

COMBATING ANTISEMITISM WITH HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

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Preface

This pamphlet, “Combating Antisemitism with Human Rights and International Law,” is an adaptation of a series of talks given by Michal Cotler-Wunsh, a prominent Canadian-Israeli expert on international law and human rights, antisemitism, Israel, Zionism, Israel-diaspora relations, and other topics. Cotler-Wunsh, who was recently appointed as Israel’s Special Envoy for Combatting Antisemitism, delivered these lectures as part of a Northeast campus series organized by the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) from April 17-21, 2023. As part of the tour, she spoke at three law schools – Columbia Law School, NYU School of Law, and Yale Law School – and made two additional appearances at Rutgers-New Brunswick and the City University of New York.

In this pamphlet, Cotler-Wunsh describes how the anti-Israel movement has manipulated and coopted the language of human rights and international law to delegitimize the Jewish State and defame its supporters. Rhetoric, concepts, and entire institutions that were initially intended to promote the rights and dignity of individuals and communities, no matter where they lived in the world, became tools to undermine the State of Israel, its society, and its founding principles. When conventional warfare and campaigns of terrorism failed to destroy Israel, its detractors found that the language of human rights could be twisted to weaken the country diplomatically and politically. Cotler-Wunsh provides a history of how it came to be that the world’s only Jewish state became the target of double standards, false narratives and equivalencies, and wild accusations of the world’s worst crimes. She further shows how these canards have become entrenched within the discourse on many college campuses and within popular digital spaces.

Cotler-Wunsh’s lectures – and this pamphlet – were developed months before the horrific terrorist attacks of October 7, 2023, a brutal reminder that while many of Israel’s detractors were pursuing a war of ideas, the physical war – against the bodies of innocent Israeli men, women, and children – had not ceased in the slightest. Rather than render Cotler-Wunsh’s arguments invalid or irrelevant, the heinous and barbaric attacks – and their aftermath – have reinforced the importance of identifying, detailing, and countering the moral corruption of many institutions, organizations, and individuals supposedly promoting human rights.

As over 1,200 Israelis were brutally murdered and more than 200 taken hostage by Hamas terrorists, many leaders of America’s most prestigious colleges and universities found it hard to issue unequivocal condemnations of those atrocities. Jewish and Israeli students, already reeling from the attacks, had to contend with an explosion of antisemitism from their classmates and even from many of their professors. In recent weeks, campuses across the country have experienced hateful demonstrations, rallies, and protests, some of which turned violent and have left Jewish and Israeli students and faculty fearful for their physical safety. Statements, petitions, and open letters that have issued forceful denunciations of Zionism echo the hostile responses that Cotler-Wunsh faced on several campuses back in April 2023.

To truly learn from the past, one must apply that knowledge to the present and work to create a better future for all. Those who seek to delegitimize and demonize Israel and core components of Jewish identity have leveraged the language of human rights and international law to provide a socially acceptable gloss over ancient hatreds. Michal Cotler-Wunsh’s impassioned plea for societal actors to better understand and work more actively against the contemporary forces of antisemitism and misinformation is an essential contribution to the effort to counter such pernicious trends.

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About Academic Engagement Network

AEN is an educational organization that mobilizes university faculty and administrators to counter antisemitism, oppose the denigration of Jewish and Zionist identities, promote academic freedom, and advance education about Israel on campus and in the U.S. academy. AEN has a faculty presence on 314 campuses and has worked with over 2,000 administrators. For more information, visit www.academicengagement.org.

Combating Antisemitism with Human Rights and International Law^[1]

This essay is written as a synthesis of theoretical analysis and lived experience. It comes at a time of rising hatred of Jews—on campus, online, and in the streets. It examines and assesses the features of antisemitism that have been enabled by its ability to mutate over centuries, latching onto the guiding social constructs of the day. Building on seminal work in the fields of Antisemitism Studies and Human Rights, this essay demonstrates how antisemitism is fueled by and is, in turn, fueling intersecting global and local events and processes. It diagnoses the current mechanisms mainstreaming a toxic old-new hate. With a growing sense of urgency, it recognizes the imperative to transcend and reach across difference if we are to uphold humanity's shared prospective commitment of "Never Again."

The toxic mutation of antisemitism, enabled by the systematic appropriation, weaponization, and selective application of foundational principles, institutions, and mechanisms of international law and human rights, exposes processes that undermine and threaten the foundations of democracies. We must enhance a vital understanding of the processes that enable and empower authoritarian regimes and organizations that utilize terror to advance their commitment to the destruction of democracies and that identify and utilize their strengths as weaknesses. In the world's new digital reality, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism is a critical resource. It enables us to comprehensively identify and combat all strains of anti-Jewish hate, including its current mutated form and empowers us to prevent it from taking root. Transparency is critical, not only to understand and counter rising antisemitism online and protect individuals and communities from the real-world harm it generates but also to address growing distrust that threatens the very fabric of societies.

As a first critical step needed to address rising real-world harm, as compromised safety on the streets and the denigration of Jewish identity on campuses, it is imperative to add "Zionist" to the list of protected characteristics in existing hate speech policies, affording all who self-define as Zionists the very same treatment as any and every other protected group. This is essential protection for most Jews, for whom Zionism is an integral part of their identity, as well as for many non-Jews who identify as Zionists. It is a false assertion to claim Zionism is only a political ideology – it is an inherent and essential part of Jewish identity that dates back 3,000 years.[2]

What Is Antisemitism?

Even as the remaining survivors of the Holocaust's systematic annihilation of European Jewry continue to bear witness to unspeakable horrors, we are seeing across the globe an uptick in the virulent hate that fueled the atrocities in that not-too-distant past. Terms such as "genocide" and "crimes against humanity" were coined to describe unique phenomena in the hope that they would etch into the human psyche the notion of "never before" so that "never again" could be envisioned as a prospective shared commitment. This commitment became a social contract, which, in turn, required the construction of an entire international legal and institutional infrastructure to uphold, promote, and protect human rights and dignity.[3] This included the creation of not only legal principles, reinforced by organizations and mechanisms, that were mandated by the international community and entrusted governments to hold—and to be held to account. To ensure "never again," foundational principles of life, liberty, and dignity were written in the blood and tears of millions who were murdered, butchered, gassed, shot, and drowned.

