anti-Defamation League, almost a quarter of Americans subscribe to multiple negative views about Jews, and young people are even more likely than their elders to hold such views. It is not surprising then, though deeply regrettable, that antisemitism exists at Harvard and at other colleges and universities nationwide.[495]

In September 2024, a report prepared by Eitan Hersh and Dahlia Lyss for the Jim Joseph Foundation presented data from a series of surveys of American college students conducted between 2022 and 2024.[496] The data showed that in 2024, Jewish students reported experiencing targeted antisemitic language on social media (16%), in campus settings (11%), and in the classroom (8%). When asked if they deliberately avoid Jews, 4% of White students and almost twice as many Black, Hispanic, and Asian students answered in the affirmative. When classified by religion, 15% of Muslim students and 5% of Christian students reported avoiding Jews.

The surveys primarily examined non-Jewish and Jewish students' attitudes about Israel, particularly regarding support for its existence as a Jewish state. In late 2023, Jewish students were twice as likely as in Spring 2022 to say, in the words of Hersh and Lyss, "that they hide their Jewish identity to fit in on campus, that people judge them negatively for participating in Jewish activities, and that Jewish students broadly pay a social cost for supporting the existence of Israel as a Jewish state."[497] These perceptions registered in 2022 and 2023 appear to be corroborated by the 2024 survey, which found that 20% of non-Jewish students said they would not "want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state." Notably, the figure climbed to 40% among students who identify as "very liberal."[498]

According to the surveys, unwillingness to befriend Jewish students who identify with Israel varies meaningfully by not only political views but also race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. For instance, while 12% of White students indicated they would not wish to be friends with those who support Israel, almost twice as many Black students expressed this view. Similar percentages and disparities characterize the views of straight versus LGBTQ+ students. These figures are largely in keeping with broader trends in American public opinion. Research by Eitan Hersh and Laura Royden, for example, has

[495] *Antisemitic Attitudes in America 2024* (https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-2024).
[496] Eitan Hersh and Dahlia Lyss, *A Year of Campus Conflict and Growth: An Over-Time Study of the Impact of the Israel-Hamas War on U.S. College Students. A Report to the Jim Joseph Foundation* (September 2024).
[497] Ibid, 4. For Jewish students with "low" Jewish background the percentage climbed from 30 to 55.
[498] Ibid, 55-56.

shown that Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely than White Americans to hold antisemitic views. This trend does not, however, hold true for White Americans on the far right of the political spectrum, who hold even higher levels of antisemitism.[499]

The surveys reveal that most college students are not antisemitic, and to the extent they are, they reflect American public opinion in general. These findings, however, do not give any college or university a right to be complacent. Far from it. Colleges, particularly residential ones, are uniquely positioned to combat antisemitism because of their close-knit communities and intense contact between students and faculty who have a responsibility to teach and model values embracing pluralism and mutual respect. To the extent that Harvard has not taken strong and decisive action to combat antisemitism on campus, this report provides guidance as to what needs to be done. But no treatment plan can proceed without a full understanding of the gravity and extent of the illness.

There are two other national trends worth mentioning before proceeding to recent events at Harvard. The first is that while holding views hostile to Israel and holding antisemitic views can overlap, survey data suggests this to be relatively uncommon. A survey released in August 2024 by the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center at Brandeis University showed that about 15% of American university students held views hostile to Israel but do not hold negative views about Jews, whereas a similar percentage of students are antisemitic but do not oppose Israel's existence. Some 2% of students are both severely antisemitic and anti-Zionist.[500] These findings suggest that while antisemitism and anti-Zionism overlap, they are not identical. At Harvard, as elsewhere, some proponents of the Palestinian cause invoke this distinction to defend their freedom to engage in protest, including engaging in disruptions of campus life. Pro-Palestinian expression and action do not, however, need to be deemed antisemitic in order to be considered in violation of Harvard's stated values, policies, and norms (e.g., regarding the appropriate time, place, and manner of protest, and prohibiting discrimination against and bullying of individuals based on their national origin, religious faith, or political beliefs).

The second trend is the diversity of opinion within the Jewish community itself regarding Israel, suggesting that the conflation of Jewishness with support for Israel should not be taken for granted. The Hersh and Lyss surveys mentioned above show that between 10 and 18% of Jewish students nationwide feel that Israel should not be a Jewish state. Understanding the past year at Harvard involves considering not only the clash of views between students who identify as pro-Palestinian or pro-Israel, but also divisions within Harvard's Jewish community itself. Intolerance and exclusion can flourish in intra-communal as well as inter-communal spaces.

From October 7th to President Gay's Resignation

Early in the morning on Saturday, October 7, 2023, the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas guerrillas invaded Israel. They attacked agricultural settlements, army bases, and a music festival close to the Gaza-Israel border. Hamas guerrillas and other Palestinian militants killed almost 1,200 people and took around 250 hostages. The attack was designed to exploit social media, with Hamas fighters livestreaming gruesome and heart-wrenching videos as part of their military strategy. Differing reactions on the Harvard campus in the first days after the massacre set into motion patterns of behavior — particularly regarding discourse and activism — that continued for months thereafter.

[499] Eitan Hersh and Laura Royden, "Antisemitic Attitudes among Young Black and Hispanic Americans," *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*. 2023;8(1):105-123.
[500] Graham Wright, Shahar Hecht, Sasha Volodarsky, and Leonard Saxe, *Antisemitism on Campus. Understanding Hostility to Jews and Israel* (August 2024).

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As the horrific news hit, Harvard's campus witnessed outbursts of grief, horror, fear, anger, and frustration. More than 100 Jewish and Israeli Harvard students and faculty gathered at Harvard Hillel (and a few joined virtually through Zoom) on Saturday afternoon to mourn the victims of the attack and extend support to those directly affected. Harvard Hillel released a statement expressing the pain its members felt as they learned of the devastating attack and affirming Hillel's support for the people of Israel.[501] On Sunday, October 8, then-President Claudine Gay and then-Provost Alan Garber went to Harvard Hillel for dinner, and that same evening more than 200 Harvard affiliates, including President Gay, Provost Garber, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Hopi Hoekstra, and Dean of Harvard College Rakesh Khurana, joined together for a candlelit vigil.[502]

At Cabot House, one of Harvard College's undergraduate residences, a group of Jewish students organized an impromptu gathering. There, a moment of connection and mutual sympathy was shared with a Palestinian student. A quite different reaction, no doubt reflecting anger and indignation, came from the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC), which on October 7, 2023 released a statement that held "the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence … The apartheid regime is the only one to blame … We call on the Harvard community to take action to stop the ongoing annihilation of Palestinians."[503] The PSC's statement was originally co-signed by 33 other Harvard student organizations, but the number of students represented by those organizations, and who consented to this message being released on their behalf, is unknown. Many student members of these organizations would later say they had not been consulted on the statement.

The PSC's statement — and the student organizations that endorsed it — drew intense criticism from within Harvard and beyond, including politicians. It caught the Jewish community, both at Harvard and elsewhere, at a moment of intense emotional vulnerability, as gruesome stories of violence filled their social media feeds in a way that appeared to intentionally echo the great tragedies of Jewish history, from pogroms in *fin de siècle* Russia to the Holocaust. Over 4,000 Harvard affiliates, including over 500 faculty members, signed on to a statement that condemned the attacks, denounced the PSC's statement, and demanded that the organizations that signed onto the statement revoke their signatures.[504] The Joint Statement was first circulated on Monday, October 9 and officially released on Tuesday, October 10. Amid national backlash, the PSC's original statement was updated on Tuesday afternoon to remove the names of the signatory organizations.[505] Before this, at least five of the original 34 student organizations had withdrawn their endorsements of the statement and released public apologies via Instagram.

Despite the removal of the signatories of the PSC's statement, individuals and websites continued to publish the names of affiliated students, sharing some students' personal information and social media profiles online, leading to targeting and doxxing of students.[506] Bill Ackman '88, for example, reposted Ian Bremmer's X post with a list of student organizations that signed onto the PSC's October 7, 2023

[501] Harvard Hillel (@harvardhillel), "The following statement was drafted and signed by many before University President Claudine Gay released a statement condemning Hamas's terror attacks …", October 10, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/p/CyO8daRuqRL/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA percent3D

[502] Joyce E. Kim, "Harvard Affiliates Mourn Israeli Victims of Hamas Attacks at Candlelit Vigil," *The Harvard Crimson,* October 10, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/10/hillel-vigil-israel/

[503] J. Sellers Hill and Nia L. Orakwue, "Harvard Student Groups Face Intense Backlash for Statement Calling Israel 'Entirely Responsible' for Hamas Attack," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 10, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/10/psc-statement-backlash/

[504] Google Docs, "Joint Statement on War in Israel," Accessed March 6, 2025. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Fg1FCm6nuIrzUSM00bUx8D6TUfjFyYTVwoGxWOXLC24/edit?pli=1 percent22+ percent5C&tab=t.0&usp=embed_facebook

[505] Ibid.

[506] "Harvard Students Doxxed, Groups Withdraw Signatures Amid Continued Backlash to Israel Statement," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 11, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/11/student-groups-withdraw-israel-statement/

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statement, expressing hope that employers would take note of these organizations and ensure that they do not hire any of the students involved with these organizations in the future.[507] By the evening of Tuesday, October 10, at least four websites had published the list of organizations that signed onto the PSC's statement as well as personal information of affiliated students.[508] A billboard truck sponsored by Accuracy in Media (AIM) drove around Harvard Square, close to campus, on Wednesday, October 11 and Thursday, October 12.[509] The truck displayed names and photos of students alleged to be connected to the PSC's statement under the title "Harvard's Leading Antisemites." Harvard University Executive Vice President Meredith Weenick '90 condemned the doxxing, and out of concern for student safety, University officials closed overnight public access to Harvard Yard between Thursday, October 12 and Monday, October 16.

The PSC, together with another organization, Harvard Graduate Students 4 Palestine (GS4P), responded to the backlash it received from its October 7, 2023 statement and the subsequent doxxing of its members via an Instagram statement on October 11 that "the PSC staunchly opposes all violence against all innocent life and laments all human suffering." Nonetheless, the PSC denounced what it called a "hierarchy of suffering," which it alleged privileged the deaths of Israelis over those of Palestinians and condemned Israeli air strikes that had already killed 1,000 Palestinians over just a few days.

The week following the attacks, University leadership tried to manage the campus turmoil by issuing a series of statements.[510] According to a published report of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the US House of Representatives, there was considerable disarray, confusion, and disagreement regarding how the first statement should be worded.[511] The version ultimately released did not specifically condemn Hamas or the PSC's original statement, and it came a full two days after the massacre, thereby angering many Harvard affiliates and alumni, as well as some politicians. President Gay released a second, more strongly worded, statement on the morning of Tuesday, October 10, but the following day, the Harvard Club of Israel addressed a letter to President Gay, condemning the Harvard administration's lackluster response to the October 7th attacks and ensuing events on campus.[512] "Anything less than full support for Israel's right to defend itself and its citizens and unequivocal denunciation of this terrorism is unacceptable." The letter went on to compare the University's slow response to October 7th to its strong and immediate reaction to other geopolitical events, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and a range of significant events in the US, such as the killing of George Floyd. In response to these and other criticisms, President Gay released yet another message — this time in video

[507] Ackman, Bill (@BillAckman), "I have been asked by a number of CEOs if @harvard would release a list of the members of each of the Harvard organizations that have issued the letter assigning sole responsibility for Hamas' heinous acts to Israel, so as to insure that none of us inadvertently hire any of their members…," X, October 10, 2023, 1:00PM. https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1711788747086233661?ref_src=twsrc percent5Etfw percent7Ctwcamp percent5Etweetembed percent7Ctwterm percent5E1711788747086233661 percent7Ctwgr percent5E2f95f12f91c598cd9bdfd0f4ca100e8e2c2cf3e7 percent7Ctwcon percent5Es1_&ref

[508] "As Students Face Retaliation for Israel Statement, a 'Doxxing Truck' Displaying Students' Faces Comes to Harvard's Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 12, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/12/doxxing-truck-students-israel-statement/

[509] Ibid.

[510] President, Harvard University. "War in the Middle East," Harvard University President, October 9, 2023. https://www.harvard.edu/president/news-gay/2023/war-in-the-middle-east/

[511] https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/10.30.24_committee_on_education_and_the_workforce_republican_staff_report_-_antisemitism_on_college_campuses_exposed.pdf

[512] "Israeli Harvard Alumni Slam University Over Response to Hamas Attack," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 20, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/20/israel-harvard-alumni-backlash/

form — on Thursday, October 12.[513,514] She affirmed the University's rejection of terrorism, hate, and harassment as well as its commitment to free speech, even when many may consider the contents of such speech morally problematic.

To some extent, it could be argued, Harvard inadvertently created a trap for itself. Throughout the 2010s, the University and its senior leaders had commented on certain matters of national and global importance, fostering an expectation among some segments of the Harvard community that the University would champion their specific concerns on such matters, whatever they might be. Now, the University was thrust into the spotlight as a result of the PSC's October 7, 2023 statement, and it would be impossible to satisfy all stakeholders.

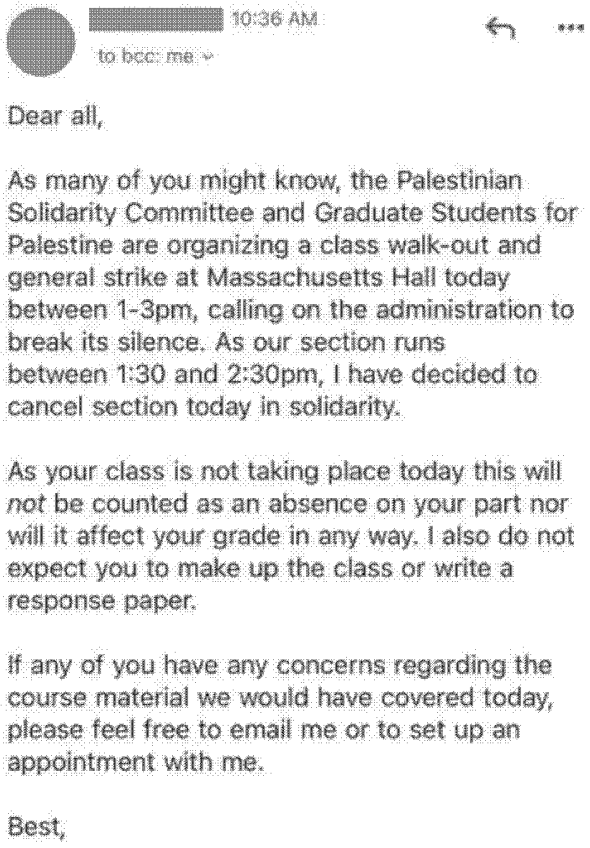
On Friday, October 13, a group of Republican lawmakers, all Harvard alumni, sent a letter to President Gay, criticizing the University's response to the PSC's statement and writing that Gay's administration "intentionally foster[s] an environment that allows rampant and dangerous antisemitism."[515] Ten days later, former Maryland Governor Larry Hogan announced in an open letter to President Gay that he would withdraw from two Harvard fellowships — one at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) and the other at the Harvard T.H. Chan School for Public Health — largely due to the rise of "dangerous antisemitism on campus."[516] And on the following Monday, the Wexner Foundation announced in a letter to Harvard's Board of Overseers its intention to end its 34-year relationship with Harvard and HKS due to the University's "dismal failure" in responding to and condemning the PSC's statement.[517]

Reactions from Harvard's Schools ranged from the perfunctory to the pointed. The latter characterizes a statement issued on October 11 by five administrators and one visiting professor all associated with Harvard Divinity School's (HDS) Religion and Public Life program (RPL). In RPL's newsletter, these individuals encouraged readers to "challenge single story narratives that justify vengeance and retaliation"[518] They went on to say, "Start with the rockets fired into Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and not with the illegal occupation of Palestinian land by Israel and the blockade of Gaza since 2007, and you have an entirely different story." The HDS dean at the time seemed to distance himself from this statement, clarifying that the six individuals "do not speak for their program, for HDS, or for its wider community."

Meanwhile, pro-Palestinian activism picked up quickly in the days following the massacre. On October 14, the PSC and GS4P jointly organized a protest against Israel's anticipated ground invasion of Gaza.[519] More than 1,000 demonstrators were reported to have attended the protest, which was held on the steps of

[513] "Harvard President Claudine Gay Fiercely Condemns Hamas, Rejects Calls to Punish Students for Israel Statement," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 13, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/13/gay-video-address/
[514] President, Harvard University, "Our Choices," Harvard University President, October 12, 2023. https://www.harvard.edu/president/news-gay/2023/our-choices/
[515] "GOP Harvard Alums Condemn Response to PSC Statement as 'Too Little, Too Late' in Letter to President Gay," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 2023.
[516] "Larry Hogan Withdraws From Two Harvard Fellowships, Citing 'Dangerous Anti-Semitism' on Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 24, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/24/hogan-withdraws-fellowships/
[517] "Wexner Foundation Cuts Ties With Harvard After 'Dismal Failure' To Condemn Hamas," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 17, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/17/wexner-cuts-ties-harvard/
[518] "Dean Distances Harvard Divinity School From Israel Statement Issued by Religion and Public Life Program Leaders," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 13, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/13/hds-distances-rpl-statement-israel-palestine/
[519] "More Than 1,000 Rally on Harvard's Campus to 'Free Palestine' Ahead of Expected Ground Invasion of Gaza," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 15, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/15/gaza-protest-harvard/

Widener Library.[520] In isolated cases, we heard, instructors excused students from class to join protests like this one that became a frequent occurrence:



10:36 AM

to bcc: me

Dear all,

As many of you might know, the Palestinian Solidarity Committee and Graduate Students for Palestine are organizing a class walk-out and general strike at Massachusetts Hall today between 1-3pm, calling on the administration to break its silence. As our section runs between 1:30 and 2:30pm, I have decided to cancel section today in solidarity.

As your class is not taking place today this will *not* be counted as an absence on your part nor will it affect your grade in any way. I also do not expect you to make up the class or write a response paper.

If any of you have any concerns regarding the course material we would have covered today, please feel free to email me or to set up an appointment with me.

Best,

Text message from an instructor to students.
(Image submitted anonymously and redacted to protect privacy.)

At the protest on October 14 a student analogized the Black Freedom Movement to the fight for Palestinian liberation, while another student representing the African and African American Resistance Organization (AFRO) claimed, according to the *Crimson*, that the group is "in full support of Palestine resistance against the settler colonial apartheid regime that is Israel."[521] (The PSC later distanced itself from that latter student's comments and clarified that "that specific member … does not speak for the PSC.")

Four days later, the PSC and GS4P jointly organized a protest and die-in, marching through Harvard Square to the Harvard Business School (HBS) campus in response to a blast at the al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza that was widely, yet incorrectly, attributed to Israel.[522] This protest became notorious when an Israeli Jewish student attempted to film the attendees. Protesters tried to remove the man, yelling "shame" as he left the scene. Videos of this incident, which appear to show the student being pushed, were widely circulated on social media and cited as evidence of antisemitism on Harvard's campus.[523]

[520] Ibid.
[521] Ibid.
[522] "Hundreds of Harvard Protesters Stage 'Die-In' to Demand End to Violence Following Gaza Hospital Blast," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 19, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/19/harvard-die-in-palestine/
[523] NBC Boston, "VIDEO: Minor Clash at pro-Gaza Harvard Die-In," Accessed March 7, 2025. https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/video-minor-clash-at-pro-gaza-harvard-die-in/3163853/

Two graduate student attendees were charged with assault in connection with the incident: a second-year HDS student who was also a proctor at Harvard College — a resident graduate student or administrator charged with "create[ing] an academic and social community" in first-year dorms — and a second-year student at HLS.[524] Many Harvard affiliates demanded that the University remove the former student from his position as a proctor due to his involvement in the incident, and the University relieved him from proctorial duties on November 8.[525,526] The Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine (HFSJP) responded with an open letter expressing its dismay that the University had strayed from its stated commitment to valuing "the dignity of each person."[527]

The Israeli military response to the October 7th attacks, which would later devastate Gaza with tens of thousands killed and more than a million people displaced, further inflamed passions on campus, and pro-Palestinian protests on campus swiftly became more frequent and vocal.

On Thursday, October 19, an estimated 500 Harvard affiliates and individuals not affiliated with Harvard participated in a walkout, march, and protest, which made its way through the Science Center, through HLS's campus, and then through Harvard Square to HKS's campus.[528] According to reports, some protesters used noisemakers, disrupting classes in session, and briefly halted traffic in Harvard Square.[529] The protest, jointly organized by the PSC and GS4P, targeted Harvard's financial ties to Israel.

A week later, on Friday, October 27, the PSC and GS4P organized another die-in, this time outside of Memorial Hall, presumably hoping to catch visiting parents on campus for Family Weekend.[530] The protest included a march from HLS through Science Center Plaza and a demonstration demanding, according to the *Crimson*, that University administration do more to support Palestinians on campus. On Thursday, November 2, the PSC and GS4P held a sit-in to mourn Palestinian lives lost in the Israel-Hamas war and to protest the bombing of the Jabalia Refugee Camp the previous week. The PSC and GS4P then organized a "week of visibility" during the week of November 13 to mourn those killed in the Israel-Hamas war. Hundreds of Harvard affiliates attended that week's events.[531]

Perhaps the most notable event of the week was the occupation of University Hall — situated in the heart of Harvard Yard and housing the offices of the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, including the Dean of Harvard College — by nine students affiliated with Jews for Palestine, an student organization that is not recognized by Harvard College's Dean of Students Office and receives neither funding nor access to University space.[532] According to the *Crimson*, the students demanded that Harvard's

[524] "Proctors | Harvard College Dean of Students Office," Accessed March 7, 2025. https://dso.college.harvard.edu/office/proctors#:~:text=Proctors percent20are percent20graduate percent20students percent20and,with percent20your percent20adjustment percent20to percent20Harvard

[525] "Harvard Chabad President Rabbi Zarchi Calls on University to De-Recognize Palestine Solidarity Committee," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 9, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/9/rabbi-zarchi-psc-statement/

[526] "Harvard Proctor Indefinitely Relieved of Duties Following Confrontation at Protest," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 11, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/11/thayer-proctor-relief-of-duties/

[527] Palestine, Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in "Statement in Support of Harvard Student Elom Tettey-Tamaklo," *Medium* (blog), December 5, 2023. https://medium.com/@harvardfsjp/statement-in-support-of-harvard-student-elom-tettey-tamaklo-cdb164760bf3

[528] "Hundreds Disrupt Classes, March Through Harvard Law School, Kennedy School in Support of Palestine," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 20, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/20/psc-protest-hls-hks/

[529] Ibid.

[530] "Harvard Students Stage Die-In During Family Weekend, Alleging Lack of Support for Palestinian Students," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 31, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/31/palestine-protest-die-in/

[531] "Harvard Student Groups Hold Visibility Week for Thousands of Deaths in Gaza," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 13, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/13/palestine-visibility-week/

[532] "University Hall Occupied By Harvard Jews For Palestine, Group Demanding Ceasefire in Israel-Hamas War," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 17, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/17/university-hall-occupation-jfp/

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administration publicly call for a ceasefire in Gaza, issue a statement that anti-Zionism and antisemitism are not the same, and create a committee to investigate Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism, and suppression of pro-Palestinian speech on campus. One of the students said in a speech: "What did we come here for? We came here to get fucking arrested or Ad-Boarded if our demands weren't met." The students remained in the building overnight, and the Faculty Dean of Adams House — faculty deans in Harvard College are leaders of the residential Houses — brought them burritos for dinner.[533]

Another "week of action" organized by activists in late November included rallies, a class walkout and ,we heard, disrupted classes.[534] During this week, the student co-founder of the African and African American Resistance Organization (AFRO), was reported to have led chants of "Long live Palestine; long live the intifada; intifada, intifada; globalize the intifada."[535]

Many Jewish students felt doubly traumatized — first by the massacre of Israelis on October 7th and subsequently by the rapid transformation of the Harvard campus, especially after Israel's military response to the massacre, into what appeared to be a space for the unfettered expression of pro-Palestinian solidarity and rage at Israel — a rage that many Jewish and especially Israeli students felt was directed against them as well. In response to the October 7th attacks, Harvard Hillel and Harvard Chabad jointly organized a vigil on Sunday, October 15, attended by more than 1000 people, to mourn the victims of the attacks and stand in solidarity with Israel.[536] One speaker responded to the PSC and GS4P protest held the prior day, asking "Are they [the pro-Palestinian organizations] calling for the eradication of the State of Israel? … Are they calling for the killing of my family?" Harvard Hillel and Harvard Chabad again joined efforts to assemble a Shabbat table in Harvard Yard, with 240 seats, each one a tribute to the 240 people kidnapped by Hamas on October 7th.[537]

The distance between Israel and Harvard, already truncated by the scope and barbarity of the killings on October 7th, was made even smaller by the insecurity that many Jewish students began to feel within the confines of the campus. A major source of concern was the messaging app Sidechat, an online platform primarily used by college students where users can anonymously post and engage in discussions within their specific School forum. Cruel and hateful posts regarding Israel, Jews, and the Holocaust appeared on the Harvard Sidechat forum in the days and weeks following October 7th and again after President Gay's resignation in January — discussed in more detail below — when Sidechat posts from some student supporters of President Gay blamed the Jewish community for her departure.

This sense of insecurity was further heightened by the slogans chanted by pro-Palestinian demonstrators on Harvard's campus. Some pro-Palestinian students insisted that one of the most popular chants, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," referred to a land in which both peoples, Israeli and Palestinian, would be free and equal. Many Jewish and Israeli students were skeptical, however, and we heard that even more explicit variations of the slogan were employed that substituted the word "Arab" for "free." These variations, along with the popular chant "Globalize the intifada," were widely perceived as antisemitic.

Tensions between Jewish Harvard affiliates with attachments to Israel and Harvard affiliates who were supporters of the Palestinian cause quickly escalated. At the October 15 vigil mentioned above, the Harvard Chabad Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi condemned what he termed "animalistic" behavior though, as the

[533] Ibid.
[534] "Harvard Pro-Palestine Groups Organize 'Week of Action,' Drawing Criticism for 'Intifada' Chants," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 4, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/12/4/pro-palestine-week-of-action/
[535] Ibid.
[536] "At Sunday Vigil, More Than 1,000 Mourn Victims of Hamas Attacks, Stand in Solidarity with Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 16, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/16/hillel-israel-vigil/
[537] "Harvard Hillel, Chabad Students Install 200-Foot Shabbat Table to Represent Hundreds Held Hostage by Hamas," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 7, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/7/shabbat-tribute-hillel-chabad/

Crimson noted, it was unclear whether he was referring to the October 7th attacks or the individuals he viewed as justifying them. The PSC interpreted his remarks as targeting them and characterized the rabbi's speech as "anti-Palestinian racism," demanding that the University hold him accountable.[538] In response, the rabbi emailed Chabad affiliates, calling for the University to remove the PSC from the list of officially recognized student organizations.[539]

In mid-November, the labor union for Harvard graduate students voted to endorse the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel and call for a ceasefire in Gaza.[540] This decision ignited outrage among many Jewish and Israeli union members, leading 33 graduate students to resign in protest.[541] The University found itself caught in the crossfire, facing pressure from opposing student factions, outside advocacy groups, elected politicians, and prominent public figures like former Harvard president Larry Summers and alumnus Bill Ackman '88.

In apparent response to these multiple pressures, President Gay announced the formation of an advisory group on October 27.[542] This group, officially called the Antisemitism Advisory Group (not to be confused with our Task Force, which was formed later by President Gay's successor) was initially composed of eight members. Their mandate was to work closely with President Gay to develop "a robust strategy for confronting antisemitism on campus." Less than two weeks later, President Gay announced that, following the advisory group's recommendation, the University would implement antisemitism education and training for Harvard affiliates.

President Gay's statement also condemned phrases frequently employed by pro-Palestinian demonstrators, including "from the river to the sea." This condemnation drew swift and sharp backlash from a segment of the Harvard community, with critics — including some Jewish students and faculty — arguing that it was an unwarranted attack on free speech and a distraction from the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

President Gay's already difficult position worsened dramatically on Tuesday, December 5, when she and the presidents of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania testified on Capitol Hill before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Congresswoman Elise Stefanik '06, among others, aggressively questioned President Gay, pushing her to state definitively whether a call to commit genocide against Jews violated Harvard's code of conduct. What seemed to many like President Gay's strained efforts to avoid providing a clear yes or no answer ignited a firestorm of criticism nationwide. Within days, the US House of Representatives launched an investigation into antisemitism at Harvard, and the US House of Representatives passed a bipartisan resolution calling for Gay's resignation.[543] Although many on the Harvard faculty continued to express confidence in her leadership, the crisis continued to escalate and evolve. President Gay resigned in early January, less than a month after her congressional testimony.

[538] "Harvard Chabad President Rabbi Zarchi Calls on University to De-Recognize Palestine Solidarity Committee," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 9, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/9/rabbi-zarchi-psc-statement/
[539] Ibid.
[540] "Harvard Grad Union Endorses BDS and Calls for Ceasefire, Drawing Member," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 13, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/13/hgsu-bds-statement/
[541] "Dozens Resign from Harvard Grad Union Over Response to Hamas Attacks and Jewish, Israeli Student Concerns," *The Harvard Crimson*, November 21, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/11/21/hgsu-members-resign-bds/
[542] "Harvard President Gay Forms Advisory Group to Combat Antisemitism on Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 30, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/30/gay-hillel-speech/
[543] "House Passes Bipartisan Resolution Calling for Harvard President Claudine Gay's Resignation," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 14, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/12/14/house-gay-resolution-passes/

Winter 2024: Reduced But Still Simmering Tensions

In the chaotic months after October 7th, the Harvard administration faced an unprecedented crisis fueled by a confluence of student activism, intensive media attention, scrutiny from Washington, and complaints from alumni and major donors. For example, both Len Blavatnik and Ken Griffin '89, who had previously donated $200 million and $300 million respectively, placed future donations on hold out of concerns about antisemitism at their alma mater. President Gay's resignation did little to quell the storm.[544]

In January 2024, a Harvard graduate student and an organization called Students Against Antisemitism filed a lawsuit alleging that the University had failed to protect Jewish students from antisemitic intimidation, threats, and bullying.[545] This development coincided with a shift in pro-Palestinian activism on campus. Although large-scale outdoor demonstrations subsided somewhat during the winter months, protests regularly continued, with a change in focus. Instead of primarily calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, activists began demanding that Harvard divest from Israeli companies linked with the Occupied Territories and sever institutional connections with Israeli universities.

Some pro-Palestinian groups, as we understand it, began holding protests on the steps of Widener Library without formal permission. These demonstrations, sometimes organized in collaboration with both officially recognized and unrecognized student organizations, seemingly violated Harvard policies. We were told these protests disturbed many Jewish students. However, the University administration and police seemed reluctant to intervene once a demonstration was underway, apparently fearing escalation into physical violence.

Over the winter, the University implemented a variety of efforts to manage the crisis. In January 2024, it strengthened and clarified its policies on protest and dissent through a new statement.[546] Also in January, the Harvard administration engaged with Sidechat, which agreed to restrict platform access to Harvard undergraduate students, as it had been inadvertently opened to anyone with a harvard.edu email address.[547]

During this period, various centers and programs at Harvard hosted events related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While units like the Belfer Center at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences made efforts to present a range of perspectives through high-quality speakers and balanced panels, others garnered significant criticism.

Specifically, the Religion and Public Life (RPL) program at Harvard Divinity School (HDS) and the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health faced accusations of presenting one-sided narratives. For instance, critics pointed to the RPL program events at HDS featuring a pro-Palestinian activist paired with a Jewish activist who identified as anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian. Similarly, they noted that the Palestine Program at the Harvard Chan School organized events featuring pro-Palestinian activists, with limited inclusion of perspectives from Jewish individuals, regardless of their stance on Zionism. As detailed in Chapter 4, some felt that the Palestine Program's events also often characterized Israeli actions as intentionally targeting Gaza's healthcare system, while neglecting to adequately address the broader context of the conflict.

[544] "Billionaire Megadonor Ken Griffin Says He Will Stop Donations to Harvard," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 31, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/31/ken-griffin-pausing-harvard-donations/

[545] "Jewish Students Sue Harvard University, Allege 'Severe' Antisemitism on Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 12, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/12/harvard-lawsuit-campus-antisemitism/

[546] "Senior Harvard Officials Clarify Protest Guidelines as Students Return to Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 20, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/20/protest-guidelines-university-statement/

[547] "Harvard Asks Sidechat to Enforce Content Moderation as Jewish Students Decry 'Vicious' Antisemitism," *The Harvard Crimson*, January 22, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/1/22/sidechat-antisemitism-enforce-moderation/

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The events hosted by the RPL program and the Palestine Program sparked strong reactions among some members of the Harvard community. Many Jewish and non-Jewish affiliates told us they found much of the event content hateful and lodged numerous complaints with various Harvard officials. Several Jewish students at the home Schools of these programs related to us that their experience with these programs contributed to their feeling that the Schools harbored a systematic bias against them.

Many pro-Palestinian students at Harvard, including some Jewish students, maintained that their opposition to Israel was distinct from antisemitism. However, incidents on campus raised concerns about the potential for anti-Israel sentiment to spill over into hostility towards Jews. Following winter break, posters displayed in Harvard Yard depicting Israeli hostages were defaced — we do not know by whom, or what, if any, connection they had with Harvard — with offensive imagery and statements such as "Israel did 9/11."[548]

Later, on Monday, February 19, the PSC and AFRO posted a classic antisemitic cartoon on their Instagram pages. Seeking to link the causes of Black and Palestinian liberation, they used a cartoon from a 1967 flyer originally published by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a major force in Black American activism at the time. The flyer included a drawing that, in the words of the *Los Angeles Times* "shows a white hand, marked with a dollar sign inside a Star of David, tightening nooses around the necks of a Black man [Muhammad Ali] and an Arab man [Gamal Abdel Nasser]."[549] Adding to the controversy, the image was subsequently reposted on Instagram by Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine.

Michael Fischbach, an expert on the Black Power movement's relationship with the Palestinian cause, told the *Los Angeles Times* that "by using symbols like dollar signs and Stars of David, one can well imagine that they were going to get a hostile reaction … It doesn't take a lot of thought to see that, whatever you meant, this is really going to rankle people." The image indeed sparked outrage among numerous Jewish student groups and others in the Harvard community, prompting then-Interim President Alan Garber to issue a clear statement of condemnation. The Harvard groups responsible subsequently deleted the image from their social media accounts, issuing an apology for the offense caused. However, their decision to replace it with a picture of Stokely Carmichael (later, Kwame Ture), a prominent figure in the Black Power movement known for his sharp opposition to Israel, including his statement that "the only good Zionist is a dead Zionist," fueled further controversy.

Even amidst the heightened tensions of February, Harvard students made tentative attempts to restore a sense of campus community reminiscent of earlier years. One such effort involved a student-organized "Unity Dinner" at one of the residential Houses, featuring kosher and halal food alongside speeches from both a Muslim chaplain and a Hillel rabbi. While the dinner proceeded smoothly, it nonetheless attracted a demonstration by pro-Palestinian students who distributed pamphlets and, we understand, appeared intent on disrupting the gathering.

