

Images

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE MAPS JEWISH PEACE RALLIES WITH ANTISEMITIC ATTACKS

American Jews have mobilized several thousand Jews across the U.S. to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. ADL calls these Jewish organizations “hate groups.”



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ON OCTOBER 27, several thousand Jews and their allies [shut down](#) the main terminal of Grand Central Station during rush hour in New York City, demanding a ceasefire in Gaza. Organized by Jewish Voice for Peace, the activists at the peaceful sit-in wore black T-shirts that read “Not In Our Name.” “It’s the largest sit-in protest the city has seen in over two decades,” Democracy Now!’s Amy Goodman said. About 400 people were arrested, including rabbis.

The Anti-Defamation League has classified the event — and dozens of other protests led by Jewish groups like Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow — as “anti-Israel,” according to an analysis by The Intercept, and added them to their database documenting rising antisemitism across the U.S.

“We’re seeing a genuine rise in antisemitic attacks and white nationalist, white supremacist, antisemitic hate and violence,” Eva Borgwardt, the national spokesperson for IfNotNow, told me. “When white nationalism is on the rise, to cheapen the accusation of antisemitism by applying it to Palestinian rights advocates, including Jews, is incredibly irresponsible and dangerous.”

Since Hamas’s brutal October 7 attack on southern Israel where Palestinian militants killed over 1,200 Israelis — most of them civilians — and took over 200 hostages, the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish advocacy group that tracks antisemitism and extremism, has been keeping track of the [alarming rise](#) of antisemitic incidents.

In 2020, over 100 progressive organizations — including the Movement for Black Lives, Democratic Socialists of America, and Center for Constitutional Rights — signed an [open letter](#) asking the progressive community to not partner with ADL because the group “has a history and ongoing pattern of attacking social justice movements led by communities of color, queer people, immigrants, Muslims, Arabs, and other marginalized groups, while aligning itself with police, right-wing leaders, and perpetrators of state violence.” Now, ADL is targeting a new group of people: progressive Jews.

Israel’s indiscriminate massacre of civilians in Gaza — killing over 10,000 Palestinians so far in the densely populated Gaza Strip, including over 4,000 children — has led to the largest anti-war protests in the U.S. since the Iraq War, including a surge of renewed activism from progressive Jewish groups. Israel has bombed Gaza nonstop since the October 7 attack, ordered the relocation of over 1 million civilians, launched a ground invasion, and is blocking food,

water, medical supplies, and fuel from making it into Gaza, triggering a humanitarian crisis and leading to what legal scholars call a [genocide](#) against Palestinians.

While the ADL told The Intercept that it does not consider the ceasefire protests “antisemitic,” just “anti-Israel,” its CEO, Jonathan Greenblatt, has said otherwise. After several thousand Jews and their allies [marched on the U.S. Capitol](#) on October 18 calling for a ceasefire, ADL DC released a statement equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Greenblatt piled on, calling the groups that organized the protest, including Jewish Voice for Peace, “hate groups.”

Roughly 500 Jews, including 25 rabbis, were arrested at the Capitol protest.

“It is important to note that these are radical fringe Jewish organizations and being Jewish does not exempt an organization or a person from being antisemitic,” an ADL spokesperson told The Intercept.

A 2021 poll of Jewish voters, conducted by the nonpartisan Jewish Electorate Institute, shows that pro-Palestinian views in the American Jewish community are far from fringe. At the time, 25 percent of the Jews surveyed believed Israel was an apartheid state, 34 percent believed that Israel’s treatment of Palestinians was [similar to racism in the U.S.](#), and 22 percent thought that Israel was committing genocide against Palestinians. These numbers are even starker for younger American Jews. This poll doesn’t reflect changes in how American Jews feel after Hamas’s brutal October 7 attack against Israel, or Israel’s subsequent massacre of thousands of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Another [poll](#), conducted by Data for Progress after the Israel–Gaza war broke out, shows that two-thirds of American voters as a whole support a ceasefire in Gaza, including 80 percent of Democrats, 56 percent of Republicans, and 57 percent of independents — despite President Joe Biden and most members of Congress, in both parties, opposing it.

