



PREPARING FOR
**Anti-Israel /
Antisemitic Speakers
Coming to Campus**

StandWithUs SAIDOFF
LAW

A white silhouette of a crowd of people holding up flags, positioned at the bottom of the page.

Anti-Israel/Antisemitic Speakers Coming to Campus

BACKGROUND Free Speech and Biased Speakers

The First Amendment right to free speech includes the right for student groups and academic departments to invite speakers to campus. Therefore, student groups and academic departments are typically given wide latitude to host events, even biased events, so long as the event is within their departmental purview or student group mission. This right is often codified in specific university policies and includes the right to bring controversial speakers who espouse biased ideas.

While you may wish to get an anti-Israel or antisemitic speaker canceled because you dislike their messaging, this is not a civic value we encourage. Instead, we suggest you respond to their hateful speech with education—alternative messaging, facts about why the speaker is problematic, and counter-programming.

StandWithUs can help with all of this! If you are concerned about a particular speaker and want to strategize how best to respond, please contact research@standwithus.com or legal@standwithus.com.

Extremist speakers often engage in hate speech when sharing their anti-Israel and anti-Jewish views

Hate speech attacks a person or group because of an immutable characteristic, such as ethnicity, religion, national origin, race, etc. Hate speech is generally constitutionally protected, although there may be certain circumstances in which protected speech crosses the line into unprotected speech, such as antisemitic conduct. The distinction between speech and conduct is a crucial one.

Even though hate speech may be constitutionally protected, you are empowered to respond!

Universities, student governments, and student groups may be allowed to host speakers that promote anti-Israel or even antisemitic views. However, students and the university administration are also allowed to—and should—condemn them for doing so using that very same right to free speech.

Remind your administration, if silent, that they have a moral obligation to use their platform to speak out against antisemitism and discrimination. Remind the bigoted event hosts—such as the student group or academic department—that while they are entitled to espouse hate speech, they are not entitled to be free from criticism for doing so.

Disruptions

Please do not disrupt anti-Israel events. The same rules apply to everybody, regardless of the content of the event. An invited speaker has a constitutional right to speak, and an audience has a constitutional right to listen. When protesters substantially disrupt a public event, they likely are violating the constitutional rights of both the speaker and the audience, as well as breaking various applicable state laws and campus policies.

Free Speech Rules at Public vs. Private Universities

The Constitution applies to all public universities; therefore, First Amendment free speech rights are strictly enforced. While private schools typically follow and codify free speech principles, they generally have more leeway to regulate speech than public universities do.

Public vs. Private Events on Campus

Academic departments, student governments, and student groups are usually allowed to host private events. If they host public events, those events must be open to the public. If you are denied entrance to an event, asked to leave an event, or kept in a Zoom waiting room because you are an identifiable Jew or Zionist, you may have a claim for discrimination. StandWithUs can help you file a complaint. Please document everything about what happened to you—take screenshots, video or photograph evidence, write down what happened, etc.

If you believe you have witnessed unconstitutional conduct or if you believe you have been discriminated against because of your Jewish or Zionist identity, you may wish to file a discrimination report.

We are here to help. Contact StandWithUs Saidoff Law at legal@standwithus.com.



CASE STUDY

The Middle Eastern Studies department and a student group are co-hosting an event, “Colonizing and Ethnic Cleansing in Israel/Palestine.” Both the title and event description contain biased stereotypes against Israel. What should I do?

We suggest you use this event as an opportunity to educate others about misinformation and the speakers’ biases or lack of credibility. StandWithUs can help provide this information to you. Should the event include or lead to a rise in antisemitic rhetoric or activity at school, urge the administration to condemn the antisemitism as part of its obligation to ensure an inclusive and safe environment for all students.

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