Over the following two months, a climate of low-intensity protest and disruption persisted on campus. At the First-Year Faculty Dinner — a semesterly event in Annenberg Hall designed to foster connections between first-year students and faculty members — on February 28, 2024, protesters affiliated with the PSC unfurled banners. According to the organization's Instagram, the banners listed the names of Palestinians who had died in Gaza, and the protesters urged faculty to address what they described as "the

[548] "Anonymous Posters, Vandalism Spur Tensions on Harvard's Campus," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 14, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/2/14/anonymous-posters-campus-tensions/

[549] Jarvie, J. "The Antisemitic Cartoon Roiling Harvard? It's Not the First Time It Caused a Firestorm," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 2024. https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2024-02-23/the-antisemitic-cartoon-roiling-harvard-its-not-the-first-time-it-caused-a-firestorm-for-student-groups

ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people."[550] Two weeks later, on the same day as Match Day at Harvard Medical School — an annual event at which students learn which residency program they will be attending — pro-Palestinian affiliates from Harvard Schools and affiliated hospitals in the Longwood Medical Area protested the presence on campus of American Medical Association (AMA) President Jesse Ehrenfeld, who was there to deliver the Class of 1958 Commemorative Lecture. According to the *Crimson*, the protesters cited "the AMA's insufficient response to the war in Gaza."[551]

Calls for Harvard to divest from Israeli companies intensified in early April. The HLS student government called on the Harvard Management Company to "divest completely from weapons manufacturers, firms, academic programs, corporations, and all other institutions that aid the ongoing illegal occupation of Palestine and the genocide of Palestinians."[552] Concurrently, a committee within the Harvard Graduate Students Union called on the University to divest from "companies and institutions involved in the ongoing attacks in Gaza."[553] While undergraduate students attempted to initiate a referendum on Israel divestment, their efforts were blocked by two officers of the Harvard Undergraduate Association.

This period marked a time of heightened anxiety for many Jewish students, while many Muslim students and students of color voiced concerns about the University's response to ongoing doxxing attacks targeting members of their communities. As data from the Joint Task Force Survey conducted in Spring and Summer 2024 indicates (See Appendix 5), the events of the 2023-24 academic year significantly impacted the campus climate. Students who identified as being of Jewish, Israeli, Muslim, or Arab origin reported feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, and unwelcome on campus at markedly higher rates than other Harvard students.

The Encampment

Pro-Palestinian protests escalated significantly at Harvard in late April 2024, following a wave of demonstrations across university campuses sparked by the arrest of student activists who had established an encampment at Columbia University. On Monday, April 22, Harvard College suspended the PSC. Two days later, in the largest demonstration at Harvard in months, the *Crimson* estimated 500 people protested the suspension, with some students erecting an encampment in front of University Hall in the heart of Harvard Yard. Access to the Yard was restricted to Harvard students, faculty, and staff to prevent participation of protesters from outside the University. Despite the tense atmosphere, the Harvard University Police Chief defended the students' right to protest, stating, "You can see in the Yard right now — we are keeping our students safe and they are protesting peacefully and it's their right and we are going to support that."

While generally maintained in a clean and orderly fashion, the encampment generated complaints from some students regarding disruptive behaviors. These included chanting slogans, playing loud music, and, on one occasion, raising Palestinian flags over the John Harvard statue while placing a keffiyeh around its neck. Some Jewish students reported feeling uncomfortable walking near the encampment, describing incidents of being followed and verbally harassed. Several Jewish first-year students residing near the encampment expressed distress over its proximity, noise level, and the nature of the chants. Additionally, a

[550] Harvard Undergrad PSC (@harvardundergradpsc), "We are proud to see first years raise awareness at this year's faculty dinner. They dropped banners that listed 4,000 of the 10,000+ lives lost in Gaza and implored…," November 9, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/harvardundergradpsc/reel/CzcjU3iJjLx/

[551] "Harvard Medical School Affiliates Protest American Medical Association President on Match Day," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 18, 2024.

[552] "2 Members of HLS Student Government Resign After Resolution to Divest From 'Illegal Israeli Settlements'," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 30, 2024.

[553] "Harvard Graduate Union's BDS Caucus Circulates Letter Calling for Divestment From Israel," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 11, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/4/11/harvard-union-divest-israel-letter/

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Jewish faculty member recounted walking through the encampment and receiving alarming calls from alumni warning them about being discussed in student demonstrator WhatsApp groups, causing this faculty member to fear for their physical safety.

The appearance of a map within the encampment of Israel and the Palestinian territories without marking any Jewish communities implied that the pro-Palestinian students' goal was the physical elimination of Israel. On Sunday, May 12, a crudely drawn image of President Garber depicted as a devil with horns and a tail appeared within the encampment, shocking many Jewish students, faculty, and staff for whom the image recalled medieval antisemitic tropes of Jews as Satan's minions. This incident prompted a member of the Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias to write in the *Crimson*: "Make no mistake, while I stand by my characterization of many protesting students as good-intentioned, there is certainly antisemitism and hate among that movement."

As the encampment continued into May, concerns arose about the potential for police intervention and student backlash as had happened on many other campuses in the country. Encampment leaders demanded that Harvard's leaders engage in negotiations regarding divestment from Israel, a call echoed by more than 300 Harvard faculty members who signed a statement urging the administration to negotiate. On Friday, May 10, following a series of unheeded warnings regarding the continuation of the encampment, the administration began placing students allegedly involved on involuntary leaves of absence. The following day, protesters from outside Harvard attempted to breach the closed-off Harvard Yard after they cut the locks at Johnston Gate but were prevented from entering by Harvard police officers and security personnel.

Despite these escalations, the encampment concluded without violence or arrests, marking it as one of the shortest-lived such protests in the country. Students began leaving the encampment as the examination period ended and summer approached, with a formal announcement of its voluntary closure by Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine (HOOP) — the coalition that led the encampment — on Tuesday, May 14.[554] This decision followed a commitment from President Garber to arrange meetings for its representatives.

A late May 2024 study from Harvard Kennedy School compared Harvard University's experience with pro-Palestinian protests to those of dozens of other colleges and universities since the previous fall.[555] The study found that Harvard's encampment, lasting just a few weeks, ranked 22 out of 30 in terms of duration. Despite its relatively short lifespan and no police interventions required or administered, the encampment garnered significant national attention. This amplified perception was arguably fueled by HOOP's consistent use of aggressive rhetoric on social media, which effectively magnified the protest's popularity and influence beyond the reality on the ground.

Commencement

While the conclusion of the encampment allowed for Harvard University's 2024 Commencement exercises, scheduled for Thursday, May 23, to proceed as planned in Tercentenary Theater — the large open portion of Harvard Yard traditionally used for graduation ceremonies — the year's contentious events cast a shadow over the ceremony in two significant ways: a walkout during the official proceedings by hundreds of students, and two controversial Commencement Week addresses.

[554] "Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine Ends Harvard Yard Encampment," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 14, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/5/14/harvard-encampment-ends/

[555] J. Ulfelder, "Crowd Counting Consortium: An Empirical Overview of Recent Pro-Palestine Protests at U.S. Schools," Ash Center, May 30, 2024. https://ash.harvard.edu/articles/crowd-counting-blog-an-empirical-overview-of-recent-pro-palestine-protests-at-u-s-schools/

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On Thursday, May 18, the Harvard College Administrative Board — the committee that oversees academic regulations and social conduct standards for Harvard's undergraduate students — announced disciplinary actions against roughly two dozen students for their involvement in the pro-Palestinian encampment in Harvard Yard.[556,557] Five students received suspensions, while the rest were placed on probation. Notably, 13 seniors among those disciplined were effectively barred from graduating with their class the following week, as the actions rendered them not in "good standing" with the College. In an unprecedented series of events, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences voted to amend the list of degrees recommended for conferral in May, seeking to reinstate the 13 seniors. However, the Harvard Corporation, which is the University's highest governing body and holds final authority over degree conferral, ultimately overruled the faculty's decision.[558] During the May 23 Commencement exercises, hundreds of students staged a walkout, chanting "Let them walk!" — a reference to the 13 seniors — and waving Palestinian flags. The students then proceeded out of Harvard Yard to the nearby Harvard-Epworth Church (not affiliated with the University) where they held an alternative "People's Commencement" ceremony.

The principal speaker at the 2024 Commencement exercises on Thursday, May 23, was Maria Ressa, a Filipino-American journalist and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021. When her selection was announced earlier in that spring, Ressa, and the choice itself, drew backlash from some American media outlets and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik '06 for comments critical of the Israeli occupation and the bombardment of Gaza.

During her address, Ressa deviated from her prepared remarks, stating:

> Because I accepted your invitation to be here today, I was attacked online and called antisemitic by power and money, because they want power and money. While the other side was already attacking me because I had been on stage with Hillary Clinton [who had refused to condemn the war in Gaza]. Hard to win, right? But I'd already survived Information Operations from my own government: free speech, used to pound you to silence.

These comments were absent from her original text, which read:

> According to social media, exploited and used by power and money for power and money, I was: A criminal. A communist. A CIA agent. Antisemitic. Anti Palestine. A Princeton grad. I am a Tiger. The rest are lies. And the truth is simple. I'm a journalist.[559]

Ressa's ad-libbed remarks extended to praising student speakers who had addressed the topic of Palestine. She omitted a section from her prepared speech that gently challenged the pro-Palestinian protesters among the assembled students:

> For the protestors: when you hid your face in a keffiyeh, did you place yourself in the shoes of another student wearing a yarmulke just wanting to walk to class? Or the faculty administrator, who's never faced this before and whose task is to protect every student or donor? ... Were there more nuanced and creative ways to handle these protests on all sides?[560]

[556] "Administrative Board — Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct," Accessed March 11, 2025. https://oaisc.fas.harvard.edu/administrative-board/

[557] "5 Harvard Students Suspended, More Than 20 Face Probation for Encampment Participation," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 18, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/5/18/harvard-encampment-protesters-suspended/

[558] The Harvard Corporation eventually conferred diplomas to 11 of the 13 seniors: https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/7/23/harvard-corporation-diplomas-encampment/

[559] https://web.archive.org/web/20240523202351/https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2024/05/harvard-commencement-2024-maria-ressa-address

[560] Ibid.

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Ressa deleted other conciliatory language from her speech as well ultimately delivering a message about confronting political opposition that was far more assertive and defiant than her prepared remarks suggested.

Shortly after Ressa finished speaking, toward the end of the Commencement ceremonies, Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi of Harvard Chabad approached Ressa on stage and quietly requested clarification on the portion of her speech he found antisemitic.[561] According to one media account, "Zarchi said he could not properly hear Ressa's response due to the ongoing address but said that when he felt it was clear she would not oblige, he left early." Zarchi went on to criticize Ressa in a statement for supporting pro-Palestinian students, "arguing that she had ignored how the students had 'hijacked' the Commencement ceremony to support protesters who had violated Harvard policies."[562] Two days later, Ressa issued an apology on X, stating her words were "misinterpreted or taken out of context," and clarifying that the "they" of her controversial remarks referred to Big Tech. She added, "if my words caused offense, I apologize" and reiterated her message about "defending democratic norms and principles." Despite this, Ressa's remarks attracted significant negative media attention and became intertwined with the year's pro-Palestinian activism at Harvard.

On Tuesday, May 21, preceding the main Commencement events, Sunn M'Cheaux, a Gullah instructor in Harvard's African Language Program, delivered the "faculty keynote" at the Affinity Celebration Honoring Black Graduates.[563] Affinity celebrations, held on campus in recent years for various affinity groups at Harvard throughout Commencement week, are "student-led, staff-supported events that recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of graduates from historically marginalized communities."[564] They are described as "in addition to" the University's main Commencement and School-based graduation ceremonies.[565]

In his address, M'Cheaux expressed explicit support of the Palestinian cause, criticizing Israel as an "apartheid state" backed by US dollars and weapons.[566] Prefiguring sentiments Maria Ressa would make later in the week, M'Cheaux criticized tech and social media companies for stifling online activism and free speech. M'Cheaux further accused Israel and the United States of backing "atrocities and genocide" against the Congolese people and condemned the Harvard Corporation's decision to withhold degrees from sanctioned student protestors. Reflecting on the personal costs of activism, he questioned, "Do we get to struggle with despondency, depression, childhood trauma, self-doubt, self-harm, bereavement, social anxieties, eating disorders and so forth when Zionist overlords starve Falastini infants to death?" He then affirmed, "Yes. Yes, we do."[567] Despite employing the phrase "Zionist overlords," M'Cheaux's speech attracted virtually no media attention or apparent concern from the audiences.

Refusal to Discipline and Reversal of Sanctions

Harvard's response to the spring encampment protests fueled perceptions of inconsistency and a lack of transparency in its disciplinary processes, with some Schools declining to impose sanctions while others faced internal disagreements and reversals. Some students who received sanctions for their participation in the encampment appealed their punishment to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences' (FAS) Faculty Council, an elected body of professors that effectively serves as an executive committee for the FAS, which includes

[561] Shah, Neil. "Rabbi Zarchi Confronted Maria Ressa, Walked Off Stage Over Her Harvard Commencement Speech," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 24, 2024.
[562] Ibid.
[563] "Affinity Events Celebrating Graduate." Accessed March 11, 2025. https://edib.harvard.edu/affinity-grads-programs
[564] "Affinity Celebrations for Graduates," Harvard College Calendar." February 5, 2025. https://web.archive.org/web/20250205155645/https:/calendar.college.harvard.edu/event/affinity_celebrations_for_graduates
[565] Ibid.
[566] Sun M'Cheaux, "Educators should embody the values they convey to students," *The Emancipator*, May 29, 2024.
[567] Ibid.

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Harvard College, and advises the Dean of the FAS. On July 9, the Faculty Council, according to media reports, concluded that the disciplinary sanctions were too severe, and remanded the cases to the Harvard College Administrative Board, which downgraded the sanctions on five undergraduate students. These sanctions, reports noted, were replaced with short probation periods (one term or less), and existing probationary terms were also reduced. This contrasted with the Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences' earlier decision on Tuesday, June 25, to place 10 students on probation — seven for six months, and three for an entire academic year — for their roles in the same protest.[568]

Reflecting the significant autonomy of each Harvard School in managing disciplinary matters, the varying outcomes of these cases contributed to a sense of unevenness when viewed across the University. This unevenness, coupled with the failure of some Schools to impose discipline and the overall opacity of the process, reportedly frustrated Harvard's Central Administration, which includes the Office of the President and Provost. The *Crimson* described the Central Administration's view of the Schools' administrative boards, responsible for handling disciplinary matters, as "ineffective, too autonomous, and overly deferential to student protesters."[569]

On Thursday, July 18, University leaders, among them the president, provost, and School deans, announced that the University Committee on Rights and Responsibilities would engage in standardized fact-finding procedures for disciplinary cases involving more than one Harvard School.[570] This modest measure may have indicated both the Central Administration's awareness of the need to institute major reforms in Harvard's disciplinary procedures and the difficulties it faces doing so. The University summarized some of the actions.[571]

Conclusion: Looking Back and Ahead

The 2023-24 academic year at Harvard was tumultuous and tense. The same Harvard Kennedy School study cited earlier regarding the duration of the encampment showed that, out of all major universities in the United States, Harvard had the second-highest number of days with protest activity during that academic year (approximately 70, compared with roughly 40 for most of Harvard's peer institutions, though less than one-third that of Stanford). Fall 2024, when much of this report was written, did not witness the large-scale protests that the University experienced the prior year, which may be partly due to the University issuing revised policies over the summer regarding the use of campus grounds and buildings in an effort to minimize future disruption.[572]

In Fall 2024, protest activity of a pro-Palestinian character, in and around the University and not all definitively involving Harvard affiliates, primarily took two forms. On the one hand, there were silent protests in libraries (including Widener, Harvard's flagship library, and the libraries at several Schools,

[568] "Harvard Places 10 Graduate Students on Probation for Encampment Participation," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 26, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/6/26/gsas-places-10-students-on-probation/; "Harvard Reverses Decision to Suspend 5 Pro-Palestine Protesters Following Faculty Council Appeal," *The Harvard Crimson*, July 10, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/7/10/harvard-reverses-encampment-suspensions/

[569] Quoted in *The Harvard Crimson*, 11 November 2024, summarizing material submitted to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and published in its November 2024 report. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/11/11/encampment-discipline-administration-criticisms/

[570] John S. Rosenberg, "Harvard Overhauls Disciplinary Procedures." *Harvard Magazine*, July 18, 2024. https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2024/07/usrr-statement-harvard

[571] https://www.harvard.edu/task-force-on-antisemitism/#implementationupdates

[572] "Campus Use Rules," Office of the Executive Vice President. Accessed March 11, 2025. https://evp.harvard.edu/campus-use-rules

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including HLS, HDS, and GSD), where groups of students or faculty had been gathering in a study space and display their support for the Palestinian cause through signage affixed to their computers.[573]

On the other hand, there were scattered but distressing acts of vandalism and apparent hate crimes on and around Harvard's campus. For example, on the night of Tuesday, October 8, an unknown perpetrator or perpetrators — it is not known whether they had any connection to Harvard — broke windows in University Hall and poured red paint (presumably symbolizing blood) on the nearby statue of John Harvard. A video seemingly made by the perpetrator(s) during the vandalism and posted on social media called it "an act of solidarity with the Palestinian resistance."[574] A week later, stickers bearing a swastika against the blue and white background of the Israeli flag and emblazoned with the words "Stop Funding Israeli Terrorism," were found posted — again, the perpetrator(s) are unknown, as is whether they have any connection to Harvard — just outside Harvard's campus in Harvard Square, close to Harvard Hillel's Rosovsky Hall. Similar incidents, including swastika stickers, were reported near the University of Michigan and Georgetown University, as well as along a major street in Brookline, Massachusetts, a heavily Jewish Boston suburb.[575]

At the start of the 2024-25 academic year, the First-Year Convocation, a ceremony to welcome new undergraduate students to the Harvard College community, proceeded without incident. This marked a departure from previous years when the event had been interrupted by pro-Palestinian demonstrators. However, the relative quiet on campus did not heal the ongoing fracture within the Harvard community At the time we are writing these lines — the first weeks of the Spring term of 2025 — occasional disturbing and offensive incidents continue to occur. Harvard encompasses numerous communities, defined by race, ethnicity, religion, political orientation, and other factors. Some of these communities view a connection with the Palestinian cause as paramount, while others view certain kinds of pro-Palestinian activism as a threat to psychological well-being and even personal safety. The challenge, which we address in the remainder of this report, is how expression, including protest, can be carried out in a manner commensurate with the values of a university — to educate rather than indoctrinate, to challenge rather than threaten, and to disagree without turning away from, or, even worse, against each other.

[573] "More Than 70 Harvard Students Stage Study-In at Widener Library," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 30, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/10/30/third-widener-palestine-study-in/

[574] "Windows Smashed, John Harvard Statue Vandalized in Act of 'Palestinian Resistance'," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 8, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/10/9/john-harvard-statue-vandalism/

[575] "Police Investigating Antisemitic Stickers Discovered Near Harvard Hillel," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 15, 2024. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/10/15/antisemitic-stickers-outside-hillel/

CHAPTER 3

Findings

The Task Forces on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias and Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias engaged in separate but similarly comprehensive approaches to understand the experiences of Harvard students, faculty, and staff. These approaches included each Task Force holding a series of listening sessions, primarily in March and April 2024, followed by a joint online survey conducted by both Task Forces from May to August 2024 across Harvard's Schools.

During the listening sessions, members of our Task Force met with groups of students, faculty, and staff, gaining valuable qualitative insights. These sessions, along with private conversations and other communications involving the Task Force co-chairs, provided a foundation for understanding the community's experiences.

The subsequent survey of students, faculty, and staff across Harvard's Schools, corroborated and contextualized much of what we heard in the listening sessions, suggesting widespread feelings of discomfort, alienation, and fear among students identifying as Jewish, Israeli, Muslim, or Arab.

This chapter examines the striking congruence between the quantitative results from the survey and the qualitative data gathered from the listening sessions. It focuses primarily on the negative experiences of Jewish and Israeli Harvard affiliates — "affiliates" being a Harvard term encompassing students, faculty, and staff — with an emphasis on students, especially in the wake of the events of October 7, 2023. Below, we begin by reviewing the findings of the online survey to establish a quantitative foundation before turning to a thematic summary of what the Task Force heard in the listening sessions, supplemented by insights the co-chairs gained through private conversations and other communications with community members.

Harvard-Wide Joint Survey

The survey attracted some 2,300 responses from students, faculty, and staff, with high levels of participation among Jewish, Israeli, Muslim, and Arab affiliates relative to their likely numbers within the Harvard community.[576] Of the participants in the survey, 477 identified as Jewish. Among this group, substantial numbers of Jewish students indicated experiencing discomfort and alienation at Harvard: 39% did not feel at home at the University, at least to some extent, while 26% felt physically unsafe and 44% felt mentally unsafe. Nearly half (49%) felt their well-being was not supported at Harvard, and 46% felt uncomfortable expressing their beliefs or opinions to people "whose political views may be in conflict with mine and/or go against my sense of identity/nationality."

Responding to a somewhat differently worded question, 67% of Jewish students reported feeling discomfort expressing their opinions generally, with a significant 73% uncomfortable expressing their

[576] As mentioned in the Executive Summary, the survey was distributed to faculty, staff, and students using various channels that ranged from emails with an embedded survey link to sharing with relevant affinity groups and mentions in the *The Harvard Gazette* and *The Harvard Crimson*. The intent was to complement the listening sessions and provide a convenient and anonymous survey that could be taken by Harvard campus community members who were impacted by and/or had views on the issues related to the Task Forces' mandate. Since this population is not readily identifiable *a priori* and also because the survey was not administered or marketed as a University-wide survey (such as the 2019 Pulse survey), it is not as feasible to provide accurate response rates. While we do provide relative demographic coverage comparisons to the 2019 Pulse survey, the Task Force joint survey is best viewed as a way to incorporate more opinions from those community members who wanted to weigh in on their experiences on campus and observations during the Fall 2023 to Summer 2024 period.

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political opinions specifically. Almost 60% of Jewish students indicated they had experienced some form of "discrimination, stereotyping, or negative bias on campus due to [their] views on current events," and only a quarter believed there was no "academic or professional penalty" at Harvard for expressing their views.

Expanding to include Jewish faculty and staff within the surveyed group, the data showed somewhat lower levels of alienation and discomfort. This difference may be attributable to faculty and staff — given their different life circumstances — being less likely than students to experience backlash, retaliation, bullying, and social isolation.

Across nearly every category, Jewish students reported greater levels of discomfort and alienation than their Christian or atheist/agnostic peers, but lower levels than Muslim students. The experiences of Muslim students are examined in depth in the companion report of the Task Force on Combating Anti-Muslim, Anti-Arab, and Anti-Palestinian Bias.

It is important to emphasize here that neither Task Force aims to minimize or dismiss the experiences of any group by engaging in comparisons of suffering. Rather, our shared aim is to understand the perceptions and experiences of students within our respective purviews over the 2023-24 academic year, identify the sources of their pain and distress, and develop strategies to foster a greater sense of community and mutual respect at Harvard.

Listening Sessions

Between March and May 2024, members of our Task Force conducted approximately 50 listening sessions, engaging with more than 500 participants across the University's Schools and key administrative units. While most of these sessions were intended for students — both undergraduates (in first-year dorms and upper-level residential Houses) and those enrolled in the graduate and professional Schools — sessions following the same format were also held for staff and faculty, including one specifically for the faculty deans who oversee Harvard College's residential Houses. Additionally, sessions were organized for students involved with various Jewish student groups, among them Harvard Hillel and Harvard Chabad. Attendees reflected a diverse range of religious observance levels, Jewish backgrounds and identifications, and attitudes towards Israel.

Each session was facilitated by at least two Task Force members, with an administrative staff member present to take notes. All sessions followed a similar format. After establishing ground rules and emphasizing the Chatham House Rule to ensure confidentiality, facilitators posed open-ended questions and primarily listened, encouraging participants to share their experiences and perspectives. (More information about the format of listening sessions can be found in Appendix 4.)

In these sessions the participants' views were documented via typed notes in which all identifying features of the speaker were anonymized except for the nature of their affiliation (e.g., undergraduate, graduate student, faculty, staff, school). Participation in the sessions was lively, with many, most, or all participants sharing their views. Our documentation of the sessions therefore reflects the contributions of hundreds of individuals.

Several major themes emerged from the listening sessions:

1. October 7th and the Deterioration of Campus Climate

- A substantial number of Jewish students reported experiencing a more hostile campus atmosphere in the aftermath of October 7th. This shift in climate was felt particularly in residences, classrooms, student organizations, and communal spaces like Harvard Yard and the Science Center Plaza.
- Israeli students reported feeling particularly targeted and ostracized, frequently experiencing social shunning.

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- Fear of encountering hostility led some Jewish students, according to their own accounts, to conceal their Jewish identity from classmates.

2. Perceptions of Bias in Specific Schools, Units, and Instructors

- Some participants identified certain Harvard Schools, departments, centers, and instructors as promoting or tolerating anti-Israeli critique that they felt was problematic and, in some cases, blurred into animosity towards Jews.

3. Concerns with Student Discipline and Complaint Processes

- Participants widely perceived the administrative response to student complaints as opaque and unacceptably slow.
- Many participants considered disciplinary actions against students who allegedly engaged in bullying, harassment, or intimidation related to these issues to be lax and inadequate.

4. Perceptions of Disparate Treatment and Indifference

- A widespread sentiment emerged that anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish expression was tolerated to a greater degree than similar hostility toward other minority groups, such as Black or LGBTQ+ students. Numerous participants did not perceive Harvard's offices for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) as adequately addressing antisemitism or considering it a serious form of bias within their purview.

5. Distinctive Experiences of Israeli Students

- Many Israeli students reported experiencing heightened social isolation, ostracism, and hostility following the events of October 7th, with several feeling unfairly labeled as "soldiers" due to Israel's mandatory conscription policy. These students described a pervasive sense of being held personally accountable for Israeli government actions, facing social exclusion and uncomfortable encounters, and some even feeling compelled to conceal their Israeli identity for fear of negative reactions from peers.

6. Effects of Social Media

- Participants identified social media as exacerbating challenges by enabling the rapid and sometimes anonymous creation and dissemination of cruel and hateful messages online, negatively impacting the reported well-being of many Jewish students.

7. Experiences of Anti-Zionist Jewish Students

- Some Jewish students who identify as anti-Zionist reported experiencing bullying and shunning, similar to that reported by numerous Jewish students who identify as Zionist, from some pro-Palestinian students.

8. Need for Enhanced Course Offerings and Academic Programming

- Participants expressed a need for more robust academic programming and course offerings to help address the campus climate and facilitate constructive, informed, and respectful dialogue on events in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The following sections, organized thematically, offer a glimpse into the range and intensity of negative experiences described by many Jewish and Israeli students after October 7th. Our emphasis in these sections is on presenting illustrative examples of these experiences as students themselves described them, often using students' own words. These accounts were shared with us in listening sessions, private meetings, and written correspondence. We did not independently verify each account. When selecting examples for these sections, we focused on patterns of experiences reported by multiple students and excluded any account we had reason to doubt.

Theme 1 — October 7th and the Deterioration of Campus Climate

Many Jewish students spoke of October 7th as profoundly affecting their life at Harvard:

I'm American. I always felt comfortable here. As an undergrad, I felt like I fit in. The change in the social dynamics [after October 7th] was instantaneous and alarming. [Graduate student]

My experience has been different before and after October 7th. Before October 7th, being Jewish was largely irrelevant. It was not a barrier. I was proud to be Jewish. When it came up, it was positive. After October 7th, I experienced the following in this order: first there was pressure, then there was chaos, then hostility, and in certain spaces, the normalization of subtle discrimination like, "We'll welcome you in this space if you align in a certain way. If not, you can't come here." This has to do with the enforcement of rules. [Graduate student]

Some students noted that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict felt as if it seeped into all areas of campus life, much to their consternation:

I'm an older student. Many of my interactions on campus are more professional. I'm less impacted than other students. I was a union member, and a little uncomfortable with antisemitic overtones as I perceived them. However, I held that grad students needed help bargaining and thought it was essential to have a union to engage in collective bargaining due to the harsh realities for grad students. But then things exploded. The union started releasing public statements that made me acutely uncomfortable. I didn't resign initially. I tried to talk to people about it and asked to let us say that not all members subscribe to these views. My objection was that they were releasing statements saying they spoke for everyone. So then, I resigned. The whole thing made me acutely uncomfortable. [Graduate student]

Many Jewish students perceived the word "Zionist" as being widely employed as a pejorative and a means of pillorying Jews:

There's a tendency to replace the word Jewish with Zionist. "All Zionists should burn in hell" — it's very frightening, there's an incongruency between how different sides would define the term Zionist. People are proudly referring to themselves as anti-Zionist but there's a strong overlap and it feels like this is an excuse to use a different term to make the point that they are anti-Jewish. [Undergraduate student]

An undergrad tells a story about choosing an event to attend: one option was in the Quad, one at Hillel. A blockmate said, "I don't want to go to Hillel, I fucking hate Zionists." The undergrad sees this as an example of something that falls squarely into the antisemitic category, but doesn't think the blockmate realized it, and thinks there are other examples of antisemitism that are even harder to categorize. [Undergraduate student]

The Harvard administration's responses during this period were described as tardy and clumsy:

I've had positive interactions with the administration. They just don't know what to do. They didn't expect this level of anti-Zionism. The [name of student's Harvard School] didn't expect having to draw a line between free speech and harassment. Anti-Zionism is considered an intellectual exercise and not as discrimination by some in the administration. [Graduate student]

Many students described a social atmosphere that had rapidly deteriorated and become dominated by pervasive feelings of rejection and fear:

If I was killed by a terrorist in America, as an American, my classmates would at least superficially mourn. If I was killed by a terrorist in Israel, as a Jew, my classmates would say I had it coming. And when other people are killed in ethnic, religious, or political conflicts, my classmates frankly don't care for longer than a few days at a time. [Graduate student]

The social exclusion and shunning of Israeli students lies at the core of the Harvard experience for many. From my first days on campus, I noticed students in pre-orientation avoiding conversation with me, simply out of fear of being associated with an Israeli. My friend has been told that others would not attend social gatherings if I was present, as they couldn't risk the social consequences of being seen with an Israeli. Students have also chosen not to join an organization I led simply because I served in the IDF. Like other Israeli students currently at Harvard, I was excluded from the invitation list to comp for a final club, with members openly stating that IDF soldiers do not align with the club's values. Israeli students at Harvard are not merely subjected to implicit bias but instead face explicit, deliberate discrimination. [Undergraduate student]

People can have political views of their choice, but the social fabric has degraded. There has been an increase in antisemitism on campus, which is a fact. I have many friends who have experienced this. An incident occurred on October 7th, which happened over the weekend. A group of five guys lived in a suite. The door was usually unlocked, but they had to lock it due to feelings of tension and a lack of safety in their own home. This is a sign that something has gone wrong. People don't trust each other. Otherwise, why would we need to lock our doors? [Graduate student]

Accounts of social shunning emerged as one of the most alarming indicators of the breakdown of Harvard's on-campus community:

The strategy used by BDS groups involves encouraging students and faculty to avoid normalizing relations with Jewish students. This involves social shaming, which is a particularly harmful tactic in academia and the impact can vary depending on your field. [Undergraduate student]

The notion that acceptance in a politically liberal or progressive on-campus space is contingent upon disavowing Israel was a recurring theme:

A Jew who doesn't renounce Zionism and who is gay can't feel comfortable in a gay students' association [Undergraduate student]

I did feel shunning, especially in progressive spaces which I have long been part of. On the [name of a progressive student organization], there's a good-Jew bad-Jew dynamic. I'm a Zionist. The experience of being a Jewish student at Harvard in progressive spaces requires incredible emotional labor. People like to pretend they're unaware of antisemitism. I try to go to every event where Israel is discussed [to explain things] so people can't claim ignorance. I've had to bare my soul in progressive spaces to show I can be accepted as Jewish and progressive. I've sat shiva three times recently. Israel and the Jewish religion are connected. I need to tell people this. I'm used to being the first exposure people have to Judaism. It's exhausting and embarrassing for Harvard. [Graduate student]

Numerous Jewish students, many of whom expressed a deep connection to Israel, spoke of feeling lumped together and collectively blamed for the situation of the Palestinians. They noted that students with analogous ties to other countries engaged in wars and conflicts are not typically prejudged in this way:

Jewish students had to bear the burden of defending themselves in the face of global politics. The same feeling was not mirrored for a Russian friend when the war broke out. The Jewish community is not a monolith. How we teach the greater community not to fall into those stereotypes is important. [Undergraduate student]

As a result of their negative experiences on campus after October 7th, some Jewish students said that they were concealing their Jewish identity:

At intramural practice, there is extra conscious[ness] about not self-identifying. You have to think about it all the time. [Undergraduate student]

Not outright antisemitism towards me, but the antisemitic culture on campus has increased since Oct 7th. Friends who are more outwardly Jewish and Israelis, the things they are experiencing are horrible. I feel lucky I don't look Jewish. I know if I do the "wrong thing" I might get the antisemitism. So, put your headphones in, make sure you're not outwardly Jewish, and just walk to class. [Undergraduate student]

Some Jewish students with critical views about Israel, including members of anti-Zionist student groups, reported that they were concerned with both insensitivity from some pro-Palestinian peers to the horror of October 7th and what they saw as Harvard's one-sided institutional response:

There are some people who have glorified what happened on Oct 7th. That was triggering and harmful for me. [Undergraduate involved in anti-Zionist campus organizing]

Harvard seems more afraid of Elise Stefanik than about helping students … Harvard's responses have been encouraging antisemitic behavior. The way Harvard has cracked down on organizers, I would probably want to say horrible things too about Zionists. Given that Harvard is acting effectively as a Zionist organization, it's understandable that people don't want to have anything to do with Zionists. [Student involved in anti-Zionist campus organizing]

Some faculty and staff also reported that they noticed a fraught and uncomfortable atmosphere on campus that was not apparent to them until the aftermath of October 7th:

I am at [Harvard unit] but I don't have much interaction with students. For several months since Oct 7th, I drove in, went straight to my office … and left. I didn't feel unsafe physically, but I felt unsafe emotionally. I did not want to see anything happening in [my office building] that I couldn't unsee. There have been several incidents there. My office and colleagues were a safe space, but I couldn't emotionally handle what was going on elsewhere in my workplace. [Staff]

Only since Oct 7th have I become aware that antisemitism is a problem at Harvard. I've been here 24 years, so I'm embarrassed. I was in a conversation with a Jewish colleague about incidents happening with our students, and she said, "Well I know how that is, from being here. It's been going on for years." I was so shocked; I had tears in my eyes and felt sad that I was so completely unaware of something that someone I am close with was going through. It told me I had a lot to learn, which is why I am here. [Faculty]

Theme 2 — Perceptions of Bias in Specific Schools, Units, and Instructors

Many of the concerns expressed above came from undergraduate students in the College and from graduate students throughout the University, with most coming from four of Harvard's graduate Schools.

