

American Jews' October 7

How do Americans, especially but not only Jews, demilitarize the hate propaganda against Israel and against America?

By Phyllis Chesler

American Jews are experiencing our own version of Oct. 7 every hour of every day in every city.

Like many Israelis, American Jews are only just now realizing the extent to which the world may actually want us dead—and we find this somewhat unbelievable. However, we cannot deny it any longer.



Anti-Israel and anti-police demonstrators gather outside a police gala at the Intrepid Museum

in New York City on June 6, 2024. Credit: Spencer Platt/Getty Images.

So many of our old alliances, colleagues, friends, favorite athletes, musicians, celebrities—even some of our family members—genuinely believe that Hamas's Oct. 7 massacre was justified or at least "understandable" given Israel's alleged "occupation" of Arab/Muslim lands and that Israel's war of self-defense in Gaza amounts to a "genocide."

What's new is the intensity and non-stop flooding of our daily, waking lives by lethal, antisemitic/anti-Zionist lies funded by Iran, Qatar and many "woke" American foundations.

Similarly provocative outrages have steadily occurred throughout the 21st century. Israel Apartheid Weeks were never stopped or punished on campuses; rather, they were defended as avatars of free speech and Academic freedom. However, they never led to months-long encampments or building takeovers or to so many up-close and personal attacks on visible Jews and Jewish students.

In a sense, just as Israeli leaders "managed" Hamas, so too have American Jews, including most of our large Jewish organizations, "managed" all the dangerously biased coverage, U.N. resolutions and anti-Israel curricula: "It will go away; it could be worse; it won't do that much harm; they may have a point..."

Wrong! Post-Oct. 7—just as the IDF discovered the extent to which presumably civilian Gaza was, in fact, a completely militarized labyrinth of hidden tunnels—American Jews have realized that all the "manageable" propaganda and campus and street activism was waiting beneath the radar to explode into a global expression of hatred for Jews and the only Jewish state.

Since Oct. 7, Americans (as well as Europeans) have been subjected to an almost non-stop and very public anti-Israel

campaign: letters, resolutions, petitions, DEI curriculum initiatives, all of which condemn Israel for daring to exist. They are supported by celebrated artists, “thought leaders,” academics and legislators. Simultaneously, as this flood of infamy rolled over the land, Israeli professors, scientists and diplomats were being disinvited, defamed and increasingly isolated by their Western counterparts.

At the same time, every week, sometimes daily, ominously masked and keffiyeh-bedecked demonstrators have blocked traffic and shamelessly interrupted sports and music events and even major holidays. This happened most recently during the July 4 celebrations in America. Apparently, American independence is less important than “freeing” Palestine “from the river to the sea.”

In unison—almost as if they have taken a page from the 9/11 hijackers who excelled in choreographed, simultaneous attacks—Israel-haters, often individuals and sometimes mobs, continued to tear down posters of Israeli hostages. When their actions and faces were caught on video, they smirked, cursed and seemed very pleased with themselves.

Someone, alone or with collaborators, just tore down such posters on Capitol Hill outside Rep. Brad Schneider (D-Ill.)’s office over the July 4 holiday. For good measure, a masked band of 50 protestors with drums and horns demonstrated in front of his home in the middle of the night. His crime? He has favored sanctioning Iran, led visits to Israel and (gasp!) is a Jew.

Last week, a Jewish cemetery in Cincinnati and a kosher bagel shop in Miami were vandalized. Many restaurants in my own once-fair city have been splashed with red paint meant to appear as blood and covered with jihadist graffiti. Every day, we discover how many pro-jihadist Jew-haters are legislators, city council members, university administrators, professors, psychologists, publishers, etc.

How do Americans, especially but not only Jews, demilitarize the hate propaganda against Israel and against America? How do we get people to understand that today, anti-Zionism is the most toxic form of antisemitism? How do we convince them that America, however imperfect, is still by far the best country on earth?

What's new is that suddenly, for the first time, more Jewish-American donors are pulling their funds from Ivy League universities. More Jewish parents are reconsidering where they want to send their children to high school and college.

What's also new is the amazing young college students who are pro-Israel and filled with energy and purpose. I met with some of the Columbia students who wrote a most excellent letter for which they obtained 500 signatures.

Is this really enough? Is it too little, too late? Aren't we coming from too far behind? Hasn't our government fatefully refused to stop Iran—in fact, unleashed Iran—which is now close to becoming a nuclear power?

In any event, as *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) teaches us: We are not obliged to complete the work, but neither are we free to neglect it.

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