

What ADL's Faculty Reports Show about Campus Antisemitism, and What They Don't

The issue of antisemitism on college campuses has been top of mind for many American Jews since the rise of the campus anti-Israel protest movement after October 7, 2023. Although the protests and encampments have largely subsided, sizeable percentages of American Jewish college students report having witnessed or experienced antisemitism on campus since the October 7 attacks,¹ and a significant minority report concealing their Jewish identities at least some of the time while at school.² There is also evidence that Jewish students' perceptions of antisemitism are often related to anti-Israel incidents and attitudes that they encounter on campus. It is less clear precisely how Jewish students distinguish between criticism of Israel, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism, and the topic remains contested among researchers and advocacy organizations.

Since late July, the Anti-Defamation League has turned its focus on college faculty and the extent to which they promote antisemitism and anti-Zionism. ADL released three separate reports on this issue. The first focused on professional [faculty groups and networks](#), the second looked at the [educational practices](#) of the faculty themselves, and the third analyzed [faculty unions](#).

These are not systematic studies; in all three cases, they present a few dozen incidents of anti-Israel or allegedly antisemitic activity and argue that they represent broader problematic trends. And in all three cases, they were followed by ADL press releases and social media posts which confidently asserted that those trends are real — perhaps even widespread — on campuses. There is no doubt that antisemitism and anti-Zionism exist among faculty. But does the evidence in these specific reports prove the existence of a widespread problem?

Take for example ADL's report, "[Antisemitism Among College Faculty and in Classrooms](#)," released on August 7, 2026. The report contains a collection of approximately 40 separate incidents of faculty behavior, which ADL groups under a handful of antisemitism-related 'patterns.' The incidents include: eight cases where individual professors included anti-Israel framings in course materials or assigned texts offering anti-Israel views (e.g., referring to Israel's actions as a genocide, praising " Hamas revolutionary resistance forces," assigning the writings of PFLP members); seven cases where professors made anti-Israel statements, either inside or outside of class; eleven cases where professors encouraged or facilitated students' participation in anti-Israel activism (e.g., cancelling class to allow them to attend a rally); seven cases where professors singled out Jewish or Israeli students for hostile treatment or exclusion; and eight cases where faculty bodies or members supported boycott or divestment initiatives (in one of these, the union membership ultimately rejected the resolution on a revote).

The descriptions of the incidents in the report generally appear to be factually accurate. But can roughly 40 incidents prove the existence of a broader trend? This is questionable. The report does not emphasize the fact that more than a quarter of the included incidents took place at one college: Columbia University in New York. The remaining incidents were spread over 18 other campuses. And when plotted chronologically, one sees that the incidents covered in this report are not exactly new: about half of them took place in the first year after October 7. Among the most recent incidents, roughly half amounted to course descriptions that referred to Israel as having perpetrated genocide or being a settler colonial state. There is no doubt that many Jews find this objectionable to varying degrees, but we would need more data in order to know the extent of the issue.

Indeed – the report itself is somewhat cautious about extrapolating larger trends from these 40 examples, stating that they are “not present uniformly in all institutions,” and that they do not “characterize all faculty.” Although the report states that these examples demonstrate a “discernible trend” it also hedges by saying that this “suggest[s] the need for closer examination.” The report also treads delicately on the issue of antisemitism, stating that although some of the examples were antisemitic, others, which all revolved around some sort of opposition to Israel or Zionism, could “in some cases veer into rhetoric that can reasonably be understood as antisemitic.”

The report's hedging and restraint were dropped from accompanying press releases and social media posts. The [press release's headline](#) announced outright that ADL found “Antisemitism Taking Root in Classrooms and Faculty Networks.” A [tweet from ADL](#) said, “campus antisemitism problem persists inside the classroom, where professors treat anti-Israel bias as fact, assign terror group readings and urge students to oppose antisemitism protections.” But the report doesn't back up this claim. It only listed one instance where a university professor assigned readings from writers affiliated with a terrorist group (in another case the report cited a university department which promoted a third party, extracurricular course where such readings were present); and only one case where a professor urged students to oppose a piece of legislation that targeted antisemitism. The assertion that a widespread, current day problem of anti-Israel and antisemitic rhetoric exists among faculty is not fully backed up by the report, which, after all, only documents about 40 incidents, most of them older than a year, on fewer than 20 campuses.

Social science research offers an alternative way of understanding antisemitism and hostility to Israel among college faculty beyond the incident-based approach ADL chose in this report. The closest attempt so far is a spring 2025 survey of more than 2,300 faculty at American research universities conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University. Three of its findings are relevant here: seven percent of non-Jewish faculty agreed that ‘Israel does not have the right to exist’; about one in five had posted online or engaged in real world activism about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past year; and about one in ten said they taught about the conflict in class. Although we need to be careful about drawing large conclusions from these numbers, it is reasonable to conclude that many Jewish students have encountered arguments hostile to Israel in their classes.³ Jewish students report something similar: in AJC's most recent survey, 23 percent said

faculty had 'promoted antisemitism or fueled a learning environment that is hostile to Jews.' Taken together, these surveys point to a real problem.

To be sure, the Cohen Center study does not paint a complete picture. It cannot tell us, for example, how many professors have called out Jewish or Israeli students in class, how many refer to Israel's actions as genocide, or how many assign readings Jewish students may find objectionable. But ADL didn't do that either. Roughly forty examples from fewer than twenty universities, many of them more than a year old, do not tell us anything about the true scale of these problems today.

So where does this leave people who are concerned about Jewish student safety and belonging on campus?

For parents and students concerned about faculty attitudes and activism related to Israel, the examples of anti-Israel or antisemitic behavior described in this ADL report could be a model for what to look out for when choosing a college or which classes to register for. For those who want to avoid professors who have engaged in any of the range of behaviors described in this report, do some research – look at the professor's public record of activism, their student ratings, and any syllabi that might be available. But don't assume that most professors single out Jewish students, promote BDS, or design their courses around criticism of Israel. The ADL report does not support that contention.

For everyone who cares about these issues: The ADL reports on faculty, like all other research, should be read carefully. Even incident-based reports like this one can surface real issues and provide stark examples of behavior that some may find problematic. But their evidence needs to be critically assessed before drawing larger conclusions. How many diverse types of phenomena is a report trying to reduce into a simple category of "antisemitism?" How many examples is the report providing to illustrate each one of the problems, how recent are they, and what geographic distribution do they cover? Is there a discrepancy between the actual findings in a report and the possibly more sweeping or overstated framings in headlines, press releases, and social media?

And for those committed to constructive research into antisemitism on campuses, these ADL reports are a reminder of how much remains to be measured, and of the difference between documenting a problem and understanding its scope.

Notes

1. [The State of Antisemitism in America 2025: AJC's Survey of American Jews](#) (American Jewish Committee, 2026). [Antisemitism and Prejudice on Campus](#) (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, April 2026). [83% of Jewish College Students Have Experienced or Witnessed Antisemitism Firsthand Since Oct. 7 Attack, Survey Finds](#) (Hillel International, January 2025).
2. [New Survey: Four in 10 Jewish College Students Report Experiencing Antisemitism](#) (Hillel International, February 2026).
3. Graham Wright et al., [Ideology in the Classroom](#), Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, July 2025. The study classifies only 3 percent of non-Jewish faculty as hostile to Israel, based on a pattern of responses across several questions; we find the individual items more informative. The survey did not ask which side faculty activism was on. AJC, [The State of Antisemitism in America 2025](#); the comparable figure in the [2024 survey](#) was 32 percent.