

Anti-Normalization

“Anti-normalization” is a policy/core value of many anti-Israel extremist groups not to engage with Jews, Israelis, and others who believe in Israel’s right to exist (“Zionists”). They believe that engaging with Zionists requires giving in to perceived power dynamics and thus giving Zionism credibility. Anti-Israel groups oppose and/or refuse to engage in any dialogue or cooperation with Jews or Israelis unless they adopt hardline and/or extremist anti-Israel political stances. These stances include: “ending the occupation;” “equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians;” and “a full right of return for Palestinian refugees.”

On campus, anti-normalization can include anything from refusing to engage in conversation with a pro-Israel friend, to refusing to allow Zionists to attend campus events. Additionally, the tactic includes preventing pro-Israel or anti-boycott messages from being shared, often by shutting down or preventing pro-Israel speakers from appearing on college campuses. While anti-normalization is typical of anti-Israel extremist groups, groups not related to this conflict, like the organizers of the Chicago Dyke March, have also adopted this tactic.

Instances of Anti-Normalization:

- A Muslim student at San Diego State University (“SDSU”) was [assaulted](#) in an act of Islamophobic hate. Following the event, the SDSU Muslim Student Association drafted a list of demands to students and the administration, asking for zero tolerance of Islamophobia and that the campus become a safer environment. Thirty student organizations at SDSU co-signed onto the list of demands, including Students Supporting Israel (“SSI”). Members of the pro-Palestinian group, Students for Justice in Palestine (“SJP”), rejected SSI’s signature. SSI was the only organization to be excluded. SJP claimed, “It didn’t serve the interests of the community” to include SSI.
- The National LGBTQ Task Force hosted a conference in Chicago. As part of the conference, a reception was given about the experiences and challenges of the LGBTQ community in Israel. Over 200 protesters [gathered](#) outside the event and shouted hateful slogans, banged drums, and waved banners. Attendees were unable to enter, and the invited Israeli LGBTQ speakers were escorted from the event by security. The event was shut down by the demonstrators.
- Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid was [shouted down](#) and threatened by protesters at a speech at the University of Chicago. The protesters claimed that Mr. Eid was not fit to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people due to his critiques of Palestinian government and society. Several argumentative protesters were removed by police, and Mr. Eid required a police escort to leave the event.

Each university has its own rules and procedures. To find out more about the rules and procedures on your campus, please contact legal@standwithus.com.

Countering Anti-Normalization

Anti-normalization is a challenge for students of all backgrounds. **However, there are numerous tools available to students that can help counteract anti-normalization efforts on campus, the most important being school policies and procedures.**

- In February 2016, the Student Association at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (“UOIT”) [banned](#) a pro-Israel group from participating in “Social Justice Week” because they were seen as “closely tied to the state of Israel.” The group filed a human rights complaint against the university. The complaint settled out of court, but the UOIT Student Association of the university was required to issue a statement that it “deeply regrets” the incident and “sincerely apologizes.”
- **Anti-normalization tactics may violate university policies**, including non-discrimination policies, because it subjects one group (pro-Israel individuals) to different treatment than other groups on campus. This is particularly relevant where the use of school facilities or access to funding is denied to pro-Israel people or groups because of their views.
- Students at George Washington University (“GWU”) issued a list of demands of the university administration in response to the 2016 presidential election. Though the list was drafted by a coalition of progressive student organizations, progressive pro-Israel students were excluded and one of the demands required the school to adopt an anti-Israel position. Pro-Israel student reached out to student leaders they knew in the progressive coalition and persuaded them not to take a one-sided stance. **This highlights the importance of building and maintaining genuine relationships with open minded progressive activists on campus.**
- Another effective approach to expose groups pushing anti-normalization is to **propose collaboration on a positive event with the campus anti-Israel group(s)** (and others), promoting dialogue/coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. We recommend doing so with the involvement of student government and/or university administrators.

To search for your school’s policies, try: “Discrimination policy;” “Harassment policy;” “Student conduct code;” “Student rights and responsibilities;” “Reporting an incident;” “Student handbook;” and “Policies.”