Like much of the American Jewish community, progressive Jews who are protesting the genocide in Gaza are also grieving loved ones who were murdered by Hamas on October 7. “In the days after the [Hamas] attack, people on [IfNotNow’s] staff were finding out that they had relatives and friends, and those people’s kids, who were murdered on October 7,” Borgwardt said. “This was extremely close to home and painful.”

ADL’s “Stand With Israel”

Map

On October 24, ADL published a [press release](#) noting a “nearly 400 percent increase in preliminary antisemitic incidents” across the U.S. since October 7, compared to the same period last year. The source for that statistic was ADL’s own dataset, published as an [interactive map](#), of “Antisemitic Incidents and Anti-Israel Rallies in the U.S. Since Hamas’s Attack on Israel.”

While ADL doesn’t distribute its raw data in a usable format, when you load the map in a web browser, behind the scenes your browser downloads a copy of it. By monitoring what my browser downloaded while loading the map, I was able to extract a copy of the data and save it as a spreadsheet. The raw data is full of duplicates. After de-duplicating it, I ended up with a spreadsheet with 1,163 “antisemitic incidents and anti-Israel rallies.” ADL continuously updates the map, and the data I’m working with was last updated on November 9.

The data plotted in the map is split into the categories of “Assault,” “Harassment,” “Vandalism,” “Anti-Israel Rallies,” and “Anti-Israel Rallies w. Support for Terror.”

The assault, harassment, and vandalism categories, which made up 46 percent of the points on the map, are full of alarming evidence of

the dramatic rise in antisemitism and white supremacy that the U.S. has been seeing, particularly since Donald Trump's 2016 election. For example, according to ADL's data:

- On October 8 in Salt Lake City, Utah, someone called in a bomb threat to a synagogue.
- On October 13 in Beverly Hills, California, someone yelled "kike" at a visibly Jewish family taking on walk on Shabbat.
- On October 18 in Manhattan, New York, someone found the words "Kill the Jews" written on the wall of a subway station.
- On October 23 in Washington, D.C., someone drew a swastika at an elementary school.
- On October 25 in White Plains, New York, a "car featuring a swastika and a Palestinian flag drove near a vigil for abducted Israelis."
- On October 28 in Knoxville, Tennessee, members of the antisemitic hate group Goyim Defense League distributed flyers saying "Every single aspect of the LGBTQ+ movement is Jewish."
- On November 3 in Seattle, Washington, a synagogue "received a suspicious letter containing white powder."

The remaining 54 percent of the points on the map are Palestine solidarity protests which ADL dubs "anti-Israel rallies" (39 percent) and "anti-Israel rallies with support for terror" (15 percent). At these rallies, protesters have been calling for a ceasefire, the end of [unconditional U.S. military aid to Israel](#), and the end of the genocide in Gaza.

"If an event is marked only as an 'anti-Israel rally,' then we do not consider it antisemitic," the ADL spokesperson said.



Police detain demonstrators at a ceasefire rally organized by Jewish Voice for Peace in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 18, 2023.

Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post via Getty Images

By scouring the social media accounts of national and regional Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow groups, I was able to match rallies led by Jewish groups with the dates and locations of dozens of the rallies listed on ADL’s map — making up around 10 percent of all the rallies listed. ADL declined to provide a full dataset, so it’s possible that for some of the “anti-Israel rallies” organized by Jews I found, the corresponding ADL datapoints are actually referring to different events that happened in the same cities on the same days.

ADL confirmed to The Intercept that several massive Jewish protests, including the march on the U.S. Capitol on October 18 and the sit-in at Grand Central Station on October 27, are included in its map.

Here are a few of the ceasefire and anti-genocide protests that American Jews have organized since Israel started its indiscriminate bombing of Gaza, also confirmed by ADL:

On October 13, a group of 15 Jews occupied the office of Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., in Seattle demanding that she support a ceasefire, and that the U.S. stop arming Israel while the country has “openly declared their intention to commit war crimes.” Six were arrested.

