



ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

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VIA EMAIL

Richard M. Englert, President
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Board of Trustees
Temple University
Office of the Secretary
1810 Liacouras Walk, 5th Floor
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Dear President Englert and Honorable Members of Temple University's Board of Trustees:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest pro-Israel organization in the U.S., dedicated to fighting antisemitism and anti-Israelism, including on college campuses. The ZOA led the successful six-year battle to ensure that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act would be enforced to protect Jewish students from antisemitic harassment and discrimination at federally funded schools. We filed the first case of campus antisemitism that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights ever agreed to investigate under Title VI and have been helping Jewish students enforce their civil rights ever since.

We were horrified that the antisemitic, anti-Israel group that calls itself "Students for Justice in Palestine" (SJP) – a group that is responsible for creating a hostile antisemitic environment for Jewish students on campuses across the U.S. – wasted no time this academic year in creating a hostile environment for Jewish students at Temple University. On August 29, 2024, SJP organized a demonstration on campus demanding that the university condemn Israel and divest from holdings in Israel. The protest specifically targeted Hillel, the center for Jewish life at Temple.

During the demonstration, the SJP protesters called for Israel's destruction, displaying signs that said, "Free Palestine" and "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free." The SJP protesters demonized Israel with falsehoods, holding signs outrageously accusing Israel of genocide, in disregard of the fact that it is the terrorist group Hamas that is openly committed to the murder of every Jew, as evidenced by its recent brutal execution of six innocent Jewish

hostages in Gaza. The SJP protesters also falsely labeled Israelis as “colonizers,” when in fact Jews are indigenous to the Land of Israel going back thousands of years.

President Englert did issue a [statement](#) to the community in response to SJP’s protest, acknowledging that the protesters were “targeting a group of individuals because of their Jewish identity.” But instead of immediately and forcefully condemning their conduct, he effectively encouraged them to continue to protest, by immediately affirming their right “to engage in peaceful and orderly demonstrations” – which does not describe how SJP and its allies conducted themselves then or on other occasions.

Furthermore, President Englert only mildly scolded the SJP protesters, describing their conduct as “not acceptable.” He was equally mild in describing Temple’s reaction to the SJP protesters’ deliberate targeting of the Jewish community, saying that the university is “deeply saddened and concerned by these events.”

This is a far cry from how President Englert and other university leaders responded when other groups were targeted by hate and bias. In 2017, when racist posters were posted on campus, President Engler was direct and forceful in condemning the conduct. In an email to the community, President Englert [wrote](#): “These fliers were disgusting, intimidating and hateful, and they have no place on our campus. . . . Personally, I found the fliers despicable, and it breaks my heart that this occurred at Temple.”

Similarly, in June 2020, President Englert, together with other university leaders, issued a strong [statement](#) condemning anti-Black racism after the death of George Floyd. He expressed “outrage” at and said he was “appalled by” incidents of violence against Black people. In response to racist comments on social media from incoming and current students, President Engler was equally strong in the same statement: He (and other university leaders) [said](#), “Make no mistake, these racist statements are repugnant.” He also said that he was “disgusted” by the comments.

Again in March 2021, in response to the killing of eight people in Atlanta most of whom were of Asian descent, President Englert issued a forceful [statement](#) to the Temple community, condemning bias and violence directed against Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Though acknowledging that it was not clear what motivated the killing of the eight people, President Englert nevertheless expressed “outrage” at the repeated incidents of bias and violence against Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in this country and he “condemned” the incidents.

When Jews are targeted by hatred and bias – particularly Jews in your own university community – that heinous conduct merits the same forceful, unequivocal response. We probably need not remind you that August 29 was not the first time that Jews were targeted and harassed at Temple. There have been numerous incidents of hatred, harassment and even violence directed against Jews, including the following:

- In [July 2024](#), a male individual opened the hatch on the roof of the Jewish fraternity AEPi, exposed his genitals and urinated down the hatch.