Given this imperative, it is alarming that within living memory of the Holocaust, the scourge of antisemitism has returned. We must recognize that the failure of "never again" manifests in a world of "again and again." This must propel increased Holocaust education so that the next generation can comprehend the hate that propelled the attempt to exterminate the Jewish people. The global rise of anti-Jewish animus is a grave concern, not only for Jews.

[1] This essay draws on a series of presentations delivered as part of the Academic Engagement Network's Northeast Law School Speaking Tour on "Combating Antisemitism with Human Rights and International Law" from April 17-21, 2023. It also builds on remarks provided to the media during the lecture tour at U.S. law schools amid attempts to censor these presentations.; Wecker, Menahem. "Enemies Wage an 'Unconventional' Legal War Against Israel." *Jewish News Syndicate*, May 3, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.jns.org/cotler-wunsh-enemies-wage-an-unconventional-legal-war-against-israel/>.

[2] Lewin D. Alyza. "Recognizing Anti-Zionism as an Attack on Jewish Identity." 68 *Cath. U. L. Rev.* 643 (2019). Retrieved from <https://scholarship.law.edu/lawreview/vol68/iss4/8/>.

[3] Irvin-Erickson, Douglas. "Raphael Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide." University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. JSTOR. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4ds5>. Lauterpacht, Hersch. "The Development of International Law by the International Court." London: Stevens, 1958.

Both the EU Strategy on Combatting Antisemitism, which unequivocally adopts the IHRA definition and the US National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, which “embraces” it, note the rot of society indicated by rising anti-Jewish hatred.[4]

Historically, the hatred of Jews has been elusive and difficult to define because it has always, and continues to, manifest in contradictory ways. Just as its subject – an ancient people that survived the test of time and place – adjusted to changing conditions from time immemorial, Jews have been hated both for what they were and at the very same time, what they were not. They were persecuted and reviled because they separated themselves, and because they assimilated; because they practiced ancient traditions and beliefs, and because they were unrooted and believed nothing; because they were poor and because they were rich; because they were communists, and because they were capitalists; because they were exiled and stateless, and because they returned and reclaimed their state.[5]

Throughout history, Jew-hate, or antisemitism, has mutated and spread like a virus, in accordance with the driving social constructs of the time, new strains not replacing, rather exponentially multiplying social contagion of old ones. It has demonized, targeted, and persecuted Jews for who they were; delegitimized Jews and denied them rights afforded to all others; and singled them out and applied the “rules of the day” selectively. Applying this analysis to track the mutation of antisemitism through millennia is critical to understanding it. In the Middle Ages when religion was the defining social construct, Jews were persecuted based on religion. In the 19th and 20th centuries, as race theory took hold, they were loathed based on race. Today, with human rights and social justice as guiding social constructs, Jews are reviled for the existence of their nation-state. Ironically, contemporary antisemitism involves loathing a prototypical indigenous people for returning to their ancestral home – the land of Israel – after millennia of exile and persecution, enabled precisely because of their statelessness.

No other people – individual or collective – have ever been denied the very right to exist, other than the Jews. No other nation-state in the family of nations, to which Israel belongs since 1948, has faced a global campaign to delegitimize it and overturn its founding. No other people have been the consistent scapegoats – as individuals and a collective – of societies, countries, and continents. The demonization and de-legitimization of Israel and the application of double standards towards its state and society have turned Israel into the proverbial “Jew among the nations.” This anti-Israelism, often described as anti-Zionism, is the new strain of the ever-mutating scourge of antisemitism. As Robert Wistrich notes in his seminal essay, “Anti-Zionism has become the most dangerous and effective form of antisemitism of our time.”[6]

Just as was true in prior historical periods, today we see the co-opting and weaponization of guiding social constructs. In the past, societies in which hatred of Jews festered persecuted not only their Jews. Ultimately, such unchecked antisemitism led to the collapse of the social order and societal contracts of the time – to the detriment of all. If in the Middle Ages, it was religion, in post-Enlightenment Europe it was science. Today, it is the critically important principles, mechanisms, and infrastructure of human rights that are threatened, and with them the shared prospective commitment of “never again.”

Instead, atrocities born out of prejudice and hate happen “again and again” – in China and Syria, Rwanda and Ukraine - because of the innate human challenge and at times inability to accept difference. It is why understanding the mutation of antisemitism can serve as a predictor of the mutation of hate in societies. Indeed, antisemitism is often described as the “canary in the coal mine.” If we can track and predict the current mutation and permutation of this type of pernicious hate, we can also prevent and effectively counter not only the scourge of antisemitism but also other kinds of hate that undermine the moral foundations of our societies, threatening lives and democratic values and principles.

[4] Wigand, Christian. “Commission presents first-ever EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life.” Press Release, European Commission, 2021.; “The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.” The White House, May 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf>.

[5] Cotler, Irwin. *Global Antisemitism: Assault on Human Rights*. Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy.; Sacks, Jonathan. *House of Lords Debate on Antisemitism*. YouTube, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.rabbisacks.org/videos/antisemitism-becomes-dangerous/>; Wiesel, Elie. “The Resurgence of Antisemitism.” PBS, 1992. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/video/elie-wiesel-resurgence-antisemitism-j2yvnv/>.

[6] Wistrich, Robert. “ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM.” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 3/4, 2004. JSTOR, Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25834602>.