On October 16, over 1,000 Jews and their allies [blockaded entrances to the White House](#), demanding that Biden support a ceasefire. In a [tweet](#), IfNotNow stated, “We are also here raising our voices for our Israeli siblings — while burying their loved ones and awaiting news of those kidnapped — are screaming at their government for the bombs to stop.” At least 30 were arrested.

On October 23, hundreds of Jews protested outside the office of Rep. Troy Carter, D-La., in New Orleans demanding that he support a ceasefire, and a group of Jews occupied his office.

ADL’s dataset does not include dozens of similar Jewish-organized ceasefire protests I found on social media. For example, on October 13, thousands of Jews [shut down the street](#) outside the Brooklyn home of Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., demanding that he support a ceasefire in Gaza. Dozens of Jews were arrested, including rabbis and the descendants of Holocaust survivors. And on October 19, [Jews protested](#) outside the Los Angeles home of Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband Doug Emhoff, who is also Jewish, demanding that she support a ceasefire. Neither of these protests, along with dozens of others like them, appear on ADL’s map.

“Support for Terror”

The Intercept also found some [rallies](#) organized by American Jews that ADL appeared to classify as “supporting terror.”

“Regarding our criteria for ‘w. support for terror:’ we include in this category when rally-goers use language or imagery that justifies or celebrates the Hamas massacre on October 7; there is rhetoric supportive of armed confrontation with Israel; or the flag of a U.S.-designated terror organization is identified,” an ADL spokesperson told The Intercept.

When asked specifically if ADL considers the phrase “[from the river to the sea](#)” in support of terrorism, the spokesperson said that it did. “In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 massacre of Israelis at the hands of Hamas, we interpreted calls for further Palestinian resistance and efforts to liberate the land, including the phrase ‘from the river to the sea,’ as implicit calls for violence against Israelis and support for Hamas’ actions,” the spokesperson said, “and therefore included rallies where those phrases were used in the category of ‘support for terror.’”

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The phrase “from the river to the sea” has [long been used](#) in the pro-Palestinian movement to mean that Palestinians should be allowed to live in their homeland as free and equal citizens alongside Israelis. At the same time, Hamas, whose leaders aim to destroy Israel and make Palestine an Islamic nation, has adopted the phrase as slogan, and many Israelis and Jews know it only with the [connotation](#) of forced removal of Jews from Israel.

It is also worth noting that, since the October 7 attack, neo-Nazis have been attempting to insert themselves into Palestine solidarity protests — not because they care about Palestinians but because they hate Jews — as [reported](#) by Vice. For example, on October 28, roughly 40 members of the neo-Nazi group National Justice Party attempted to hijack a protest in front of the White House where they made antisemitic statements over a PA system; the hundreds of other protesters calling for a ceasefire had nothing to do with them. Likewise, neo-Nazi groups including NSC-131, National Socialist Florida, and White Lives Matter have all used pro-Palestinian language in their recent propaganda attacking Jews.

A Surge in Jewish Activism for Ceasefire and Against Genocide

In a recent [episode](#) of “On the Nose,” a podcast hosted by the magazine Jewish Currents, Elena Stein, director of organizing strategy for Jewish Voice for Peace, said that after the Hamas attack it was “immediately clear” that “the lives of Palestinians and Israelis

are completely intertwined.” She said that [Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism](#) “enact daily horrifying violence against Palestinians” and “doesn’t make Israelis safer either.”

Stein argued that American Jews have an important role in stopping the violence and genocide in Israel and Palestine, and that this is important to protect the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. “It’s on us — especially those of us here in the U.S. whose government is funding this, is fueling this, is protecting the Israeli apartheid government from accountability at all levels — to stop the complicity that puts Palestinians’ lives in danger every day and also puts Israelis’ lives in direct danger,” she said.

Jewish anti-war activism calling for a ceasefire and against the genocide in Gaza shows no sign of slowing down. On Monday, hundreds of Jews and their allies [took over](#) the Statue of Liberty calling for a ceasefire, with a banner saying “Never Again for Anyone.”

Update: November 13, 2023

On Friday, Israel [indicated](#) the death toll of Hamas’s October 7 attack was closer to 1,200, not 1,400 as initially reported. The story has been updated.