

quick to applaud the British government's dismissal of the case.

It has even previously gone to extreme lengths to whitewash Israel's barbarity. During the Great March of Return in 2018, when Israeli forces killed over 120 Palestinians peacefully marching and demanding the right to return, the Board of Deputies issued a statement that appeared to lay the blame

on the Palestinians, implying Israel's indiscriminate gunfire at unarmed civilians was a defense against a "mass invasion".

Remarkably, there is seemingly no attempt to obscure the process either. Its recent board president Jonathan Arkush stated explicitly, "We lobby unashamedly for Israel." The organization has also disclosed the "close working relationship" it enjoys

with the Embassy of Israel in the UK and its "links to the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs and IDF". This would not make it the first organization with a robust dedication to safeguarding Israel that has ostensible links to Israel's cabinet institutions. It was more than a century ago that Britain and Lord Balfour played a monumental role in facilitating the systematic Zionist takeover of Palestine. Today,

Britain is playing an indispensably strategic role in maintaining it. As the latest dark chapter unfolds with Israel's genocide in Gaza, it is inconceivable that positives can be drawn. But one preeminent takeaway must be a revived cognizance of the extent of the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the UK.

The article first appeared on Mondoweiss.



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PERSPECTIVE

Over the past six months, Jonathan Greenblatt, head of the Anti-Defamation League, has stressed repeatedly that he is concerned about rising antisemitism. Unfortunately, he has also made clear that he cares about antisemitism only as he defines it and as it affects people who agree with him on the definition.

Anti-Defamation League has abandoned some of people it exists to protect



The illustration shows the Anti-Defamation League leader Jonathan Greenblatt (front-L) and Jewish anti-war protesters in contrast.
● SLATE

The ADL is arguably the most prominent organization in the US dedicated to countering antisemitism. It is not that the ADL has not faced criticism before (earlier this year, a report from the Intercept charged that the ADL had "lobbied for counterterrorism legislation that singled out Palestinians"). Nor is it the case that the ADL has never before chosen to cooperate with law enforcement or authority over forging solidarity with left-wing Jews. (Indeed, it did so during the Red Scare.) Still, the group is the go-to American organization on antisemitism, and it also played a prominent role in championing civil rights historically. It has also been a resource for me personally: I have, over the years, interviewed and been greatly informed by various ADL staffers, and have turned to the organization's research in my own writing and thinking on antisemitism. I believe that a civil rights organization "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people, and to secure justice and fair treatment to all," the founding principle of the ADL, remains necessary in this country. But the ADL, under the leadership of Greenblatt, is insisting on conflating anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and it has made this conflation central to the ADL's work. This has not only muddied the waters of its own antisemitism research, but it has also undermined the safety, security, and pluralism of American Jews.

For example, the ADL reportedly mapped protests for a cease-fire led by the Jewish groups Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow as antisemitic incidents. The ADL also, in its report on antisemitism this year, updated its methodology to include certain anti-Israel incidents in its calculation of how much antisemitism had risen. This not only makes it more difficult to see what the actual year-over-year change in antisemitic incidents was — of course, an increase will seem more dramatic if you are now counting incidents that you weren't before — but it also arguably undermines the rest of the ADL's reporting on antisemitism. If the group tracking antisemitism considers pro-Palestinian speech or differences in foreign policy preferences to be motivated by antisemitism, how seriously will those who disagree with the ADL on foreign policy take its calls to tackle antisemitism?

At least as troubling as the new research methods, though, are the statements and posture of Greenblatt himself. Some observers thinking that he

privileges support for Israel over civil rights is not new; a Jewish Currents story from 2021 revealed that former ADL employees felt Greenblatt was choosing the defense of Israel over protecting civil liberties, one of the group's stated missions. In March of last year, the same publication published a report on internal dissent over Greenblatt comparing pro-Palestinian groups to the extreme right.

But if this had been a running undercurrent, the past six months have thrown it to the surface. In November, mere days after X boss Elon Musk called an antisemitic conspiracy "the actual truth," Greenblatt praised Musk's suggestion of banning the terms "from the river to the sea" and "decolonization" from the platform.

In a speech at Brown University in February, Greenblatt reiterated that he thought anti-Zionism was antisemitism, and said he wanted to define the terms before "activists who participate in 'BrownU Jews for Cease-fire Now' start to object." The next month, addressing the Never Is Now Conference, Greenblatt similarly dismissed "the editors at left-wing Jewish magazines that very few of us actually read" and said, "I must say, I have to share: What amazes me is that when ADL says that anti-Zionism is antisemitism, or when the Hillel director says that the mob chanting 'from the river to the sea' [is], ... journalists at major newspapers don't listen to the victim. Instead, they literally go looking for an alternative point of view. ... You've all read these paragraphs: 'To be sure, Professor so-and-so says' or 'the head of Jewish Voice for Peace counters ...'"