The Systematic Co-opting and Weaponization of International Law and Human Rights

The exclusion of Jewish-Zionists from equal access and participation in many facets of campus life – university book clubs, support groups for victims of sexual harassment, positions in student government – has become an unacceptable reality.[7] The mutation of antisemitism enabled by the appropriation and weaponization of foundational principles to demonize, delegitimize, and apply double standards toward Israel (Natan Sharansky's 3 D's) finds multi-dimensional, escalating expressions. In this blurred-boundary reality, they manifest on digital platforms and on the streets, peddling and echoing modern renditions of ancient toxic antisemitic tropes as defined in the IHRA definition.[8]

The 'trigger' for the creation of the IHRA definition, a non-legally binding resource, was the 2001 Durban World Conference 'Against' Racism, the pretext for what became an antisemitic hate fest, a milestone in the systematic appropriation of human rights to advance and conflate Israel with apartheid South Africa.[9] A mutation of the 1975 "Zionism is racism" UN resolution, which was revoked decades later, the anti-Zionist rhetoric at the Durban Conference was the opening salvo in the "war for hearts and minds," which replaced more conventional means of warfare. Though constant threats of annihilation against the State of Israel persist, multiple military offensives and countless other violent campaigns of terror thus far failed to destroy the Jewish state, leaving its enemies to make a deliberate decision to simultaneously enlist and exploit less overtly militant means in pursuit of the same ultimate end—Israel's delegitimization and ultimate demise. The launch of this war, which many refer to as "lawfare," was announced at various public fora and was embedded into the infamous 1975 UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 declaring Zionism as "racism" that was only formally revoked in 1991.[10]

Systematically using and abusing the language of human rights leads to the charge that Israel is an illegitimate "apartheid state" that must be dismantled in the same way as apartheid South Africa and allows for the delegitimization of Zionists as racists. The Durban antisemitic "hate fest," in which non-governmental organizations could voice support for racism against the proverbial Jew among the nations, would set the stage for the "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" (BDS) and "Israel Apartheid Week" activities on university campuses across North America and beyond, campaigns that poison young minds and normalize the delegitimization of the Jewish people's right to self-determination.

On campus and in the academy, BDS campaigns threaten academic freedom, open inquiry, and free intellectual exchange[11]. But the mutating virus of antisemitism into anti-Zionism also drives a wedge through the deeply connected Jewish people, as well as between the family of nations and Israel by rendering it acceptable to question the legitimacy of the single (tiny) Jewish state. More than two decades of "Israel Apartheid Week" on campuses around the world are yet another manifestation of this systematic strategy to destroy the state of Israel—with delegitimizing rhetoric rather than with military force and violence.[12]

[7] *Columbia Spectator*, Columbia College Student Council Votes to Hold Student Divestment Referendum, BDS, 2019; Klein, Zivka. "Complaint Filed against UC Berkeley Law for Student Anti-Zionist Move." *The Jerusalem Post* | JPost.com, November 21, 2022. Retrieved from www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-723014; Tress, Luke. "Victim blaming: University of Vermont Assailed for Denying Antisemitism Charges." *The Times of Israel* / timesofisrael.com, September 18, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/victim-blaming-university-of-vermont-assailed-for-denying-antisemitism-charges/>.

[8] Included in the IHRA definition are illustrative examples. In these, we see the incorporation of Sharansky's 3Ds: Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations; Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor; Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation; Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis; Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis; Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

[9] Fraser, Lola and Fraser, Ronnie. Challenging the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement: 20 Years of Responding to Anti-Israel Campaigns. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023; Steinberg, Gerald. "20 Years after the UN's Durban Event, the Antisemitism Continues to Grow." *The Jerusalem Post* | JPost.com, June 24, 2021. Retrieved from www.jpost.com/opinion/20-years-after-the-uns-durban-event-the-antisemitism-continues-to-grow-671910.

[10] Steinberg, Gerald M. "From Durban to the Hague: 20 Years of NGO Lawfare." *Jewish Journal*, March 9, 2021. Retrieved from jewishjournal.com/commentary/334018/from-durban-to-the-hague-20-years-of-ngo-lawfare/; Fraser, Lola and Fraser, Ronnie. Challenging the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement: 20 Years of Responding to Anti-Israel Campaigns. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023.

[11] Atkins, Michael and Elman, Miriam. "BDS as a THREAT to ACADEMIC FREEDOM and CAMPUS FREE SPEECH in the UNITED STATES." *Michigan State International Law Review*, vol. 29.2, 2022.

[12] It should be noted, however, that despite repeated declarations that it endorses only non-violent approaches, the anti-Israel BDS movement and its activists routinely glorify terrorists and/or terrorism. Many of its leaders and activists also support "resistance by any means necessary" and several pro-BDS groups have documented ties to terror organizations. See for example: Berk, Jamie and Diker, Dan. "Students for Justice in Palestine Unmasked." Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2017. NGO Monitor, "Key Issue: BDS (Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions)." *Ngomonitor*. Retrieved from www.ngo-monitor.org/key-issues/bds/about/.

There can be, after all, no legitimacy granted to an apartheid state. It must be dismantled. Thus, erasing Israel from the map is the ultimate goal of the "industry of lies," perversely done in the name of human rights.[13]

These are manifestations of the unconventional war being waged on the nation-state of the Jewish people—an ancestral homeland to which an archetypal indigenous people returned after millennia of exile and persecution, itself a direct result of statelessness. It is a war of words for global and local public opinion in a polarizing click-bait digital reality, to which international law, human rights, and the mechanisms and institutions created and entrusted to uphold, promote, and protect them equally and consistently have been co-opted and weaponized. It constitutes an integral part of the continued refusal to accept the equal right to Jewish self-determination and the legitimate existence of a Jewish and democratic state – in any form or within any negotiated borders.

This unconventional war gnaws away not only at Israel's legitimate existence but at the very foundations upon which democracies, international law, and human rights rest. It is therefore not only the right and responsibility of Israel, but the imperative of all trustees of international law and human rights, to identify, expose, and address the abuse and double standards that enable and empower this damaging process.[14]

Zionism is a 140-year-old progressive national liberation movement built on a millennia-old identity integral to the character, heritage, and ancestry of Jews worldwide. Most Jews, including young people, have positive feelings about Israel and say that "caring about Israel" is central to what being Jewish means to them. Yet today this positive identification with Israel is rendered synonymous with the gravest of human crimes, included in the list of "isms" to be abhorred by the progressive left and thus enabling the exclusion of Jewish-Zionists from equal access, rights, and participation in both digital and physical spaces.[15]

To ensure equal access to opportunity, safety, and protection from harm for ALL, including those who view Zionism as an integral part of their identities, it must be added to existing lists of "protected characteristics" in policies surrounding hate speech in real and digital spaces. It is vital that international institutions take concrete measures to protect Jews from anti-Zionist harassment and even violence and that online platforms transparently take responsibility for identifying and removing fake accounts that use them to sow hatred. Further, it is critical to create external audit mechanisms, engaging the public in increasing transparency of platform policies and their application, as an antidote to growing distrust that threatens the fabric of societies. This will ensure that safety and protection from harm are extended to all, equally and consistently. The selective application or any appearance of double standards not only fails to protect one category of people but ultimately undermines the entire infrastructure created to protect all categories.

