

Key Points about “Open Hillel”

In recent years a campaign called Open Hillel has appeared at a few college campuses. While the campaign claims to be about promoting open and honest debate about Israel, what it actually does is pressure Hillel to open its doors to bigotry.

In December 2013, Hillel at Swarthmore College became the first-ever chapter to reject Hillel International’s guidelines on Israel, dubbing itself an “Open Hillel”. Hillel International president Eric Fingerhut strongly rejected the “Open Hillel” campaign, stating that “anti-Zionists will not be permitted to speak using the Hillel name or under the Hillel roof, under any circumstances.”¹ Some, including a New York Times reporter, suggested that Hillel is being unfair and heavy handed.² But in truth, Hillel International should be applauded for its principled stance.

Key Points:

- **“Open Hillel” is organized by major Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) lobby groups like Jewish Voice for Peace.**³ BDS uses progressive rhetoric to advance a fundamentally unjust cause: the elimination of Israel and the violation of Jewish rights.
- **A former Open Hillel organizer revealed that the group’s real agenda is to promote anti-normalization and BDS.**^{4,5} Essentially they are trying to use seemingly benign rhetoric about “open debate” to gain access to Hillel chapters, and then marginalize Jews who support Israel.
- **The organized Jewish community, including Hillel, allows and should continue to allow robust debates about Israel and Israeli policy.** These debates should include voices from all sides of the political spectrum.
- **Criticism of Israeli policy is acceptable. Demonization, delegitimization, and double standards are not.** There is an ongoing, malicious propaganda campaign against Israel and BDS is at the center of it. BDS does not deserve our acceptance or support. Hillel International should be commended for rejecting this bigotry and standing up for what is right.
- **Anti-Zionism rejects the collective rights of the Jewish people to self-determination in their ancestral homeland.** All peoples have an inalienable right to self-determination under international law, and those who deny this right to Jews should not be welcomed in by the organized Jewish community.
- **Jews who support BDS, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israel propaganda have the right to speak, but not the right to receive support and funding from the organized Jewish community.** We should oppose bigotry whether it is intentional or unintentional, and regardless of where it originates.
- **This is not an issue of left vs. right. It is an issue of civil debate vs. hatred and discrimination.** Speakers, activists, and organizations that contribute to the global campaign to demonize, delegitimize, and apply double standards against Israel are an example of the latter.

Hillel International Sponsored Speakers and Partner Organizations must not:

- Deny Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state.
- “Delegitimize, demonize, or apply a double standard to Israel”
- Support the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (BDS)
- Behave in a disruptive manner or “foster an atmosphere of incivility”.

The organized Jewish community does not have a duty to support and/or facilitate speech that is hateful or discriminatory. To the contrary - we have a moral obligation to condemn and marginalize hatred and discrimination.

¹ Eric Fingerhut, "Hillel President Responds to Swarthmore College Hillel," *Hillel International*, December 10, 2013, at <http://www.hillel.org/about/news-views/news-views--blog/news-and-views/2013/12/10/hillel-president-responds-to-swarthmore-college-hillel-resolution>

² Laurie Goodstein, "Members of Jewish Student Group Test Permissible Discussion on Israel," *New York Times*, December 28, 2013, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/29/us/members-of-jewish-student-group-test-permissible-discussion-on-israel.html>

³ Cecillie Surasky, "JVP Congratulates Swarthmore Jewish Student Group," *Jewish Voice for Peace*, December 11, 2013, at <http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/blog/jvp-congratulates-swarthmore-jewish-student-group>

⁴ Bicerano, Holly. "Standing athwart lies: Why I left Open Hillel." *The Times of Israel*. December 07, 2014. Accessed February 14, 2017. <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/standing-athwart-lies-why-i-left-open-hillel/>.

⁵ Samilow, Jared. "Hillel can't be a soapbox for Jewish millennials' anti-Israel crusade - Opinion." *Haaretz.com*. June 07, 2016. Accessed February 14, 2017.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache%3AsEMqLCfmlGoJ%3Awww.haaretz.com%2Fopinion%2Fpremium-1.723597%2B&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>