

## Dealing with Antisemitism: A Guide for the RSNS Community

The Shamor Committee of RSNS is committed to helping us maintain our safety, dignity, and identity as Jews. To that end, we have put together this guide to help you navigate these tough times by addressing Antisemitism.

Antisemitism is not confined to any single point on the political spectrum. It manifests across both left-wing and right-wing movements, though often in different forms. On the right, Antisemitism has historically appeared through explicit hatred, conspiracy theories about Jewish control, and white supremacist ideology. On the left, it can emerge through the demonization of Israel that crosses into Antisemitic tropes about Jewish power, the exclusion of Jewish voices from progressive spaces, or the downplaying of Jewish concerns about discrimination.

Experiencing Antisemitism is deeply painful. It strikes at your sense of safety, your identity, and your belonging in spaces that should welcome you. Whether it's a comment at work or in class, exclusion from professional or social activities, or hateful graffiti, these incidents can leave you feeling isolated, anxious, and questioning whether you can be fully yourself. The hurt is real, and your feelings are valid.

In this document, you will find resources including definitions of Antisemitism; practical strategies for confronting Antisemitism; guidance on reporting Antisemitic incidents; ways to maintain emotional and spiritual resilience; and additional resources from organizations that fight Antisemitism.

### What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism is prejudice, hostility, threats, or discrimination directed at Jews, and their identity, culture, or institutions.

#### *Examples:*

- Negative stereotypes, slurs, or jokes
- Social exclusion or intimidation
- Vandalism, violence, or threats
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions they did not take
- Using Antisemitic tropes or symbols
- Denying Jews opportunities or services available to others
- Denying the Holocaust
- Imposing a higher burden of proof on Jews to establish a claim of discrimination

## Is Criticism of Israel Antisemitic?

Criticism of Israel is not automatically Antisemitic, but it can become Antisemitic if it:

- Holds Israel to a standard not applied to any other nation
- Targets Jewish people or institutions
- Promotes conspiracy theories about Jews
- Holds all Jews responsible for Israel's actions
- Accuses Jews of dual loyalties
- Engages in the examples of Antisemitism listed above

## Is Anti-Zionism Antisemitic?

This is a complex issue. Definitions of Zionism and Anti-Zionism vary and are constantly changing. While some feel all forms of Anti-Zionism are Antisemitic, others don't. Still others feel it depends on the situation and intent.

You will find additional definitions of Antisemitism as well as a discussion of Anti-Zionism in the Resources section at the end of this guide.

## Talking Points for Dealing with Antisemitism

Everyone must decide for themselves when it's appropriate to respond to instances of Antisemitism, and should consider whether, under the circumstances, it is safe and will be impactful to call it out in the moment.

The overarching concern here is that, by failing to call it out (when safe and appropriate), Antisemitism becomes normalized and accepted.

Here are some suggestions for how to address Antisemitic statements or actions, including some examples of what you could say:

- Always stay calm, pause, and create space, allowing you to choose a thoughtful response
- Use "I" statements
  - "I won't participate in a conversation that denigrates the Jewish people in this way."
  - "I feel disrespected when you speak to me that way."
- Ask a question for clarification or emphasis

- “Can you clarify what you mean by that?”
- “Do you mean everyone who is Jewish has that characteristic, or are you speaking of someone in particular?”
- Set a boundary
  - “Let’s talk about this when we can be respectful.”
  - “I’m not going to engage with that.”
- If necessary, remain silent or walk away/disengage
  - Protect your energy; focus on self-care
  - Decide whether the situation warrants a response; sometimes a long silence is effective in drawing attention to the conduct by leaving the speaker in an awkward position
- Take a moment to explain why something said or done could be interpreted or experienced as Antisemitic, discriminatory, or offensive
  - “I understand you may not have intended it this way, but when many Jews hear the term, ‘From the River to the Sea,’ they react to its literal meaning, which is to violently eliminate the Jews and the Jewish State of Israel, located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.”
- Explain the impact of the person’s statement or action
  - “When you say that, it really is damaging to an entire group of people.”
  - “Statements like that reinforce systems that really harm people.”
- Shine a light on the person’s choice to characterize something as a universal behavior attributable to Jews
  - “I don’t think that’s a Jewish thing. I think lots of different people have that quality.”
  - “You can’t make a generalization about any one group of people based on your interaction with one person.”
- Look for common ground
  - “Can we agree every human is deserving of respect and decency?”
  - “Can we agree the loss of any life in armed conflict is tragic?” Avoid using charged words or terms, and seek, instead, to discuss the underlying premise
  - Instead of defending “Zionism,” discuss the issue of “self-determination,” and the belief that both Palestinians and Israelis have such a right

- Provide historical context
  - “What you’re saying actually feeds into a really old stereotype.”
  - “That language supports a legacy of disrespect, violence, and oppression.”
- Share your own positive experience of being Jewish
  - Personal stories and connections can break down barriers and be far more convincing than trying to persuade someone of “your facts” or your arguments
  - “I’m proud of my Jewish heritage and the values it represents.”
- Offer an opportunity to learn from each other.
  - Invite the person to consider reading material related to the issue
  - Invite the person to engage in a more thoughtful conversation at another time

For examples of scenarios that you may encounter and responses that employ the talking points above, please see [Link to Separate Document] **Talking Points for Different Scenarios**[Link].