Robert Bernstein z"l, Founder and CEO of Human Rights Watch, understood the power of the tools he had championed to uphold, promote, and protect human rights and recognized that they were being weaponized to turn Israel into a pariah state. In his important *New York Times* 2009 article, titled "Rights Watchdog, Lost in the Middle East," he wrote: "Only by returning to its founding mission and the spirit of humility that animated it can Human Rights Watch resurrect itself as a moral force in the Middle East and throughout the world." He continued: "If it fails to do that, its credibility will be seriously undermined and its important role in the world significantly diminished."

Intended to be used as a force for good, international law and human rights frameworks have been manipulated in such a way that they threaten not only the continued existence of Israel but the foundational principles of democracies. Left unchecked, it will ultimately empower a continued culture of impunity toward the most egregious violators of human rights.[16] We are at a critical moment of challenge and opportunity, and it is imperative that all trustees of international law and human rights undertake their collective responsibility. Realizing this goal requires the identification, exposure, and capacity to address the lies and double standards arrayed against Israel. It demands an equal and consistent application of expectations and law, ensuring that these powerful tools are not utilized to undermine the possibility of peaceful coexistence. It necessitates an understanding that this is a war for our very collective survival, one that we can and must fight – together.

[13] Ben-Dror, Yemini. "Industry of Lies : Media, Academia, and the Israeli-Arab Conflict." Institute For The Study Of Global Antisemitism And Policy, 2017.

[14] Among its most damaging aspects is its systematic stripping away of Palestinian agency, casting Palestinians as perennial victims and ignoring the responsibility and accountability of Palestinian state and societal actors, including the Palestinian Authority. The ahistorical approach puts the negotiated process of the 1990s which culminated in the Oslo Accords, meriting Nobel Peace Prize recognition, into service for an anti-Israel apartheid narrative. It also erases other minorities in Israel, such as Druze, Bedouin, and Circassian, inaccurately defining all such communities as Palestinian even as they do not self-define in this way.

[15] Pew Research Center. "U.S. Jews' Connections with and Attitudes toward Israel." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 11 May 2021. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/u-s-jews-connections-with-and-attitudes-toward-israel/.

[16] "Israel – UN Watch Database." May 15, 2023. Retrieved from [Unwatch.org, unwatch.org/database/country/israel/](https://unwatch.org/unwatch.org/database/country/israel/).

The International Criminal Court (ICC) as a Case Study

On Friday, February 5, 2020, as Israelis and Jews around the world were marking the Sabbath, the International Criminal Court (ICC) published its decision regarding whether it would grant permission to the Prosecutor to open an investigation for alleged war crimes in “the State of Palestine.” The Judges, by majority with one dissenting, found that “Palestine is a State Party to the [Rome] Statute” and that jurisdiction extends to “Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.” Simply put, the ICC Prosecutor was given the green light to investigate alleged instances of war crimes committed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), on one hand, and the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), on the other – equating the investigation of a state army bound by the laws of war with designated terror regimes.

The ICC's decision undermined legal opinions expressed by renowned international law experts from around the world, as well as seven governments^[17] that submitted amici briefs to the Court arguing that as “Palestine cannot be considered a State,” the Court, therefore, does not have jurisdiction to investigate. Canada, too, wrote a letter to the Court arguing this very same point. Yet, nonetheless, by majority, the ICC Prosecutor was given permission to move forward and initiate an investigation that challenged the very founding principles of the Court “of last resort” – namely, to investigate and address the world's gravest violators of human rights when no other means are available.

As an established democracy, Israel is certainly capable of addressing alleged crimes committed by state agencies. Thus, utilizing the Court in such a way ignored Israel's internationally respected legal system and commitment to the rule of law. This decision thus undermined the foundational principle of complementarity, contradicting the Court's intended scope and ensuring that its scarce resources would be utilized in service of the delegitimization campaign against the State of Israel. In applying a double standard, it also was a clear violation of the consensus International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

By applying and enabling this double standard and diverting the Court's limited resources toward anti-Israel lawfare, alleged crimes against humanity committed in other conflicts are ignored. For instance, in December, the ICC declared that it would not pursue an investigation of China's treatment of its Uyghur population despite evidence of torture, internment, mass sterilization, and other abuses of a million human beings. The US government has even referred to China's treatment of its Muslim minority population as a “genocide,” yet the Prosecutor nonetheless claimed that it could not gather sufficient evidence to pursue an investigation. Other cases of human rights abuses in countries with failed domestic justice systems, such as Iran, are blatantly ignored by the ICC or are not prioritized, such as with the case of Venezuela.

In addition to undermining foundational principles and overlooking legal expert opinions and member States' submissions in its decision to grant the Prosecutor permission to open an investigation of Israeli alleged criminal actions, the Court's tangential justification for its decision also exhibited reasonable apprehension of bias, as in reaching its decision it reportedly engaged with members of internationally designated terrorist organizations and relied on information provided by terror-tied non-governmental organizations (NGOs).^[18] Additionally, the Court's “legal argument” for opening the investigation also heavily rested on UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council decisions, which by definition are not binding international law.

Given this reasonable apprehension of bias and the flawed legal foundations presented, it appears that the Court's investigation will serve one-sided political interests rather than a legal or human rights agenda. The Palestinian Authority must too be held to account for its outright violation of the internationally-brokered Oslo Accords, which prohibit unilateral endeavors such as this, while simultaneously seeking to benefit from the international status that these very same agreements seek to create. Possible Israeli responses to ensure its sovereignty must be viewed in the context of these unilateral moves on the part of the Palestinian governing authority.

In sum, the trustees of international law and human rights and all who cherish them must condemn the ICC's shameful move and call for its immediate reform. The Court's case against Israel is a symptom of the politicization of yet another international institution that merely serves to enable and empower a culture of impunity afforded to the worst violators of human rights and regimes where there is no means for justice. Our collective responsibility is to demand and lead this reform, ensuring that the Court realizes its mission to uphold, promote, and protect universal human rights and international law.

[17] Cotler-Wunsh, Michal. “Take a Stand against ICC Politicization - Opinion.” *The Jerusalem Post* | JPost.com, March 13, 2021. Retrieved from www.jpost.com/opinion/take-a-stand-against-icc-politicization-opinion-661733.