- AEPi was also vandalized in [May 2024](#). “Free Palestine” – a call for Israel’s destruction – was spray-painted on the roof of the AEPi house, and an Israeli flag was [stolen](#).
- In [September 2021](#), a Jewish student's roommate – who was also her teammate on the rowing team - sent the Jewish student a text containing a screenshot of a Snapchat. It was an image of the Jewish student who was unknowingly photographed by her roommate while studying, with the caption, “I hate Jews.” The Jewish student reported the incident to the university, but it took weeks for her rowing coach and the university even to move her out of the dorm room and away from her antisemitic bully. Feeling that the university failed to protect her and adequately discipline the wrongdoer, the Jewish student ultimately decided to leave the university.
- In [August 2014](#), a Jewish student at Temple University was punched in the face by someone staffing SJP’s informational booth.

Especially given the long history of antisemitic harassment and intimidation at Temple University, we urge you to issue another statement to the university community that unequivocally condemns the conduct of SJP and its allies. As you did when Black people and people of Asian descent were targets, express your outrage at the conduct of SJP and its allies on August 29, and make it clear to SJP and the rest of the university community that the conduct was repugnant, despicable and disgusting. Let the community know that their conduct was intimidating and hateful and that it has no place on your campus. As you did in your statement condemning bias against Asian Americans, send the crucial message to your community that “[w]hen one group in our community feels threatened, we all feel the impact.” Let the community know that you stand with Jewish students and that you will safeguard their right to be proudly Jewish and proudly pro-Israel, without fear of harassment or intimidation by SJP or anyone else.

In addition, we urge you to include in your statement a clearer commitment to holding accountable the students and student organizations who engaged in the misconduct on August 29. Encourage members of the university community to come forward if they can help identify individual students who were part of the demonstration, so that all Temple perpetrators can be appropriately punished.

Other steps are needed to address the hostile antisemitic environment that SJP is creating, including the following:

- Ban SJP, as other [universities](#) have done. It is obvious that this group perpetrated the antisemitic harassment and intimidation on August 29, and it is just the latest in this hate group’s pattern of promoting a campus environment that feels hostile, unwelcoming and even unsafe to Jewish students.

SJP openly supports and promotes “[Palestinian Armed Resistance](#),” i.e., violence and terrorism against Jews. At an SJP protest in October 2023, the protesters called for Israel’s destruction, chanting “[From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free](#).” At a rally

in December 2023, SJP and its allies called for violence and terrorism against Jews, chanting “[Intifada revolution](#).” In what Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro described as “[a blatant act of antisemitism – not a peaceful protest](#),” these protesters deliberately targeted and mobbed a restaurant simply because its owner – a renowned chef – is Jewish and Israeli, with chants of “[Goldie, Goldie you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide](#).”

Temple would not tolerate for one second a student group that harasses a group of people based on their race or ethnicity and openly calls for violence against them. It is indefensible that the university has continued to tolerate such abominable conduct when it is directed against Jews.

- Restrict mask-wearing at protests, as [some universities](#) have done.
- Mandate antisemitism training for all students and student groups, administrators, faculty and staff, using the internationally accepted [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) working definition of antisemitism](#) as a guide. The ZOA would be pleased to provide the training.

Many of ZOA’s supporters, including our national president, are graduates of Temple University, and expect that Temple will do whatever is necessary to ensure that Jewish students are afforded the safe and welcoming environment that they are legally entitled to under Title VI and that everyone deserves. All of our supporters in the Philadelphia area and elsewhere are committed to the same objective.

Please know that we are a resource to you and encourage you to meet with the ZOA professionals in our Philadelphia office to ensure that Temple University is a safe and welcoming environment for Jewish and pro-Israel students.

We look forward to your response.

Very truly yours,

Morton A. Klein, National President
Susan B. Tuchman, Esq., Director, Center for Law and Justice
Jonathan Ginsburg, Managing Director, ZOA Campus
Steve Feldman, Executive Director, Greater Philadelphia Region