Other good resources for possible talking points are **Hey Alma’s “A Jewish Professional’s Guide on How to Have Hard Conversations”** (<https://www.heyalma.com/a-jewish-professionals-guide-on-how-to-have-hard-conversations/>) and [Link to separate document here] **The ADL’s Top 7 Messaging Recommendations**[Link]

## How to Report Antisemitic Incidents

Of course, there are circumstances when a response in the moment or to the individual offender is not effective or sufficient, and when the matter should be elevated, brought to the attention of the responsible or appropriate authorities, and/or pursued through legal channels.

- Where the words or conduct seek to exclude Jews from organizations or institutions (such as public forums or college campuses), elevate the concern to the proper institutional level
- Where the targets of criminal attacks, such as buildings, schools, places of worship, or cemeteries, are selected because they are or are perceived to be Jewish, the criminal conduct may be categorized as a hate crime, and security and law enforcement should be involved

- Where Jews are denied equal access to employment opportunities because they are Jewish, the conduct may violate applicable Federal and local discrimination laws. Consider filing a complaint with your organization's human resources department or consulting with a lawyer. Also see the following resources:
  - The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Public portal at [publicportal.eeoc.gov](https://publicportal.eeoc.gov)
  - The NY State Division of Human Rights (NYSDHR) at [dhr.ny.gov](https://dhr.ny.gov)
  - The Nassau County Human Rights Commission at [nassaucountyny.gov/414/Human-Rights-Commission](https://nassaucountyny.gov/414/Human-Rights-Commission)
  - The New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) at [www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/about/inside-cchr.page](https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/about/inside-cchr.page)
- Where Jews are denied access to services available to the public because they are Jewish, this too may violate discrimination laws. You can elevate this issue to the entity's leadership and take legal action as appropriate.

## Where to Report Antisemitic Incidents

- Local Police if It's Criminal Activity
- The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (Brandeis Center) <https://brandeiscenter.com/get-legal-help/>
- ADL <https://www.adl.org/report-incident>

## How to Keep Your Emotional & Spiritual Resilience

Resilience does not mean ignoring pain; it means holding pride alongside challenge. You should be proud to be Jewish and need not shy away from that pride.

- Anxiety, isolation, anger, fear, and exhaustion are normal
- Document and talk about your experiences
- Stay connected to Jewish and other supportive communities
- Take breaks from social media or stressful environments
- Use spiritual or reflective practices if meaningful to you
- Build allies who recognize Antisemitism and support you by collaborating on initiatives, inviting peers to educational events, and participating in interfaith dialogues

## You Don't Have to Face This Alone

Reading about Antisemitism and staying up on all the latest examples of Antisemitism can be draining, alarming, and demoralizing. The best way to fight back is to bone up on our strengths by learning about our history, culture, and the many reasons to be proud of who we are. This will be empowering and a source of strength.

Staying connected to our vibrant Jewish community is an effective antidote to the marginalization and exclusion associated with Antisemitism. Whether you need someone to talk to or to help you navigate the reporting process, or a simple reminder that you are valued and supported, our Shamor Committee, clergy, and congregation stand with you. Reach out to us anytime: [RabbiJodie@RSNS.org](mailto:RabbiJodie@RSNS.org), [CantorEric@RSNS.org](mailto:CantorEric@RSNS.org)

Remember, RSNS is here for you as a source of support, guidance, and community.

Additional resources follow.

## Antisemitism: Additional Resources

### More Definitions of Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism

- The International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA): Working Definition of Antisemitism  
<http://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>
- The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) (2020)  
<http://jerusalemdeclaration.org>
- The Nexus Document: Understanding Antisemitism at Its Nexus with Israel and Zionism  
<https://nexusproject.us/nexus-resources/the-nexus-document/>
- Understanding Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism From the ADL  
<https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/understanding-antisemitism-and-anti-zionism>
- Understanding Zionism, Anti-Zionism, and Antisemitism FAQ  
<https://icsresources.org/wp-content/uploads/Understanding-Zionism-Anti-Zionism-and-Antisemitism-FAQ.pdf>

- World Jewish Congress Definition of Anti-Zionism  
<https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/anti-zionism>

## Resources From Organizations Working to Combat Antisemitism

- **ADL Antisemitism Uncovered Toolkit**  
This resource provides questions and strategies to highlight the impact of generalizations and stereotypes.  
<https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2022-06/Antisemitism%20Uncovered%20Toolkit.pdf>
- **Blue Square Alliance**  
The mission of this organization is to stand up against Jewish hate and all hate  
<https://www.bluesquarealliance.org>
- **The Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) Antisemitism Resource**  
Here is a comprehensive guide to Antisemitism from this organization that fights for racial justice.  
<https://www.splcenter.org/resources/guides/antisemitism-resource/>
- **T'ruah's "A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism"**  
This guide to Antisemitism is available as a pdf for download; hard copies may be purchased.  
<https://truah.org/resources/antisemitism-resources>
- **The Union for Reform Judaism's (URJ) Talk For A Change**  
A URJ initiative aimed at fostering communities where people can have open conversations, even around difficult topics; materials are available for download.  
<https://urj.org/what-we-do/creating-vibrant-congregations-communities/talk-for-a-change>