These students and professors and activists are also Jewish. Again, historically, the ADL has had as its mission not only to protect Jews but also to protect civil liberties for Jews and all Americans; on its website today, one can still read that the ADL stands up for religious freedom and against discrimination. It is thus theoretically Greenblatt's job to defend these ostensibly little-read journalists and professors so-and-so, too, even if he disagrees with them on Israel. Instead, he has repeatedly used his platform not to defend their right to expression even as he disagrees with their definition of antisemitism but to undercut them. That isn't just an abandonment of part of the ADL's mandate, but an abandonment of some of the peo-

ple who are at risk of antisemitism.

In the past week, this dynamic has intensified. Speaking outside Columbia University last week, Greenblatt suggested that the National Guard may need to be called to ensure the safety of Jewish students. In 1970, the National Guard killed four anti-war student protesters at Kent State; as Jamie Beran, head of progressive Jewish group Bend the Arc reminded Greenblatt in an open letter, three of those victims were Jewish. Given that there are indeed Jewish students participating in the protests today, it is possible that Jewish students (in addition to, and no less concerning, non-Jewish students) would be hurt by force should state authorities suppress the protests. Greenblatt also compared the protests to an explicitly neo-Nazi march in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, where marching demonstrators chanted, "Jews will not replace us." Then, in a particularly shocking moment, Greenblatt went on television and likened the group Jewish Voice for Peace to Hezbollah, calling it an on-campus proxy for Iran.

reach — are motivated by wanting an end to war? That they see Israel as more culpable for the death in Gaza than he does? That they see Israel as carrying out actions that are at odds with — not extensions of — their own Jewishness? That they, too, feel they deserve to have a say in what constitutes antisemitism?

If that really is so hard to imagine, Greenblatt, and by extension, the ADL, has a problem: Younger American Jews are increasingly critical of and feel disconnected from Israel. Not all younger American Jews, of course. But per the Pew 2020 study on American Jews, 51 percent of those between ages 18 and 29 were not emotionally connected at all to Israel, compared to just 32 percent of those 65 and over who said the same; Unsurprisingly, younger American Jews were also less likely than their older counterparts to say that caring about Israel was an essential part of being Jewish. More recently, in November 2023, the Jewish Electorate Institute found that American Jews under the age of 36 were much likelier to disapprove of Biden's



Pro-Palestinian protesters reinforce barricades around their encampment on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus in Los Angeles, the US, on April 30, 2024.
● JAE C. HONG/AP

I understand Greenblatt disagrees with JVP, which is anti-Zionist. I understand that when he speaks about Jewish students, he is not speaking about the Jewish students sitting at part of the protests. Still, I do wonder how, exactly, likening a Jewish student group to Hezbollah helps stop the defamation of the Jewish people, or secures justice and fair treatment to all.

What makes this especially baffling is that Greenblatt did not need to do this to make his point about antisemitism on campus. It would be easy enough to say something like, "I disagree with these students on everything related to Israel, but I am glad they feel safe on campus. But safety on campus for Jewish students shouldn't hinge on their views on Israel." But perhaps saying something more along those lines would not have been easy for him. Doing so would have required him to admit that these are Jewish students, albeit ones with whom he has profound disagreements, and to acknowledge that they see the world differently than he does and are motivated by different principles.

I can understand that Greenblatt is motivated by a desire to defend not only Israel but also the American Jews who see support for Israel as an important part of their Jewish identities. Is it really so hard for him to imagine that other American Jews — particularly Jews born in this century, a decade after the Oslo Accords, who have only seen the situation on the ground move farther out of peace's

handling of Israel's war. Earlier this year, a survey by the American Jewish Committee found that younger American Jews were less likely to view antisemitism as a "very serious" problem. And while the AJC poll found that nearly 90 percent of Jews over 30 believed that the statement "Israel has no right to exist" was antisemitic, that number dropped to 67 percent for those under 30.

Greenblatt, then, is committing something worse than a failure of imagination. He is failing to stand up for the rights of all American Jews — not only the ones with whom he agrees. This failure will likely become more pronounced, not less, with time. One cannot simply insult or defame younger Jews into changing their positions or interpreting the news differently.

Still, he can try. And it's entirely possible that, in the end, Greenblatt will win the fight over the definition of antisemitism, over who counts as a "Jewish student". After all, he is the head of a major Jewish organization, and, in pushing these definitions and boundaries, he'll have some powerful allies on his side (including non-Jews who have made common cause with open antisemites). In the process, he'll have used his position as leader of the ADL to make clear that some Jews are more worthy of protection and political representation than others.

The article first appeared on Slate.