

2015-2016 CAMPUS TRENDS REPORT



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An analysis of Israel-related activity on U.S. college campuses during the 2015-2016 academic year and a look at trends facing the pro-Israel community in the school year ahead.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its mission to provide partner organizations and stakeholders with an updated and realistic picture of the environment on U.S. campuses regarding Israel, Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC) tracks thousands of Israel-related events at colleges and universities each semester. ICC collects reports from national partner organizations, local campuses, and open-source material. ICC analysts use this data to identify trends and assess changing needs at individual campuses and across the broader campus community.

The 2015-2016 academic year marked a turning point for the pro- and anti-Israel campus communities. ICC observed an overall decline in the number of BDS campaigns on U.S. college campuses, with anti-Israel students focusing their efforts on other forms of activism, such as attention-getting, visceral displays of anti-Israel sentiment. Campuses also saw a surge in disruptions of Israel-related events, during which anti-Israel activists attempted to silence lecturers and guest speakers. In many cases, anti-Israel students resorted to heckling and name calling, subjecting speakers to aggressive forms of verbal harassment. By filming and disseminating videos of the event disruptions, protesters drew attention from the broader community, increasing the reach of their intimidation tactics.

In addition to these trends, ICC observed important changes within the anti-Israel movement. As anti-Israel activity declined on the West Coast, Chicago emerged as a hub for anti-Israel activism. In ICC's 2014-2015 Campus Trends Report, ICC noted an increase in anti-Israel activity on the West Coast and in the Midwest. During the 2015-2016 academic year, anti-Israel activity decreased on the West Coast and continued to increase in the Midwest.¹

In another shift, anti-Israel Jewish groups continued to grow on U.S. campuses. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), a harsh critic of Israel and a vocal proponent of BDS, expanded its presence on American campuses. JVP's presence on campus proved critical for SJP, helping it legitimize anti-Zionist rhetoric and effectively defend against accusations of anti-Semitism.

Throughout the academic year, anti-Israel groups relied heavily on existing coalitions, capitalizing on partnerships formed during previous years. Efforts on the part of the anti-Israel community to collaborate with other campus groups resulted in student activists of diverse backgrounds embracing and supporting the anti-Israel cause as part of a broader protest movement. In recent years, SJP and its allies have adopted a strategy of merging their agendas with those of other campus activist organizations. In many cases, these efforts produced shared issue platforms, which combined anti-Israel demands with support for other causes.

These developments have transformed the anti-Israel movement on American campuses. After years of focusing efforts and resources on fighting BDS measures, Israel's supporters must now

1. http://israelcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICC-2014-2015-Campus-Trends-Report.pdf

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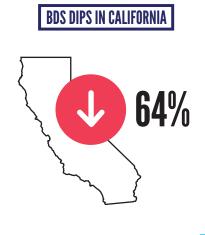
adapt in order to address a broader range of anti-Israel efforts. The recent surge in event disruptions challenges pro-Israel activists to strengthen their voices and to engage in increased outreach to the broader campus community. In sum, a convergence of trends is shifting the campus landscape across the country, creating a new reality – and new challenges – for the pro-Israel movement.



- ICC tracked 5,323 Israel-related events on college campuses nationwide. Of those, 1,437 were anti-Israel events, and 3,886 were pro-Israel activities. That marked a 12 percent decrease in anti-Israel activity on U.S. college campuses (1,630 in 2014-2015). In contrast, pro-Israel activity increased by 3.5 percent (3,753 in 2014-2015) and outnumbered detractor events by more than 2-1 during the same period.
- Nationally, BDS campus campaigns declined by 25 percent during the last academic year. During the 2015-2016 academic year, there were 33 BDS campaigns on U.S. campuses; during the 2014-2015 academic year, there were 44 campaigns.
- In California, which experienced the most Israel-centric activity last year, pro-Israel events outnumbered anti-Israel activity by more than 3-1 (655 pro-Israel; 201 anti-Israel). BDS campaigns declined there by 64 percent year-over-year (14 in 2014-2015; 5 in 2015-2016).