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

To give some context, [the School is] a microculture. Students lean left more than Harvard in general, with a big focus on social justice and equity as stated missions of the School. This has affected my experience. Social justice and advocacy are part of the mission and ethos of the School. In the aftermath of October 7th, among students and in part the faculty, the zeitgeist is very pro-human rights and manifested as pro-Palestine in many ways. This is not the same as antisemitism, but the relationship is complex. Antisemitism is built into how some people are advocating for Palestine. [Graduate student]

I was told by [a School administrator] that I violated the student code of conduct by deleting social media posts from a student group account. There was pretty vile stuff posted in October. I asked someone in the group to remove a post that was disturbing and people requested it be taken down. It was like "Elders of Zion" kind of stuff. I asked the person to remove it. The person said no. So I, as an administrator of the group, removed the post. The poster and the president of the student government reported the incident to the Office of Student Affairs. That office claimed it was a Harvard program social media group. So the office

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stepped in. The poster asked their friends to report me to the Office of Student Affairs. Students started saying I was infringing on free speech. That office told me I was in a whole world of trouble, but they couldn't explain why. They said I was infringing on student speech. [Graduate student]

Harvard Law School

We brought the families of hostages to campus and the administration moved us for our safety. This is disgusting and these students need to be punished. They walk around like they own the place. It's ridiculous. [Graduate student]

What can HLS do about the dirty looks and unwelcome feeling? If you have an event in Belinda Hall, everyone must be welcome. But there are about 10–20 people who consistently break the rules. They are at the tops of their [student] organizations. They dictate norms. Everyone goes along. The administration needs to make sure organizations follow the rules. [Graduate student]

Students have reported antisemitic activity, they've done a great job with programmatic efforts, holding space for each other. The difficulties arise with the protests and where they're taking place. Because of their Jewish identity they've been singled out when activities are taking place and people assume things don't align with their beliefs. This is where the reported accounts from Jewish students being singled out [come from]. Everyone wants to feel seen, heard, and respected. Where the protests are taking place, it feels like certain individuals are being centered. [Staff]

Harvard Divinity School

HDS should be a leader in situations like this. It's a flop. There's a diversity of views. We're supposed to find the divine in ourselves and others. Opposing views should be discussed together … There was an interruption at a community dinner. I have a photo. "Harvard out of occupied Palestine." Part of the dinner's purpose was for prospective students, what's the message for them? They commandeered the lifeblood of HDS for their own purposes. I lodged a complaint. The response was vapid. There were no consequences. They're entitled to their views, but they're also entitled to follow the rules. At a Hanukkah event, the host expressed dismay that it was canceled. A pro-Israel student was booted off a WhatsApp page because they made a snarky comment. But that wouldn't have happened to the other side. My reaction reflects an earlier view of anti-Israel rhetoric. "Zionism is racism" is a canard. They're entitled to that view, but not to intimidate. [Graduate student]

Harvard Medical School

A more recent thing was during Admitted Students Week, there was a Med School music video. It was a big deal. Students from a pro-Palestine organization asked other students if they wanted to make the Admitted Student video a protest against the Israeli occupation. Because Admitted Students Week is a big thing, the administration said this is not okay, we fund this. But it took the administration a long time. It took students complaining to get action. The overall message is — if you are a Jewish student with Israeli connections, you don't have a place here. During Admitted Students Week, a lot of the current students made it clear they wanted to send a message to visiting students to discourage Zionist students from coming here. There are very few Jewish students in my class and few Jewish students feel comfortable at the Med School. I wish the administration thought more about the admitted student experience and how they feel with this kind of thing happening. [Graduate student]

Specific Instructors

Students also raised concerns about specific faculty and teaching fellows, citing examples such as faculty who "gave time at the end of class for students to promote various solidarity groups, including the

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Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC)" or "ended class early on the day of a protest, which seemed like an encouragement to join the protest." Some students complained of "one-sided syllabi" concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and expressed apprehension about taking courses from instructors who had signed pro-Palestinian statements.

The antisemitic cartoon described in Chapter 2 was a particular source of anxiety for some students due to its reposting by the organization Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine. One student recalled, "When the antisemitic cartoon was posted, I was baffled. How could this be posted by Harvard faculty [along with] student groups? Then it became clear to me that there are no consequences." Another student told us some Israeli students felt apprehensive in Arabic language classes, and "stopped going … because they didn't feel safe."

While there were relatively few comments about Teaching Fellows (TFs), some experiences were shared. One student described an instance where "a student said in class [they] didn't believe IDF soldiers should attend Harvard. The teaching fellow supported [the student who said this]."

Another student recounted a situation with a TF who "openly expressed solidarity with the Palestine Solidarity Committee and allied movements." This student expressed frustration with the administrative response, noting that after they brought this to administrators' attention eight times, "their response was that slogans and chants can mean different things to different people. I wonder if they would ever say the same to a member of another minority group."

Theme 3 — Concerns with Student Discipline and Complaint Processes

Concerns about opaque processes for reporting complaints and seemingly inconsistent disciplinary responses were among the most common issues raised during the listening sessions:

> *The officials I spoke with were confused about the policies and they were not sure who's in charge. That's a common theme — policies are unclear, people don't know if a policy is a University or School policy. All this to say, there's a lack of accountability about what rules should be and how they should be followed. This is a pattern throughout the University, there are policies but people are refusing to enforce them. [Graduate student]*

> *I understand the importance of freedom of speech, but this institution needs to establish some boundaries. [Student]*

Many students criticized what they perceived as a lack of discipline for disruptive actions, such as interrupting classes or holding unauthorized protests. Although we were told that students who disrupted classes did face consequences, many Jewish students still felt that on the whole Harvard's Schools were not consistently applying their own policies or holding students accountable for violations:

> *On the policy side, rules are violated and there are no consequences — for example, the rules around protests. Earlier this year, there were class disruptions. The School knows who the people were. The handbook describes what the punishment should be but still nothing happened to them. [Graduate student]*

> *There seems to be a total lack of fear of consequences among the [members of certain student groups]. There are no repercussions for those who interrupt classes.[577] There appears to be a lack of consequences, but there should be some form of accountability for [student group] organizers. [Undergraduate student]*

[577] As noted, this quote is the account of one undergraduate student and therefore their impression. We note that students at Harvard College who interrupt classes can face serious repercussions.

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Harvard's decentralized structure, in which each of the Schools is responsible for its own disciplinary matters, was a source of much frustration:

If there's a disaster, you don't care how FEMA is structured or organized. Harvard needs to solve this. I don't care how. There's impunity here, people who make antisemitic comments on this campus enjoy it. Nobody else on campus enjoys that impunity … We have a student handbook with rules, they need to be enforced promptly and publicly so people can see justice done. I understand there are limits, but absent that we all understand it's open season. There's impunity for antisemitism. We don't just need to talk about education, we need to enforce existing rules quickly and rigorously. [Graduate student]

Many students were unsure how the complaint system worked and spoke of tardy, curt, or nonexistent responses:

Sometimes you send off this very painful report and then it just gets lost in the shuffle. The fact that there isn't a response to students also makes them feel like their very pressing worry has not been dealt with. [Undergraduate student]

I am tired of fighting. It's the same group of students, whose sole objective seems to be to harass and intimidate Jewish students. Despite reaching out to every office, everyone says it's not their problem. [Graduate student]

There are some things Harvard could do much more humanely. Following up with people to ask how they are. Right now people feel like nobody cares. There are limits to what can be done. But it's possible to tell students, "Hey, we got your thing, we don't have any update, but we just want to check in on you." [Undergraduate student]

Theme 4 — Perceptions of Disparate Treatment and Indifference

Our listening sessions revealed significant concerns about perceived indifference towards Jewish students by Harvard's offices for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, which exist at both the University and the School level. These concerns were often accompanied by claims that animosity against other groups at Harvard have been, and would be, taken with more seriousness than those against Jewish students:

The issues related to free speech are being misdiagnosed. This was pointed out in an article by [Professor] Danielle Allen. She makes a good point — people can argue about what "Intifada" means, but she said as a person of color, she wouldn't feel comfortable in a place displaying "White Power" signs, even if it's free speech. The question of whether it's legal to yell "Globalize the Intifada" is not the most relevant issue here. Yes, you can say that, but community standards and norms need to be part of the conversation, too, not just the laws surrounding free speech. [Undergraduate student]

Hearing the "river-to-the-sea" chants on campus is troubling. I approached an administrator about this, and their response was that these words could have multiple meanings. If I were part of the LGBTQ community and complained about offensive language, no one would tell me I was wrong to be upset because the language could be interpreted in multiple ways. The same would be true if I were Black and someone used offensive language around me. Why am I being told what is and isn't antisemitism by an administrator? Why am I being told that my fear is unjustified when offensive language is used around me? It's inappropriate and insensitive for administrators to respond in this manner. [Undergraduate student]

Jews are the only minority [against whom] people speak [but] enjoy maximalist First Amendment protections. Every other minority group is defended by the administration against hate speech. There's absolute freedom for antisemitic speech. I agree with the Supreme Court case about the neo-Nazi march in Skokie. It's right for the country but not for Harvard. [Graduate student]

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Harvard's process for receiving and handling complaints of discrimination — governed by the University's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying (NDAB) Policies, which went into effect on September 1, 2023 — often described by students as cumbersome and slow, was a recurring theme, often fueling their perception of disparate treatment:

> *Don't explain the lack of response by saying the University is a big, decentralized place. If there's a racist remark, communications go out quickly. So, the University knows when it wants to act quickly. If the issue involved someone who's Asian, Black, or gay, it would be different. You can't blame it on the University being slow because it clearly isn't slow all the time. [Undergraduate student]*

Some students distinguished between discrimination against Jews and discrimination against those who identify as or are considered Zionists. They argued that because Zionism is a political belief, it should be protected under Harvard's existing non-discrimination policies:

> *Harvard's non-discrimination policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of political belief. If you describe Zionism as such, it does fall under policy. [Undergraduate student]*

Some Harvard affiliates we met with noted a persistent lack of awareness and sensitivity regarding the Jewish calendar among some faculty and administrators, particularly concerning the autumn High Holidays, which often coincide with start of term activities:

> *There was a welcome picnic on Yom Kippur, a mandatory doctoral meeting on Rosh Hashanah. A tenured professor asked one of my Jewish friends if it was true that Yom Kippur was really a reason why students couldn't come to class. I explained … that it was countercultural as a Jewish American of my generation to speak up about inclusion because I was taught these institutions were not built for us. Maybe it's not the same extent as for Black people, but we were not welcome here so we can't have expectations that the institution is built for us. We as a community have worked very hard to make sure that as the doors have opened for us, we have not slammed them shut behind us. That ideal has not been honored here. [Faculty]*

Theme 5 — Distinctive Experiences of Israeli Students

Many Israeli students at Harvard had a particularly hard time in the wake of October 7, 2023, and even in the period preceding it. We heard numerous accounts of them being subjected to social shunning and other negative behaviors based on their national identity. Additionally, because the State of Israel has mandatory conscription, and most Israeli young people serve in the Israel Defense Forces, many reported finding themselves labeled as "Israeli soldiers" even though they are no longer in the military and are no more "soldiers" than their peers from any other country in the world with conscription. These concerns all came up in the listening sessions:

> *Some people, upon learning that I'm Israeli, tell me they won't talk with someone from a "genocidal country." [Undergraduate student]*

> *Before October 7th, we were in class discussing the random rooming policy. A student said she didn't think the policy was appropriate because she could get roomed with an IDF soldier. [Undergraduate student]*

> *It has become accepted to not be nice to someone because they are Israeli. But you can not like what someone's country is doing without ostracizing them. [Undergraduate student]*

> *From his first day at Harvard, he has had encounters with people who refused to speak to him because he is Israeli. At an orientation program, he was speaking and getting to know people, met a guy from [a country in the Middle East], speaking in Arabic. When the guy from [the Middle Eastern country] found out he was from Israel, in mid-sentence, he turned around and walked away. [Israeli Arab undergraduate student]*

In my research group, we had an Iranian national. I had a nice interaction with her. The idea that I'd hold her personally responsible for the policies of the Iranian government is absurd. And I never brought up contentious political issues with her at work. Once she brought up Iranian history and politics at a staff retreat and we spoke. I engaged with her on her terms. That's the way to treat people with respect from different countries even when the countries are at odds. That's not the way Israelis are treated. We're treated unlike people from any other country. If people are consistent about their opposition to ethnostates, I'm okay with that. But they don't treat others like they do Israelis. There's selective outrage against Israel and Israeli students are treated with ostracism and disrespect. [Graduate student]

Three people in my cohort think they understand better than me what's going on in Israel ... I know. They didn't bother asking me or talking to me. They just tell me they don't support Israel killing children. Are they implying I do? It's so wild. They tell me Israel is an apartheid and colonial state. Why do they think they're right and I'm wrong? They've never been there? I have two Russian girls in my department. Nobody treats them differently because of what Russians are doing. And Chinese students never get blamed for the Chinese government's actions. Jewish people are blamed for Israeli policies. This is antisemitic. [Graduate student]

The anti-normalization idea is that Jews on campus with ties to Israel must be anti-Zionist to be welcomed. I've lost friends who abandoned me. They knew I was Jewish, and my mom was Israeli, and I was not ashamed of those connections. I was involved with international law. I'm part of some progressive groups, and the moment October 7th happened, I was traumatized because I didn't align with the binary view. The anti-normalization idea is to normalize ostracization. That is a foundational source of tension. The constant dirty looks are disgusting to me. This has become the dominant thinking — [graduate] school should be about disagreeing and having difficult conversations. It's hard because ... we want to convince ourselves it's antisemitism. But the way it's manifested is tied to social dynamics. We can't fix social dynamics by banning protests. It's a systemic cultural problem. I'm censoring myself in class and with friends. I can't visit friends because their roommates are anti-Zionist. This shouldn't be happening ... [Graduate student]

[There was] one experience of an Israeli grad student in the department who has effectively been bullied out of the graduate lounge where all graduate students assemble on the basis of a series of difficult conversations/confrontations including one which was an atrocity-denial about October 7th, doubts being thrown on the incident, and the effects on this student have been noticeable. [Faculty]

Theme 6 — Effects of Social Media

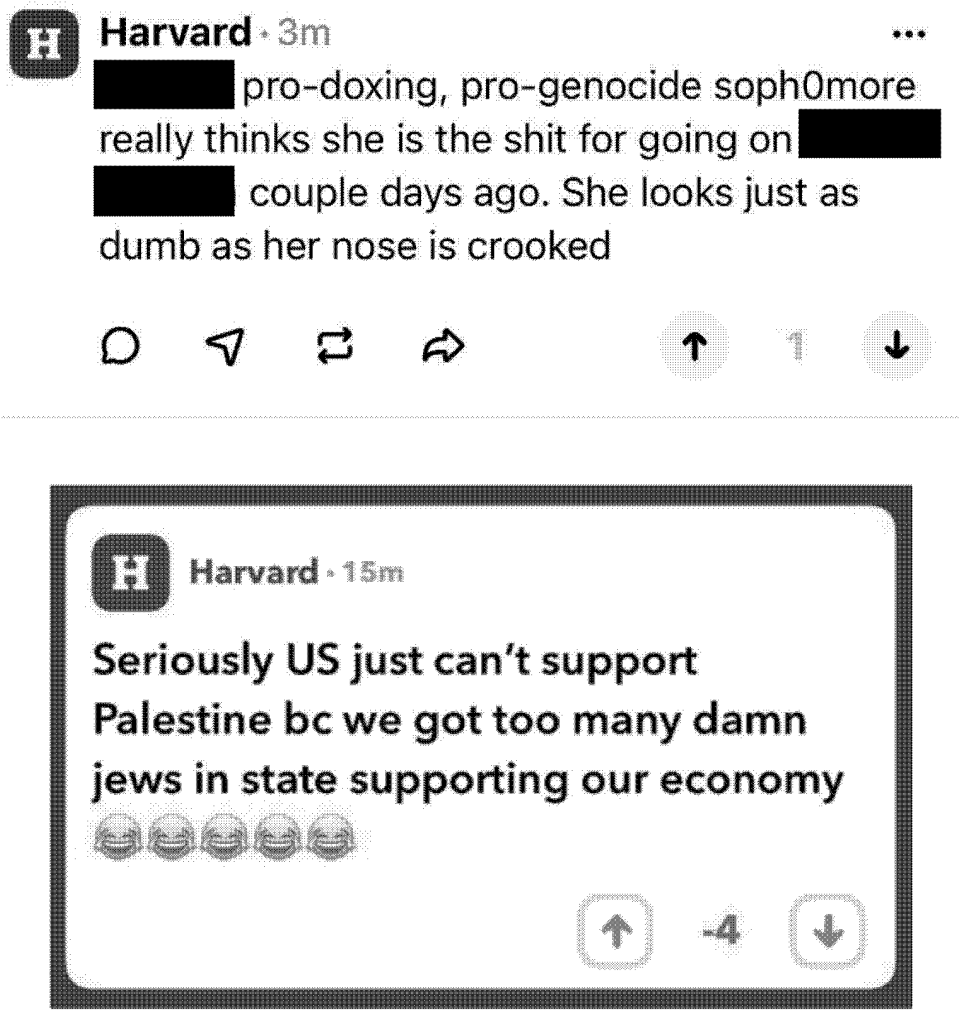
As documented in Chapter 2, the aftermath of the October 7th attacks saw Sidechat and other social media platforms flooded with cruel, offensive, and hateful comments regarding Jews and Israel. One graduate student described a veritable avalanche of hostile social media posts that began on Saturday, October 7 and continued unabated through Sunday, with some students apparently feeling increasingly emboldened to express hateful statements. By the time classes resumed on Monday, October 9, the combined impact of the PSC's October 7, 2023 statement blaming Israel for the attack and the persistent frenzy of violent social media posts had a profound effect on many Jewish students.

In a letter to the editor in the October 24, 2024 issue of the *Crimson*, the student president of Harvard Hillel's undergraduate student Jewish community wrote: "Being Jewish at Harvard today is vastly more difficult than it was [for college students] in the '90s."[578]

[578] https://api.thecrimson.com/article/2024/10/24/gershengorn-harvard-hillel-attacks-jewish-life/

We were surprised to learn just how correct this seems to be. Many Jewish students at Harvard today say they contend with antisemitism from their fellow students and in some University programs. Some Jewish students told us that they avoid certain degree programs, classes, and panel discussions sponsored by various departments and centers at Harvard because of antisemitism. Unfortunately, we fear that they may have good reason to do so.

We illustrate this point first with evidence from social media postings and group chats that were shared with us, which demonstrate the extent to which Jewish and Israeli students have encountered bigotry from their peers. We received many dozens of examples of social media posts that caused concern. Here, we provide here just a small sample to convey a sense of the climate of discourse to which Harvard students were being subjected.



Posts from the Harvard community page of Sidechat, an independent platform not affiliated with Harvard. (Image redacted to protect privacy.)

The Task Force also received complaints from students about other students who peppered their speech with derogatory references to Israelis and Jews:

> *[I] count … among my peers many students who regularly posted social media images like "Decolonisation is not a metaphor" (with Jewish blood dripping from the text) and who seemed generally unable to convene*

for any sort of social function (drinks, dinners, etc) without bringing up Palestine and "Israeli scum," "Zionist dirtbags" etc. [Graduate student]

We reviewed many other similar complaints and messages; some of them are provided in Chapter 4. This exercise illustrates the far greater levels of casual bias many Jewish and Israeli students experience today compared to a few decades ago:

I was on Sidechat for a while, enjoyed it, but had to delete it after October 7th. The comments were so awful, along lines of "Israel deserved what they were getting," many people in support of Hamas. There was no room for conversation because of the anonymity. It could be the person you just sat with at section and you just didn't know. It made campus feel different in a way it never felt before. I never wore a Star of David, but if I did, I would have taken it off, knowing that people hide behind the guise of anonymity. People in support of Jewish identities got downvoted. Anything in support of Hamas would be upvoted. It was a binary thinking. [Undergraduate student]

It's surprising to see people who are educated posting horrible things and seeing people in the street the next day knowing what they just posted. [Undergraduate student]

In another incident in early November, after October 7th, I faced backlash on social media for posting pro-Israel content. As part of a social organization, I noticed a bunch of highly antisemitic posts [online] .... One post, directed at me, accused me of humiliating an Arab student, which is something I would never do. My best friend here is Arab. [Undergraduate student]

I understand not everyone's your friend and belongs to your club. A major theme at Harvard is wanting to have your cake and eat it too. People want to make anonymous statements with no accountability, and yet want the prestige to speak on behalf of Harvard students. In the absence of the University speaking, we need a much more careful discussion about public vs private speech. You shouldn't expect to make bold public announcements anonymously without putting your name under it. Doxxing is a distraction from the need for accountability around speech. [Graduate student]

The most blatant things are happening online. Sidechat, no one can see it other than what undergrads share. There is anonymity so can't be regulated by Harvard. Exists on other campuses. Students are very active on it. Some antisemitic posts and students are perceiving things that outside cannot know of. [Faculty]

Theme 7 — Experiences of Anti-Zionist Jewish Students

While most of the Jewish students at our listening sessions focused on experiences of hostility against them from non-Jews, a smaller but active and organized segment of Jewish students who identify as anti-Zionist felt that one of the primary sources of their discomfort was the main Jewish chaplaincy organizations that serve members of the Harvard community (Harvard Hillel and Harvard Chabad) as well as various Jewish student organizations in the Schools. For these students, Israel was the key point of division: they felt unwelcome in Jewish campus organizations where support for Israel seemed assumed or even demanded:

I've never felt comfortable at Hillel or Chabad because of how staunchly pro-Israel they are. I have problems with Israel and how those speaking out against Israel have been targeted by those groups and our University. Much harder to be open about being Jewish and Israeli because of how these groups and the University have created a playing field in which Jews are addressed in a whole different realm. In reality, Islamophobia, racism, antisemitism, problems in Israel/Palestine are not separate from each other. [Undergraduate student]

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Some Jewish students, including members of various anti-Zionist organizations active in the College and some of the graduate and professional Schools, expressed sadness and frustration at feeling shunned by fellow Jews and Jewish organizations on campus who do not share their views on Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

All of the advocacy I do — protests, risks I take — it is because I am Jewish. Deeply rooted in these values. They've influenced every aspect of my life. It's never been as disrespected as it is here by other Jewish students in the [Harvard School name]. [Graduate student]

We've done our best to put out statements condemning doxxing [of pro-Palestinian students]. Through that, we have been accused of antisemitism throughout year … I have spent my entire life in predominantly Jewish spaces. Super important part of my identity. I quickly left [a Jewish student organization], made to feel wasn't Jewish enough because I grew up Reform. Programming was conservative-focused … Dropped out of doing Jewish related things at [my School]. My roommate was doxxed, our apartment was doxxed … the most frustrating thing is that students have been weaponizing antisemitism to accuse people of acting out Judaism in a way they don't like. I'm not antisemitic because I'm doing Judaism differently, and that's how it's been seen. [Graduate student]

The largest form of antisemitism I have experienced has been from other Jewish students who are interested in policing the bounds of Jewish identity one way or the other. They've called me a kapo or a useful idiot to Hamas or a non-Jew. [Student]

Some students expressed concern that the University's leaders, in the way they engaged on issues related to Jewish matters, conflated Harvard's Jewish community with prominent organizations like Harvard Hillel, Harvard Chabad, and others they perceive as pro-Zionist:

The first thing that comes to mind is the President's Office, administration, Hillel, and Chabad excluding anti-Zionist and Zionist-questioning people, making them feel excluded from Jewish spaces. It feels like they're defining antisemitism without considering what many Jewish people feel is actually antisemitic. Using the label antisemitism to take down movements or student organizers is a real misuse of antisemitism. As a result, it's challenging to combat real forms of antisemitism that exist all over the world. [Student]

The non- or anti-Zionist Jewish students we met with called for more openness to their perspectives within the broader Harvard Jewish community, as well as greater institutional support for their spiritual needs and the social events they wish to organize:

In my experience, the hardest part has been feeling constant need to invoke my Judaism because people around me are being called antisemitic. My grandfather is from Israel. I have family whose houses were burned down on Oct. 7th. That's not something I wanted to share, but everyone around me was being called antisemitic for an article and I felt like I had to share this deeply personal family information because people around me were being called antisemitic for voicing their opinions. This institution is the reason that talking about Israel is hard. I have family members I profoundly disagree with, but we can still talk. [Graduate student]

I would like to envision a more diasporic Jewish life on campus. Practical limitations to what Hillel International could do. But to have a group to coexist alongside Hillel, I think that would be amazing. Share members. I also go to Hillel. But there are practical limitations to what it can do. My roommate and I have been hosting Passover and it's been getting bigger and bigger. We're struggling to fund it. Having grants would help. Supporting different approaches to Jewish life on campus. [Undergraduate student]

Theme 8 — Need for Enhanced Course Offerings and Academic Programming

As described in Chapter 2, the October 7th Hamas massacre immediately and sharply deepened pre-existing divides between students with clashing perspectives on Israel/Palestine. In our listening sessions, many students spoke of a lack of opportunities for what they considered informed, wide-ranging, and unbiased education about Israel/Palestine at Harvard. Some attendees, however, expressed doubt that students would avail themselves of such opportunities if they existed and willingly challenge their preconceptions and engage in open dialogue, as opposed to seeking confirmation of their existing views:

> *If Harvard sponsored conversation about Israel and Palestine, some of my peers would laugh at that, and say how could Harvard, supporter of a colonizer state, possibly host this conversation? There is animosity towards even the idea of Israel right now, and that's where a lot of the antisemitism lies. [Undergraduate student]*

Despite this skepticism, the Task Force felt this subject was far too important to be left solely to students alone to navigate, especially given some of the accounts we heard:

> *One of my suitemates knew nothing about the Israel/Palestine conflict and the student tried to talk about it without going too deep, because they didn't feel comfortable talking about it with non-Jews. There's a fear of having conversations about anything related to Israel/Palestine because people don't know enough to participate and don't want to say the wrong thing. But they can listen. [Undergraduate student]*

> *People want to talk about Jews, but not know anything about Jews. This creates the atmosphere … in which I have a continuous sense that my classmates do not respect my ethnicity at all. They don't want to learn about Jews, they only want to tell some of us that we deserve to die. [Graduate student]*

While there was little if any University-wide academic programming on Israeli-Palestinian issues, various Harvard Schools, centers, and affiliated organizations (such as Harvard Hillel) attempted to address the need for such programming with events ranging from impromptu teach-ins to panel discussions held at venues like HKS's Belfer Center and FAS's Weatherhead Center. Many students expressed a strong desire for substantive engagement on these issues:

> *I attended a conversation at Hillel moderated by Michael Sandel, and I've never felt prouder to be Jewish. In a moment of so much loss, people were able to take a step back and have an intellectual discussion, which is similar to how they were raised. I wish more people saw that side of Zionist students, and Jewish students, and they don't see that. [Undergraduate student]*

These events, however, seemed aimed at particular campus communities, which could be seen as problematic:

> *Something I've noticed and want to flag and create a conversation thread around is separation. I have a desire for there to be more bridging conversations instead of separation conversations. On [one particular] quad, there was an event for Israeli and Jewish students, and one for Arab and Muslim students, as if to say there's no overlap or nothing to be gained by mixing. I'm frustrated by this narrative of separation. I think it was a departmental decision. I asked if we could have a shared, joint event. There were discussions that followed. I would love Harvard to focus on bringing people together across boundaries. [Graduate student]*

Some students emphasized the need for courses that contribute to greater religious literacy, both for its intrinsic value and to promote pluralism in general:

> *I have managed to get through HDS without taking courses on Hinduism or Buddhism, both of which are hugely important and demographically much larger than Judaism. I think that is a failing on my part, but also on the part of HDS. How can we be pluralists if we are ignorant? [Graduate student]*

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Numerous students we spoke with expressed concern that courses addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict presented a biased perspective, unfairly critical of Israel:

> *It's unfair to have a very biased curriculum on a subject this tense [the Israeli-Palestinian conflict] without addressing the counterargument. We should hold our professors to that standard. If you have a class that has one leaning, you had better include the other argument. If you personally cannot, invite a guest lecturer. [Undergraduate student]*

Another student suggested that sensitivity and professionalism on the instructor's part could mitigate this concern, allowing discussion of events like the Gaza crisis without imposing personal political viewpoints. The same student emphasized the need for courses on Israel to showcase the country's multifaceted nature beyond conflict:

> *Israel is more than war — it's a vibrant and diverse country … A lot of students don't know what Israel is really like. [Undergraduate student]*

During listening sessions, faculty members grappled with a range of challenging questions arising from the campus climate, particularly regarding how to foster constructive dialogue in the classroom on difficult topics like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how to engage diverse and sometimes conflicting viewpoints with both directness and mutual respect. In this connection, one faculty member spoke positively of the work being done at the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics, a University-wide initiative, and at HKS in sponsoring conversations on a wide range of contentious subjects. This faculty member emphasized that such conversations "need to step away from patronizing and protecting" participants, and instead demonstrate a firm commitment to presenting diverse, and at times discomforting, views.

However, some expressed concerns that such engagement could potentially expose instructors to personal risk. One faculty member, for example, shared that while considering developing a course on antisemitism, a concern on their mind was the possibility of doxxing and harassment targeting the course's would-be teaching fellows:

> *Part of the difficulty here is how the discussion about antisemitism in particular has been dominated by certain very loud voices. Some students come to me and whisper, which is so sad. They feel that someone else doesn't think they have the right to talk about threats as a Jew because they have the wrong view on Israel. We have multiple layers of untangling to do. As a Jewish faculty member, I feel a lack of support for professors because of social media attacks, which makes me not want to speak out. [Faculty]*

Ultimately, fostering productive discourse among Harvard students on complex issues like Israel/Palestine requires Harvard faculty to effectively explain and exemplify how to engage constructively with diverse perspectives, even when personal political commitments differ. This demands modeling how to momentarily transcend entrenched positions and find common ground:

> *[Universities like Harvard should hold] public events about how/why we [the faculty] are able to work together so well even though all have different political viewpoints. We have avoided this … It's difficult to do. Let's turn it into intellectual discourse. We're not talking about how to disagree agreeably, we're talking about how to do it in an intellectual way, which is what universities should do to produce not just knowledge but understanding. [Faculty]*

Communications with the Task Force Co-Chairs

The summaries and quotations provided above represent only some of the voices the Task Force heard during listening sessions. Yet, they illustrate the profound sense of crisis experienced by many Jewish and Israeli students at Harvard during the 2023-24 academic year. They reveal not only the depth of pain endured, but also the students' fervent desire for the University administration to implement swift and comprehensive measures addressing their concerns.

The gravity of the situation was further underscored through private conversations and direct communication with the Task Force co-chairs. Below, we present a selection of these accounts, focusing on three themes of special concern: perceived threats and safety concerns, challenging academic experiences, and social derision and shunning. These accounts provide additional context to the challenges reported to us by many Jewish and Israeli students.

Perceived Threats and Safety Concerns

In a complaint submitted to Harvard officials shortly after October 7, 2023, and later shared with the Task Force co-chairs, an Israeli American graduate student expressed that given the ensuing turmoil they had "not felt comfortable or safe walking on campus without a Harvard police escort." The student also described an incident in early December 2023 where, while posting flyers in in support of Israel in Harvard Yard, they were observed, photographed, and approached by a man who questioned their actions. While the man did not attempt to harm the student, we were told they nonetheless felt badly shaken by the encounter.

A faculty member provided another first-hand account that touched on the theme of physical safety:

> *I want to document my experience around the encampment in case it is useful to shed light on how these "peaceful" protests may have impact in ways they don't realize or intend. I don't feel safe going into the yard at this time, not because I fear physical violence, but because I'm not comfortable being surveilled and targeted as a "Zionist" by protestors using the label to be denigrating and derogatory, which is what happened when I walked over last Friday night in a spirit of learning.*
>
> *While I quietly stood watching the open mic in the encampment (I attended alone and not in "counter protest"), a Harvard alum and former student called me on the phone, and then texted several times, which is not normal. When we were able to speak after I left the yard that night, he informed me that he had seen my name come up on an internal chat (apparently a large group communication for "marshals of the encampment") and that there was concern with my presence there. I was described so that others could recognize me and identified as a "Zionist." It was unclear if he was alerting me to warn me to be careful or to ask me to leave, but during our brief conversation he wrongly associated me with counter protest and communicated that he was hoping I'd act in an especially nonthreatening way because my presence was a concern. It was chilling.*
>
> *What I'm taking from this, and perhaps I've internalized it in the wrong way, is that I was surveilled, identified by name, and profiled as a "Zionist" threat in a chat that reached far enough that an alum not at the protest, who I had no idea was even involved, knew exactly where I was and reached out with concern. I have not shared any of my views (complex and ever-changing) with students or in any public setting save for asking a question at a "teach in." I have no idea what I did to end up on a blacklist, but whatever the reason I was profiled, beliefs about me that are inextricable from my Jewishness seem to have made me a potential target.*
>
> *This experience is personally significant in diminishing my sense of freedom from religious discrimination on campus. [Faculty]*

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A graduate student informed the co-chairs that, in May 2024, the student submitted complaints regarding the pro-Palestinian encampment in Harvard Yard and the behavior of some individuals within it, which the student characterized as harassment. The student, the co-chairs were told, contacted multiple administrators, and submitted several Title VI complaints, which the student said were deemed not to rise to the level of discrimination:

> *Throughout the past weeks, the encampment engaged in disruptive activities that significantly interfered with my ability to carry out my academic and professional responsibilities. Loud demonstrations, amplified chants, and the occupation of a large section of the Yard occurred daily, often late into the evenings. The noise and disruption made it very difficult for me to focus on my work, research, and duties … [Graduate student]*

The student felt threatened by many of the slogans and much of the signage in the encampment:

> *Hearing such rhetoric being promoted in my place of residence and work … created feelings of fear and distress … The pervasive use of this violent language throughout the encampment created a hostile and intimidating environment for … many … Jewish first-years who live in the Yard. [Graduate student]*

Challenging Academic Experiences

An undergraduate student reported to the co-chairs enrolling in a class on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in academic year 2023-24 but ultimately dropping it. According to the student the course had what they perceived as a one-sidedly pro-Palestinian tone, which they said led them to feel defensive and uncomfortable in the classroom setting.

An Israeli graduate student shared an account of their experience three years prior, when they said they had taken a course on Israel and the Palestinians. The student described the course as explicitly one-sided from their perspective. They reported that throughout the term, they felt consistently singled out and asked to justify their decision not to emigrate from Israel, as well as to account for their actions during their military service. The student told the co-chairs they had been engaged in peacebuilding activities since high school, but felt this background was disregarded in the class. The student felt they were, as they put it, not allowed to be a human being in the eyes of fellow students.

Social Derision and Shunning

An Arab-Israeli undergraduate student shared that from their first days at Harvard, they encountered what felt like social discrimination by some people of Arab descent. The student reported that some people refused to speak with them altogether or broke off conversations upon learning they were Israeli. They said they lost many friendships with fellow Arab students, and described feeling attacked by strangers for their involvement in the annual Israel Trek — a peer-led trip to Israel for Harvard students during spring break. According to the student, the PSC urged students to boycott the trip and refused to meet with them or other Israel Trek leaders. The student also mentioned knowing of a Palestinian student who, they said, initially talked openly with Israelis upon arriving at Harvard, but over time cut off ties with Israelis after associating with what the Arab-Israeli student described as more radical students.