[18] Esterson, Ariella. “The Role of NGOs in Supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) Investigation.” Ngomonitor. February 2, 2023. Retrieved from www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/ngos-supporting-icc-investigation/.

To be clear, the case of the ICC is not the only example of the misuse and abuse of international human rights mechanisms and the relationship with antisemitism. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is another case where the demonization, double standards, and delegitimization of the Jewish state take centre stage. Israel is the only country in the world with a standing “Agenda Item,” or topic on the regular schedule of the UN Human Rights Council, dedicated to it – the notorious Agenda Item 7. Every other country in the world falls under Item 4, “Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention.” According to [UN Watch](#), since its founding in 2006, the UNHRC has issued 106 resolutions against Israel and only 42 on Syria, 16 on North Korea, 14 on Iran, six on Russia, and none on China. The language used in these resolutions against Israel is also noticeably more toxic and accusatory. Despite the clear bias, these resolutions and the UNHRC in general are regularly cited by BDS activists on campus, who ignore that they are siding with dictators so long as it serves their purpose of denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination.

Online Antisemitism

Statistics indicate that across the globe, there has been an alarming increase in antisemitic incidents.[19] Particularly concerning is the proliferation of antisemitic tropes, memes, and rhetoric on online platforms, which intersect with and are incorporated into other online conspiracy theories. It is clear that online hate is not just harmless chatter relegated to the dark corners of the internet but instead fuels dangerous propaganda that transcends the geographic borders of any country and spills onto campuses and into the streets. Research has shown that increased online antisemitism has correlated with an uptick in real-world attacks, harm, and violence.

Online antisemitism is similar to its offline peer in that it comes from both the right and the left and everything in between. The Goyim Defense League, for example, promotes a more “right-wing” [Neo-Nazi type of antisemitism](#), echoing classic examples of Jewish control and including [Nazi imagery](#). On the other side, more “left-wing” contemporary antisemitism is also prevalent, including revisions of the age-old blood libel that blames Israel for killing innocent Palestinian children, comparing the Holocaust to Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, and referring to Jewish organizations as “Ziocommunist.”

Combating this global hatred requires global collaboration. Online antisemitism presents an opportunity for the owners of digital platforms, policymakers, special envoys, and civil society stakeholders to work together to recognize, track, and examine the problem. They can then create comprehensive recommendations, develop legislation, and build institutions that can inform and be used to address forms of online hate, conspiracy, and disinformation that sow distrust and translate into harm and violence. These tools may also be helpful in the broader context of combating antisemitism in other ecosystems.

Multiple such global initiatives have already been launched to combat virulent, rising antisemitism. One such example grew from parliamentary hearings initiated and held in Israel’s 23rd Knesset, in which social media giants, civil society organizations, and technology experts convened to understand the problem better and identify possible solutions. Subsequently, the Inter-parliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism was launched with multi-partisan partners from the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia.

The Task Force has since grown to include additional members, continuing the discussion in various geographies in the hope that it will serve as a consistent voice committed to protecting all from online hate, underscoring that the fight against antisemitism is a non-partisan consensus. Transcending real and perceived differences of geography, politics, religion, language, and more, the Task Force works to establish consistent messaging and policy from Parliaments and legislatures around the world to hold social media platforms, including Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, and Google, accountable; advocate for the adoption and publication of transparent policies related to hate speech and their consistent application; raise awareness about antisemitism on social media platforms and its consequences in order to acknowledge the tremendous responsibility that comes with the power these platforms hold; and emphasize that if one minority cannot be protected by hate speech policies and their detailed protected characteristics, ultimately none can.[20]

[19] Anti-Defamation League. “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022.” ADL. www.adl.org, March 23, 2023. Retrieved From www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2022; American Jewish Committee. “Amnesty’s Outrageous Lie, Its Big Problem with Jews, and the Truth about Israel.” American Jewish Committee, February 1, 2022. Retrieved from www.ajc.org/news/amnestys-outrageous-lie-its-big-problem-with-jews-and-the-truth-about-israel.

[20] Wasserman-Shultz, Debbie. “[Interparliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism Members Press Tech Leaders to Step up Efforts to Remove Hate, Better Moderate Platforms](#).” Debbie Wasserman-Shultz, U.S. House of Representatives, 16 Sept. 2022. Retrieved from wassermanschultz.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2887; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. “Tackling Antisemitism Online Inter-Parliamentary Task Force.” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation - Radio Canada, November 30, 2020. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca/player/play/1805981763628; www.cnn.com/2020/11/30/opinions/tackling-antisemitism-online-inter-parliamentary-task-force/index.html.

The Task Force's 2021 Interim Report included a number of recommendations, including that National, State/Provincial, and local governments, as well as social media providers, should adopt a clear definition of antisemitism, for without first defining a problem, we cannot effectively combat it. Further, social media platforms should enhance transparency regarding algorithms, how content is removed, what content is removed, and what tools are used to direct users to certain sites or redirect users away from hate and/or harms and provide regular quarterly reports on these issues. It is important that social media actually be a marketplace of ideas and that individuals are not simply directed to content that reinforces existing opinions. Legislators should create an independent oversight or regulatory body in each country to efficiently and transparently monitor the online space.[21]

As the international consensus definition, established after years of democratic process and adopted by hundreds of entities – including countries, cities, sports leagues, and corporations – the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition is the logical and recommended definition of antisemitism for social media giants to turn to as well. This comprehensive working definition critically enables, as Canada's former Justice Minister and current Antisemitism Envoy Prof. Irwin Cotler explained, the tracking of the mutation from its 'traditional' form, barring the individual Jew from an equal place in society, to the mainstreamed, 'modern' form, barring the Jewish nation state from an equal place among the nations.

The hate being spewed online today against the Jewish people and their sovereign state must be of significant concern. Online haters have learned that referring to "killing Jews" will trigger an algorithm to remove the content, but calling for "death to Zionists," regardless of the fact that it incites harm and violence to a majority of Jews, is tolerated. That is why social media platforms must add Zionism, a central component of the identity of most Jews, to their lists of "protected categories." In its absence, hate against the majority of Jews as well as non-Jews who define as Zionists, is dismissed and allowed to fester online.