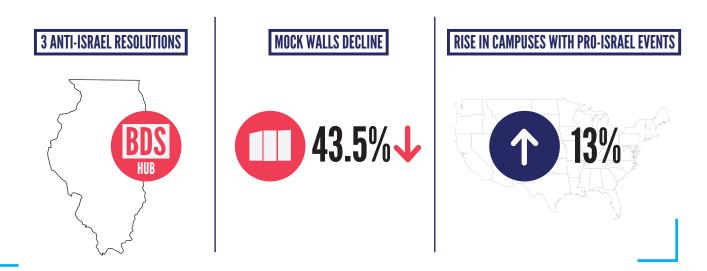






DATA DOWNLOAD

- Among major metropolitan areas, Chicago continued to grow as a major hub of campus BDS initiatives as activists expanded anti-Israel actions on multiple campuses. Three Chicago-area universities – University of Chicago; University of Illinois at Chicago; and Northwestern University – passed anti-Israel resolutions in a three-month period during the spring of 2016.
- > Even though BDS activity saw an overall decline, the number of campuses experiencing anti-Israel activity increased slightly (181 in 2014-2015; 185 in 2015-2016).
- There was a 28 percent decrease in the number of campuses hosting Israeli Apartheid Week events (83 in 2014-2015; 60 in 2015-2016), and a 43.5 percent reduction in mock "apartheid walls."
- > Simultaneously, there was a 13 percent increase in the number of campuses experiencing pro-Israel activities (213 in 2014-2015; 240 in 2015-2016).





EMERGING TRENDS ON AMERICAN CAMPUSES

During the 2015-2016 academic year, American campuses experienced an overall decline in anti-Israel activism, with fewer anti-Israel events on campuses than the previous year. Despite a slight increase in the number of schools that experienced detractor activity, detractors hosted fewer speakers with national notoriety than in 2014-2015, and anti-Israel "theme weeks" reached their lowest point in three years.² While such changes appear to suggest a decline in anti-Israel sentiment, most reflect unusual patterns of detractor activity during the 2014-2015 year – a year in which the war in Gaza triggered an exceptional surge in anti-Israel activity on American campuses. Since then, anti-Israel activism has returned to levels observed in previous years, with ICC noting significant increases in certain types of activity.

Pivot: BDS Measures to Event Disruptions

ICC observed a sharp decline in BDS activity on college and university campuses throughout the school year.³ Across the country, many SJP students challenged the value and efficacy of BDS efforts, identifying "Palestinian solidarity" as the movement's primary aim. Activists in this camp shifted their focus beyond BDS resolutions and referenda, redirecting their efforts to rallies, demonstrations, and other types of disruptive activism. For the first time since 2012, anti-Israel students organized fewer BDS campaigns than in the previous academic year. Students from large schools and Ivy League institutions, once considered the nation's most vocal BDS advocates, reduced their involvement in divestment initiatives.

Despite the recent decline in BDS activity, public displays of anti-Israel campus activism have continued to rise gradually in recent years. Throughout the 2015-2016 school year, demonstrations, interruptions, and "die-ins" enabled Israel's detractors to increase the visibility of their anti-Israel efforts. During the school year, anti-Israel activists carried out 24 disruptions, marking a 33 percent increase from the number recorded last year. On campuses across the country, Israel's detractors staged walkouts, shouted over Israeli guest lecturers, and deliberately interfered with Israel-related educational activities. In several cases, pro-Israel speakers were subjected to heckling, name-calling, and other forms of verbal harassment. Widely distributed – and in some instances, doctored – videos of a number of these disruptions amplified protesters' messages, turning disruptions into international propaganda tools.

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- 2. A "detractor event" is an event on campus related to Israel that has as one of its primary organizers a group that A) clearly denies the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state with secure and recognized borders and/or B) actively promotes an agenda of boycott, divestment and sanctions against the State of Israel. A "supporter event" is an event on campus related to Israel that has as one of its primary organizers a group that A) supports the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state and B) respects the right of the Israeli people to make their own decisions within their democratic process.
- A BDS campaign is an organized effort by students or faculty on campus that is designed to bring about a specific political result in support of the BDS movement.