An Israeli undergraduate student reported to the co-chairs that they were called a murderer to their face, felt compelled to drop their course in Arabic due to what they described as a hostile atmosphere, and believed that they were the target of malicious comments by classmates. They also told us that a Muslim woman who had befriended them was called a "Zionist" by others.

The co-chairs received an account from an eyewitness to encounters between an Israeli graduate student and a classmate. According to this account, the classmate allegedly said "you worked in the government, so you are a Zionist. I don't respect Zionists." (We understand that the Israeli student worked for a civilian ministry.) The eyewitness, who identified as neither Israeli nor Jewish, claimed the classmate pressured

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other students to shun the Israeli, suggesting they might be seen as supporters of genocide and the killing of children if they did not. The eyewitness provided the following statement:

> *Judging someone based on their country, religion, or the actions of others is UNACCEPTABLE … It's troubling that someone I share the identity of being a Harvard student who holds such narrow views and acts in such a way toward a fellow student. It's even more concerning that [the classmate] used a global conflict to create a hostile environment and stain the name of a fellow student in a space meant for learning. I don't mind if [the classmate] dislikes me or chooses not to be friends. This is something which doesn't even matter to me but I strongly object to [the classmate's] connecting me with "killing children" or "genocide" when it has nothing to do with my interactions or opinions except for knowing [the Israeli student in question].*

Conclusion

The Task Force found that Jewish and Israeli student reactions to the events of the 2023-24 academic year, especially in the aftermath of the October 7th attacks, were diverse and intense. Many of the students we spoke with described experiences of being bullied or shunned by fellow students, singled out for negative attention by instructors, and feeling ignored by administrators. Other students reported few or no hostile encounters, but a segment still admitted to a degree of self-censorship and self-concealment about their Jewish identity and views on Israel to avoid what they perceived as potentially unpleasant situations with their classmates.

Notably, many Jewish students who identified as anti-Zionist reported to us that they felt the main source of hostile behavior against them was other Jewish students.

Overall, a substantial majority of the students we met expressed some level of discomfort with their position within the Harvard community, with reported experiences ranging from mild to severe. This qualitative assessment appears to be corroborated by the quantitative survey data presented at the beginning of this chapter.

It is important to note that while these accounts provide valuable insights into student experiences, they represent individual perspectives and perceptions. The Task Force's role has been to listen to and report these experiences as they were shared with us. These narratives, combined with the quantitative data, form a crucial piece in understanding the full picture of Jewish and Israeli students' experiences at Harvard. They can help us better comprehend the concerns of these students and work towards envisioning and creating a more inclusive and supportive campus environment for all members of the Harvard community.

CHAPTER 4

Case Studies from Harvard's Schools

The Task Force received a significant volume of complaints about specific programs, classes, and protests at Harvard that some students, faculty, staff, and alumni experienced as antisemitic or involving bias against Israelis. Some of these concerns came to the Task Force through listening sessions, while others came through emails and personal meetings with members of the Task Force. Chapter 3 presented a sampling of these concerns. The accounts received made it clear that, particularly during academic year 2023-24, many Harvard affiliates had negative experiences and found that the University's channels for addressing complaints about experiences of bias, discrimination, and bullying were not functioning effectively. In Chapter 5, we offer policy recommendations aimed at improving the University's ability to receive and address such complaints.

This chapter examines the perceived failure by some administrators and faculty to manage courses, academic programming, and School-related events while upholding the principles of open-minded inquiry, civility, and respectful disagreement. While troubled by the incidents described, the Task Force acknowledges that it could not and should not serve as a substitute for a functional system for handling complaints and discipline actions at Harvard.

Moreover, we want to underscore an important point we made in the Introduction. The Task Force did not view its charge as serving as an investigative body. We have listened to and are reporting on what we were told. We did not seek counterarguments or counterevidence. It is also important to note that the University and individual Schools may have taken or may be in the process of taking actions to address the concerns outlined here. The University summarized some of the actions it has taken since our Task Force released our Preliminary Recommendations in June 2024.[579]

Therefore, the information presented in this chapter should be considered the starting point of a broader evaluation of these potentially problematic programs, not the end point. A complete assessment requires that the Schools housing these programs conduct a full and fair investigation of these concerns (an activity beyond the scope of the Task Force), seeking out possible counterevidence and counterarguments and gathering more in-depth information from the individuals involved.

In this report, we define antisemitism as an identity-based bias that has kept Jewish Harvard affiliates from fully participating in Harvard's educational, co-curricular, and social life. Similarly, we define anti-Israeli bias as an identity-based bias that has kept Harvard affiliates with Israeli nationality or background from fully participating in Harvard's educational, co-curricular, or social life. Based on what the Task Force heard, we believe both antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias under these definitions exists at various places at the University but seems to be particularly pronounced in certain programs at a few Schools, as is discussed below.

Some on Harvard's campus described experiencing direct expressions of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias, which manifested in the following ways, listed in descending order of reported frequency:

1. ostracism of Zionist and Israeli students that adversely affects their participation in both classroom and co-curricular settings;
2. politicization of instruction or academic settings that effectively makes a specific view on the Israel-Hamas conflict a litmus test for full classroom participation and ends up disparately impacting many Jewish and Israeli students; and

[579] https://www.harvard.edu/task-force-on-antisemitism/#implementationupdates

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3. politicized instruction that mainstreams and normalizes what many Jewish and Israeli students experience as antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.

While reported less frequently, the third category — politicized instruction that mainstreams and normalizes antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias — was especially concerning as it often occurs in the context of instruction about Israel/Palestine, a subject of considerable student interest, but one with a shortage, in our view, of high-quality offerings meeting Harvard's standard for intellectual excellence. Also, such instruction can negatively influence the broader campus climate, creating a knowledge vacuum that allows problematic offerings to unduly shape campus discourse and culture.

The following sections examine each category in turn, providing examples of the kind of behavior we heard occurred on campus in academic year 2023-24, and offering one in-depth, illustrative case study. The chapter concludes with an analysis of potential causes and possible remedies.

Ostracism of Zionist and Israeli Students and Their Exclusion from Full Participation in Both Classroom and Co-Curricular Settings

Many Jewish students shared accounts with us of experiencing shunning from their peers for their support or presumed support of Israel. In this student politics, Jews are objects of suspicion, who some students and instructors view as presumptively holding "bad views," and the response of some students is to choose not to engage with them as fellow humans or Harvard community members. These experiences appear to be widespread, with reports emerging from students in Harvard College, Harvard Law School, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Harvard Medical School. Israeli students, both Jewish and non-Jewish, encountered a more severe version of the same problem since their Israeli identity is often very obvious to their fellow Harvard community members:

> *On paper, I went to the best … school in the world, but Jewish students weren't really part of the vision they had for their diverse community. I largely felt that there was a problem but nobody wanted to do anything about it. It just seemed to be the case that antisemitism was just okay. And as an Israeli it was just okay to alienate me and not include me. Friends of mine were bullied for being friends with me — one was told that it would "hurt his career to associate with a Zionist and to be publicly associated with a Zionist." He posted a picture of us studying together on Instagram and people attacked him for being with me. I never even did pro-Israel things — I just existed [as an Israeli and a Jew]. This ruined my experience. I was cheated out of what I should get to experience as a student at Harvard. Going to Harvard meant everything to me — to spend [my time at Harvard] being bullied and ostracized was horrible. I was not invited to participate in the social life of my [cohort] because of this and I missed out on opportunities. [Graduate student]*

The experiences students related, such as overhearing friends urging classmates to drop a student solely because of that student's Jewish and Israeli identity, are deeply concerning. One faculty member told the Task Force that students had expressed interest in their course but ultimately decided not to enroll because the faculty member was "a Zionist." Similarly, a student reported to us overhearing a non-Jewish classmate ask another student about a Jewish peer: "Is she a fanatical racist Zionist or just a Jew?":

> *I had friends over … to my apartment. Of the people who attended, 13 of them were my closest friends that I had made at [Harvard] up to that point. At one point, a small group of them brought up that they did not feel safe around an Israeli student on campus because of his nationality. I passionately defended him as a person and his right to be a student here. The topic of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict itself did not arise during the conversation. After the discussion ended, we went back to doing other things (talking, playing games, etc.). Only three of my friends were part of the argument, the others were in another room or doing something else.*

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Soon after the party, I noticed an uncomfortable distance between myself and all 13 of my friends. Invitations to hang out stopped, texts were not replied to, and one person had blocked me on Instagram. I reached out to a few of the people, asking to chat or meet to discuss what had happened, but the texts were either ignored or I was told they were busy.

[Later], I reached out to a few of the friends who I thought would be most receptive to meeting with me. They agreed, and I met with four of them. All of them expressed that they had no issue with me personally, and that they were sorry for the exclusion I had experienced. However, they viewed the incident as a disagreement amongst friends that they were not willing to mediate or intervene in. As such, when that group spends time together, I will not be invited anymore because some of the people do not want to associate with me.

It was in these discussions that I learned that one of the people in the friend group had labeled me a Zionist. They had called me a Zionist to others and made clear that they were not willing to meet with me or speak with me at all for that reason. As such, I have not been able to sit down with them to have a conversation, clear the air, and reach a mutual understanding. I can only assume that my subsequent social isolation (and Zionist labeling) was for expressing my view that the Israeli student had a place on campus, and that students should not feel unsafe on campus because he is Israeli. [Graduate student]

Examples like this illustrate how anti-Israeli bias can easily spill over and affect American Jews.

Even before October 7th, prejudice and shunning based on perceived connections to Israel were already experienced on Harvard's campus. For instance, as noted in the introduction, the Task Force heard an account from a few years ago of an Israeli student in a Harvard degree program was assigned to a group project with another student. That student informed the faculty member who made the assignment that their pro-Palestinian politics prevented them from participating in the group project with an Israeli. While stating there was nothing academically wrong with collaborating with their assigned partner, the student requested a different group assignment, citing their political views as justification. The instructor reportedly granted the request.

Another example involves the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights at the François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights, based at the Harvard Chan School. Until very recently, the Palestine Program operated a study abroad program in partnership with Birzeit University.[580] Birzeit, a Palestinian institution, maintains an official policy of academic boycott, refusing academic contact with Israeli universities. This collaboration for several years raised concerns that a Harvard program effectively tolerated a boycott of Israeli academia, and was, potentially, serving as a model for such practices for its students. The Task Force suggests that a more constructive approach would have been for Harvard to condition its collaboration with Birzeit on the inclusion of an Israeli university partner.

[580] In late March 2025, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health informed us that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Birzeit University's Institute of Community and Public Health, which initially established the FXB Center's initiative on Palestinian health, has expired. The formal collaboration with Birzeit has ended, though individual faculty collaborations remain possible. The FXB Center has removed Birzeit's logo from its website, which now reflects a broader range of international partnerships.

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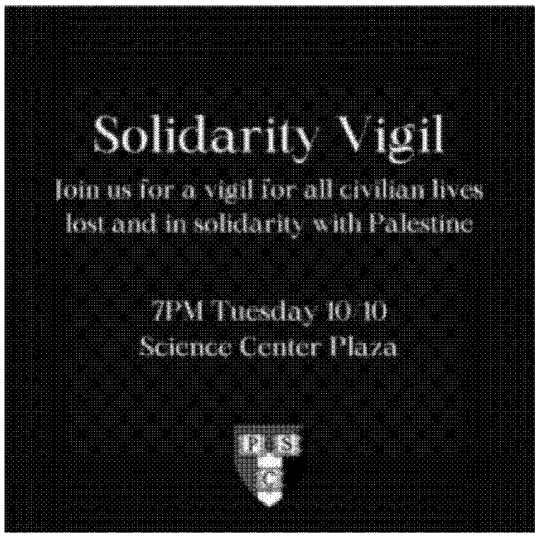
Politicization of Instruction and Other Academic Activities

The second category of concern observed in numerous Schools across campus, involved the introduction of what effectively amounts to a political litmus test regarding the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, even in courses seemingly unrelated to the subject.

One example relates to multiple concerns expressed to the Task Force about the actions of some faculty at the Harvard Chan School in relation to protests during the 2023-24 academic year. Several students reported feeling that some faculty appeared to endorse pro-Palestinian protests on campus. For instance, one student expressed concern that a faculty member canceled and rescheduled class, seemingly to allow students to participate in the "Palestine Solidarity Global Strike" on Friday, October 20, 2023. This student reported feeling "disheartened, isolated, and scared" as a result. The Task Force believes that when faculty take actions that could be perceived as signaling to students that their grades will not be affected if they miss class to join a specific protest — especially if that protest aligns with the instructor's political commitments — such actions have the potential to undermine the Harvard Chan School's stated aim of producing an inclusive and welcoming environment. (We understand that the School's leadership has subsequently communicated to its faculty that canceling classes so students can attend protests is, going forward, unacceptable.)

Similarly, the Task Force received a report that a Teaching Fellow at Harvard Law School sent an email to students in their class on October 10, 2023, which included the following:

> I have tried to normalize the practice of bringing your whole identities and ideologies to the law school and classroom. I am sure you have been apprised of the ongoing violence in Gaza. To say the least, the news may seem overwhelming and confusing. I remain a resource for you all as a peer and TF to help process what we are seeing. I've found that spaces like the event below, a vigil at 7pm tonight at the Harvard Science Center, are very grounding. I invite you to take time to process your emotions, develop your commitments, and be in the community.



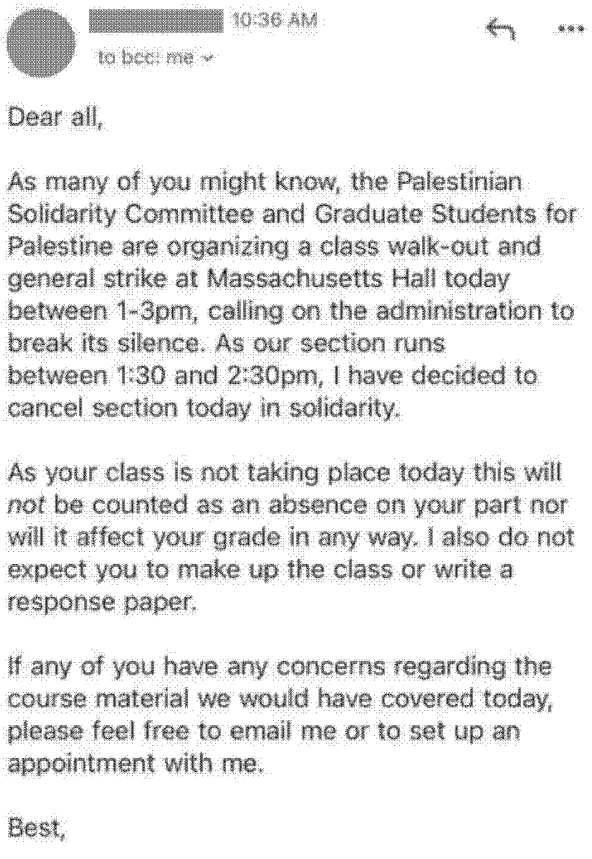
The student described in a letter to the Task Force how this made them feel:

> *[The Teaching Fellow] made no mention of the horrific terrorist attacks on civilians in Israel and made it seem that this was a one-sided issue, echoing the abhorrent statement written by the Harvard Palestinian Society Committee that was released days earlier and signed by 34 student organizations … [The Teaching Fellow] also stated in [their] email, "I remain a resource for you all as a peer and TF to help process what*

we are seeing." By explicitly calling out that [they are] a TF, [they] called on [their] authority and role as an employee of the University to further [their] agenda. Finally, [they] encouraged students to attend a Palestinian Vigil, making no inclusion for any of the Israel Vigils we were also being conducted to help students. [The Teaching Fellow] encouraged students to only mourn the lives lost in Gaza …

The professor in the course, upon learning of this email, immediately intervened to prevent its recurrence and made clear to all students in the class that the email had not been authorized by him. No further emails of this sort were circulated.

The Task Force received a similar concern about a Teaching Fellow's decision to cancel a class at Harvard College:



10:36 AM

to bcc: me

Dear all,

As many of you might know, the Palestinian Solidarity Committee and Graduate Students for Palestine are organizing a class walk-out and general strike at Massachusetts Hall today between 1-3pm, calling on the administration to break its silence. As our section runs between 1:30 and 2:30pm, I have decided to cancel section today in solidarity.

As your class is not taking place today this will *not* be counted as an absence on your part nor will it affect your grade in any way. I also do not expect you to make up the class or write a response paper.

If any of you have any concerns regarding the course material we would have covered today, please feel free to email me or to set up an appointment with me.

Best,

Text message from an instructor to students.
(Image submitted anonymously and redacted to protect privacy.)

In a course focused on reimagining education through diverse learning methods — including storytelling, art, drama, games, and community action — the instructor, a visiting fellow who was at Harvard for a short, one-week visit, posted a course welcome video that began, "We have inherited a world where a genocide is happening in Gaza." The application of the term "genocide" to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is hotly contested. Beginning a course unrelated to the Middle East with this assertion effectively establishes a political viewpoint as a prerequisite for full participation in the course.

This framing significantly affected some students:

It was clear that genocide is not the professor's area of expertise, and yet [they] felt the need to frame this controversial argument as a fact, as part of [their] "welcome" to the students in the course. No context to the war was given, no mention of the suffering of people in Israel or the hostages, or of the countless devastating

conflicts in the world. Needless to say, there is no connection between the comment and the course. As an Israeli student, when I hear these as the first words of a course, I know that I am no longer welcome in this course … this environment puts me in a situation where I need to think twice before enrolling into a class, before saying where I am from when professors or students ask, give examples from my experience, or even if I should speak in class and draw more attention to myself. And more importantly, the atmosphere results in me as [a small number of Israelis] at HGSE being singled out. My Jewish peers and I continue to be marginalized from some classes and opportunities other students have access to. HGSE's curriculum clearly values equity and inclusion, but I am left feeling that this is a hollow promise when it comes to me and my Jewish peers. [Undergraduate student]

While instructors have the right to express their political viewpoints in civic and political contexts, their role as educators, especially when teaching unrelated subject matter, requires them to exercise restraint in expressing personal political views. This restraint helps ensure that all students feel able to participate in the class on an even footing. In the case of the visiting fellow, who was on campus for a very short period of time, the Task Force is concerned that basic professional norms regarding the role of an instructor were not communicated. We note that as soon as the administration was notified of the problem, they acted to remove the offending video from the course website.

Similar to the issue of shunning, the Task Force heard accounts of what some described as political litmus tests being present at Harvard prior to 2023. One notable example involved the "Settler Colonial Determinants of Health" course, taught annually at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. A 2021 email from the EDIB Standing Committee of the Department of Global Health and Population that was distributed to the full department described the course as part of a broader initiative that ultimately resulted in the creation of two courses:

> Our students, faculty, researchers, and staff come from every region of the globe, bringing together diverse backgrounds, identities, and perspectives. As scholars and as colleagues, we work towards building an inclusive and welcoming environment, where everyone can feel valued and accorded dignity and respect.
>
> Since the designation of the standing committee, we have been working through the materials gathered in our retreat, the priority plans from the school, and the previous recommendations from the EDIB committee to chart the optimal next steps. Although we are still sorting through the optimal strategy, we have already seen some progress so far. The Department has developed a course on Decolonizing Global Health … and a course offered this Winter session, *The Settler Colonial Determinants of Health* …; the Brown Bag Seminar has diversified its speakers. The doctoral and SM2 student communities have some mentorship programs that have developed organically. We will update you as we progress in our learning and actions.

The first instructor of the first class mentioned in this email, "Decolonizing Global Health," described their vision for the topic on social media in a post that students shared with us:

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This social media post appeared to suggest that success in the course might be contingent upon political support for a specific side in a heated political contest. It also arguably conveyed a message that students who disagreed with this viewpoint might not be welcome. Indeed, several students with different political views who were initially interested in the course told the Task Force they chose not to enroll due to fear of discrimination. It should go without saying that academic performance should never depend on a student's political opinions or commitments. If this course adopted a specific political agenda, as the social media post suggests, such an approach would undermine Harvard's academic mission and integrity.

This situation also raises concerns about whether instructional quality met Harvard's standards of excellence. In any event, the decision-making process surrounding this course does not serve as a model for how Harvard departments should implement significant new curricular initiatives.

The Task Force heard similar concerns about actions related to the Israel-Hamas conflict in other areas of the University that some perceived as imposing a viewpoint litmus test. For example, protests at Harvard Medical School in Spring 2024 sparked concerns that the atmosphere at recruiting events for newly admitted Harvard students could discourage open and constructive discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some worried that these protests might create pressure to conform to a particular viewpoint, potentially discouraging prospective students who hold dissenting views from enrolling.

To provide context for the concerns, we will share some background information, relayed by HMS faculty, students, staff, and alumni, about the events that took place in the 2023-24 academic year at the Admitted Students Preview Days at HMS.

Many HMS affiliates described a deeply politicized environment, where outward expressions of social and political commitments were commonplace. For example, it was reported that HMS affiliates commonly wear pins and other visible symbols to signal their support for various causes. Numerous Jewish physicians and physicians-in-training told us that they supported such outward expressions as a way to affirm inclusivity and shared humanity. The Task Force recognizes the value of this aim.

However, many affiliates also reported an intellectual environment that provided little room for other types of diversity. Some HMS faculty, staff, and students characterized the dominant political atmosphere at HMS as a monoculture. Unfortunately, we were told, Jews do not do well in this narrative, where "Jews are the oppressors and [part of being good and supporting health means] stopping colonialism and Israel." In recent years, HMS has embraced an expansive view of the role of health professionals in promoting public health, for example by training its new students how to become advocates and activists on issues related to public health and encouraging them to leverage their roles as physicians to effect social change along multiple dimensions.[581] Importantly, while this political framework suggests a worthy concern about certain forms of discrimination, many community members expressed concern that this focus seems limited to groups "underrepresented in medicine"[582] or those experiencing "adverse health outcomes." These categories, they noted, do not include Jews or Israelis.

Indeed, several community members — a term we intentionally employ to protect the anonymity of individuals who requested that even their roles at HMS not be disclosed — told the Task Force that they felt hostility when seeking assistance from HMS's Office for Diversity Inclusion and Community Partnership (DICP). They said they were told that this office primarily addressed the concerns of groups currently underrepresented in medicine. HMS administrators disagreed with this framing of DICP, and in

[581] In sharing early drafts of this work, many readers expressed disbelief that this was true. However, it is. In the *Introduction to the Profession* mandatory course for first year medical students, there is indeed a class on "Physicians as Advocates and Activists." The course teaches students "principles of advocacy and activism" after which the class "explore[s] a pathway to meaningful activism and advocacy through the lens of a most consequential public health threat — climate change." The course teaches students that as physicians, they will be "among the most trusted voices in our society" who should use that trust to advocate for social causes.
[582] See e.g., https://www.aamc.org/career-development/affinity-groups/gfa/unique-populations#

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emails with the Task Force pointed to recent programming related to antisemitism concerns.[583] That said, these community members described an environment where commitments to anti-racism and diversity, equity, and inclusion did not appear to encompass a parallel commitment to combating, or even adequately acknowledging, antisemitism. HMS affiliates who advocated for the School to address antisemitism more directly told the Task Force that they often felt their efforts were met with resistance.

It is within this context — one in which some community members see HMS as an environment where many people are committed to combating certain kinds of discrimination and encouraging activism — that October 7th arrived. The Hamas massacre and global response brought into sharp focus how HMS's commitments to social justice intersected with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This question was not entirely new, as tensions surrounding the issue had been increasing in salience since the 2010s. Nor was the division within the broader HMS community, with some viewing Zionism a form of social justice, while others saw pro-Palestinian activism as the paramount social justice issue of the day.

What the Task Force learned about HMS underscored for us the critical need to create and nurture a School culture that provides room for dissent and values genuine diversity, including diversity of thought. In the aftermath of October 7th, any Jewish, Israeli, and Zionist community members appeared to have expected the HMS administration to share their grief, while other students appeared to have expected the administration to share *their* grief, which they described as not only fear for what would happen in Gaza but also their mourning for all of the violence and displacement that has been a part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades. As one Jewish student poignantly described, they felt "torn between being Jewish and being a health care provider who cares about the lives of all endangered people."

This pre-existing climate of polarization intensified in the aftermath of the Hamas attacks. We heard that public political expression at HMS surged, taking the form of protests, open letters, external threats, legal actions, and demands for divestment or boycotts. Both sides of the political dispute closely scrutinized the administration's various responses, meticulously analyzing written communications for any hint of bias and dissecting the statements of various deans. Several staff and students reported paying close attention to which administrators attended specific protests or social events, and what they said while present. Some HMS affiliates felt that HMS's handling of demonstrations — specifically, what they perceived as a failure to enforce rules regarding permitted demonstrations and an implicit endorsement of pro-Palestinian protests — demonstrated an uneven application of policy. Others viewed any attempt to discipline the protestors as an attempt to delegitimize their cause.

One of the most troubling stories that we heard in the course of our overall work had to do with Admitted Students Preview Days (ASPD) at HMS. HMS, like many medical schools, hosts an event on campus for its admitted students to come and "experience HMS" with the goal of persuading them to enroll. This is an example of a "yield event" where universities welcome their admitted students to campus to see the community they have been invited to join.

According to reports received by the Task Force, some HMS students planned to use ASPD as a platform for a pro-Palestinian protest. This plan was not a secret — it was initially shared with the student body via an email survey gauging support for incorporating pro-Palestinian messaging into the HMS student "music video," a signature element of ASPD. However, the HMS administration reportedly blocked this attempt, deeming it "inappropriate" and stating that "it would likely be perceived as representing a political viewpoint and could alienate some members of the student body." The *Crimson* reported that some HMS

[583] When HMS administrators reviewed a draft of this report, they pointed to several programs that this Office had produced that were not mentioned to us by the HMS affiliates who spoke to the Task Force, such as seminars and programming on Holocaust education and sessions co-sponsored with the Harvard University Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging on antisemitism and Islamophobia. We acknowledge and appreciate the work that HMS has been doing to improve the climate on their campus.

students viewed the administration's decision as censorship, particularly since pro-abortion messages had been featured in the prior year's video, which reflects back on the deeply politicized environment.[584] In a statement to the *Crimson*, HMS' spokesperson wrote that:

> There is a place and space for protest and expression of political advocacy, but it is not in a celebratory student music video, which is meant to be a non-political, festive piece and designed to create a supportive, inclusive environment for all students and to welcome newly admitted ones.

This strikes us as exactly right, and we commend the HMS administration for responding as they did.

Despite the administration's significant and admirable efforts to prevent the politicization of the student music video, several accounts described the ASPD event as intensely partisan and off-putting. While we were not in a position to conduct an exhaustive investigation, the common themes that surfaced suggest important issues and concerns meriting close attention:

> *A lot of the current students made it clear they wanted to send a message to visiting students to discourage Zionist students from coming here. [HMS student]*
>
> *[At admit day], many students were wearing keffiyahs, including officers of student groups. [There were] many signs like "Stop the Genocide" and "Free Palestine." There was a talent show where many student organizations put on Palestinian-themed presentations. Current medical students [stood] on an elevated walkway yelling "Free Palestine." Many students wore red masks to show that they had been muzzled by Harvard (apparently in connection with a student-produced video that was to have more Palestine content). I was told by one of the students that "Zionists are not welcome at HMS." [Recently admitted HMS student]*

HMS students and admitted students described the rhetoric and protests at the event as threatening. For example, during the talent show, an HMS student performed an Arabic song that was written by Lebanese artists after the Israeli victory in the Israeli-Arab War of 1967 that reflects sadness over the outcome of that war and a longing for the conquest of Jerusalem. In Arabic, the song is called "Ya Zahrat al madayn." The HMS student performed the first verse of a three-verse song, where the first verse reflects a longing for Jerusalem and a praise for its holiness, the second verse reflects a lament for the loss of Jerusalem to Israel in the war of 1967 and the third verse expresses faith that fury will come and restore Jerusalem to Arab rule. The verse performed during HMS Admitted Students Preview Days, translated into English, is as follows:[585]

> It is for you O city of the prayer that I pray
> It is for you O splendid home, O flower of the cities
> O Jerusalem O Jerusalem O Jerusalem O city of the prayer
> Our eyes are set out to you everyday
> They walk through the porticos of the temples
> Embrace of the old churches
> And take the sadness away from the mosques
> O night of Al Asra O path of those who left for the sky
> Our eyes are set out to you everyday and I pray

HMS administrators informed us that they had authorized this student to perform a different Palestinian folk song, "Ya Taali'een 'ala el-Jabal," and that the student substituted this other song about Jerusalem for that one after going up to perform with no warning. They also emphasize that the student did not perform the final verse of the song, where the longing for the conquest of Jerusalem is most explicit (e.g., the lyrics

[584] https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/4/22/medical-dental-students-allege-music-video-censorship/
[585] A translation of the full song into English can be found here: https://lyricstranslate.com/en/node/77817

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"I will knock the gates and I will liberate them / My face will be cleaned by the holy water of the Jordan river / And the effects of the barbarism of the past will be erased O Jordan River / The glaring anger is arriving riding … This is our home and Jerusalem belongs to us / And in our hands we will celebrate the splendor of Jerusalem / by our hands the peace will return to Jerusalem" were not performed). However, students and prospective students in the audience who did not speak Arabic were aware of what song was performed and the lyrics that they looked up online, not the fact that the second two verses were omitted. HMS administrators also tell us that they admonished this student subsequent to the performance of the song for failing to follow the approved script and reminded this student of the time, place, and manner restrictions on protest. HMS administrators also inform us that they will separate the talent show from ASPD going forward.

One student described their admission to HMS as "one of the biggest honors" of their life. It was "not even a dream" because they "never imagined it would happen." There was "true elation." This applicant identified as a progressive Jew who said they were "not afraid of keffiyehs." However, the ASPD event revealed to this applicant that HMS was "not an environment that was welcoming to different viewpoint/stances" and not a place where they "could find community. [The ASPD event] burst the bubble of elation." This applicant, while deeply critical of Israel's actions in Gaza, shared the following:

> *What stuck with [me] throughout the [event] weekend: [is] Zionists not welcome here. You [the applicant] are not and will not be. Students were trying to make other students not welcome.*

The admitted student felt that HMS did not offer the sort of "respectful and inclusive" environment that they envisioned for their preparation as a health care professional and instead was a toxic place where the student did not want to spend four years. As a result, this admitted student turned down HMS and pursued their medical education elsewhere.

Another admitted student shared with the Task Force a strikingly similar experience. They reported feeling shocked by what they perceived as endorsements of the anti-Israel protests by HMS administrators at the ASPD event. They mentioned noticing the absence of any Israeli or Jewish representation (for example, in flag displays), while seeing HMS tour guides wearing clothing that signaled support of anti-Israel protestors and what they described as "pro-Hamas posters" during the dorm tour. These observations left the prospective student feeling that HMS staff and students would be actively hostile toward them if they enrolled.

This prospective student further reported visiting HMS's Office for Diversity Inclusion and Community Partnership after the ASPD event to inquire about accommodations for Jewish holidays and express feeling unsafe during the ASPD activities. According to the student, they were told that they were not unsafe but rather uncomfortable, and that they should know the difference. The student was reportedly told that their safety was assured by the presence of security personnel at the event. However, the student replied at the time, the fact that HMS had to bring security to the event for admitted students meant that there was a safety issue. They told us that they left the meeting in tears.

This admitted student also declined HMS' offer of admission.

A vocal component of the HMS community appears to view itself as engaged in an ongoing battle to establish a certain narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an institutional orthodoxy. In line with this, one senior HMS administrator noted the strong focus of many HMS students on social justice, adding "[they] think Harvard is on the wrong side of history when it comes to Palestine":

> *[Life at HMS] left me ready to quit medicine — I had to remind myself that Harvard isn't medicine and that not everywhere is like this. [HMS graduate]*

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Politicized Instruction that Mainstreams Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias

The Task Force received examples of instructional materials from multiple Schools that raised concerns about the potential introduction of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias into the classroom.

Harvard Graduate School of Education

One concern involved a course at HGSE about ethnic studies that assigned an article titled "Palestine is Ethnic Studies: The Struggle for Arab American Studies in K–12 Ethnic Studies Curriculum."[586]

The article, which focuses on the conflict over the Ethnic Studies curriculum in the State of California's K-12 education system, describes how Jewish groups raised concerns about what they perceived as one-sided depictions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the erasure of California's Jewish community. However, the article characterizes these Jewish groups as one of two main opponents of ethnic studies in California, alongside White supremacists. On page 222, the article states:

> In addition to the white supremacist targeting of this movement, Islamophobic and Zionist organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Community Relations Center, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center organized an aggressive campaign to remove any mention of Palestine and Palestinian Americans in the curriculum.

The article then asserts that dismantling anti-Arab racism requires "ending the war on terror including the US-backed colonization of Palestine."[587] Notably, the article itself offers limited insight into the perspectives and motivations of the California Jewish community regarding the draft curriculum beyond cursory references to "anti-Palestinian racism." It then posits that a new, liberated ethnic studies curriculum emerged in response to the perceived political influence of the California Jewish community (or "Zionists," as the article refers to them).

There is no reason why an article about Arab American studies in the broader conversation around ethnic studies could not be featured as part of a course that covered the content, which this one at HGSE did. However, the article, as written, taps into antisemitic tropes. The article does not include any counterpoint explaining *why* Jewish groups had problems with the model California ethnic studies curriculum. Jewish groups are reduced to a faceless, shapeless, and malevolent force. A class discussing the perspective of both pro-Palestinian groups and Jewish organizations with attachments to Israel could nicely illuminate contested spaces within ethnic studies curricula. Instead, the provided course materials communicated a dehumanizing frame to Jewish students in the course.

Instructors should strive to identify and avoid potentially antisemitic materials, just as they would materials containing potentially racist or otherwise biased content. In addition to the concerns raised about this article, the Task Force also learned about a session in four sections (out of 28) of a required course for all HGSE students that included the following graphic about White supremacy:

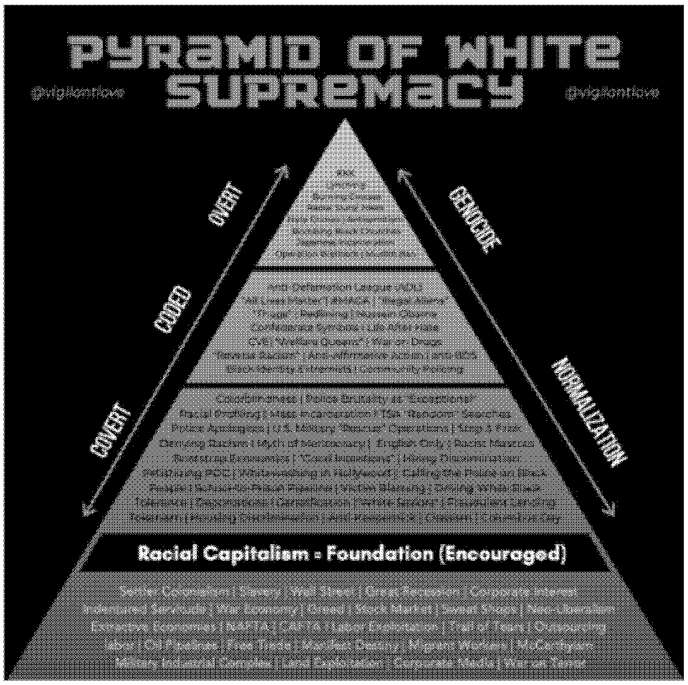
[586] Lara Kiswani et al.,"Palestine is Ethnic Studies: The Struggle for Arab American Studies in K–12 Ethnic Studies Curriculum," Journal of Asian American Studies, vol. 26 no. 2, 2023, p. 221-231. Project MUSE. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2023.a901070

[587] Ibid, 223.