The continued Task Force discussions held in the US Congress and planned to take place in the EU Parliament recognize that we have a shared responsibility to work together, in order to identify and combat the mutating hate in our midst and to put a stop to the downward spiral of antisemitic vitriol. The imperative to raise the public's awareness to the dissemination of hateful digital information and to the fact that we are not consumers in the current digital platform business model, but rather the product, assumes and reclaims compromised free will and agency, at a time of supposed ultimate freedom and agency.

These hearings are not about blame. They are a call to action – to legislators, tech giants, envoys, civil society, and the general public – to fulfill the responsibility of our generation to ensure that as humanity continues to evolve and develop, we devise necessary tools to address the fundamental changes in the way we all consume information. We must prevent the spread of conspiracy theories, of which antisemitism is a predictive example, so that they do not collapse the entire shared infrastructure of modern society.

From Theory to Practice

Identifying and combatting rising antisemitism begins with underscoring that Israel does not exist because the Holocaust occurred; rather, the Holocaust would not have occurred had Israel existed.

More than eighty years after the horrors of the Holocaust, toxic hate is mainstreamed once again. Old-new forms of virulent, libelous tropes and "propaganda" target Jews worldwide, manifesting in and translating into real world consequences and harm.[22] It seems we are, once again, at a critical junction, where global and local processes intersect and must be accurately diagnosed if we are to effectively address the scourge of antisemitism that historically destroyed societies in which it was allowed to fester and flourish.

In seeking to address any form of hate, the first step is to define it. When it comes to antisemitism, we have an important consensus standard that can be relied upon. The International Holocaust remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition is the result of a long democratic process. Adopted by 41 (and counting) countries and over a thousand entities, its significance cannot be overstated. The definition comprehensively identifies a gamut of variants of the "oldest form of hatred" – from "traditional" antisemitism barring the individual Jew from an equal place in society, to "modern" antisemitism barring the collective Jewish nation state from an equal place among the nations.[23]

[21] U.S. House of Representatives, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz. "Interim Report." Inter-Parliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism." July 2021. Retrieved from https://wassermanschultz.house.gov/uploadedfiles/inter-parliamentary_task_force_online_antisemitism_interim_report.pdf.

[22] Ironically or not, these same claims were peddled long ago in and by the Former Soviet Union, and embraced in the name of 'progress'; Tabarovsky, Izabella. "Soviet Anti-Zionism and Contemporary Left Antisemitism." *Fathom*, May 2019. Retrieved from fathomjournal.org/soviet-anti-zionism-and-contemporary-left-antisemitism/.

[23] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. "Working Definition of Antisemitism." IHRA, 2016. Retrieved from www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism.

Partial definitions that recognize only one type or manifestation of antisemitism, for instance, Holocaust denial, are insufficient. They can limit and even hinder a critical and comprehensive identification of this ever-mutating hate, augmenting the toxicity and resilience of other variants.[24]

It is critical that the 75-years-young Israel – a nation-state to which Jews, a prototypical indigenous people returned after millennia of exile and persecution – recognizes and exposes the viral mutation of antisemitism as part and parcel of an unconventional war waged on her very right to exist. Part of this role must be to consistently highlight the systematic demonization, delegitimization, and double standards to which it is subjected as a member of the family of nations. This does not only harm Israel and all who support or are presumed to support her around the world; by definition, it collapses the entire infrastructure created to uphold, promote, and protect foundational principles of the international rules-based order built upon the ashes of the Holocaust.

Connecting the dots must include the recognition that while traditional warfare failed to annihilate Israel, international principles, mechanisms, and institutions have been appropriated and weaponized in a global war to influence hearts and minds. The goal is to sway public opinion against Israel's inherent legitimacy, simultaneously denying the Jewish people an equal right to self-determination and denigrating a core aspect of Jewish identity. Examples are abundant, from the infamous 1975 UN resolution alleging that Zionism is racism to the 2001 U.N. 'World Conference Against Racism' that paved the path for the 'Israel as apartheid' insidious falsehood.

A critical step forward is for Israel to lead in emancipating Zionism – a 140-year-old progressive national liberation movement anchored and seeped in a millennia-old heritage, ancestry, and faith. It requires reclaiming the right and responsibility of the Jewish people and their state to define an individual and collective identity. According to the American Jewish Committee's 2020 Survey on the State of Antisemitism in America, 85% of American Jews consider anti-Zionism - the belief that Israel has no right to exist –an antisemitic stance. The majority of Jews self-define as Zionists, based on a millennia-old yearning and prayer for Zion as an integral part of their identity. In other words, Judaism and Jews cannot be disconnected from Israel. Thus, anti-Zionism should also be considered a form of religious discrimination.[25]

Reflections from a U.S. Campus Speaking Tour: Addressing Antisemitism and Experiencing anti-Zionism

The Academic Engagement Network's Northeast Law School Speaking Tour, timed for the week of Holocaust Remembrance Day in April 2023, brought me to law schools at Columbia, Yale, and New York universities, as well as to the City University of New York (CUNY) and Rutgers University.[26] In many respects these speaking engagements corroborated for me, and for many of those who attended, both the accuracy and urgency of the IHRA consensus definition of antisemitism. The result of a long democratic process; adopted by over 1000 entities including 39 countries, it is a critical first step toward the comprehensive identification of an ever-mutating, toxic hate.



A declaration of "Zionists not welcome" greeted my talk on antisemitism in sidewalk graffiti at New York University's Law School. A flyer calling for "Zionism out of NYU" was handed out by a student "wishing Israel would disappear." Outside the auditorium at Columbia University Law School, protesters handed out a flyer that depicted Palestine while erasing the map of Israel. The protest at NYU became a disruption followed by a self-censoring walk-out. While leaving the hall, protesters shrieked and chanted "from the river to the sea; Israel is apartheid, racist settler-colonial project." Even as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies and practices claim to afford protection to all students, I was targeted as a Zionist. Meanwhile, avowed anti-Zionist guest speakers deliver lectures on these campuses without protests or disruptions.

