

## No, Antisemitism is Not a Threat on Campus

About the author: Mike Miccioli is a recent graduate of Harvard College, Class of 2022. The following letter was written in response to campus backlash against the Harvard Palestine Solidarity Committee's annual Israeli Apartheid Week and the school newspaper's (the Crimson) decision to endorse the BDS movement.

Following the Palestine Solidarity Committee's annual [Israeli Apartheid Week](#) and the Crimson Editorial Board's [editorial](#) in support of BDS, defenders of Israel employed their tried and true tactics used whenever the country comes under increased scrutiny - cry "antisemitism" and shamelessly invoke the Holocaust.

In the most histrionic [response](#), an op-ed claimed the display of anti-apartheid artwork diminishes "Jewish safety" because it was displayed during Passover. In addition to omitting the fact that the artwork was also displayed during Ramadan and Easter, all three of which coincided, the authors exhibit bewildering levels of narcissism. The rest of the world is not obligated to come to a standstill for their holidays, especially not as Israel attacks Palestinian worshippers on [Ramadan](#). The authors also display symptoms of [neurosis](#), as they claim the presence of planes and trains in the artwork depicting the West Bank triggers images of Nazi concentration camps. It's truly a wonder the authors have survived public transportation.

In a similarly unhinged [letter](#) to the editor, the author took offense at the Crimson's BDS editorial for being published the day after Holocaust Remembrance Day. Apparently, not only should Palestinians and supporters refrain from their advocacy during the holiday, but also there exists some unspecified buffer period afterwards, during which criticism of Israel is still unacceptable.

It's amazing how many things can be classified as "antisemitism" when you just make the rules up as you go.

In an op-ed [written](#) by [disgraced](#) former Harvard president Larry Summers, the author claims BDS is antisemitic because of a "double standard." Summers claims BDS is "singling out" Israel by pointing to an [article](#) where BDS points to disparities between boycotts of Russia and Israel. Summers writes:

"Apart from raw animus against the Jewish State, how could any thoughtful person today regard Russia and Israel on the same plane when Russia is waging a war of aggression, murdering civilians, bombing maternity hospitals, and creating 5 million refugees?"

First, Summers debunks his own accusation that Israel is being "single[d] out," as the article he cites clearly supports organizations' decisions "ensur[ing] their institutions were not complicit in Russia's violations of international law." How is one country being "singled out" if both countries are "on the same plane"?

Second, Summers seems to be unaware of the fact that Israel bombs [hospitals](#), murders [civilians](#), and that there are over [5 million](#) Palestinian refugees registered with the [UN](#) resulting from the Nakba.

Summers cites the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) [definition](#) of antisemitism, which has been [rejected](#) by [progressive](#) Jewish organizations. Among the IHRA's examples of antisemitism are "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" and "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis." Rather than a [traditional](#) definition, which would simply be discrimination against Jews for being Jewish, the IHRA attempts to shield Israel with an overly-broad and ahistorical definition.

The [first](#) op-ed cited a [report](#) by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) claiming one in four American Jews has been a victim of antisemitism over the past year. However, the AJC also [adopts](#) the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Moreover, of the participants polled in the survey, 81% view the statement “Israel has no right to exist” as antisemitic.

In a [petition](#) signed by Harvard faculty members condemning the Crimson’s support for BDS, the author cites a [report](#) from the Brandeis Center about “antisemitism” on campus. Unsurprisingly, the Brandeis Center also encourages [adoption](#) of the IHRA definition. Moreover, the students surveyed were either in the Jewish fraternity AEII or the Jewish sorority AEΦ. AEII’s mission [statement](#) says that its mission is demonstrated through “support for Jewish communities and Israel,” and its [website](#) also claims that “anti-Zionism is simply a dressed-up form of antisemitism.” AEΦ’s “combatting hatred and antisemitism” [page](#) links to an [article](#) which uses the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism. Furthermore, the Brandeis Center survey includes examples of antisemitism such as the statements “Israel treats Palestinians how the Nazis treated the Jews,” “Zionists are murderers,” and “Zionism is a form of white supremacy.” We see a pattern emerging - organizations using an incorrect definition of antisemitism, asking people with an incorrect perception of antisemitism, whether they have experienced antisemitism. This serves to inflate the numbers and is ultimately weaponized against critics of Israel.

The most influential organization documenting “antisemitism” is the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Cited by the faculty [petition](#) and [two op-eds](#), it is no surprise that the ADL [supports](#) use of the IHRA definition. More surprisingly, the ADL has downplayed the significance of actually antisemitic organizations, such as Ukraine’s [neo-Nazi](#) Azov Battalion. While the ADL has [reported](#) on Azov’s neo-Nazi ties in the past, it has [dismissed](#) the influence of Ukrainian Nazism as “marginal” since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, even though it played a [key role](#) in

the 2014 Maidan coup. Moreover, while the ADL has frequently [called](#) for social media censorship of “antisemitism,” it has not commented on Facebook’s [decision](#) to allow an exception to its policy against praising Nazis, in the context of support for the Azov Battalion.

While pro-Israel organizations continue to feign concern for “antisemitism” from pro-Palestine student groups, they continue to ignore Israel’s recent history of [arming](#) Ukrainian neo-Nazi groups and [documentation](#) of these groups using these weapons presently. The recent [freak-out](#) from “antisemitism” watchdogs and parts of the Harvard community is not out of concern for Jewish safety, but rather for defending an indefensible country.