



Israel on Campus: A Guide for the Congregation Shomrei Torah Community

Need help or information urgently? Don't know where to turn? Want to report a specific incident or get assistance with a particular concern?

For Students: Start with Hillel on Campus. You can find a local phone number from <http://www.hillel.org/college-guide/search>.

For Parents and Community Members, contact:
Paula Simon, Director, Operations and Special Projects, Jewish Community Relations Council, psimon@jcrc.org, 415-977-7401, ext 101.
Our clergy and staff: 707 578 5519, office@cstsr.org.

This guide is online at www.shomreitorah.org/college-students/.

What to Expect on Campus

College campuses are exciting places where the freedoms of speech, thought and the exchange of ideas are free flowing and highly encouraged. While overall this creates a positive environment to learn more about the world, there also can be rancor, misinformation, and uninformed opinions. Unfortunately, when it comes to discussing Israel, the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns and anti-Israel activity have brought disturbing interactions and messages to campuses throughout California and across North America. In addition, campuses are often tuned in to headline stories about Israel in the media that are accompanied by a torrent of commentary in social media.

Characteristics of typical anti-Israel political activities

Anti-Israel activity, to be distinguished from the open inquiry expected on campus, takes a different form on every campus and can include:

- Speakers, movie screenings, panel discussions, protest marches, tabling and petitions.

- Multi-day events such as ‘Israeli Apartheid Week’, student organized product or academic boycotts, and the disruption of pro-Israel speakers.
- Academic conferences, divestment campaigns and other activities painting Israel as an oppressive and racist country and Palestinians as the sole victims of the conflict.

What should I expect?

Discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on campus should be encouraged. Criticism of Israel and its government’s policies is fair and legitimate, but some campus activity can and has crossed the line, challenging Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state.

Anti-Israel activity on campus sometimes creates an uncomfortable atmosphere for Jewish students and Israel supporters, particularly when misinformation is passionately expressed in simplistic terms. Yet most college students feel they are ill-prepared to respond constructively to harshly negative portrayals and false statements about Israel. There also is a risk of becoming a sullied outcast when there is no effective reply from the campus community.

What can I do if events on campus go too far?

Sometimes anti-Israel rhetoric and activities go over the line to become verbal attacks on individuals and in rare cases escalate to physical attacks. If that seems imminent or has already occurred, your campus administration should be proactive to protect all student rights. Above and beyond what may be done by the campus administration, on most campuses the best place to turn for help, advice, and support is the local chapter of Hillel International. You can find a local phone number from <http://www.hillel.org/college-guide/search>. Parents and community members should contact Paula Simon, North Bay Regional Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council: psimon@jcrc.org, 415-492-2127. The Shomrei Torah staff and clergy also should know and can be helpful (707 578 5519, office@cstsr.org). Several other resources are given below.

What Can I Do?

Apart from politics, college and university campuses are a place for vibrant Jewish life with numerous opportunities for students to get together with other Jewish students and various pro-Israel groups. The best place to start is at your campus Hillel. There likely are many Jewish groups on campus. Try them out and see what feels best to you! The rest of this guide outlines some of the go-to organizations that are focused on being a Jewish student on a North American campus.

Jewish and pro-Israel organizations on campus

[Hillel International](#) welcomes students of all backgrounds and fosters an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning and Israel. As the largest Jewish student organization in the world, Hillel builds connections with emerging adults at more than 550 colleges and universities and inspires them to direct their own path. During their formative college years, students are challenged to explore, experience, and create vibrant Jewish lives.

Resources: Connections at [550 colleges and universities](#), professional staff or advisors, relationships with campus administration, faculty and law enforcement, coalitions. The first place we recommend students reach out to for positive Israel engagement opportunities, as well as assistance in dealing with campus based anti-Israel or anti-Semitic concerns. Israel trips and leadership opportunities. Go to <http://www.hillel.org/college-guide/search>; this is the best place to start!