[24] Nelson, Cary. "Fathom Long Read | Accommodating the New Antisemitism: A Critique of "the Jerusalem Declaration." *Fathom*, April 2021. Retrieved from fathomjournal.org/fathom-long-read-accommodating-the-new-antisemitism-a-critique-of-the-jerusalem-declaration/; Jikeli, Günther. "Why Is There Resistance to a Working Definition of Antisemitism?" *JewThink*, January 15, 2021. Retrieved from www.jewthink.org/2021/01/15/why-is-there-some-resistance-to-a-working-definition-of-antisemitism/.

[25] Lewin, Alyza D. "RECOGNIZING ANTI-ZIONISM AS AN ATTACK ON JEWISH IDENTITY." *Catholic University Law Review* (1975), vol. 68, no. 4, 2019. Retrieved from <https://scholarship.law.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3519&context=lawreview>.

[26] Cotler-Wunsh, Michal. "Enemies wage an 'unconventional' legal war against Israel – Opinion." *The Jerusalem Post* | JPost.com, May 3, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.jns.org/cotler-wunsh-enemies-wage-an-unconventional-legal-war-against-israel/>; Sibarium, Aaron. "Jewish Students at Yale Law School Invited an Israeli Politician to Speak about Anti-Semitism. Then They Caved to Pressure." *Washington Free Beacon*, April 21, 2023. Retrieved from freebeacon.com/campus/jewish-students-at-yale-law-school-invited-an-israeli-politician-to-speak-about-anti-semitism-then-pulled-out/; Bandler, Aaron. "Former Israeli MK's NYU Speech Disrupted." *Jewish Journal*, April 25, 2023. Retrieved from jewishjournal.com/news/358166/former-israeli-mks-nyu-speech-disrupted/.

Responses to my April 2023 speaking tour underscored my primary thesis that the selective application of international laws and principles undermines the entire system. This extends to the academy, whose foundational principles are undermined when rules are applied selectively to the detriment of self-identified or perceived Jewish or Zionist students. Attacks on Israel are often couched in what some would call “progressive” or “woke” values, but these are not liberal at all. In many ways, they are regressive.[27] Despite being reversed in 1991, the 1975 “Zionism is racism” U.N. General Assembly resolution peddling Soviet propaganda is alive and well on America’s campuses, where Zionists are in the closet, fearing being dubbed racists, or are courageously open about their Zionism, reconciling themselves to the fact that they will be ostracized and marginalized from the liberal causes that they care deeply about.[28]

The “Zionists not Welcome” sidewalk chalking with which I was greeted at the entrance of the NYU Law School building – named after a Jew – was not only there for me but to “alert” all others who would dare to cross the threshold. The most shameful part of my “cancellation” is the fact that this happened at what was an opportunity for the protesting students to engage ideas with which they disagreed.

At Columbia, though I was allowed to speak undisturbed, multiple flyers referred to Israeli “apartheid” and to Israel’s “racist defenses of ethnic cleansing.” One flyer claimed that “By allowing speakers like Cotler-Wunsh on our campus, Columbia Law School is actively complicit in the dehumanization and repression of Palestinians.” The flyers maligned me personally and the hosting organization (the Academic Engagement Network) specifically, making false and unsubstantiated charges. Refusing to enter the auditorium to hear my responses to these false accusations, law students who soon will be entrusted to represent others in court failed even to consider listening to or engaging with a perspective different from theirs. The “chilling effect” of the protests on potential audience members should also not be overlooked. Students who entered the hall had to “self-identify” as Islamophobic, anti-Palestinian, and racist, with the implication that their entry reflected their “support” of apartheid, colonialism, and white privilege. I witnessed many young people hesitating about whether to pass through this gauntlet. No doubt, many chose not to attend. Can you blame them?

A speaking engagement there was impossible at CUNY Law School, given the hostility toward Israel that permeates that institution. CUNY Law, after all, has the only law faculty in the country to have embraced a discriminatory academic boycott of Israel and to have implemented BDS tactics—now the basis for complaints into the NY City Commission on Human Rights and the New York State Division on Human Rights as well as the American Bar Association.[29] Instead of the Law School, a meeting was scheduled with a courageous group of young women, all CUNY undergraduate students who have faced attacks on their identities—in classrooms, in the corridors of university buildings, and even in a shared interfaith prayer space.

Then, at Yale University, the Jewish Law Students Association at Yale backed out at the last minute from hosting my event, reportedly caving to pressure. Had the Law School’s deputy dean not interceded, the “event (and I) would have been canceled.”

Particularly poignant and chilling was the address at Columbia Law School on Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, eighty years after the Warsaw ghetto uprising. It was overwhelming to engage on that day on the Orwellian idea that international law and human rights written in the ashes and blood of Jews, murdered because of their identity, can be weaponized for use in an unconventional war on Israel’s right to exist of Israel, and that those who support Israel’s right to exist and rendered racists. Many, particularly younger people, feel that they have no choice but to opt out of their Zionism. Great courage and bravery are required to speak out against the received wisdom and established orthodoxy of anti-Zionism. We must not expect those who are most vulnerable on campus – undergraduate students, non-tenured faculty, and part-time staff – to do this work.

[27] The implications of the co-opting and weaponization of human rights harms all who need their protection, including Palestinians who are used as human shields by genocidal terror organizations; and stripped of agency and hope by corrupt, anti-democratic leadership.

[28] Langsam Braunstein, Melissa. “The New Loyalty Oath Imposed on Jews.” *Washington Examiner*, September 30, 2022. Retrieved from www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/the-new-loyalty-oath-imposed-on-jews; Yeshurun, Avner. “The Soviet Origins of Left Wing anti-Zionism.” *Jewish News Syndicate*, June 8, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.jns.org/the-soviet-origins-of-left-wing-anti-zionism/>

[29] *Jewish News Syndicate* Update Desk (BDS). “Advocacy group says CUNY law-school’s faculty boycott of Israel may be illegal.” *Jewish News Syndicate*, June 6, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.jns.org/advocacy-group-says-cuny-law-schools-faculty-boycott-of-israel-may-be-illegal/>; Anderson, Kate. “NYC Law School Slapped with Complaint over Anti-Israel Policy.” *Dailycaller.com*, June 6, 2023. Retrieved from dailycaller.com/2023/06/06/nyc-law-school-complaint-anti-israel-policies/.

