KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Online Antisemitism
LEGALITIES AND STRATEGIES

StandWithUs SAIDOFF
LAW

Is Online Antisemitism Unlawful?

Online antisemitism is antisemitic hate speech that appears on any number of internet-based forums – in social media posts, YouTube comments, blog posts, and more – and can resemble traditional antisemitism. Hate speech is generally permissible online just like it is legal in the "real" world, and only becomes unlawful in narrow circumstances, such as if it rises to the level of criminal harassment, incitement to violence, is defamatory, or engages in "doxing" (see below for definitions). When such content does not rise to the level of breaking a law, it still might be in violation of a service or site's terms of service and community guidelines.

Combating Antisemitism Online

The easiest and safest way to combat antisemitism and protect yourself online is to report posts and comments directly to the service using their built-in tools. Virtually all platforms have a reporting feature to inform its censors that a post, account, or comment has violated their terms of use or community guidelines, such as making offensive or threatening remarks. This includes antisemitism!

Flagging an antisemitic post might not always get it removed, but it will send an important message to the platform that it is happening on their platform and that users want antisemitic content removed. The antisemitic rhetoric does not need to directly target or attack you – such as a comment on one of your posts, a post on your profile/wall, a message you receive, or something you are tagged in – to be a violation. And to build greater strength in numbers, feel free to privately forward the offending content to those in your network so they can report it too.

Sometimes it can feel like these platforms make it very difficult to report because of the numerous steps and buttons to click before submitting. Please don't let that dissuade you, and continue filling it out until the end. **Social media services will only know about the hate on their platforms if it is reported to them.**

If you notice a pattern of a platform's failure to appropriately address antisemitic posts, reach out to us. We can work with you to address the pattern.

Self-Care on Social Media

Don't hesitate to set healthy boundaries with your interactions on social media. Most sites will let you restrict who may interact with or see your profile and posts. Specifically, you can set your account to private and require users to "request" access, limit comments, and prevent the sharing of your posts.

Please do not try to engage with every hateful person you come across or be baited into antisemitic exchanges. Instead, prioritize your wellbeing, monitor your screentime, and take care of yourself! You are the best activist against antisemitism when you are your best you.

Be mindful of what you post and be aware of what others post about you or tag you in. Make your opinion known but avoid engaging in behavior that can be considered defamatory, threatening, or criminal. Remember, everything you post will likely stay online forever – even on "temporary" platforms like Snapchat or comments you've deleted.

What is the difference between disinformation and misinformation?

Misinformation is when people unwittingly share false or misleading information, whether because they are ignorant or have themselves been misled, and can have a less harmful motive.

Disinformation is the intentional spreading of false information to control a narrative. This manifests in misleading or blatantly false posts, including conspiracy theories, sometimes under the guise of "debunking."

Defamation and Doxing

Defamation is making a false statement of fact about someone, and you can be sued for doing so. It is safe to share your opinions, and you can do that by describing someone's behavior, not making a characterization. For instance, do not call someone an "antisemite;" instead say, "this is antisemitic" and be specific.

Doxing is if you are threatened and harassed by having your home address or other personal identifying information posted online. If this occurs, document everything, including anything relevant that you have posted even if it does not paint you in a positive light. Please notify the police immediately if you are concerned for your safety.

Being Proactive Online

You have the power to make chance in your community and within your network. You can post educational graphics, carousels, stories, and videos that debunk false claims, call out double standards, and educate about current events that affect the Jewish community in Israel and closer to home.

Show support for positive messaging and allies by retweeting and reposting your favorite content creators, including StandWithUs! One of the easiest ways to be an influencer is to curate the very best for your followers, for whom you will become a trusted voice.

Think about what posts would be most compelling to you scrolling on social media knowing nothing about Israel, the Jewish community, or antisemitism.

What do I do if my post was flagged?

It is possible your post or entire account may be restricted, warned, or deleted due to someone reporting your pro-Israel content. If this happens, you can and should appeal this decision. If overturned, your post/account will be reinstated. If not, do not be discouraged—continue to express the truth. Often the best action after losing an appeal is to write a noncommittal apology privately to the platform for unintended wrongdoing. We can help you draft this.

When dealing with being reported or having your post removed, be sure to document everything by taking screenshots, screen-records, saving links, etc. This includes the original post as well as all comments and the profiles of those who commented in opposition and might have been the reporter.

If you believe that there is anti-Israel or antisemitic bias at play, reach out to us for help. Beyond reporting antisemitism online, we can help you hold public figures, influencers, and others accountable for sharing antisemitism online.

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