



SUBJ: When Unions Fail Their Jewish Members: New ADL/AEN report exposes antisemitism in academic unions

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New AEN-ADL Report: Higher Education Unions Are Failing Jewish Faculty and Graduate Students

Report Finds Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism Are Marginalizing Jewish Members of Higher Education Unions

Washington, DC – Today, the [Academic Engagement Network](https://academicengagement.org) (AEN) and ADL (The [Anti-Defamation League](https://adl.org)) released a new report documenting how antisemitism, including extreme anti-Zionist activism, and failures of union governance are leaving some Jewish faculty and graduate students marginalized, silenced and inadequately supported by the very organizations charged with representing them. The report notes union leaders are failing to meet their responsibility to address antisemitism, represent Jewish members fairly, and protect viewpoint diversity within their ranks.

The report, “A Crisis of Representation: Antisemitism and Inclusion in Higher Education Unions,” [draws](#) on incident reports, member accounts, union materials, and campus developments to examine how union governance, campus politics, and activist dynamics can create environments in which Jewish faculty and graduate students feel marginalized, silenced, or inadequately represented.

Across higher education unions nationwide, the research identifies troubling patterns of antisemitism and divisive conflicts around Israel, Zionism, and Jewish identity. It documents how highly organized activist factions have used low-participation governance processes to advance anti-Israel positions without broad member consensus, with members being told that they are “wrong for being ‘unwilling’ to separate Israel and antisemitism, even though [their] own feelings of Judaism are connected to Israel.”

In other unions, Jewish members report hostility from leaders and fellow members for raising concerns about antisemitism, expressing views related to Israel or Zionism, or challenging anti-Israel advocacy within their unions. As one faculty member described in the report, “the term ‘Zionist’ is applied as a slur if you express an opinion other than full condemnation of Israel.”

One prominent example examined is the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), a national union and membership association representing faculty and other academic professionals, as a prominent example of this broader shift towards hostility toward Israel and Zionism. In 2024, the AAUP reversed its longstanding opposition to academic boycotts, claiming they can be used as a “legitimate” tactic. Since then, the organization hosted a webinar on “scholasticide in Palestine,” while requests from Jewish organizations to include differing perspectives in its programming went unanswered.

The AAUP is not an outlier. In 2025, the California Faculty Association, which represents faculty across 23 California State University (CSU) campuses, urged CSU to cut academic ties with Israeli universities, invoking claims of “scholasticide,” “apartheid,” and “genocide.” The Santa Cruz Faculty Association took similar action by co-authoring resolutions that raised allegations of “scholasticide” in Palestine and supported anti-Zionist departmental statements on the grounds of “academic freedom.” At City College of San Francisco, a union leader reportedly targeted a Jewish instructor, calling her a “colonizer” and making derogatory remarks about her name. Cornell Graduate Students United adopted a statement endorsing a boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions and affirming Palestinians’ “unequivocal human right to resist oppression by any means necessary,” a statement that many Jewish people see as a call to violence.

“Unions are strongest when all of their members believe they are represented fairly and can participate meaningfully,” said **Miriam Elman, Executive Director of AEN**. “When Jewish faculty and graduate students feel they must remain silent, disengage, or conceal aspects of their identity in order to participate, unions risk undermining the solidarity and equal representation at the heart of their mission. This report offers a path toward stronger, more inclusive and accountable unions.”

“Antisemitism does not become acceptable simply because it is dressed up as anti-Zionism,” said **Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO**. “When Jewish faculty and graduate students are subjected to slurs, hostility, or exclusion because of their connection to Israel and their belief in the right to self-determination and statehood for the Jewish people, union leaders have an obligation to confront it - not excuse it, ignore it, or allow it to become normalized. Academic unions should be places where antisemitism is challenged unequivocally, not given institutional cover.”

The research also identifies factors that make academic unions particularly vulnerable to antisemitism, including extreme anti-Zionist sentiment, such as low participation, procedural complexity, and a pressure to conform, particularly when anti-Israel positions

are held up as the “only morally legitimate stance” and objections from Jewish members are dismissed.

These dynamics can also pull unions away from core labor priorities including wages, working conditions, academic freedom, job security, and fair treatment, while eroding trust and internal cohesion. For some faculty, that erosion of trust has called into question whether their unions can represent them at all. As one member said, “I no longer feel that the national organization can represent me equally...Union leadership has not addressed antisemitism with any seriousness or clarity.”

The report is intended as a constructive intervention to strengthen unions to be more democratic, inclusive, and accountable institutions. It offers recommendations for union members, union leaders, and university administrators, including improving governance and transparency, encouraging broader participation, addressing antisemitism within inclusion efforts, protecting viewpoint diversity, and renewing attention to unions’ core representational responsibilities.

Ultimately, the report calls for equal membership: ensuring Jewish faculty and graduate students can participate, dissent, and be represented without fear of exclusion or retaliation.

Read the full report by AEN and the ADL [HERE](#)

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AEN is a national organization that mobilizes networks of university faculty and administrators to counter antisemitism, oppose the denigration of Jewish and Zionist identities, promote academic freedom, and advance education about Israel. More at <https://academicengagement.org/> and <https://www.facultyagainstantisemitism.org/>.

ADL is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913 to protect the Jewish people, ADL works to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment to all. In the face of rising antisemitism and extremism, we protect, advocate, and educate, through a mix of programs and services using the latest innovations and technology, and seek to create a world without hate. More at www.adl.org.