An Example: Deconstructing White Supremacy

"This image illustrates the historical foundations of day-to-day racist norms that work together to produce "extreme" or spectacular acts of white supremacy. It shows that individualized white supremacy stems from centuries of structural racism in the US."

from: https://www.vigilantlove.org/servicesnotsurveillance



Setting aside concerns about potential antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias, this graphic is on its face conceptually incoherent. For example, it pairs slavery with free trade, neo-liberalism with McCarthyism, and outsourcing with the War on Terror. Such dubious comparisons appear throughout the chart.

A closer examination reveals additional concerns. The graphic labels opposition to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement as considered "coded genocide," placing it alongside the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Both are positioned merely one step removed from "overt genocide," which includes examples like lynching and the KKK. The ADL, while not without controversies, is a longstanding American Jewish organization founded in 1913 with a well-documented history of advocating for civil rights.

Some Jewish students enrolled in this course who spoke with the Task Force expressed that this graphic felt demonizing towards individuals who support Israel's right to exist. They reported that the instructor displayed the graphic on screen for an extended period without addressing its problematic characterization of Jewish organizations and perspectives. Furthermore, when a Jewish student raised concerns about the graphic's antisemitic elements to the teaching assistant, who then relayed these concerns to the instructor, the graphic was neither removed from the screen nor from the copy of the slides posted online. Instead, the student told us the instructor made a comment at the end of class that felt targeted and dismissive of their concerns. According to the student, the instructor referenced the "land acknowledgement" made earlier in the class, in which the instructor acknowledged that Harvard University sits on land rightfully belonging to Native Americans, and then stated, "I am so grateful that we could acknowledge the land we are on right now is not rightfully ours and this [rule] must apply to other places."

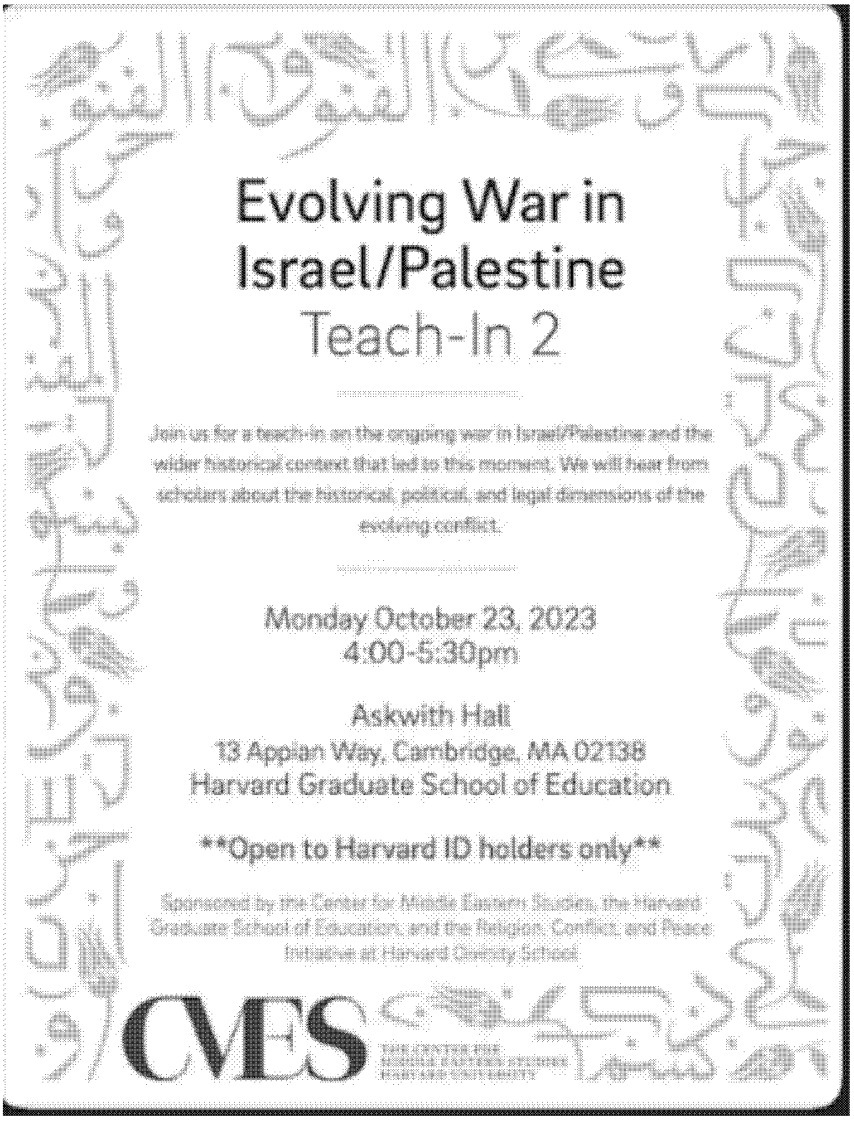
We understand that the instructor has since agreed not to include this graphic in their course materials in the future.

The complex dynamics of problematic social media, public commentary, and experiences of shunning and identity-based targeting that the Task Force has noted coalesced in certain significant community events. One such incident was a teach-in at HGSE.

In the aftermath of the October 7th attacks and the ensuing war and campus unrest, HGSE, like other Harvard units, sought to organize a panel discussion featuring diverse perspectives on Israel and the Palestinians. Given that HGSE lacks resident faculty with expertise in the area, they (sensibly) looked elsewhere in the University for help. Consequently, HGSE leadership asked the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, whose faculty possess considerable expertise in the region, to assemble the desired panel.

Several attendees perceived the resulting panel to be heavily skewed toward a single perspective, with some even expressing concern that the speakers appeared to justify Hamas' actions. Furthermore, the Task Force received reports alleging that an antisemitic comment was made by one of the panelists, directed toward a HGSE affiliate.

An examination of this incident underscores the danger of convening one-sided panels to address deeply contested issues. It highlights the importance of responsible and knowledgeable faculty leadership in moments of crisis and in assembling suitable speakers for such moments, and what happens when that does not happen.



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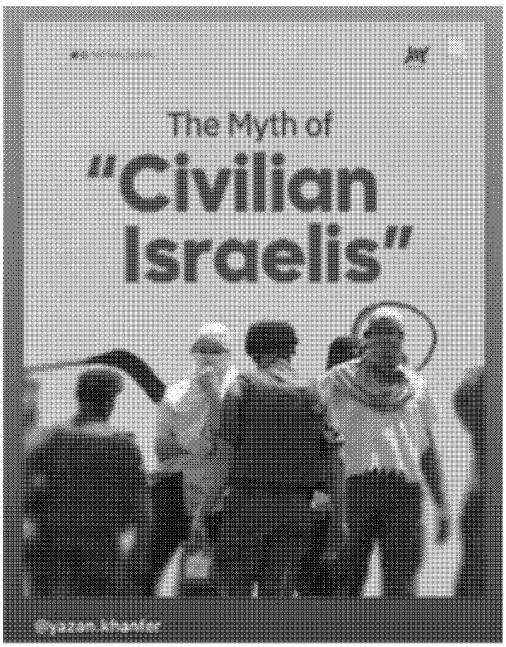
This event was co-organized by Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), which possesses considerable resources and expertise on the region. A HGSE administrator opened the event with the following remarks:

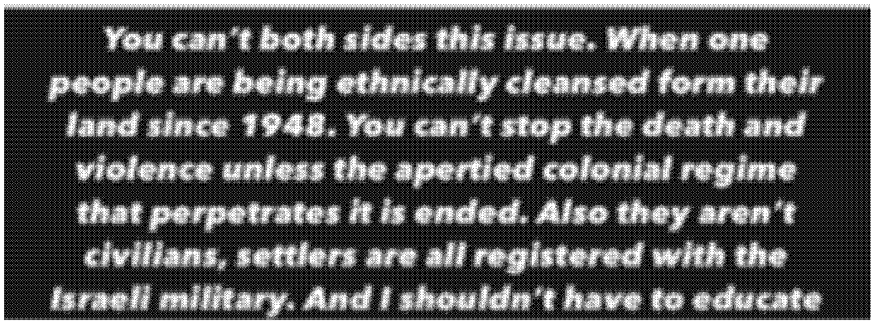
> As you know, this is the second in a series of teach-ins on the evolving war in Israel/Palestine that are being organized by our colleagues in Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. This one co-sponsored and hosted by [HGSE] …
>
> We decided to start these events with a teach-in for at least two reasons. First, we heard from many students over the past two weeks about their perceived lack of knowledge about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their desire to learn more about the historical, political and legal context for the current conflict. Second, as a School of Education, one with the motto "Learn to change the world," we view learning as an essential prerequisite for work on the most challenging issues we face as a society.
>
> The scholars we will learn from today vary in their identities, their experiences and their expertise. They differ on how they assess the current situation. What matters most about it? Where things are headed. And what should be done …
>
> What they and other scholars affiliated with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies share is a commitment to the principle that there is no justification for the targeting of civilians and that any loss of civilian life should be grieved.

Unfortunately, the speakers largely did not differ in how they perceived the then-current situation. The speakers included a professor of Palestinian Studies from another university and three Harvard affiliates with recognizably pro-Palestinian viewpoints. Some Jewish HGSE affiliates told us they chose not to attend this event when they saw that there was likely no one on the panel who would offer a pro-Israel or even neutral voice. Their concerns proved to be justified.

At the outset of the event, speakers described the October 7th attacks as attacks on "Israeli Jewish settlements surrounding the Gaza strip." This terminology raised concerns among some attendees, who perceived it as an arguably deliberate attempt to de-humanize the Israeli victims of the attack and to justify their murder since they were "settlers," a term typically used in English to describe Jewish residents in the West Bank, as opposed to those who live in pre-1967 Israel. (The places in southern Israel that were attacked by Hamas were the latter, e.g., collective agricultural communities founded in the 1940s and 1950s.) Some Jewish and non-Jewish HGSE community members reported feeling that the thematic thrust of the teach-in leaned more toward justifying the violence against Israeli civilians than criticizing it.

This perceived sentiment about Israeli settlers was not limited to this particular event at HGSE but appeared to be present elsewhere at the University as well. Students shared social media posts with the Task Force — allegedly made by fellow students — that exemplified this perspective.





The lack of any kind of sympathetic perspective towards Israel meant that the assembled HGSE participants were left without answers to important questions: Why was Israel alarmed by Hamas' victory in the 2006 Palestine Authority elections? Why did Hamas and the mainstream Palestinian faction, Fatah, fight a civil war after that election? Why did Israel choose after Hamas' victory in that war to impose strict separation between it and Gaza? Why are Jews living in Israel in the first place? On all of these questions, the panel offered no information.

This event was recorded, so we were able to review the full transcript in addition to hearing complaints and concerns from attendees. In the recording, panelists claimed that pro-Israel community members at Harvard were in denial, suggesting that efforts should focus on helping them "unlearn what they've already learned." This framing implied that individuals holding views divergent from those of the panelists had been misled or indoctrinated into falsehoods. The panelists were perceived by audience members to adopt a stance of "breaking a taboo" and of "speaking out against power" while actually offering partial truths and misinformation. The panelists talked about the importance of humanizing Palestinians, but at the same time they seemed to de-humanize Israelis.

The discussion seemed to lack historical and political context essential for a comprehensive understanding of the conflict. For example, the panel did not address Israel's history of releasing large numbers of Palestinian prisoners in hostage deals, a factor that reportedly played an important role in the planning of the October 7th attacks, so even the Palestinian perspective was not well-represented at the event. Instead, the panelists focused on advocating a particular pro-Palestinian framing that left the motivations of both Israelis and

Palestinians a mystery. For example, in a transcript of the event "settler colonial" appeared three times, "apartheid" appeared four times, and "genocide" appeared 13 times, while "hostage" did not appear once.

In an extraordinary moment, a Jewish American HGSE affiliate posed the following question after the panelists concluded their discussion:

> You know, to say I feel gaslit in the face of massive atrocities in Gaza and in Israel would be an understatement. This does not feel like a teach-in. This feels like indoctrination. I will end with a question, though. My heart goes out to each of you on a human level. Deeply human level. I'd love to hear how, given all the context, the justification, but not the justification, you would explain the violence on kibbutzim founded in 1946, not settlements. Thank you very much. Kibbutz is peaceful. Kibbutz is with peace workers. How would you explain the targeting and murder of children and families in their bedrooms? And I would end that by not making some political statement. Right now, what we see in Gaza is absolutely heart-wrenching, that we know thousands of people have died and will continue to die in Gaza. Israelis and Palestinians will continue to die in this conflict. And it is astounding to me that we have just sat through 90 minutes where one person made a very brief mention and then each of you went to great lengths to give us context for the murder of families in their bedrooms.

In response to the HGSE affiliate's question, one of the panelists reacted by asking the individual to repeat their name, which was a common name for a Jewish American. The panelist, who had grown up in Israel/Palestine, then proceeded to tell the HGSE affiliate that they had no right to ask the question:

> Now, honestly, what's your name? [Repeating a recognizably Jewish first name] … Excuse me. I am extending first of all, don't interrogate me. I'm not [at] an interrogation. We're not at home.

Audience members who spoke with the Task Force perceived this response as implying that the Jewish HGSE affiliate, by virtue of their Jewish identity and pointed question, posed a threat akin to interrogation or even torture by the Israeli military.

Following the event, the Jewish HGSE affiliate who had asked the question and received this answer, subsequently communicated with senior HGSE administrators, who apologized for the harm caused by the teach-in and the "extremely one-sided" panel. They also recognized the panelist's behavior as "antisemitic" and that this response to a legitimate question was "unacceptable and bigoted." Other HGSE community members expressed a similar sympathy and shock at the event. We were told that members of the HGSE community were deeply traumatized by this panel and this incident, and it contributed to what we were told was a very tough year at HGSE.

We believe this example illustrates the dangers of one-sided academic events on controversial topics. These dangers are enhanced when these events are produced by a School itself or center, as opposed to a student-initiated event, which does not carry the University's implicit endorsement. Events like the HGSE "teach-in," which consist of 90 minutes of people agreeing with one another, transforms the ostensible purpose of the event into something more like a rally for partisans who passionately share the same viewpoint. Moreover, such a structure incurs a risk of emboldening and bringing out extreme aspects of the hegemonic point of view on display.

That is what happened here. We wonder whether the panelists would have been so quick to dismiss points of view from the audience that differed from their own if those perspectives had been represented by the panelists themselves. And we also wonder whether the antisemitic attack by one of the panelists on a member of the HGSE community would have taken place in an atmosphere open to the exchange of dissenting views. The event was attended by students from other Harvard units, so its influence was felt beyond HGSE as well.

Disturbingly, the Task Force received additional accounts from Harvard affiliates at HGSE describing instances where American Jews, Israelis, and even Palestinians with moderate political views were subjected to bullying and intimidation by pro-Palestinian activists who viewed any perspective on Israel that did not align with their own as a betrayal. This bullying reportedly took various forms, including shunning, threats, and verbal harassment — all of which are antithetical to the values and norms of a pluralistic and inclusive community. The public nature of the abusive behavior at the HGSE Teach-In, coupled with the lack of immediate public condemnation, raises concerns about whether this incident may have contributed to a broader culture of intolerance. By appearing to legitimize a narrow and exclusionary perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the event may have had a chilling effect on the free expression and sense of belonging of those — among them many Jewish and Israeli individuals — holding dissenting views within the HGSE community.

This case points to the need for centers of excellence with topic matter expertise, like CMES, to act as trusted partners to the rest of the University during times of crisis. CMES failed to rise to the occasion at this event. The moderator (a faculty member from elsewhere in the University) was also not sufficiently prepared to handle an active instance of antisemitic name-calling in the moment.

Preventing similar occurrences in the future requires support for improved academic capacity at the University to address the thorny questions in the Middle East at the highest level of academic caliber, more professional development for administrators in how to develop, structure, and implement public events on controversial topics, and more clarity from School leadership on how to establish non-discrimination and anti-bullying as norms anchoring a pluralistic School culture. Additionally, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies should in the future offer more diverse perspectives when providing experts to serve in public events throughout the University.

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

In Fall 2024, the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights at the François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights (the "Palestine Program") at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health offered many high-profile webinars about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Several students raised concerns with the Task Force about these webinars, alleging that some of the featured speakers presented a demonizing view of Israel and Israelis. One student told us that the FXB programming created the impression that "Israel exists solely to oppress Palestinians, and nothing else."

Students reported that when they voiced concerns about what they saw as bias in the Center's programming, they were asked: "Who is more marginalized, Jews or Palestinians?" These students interpreted this response as an attempt to invalidate their concerns by suggesting that the complaints of Jews were illegitimate because of an unseen hierarchy of civil rights claims and victimhood. Students noted that there were no programs on the "public health consequences of rockets being fired or suicide bombings."

One student shared, "I came to the school as a [scientist], only to encounter this big over-arching framework of social justice that is a higher priority here than science." Another student echoed the sentiment, stating, "[We] have decided that every issue is a public health issue, which means we bring our public health lens to every problem we encounter, despite a poverty of actual knowledge on whatever the details of that problem are."

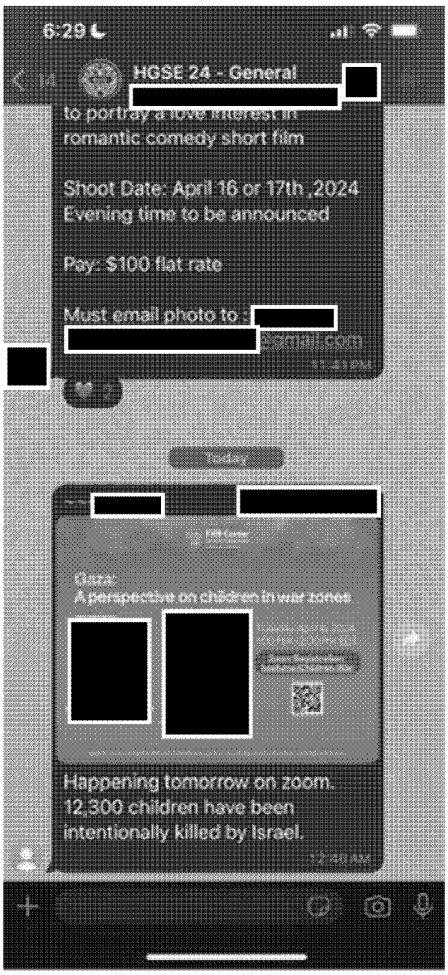
We note that since at least late April 2024, FXB webinars, like other Harvard Chan School programming, have carried a disclaimer indicating that FXB webinar speakers do not speak for Harvard.

One Harvard alum offered this observation about an FXB webinar held in November 2024, citing it as a representative example:

> During the webinar another [speaker] said that all the hospitals in Gaza have been "attacked, besieged or ordered to evacuate" without ever once mentioning why that was the case … [The speaker] then went on to assert "the IDF's charter is to target healthcare workers."[588]

We received complaints about another FXB webinar from April 2024, "Gaza: A perspective on children in war zones," which was also characterized by bias and misinformation. To give a handful of examples, the speaker initially presented the casualty numbers in Gaza as if all deaths were civilian deaths. The speaker asserted that Israel had sealed all exits from Gaza dating back to the mid-2000s, which is not true: prior to (and during part of) the Gaza war that started in 2023, the southern border was controlled by Egypt. The speaker asserted that the number of casualties was comparable to the Darfur genocide, which was also untrue. The accumulation of dis- and misinformation of this kind about Israel is a form of demonization, and we were told it was experienced as such by Israeli and Jewish members of our campus community.

It is important to note that an association between a Harvard program and this type of content gives the content seeming credibility that can have an impact far beyond a particular School at Harvard. For example, in the main Harvard Graduate School of Education group chat last year, students implored each other to attend these FXB webinars:



Some Jewish students shared with the Task Force that they felt these types of one-sided events carried the implicit endorsement of Harvard's name and reputation. They expressed concern about the

[588] This paraphrase from the report to the Task Force appears to correspond to the following statement from the webinar: "This is intentional targeting of healthcare workers. So being a healthcare worker in Palestine, especially in Gaza, that's per the Israeli military, this is basically their charge — because you're being a healthcare worker, you're doing your job, you're going to be targeted."

proliferation of such events — citing numerous instances at both FXB and the Religion and Public Life (RPL) program at Harvard Divinity School (which we discuss below) — as indicative of institutional bias and hostility. This sentiment stemmed, in part, from the perceived absence of any perspectives within these programs that offered alternative explanations for Israel's actions or presented different interpretations of the data:

> *Chan has a truth; this is just how we think; Chan has never had a single event that is pro-Israel or even neutral, it is all very one sided. [Harvard Chan School student]*

> *Weekly [at the Chan School] there were [events hosted by the Palestine Program of FXB] — there were a ton of flyers around the school around it, a seeming constant presence to students that "the most important thing in public health is Palestine" and there is only one acceptable view. [Harvard Chan School student]*

Notably, every Jewish and non-Jewish student who raised concerns about the Palestine Program with the Task Force also expressed either personal ambivalence or even opposition to the ongoing Israeli military operations in Gaza, as well as deep concern about the health and well-being of Palestinians. But at the same time these students felt there was no place for them in such programs at the Harvard Chan School unless they adopted a pervasive yet at best incomplete framing of facts and history that had become, in their view, almost universal in the School.

The Task Force also received numerous complaints about the Harvard Chan School's course on the "Settler Colonial Determinants of Health," specifically concerning the Spring 2022 version of the syllabus and some of its assigned readings. It is worth noting that this course was taught by one of the leaders of the Palestine Program.

Before delving further into the specific concerns about the course, it is essential to understand the broader context of the settler colonial framework that the course uses, through which it considers Israel as one of several settler-colonial countries worldwide, the most prominent of them being the United States.

Like Americans in general, Harvard students have long considered Israel through the lens of their own American identities, although what was once a positive association between America and Israel has in recent years turned into a negative one. In effect, the "settler colonial" frame that this course (and the RPL program) adopts tracks a shift in how members of different generations of Harvard students — and, by extension, many Americans — view the United States and its allies.

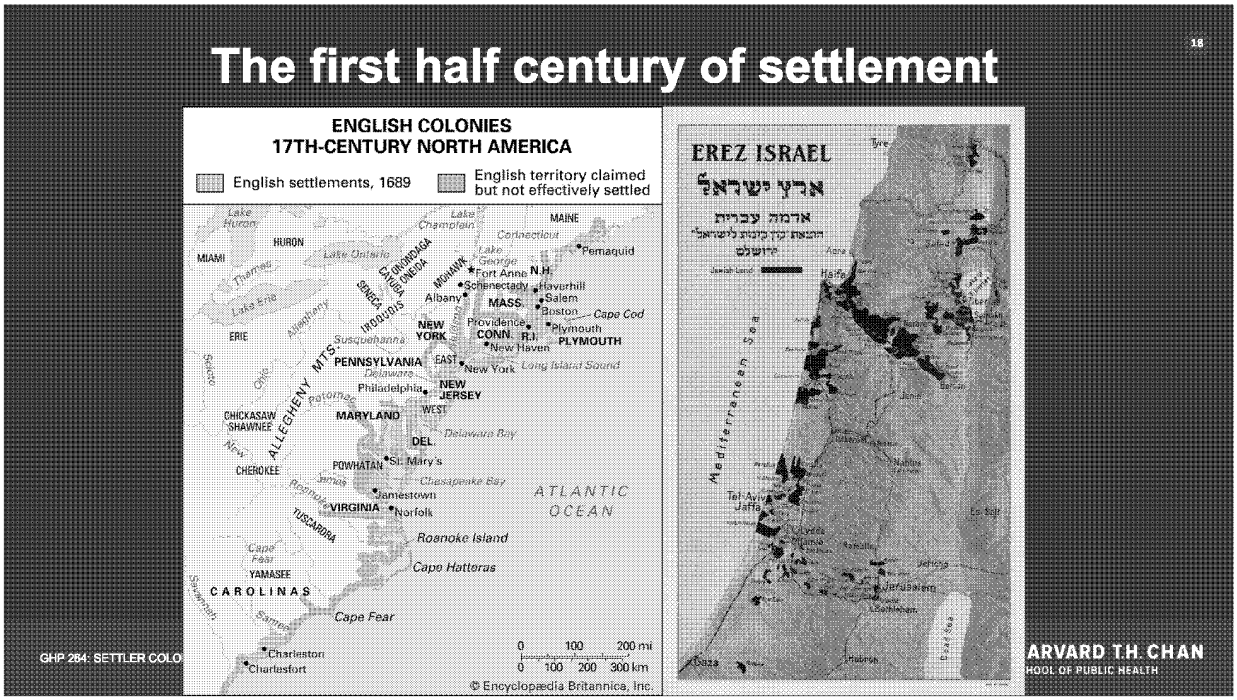
As an example of this historical shift, a Harvard student wrote in the *Crimson* in 1968:

> HEBREW University in Jerusalem is just like Harvard except that there are slightly fewer Americans, it rains less, the students work harder … ISRAEL began as, and in many ways still is a country of pioneers, and as a country of immigrants driven by the pioneering spirit it parallels America in its youth.[589]

This student's perspective reveals a clear identification with Israel as a kindred nation. When this student looked at one of Israel's premier universities, they saw Harvard, and when they looked at the country of Israel, they saw America in its youth, and they connected the pride they felt in the America that was a "pioneer[ing]" "country of immigrants" to Israel.

Today, many at Harvard also look at Israel and see the United States and its allies, but their judgment is different. For example, one of the slides in the Settler Colonial class on the first day in Spring 2024 depicted the following image:

[589] https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1968/12/17/israel-after-the-war-a-sociologist/



Relatedly, in a published article describing the trip organized by Harvard Divinity School's Religion and Public Life program to Israel and the West Bank profiled below, the Harvard staff running the trip describe:

> Increasingly, our students who are sensitized on the issue of Harvard's crimes against Indigenous peoples and who also reckon with the legacies of slavery and ongoing anti-blackness as well as other forms of bigotry cannot bracket their sensibilities concerning how one case relates to another. They become attuned to their situatedness and implication in various historical and ongoing injustices. They also see the links between the depopulation of Palestine and the legacies of settler colonialism in North America and understand that while the stories are distinct, they share common origins in European Christian modernity.[590]

Returning to the Settler Colonial Determinants on Health course at the Harvard Chan School, one of the assigned readings in Spring 2022 (which was made an optional reading in Spring 2023 and then removed from the syllabus in Spring 2024, in response to administrative intervention and an internal review process following complaints) was an article that aims to offer a comprehensive background on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, entitled "A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine," by Tariq Dana, a professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a former faculty member at Birzeit University, and Ali Jarbawi, a professor at Birzeit University.[591]

The paper begins:

> Throughout the past century, the Zionist movement constructed the most sophisticated settler-colonial project of our age: the State of Israel. The violent birth of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent colonization of the entirety of the land of Palestine after the 1967 war are indeed reflections of Zionism's successes in fulfilling its settler-colonial ambitions in Palestine. Yet, while this settler-colonial project continues unabated, it is an entangled one, unable to reach the ultimate point of

[590] "Touring Absences, Erasures, and Futures in the Unholy Land: A Religiously Literate Diasporic Reading of Palestine/Israel," Palestine/Israel Review 1, no. 2 (2024), 313-42.
[591] Tariq Dana and Ali Jarbawi, "A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 24, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2017), 197-220.

> Jewish exclusivity in the land. Zionist settler colonialism, as its historical precedents suggest, is fundamentally based on the operative logic of "eliminating the native" and failing to utterly marginalize and "minoritize" him. The vibrant Palestinian presence in the land, the everyday resistance to the colonial order, and the robust Palestinian adherence to their rights all stand as structural obstacles to the ultimate realization of the "Zionist dream." Despite Israel's relentless colonial power and domination, Palestinian steadfastness means that this project will remain impeded and incomplete, a matter that may lead to its future demise.

The remainder of the article draws on highly polemical scholarship to contend that:

> Zionism manipulated Judaism as a religion to reinterpret history and redefine Jewishness in terms of ethnic belonging.

The article posits that Jews are fundamentally a "religious group," not an "ethnic group," and therefore lack inherent territorial claims. It further contends that even if Jews were an ethnic group, the popular account of Jewish history is ahistorical.[592] The article suggests that the true descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the land are not those who identify as Jews today — who, as the article emphasizes, are a religious group, not an ethnic one — but rather, the Palestinians.

These perspectives are found in courses in Middle Eastern history and politics, and in many other courses in a wide variety of fields, throughout the world. This generalization misconstrued must not, however, be seen as a justification for the current state of teaching on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Harvard Chan School. Courses on such contentious subjects should offer multiple perspectives. Harvard should be a leader in this regard, yet students reported to us that the 2022 version of the syllabus for "The Settler Colonial Determinants of Health" implicitly communicated that any debate over Israel is settled and not welcome in the class. This perception stemmed from the stated learning objective to "analyze and interrogate the relationships between settler colonialism, Zionism, antisemitism, and other forms of racism."

Session 6, Day 4. Settler Colonialism in Palestine/Israel (will include lecture by guest speaker)		
Upon successful completion of this session, you should be able to: • Understand and discuss the history of settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel and its ongoing structure and manifestations • Analyze and interrogate the relationships between settler colonialism, Zionism, antisemitism, and other forms of racism	Required Readings: (46 pages + 11-minute audio clip) • Tariq Dana, & Ali Jarbawi. (2017). A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, *24*(1):197–219. • Andy Clarno. (2017). Introduction: Racial Capitalism and Settler Colonialism. In: Neoliberal Apartheid : Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994. University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-8. • Leila Farsakh. (2016) Palestinian Economic Development: Paradigm Shifts	TBD

We are told that this language was removed from later versions of the syllabus for subsequent iterations of the class after administrative intervention in response to student complaints after the class was taught.

The course's seemingly one-sided framing unfortunately overlooked alternative perspectives offered by Harvard's tenured faculty on these very issues. The broader literature on the question of the Jews' relationship with the ancient Near East as summarized in the appendix to a recent paper,[593] published in *Cell,* among whose authors are David Reich, Professor of Genetics at Harvard Medical School and Professor of Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University. According to Reich and his co-authors, there is considerable

[592] Dana and Jarbawi, "Century of Settler Colonialism," 199.
[593] See Shamam Waldman et al, "Genome-wide data from medieval German Jews show that the Ashkenazi founder event pre-dated the 14th century," 185 Cell (2022), 4703.

historical, archaeological, linguistic, and genetic evidence of a Middle Eastern origin of those Jews in today's Israel who have more recent European roots — let alone the Jews in Israel whose ancestors are from the Middle East and North Africa. Other research has found that Jews, Palestinian Arabs, Bedouin, and Druze are closely related.[594] Instead of engaging with the breadth of scholarly evidence on this subject, the Settler Colonial course seems to present a single, highly politicized approach to the question of Jewish origins.

Jonathan Gribetz '02, a Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, has described this type of one-sided rhetoric as an example of a kind of "mutual hatred and delegitimization" that has come to dominate the rhetoric between Israelis and Palestinians and their supporters:

> Many versions of such discourse circulate: there is no such thing as a "Palestinian"; contemporary Jews are merely Europeans with no connection to the Holy Land; there were hardly any Arabs in Palestine before the Zionists came; Zionism is racism; Palestinian nationalism is nothing more than antisemitism; and so on.[595]

Gribetz's observation highlights the dangers of reducing complex historical narratives to simplistic and oppositional binaries.

The Settler Colonial Determinants of Health course ends with an assigned reading entitled "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." This phrase, "decolonization is not a metaphor," resonated with numerous accounts the Task Force received from students who reported hearing it used by classmates to justify the violence of October 7th:

> *In the immediate aftermath of October 7th, close friends and classmates callously dismissed the atrocities that took place in Israel. In response to a friend who knew two people who were killed at the music festival, one close friend said, "I mean, I guess that sucks, but what did they expect?" When I expressed anguish at the loss of life, another responded, "do you believe in de-colonization in theory or in practice?" Then they asked me why I support Netanyahu. I have known some of them for almost ten years — nothing about my liberal values would indicate that I support Netanyahu. But somehow my Jewishness did … A few weeks later, one friend stopped responding to my texts and stopped acknowledging my presence in the hallways. And then another friend stopped talking to me. And then another. I have spent months wondering what I did wrong, but I am only left with the nagging suspicion that they do not want to associate with a "Zionist." They or their friends like and repost tweets that call Zionists "the most evil people to walk the planet" and call for the "slaughter" of Zionists. As I've walked to class, I've heard people mutter under their breath, "fucking Zionist." I don't even know if I'm a Zionist. But I'm a Jew and I've learned that that is enough to make me no longer worthy of their friendship or even basic kindness at school … [Student]*

The article assigned in the Settler Colonial course sheds light on this type of treatment by potentially suggesting a framework for understanding and even justifying hostile interactions like the ones described by the student:

> The absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler, disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self.[596]

[594] https://www.jns.org/genetics-can-bring-jews-and-arabs-together/#:~:text=Of%20particular%20interest%20is%20that,waves%20since%20the%20Muslim%20conquest; https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3032072/

[595] *See* Gribetz, Defining Neighbors at 2.

[596] See https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf at 7.

HHSHarv_00000321

In the view of this reading, when an Israeli or Jewish student at the Harvard Chan School complains that they are being attacked on the basis of their identity for the sins of others, they are "tr[ying] to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self." In fact, the reading explains why any attempt by Israeli or Jewish students to disclaim this type of blood guilt are "settler moves to innocence." The article continues:

> Though the details are not fixed or agreed upon, in our view, decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically[597]… [decolonization] means relinquishing settler futurity, abandoning the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples. It means removing the asterisks, periods, commas, apostrophes, the whereas's, buts, and conditional clauses that punctuate decolonization and underwrite settler innocence. The Native futures, the lives to be lived once the settler nation is gone — these are the unwritten possibilities made possible by an ethic of incommensurability.[598]

The kind of identity-based bias evident in this excerpt resonates with the classroom experiences shared with us by some Jewish and Israeli students at the Harvard Chan School. These ideas also appear to have an impact on the broader culture at the School. Materials such as these can be particularly hurtful to Jewish and Israeli students but they also undermine the educational experience of any student who takes the course by presenting politicized analytical paradigms as absolute truth.

Underlying our concern with the Palestine Program's content is its lack of administrative oversight by ladder faculty. Established in 2022, during a period of increased pro-Palestinian activism among Harvard staff, faculty, and students, the program appears to be run by a "leadership collective" of five individuals. Notably, none of the individuals hold a tenure-track faculty appointment at Harvard, and only one maintains a full-time appointment at Harvard.

