



Contact: Nicole Rosen, 202-309-5724
nicole@rosencomm.com

Faculty Against Antisemitism Movement (FAAM) and #KeepTheLightOn Campaign Launched

AEN harnesses power of its 1,000+ members on 322 campuses to address soaring antisemitism

Washington, DC, April 14, 2024 – Inspired by the courageous actions of Academic Engagement Network (AEN) member and UC Berkeley Professor Ron Hassner, who recently [staged a sit-in](#) protest and ate, slept, and taught from his office until UC Berkeley leadership took measures to address escalating antisemitism on their campus, AEN today announced the launch of the [Faculty Against Antisemitism Movement](#) (FAAM) and [#KeepTheLightOn](#) campaign.

Since Oct. 7, antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israel bias have been running rampant on U.S. campuses. Student activists and student organizations, such as Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, are engaging in pernicious activity that violates campus policies and ostracizes and demonizes Jewish and Israeli peers.

Making matters worse, in the last six months, Faculty for Justice in Palestine chapters have sprouted up on more than 80 campuses. Many Jewish students now report feeling besieged by their own professors.

FAAM will help enable AEN's faculty members, as well as other academics who choose to sign up, to stand against antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israel activity on their campuses and to collectively urge their own university leaders to take appropriate action. The AEN-coordinated national campaign will harness AEN's more than 1,000 members on 322 campuses to provide a collective and highly public response from faculty that is required to counter campus antisemitism and oppose the denigration of Jewish and Zionist identity. Through the campaign, faculty will be empowered to engage directly with senior administrators on their campuses, helping them to recognize that antisemitism under the guise of anti-Israel activism is still antisemitism and to address it effectively.

"Many Jewish faculty, and many other faculty as well, have been appalled as the energies associated with social justice have veered into ideological conformity, advocacy of violence, and openly antisemitic threats," said Michael Saenger, Professor of English at Southwestern University and a member of FAAM's Steering Committee. "We have written books, op-eds, and articles, but they are not penetrating the echo chamber of anti-Zionist antisemitism. As with previous protest movements, visual displays are sometimes necessary to get people to stop demonizing marginalized groups. We need to respond to bullying and hate, directed against ourselves and Jewish students, more directly and more personally: by visibly advocating for a university that treats Jews as people, and that treats Israel as a nation."

To get started, the faculty will participate in FAAM's national [#KeepTheLightOn campaign](#), leaving a light on in their offices as a beacon to their Jewish students, showing support and solidarity for them, and to publicly demonstrate their commitment to fighting antisemitism. The light will also symbolize the faculty's commitment to "light a fire" under administrators to ensure a better academic year ahead. They will start now to provide students with the support they need and deserve as they wrap up a difficult academic year, and they will begin conversations with university leadership to ensure the necessary action plans are in place by fall 2024.

Faculty participating in the campaign will also receive [FAAM-branded items](#) that they can wear and display on campus and in other academic arenas in order to show publicly that they stand against antisemitism.

"Far too many university administrators are still looking the other way as a wildfire of antisemitism spreads across their campuses," stated Miriam Elman, AEN's executive director. "In recent months, AEN faculty members have been countering these new disturbing developments by forming campus affinity groups, organizing solidarity and educational exchange missions to Israel, and by writing and speaking out. Now, AEN will be offering the opportunity to get involved in a national campaign to share information, resources, best practices, and more. Drastic times require drastic actions. We need to build on the energy and momentum, utilize [activist models](#) like the one devised by Ron Hassner at UC-Berkeley, and grow a strong faculty movement that will fight for Jewish inclusion and academic integrity."

This past spring, Hassner began an open-ended "[sit-in protest](#)" over the failure of UC Berkeley administrators to protect Jewish students. In addition to eating, sleeping, and teaching from his office, he left a light on in his office window to let students know that his door is always open to them and that he was "sleeping as bad at night as they are." In addition, AEN members across the country founded groups to publicly speak out against antisemitism and anti-Israel bias, to advise and mentor students, and host educational programming. Examples include: [UCLA's Jewish Faculty Resilience Group](#); [Yale's Forum for Jewish Faculty & Friends](#); [UIUC's Faculty for Academic Freedom and Against Antisemitism](#); [Columbia's Jewish Faculty and Staff Supporting Israel](#); University of Buffalo's Association of Jewish Faculty, Staff and Friends; University of Cincinnati's Israel Initiative Committee; and [Indiana University's Faculty and Staff for Israel](#). AEN members at UPenn, UCLA, Yale, Harvard, Stanford, Dartmouth, UC Berkeley and MIT have also organized [faculty solidarity and educational missions to Israel](#). By networking faculty and sharing materials and best practices through FAAM, AEN hopes to enable many more of these faculty groups and missions to sprout up across the country.

"The FAAM initiative is both a distressing sign of the times and a hopeful symbol for the future not only for Jews but also for the academy," noted Donna Robinson Divine, who serves on AEN's Advisory Board and is Morningstar Family Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor of Government Emerita at Smith College. "An academy that has become the core location for an activism promoting social justice cannot sustain its credibility by tolerating hostile attacks against its Jewish students and faculty. Nor can educational leaders preserve the legitimacy of the universities over which they preside by ignoring the recycling of this old and dangerous hatred. Rooting out antisemitism in classrooms, lecture halls, and social gatherings is thus as important for Jewish students and faculty as it is for the academy and the nation."

AEN will coordinate the national campaign and provide support to participating faculty, including maintaining a [website](#) that will be continually updated with information and resources for faculty looking to counter antisemitic and anti-Israel claims and actions, issuing a FAAM social media toolkit, and supporting faculty-driven initiatives.

About the [Academic Engagement Network \(AEN\)](#): *AEN 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. It envisions a world where American higher education welcomes, respects, and supports the expression of Jewish identity and robust discourse about Israel. The organization is comprised of nearly 1,000 faculty members on more than 300 campuses. Former Canadian Member of Parliament and Minister of Justice Irwin Cotler and U.S. Representative Donna Shalala serve on AEN's Advisory Board, chaired by the former President of the University of California Mark G. Yudof. Deborah Lipstadt was an AEN Advisory Board member before taking on the role of U.S. Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism.*