[The David Project](#) -The David Project positively shapes campus opinion on Israel by educating, training, and empowering student leaders to be thoughtful, strategic and persuasive advocates. The campus team works directly with students and Israel groups to help them reach out to their peers and talk about Israel.

Resources: Campus grants, advocacy and discussion guides, and campus liaisons at [core schools](#) (including UC, Berkeley and Stanford in California). 617-428-0012 (Boston)
info@davidproject.org.

[J Street U](#) – J Street U is the student organizing arm of J Street, the political home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans. On campuses across the country J Street U organizes students to act together on behalf of a two-state solution and a more peaceful, secure, and democratic future for both Israelis and Palestinians. In so doing, it strives to bring about inclusive, pragmatic, and values-driven conversations able to meet the urgency and seriousness of the challenges.

Resources: Student resources include local chapters, background materials, internships, leadership opportunities, including trips to Israel:
www.jstreetu.org/.

[AIPAC:](#) Working with high school, undergraduate, and graduate students, as well as young professionals, AIPAC's training programs teach students how to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship through political involvement. On campuses across America--from Ivy League universities, to small liberal arts colleges, to Historically Black and Christian schools--AIPAC aims to give students the tools to find their voices in support of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

Resources: campus leadership training, congressional relationships, policy conferences and publications. Go to <http://www.aipac.org/connect/aipac-near-you>.

[AMCHA](#): The AMCHA Initiative was formed to respond to anti-Israel and antisemitic events on California university campuses and now has a national focus. Their mission is, “To investigate, document, educate about, and combat antisemitic behavior on college and university campuses in America and the institutional structures that legitimize it and allow it to flourish.”

Resources: Up-to-date campus news, quotations and videos, numerous links to current events, and an alumni network. Go to www.amchainitiative.org.

Other Resources for College Students

[The Israel Action Network](#) (IAN) is a strategic initiative of The Jewish Federations of North America in partnership with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs that was created to counter assaults made on Israel’s legitimacy. The IAN seeks to educate, organize and mobilize the organized North American Jewish community to develop strategic approaches to countering these assaults and develop innovative efforts to change the conversation about Israel and achieving peace and security for two states for two peoples. IAN actively fosters campus-community partnerships backed by a broad coalition of pro-Israel groups. Newsletters, fact sheets, talking points, and FAQs are available to counter assaults made on Israel’s legitimacy. [IAN’s Campus Resource Guide and The Playbook](#) are among available guides to building campus-community partnerships and increasing advocacy on campus. Hillel and other campus groups refer to this information. Go to <http://israelactionnetwork.org/hot/campuses/>.

[Israel on Campus Coalition](#): A national network of students, faculty, and professionals dedicated to strengthening the pro-Israel movement on campus. ICC champions a whole-campus approach, enlisting allies from every segment of the university community to create a positive climate for Israel on campus. ICC supports and empowers campus leaders, facilitates strategic collaboration among national pro-Israel groups, incubates innovative initiatives, and conducts cutting edge research to inform campus partners and the national pro-Israel community. Go to <http://israelcc.org/> to bring this approach to your campus.

[StandWithUs](#) supports, trains, and provides resources to college students across North America. It provides guidance to student groups opposing BDS efforts by anti-Israel groups. Go to www.standwithus.com; and note this concise, fact-filled Q&A [booklet](#).

[Taglit Birthright Israel](#): The vision of Taglit-Birthright Israel is to strengthen Jewish identity, Jewish communities and solidarity with Israel by providing a 10-day trip to Israel for young Jewish people. Taglit-Birthright Israel provides a gift (FREE!) of a peer group, educational trip to Israel for Jewish young adults ages 18 to 26 from around the world. See <http://www.birthrightisrael.com/>.

Apps on antisemitism and Israel news at the Apple Store: [AJC](#), [CombatHate](#), [CombatHateU](#), [CFCA](#), [Israel News](#), [Israel HaYom](#); [MFA \(Israeli Gov’t\)](#), and more.