This lack of ladder faculty oversight and accountability resonated with the concerns expressed by a frustrated Harvard Chan School student:

> *You can't allow a program at the Chan School like this that doesn't have a faculty director who's accountable for the content being put out.*

We agree. The use of the Harvard brand for a research or teaching project creates expectations among Harvard faculty, staff, students, and the broader public. Programs operating without the guidance and oversight of Harvard's regular faculty with expertise risk falling short of these expectations. This concern is further compounded by the fact that research disseminated by such programs is often reported in the media as "Harvard studies," even though, at least in the case of the Palestine Program, many of the published works reviewed by the Task Force appeared to be primarily authored by individuals based at other universities. We believe these accounts of experiences with the Palestine Program point to potential weaknesses in Harvard's approach to governance when it comes to academic matters that extend beyond the scope of the Task Force's mandate, but we leave that work for others to come after us.[599]

We should note there are physicians at the Longwood Campus and elsewhere at Harvard who take a very different approach to promoting Palestinian health. For example, a group of Israeli, Jewish, and Palestinian physicians working together as part of the Middle East Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School recently wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine* of the work they had done to treat both

[597] Ibid.

[598] Ibid at 36.

[599] We were pleased to learn from the Harvard Chan School that the Dean recently launched a faculty committee, led by the Dean for Academic Affairs, to review criteria and processes for instructor appointments and renewals, aiming to ensure the highest standards of academic and pedagogical excellence.

Israelis and Palestinians in the aftermath of the Hamas attack on Israel and the Israeli counterattack. In their article, they provided a nonpartisan and accurate description of the health crisis for both Israelis and Palestinians and spoke of their desire to promote health care and peacebuilding at the same time:

> Furthermore, as a profession founded on trust and open communication, medicine has the potential to build and strengthen trust between communities in conflict, and it should be leveraged toward that end. Indeed, health care has long been one of the few spheres in which Palestinians and Israelis work together and interact on a daily basis, treating each other with respect and dignity. Palestinian patients commonly put their fates and lives in the hands of Israeli physicians, a leap they could not take without trust. The same can be said of Jewish Israelis who are treated by Palestinian physicians, many of whom train and work in hospitals in Israel.

As this example shows, a profound and meaningful concern for Palestinian health does not require propagating a one-sided view of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The Task Force did not have to look farther than Cambridge to see that another approach was possible.

Harvard Divinity School[600]

The Religion and Public Life program at Harvard Divinity School illustrates how a limited selection of high-caliber courses on Judaism and Israel/Palestine, coupled with the influential presence of a program offering politicized, one-sided treatments of controversial issues and the embrace of a pedagogy of "de-zionization," harms the learning environment for all students, and especially for many Jewish and Israeli students.

HDS has the mission of "educat[ing] students of religion for intellectual leadership, professional service, and ministry." Although founded in the early 19th century as a "non-sectarian" (though in effect Unitarian) seminary, the School has in recent decades made considerable effort to become a non-denominational, multireligious theological school with students from a wide range of religious backgrounds. In this generation, HDS offers a set of degree programs that we understand Jewish prospective students find quite appealing, as it allows them to study Judaism while also learning more about other faiths and traditions. Important mainstream American Jewish leaders have degrees from the Harvard Divinity School. The courses also seem to appeal to Jewish students who cross-register from other Harvard Schools. Some HDS faculty and offerings draw praise from a wide range of Jewish students. However, the Religion and Public Life program raised significant concerns.

The Religion and Public Life (RPL) program at Harvard Divinity School became a focal point for concerns about one-sidedness and the promotion of a specific political ideology under the guise of academic inquiry. While the program was publicly launched with what seemed like a broad mandate to explore the intersection of religion and various aspects of public life, in practice, it focused heavily on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, presenting a perspective widely perceived as consistently anti-Israeli and aligned very narrowly with a strand of pro-Palestinian politics. This narrow focus on this exceptionally polarizing topic appears to have stemmed from the decision, made soon after RPL's founding, to center its programming around a multi-year case study on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This disconnect between the apparent mission and the actual implementation is a central concern addressed below.

The RPL program was founded in October 2020. The program incorporates, among other things, a speaker series, a one-year degree program, classes and a major paper or project at the end of the program.

[600] As mentioned in Chapter 1, Harvard Divinity School experienced a decanal transition during the 2023-24 academic year. The incoming dean inherited many of the challenges specific to HDS outlined in this report. We believe it is important to consider this context, particularly as the dean has since overseen a leadership change at what in our view has been the most concerning HDS program. This development gives us hope for considerable improvement, aligning with the recommendations outlined in this report.

The program has a director and several staff members. The first version of the program's website described its Master of Religion and Public Life degree (MRPL) as:

> A one-year graduate degree program designed for experienced professionals who wish to develop in-depth knowledge of the complex ways religion influences public life related to their career areas. The MRPL degree provides an opportunity for mid-career journalists, government officials, humanitarian aid workers, educators, artists, health care professionals, lawyers, and other practitioners to become leaders in their fields who can help foster a better public understanding of religion and address the religious dimensions of some of the most difficult issues of our time.

An article in the *Crimson* announcing the new program featured its leaders describing the MRPL as a degree for people seeking a deeper understanding of the interaction between religion and "civic life."[601] Notably absent from this article was any mention of Israel or Palestinians. The HDS Dean's announcement of the program put its emergence in the context of the social upheaval of Summer 2020 and said that the program would "educat[e] leaders to understand the civic consequences of religion, in service of building a just world at peace."[602]

Here as well there was no mention of Israel or Palestinians. Furthermore, in a brief interview on the RPL program's launch website,[603] the inaugural director of the program (who did not hold a tenured or tenure-track faculty position) highlighted how a better understanding of religion could illuminate a range of contemporary issues. These included: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the apparent end of the Cold War; the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks in the United States and the United Kingdom and the ensuing War on Terror; the US invasion of Iraq; the challenges faced by public health officials amid the Ebola academic in West Africa; and the role of white evangelical Christians in American politics.

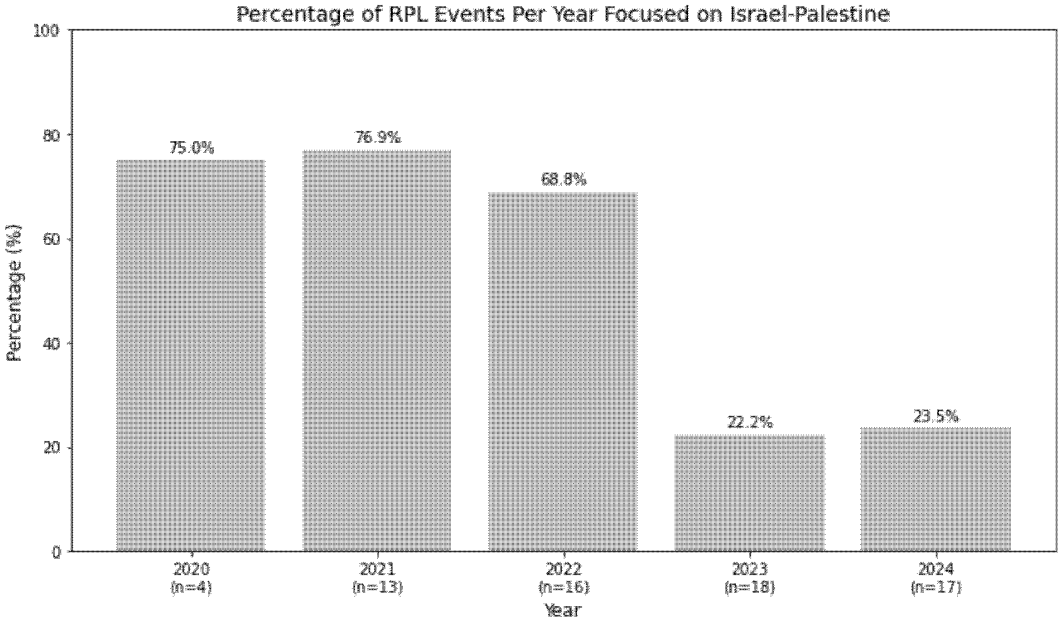
The RPL Director also provided several examples of professionals who might benefit from the program, further highlighting its intended scope:

- A political reporter who wishes to pursue a project around understanding the influences of white evangelical Christianity in the Trump era.
- A regional director in Africa for a secular humanitarian aid organization that focuses on local humanitarian leadership and wishes to understand the differing religious influences that shape women's access to reproductive health services.
- A human rights lawyer in Myanmar who wishes to study the rise of religious forms of nationalism.
- A master secondary school educator who wishes to revamp the school's "Introduction to World Religions" courses to align with current religious studies scholarship.
- An instructor at the National War College who wishes to create a course that explores peace-building strategies that include religion, but that critique and go beyond the widespread focus on countering violent extremism.
- A climate change activist who wishes to mobilize religious communities to address the climate crisis.
- A playwright who wants to explore how differing interpretations of sexuality and gender norms can exist within a single family.
- A public policy official interested in the roles that religions play in shaping immigration policy here in the US.

[601] See https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/10/26/religion-public-life-div-school/
[602] https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news/hds-launches-religion-and-public-life-new-degree-program
[603] With the new director of the program (the "RPL Director") https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news/understanding-religion-and-public-life

The RPL program encompasses two main initiatives: the Religious Literacy and the Professions Initiative (RLPI), which reflects the program's stated broad mandate, and the pre-existing Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative (RCPI), which was incorporated into RPL. An announcement said the RCPI aimed to further insight into "religious conflicts," mentioning a "January term course in the Middle East," among other initiatives.[604] Notably, even in early statements about the RCPI from HDS, there was no explicit mention of Israel or Palestine, despite their falling clearly within the framework of peacebuilding in the Middle East.

In practice, the RPL program that was implemented was deeply focused on Israel/Palestine.[605] Some HDS faculty told us that they did not understand the program would be as focused on Israel/Palestine as it turned out to be, while others told us that they thought the RCPI initiative meant a significant focus on the Middle East. It is important to note that the degree program, while housed within RPL, did not require students to have the same focus on Israel/Palestine that the program's activities might indicate.



In a listening session with RPL's then-leadership, we were informed that, as of April 1, 2024, the RPL program was four years into a six-year case study of Israel/Palestine.

In this genesis story, we see inherent problems that we received complaints about:

1. a lack of involvement or supervision from HDS's ladder faculty or from ladder faculty who are experts on the topic elsewhere at Harvard University; and
2. a governance and oversight structure that is not properly aligned with RPL's activities.

As we will explain, many students, staff, faculty, and alumni expressed concerns to the Task Force, alleging a lack of balance and a pattern of demonization towards Jews and Israelis within RPL's activities. We received significant complaints about:

1. events about Israel/Palestine hosted by RPL, which some students felt were biased and contributed to an atmosphere perceived as hostile; and
2. communications about Israel/Palestine from RPL personnel, especially a statement made by RPL's leadership after the events of October 7th.

[604] https://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/2018/01/31/hds-hks-rcp
[605] The numbers below are our summaries of the content of the RPL webinars posted on their website.

To illustrate the nature of these concerns, we present the following excerpt from a controversial statement released by RPL's leaders after October 7th, which was the subject of many complaints to the Task Force:

> When these "decades of oppression" are left out of the story about Hamas' horrendous attack on Israeli civilians, a narrative about an "innocent" state of Israel's right to "defend" itself against "unprovoked" aggression is legitimized. The reality is much more complex, and that complexity must be confronted if there is any chance to avoid endless cycles of dehumanization, destruction, and death.

Unfortunately, as a student pointed out to us, the "call for context and recognition" that RPL thought was needed in the aftermath of the October 7th attack is not something that was reflected in the program. Instead, program offerings and materials disproportionately presented Israelis and Jews as guilty of monstrous historical crimes, which require both repentance and redress.

It is certainly understandable why a program in religion and public life would include the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in its purview. Both Israeli and Palestinian societies are infused by religion, and it is difficult to understand either society without appreciating the role of faith in shaping individual and collective identities. Furthermore, given the explicitly religious character of many states in the region, an educational program focused on deepening the understanding of the religiosity of people in the region could meaningfully contribute to RPL's stated goal of fostering a "just world at peace."

However, RPL appears to have focused on non-mainstream Jewish religious perspectives that lack widespread support within the Jewish diaspora or in Israel. These perspectives arguably offer a particular political theology that attributes to Jews two great sins: first, in the Levant, the establishment of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba; and second, in the United States, participation in White supremacy. According to these perspectives, it seems, Jews can and should repent by dedicating themselves to pro-Palestinian activism.

These perspectives, which RPL staff appeared to embrace openly, permeate much of the programming the Task Force reviewed. For example, in RPL's inaugural webinar held on September 17, 2020, one speaker commended Jewish pro-Palestinian activists for grappling with "a specific Jewish sinfulness against the Palestinians and an embrace of the charge to [use a Jewish framework to arrive at] social protests and actions of civil disobedience." Similarly, a second speaker offered what amounts to a personal conversion narrative, explaining how he became disillusioned with the Zionism of his childhood, citing Israeli violence against Palestinians, and now sees opposition to the existence the State of Israel as a moral imperative.

Another webinar featured a speaker whose work was described as "extricating Judaism from state violence and from the idolatry of Israel."[606] The speaker, who also participated in the inaugural webinar, expressed his interest in composing an alternative prayer to the traditional Jewish prayer of thanks recited by many religious Jews on Israel's Independence Day. His proposed prayer is centered on a meditation on the sins committed by Jews and Israelis through the actions of the Israeli state. In response, a second speaker at the same webinar expressed support: "I am deeply in sympathy with your political and ethical positions … I suppose you knew that, which may be part of the reason I was invited here." The moderator further emphasized this perspective by suggesting that the first speaker, a rabbi in Chicago, had a responsibility to atone for being "complicit in power and abuse and displacement [of Palestinians]." Notably, RPL had previously featured this speaker at an earlier webinar that also elicited complaints to the Task Force.[607]

The Task Force received considerable feedback expressing concerns about a perceived anti-Israel bias within RPL:

[606] See "Yom Ha'atzmaut and the Colonization of American Judaism," RPL Webinar, April 19, 2022.
[607] See "Reimagining and Rewriting Jewish Liturgy", RPL Webinar, April 28, 2021.

I [am a member of the community] at Harvard Divinity School. It may not meet the definition of Antisemitism, but the anti-Israel bias at the school is intense. [Jewish students do not] feel comfortable studying there. [HDS affiliate]

The Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative, which is part of RPL, focuses on advocacy for Palestinians. They offer a huge number of events, book talks, newsletter articles, academic appointments, and academic offerings, all focused on condemning the Israeli occupation. No other conflicts are ever discussed, and there is no discussion of the Israeli perspective (at least not in the event announcements). HDS is not the only Harvard school to offer events like this, but because HDS is so small, the dominance of this issue is really striking. HDS seems to be saying that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is the only conflict that matters, the only one that good people should care about. And, furthermore, that only one group of people involved in that conflict is worthy of concern. [HDS affiliate]

From what I've seen, the people running the RPL program are … vehemently anti-Israel. Every week, the RPL program features one anti-Israel speaker or documentary, with no counterpoint. Some [RPL employees] are ideologically fervent and lack any sense of balance. [HDS student]

It is important to note that the perspectives on Jews and Judaism described above were present in academia well before October 7, 2023. One could easily infer from much of RPL's teaching and programming that Jews are profoundly flawed, and that the study of Jewish civilization should be an exposé of error, particularly with reference to Zionism and Israel. The Task Force was particularly struck by how this echoes the scholarly anti-Judaism identified by Harvard Divinity School Professor George Foot Moore's critique of a century ago, when Judaism was often studied in order to highlight its failings, limits, and supersession. In a glowing review[608] of one of G.F. Moore's major books, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim,* Rabbi Samuel Schulman noted in 1928 the historical depths and polemical underpinnings of this approach:

> [The scholarly study of Judaism] has lent itself very easily to the injection of theological dogmatism. It has been the favorite pastime of many Christian scholars to use it as an opportunity for contrasting the inferiority of Judaism with the superiority of the great religion, Christianity, that sprang from its loins … One would not be using too strong language in saying that Judaism was presented as a foil by means of which the glories of the daughter faith could be made all the more resplendent.

We do not believe that the RPL staff meant to construct a vision of Judaism and Jewishness that intentionally echoes the way it would have been taught at American divinity schools 100 years ago, but the parallels are undeniable. This resemblance has not been lost on some students, who have perceived these problematic echoes in RPL programming. Even if unintentional, the consequences of such an approach could be considerable, potentially hindering all students' understanding of Judaism and Israel, and for many Jewish and Israeli students in particular, undermining their access to a supportive learning environment:

In short, there is a sort of moral and intellectual laziness vis à vis many things at HDS, but especially around Jews and Judaism. This is slightly improved this year, but most classes related to Judaism at HDS are comparative, about the Bible, or about Israel. In some way, this seems to partake in the old Christian stereotype that Jews are not a vital, living and evolving people with rich culture, history, and tradition, but rather a problematic remnant of a violent and vengeful people. This is not about Middle Eastern politics; this is about Jews here and now. [HDS student]

To the extent that RPL's programming serves as an introduction to Judaism for some HDS students, one could be left with the view that Jews are a people without virtues, other than the capacity to confess and attempt to remedy their historic misdeeds. Programming that consistently taps into historical stereotypes

[608] Samuel Schulman, "Professor Moore's 'Judaism'," The Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. 18, no. 4, 1928, pp. 339–55. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1451546. Accessed 24 Nov. 2024.

in this way is intellectually problematic and bad for the learning and development of HDS and other Harvard students who avail themselves of RPL's offerings.

The problems we have noted with RPL are particularly acute in the annual student trip it had organized to Israel and the West Bank. In an article published by RPL staff,[609] the goal of the trip is described as being to teach students the "decolonial approach" to the "Jewish settler colonial project in Palestine" — a goal which, the description says, "is not 'metaphorical.'" The RPL staff wrote that the objective of the trip is to:

> Dismantle the oppression of Palestinians, institute mechanisms for restorative justice, and draw ethical political maps. It is also hermeneutical, denoting the urgent need to dezionize Jewish consciousness.

The RPL staff then also described the Jewish students in the program as: "becom[ing] overwhelmed with their sorrow at how the Jewish tradition has become indistinct from a settler colonial nation-state project."

RPL personnel touted this program, and its effect on Jewish students, in its marketing materials, which included the following quote from a Jewish HDS student about what they learned from their HDS-sponsored trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories:

> Our [trip to Israel and Palestine] was a formative, painful, and powerful experience that shaped my on-the-ground understanding of political realities in Israel/Palestine. Our conversations with leaders at Palestinian arts and culture organizations helped me realize the way that Israeli apartheid intends to destroy everything — from after-school art programs to independent film festivals — despite claims by liberal Zionists to the contrary.[610]

The passages above arguably make clear that the decolonial pedagogic approach advocated in this article by RPL leaders is an overt political project aligned with one strand of pro-Palestinian politics. The alleged settler-colonial nature of Israel is taken to demand a blurring, if not a collapse, of the distinction between scholarship and advocacy or activism. In other words, the seemingly one-sided, ideologically partisan, and biased nature of RPL instruction and programing about which we heard many complaints is not perceived as an oversight or accident in the reports we heard, but as a deliberate programmatic objective with an explicit methodological articulation and justification from RPL staff. And students are learning these lessons, with the organizers approvingly citing students on the RPL study abroad program who promise to become pro-Palestinian activists when they return to the United States.[611]

Setting out in an instructional program to "dezionize" the "consciousness" of Jewish students is to craft instruction to target students based on their religious identity. To suggest that the Jewish tradition is properly understood as reducing to "a settler colonial nation-state project" is also to denigrate both a religion and an identity. This is not to say that to be Jewish is to be Zionist. To the contrary, some students who identify as Jewish on campus also identify as anti-Zionist. However, for many Jewish and Israeli students, Zionism is a core part of their identity. And while debates about the status of Zionism in relation to Jewish identity are important within the context of Judaism, shifting ethnic and religious identity in this way should not be the objective of a course in a secular institution. And one-sided instruction is not consistent with Harvard's expectations for a Harvard program.

In an RPL publication featuring student comments from the trip that RPL organized to Israel and the West Bank, an RPL student thanked the program for helping them understand that "Zionism" was taking the natural resources of Palestinians. But Zionism is a set of beliefs, not a human actor. Ascribing inequities in access to land and water to "Zionism" implies that the problem is not Israel's policies and

[609] PDF available at https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/psup/pir/article/1/2/313/390095/Touring-Absences-Erasures-and-Futures-in-the

[610] https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news/2023/07/10/rcpi-student-highlight

[611] See Touring Absences (footnote 609) at 11.

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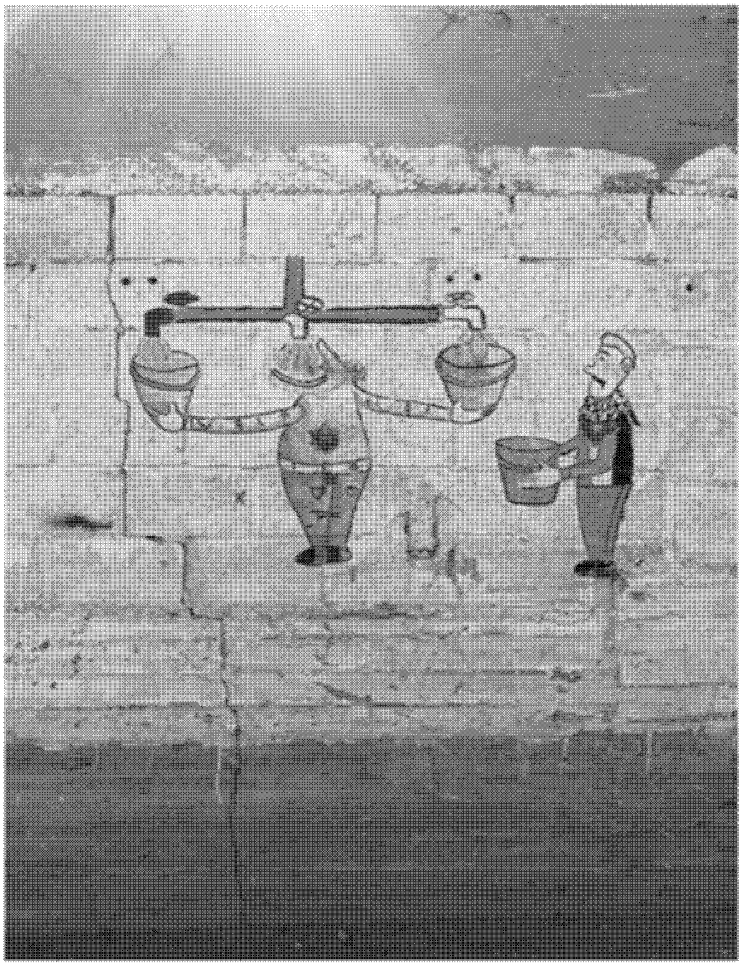
actions (the merits of which can be debated, and which can be altered) but rather the very existence of Zionism itself, and with it, Zionism's realization in the State of Israel.



The Fight for Water Sovereignty at AIDA Refugee Camp
by [redacted] MDiv 24, CRPL & RCPI
This is an image of graffiti located outside of AIDA Refugee Camp near Bethlehem. Through my experience with RCPI, I became further attuned to the ways in which Zionism, as a form of religious nationalism, impacts Palestinians living under occupation in myriad ways, such as water sovereignty. Here, not only is the water a literal representation, but it also doubles as an allusion to the ways that religion is weaponized through Zionism, and violently denies Palestinians daily of their livelihood and humanity by taking their natural resources.

This line of analysis is consistent with RPL's goal of "dezioniz[ing]" Jewish students." While negative perspectives on Zionism and Israel exist globally and exploring them critically is entirely appropriate in an educational setting, doing so in isolation — framing them as norms rather than contestable beliefs — represents a pedagogical failure.

We conclude this chapter with an extensive and revealing reflection on HDS 3335, an RPL course whose title varied from year to year but, to the best of our knowledge, consistently focused on aspects of Israel/Palestine. Nisan Plitman, an Israeli doctoral student enrolled in the course in Fall 2021, wrote a

compelling account of her experience for the prestigious Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, which is excerpted here in translation from the original Hebrew:[612]

> Two years before October 7th, I enrolled in a course at the Harvard Divinity School. Its title was "Religion and Peace in Israel/Palestine," and its introduction read: "In this course, we will explore the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, with particular focus on identifying and analyzing the varied and complex roles of religions in promoting both violence and peace. This will be examined through engagement with Israeli and Palestinian literature."
>
> "How interesting," I thought to myself, but on its first day, the course turned out to be even more intriguing than I had anticipated. The lecturer began the class with what she called a moment of candor: "The discourse is saturated with the Israeli narrative," she explained to the students, most of whom were Christians from American communities encountering academic material on the conflict for the first time. "Therefore, I decided, with a heavy heart, to remove Israeli sources from the syllabus. We will focus solely on Palestinian literature because power disparities, methodology, and conscience demand it."
>
> The measured manner in which this was delivered made me suspect it was a planned drama, but it took time to grasp its significance. The implications included, for instance, reading writings by Khaled Hroub from Northwestern University in Qatar, who asserts that "functionally, the Zionist movement has made extensive use of religious claims to forge a strong Jewish national connection to Palestine. In contrast, the Palestinian appeal to religious ideological sources is secondary. For Palestinians, millennia of uninterrupted residence and ownership of Palestine have created a natural and indisputable collective connection to the land, obviating the need for meta-religious claims."
>
> As we progressed in the lessons, my classmates' antipathy toward me, the sole Israeli in the course, intensified. And who could blame them? Based on the course material, it was hard not to conclude that Zionism is a project of fictive and mobilized religiosity, while Palestinian identity is authentic and rooted. My attempts to highlight Zionism's story as a movement of liberal pragmatism — which sought to break free from what was perceived as the oppressive shackles of Jewish law and religion in the diaspora — were of little help. Nor did recounting the story of the Jewish community in the pre-Zionist Land of Israel, the aliyah of the disciples of the Vilna Gaon, or the history of Safed.
>
> In one of the lessons, a tearful Presbyterian seminary student proclaimed, "Israel was built on cruel religious manipulation. If only we had been able to channel this understanding into American activism, we would have reaped the benefits."
>
> The day after October 7th, more than 30 student organizations published a letter declaring Israel solely and entirely responsible for Hamas violence against it. Recently, during a joint lecture hosted by the law and divinity schools, a proposal was even raised that the United States should arm Gaza against Israel. Many members of those organizations had sat with me in that theology course.

Other HDS students interested in Israel/Palestine also expressed concerns to the Task Force about unbalanced presentations in HDS 3335, finding them a hindrance to their learning. One student, who had previously visited both Israel and the West Bank and who had a deep desire to learn more about the course material, dropped the class after a handful of sessions because of its "tremendous anti-Zionist bias." Another student told *The New York Times* that in reflecting on her time at HDS, "I reread different papers that I wrote last fall, in classes taught by very far-left professors, Jewish professors, and I wrote things with language that I am not ashamed of, but I was just being so insensitive to the Israeli perspective."[613]

[612] Original Hebrew version: https://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/2024-07-10/ty-article-opinion/.premium/00000190-9bef-d1c5-a1d6-bbefc0f70000.
[613] https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/14/us/college-campuses-gaza-conversations.html

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HDS has outstanding tenured faculty who work on ancient Judaism and whose work engages with the history of antisemitism. A visiting faculty member with expertise in modern Jewish thought has further strengthened HDS's offerings on Judaism and Jewish civilization. But RPL places the expanse of Jewish civilization into a highly politicized program. In a listening session, RPL staff told us they focused on moving "beyond binaries." We appreciate that intention and goal. But some others with whom we spoke felt the staff had constructed a polarized and one-sided approach to this issue. In the end, we did not see evidence that RPL was successfully moving beyond binaries but rather evidence that the RPL program was reinforcing them.

This treatment of Judaism and Jews in RPL course offerings and instruction deserves comprehensive review by the HDS leadership. The School should seek to strengthen its sound and comprehensive anchorage in ancient Judaism with a complement of courses in Jewish modernity taught by ladder faculty or a Professor in Residence (a non-ladder position that requires rigorous vetting prior to hire and thorough periodic reviews for reappointment). We expect that such a review by the HDS leadership would also determine that "dezioniz[ing]" students is not an appropriate or reasonable pedagogic objective and that programs like RPL should be led by HDS' tenured faculty.

Conclusion

Harvard's academic standards are, and should always be, exceptionally high. Everything we do should reflect our aspirations and our values. In considering what a high-quality Harvard course, research center, or program might look like, it is helpful to reflect on the University's stated values, which were summarized in the 2018 "Values Statement" by the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging:

> Harvard University aspires to provide education and scholarship of the highest quality — to advance the frontiers of knowledge; to equip students, staff, and faculty and academic personnel for fulfilling experiences of life, work, and inclusive leadership in a complex world; and to provide all members of our diverse community with opportunities for growth.

The Values Statement maintains that achieving these goals requires affirming five values on campus: "respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others"; "honesty and integrity in all dealings"; "conscientious pursuit of excellence in our work"; "accountability for actions and conduct in the community"; and "responsibility for the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another."

Along with adhering to these five values, Harvard's Schools, centers, and programs are expected to refrain from activities that purport to present an official University viewpoint. As the 2024 Harvard University Institutional Voice Working Group noted:

> If the University adopts an official position on an issue beyond its core function, it will be understood to side with one perspective or another on that issue. Given the diversity of viewpoints within the University, choosing a side, or appearing to do so can undermine the inclusivity of the University community. It may make it more difficult for some members of the community to express their views when they differ from the University's official position.

These two sets of guidelines — the call to promote broadly-cast values and refrain from taking specific political positions — provide a framework for understanding the experiences of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias we have described above, and the conditions that appear to contribute to such experiences.

Based on the Task Force's analysis of the examples shared above, six key concerns emerge:

1. a lack of accountability in program design that fell short of Harvard's usual standards of excellence;
2. partisan and one-sided pedagogy that also fell short of Harvard's usual standards of excellence by failing to represent multiple viewpoints;

3. insufficient rules and enforcement around disruptive protest that have effectively created political litmus tests for full participation in the educational program of the University in some places;
4. failing to take antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias sufficiently seriously as a bias that matters at Harvard;
5. perhaps most troublingly, apparent attempts to mainstream antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias; and
6. an alienating and hostile atmosphere experienced across different units of the University, to which the preceding problems contributed.

The problematic course content and instructional strategies we observed seemed disproportionately concentrated among courses taught by non-ladder instructors. Notably, these instructors are not subject to the rigorous vetting standards Harvard applies to tenure-track or permanent lecturers and senior lecturers, which are designed to ensure the "conscientious pursuit of excellence." Furthermore, non-ladder faculty whose course materials raised concerns often seemed linked to political advocacy roles outside Harvard. This raises questions about whether the opportunity to access a non-ladder role at Harvard represents a form of social capital that can be used to boost the credibility of their advocacy efforts.

For instance, organizers of both the Religion and Public Life program at HDS and the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights at the Harvard Chan School have recent separate publications describing the programs they developed at Harvard. These publications suggest a desire to present their work as a "Harvard model" for others to emulate. This raises concerns that lax approval and oversight processes for instructors in some Harvard Schools may have inadvertently contributed to a decline in academic rigor, the propagation of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias, and the politicization of Harvard's reputation.

A pre-existing culture of politicized curricula and instruction at various points across the University made it too easy for curricular and co-curricular offerings to create what amounted to political litmus tests during academic year 2023-24. Those litmus tests in courses and at student recruitment events were subtle versions of the more overt practices of social shunning that students reported. Importantly, the Task Force believes that insufficient respect for viewpoint diversity and for norms of taking responsibility for building bridges across lines of difference enabled some of the more concerning student behaviors reported to us.

Furthermore, we believe that insufficient academic resources for engaging with topics related to Israel/Palestine also meant that intellectually weak material, as well as materials that arguably promoted antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias, were allowed to be more influential than they would otherwise have been.

As we mentioned at the outset, this was not an adversarial investigation and our work is the beginning, not the end, of an inquiry. As such, we urge that the University and the various Schools begin a review of the problems we identify above. This process might include recommending:

- leadership and supervision from ladder faculty, including faculty participation in events, for courses and programming offered by centers;
- missions for all centers aligned with the goal of "advancing the frontiers of knowledge" and overseen by governance structures re-focused on academic integrity;
- cultivation of respect for viewpoint diversity and a norm that we respect, relate, and cooperate even with those with whom we vehemently disagree;
- an expectation that viewpoint diversity will be featured in programming that engages controversial subjects; and cultivation of respect for viewpoint diversity; and
- increased depth on campus of scholarly expertise of the highest caliber on subjects of the modern Middle East including Israel/Palestine.

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CHAPTER 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This report has surveyed the experience of Jewish and Israeli students at Harvard in both the past and the present time, especially during the 2023-34 academic year. It has shown that the turmoil that erupted after October 7, 2023 had been brewing for several years. The politicization of certain academic units, a retreat by students into communities of the like-minded, and a diminished willingness to engage with differing points of view began to manifest themselves in the latter half of the 2010s. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-22, which largely shut down normal campus life, accentuated pre-existing processes of social seclusion and political polarization. The Hamas attacks of October 7th accelerated these processes into hyperdrive.

Harvard's current challenges extend beyond concerns about antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias. As the joint Task Force survey of student attitudes revealed, and as discussed in Chapter 3, Muslim and Arab students, as well as Jewish and Israeli students, report high levels of discomfort and alienation at Harvard. The University must combat antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias, but it can only do so effectively by improving the campus environment for everyone. Israel/Palestine is a contentious issue, and it is likely to remain that way for a long time to come. Members of our community have every right to express their views on this and other matters as well as an obligation to learn from and respect each other, maintain a curious and open mind, and be willing to learn from those with whom they disagree.

Admittance to Harvard should be an invitation to become part of a community in which differences abound and debate is intense — a place of varying experiences and outlooks, of diverging views deeply probed and challenged, of exchanges that require individuals to examine their own views, and of ideas and ideals that are frequently in intellectual, ideological, academic, and even material conflict with each another. The key, however, is the invitation to become part of a community.

What has been most at stake in the crisis on campus since October 7th — and in its roots, which go back long before that date — is a question central to student life at Harvard: can the members of our community appreciate one another across differences as partners in learning? It is vital to the intellectual life and the promise and opportunity of this place that all of us here value each other in this way, and such an attitude toward one another must be fostered and reinforced — and expected.

The "Report on Institutional Voice in the University," released in May 2024, states that in order to protect its core function of "seeking truth through open inquiry," Harvard must foster "an environment in which its members can research, teach, and learn." Such an environment is not given; it requires "nurture, support and defense in order for members of the University to do their work." This requires that members of our community resist alienating and excluding one another.

From the roughly 50 listening sessions conducted by our Task Force with approximately 500 members of the Harvard community, a clear conclusion emerged: Harvard had not sufficiently internalized the values and safeguarded the practices necessary for its core function — namely, cultivating an environment in which its members can research, teach, and learn. As a result, many at Harvard have not experienced this kind of environment and all that it entails.