It is critical that it not be only Jewish students, faculty, and staff who stand up as voices of moral clarity. All who cherish foundational principles of life and liberty, and who recognize that the selective application of any principle undermines the entire legal infrastructure must also raise their voices. It is critical that all who understand the importance of history speak out against the depraved inversion of the Holocaust—in which Israelis are depicted as heinous criminals against humanity akin to the Nazis.[30]

My experiences on these campuses underscore that knowledge of the past is necessary yet insufficient to identify and combat present strains of antisemitism which presents as the demonization, delegitimization, and double standards applied against Israel, the Jew among the nations—yet also ensnares individual Israelis and Jews with a deep attachment to Israel in its hateful web. They also highlighted how ignoring or minimizing the current virulently anti-Israel version of the ever-mutating scourge of Jew hate is to be complicit in enabling its current and future rising manifestations.

Nothing could underscore more poignantly the urgency to adopt and implement the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism than a lecture about antisemitism on Yom Hashoah being met with Palestinian flags, anti-Zionism, and the demonization, delegitimization, and double standards applied towards a Jewish-Zionist woman and her country of residence, the Jewish democratic nation-state of Israel.

Final Thoughts

Criticism of Israeli policy and practice is not the same as delegitimization. Delegitimization says, "You have no right to exist." There is no other individual (Zionist) or country (Israel) in the world that is met with this kind of delegitimization. The IHRA definition is important because it transcends and reaches across differences – of geography, politics, and faith. Politicizing antisemitism, whether labeled as coming from the extreme right or the extreme left, enables it to thrive. Traditional divisions - of right and left, religious and secular, geography and time, are no longer relevant. Democracies everywhere are experiencing a rapidly moving line in the quicksand, where though difficult to detect, the lines drawn are in fact between radicals and moderates, the former benefitting from the fact the latter are holding on to differentiations of the past. In a digital reality, moderates—who are the majority—are either silent or silenced, empowering or paving the path for extremists from across the political spectrum. In our world of "again and again," simply knowing the past is insufficient if it does not inform the identification of present strains critical to preventing future atrocities.

In the face of rising challenges and opportunities, I am reminded of the former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who differentiated between optimism - the belief that everything will be OK - and hope, the belief that together, we can make it OK. In that sense, he taught that optimism is a passive virtue, whereas hope is an active one. It does not take much courage to be an optimist, but it does take a great deal of courage to have hope. Thus, while we witness the rising scourge of antisemitism enabled by the weaponization of international law and human rights, it is important to remember that the national anthem of the 75-year-young, miraculous Jewish democracy is 'Hatikvah': the hope. Together, with action and courage, we can and must confront this ever-mutating hate wherever it rears its ugly head.

[30] Klaff, Lesley. "Holocaust Inversion and Contemporary Antisemitism." *Fathom*, 2014, Retrieved from fathomjournal.org/holocaust-inversion-and-contemporary-antisemitism/; Klaff, Lesley. "Holocaust Inversion." *Israel Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, JSTOR, 2019. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.24.2.07>.

About the Author



**Michal Cotler-Wunsh, LL.B, LL.M, Israel's Special Envoy for Combatting Antisemitism
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Michal Cotler-Wunsh is a prominent public speaker, researcher, and independent policy and strategy advisor on intersecting issues of antisemitism, law, human rights, and Zionism. Informed by political, professional, and academic experience, Michal explores topics surrounding mutated and mainstreamed rising antisemitism; international law, human rights, and the harm of their weaponization; the threat of disinformation and conspiracy theories to democracies; Zionism as a millennia-old identity integral to the construction of a progressive national liberation movement; the relationship between Israel and global Jewry in collaborative nation-building; and the role of "Olim" as a "live bridge" to build resiliency, address growing internal gaps, and connect Israel to global communities, cultures, and countries. Michal's focus on process, transparency, and accountability continues to inform and guide her in the role of Israel's Special Envoy for Combatting Antisemitism, engaging local and global partners around the shared responsibility to comprehensively identify and address the rise and mainstreaming of ever-mutating antisemitic hate.

Michal was a Member of Israel's 23rd Knesset. Drawing on areas of expertise and commitments, she served as Chair of the Special Committee on Drug and Alcohol Use, Chair of the Subcommittee on Israel-Diaspora Relations, and as an active member of several prestigious committees including the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, and the Children's Rights, Women's Status, and Immigration and Integration Committees. Michal served as the first Knesset Liaison to the Issue of the International Criminal Court (ICC), was co-chair of the Canada-Israel Interparliamentary Friendship Group, was a member of several interparliamentary working groups, and Chair of the Caucus for Ethiopians in Israel. She initiated and led multiple Knesset hearings on the topic of online antisemitism, engaging social media platforms, civil society organizations, and technology experts. Recognizing the inherent connection between online hate and real-world violence, Michal co-founded the Interparliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism, together with multi-partisan elected officials from Canada, Australia, the US, and the UK. She remains at the forefront of this and other initiatives, committed to identifying, exposing, and combatting the mutation and permeation of antisemitism in the online and real-world space.

Equipped with extensive experience, academic expertise, and multi-lingual communication skills, Michal is regularly interviewed and featured as a speaker at diverse events in Israel and abroad. She is a prolific author published on multiple platforms, utilizing her hybrid identity and competencies to transcend and bridge geographic, cultural, religious, and linguistic divides. Michal is a trustee in The Rabbi Sacks Legacy and is a member of several not-for-profit boards focused on governance and strategy. She is a legal advisor to the Goldin family, dedicated to the return of deceased Israeli soldiers Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul and Israeli civilians Avera Mengistu and Hisham a Sayed, held captive for nine years in standing violation of international law and human rights. In this as in other engagements, Michal is committed to underscoring shared responsibility for equal and consistent application of international law and human rights, critical to the sustainability of the infrastructure created to uphold, promote, and protect foundational principles.

Michal was born in Israel and grew up in Canada. She received her LL.B. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and her LL.M. from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Her PhD research focused on freedom of speech on university campuses, tracking the effects of (attempted) regulation of rights. She previously served as a scholar-in-residence for the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA); Strategy & Policy advisor to Nefesh B'Nefesh; Director of International External Relations at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya; PhD candidate in the Human Rights under Pressure - Ethics, Law and Politics program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Freie Universität of Berlin; and research fellow at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at IDC Herzliya.

Michal lives in Ra'anana, Israel with her husband and their four children.



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