For Israeli students and many Jewish students at Harvard — particularly those who believe in a right of the Jewish people to a state in their land of origin — the consequences have been dire, especially since the attacks of October 7th. Due to aspects of their identity, including their religion and national origin, these students have faced bias, suspicion, intimidation, alienation, shunning, contempt, and sometimes effective

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exclusion from various curricular and co-curricular parts of the University and its community — clear examples of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias. Students who at Harvard would wish to develop mature and multi-faceted Jewish identities, knowledge of Jewish heritage and community, and their own relationships of inquiry and engagement with Israel and its challenges have instead faced pressures to repress aspects of themselves and to veer away from entire areas of curricular and co-curricular exploration. This has diminished their educational opportunities, their own lives, and Harvard's aim to be a learning community for all students.

In light of these damaging consequences, the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias submits a number of recommendations, in two sections:

Section 1 on Campus Culture and Student Experience (pages 174-188) outlines a set of recommendations for repairing student life at Harvard — for Israeli, Jewish, and indeed all students — which will require a **comprehensive, integrated, and sustained program of efforts.**

Section 2, on Governance Changes, (pages 188-190), urges changes in University governance as it relates to faculty and academic oversight. First, we recommend a comprehensive review of the academic activities of the University to identify gaps in governance. Second, we call for implementing changes in response to that review, potentially including better incentives for good governance with respect to academic matters across Harvard's Schools through a more equitable cost-sharing system.

Finally, we conclude with a charge to the University and its Schools and key administrative units to become leaders in a renewed fight against antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Campus Culture and Student Experience

A guiding spirit behind this first set of recommendations is the report of the Joint Task Force Subcommittee on Pluralism (Appendix 3). Its focus is the promotion of a "culture of pluralism," defined as:

> Recognizing the diversity of identities and ideologies on campus, respecting, relating, and cooperating with one another, and connecting personal and campus civic values to advance our educational and research mission. These campus civic values are anchored in the University's Values Statement advancing respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others; honesty and integrity in all dealings; conscientious pursuit of excellence in our work; accountability for actions and conduct in the community; and responsibility for the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another.

Fostering a pluralistic campus atmosphere is connected with striving to realize the ideals represented by the University's 2018 Values Statement,[614] which calls for:

> "Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others"; "honesty and integrity in all dealings"; "conscientious pursuit of excellence in our work"; "accountability for actions and conduct in the community"; and "responsibility for the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another."

The recommendations presented here suggest means by which these values can be embodied in our campus community's interactions in the classroom, student residences, and co-curricular life.

We call for changes in the following eight categories:

- Admissions: We believe classes at Harvard should consist of students who are eager to contribute to a learning community grounded in open inquiry and mutual respect.
- Early Student Experiences: Early student experiences, especially for undergraduate students, should focus on establishing norms that reflect Harvard's aspirations for its learning community.
- Academic Life: Students deserve a classroom experience that embodies the desired learning community — one free from antisemitism, anti-Israeli bias, and all forms of discrimination — and supported by enhanced course opportunities offered by Harvard's Schools and faculty.
- Co-Curricular Activities and Residential Life: Student organizations need support and guidance to ensure their activities do not have antisemitic or anti-Israeli impacts, so they can effectively contribute to the kind of learning community Harvard aspires to beyond the classroom.
- Building a Pluralistic Community: To foster a campus culture of pluralism at Harvard, a central hub for pluralism should be established.
- Religious Life: We believe that faith can be an important source of support for Harvard's students and an integral part of the learning community, and that steps can be taken to strengthen this aspect of campus life.
- Administrative Infrastructure: A robust administrative infrastructure is needed to support, coordinate, and sustain the efforts outlined above.
- Protest, Complaints, and Discipline: Protests must be authorized and must not disrupt the normal operations of the University, including conducting classes and providing unrestricted access to libraries and other campus buildings. Complaint mechanisms should be aligned across Harvard's Schools to the

[614] https://inclusionandbelongingtaskforce.harvard.edu/files/inclusion/files/vii._appendix_d._revised_values_statement.pdf

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greatest extent possible, and should be easily accessed, user-friendly, and efficient. Disciplinary policies and enforcement should be substantive and equitable across Harvard's Schools.

Below, we lay out recommended actions in each of these eight categories.

Admissions

Student life at Harvard is profoundly shaped by which individuals we choose to attract and admit to our student body. Events of the past two years have caused us to worry that Harvard tends to admit some individuals who already see themselves as leaders with a mandate to act, rather than as learners who are curious, open to others, and aware that they need further education. Efforts are already underway in some Schools to correct this tendency, and we endorse them.

To reinforce and expand these efforts, we recommend that the staff and faculty responsible for admissions across all of Harvard's Schools take — or where applicable, continue to take and build upon — the following actions:

- **Articulate to prospective students that Harvard seeks to build a learning environment where each student is in genuine community with people with whom one may disagree.** Communicate clearly, as part of the admissions criteria, that Harvard expects all students to demonstrate civility, engage thoughtfully with one another, practice tolerance and empathy, and, above all, to cherish the opportunity to learn with and from one another.
- **Where feasible, incorporate application questions that assess an applicant's aptitude in navigating situations involving diverging viewpoints and commitments (as we understand Harvard College has recently done).** Additionally, in interview settings where applicable, prompt applicants to respond to ideas and opinions that may differ from their own. Admissions personnel should look favorably on demonstrations of empathetic and reasoned engagement and unfavorably on exhibitions of hostility, derision, or dismissiveness.
- **In evaluating candidates, prioritize demonstrated qualities such as bridge-building, particularly through participation in organizations and activities that promote dialogue across difference.** Look favorably upon experience in identity-based commitments and activism that involved constructive engagement with others who may hold differing viewpoints, as well as a demonstrated commitment to curiosity and self-education. Conversely, reject candidates who have track records of antisemitism, bias against Israelis based on their national origin, or other forms of identity-based discrimination, including anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, or anti-Palestinian bias.
- **Be open to collaboration with self-organized faculty volunteers aiming to reach out to admitted students who may, in view of recent events on campus, fear identity-based bias or hostility toward their personal commitments.** We are aware, for instance, of faculty groups eager to welcome Jewish and Israeli admitted students and to foster a sense of belonging even before matriculation. We encourage admissions leaders to work with such groups.

Early Student Experiences

Early experiences on campus have a disproportionate impact on student life. In Harvard College, for instance, events such as preorientation, orientation, and Convocation shape undergraduate students' impressions of our community and its norms. In some recent Convocations, protestors have stationed themselves near first-year students and have chanted pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli slogans. Silence at the time from University leaders has conveyed to incoming students that such chanting is a welcome form of "discourse" in our community and that it is acceptable to alienate or intimidate some community members. Graduate students experience entrance lifecycle events of their own. For them as well as for

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undergraduate students, first encounters with their fellow students should be designed to shape a learning community of open inquiry and mutual respect.

To achieve this goal, and in the spirit of the recommendations of the Joint Task Force Subcommittee on Pluralism, we recommend that organizers of early student experiences at all Harvard Schools implement the following:

- **Deeply examine and revise pre-orientation and orientation programs.** Encourage new students to engage constructively with peers who may hold differing worldviews from their own, ideally within a structured pluralism framework:
  - Ensure that all facilitators of early student activities are trained to cultivate a committed learning community among new students of different backgrounds and outlooks.
  - Create diverse cohorts of students in preorientation programs and consider whether the benefits of programs that are more monolithic outweigh the cost of creating homogenous social spheres at the beginning of one's Harvard journey.
  - In early student events, showcase returning students who can model civil and reasoned disagreement and lead constructive dialogues around contentious issues, thereby encouraging similar discussions among new students.
  - Given the current climate surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, engage Israeli and Palestinian leaders who are willing and able to model frank and genuine dialogue with one another, as part of early student programming.
  - Enlist respected faculty (e.g., faculty deans in the residential Houses of Harvard College) to reinforce the message that Harvard expects constructive engagement across differences and support faculty in developing programs that help facilitate this engagement.
  - Starting in the 2025-26 academic year, enlist Jewish and Muslim faculty and students to assist in the design of anti-bias materials that can be incorporated into orientation programs at Harvard College and other Harvard Schools in future years. These materials should address campus culture, antisemitism, and other forms of hate.
  - In instances where Schools may have ceded responsibility for pre-orientation and orientation programs to student groups, reclaim oversight to ensure a high-quality, coherent presentation that aims to integrate all students into a shared community.
- **Prepare all administrators who speak in opening programs, including the President and Provost, to intervene and speak up on the spot when agitation for alienation erupts at official events and activities.** At such moments, it is essential that leaders model the defense of the University's core function and protection of its learning environment.

Academic Life

What happens in Harvard's classrooms has both a direct and an indirect impact on student life. Critically, the actions of instructors influence whether students experience a culture of open inquiry and mutual respect within those spaces. These actions also shape the expectations students have about acceptable behavior and discourse during their time at Harvard outside the classroom.

The Task Force believes that every Harvard student should have full access to Harvard's educational opportunities, regardless of their religion, national origin, or political beliefs. Yet, in the course of our work, we heard from too many Jewish and Israeli students who said they have not fully enjoyed such access in recent years. They described instances where fellow students and even instructors created classroom environments that felt inhospitable.

Toward the goal of full access to educational opportunities, we recommend that all Harvard Schools and programs do the following:

- **Develop a set of rules and expectations for instruction.** These should respect the academic freedom, rights, and responsibilities of both instructors and students. While each School or unit must determine what is appropriate within its own specific context, we suggest the following as a starting point:
  - Instructors should clearly distinguish between their professional academic roles and their personal civic roles and refrain from political comment unrelated to course subject matter when they are teaching.
  - Schools should ensure that instructors are aware they may not refuse to teach students on the grounds of student identity or political or religious beliefs, nor may they discriminate among students on such grounds when conducting class or grading.
  - Instructors should value diverse identities and outlooks in the learning community. They should be open to divergent points of view and actively promote such openness among students, colleagues, and others.
  - Schools should ensure that instructors are aware they may not encourage students to adopt particular political stances or take specific political actions outside of class. For instance, we think it should be unacceptable for instructors to cancel class to facilitate student attendance at a protest or hold office hours onsite at a political event (as we understand some instructors did at the 2024 pro-Palestinian encampment). In our view, these should be basic expectations of all Harvard instructors, and falling short of these expectations should be seen as a sign that a teacher does not take their responsibilities as a Harvard teacher seriously, which should result in significant and lasting consequences.
  - Instructors should be adept at eliciting multiple viewpoints within their classrooms and should promptly address any behavior that undermines a learning environment grounded in open inquiry and mutual respect.
  - An instructor's ability to engage diverse opinions should be a factor in course evaluations and considered by the respective School and the University when hiring, promoting, and renewing the appointments of instructors.
- **Communicate and enforce expectations.** After developing these norms and expectations, each School should clearly communicate them to both instructors and students. Additionally, they should establish clear processes for addressing breaches of the norms and expectations if such processes are not already in place.
- **Create opportunities, support, and incentives for all instructors to learn how to facilitate difficult conversations across lines of difference in the classroom.**

As articulated in the "Report on Institutional Voice in the University," Harvard should ensure that its Schools, departments, centers, and programs refrain from supporting, promoting, or lending their names or Harvard's to activities and ideological campaigns that encourage alienation of segments of Harvard's learning community. To the extent this is not clear, we recommend that the University produce guidelines along these lines. The Provost's Office should track compliance with the Report and any such guidelines and then remedy breaches of them.

We understand that the Institutional Voice is a new policy, and we urge the Provost's Office to consider whether a Task Force or other reviewing body is needed to examine existing content to ensure that we meet our goals of including people with diverse opinions and backgrounds across the University's various classes, centers, and degree programs. To the extent that changes are necessary, we encourage copious engagement with difference.

This report has noted complaints by students about certain professional and graduate Schools where teaching about Israel/Palestine is, in their view, highly politicized and partisan, and where they feel unwelcome because of their political views or simply because of their nationality or ethno-religious identity. In addition to the general recommendations we have laid out thus far, the University's Central Administration should enter into a dialogue with the administration of each School, assess the presence of antisemitism and anti-Israel bias, and formulate School-specific remedies.

In considering curriculum and instruction within Harvard College, our Task Force recognized that students are not currently offered a sufficiently robust set of courses on Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the wider Middle East, and conflict resolution. As a result, student views and debates on these topics often do not seem grounded in established facts, rigorous scholarship, and adequately considered perspectives. To correct this gap, we recommend the following:

- **Create opportunities for students to engage in a more comprehensive course of study on Israel and the Palestinians, Jewish Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies.** Specifically, Harvard College should ensure that undergraduate students have substantially more opportunities to learn about antisemitism, Jewish history and culture, the history and politics of Israel, Zionism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To fulfill the College's mission of preparing "citizen leaders," students should have access to a series of courses—both large lecture courses (such as General Education courses) and small seminars—taught by a range of faculty. This will enable them to build deep content knowledge in these areas and shape their own informed viewpoints on these complex topics. The team implementing this recommendation should consider the following possibilities:
  - Hiring new faculty, potentially through a cluster hire to recruit a diverse range of faculty with differing views and methodologies.
  - Developing interdisciplinary courses, with some potentially counting towards the College's newly offered Certificate for Civic Engagement[615] or fulfilling requirements towards a secondary concentration.
  - Creating relevant research opportunities for students both by working as research assistants for faculty and through developing original projects.
  - Providing funds for practice-based opportunities, such as internships and shadowing opportunities, during the winter and summer terms and in the year following graduation.
  - Developing and funding travel opportunities for diverse groups of faculty and students through which they can build community, learn about complex situations, and engage in concrete community improvement projects.
- **Create opportunities for students to build skills in peace building and conflict resolution, utilizing the resources and expertise of University centers of excellence such as the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School.**
- **Fill the vacant positions at Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies (CJS).** CJS plays a vital role in teaching the history, religion, and culture of Jews from antiquity to the present. Unfortunately, due to recent and imminent departures and retirements in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences' Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and in Harvard Divinity School, CJS will lose five out of its seven core, ladder-faculty instructional staff. It is vital to refill these positions, all funded via endowed chairs, as quickly as possible.
- **In addition to the College, curricular attention to Judaism is urgently needed in multiple graduate and professional Schools.** Harvard Law School's Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law serves

[615] https://oue.fas.harvard.edu/certificate-civic-engagement

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as a successful example of how education on Judaism can advance both the mission of a professional school and foster a student body that is more informed about issues that may contribute to antisemitism and manifestations of it. Although aspects of Harvard Divinity School's academic programs require significant reform, as outlined in Chapter 4, HDS could become a key player in constructing a healthy approach to the study of Judaism and Jewish civilization. A Jewish Ministry initiative, modeled after the successful model of the Buddhist Ministry Initiative,[616] could benefit students seeking to study Judaism within the larger context of world religion and prepare for leadership in Jewish communities beyond rabbinic ordination. Such an initiative could help address long-standing curricular deficits.

- We urge Harvard Divinity School to consider whether the addition of a ladder faculty member who writes and teaches in the mainstream of the modern American Jewish community would provide a voice that is missing on their campus. Such an addition could contribute to ensuring that the richness and diversity of the modern American Jewish mainstream are fully represented within the HDS community.

THE STUDY OF ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Both Task Forces agree on the need for more classroom instruction about Israel/Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The challenge is how to teach these subjects in ways that bridge rather than exacerbate political and emotional divisions. We must strive to avoid a situation (that has developed at other universities, including peer schools) where "Palestine Studies" becomes an instrument of faculty and student advocacy. Similarly, we must resist pressures for teaching about modern Israel as a defense against the country's critics. We urge avoiding having dueling courses taught from a Palestinian or Israeli "perspective" in which instructors hold fast to the identities of their subjects of study, and students are called upon to do the same.

Mindful of the fact that administrators at Harvard and other universities may read this, we wish to elaborate on this point. One of us has written on it at length, pointing out that scholars of "Israel Studies" and "Palestine Studies" often rely on different sources, methods, and approaches, which are best situated in conversation with one another as opposed to apart:[617]

> Scholars who work on Israel/Palestine must decide, therefore, if it is their responsibility to engage in overt political advocacy, to cloak that advocacy under a pretense to Weberian neutrality, or to aspire to neutrality even if it is impossible to attain. They must decide whether "civility," that is, rational, respectful, and courteous conversation, is a relic from a bygone era, a screen for the concealment and maintenance of hegemony, or if it has continuing value as a means of fostering constructive communication with an often angry and fearful public. I believe that unlike the realms of political discourse and public opinion (now expressed via limitless and unchecked access to the internet), academic conversation about Israel/Palestine can and should refract, rather than reflect, the conflict. To continue with the optical metaphor, an academic field of Israel/Palestine studies can help not only scholars and students, but also a broad, global public, see the area in a new light.

We acknowledge that the demands that teaching about Israel/Palestine places upon an instructor — ideally, a mastery of Arabic and Hebrew and a thorough knowledge of the history and politics of the Middle Eastern and the Jewish world — are great, and that even the most rigorous of scholars are situated in a subject-position that may carry with it bias and selectivity (even if unconscious). We therefore recommend that whenever possible introductory courses on Israel/Palestine be co-taught, as has been done, with considerable success, at Dartmouth.[618]

[616] https://hds.harvard.edu/academics/ministry-studies/buddhist-ministry-initiative

[617] Derek Penslar, "Toward a Field of Israel/Palestine Studies," in *The Arab and Jewish Questions,* ed. Bashir Bashir and Leila Farsakh, Columbia University Press (2020), 173. https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.7312/bash19920-009/html?srsltid=AfmBOoo3951N4sB1bCu3OK6erI-sIyTtO0wdbppjYLssY725CcO3HCsp

[618] Bernard Avishai, "Co-Teaching a Class on Israel and Palestine," *The New Yorker,* February 2, 2024. Accessed December 9, 2024.

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One of us is teaching a course on the history of Israel/Palestine at Harvard in the Spring 2025 semester and, in the absence of a co-teacher, brings together sources that might be found in a Palestinian Studies course along with sources that might be found in its Israel Studies counterpart for each week: for example, comparing the post-1967 Israeli settlement movement with its effect upon the Palestinians in the West Bank by juxtaposing texts produced during the 1970s by activists in the Bloc of the Faithful movement with Sahar Khalifa's novel *Wild Thorns*.

THE STUDY OF ANTISEMITISM

The 2023-24 academic year, especially in the aftermath of October 7th, witnessed an unprecedented surge in reports of antisemitism, both at Harvard and around the globe. Harvard is well equipped to play a crucial role in combating antisemitism in many ways, with research being one of the most obvious. We urge Harvard to become a hub for antisemitism research by establishing a dedicated research project, ideally by appointing a globally renowned expert in the social scientific study of antisemitism to the faculty at a Harvard School, such as the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. This person could lead a robust program of research, teaching, mentoring graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, and fostering and invigorating the social scientific study of antisemitism while promoting scientific excellence in the field. This individual should be encouraged to cultivate ties with recently established centers for the study of antisemitism at the University of Michigan and New York University, as well as long-standing centers for antisemitism research in Israel, the United Kingdom, Germany, and other countries.

Co-Curricular Activities and Residential Life

Much of student life takes place outside of Harvard's classrooms — in clubs, dormitories, and residential houses, in various kinds of affinity spaces, and on social media. In academic year 2023-24, such venues were the sites of some of the most painful reported instances of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias. We heard accounts of some Jewish and Israeli students feeling pressured to renounce Israel or risk significant social penalties, including the loss of friends, rejections from clubs, exclusion from social activities, and more.

While Harvard's Schools cannot force students to be friends with each other, they can and should establish rules and norms that aim at discouraging social exclusion based on religion or national origin. Toward this end, we recommend that each School implement the following:

- **Review, revise, if necessary, implement, and enforce responsible policies regarding student organizations.** This should complement the ethos of pluralism that Schools seek to cultivate. Specifically, we recommend that relevant administrators in each School:
  - Review and reinforce compliance with non-discrimination policies that govern all student organizations that are officially recognized by their respective Schools. Organizations failing to comply should not be allowed to operate on University property or use Harvard's name or resources.
  - Take appropriate action against unrecognized student organizations that "piggyback" on recognized groups to take advantage of privileges and resources that would otherwise be unavailable to them.
  - Ensure that the activities of recognized student organizations reflect the organizations' stated purpose and scope. The Task Force believes Harvard's student civil society only works if recognized organizations provide opportunities for connecting across common interests and affinities, mindful of the fact that it is highly desirable for members of the chess club, for example, to disagree on questions outside of the value of playing chess with their fellow Harvard students.
- **Mandate special training, if it has not been already, for students tasked with promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within their respective student organizations.** This training should ensure alignment between efforts to promote inclusion and the University's Values Statement.

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- **For the co-curricular life of each of Harvard's Schools, adopt the measures recommended by the Joint Task Force Subcommittee on Pluralism.** Despite commendable recent efforts to promote dialogue between Jewish and Muslim students, these initiatives appear underattended. It is our understanding that the current campus climate can sometimes mean Arab and Muslim students who engage with Israeli students experience negative social repercussions, including shunning and alienation from their friends and social groups. For example, we are aware of disturbing accounts of bullying of Palestinians who merely showed an openness to dialogue. We believe that this kind of behavior should be combated, just as we believe work needs to be done to bridge differences among Jews with varying views on Israel. According to student organizers we spoke with who have facilitated small group discussions between Jewish and Arab students, there are Muslim and Arab students open to such engagement, but the prevailing campus culture discourages their involvement. We endorse the following measures recommended by the Joint Subcommittee:
  - Foster a series of prominent, public, civil, and reasoned debates on contentious geopolitical matters. These events should model respectful disagreement and include speakers representing a wide array of viewpoints, including prominent pro-Israeli leaders.
  - Recognize and support student leaders who make the peer-to-peer case for dialogue and inclusion, speak out against exclusionary practices like shunning, and strive to build bridges across differences. This could include awards, fellowships, and highlighting these students in appropriate events. Ensure these student leaders are committed to promoting civil discourse across differences, not solely within a particular group.
  - Establish a dedicated group of faculty members and administrators to support dialogue efforts between Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian students and their Jewish and Israeli peers. This group would actively encourage participation and promote a culture that values and supports these meaningful interactions.

  We also recommend:
- **Formally recognize and celebrate staff and faculty who make substantial contributions to fostering constructive dialogue across differences within Harvard's academic community.**
- **Develop an assortment of grants, fellowships, and programs dedicated to studying campus culture and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** This might include grants for study and internships in Israel and other Middle Eastern countries.
- **At Harvard College, take specific steps to enhance aspects of its residential system, comprising both dorms in the Yard for first-year students and the Houses for upper-level students, which many regard as the hearth and home of the College community.** The steps outlined in the next set of bullets are intended to renew a sense of shared community and to counter tendencies towards demonization and division.
- **Staff involved in the undergraduate student housing system, including various deans, proctors, tutors, and others, should operate as a more collaborative and unified team, supported by stronger leadership from University Hall.** In particular, we recommend:
  - Improved orientation and regular in-service training should be implemented for all residential personnel in the Yard and the Houses. The goal should be ensuring they are equipped to foster engagement across a variety of differences, including national origin, viewpoint, and identity along multiple dimensions. This is especially crucial for faculty deans, who ultimately bear responsibility for the climate and culture of their individual Houses and oversee both staff and budgets.

- Best practices for cultivating a constructive ethos of pluralism within the housing system should be identified and disseminated, with a particular emphasis on how these practices can support and reinforce a similar ethos in academic settings.

While we commend Harvard College's current efforts to promote intellectual vitality, we caution that this focus on intellectual vitality in general should not overshadow the need for College leaders to address antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias directly. Educating students about intellectual vitality in orientation programs, for example, does not eliminate the need to educate them about matters like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the history of antisemitism. Similarly, conducting intellectual vitality training during orientation does not negate the need for antisemitism training.

Building a Pluralistic Community

In a joint effort between the two Task Forces, the Pluralism Subcommittee examined the resources that exist at Harvard for interfaith engagements, interdisciplinary collaborations, religious literacy, and community building, including the arts, as well as examine new resources, structures, and/or practices.

The focus was on promoting a culture of pluralism, defined as recognizing the diversity of identities and ideologies on campus, respecting, relating, and cooperating with one another, and connecting personal and campus civic values to advance our educational and research mission. These campus civic values are anchored in the University's Values Statement focused on advancing respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others; honesty and integrity in all dealings; conscientious pursuit of excellence in our work; accountability for actions and conduct in the community; and responsibility for the bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another.

A broad focus on pluralism will ultimately be foundational to ensuring the experience of inclusion and belonging on our campus for members of Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities, and their allies. At the same time, we wish to underscore that it is crucial not to overlook the specific forms of hate and bias that the two anti-bias Task Forces are committed to addressing, including anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian sentiments, as well as antisemitism and anti-Israel biases. Directly confronting these particular issues by advancing a pluralism agenda ensures that our efforts are impactful and resonate with the experiences of those most affected, fostering a truly inclusive environment.

While the full report of the Joint Subcommittee is included in Appendix 3, here we note one of the main recommendations, which our full Task Force endorses as well:

- **Establish an institutional anchor for practices of pluralism on campus.**

  There is a need for a central hub for pluralism efforts on campus — to anchor the practices of the University around a commitment to pluralism, and to engage all members of our campus community in exploring, embracing, and bringing our University values to life across a variety of contexts — from orientation and onboarding to interdisciplinary exchanges and language learning, to interfaith experiences, student life, and the arts on campus.

  Though the University will need to determine the appropriate approach to implementation, the Joint Subcommittee report details two possible options: expanding the Harvard Foundation into the Harvard Foundation for Pluralism or creating a new University-wide Center for Pluralism that incorporates the Harvard Foundation, which would continue to be College-facing, as a program. Many other entities also work in these areas and the specific value-add of a Reimagined Harvard Foundation/Center for Pluralism would be to connect the academic enterprise of the University, along with campus expertise on issues of inclusion, belonging, and pluralism, to the administrative enterprise that fulfills these functions. As the University considers the design of the Reimagined Harvard Foundation/Center for Pluralism, three key principles are essential for success: faculty leadership,

collaboration with OEDIB and other diversity offices on campus, and a strong staffing structure to support cross-functional work.

A Reimagined Harvard Foundation/Center for Pluralism should develop and implement programs that reinforce pluralism. For example, the Center/Foundation could support:

- a fellowship program for students;
- a campus awards program for students who lead in advancing a culture of pluralism on campus;
- engaging faculty with expertise in pluralism and connected subject areas to develop trainings and professional development opportunities for the campus;
- mediation resources for conflicts that involve issues of pluralism; and
- the work of OEDIB and School-specific Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging offices to cultivate a campus-wide network of expertise on pluralism that all Schools could tap into in a shared way.

This Reimagined Center, in partnership with OEDIB, could also lead the Harvard Culture Collaborative, fostering faculty-staff partnerships to enhance research and learning in support of inclusion and belonging grounded in a commitment to pluralism. Several of the Task Force recommendations laid out above might also be advanced via this vehicle, including the development of new intellectual exchanges and innovative trainings.

The Task Force discussed the merits and potential challenges of using the Harvard Foundation as the hub for University-wide pluralism efforts. A detailed examination of these issues is warranted, as exploring these complexities was beyond the Task Force's remit. The Harvard Foundation currently focuses on undergraduate students, and there is a proposal to transform it into a Harvard Foundation/Center for Pluralism that serves the entire campus community, while preserving and indeed strengthening the current mandate of the Harvard Foundation. The Joint Subcommittee suggests structuring this Reimagined Harvard Foundation/Center for Pluralism as a School-based entity for easier integration with the University's mission. The Joint Subcommittee recommends significant investment from the Office of the President and Provost, as well as School deans, to establish faculty leadership and anchor pluralism practices across the campus.

Religious Life

In the wake of the traumatic of the October 7th attacks and the heightened tensions of the 2023-24 academic year, many Jewish students sought solace and support within Harvard's Jewish community, primarily centered around Harvard Hillel and Harvard Chabad. However, the events of academic year 2023-24 also exposed longstanding challenges and unmet needs within Jewish life, and indeed within religious life more broadly, at Harvard.

The Task Force's impression is that many faith communities at Harvard tend to be fragmented and internally divided, and that they engage in limited dialogue with one another.

While Harvard does not gather statistics on the religious affiliation of its students, several factors lead the Task Force to believe that the number of Jewish students may have decreased in recent decades. This apparent decline has made it increasingly challenging, across religious denominations of Judaism (e.g., Conservative, Orthodox, Reform), and in various areas of Jewish cultural life, to achieve the requisite quorum of peers required to hold certain religious and cultural Jewish activities, potentially affecting students' ability to experience and explore the richness of Jewish heritage and life.

In several listening sessions, non- and anti-Zionist Jewish students told us that they do not feel welcome at Hillel or Chabad.

Clearly, Harvard is missing opportunities to make religious life on campus a greater source of support and an integral part of the learning community we desire. To tap such opportunities, we recommend the following:

- Connect the Harvard Chaplains better with the residential system of Harvard College, so that students experiencing spiritual distress and isolation can more easily find support.
- Urge admissions leaders to consider applicants of all faiths who have played faith-based leadership roles in the past, including those who have shown an ability to build bridges across faiths. Admissions practices cannot favor certain applicants based on their religion, but they can consider faith-based leadership experience in the way they consider other kinds of leadership experience.
- Ensure that all personnel who teach and advise students are apprised of Harvard policies regarding reasonable accommodations when religious observances conflict with the academic calendar and the scheduled assignments and exams of individual courses. Such policies should not only fulfill statutory requirements but also meet a standard of inclusion. Students should be guided and supported in making appropriate arrangements with their instructors in such circumstances, and faculty should be receptive to requests for such accommodation. Calendars of religious observances, with brief descriptions of the practices and restrictions germane to each observance, should be made easily available, to consult when religious accommodation is requested.
- Create an Office of Religious, Ethical, and Spiritual Life, as described in the Subcommittee Report on Pluralism.

Administrative Infrastructure

The steps recommended above, while comprehensive, will only effectively take root and improve student life if the University, both centrally and within its individual Schools, ensures the administrative infrastructure is in place to support, coordinate, and sustain these efforts over the long term. To that end, the Task Force recommends that the University's leadership and the leadership of each School take the following concrete actions:

- **Include in the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (OEDIB), or another appropriate office in the Central Administration, a dedicated team member specifically tasked with addressing antisemitism and anti-Israel bias.** This individual should possess relevant training and experience regarding Jewish and Israeli identity and culture. Their responsibilities should include:
  - Serving as a readily accessible point of contact for receiving concerns about antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias and overseeing cases from initial complaint to resolution.
  - Providing direct support to students experiencing antisemitism or anti-Israeli bias as they navigate the complaint process, which can be emotionally challenging.
  - Collaborating proactively with other administrators across the University to ensure the inclusion and belonging of Jewish and Israeli students.
  - Engaging with Jewish, Israeli, and pro-Israeli students across Harvard's Schools, offering guidance and support to those who may be navigating a range of challenges, including experiences of shunning, alienation, and discrimination.
  - Working proactively to repair the distrust between many members of Harvard's Israeli and Jewish community and the OEDIB.
  - Staying abreast of antisemitism resources best practices from other institutions and organizations.
  - Developing and providing trainings to Schools, departments, administrative units, and campus groups on recognizing and addressing antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.

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  - Offering consultation and support to staff members across the University responding to concerns related to antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.
  - Engage with deans, faculty, the Office of the President and Provost, the Office of the General Counsel, and OEDIB colleagues, to provide relevant insights and perspectives informed by Jewish culture, history, and community, particularly regarding emerging issues.

- **The University should explicitly acknowledge and address in an appropriate way that many Israeli and pro-Israeli students at Harvard have experienced shunning, alienation, social isolation, and discrimination from some of their peers, professors, and administrators on campus.** Harvard must unequivocally state that such behavior is unacceptable and fails to meet the expectations for the behavior of Harvard community members. Recognizing the intolerable reality faced by Israeli students is an essential first step toward fostering meaningful change and creating a truly inclusive environment.
- **Constitute in each School of the University a student-faculty-administration Working Group on Campus Culture to monitor and discuss situations that threaten the welfare and core functions of the learning community, to pursue ways of addressing and ameliorating such situations, and to act to improve campus community.** A responsibility of this group should include transforming campus culture by translating University norms into student activities and programming. These groups should represent diverse ethnic, religious, and political communities on campus, including Jewish, Israeli, Arab, and Muslim students, as well as leading administrators, and they should be funded to foster and support student initiatives toward a collegial and hospitable learning environment, including relevant high-profile events and culture-building activities. These groups should convene together periodically to report on challenges and successes and to learn best practices. They are intended to guide and catalyze the long-term development of campus culture, not to respond immediately to specific incidents.
- **Orient those in positions of advising students to the proper practices for reporting incidents.** Ensure that students know who to approach with concerns, and that those designated people know how to guide students on reporting, and how to follow up to make sure that students are apprised of responses to their reports, even when it may not be possible for legal reasons to disclose some details.
- **Launch a University Task Force of faculty, staff, and student leaders to tackle the special challenges of social media.** Social media sites, especially the anonymous Sidechat, have been the venues of particularly vicious displays of antisemitism and anti-Israel bias, as well as other biases. Conflicts among students are often full-blown and factionalized online before involved students have had a chance to interact on the matters at hand "IRL" (in real life).
- **Hold accountable any administrators, faculty, teaching staff, or advisors who encourage violations of rules that undermine the learning environment.**
- **Ensure, regarding all the efforts recommended in this document, that there be a clear locus of responsibility and accountability, metrics, ongoing measurement, and public reporting.**

In addition, the two anti-bias Task Forces jointly call for regular, in-depth demographic research and surveys on the sense of safety and well-being among Harvard community members. These efforts should prioritize, but not be limited to, groups who have historically faced challenges in expressing themselves and finding safety and belonging at Harvard, recognizing that these groups may evolve over time. In this regard, we specifically recommend:

- **Enhance regular University-wide Pulse surveys to assess the experiences of students, staff, and faculty, providing them a platform to voice concerns, suggest improvements, and propose additional areas of exploration.** Integrate a mechanism for community feedback on the survey itself, including suggestions for questions related to relevant concepts such as antisemitism and bias against Israelis, Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians, and emerging trends.

- **To complement survey data and address potential limitations like response rates and survey fatigue, enhance the University's capacity to analyze existing administrative data, such as course enrollment, dropout rates, and other routine student touchpoints.** This analysis should be conducted with strict adherence to privacy policies (e.g., FERPA) and could be centralized within the University's Office of Institutional Research and potentially involve relevant faculty, researchers, and staff in coordination with Harvard's Central Administration and the various Schools.

Protest, Complaints, and Discipline

PROTEST

This report has stressed the need for Harvard to foster an inclusive campus environment where members of our pluralistic community engage with each other respectfully and appreciate perspectives different from our own. Those differences might be stark and, in the case of contentious issues like Israel/Palestine, fraught. At times, members of our community will choose to communicate their views on such issues through public protest. Public protest is no less legitimate a form of speech than private conversation or in-class discussion. Protest can effectively communicate to our community the gravity and urgent need for action that some of our members attribute to a current crisis, either within Harvard or beyond.

Like any other form of speech, protest must operate within certain guidelines. Freedom of speech does not justify harassment, bullying, or intimidation by one student toward another, nor does it justify unprofessional conduct by an instructor towards a student due to their political views, national origin, or religion. Protest must not disrupt the normal operations of the University, including conducting classes and providing unrestricted access to the libraries and other campus buildings.

The University has already taken steps to revise and strengthen its protest policies. In January 2024, President Garber and the deans of the University's Schools issued "Guidance on Protest and Dissent" clarifying the relevance of the University's 1970 Statement on Rights and Responsibilities to current protests. (This new document prohibited, among other things, certain indoor protests.) In August 2024, the University established additional policies prohibiting unauthorized outdoor camping and excessive noise on campus property, addressing concerns stemming from the Spring 2024 encampment and other disruptive demonstrations held during the 2023-24 academic year. These policies now in place, we feel, provide substance to the concept of time, place, and manner that has long prevailed in determining the limits of free speech in the United States.

Moving forward, however, the University faces challenges in proactively establishing limits on protest rather than making ad hoc determinations during protest events. While we do not recommend proactively prohibiting the use of certain words, phrases, or symbols, we do recommend that the University prohibit the masking of faces at protests. Such a prohibition will enable the Harvard University Police Department to maintain order at public gatherings and identify individuals who may be violating University policies. Similarly, to ensure the maintenance of the University's normal operations, we urge strict adherence to the existing prohibition against unauthorized and last-minute protests.

While unauthorized or disruptive protests are perhaps the most visible manifestation of policy violations, they should not overshadow the accounts in this report describing students' experiences of bullying, exclusion, and intimidation based on national origin or political views regarding Zionism and Israel. As noted in our June 2024 Preliminary Recommendations, students alleging such mistreatment have expressed concerns about a "lack of transparency, clarity, and clear process for the submission of complaints of antisemitic or otherwise hostile behavior."

COMPLAINTS

In addressing concerns about the complaint process, the Task Force acknowledges that Harvard's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying (NDAB) policy was only implemented in September 2023. When the October 7th attack triggered a variety of events on campus, there had been no opportunity to assess how the new NDAB policy would interact with the other policies already in place within individual Schools. This unprecedented pressure test of a nascent system revealed, in our view, some fundamental flaws in its design, which we highlight here and believe require rectification. Importantly, by introducing significant confusion into the process, the implementation of NDAB may well have undermined what had been more stable processes under the previous system of administrative boards, which are responsible for handling disciplinary matters at the various Schools.

Both anti-bias Task Forces, in their preliminary recommendations, called for clear and transparent policies on protests, bias, and discrimination that would be consistent across the University and clearly communicated to all. Based on our Task Force's subsequent work, we offer the following additional recommendations.

- **The University's Office of Community Conduct (OCC) needs to clarify for the Harvard community that it is the University's Title VI office and is responsible for administering the University's Title VI compliance.** That clarification would need to include:
  - Clarifying that NDAB (the policy the OCC administers) is aligned with Title VI; or adjusting NDAB to improve alignment, if necessary, presumably by adding a venue for complaints with no clear perpetrator, and for complaints that can be made anonymously; or by adding an additional and specifically Title VI policy alongside NDAB.
  - Ensuring personnel who are employed in central offices and available across the University understand antisemitism; including ensuring improved training as well as cross-training across Schools to support development of shared understandings.
  - Better communicating the availability of those personnel and the entry points for access to them to the community.
- **As the University's Title VI office, the Office of Community Conduct should work to improve complaint processes, including the following improvements:**
  - Clear user-facing communications are needed to help people understand the different entry points into an incident reporting process, as well as the differences among different modes of reporting an incident and the differences between informal and formal processes.
  - User-facing communications should give students clear instructions as to where and how to file complaints.
  - Students should be updated as much as possible on the status of complaints.
  - Substantial consistency across Schools in both process and available sanctions, with School-specific alterations being kept to a minimum, including, at a minimum, bringing together administrators from across Schools to develop shared policy understanding, as well as exploring a transition from having separate handbooks and codes of conduct in every School to having a University-wide handbook with School-specific addenda.
- **Each School should consider appointing a specific faculty or staff member at each unit who is a navigator to assist students with making complaints.** This individual would be different from the Local Designated Resource (LDR) and would have no responsibility for judging whether a complaint should be dismissed, nor for determining whether a complaint falls under non-discrimination or bullying. The current system puts the LDR in the position of both advisor and judge, and this is a conflict of roles that needs to be corrected. The navigator would advise students where and how to file

complaints and provide updating. This would reduce confusion and allow students to feel heard, even if the substantive outcome is not to their liking. The navigator would support the LDR in the first phase of NDAB of connecting the complaining student and others involved to mediation or other informal resolution practices.

- **The University should initiate regular review of protest policies and complaint processes:**
  - Assess effectiveness, analyze enforcement trends, identify issues, and ensure alignment with evolving community needs.
  - Include feedback from frontline staff and the broader Harvard community.
  - Institute a process of regular review that is attached to a stable University-wide governance mechanism and includes faculty.
- **The University should aim to set a field standard for comparable reporting on the volume of complaints and the percentage that is resolved through mediation or other practices and the percentage that moves on to formal grievance filing or an administrative board proceeding.** This standard could parallel that for the Clery Act, which requires colleges and universities to report annually on sexual assault cases in aggregate. This reporting should include categories of sanctioned behavior as part of educating the campus about which actions are judged to be violations of NDAB.
- **The NDAB process needs to include a channel for reporting on incidents and patterns to University leadership even when no formal grievance is filed.**
- **There is a need for a channel through which complaints can be made anonymously, to protect a complainant from retaliation, and still reach University-level leaders.**

Improving the University's policies and procedures in the manner laid out above is in the best interests of the many Jewish, Israeli, Arab, Muslim, Palestinian, and pro-Palestinian community members negatively affected by these processes. It is also in the best interests of the staff and administrators of this university who are responsible for these policies. And it will certainly be necessary for the health of the Harvard community generally over the long term.

DISCIPLINE

While complaint resolution can take many forms, including voluntary mediation and other steps that fall short of punitive discipline, disciplinary action must remain a viable option. Yet, as discussed in our June 2024 Preliminary Recommendations, significant inconsistencies seem to exist in the policies and procedures of administrative boards and other disciplinary bodies across the University's various Schools. This has resulted in apparent disparities in the handling of disciplinary cases.

Therefore, the Task Force urges the University to establish clearer communication channels and strive for greater consistency in disciplinary procedures across its constituent Schools. We view the July 2024 announcement that the University Committee on Rights and Responsibilities[619] would use standardized fact-finding procedures for disciplinary cases involving multiple Schools as a positive step. However, this should be the beginning of a broader reform process encompassing the individual Schools' Administrative Boards and the interactions between them. The process should start with a University-wide committee of representatives from each School, tasked with comparing the Boards' remit, composition, operating procedures, and outcomes. The committee's objective should be recommending ways to achieve an optimal level of equalization and standardization across the Administrative Boards. Achieving this will help the University restore trust with many members of the Harvard community who want assurance that students who violate Harvard's policies will be treated fairly and equitably, with disciplinary consequences

[619] https://www.harvard.edu/president/news/2024/update-on-university-rights-and-responsibilities/

commensurate with the gravity of their infractions. To further restore trust, we recommend that the University — to the extent legally possible — provide an annual account, in an aggregated and anonymized form, of disciplinary cases University-wide, including the number and types of cases and their outcomes. Importantly, faculty should play a significant role on this committee, helping to address the information gaps that currently seem to hinder their ability to understand and engage with University policies and effectively mentor students.

When policies are on the books, they must be enforced consistently and impartially across all parts of the University to avoid even the appearance of institutional bias in their application. Uneven enforcement can feel arbitrary or selectively repressive to those who face disciplinary action, rather than a simple consequence of deciding to break a rule. This problem is further compounded by a lack of clarity and understanding surrounding these policies and their enforcement, a challenge that was particularly evident to us on the Longwood campus.

B. Governance Changes

In the course of our work, we encountered several surprising issues related to University governance, some detailed in Chapter 4. These issues included:

- Evident gaps in faculty and administrative governance, significantly degrading the academic programs in certain areas of the University and creating potential legal liability for the institution.
- Staff leading significant academic programs with insufficient oversight from the ladder faculty.
- Concerning performance of a small, but not insignificant, number of Harvard's teaching faculty.

To address these issues, we offer the following recommendations:

- **The President and Provost, either acting independently or with the counsel of a faculty advisory group, should establish a set of uniform standards for all Harvard academic programs, such as centers, institutes, and study abroad programs.** These standards should consider factors such as:
  - Requiring a faculty director, who is a responsible tenured member of the ladder faculty, to oversee all activities of such programs.
  - Establishing best practices for oversight boards of such programs.
  - Establishing best practices for visiting affiliations and appointments.

We were surprised to encounter significant academic programs that lacked any involvement from the ladder faculty, and we think as a nearly hard rule that the University should avoid creating programs like these in the future. We understand that this rule will not apply evenly across the University and that there are places and programs that can be run with the supervision of a dean's office and with the excellent staff and regular non-ladder faculty we can recruit. However, we think in general it is best to have oversight from ladder faculty with relevant expertise, and to the extent an activity is outside the scope of the expertise that exists at Harvard, it is an opportunity to think about adding skills and expertise to the faculty or, alternatively, admitting that we are not well-positioned to run a particular program, which is a healthy response, as we cannot do everything.

To the extent Harvard has expertise, and those experts are unwilling to commit the amount of time needed for meaningful and real supervision of a program, we may not be able run a proposed program with the necessary integrity. The right consequence of such a scenario would be to focus on other ventures as opposed to inviting faculty from other universities to supervise on an ad hoc basis.

We must avoid allowing staff and non-ladder faculty to create partisan projects on our letterhead, which degrades the brand and reputation of the University and is completely out of scope with our mission.

Importantly, at any given time, different Harvard Schools are capable of doing different things. Harvard is an institution that takes expertise very seriously, which is why we were surprised to find programs deeply outside the scope of a given faculty's expertise. When we found those programs, they often failed to operate at the same level of excellence as the activities within the core body of knowledge of the Harvard unit. We would do much better to partner with one another to create interdisciplinary programs than to hire non-ladder faculty to add expertise to a unit that would not merit a tenured appointment in the discipline.

The Task Force also believes the University should generally avoid partisan programs of instruction that seem aimed at training students to take sides on contested issues. While our scope did not permit extensive discussions with faculty across all units regarding the perceived instances of partisanship, those faculty members we did speak with were often shocked and unaware of the current climate — we particularly found this to be the case in discussions at Harvard Medical School. Many HMS faculty noted a significant shift towards a more politicized educational environment compared to their own training experiences.

It was especially strange to observe the following pattern. All Harvard Schools have rules regarding the time, place, and manner of permitted protest and are charged with administering those rules. But in some places in the University, we found programs of instruction that teach students to engage in disruptive protest. In effect, in some quarters — and not the majority, we should add — we found a deep tension at the heart of how we operate. It is thoroughly understandable that, when Harvard did enforce rules against some of those students, the students felt betrayed.

We also recommend increased oversight over Harvard-branded content. We find it particularly concerning that the two programs we found most problematic — the Palestine Program at the Harvard Chan School and RPL at HDS — also have recent journal publications authored by their organizers, who described their pedagogical approaches and promote their activities under the Harvard name and brand.

We believe the activities we identified in Chapter 4 present urgent brand and reputation concerns that imperil the University's pre-eminence and require immediate action.

- **Improve the incentives that Harvard's faculties have to monitor academic programs.** We observe that in some cases, when a Harvard School receives a grant or a donation to fund a program, the program quickly takes on a life of its own, growing and hiring staff. Ladder faculty insight is either non-existent or fleeting. Senior administrators appear to either lack the bandwidth to oversee the program or to take a hands-off approach to avoid antagonizing staff who have relationships with donors or students.

  To address problems like this, we urge the University to consider implementing a system of accountability where costs are assigned to Schools that fail to adequately supervise programs and other activities under their purview. This system should align with the best practices that are subject of the prior recommendations in this section on Governance Changes. Currently, incentives for diligent oversight appear weak and ineffective. By establishing clear lines of responsibility and consequences for inadequate supervision, the University can mitigate potential risks with certain programs and other activities across its Schools.

OUR CHARGE TO THE UNIVERSITY

The task of researching and writing this report has been profoundly challenging, as all involved care deeply about Harvard University. Our work has required us to examine situations where aspects of the Harvard community have broken down, resulting in deeply troubling experiences for many students, faculty, and staff. Too often, we heard these experiences reflect prejudice and intolerance based on individuals' identities, nationalities, and religious commitments. We have encountered places and instances where Harvard has fallen far short of the stated values it aspires to uphold.

Yet, throughout this process, we have also witnessed the potential for a better Harvard, the Harvard we cherish. The University's renown rests not only on its history, the many contributions of its graduates to the wider world, or the individual achievements of its faculty and students. Rather, from its vibrant undergraduate residential system to cutting-edge academic programs across the various Schools, Harvard's accomplishments stem from its enduring ability to forge and renew a purposeful community of research, teaching, and learning, strengthened by the rich tapestry of experiences woven by those who have met, learned, and grown together here.

Our work has revealed numerous examples of students, staff, and faculty dedicated to renewing and strengthening the Harvard community. For instance, three Schools highlighted in this report — the Harvard Chan School, HGSE, and HDS — have new deans committed to improving the climate and atmosphere at their Schools. In academic year 2024-25, HDS provided a book by a critical but committed Zionist, Yossi Klein Halevi, to all students, and invited all community members to a conversation with the author. This book provides a voice and a face for Zionists that seemed absent in the Religion and Public Life programming we reviewed, and it pushes back against dehumanization of Israelis. Similarly, the Dean of Harvard Medical School, in his Fall 2024 welcoming remarks to incoming students, powerfully stated, "We leave our politics at the door when we come to the bedside of a patient." In doing so, he reinforced a cornerstone of medical professionalism that we believe needs to be emphasized anew at HMS and in medical education generally.

These examples, encountered even as we have described instances where Harvard has fallen short, demonstrate Harvard's capacity to translate aspirations into action when University leadership and the broader Harvard community work together with shared resolve.

With this capacity in mind, we issue this charge to the University: it is clear to the Task Force that antisemitism and anti-Israel bias have been fomented, practiced, and tolerated not only at Harvard but also within academia more widely. We urge Harvard's leadership, including the president, provost, deans, faculties, and offices of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging to become champions in the fight against antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias — first at Harvard, and then as a model for institutions of higher learning everywhere. We further call on Harvard's leaders to combat, with equal resolve, all other forms of prejudice and intolerance, including anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian bias. This charge is made with particular urgency to those Schools that operate in deeply politicized fields, such as medicine, public health, and education.

As a final recommendation, we urge the University to convene a subset of the members of this Task Force to monitor implementation and provide two post-report updates to the public.

We conclude by reflecting on the vital importance of this Task Force's efforts, alongside those of our sibling Task Force focused on anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian bias. In moments when over 1,000 civilians are slaughtered in a single day, when tens of thousands of innocents suffer death and injury in the ensuing conflict, when millions are displaced, and when hostages remain captive — one might question the impact of actions taken within Harvard's leafy quadrangles and serene libraries, half a world away.

We believe such actions matter profoundly because of the model we set for the countless future leaders who pass through Harvard's gates. Harvard could model a world where individuals retreat into echo chambers of the like-minded, where differences are met with shunning and intimidation, and where divisions are amplified. Our students could be conditioned to seek out only those academic and extracurricular pursuits that position them as combatants in pre-existing ideological conflicts.

Yet, Harvard can — and must — model a world where the full spectrum of human talent converges, where engagement across profound differences is the norm, and where those very differences become wellsprings of creativity and imagination propelling progress on humanity's most pressing challenges.

It is our conviction that Harvard possesses both the capacity and the responsibility to provide this latter model. It is our hope that the actions recommended in this report, in concert with the recommendations of our sibling Task Force, will help illuminate the path forward.

Harvard, like the country and world it serves, is in need of profound repair. We must dedicate ourselves to this essential work, and we must do so as a unified and resolute community. Let us begin.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Recent Progress on Addressing Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias Across Harvard

This Appendix provides an overview of some recent initiatives undertaken by Harvard Schools and key offices in the Central Administration since the 2023-24 academic year aimed at addressing antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias. The information presented here is based entirely on self-reports provided by these Schools and offices in response to a request from the Task Force co-chairs.

While the co-chairs acknowledge these reported efforts as important steps and promising signs of growing institutional commitment, several important caveats must be emphasized. The initiatives described are illustrative examples, not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, the Task Force has not independently verified the implementation or effectiveness of these actions. Crucially, their inclusion here does not imply that the significant concerns about antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias detailed elsewhere in the Task Force's report have been resolved or sufficiently addressed.

All that said, the self-reported actions provide important context for the Task Force's recommendations (presented in Chapter 5). Our recommendations seek to build upon this foundation of existing efforts by promoting the systemic change needed to create a truly inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of the Harvard community.

Training on Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias

According to information provided to the Task Force, several Schools have implemented specialized training programs focused specifically on understanding antisemitism, anti-Israeli bias, and related forms of discrimination. These efforts appear aimed at equipping faculty, staff, and student leaders with the knowledge and tools to recognize problematic behaviors and create more inclusive environments.

- The University committed to hiring a new Office for Community Conduct (OCC) employee who will have responsibility for consulting on all complaints of antisemitism and supervising the preparation of the written report of such complaints that will be included in the annual report published by the OCC director.
- All OCC staff involved in reviewing complaints raising allegations of antisemitism will participate in expert training focused on recognizing and combating antisemitism and the IHRA definition of antisemitism.[620]
- Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, Harvard will push out broadly to the University community training that is focused on recognizing and combating antisemitism. This will be mandatory for students, staff, and members of disciplinary boards.

[620] To be clear, the Task Force did not deliberate on, or endorse, any particular definition of antisemitism. As we mentioned in the Executive Summary, we defined antisemitism through the actual experiences of faculty, staff, and students, not with specific reference to any of the lengthy definitions of antisemitism.

- The University's Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (OEDIB) devoted its annual Inclusion and Belonging Leadership Summit in academic year 2024-25 to the theme of "Committed to " Hate and Bias," with programming addressing antisemitism, anti-Israeli bias, and other forms of bias. Separately, OEDIB also held a moderated panel discussion on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that featured the general counsel from Hillel International and reviewed what is covered under Title VI and the role of universities in addressing incidents of harassment and discrimination.
- OEDIB led development of a series of seven sessions offered across the Harvard campus called "Honoring Our Shared Humanity: Combatting Islamophobia and Antisemitism." Developed through a partnership with Project Shema, the sessions focused on providing practical strategies to combat Islamophobia, antisemitism, and anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian, and anti-Israeli biases on campus.
- The Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) held events in Fall 2024 with Project Shema, a training organization focused on addressing contemporary antisemitism, and earlier in the same year GSAS staff attended Brandeis University's Summer Institute on Countering Antisemitism in Higher Education.
- The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (Harvard Chan School) co-hosted "Honoring Our Shared Humanity: Combatting Islamophobia and Antisemitism" in October 2024 for the Longwood campus and will be bringing Project Shema to campus for three intensive workshops on antisemitism in the coming months, tailored to the School's administrative leadership, department chairs, students, staff, and faculty.
- Harvard University staff and Harvard College senior leadership and staff participated in multiple training sessions led by Brandeis University's Summer Institute on Antisemitism in Higher Education to deepen their understanding of antisemitism, its historical and contemporary manifestations, and effective strategies for responding to bias incidents.
- The College also organized Project Shema training sessions for residential staff, tutors, proctors, and other College staff to help recognize and challenge antisemitic tropes, equipping them with tools to foster nuanced discussions and a more supportive campus climate.
- The Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences held two workshops in February 2025 on combating antisemitism and Islamophobia, respectively.
- The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) has enhanced faculty training on antisemitism, anti-Israeli bias, and classroom climate. The Bok Center Director's remarks at New Faculty Institutes addressed concerns about antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias in classrooms and emphasized keeping personal politics out of teaching. Since the University's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying (NDAB) Policy went into effect in Fall 2023, the FAS Office for Faculty Affairs has conducted 55 trainings for faculty, staff, and academic leadership.
- Harvard Law School (HLS) has begun piloting staff training focused on antisemitism.

Curricular Reviews and Academic Program Development

Schools have reported initiating reviews of their curricula and launching new academic initiatives intended to help ensure programs reflect diverse perspectives and promote inclusive excellence. These efforts include faculty searches in relevant fields, leadership transitions, program evaluations, and development of new academic offerings that address issues of religious and cultural understanding.

- The University has committed to hosting and sponsoring events with the goal of addressing antisemitism and increasing respect for and understanding of Harvard's Jewish and Israeli community members, including:

  - hosting, sponsoring, publicizing, and funding an annual academic symposium on the topic of antisemitism;
  - providing space and financial support for the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law to host an annual campus event; and
  - facilitating and funding an event at HKS on Israeli Jewish democracy.
- Harvard has committed to partnering prior to the 2025-26 academic year with an Israeli university (in addition to those in place already) and will offer Harvard students the opportunity to earn academic credit for participating in coursework from this university.
- The Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) is undertaking a comprehensive curricular review entailing a detailed descriptive analysis of the course catalog, on a number of dimensions including enrollment and instructional cost, and are shifting to a content analysis, mapping and analyzing the curriculum by topics, competencies, and pedagogy types, in connection with HGSE's academic mission and commitment to excellence in learning and teaching.
- Harvard Divinity School (HDS) has appointed new leadership for the Religion and Public Life (RPL) program effective July 1, 2025, with the Academic Dean serving as interim director to help with the transition. Additionally, the School appointed a committee of four distinguished scholars from outside Harvard to review the RPL program. The committee will provide an independent evaluation of the program, focusing on academic quality, effectiveness, and alignment with institutional goals.
- HDS is taking steps towards the development of a Jewish Leadership Initiative, akin to the School's longstanding Buddhist Ministry Initiative, to prepare students for service in their congregations, broader communities, and beyond.
- HDS launched faculty searches in Fall 2024 for two positions that correlate strongly with the issues identified in this report: a Professor in Residence in Modern Jewish Studies and tenure-track Professor in Religion, Violence, and Peace.
- Through its Middle East Initiative and other frameworks, Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) currently provides a range of opportunities for students to learn about the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. HKS plans to expand course offerings that engage topics related to the Middle East, religion and politics, and issues of discrimination, including antisemitism and anti-Muslim bias, by searching for qualified adjunct faculty who can create classroom learning environments conducive to constructive conversation about difficult and contentious topics.
- GSAS's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) team is working closely with Harvard Hillel to develop a series of events with an academic focus addressing antisemitism.

Fostering Inclusive Community and Dialogue

In their communications with the Task Force, many Schools described efforts to build a more inclusive campus community, foster dialogue across differences, and cultivate skills for engaging with challenging or contentious issues. Based on these reports, Schools are developing frameworks for respectful discourse, creating spaces for meaningful exchange, and establishing community principles that value pluralism and inclusion.

- In February 2025, President Garber announced the award of four grants from the President's Building Bridges Fund for student-led initiatives focused on building community across faiths, cultures, and backgrounds.
- In October 2024, the Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group released its recommendations, which were accepted by President Garber, on strategies and best practices to

advance open and constructive learning environments including a required teaching module on constructive disagreement.

- In May 2024, following the recommendation of a faculty-led working group, the University adopted a policy on the "Institutional Voice," whereby University leaders will not issue official statements on behalf of the institution on matters of social or political significance that do not directly affect the University's core functions. (The Task Force is hopeful this will end the unproductive lobbying of administrators to issue statements that usually ended up satisfying nobody.)
- HGSE has dedicated resources to a broad effort to foster an inclusive community, led by a workgroup of faculty and administrators. This workgroup has drafted a strategic plan aiming to foster a dynamic campus community that values and promotes authentic dialogue and understanding across differences. The goal is to both leverage and enhance existing expertise across HGSE to ensure community members have the tools and disposition to further embed pluralism into their learning, teaching, research, advising, and field-based work.
- The Harvard Chan School initiated Harvard Chan LEADs (Learn & Engage Across Differences) to strengthen commitment to inclusivity and build capacity for meaningful discourse, including a module at student orientation and ongoing workshops and events.
- The Harvard Chan School is launching a Working Group on Constructive Engagement, with representatives from students, staff, trainees, and faculty. The working group is charged with developing practical recommendations for sustaining healthy pluralism at the School by nurturing an inclusive culture, encouraging open inquiry, and building capacity within all segments of the community to engage respectfully across differences.
- The Harvard Chan School has also created Principles of Citizenship, emphasizing respect and inclusivity, through a School-wide task force with representatives from student, alumni, staff, and academic appointees. It also launched a new Harvard Chan Citizenship Award to recognize students, staff members, and academic appointees who best exemplify the principles.
- HMS has implemented multiple initiatives to advance a culture of respectful discourse. The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine emphasized at White Coat Day that physicians must "leave their politics at the door" in patient care settings. HMS now requires all entering medical students to reflect on the School's Statement of Mutual Respect, supports dialogue series with relevant speakers, and has adjusted professionalism training to focus on tolerance, pluralism, and civil discourse. All master's students attended orientation sessions on civil discourse, while all PhD students developed community agreements for facilitated discussions in a required course.
- HKS has been immersed for several years in a robust "Candid and Constructive Conversations" project following extensive listening sessions, including signature events modeling constructive disagreement, a new online module, workshops during orientations, and facilitated discussions with diverse audiences.
- HKS held a day-long session for faculty to strengthen their capacities for constructive dialogue, including simulated classroom situations where students objected to taking on perspectives they felt were harmful.
- HDS developed programming to encourage dialogue across difference, including a "Community Read" of three books presenting different perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The FAS Civil Discourse initiative, launched in December 2023 by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and led by a tenured faculty member from the Government Department represents a long-term, high-profile commitment to fostering an environment of curiosity, ambition, mutual understanding, and achievement for the entire FAS community.

- HLS made restorative practices — facilitated dialogues aimed at repairing harm and rebuilding relationships — available to student group leaders focused on Israel and Gaza and launched a Community Connections Grant Program to encourage small-group discussions, build facilitation skills, and model constructive disagreement.
- In spring 2024, the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics began engaging in a Center-wide effort to expand its longstanding work on civil discourse, including a new Fellowship in Values Engagement. The Fellowship works with resident tutors to foster intellectual vitality by promoting ethical reflection and a culture of civil disagreement in undergraduate community life.
- In January 2024, Harvard College and PEN America hosted the Intellectual Vitality and Free Expression Student Summit aimed at fostering open, productive communication.

Strengthening Support for Jewish Students and Communities

According to information submitted to the Task Force, several Schools have taken steps to directly support Jewish students and communities through sustained engagement with Jewish organizations, dedicated programming, and regular communication between leadership and community members. These efforts appear aimed at ensuring Jewish students feel welcome, supported, and integrated into the broader campus community while having their specific concerns addressed.

- The University has developed and distributed a resource guide for all students, faculty, and staff to help them recognize and report online harassment. Harvard University Police Department (HUPD), working with Harvard's information security team, has processes in place to receive and act on these reports.
- Harvard has established 24/7 reporting mechanisms to allow community members to report antisemitic incidents anonymously. To directly address any allegations of antisemitism, Harvard has provided specialized resources and training on antisemitism and its manifestation on campus to those who adjudicate complaints under the Non-Discrimination Policy at all Schools.
- The University organized community support sessions led by the counseling team and Harvard's chaplains, which comprise more than 30 faith leaders representing Judaism and several other religions.
- Harvard has deployed additional law enforcement resources to protect Jewish students and ensure the safety of the entire community. Additionally, Harvard has increased coordination between HUPD and local and federal law enforcement to assess and respond to any potential or actual threats to the Harvard community.
- When circumstances warrant, Harvard has restricted access to Harvard Yard (the center of its Cambridge campus) and HMS has restricted access to the Longwood Campus Quadrangle to limit outside disruptions, better manage campus spaces, and ensure student safety.
- The University clarified that its inclusion and belonging efforts must reach all members of its community and has ensured that its "Inclusion and Belonging Student Leadership Council" includes Jewish student representation.
- Harvard leaders attend dinners at Harvard Hillel, Chabad, and other Jewish organizations across our community (both on campus and with alumni and other off-campus groups) to hear concerns and suggestions on improving the campus climate.
- Clinicians and staff from Harvard's Counseling and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) received cultural competency lectures from the then-Campus Rabbi at Harvard Hillel, who was a Harvard Chaplain, to provide a deeper understanding of antisemitism and enable better care for students.

- The University launched a webpage to provide information and guidance for planning events and programs with inclusion in mind, which include a multifaith calendar, a glossary of religious observances, and suggestions for inclusive catering.
- Harvard has committed to dedicating additional academic resources and opportunities to the study of antisemitism and to Hebrew and Judaic studies as a part of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University and the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard Law School.
- Harvard has committed to issuing an Annual Report for the next 5 years from each Harvard School concerning Harvard's response to discrimination or harassment based on Title VI-protected traits.
- Harvard College held regular weekly meetings with Harvard Hillel to plan events, coordinate vigils, and address emergent concerns related to antisemitism on campus, ensuring Jewish students' perspectives, experiences, and needs were integrated into the College's broader inclusion efforts and students' concerns and issues were addressed.
- The Harvard Chan School has held and remains committed to holding regular meetings between the Dean of the Faculty, the School's senior leadership team, and members of the Jewish community. The Dean's Office has offered guidance to a new community-wide Jewish and Israeli support group for students, staff, and faculty across the Longwood area, which holds weekly lunches at the Harvard Chan School.
- HMS has reconfigured its Admitted Students Preview Days to focus on the academic, scientific, and clinical learning environment at HMS.
- Senior leaders at HDS have held meetings to establish clear lines of communication with Jewish students, Muslim students, and representatives from Harvard Hillel.
- Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) administrators and faculty allies have served as bridges between Jewish students and the administration, helping students understand policies that create a safe campus climate. Jewish faculty leaders at HSDM offer mentorship through both individual meetings and group gatherings. HSDM administrators also work closely with a Hillel staff member who is specifically dedicated to serving graduate and professional students, collaborating to promote activities and access to additional support resources.
- HKS hosts and funds several Shabbat dinners on campus, open to all members of the HKS community, and awards competitive student fellowships for a wide range of students, including those from Israel (previously Wexner Fellows, now Wolk fellows) and "emerging leaders from Israel and Palestine" (Ofer Fellows).
- The Office of the President provided funding for weekly Jewish community lunches on both the Cambridge and Longwood campuses. Kosher food is served at both.
- University Dining Services expanded access to Kosher food for students.

Reviewing and Strengthening Policies and Processes

Schools have reported implementing structural and policy changes that they believe will ensure programs are consistent with core academic values, that guidelines for events and conduct are clear and enforced, and that appropriate leadership and oversight mechanisms are in place. These administrative changes appear intended to institutionalize commitments to inclusivity and establish clearer expectations for community behavior.

- In March 2025, the University posted FAQs, clarifying that both Jewish and Israeli identity are covered by the Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying policy (NDAB), and that the IHRA definition

and examples will be used in applying NDAB. The FAQs further clarify that conduct targeting Zionism may violate the NDAB.

- In November 2024, the University issued Library Protest FAQs explaining how the University-Wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities (USRR) applies to protests in Harvard's libraries.
- In September 2024, the University released Guidance explaining that doxxing violates the University-Wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities' (USRR) prohibition against "intense personal harassment" and is "bullying" under the NDAB Policies.
- In August 2024, the University announced Updated Campus Use policies to centralize existing regulations and provide new guidelines to facilitate productive use of space and enforcement of policies. Among other things, these policies expressly prohibit camping with or without a tent.
- In July 2024, the University adopted new procedures to standardize fact-finding for disciplinary cases involving students from different Harvard Schools following the encampment in Spring 2024.
- In January 2024, the University issued updated Guidance on Protest and Dissent (endorsed by the Harvard Corporation) under the USRR. The Guidance makes clear that protests and rallies are prohibited in study and instructional areas, like classrooms and libraries, and in private areas, such as dorms and dining halls. Moreover, protestors are barred from blocking access to campus buildings, classrooms, and offices and preventing the free movement of people and vehicles.
- Harvard committed to issuing an annual statement for at least the next five years stating that antisemitism will not be tolerated and that the IHRA definition and examples will be used in applying NDAB.
- Harvard is in the process of instituting an Action Plan and training to ensure that all personnel charged with reviewing and evaluating complaints of potential shared ancestry discrimination, whether anonymous or informal, are applying similar standards consistent with the Policies and Procedures. This Action Plan will be submitted to the Department of Education OCR, with records of trainings.
- HGSE is designing a review of student groups and organizations, including affinity groups, to ensure that all are genuinely accessible and inclusive to all students, and that they are funded and administered equitably.
- HMS is codifying and enforcing policies regarding student group-sponsored events and establishing guidelines for faculty in the case of classroom disruptions, with policies and guidelines now written, approved, distributed, and currently in force.
- HMS is also advancing open inquiry through a new Task Force on Open Inquiry, convened and chaired by a former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. This task force will evaluate culture and climate issues, assess the recommendations of this Task Force and interventions already in place, and issue recommendations that reconcile both the Task Force reports and ongoing changes.
- HDS launched a strategic planning process in Fall 2024 for the entire School to identify key areas of academic/scholarly growth, create better structures for oversight and guidance of centers and programs to ensure academic excellence, develop more consistent guidelines for selecting and reviewing non-ladder faculty teaching appointments, and enhance the academic quality of the overall learning experience.
- HSDM and HMS launched a new, more robust Student Organizations, Events, and Activities Manual, requiring open student membership, annual registration, clear guidelines on the use of Harvard names in communications, and established procedures for addressing policy violations.

- FAS created a Classroom Social Compact Committee that developed handbook language for students and instructors outlining expectations for classroom behavior. This language, which will be effective in academic year 2025-26, aims to advance academic freedom, engagement with a range of viewpoints, and a vibrant learning environment.
- The Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) implemented a new Campus Posting Policy, defining acceptable content and outlining procedures for non-compliance. The School also introduced a Statement of Mutual Respect and Public Discourse to foster an environment of open and civil dialogue and establish expectations for community members during events, meetings, and gatherings, including peaceful protests.
- HKS hired a full-time "Community and Professional Conduct Specialist" who acts as the HKS "Local Designated Resource," conducts training and education, and works closely with the University Office of Community Conduct.
- HKS also has established clear policies on "debate and dissent" which permit protest or dissent at events so long as it does not interfere with the speakers' right to speak or the audience's right to listen. The School has established protocols for handling potential disruptions at events and works closely with hosts and moderators to help them implement these protocols effectively.
- HLS improved guidance and enforcement regarding the use of campus spaces for protest and dissent, incorporating community input and feedback.

Conclusion

The initiatives described above represent what Schools and key offices in the Central Administration report as important steps in addressing the complex challenges of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias at Harvard. While these self-reported efforts suggest institutional responsiveness to emerging concerns, the Task Force co-chairs recognize that more coordinated, comprehensive, and sustained efforts are necessary to create lasting change. We believe that many of them may have strong and positive impacts on the Harvard community that goes beyond concerns about antisemitism and anti-Israel bias, but many of these initiatives are still nascent, and their impact remains to be seen.

The recommendations presented in Chapter 5 of this report build upon these promising foundations, offering a comprehensive framework for addressing antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias across the University. By acknowledging both reported progress and areas requiring further attention, we aim to catalyze a more robust institutional commitment to creating a truly inclusive and welcoming environment where all members of the Harvard community can thrive.