At **Harvard University**, during a panel discussion featuring Israeli politician Tzipi Livni, Husam El-Coolaq, a Harvard Law School student affiliated with the Harvard Arab Student Association and the Harvard chapter of SJP, interrupted the event and taunted Livni by repeating an anti-Semitic slur.⁴

An event at **Goucher College** featuring Israeli LGBTQ activist and television personality Assi Azar was disrupted by 15 students. Following the screening of Azar's film "Mom, Dad, I Have Something to Tell You," the group collectively shouted anti-Israel slogans and displayed anti-Israel signage.⁵

At **University of California, Davis**, Arab-Israeli diplomat George Deek was shouted down by roughly two dozen students and community members.⁶ Demonstrators protested Deek's lecture, which focused on dialogue and reconciliation, for several minutes before leaving the lecture hall. Due to security concerns, police officers escorted attendees back to the campus' Hillel building at the conclusion of the event.

At **San Francisco State University**, anti-Israel activists forced Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat to end a speech after they barged into the lecture hall, shouting, "Intifada! Intifada! Long live the Intifada!" Video released from the event shows Barkat attempting to have an intimate conversation with a group of students while their anti-Israel peers stood in a corner of the room, shouting and waving flags and signs.

In a new tactic designed to bolster anti-Israel sentiment across the country, activists have begun filming event disruptions and disseminating their footage through anti-Israel media channels. At times, the footage is edited to portray anti-Israel students as victims of aggressive speakers and professors. Throughout the school year, detractors used recordings of disruptions to promote their activities among supporters, creating an "echo chamber" within the anti-Israel movement. In November 2015, after disrupting an Israel-related event at **The University of Texas at Austin**, anti-Israel activists published a doctored video of the incident, portraying a professor's reaction to their outburst as an unprovoked attack. Palestine in America, a student-run website popular among critics of Israel, frequently publishes videos of disruptions for its growing audience of anti-Israel activists.

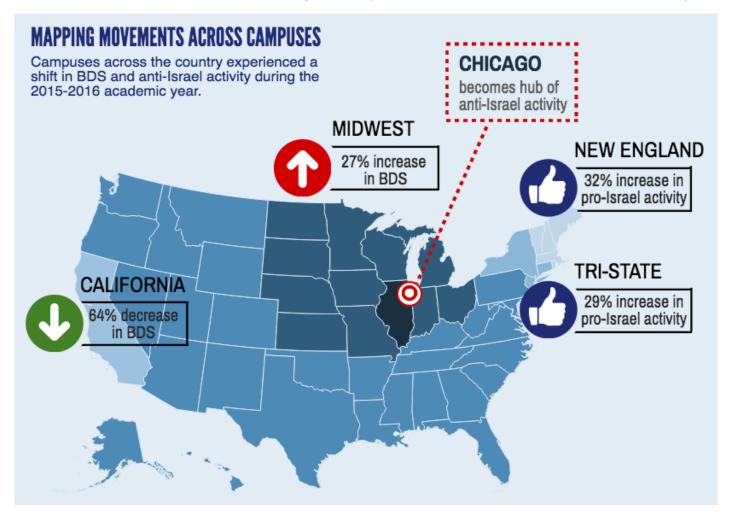
Regional Shift: Chicago as a Hub for Anti-Israel Activity

Anti-Israel activity declined or remained constant in every region of the country except the Midwest, where campuses experienced a sharp increase in anti-Israel activism. In California, once the center of anti-Israel involvement, BDS activity declined by more than 64 percent year over year, while BDS activism on Midwest campuses increased by 27 percent. As detractor activity on

- 4. http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/200558/at-public-event-harvard-law-student-asks-tzipi-livni-how-is-it-that-you-are-so-smelly
- 5. http://www.timesofisrael.com/proud-pinkwasher-assi-azar-confronts-campus-protesters/
- 6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Se0ew0LIII



the West Coast decreased, Chicago emerged as the new hub for anti-Israel activism. Alongside a surge in BDS activity, Chicago-area campuses saw increases in anti-Israel lectures, cultural events, film screenings, and theme weeks. By contrast, West Coast schools experienced significant declines in these areas, contributing to a 38 percent decrease in overall anti-Israel activity.



These changes reflect Chicago's growing role as a center for anti-Israel activism. The city is home to the headquarters of American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), an organization that provides financial, material, and programming support to SJP. In April 2016, Jonathan Schanzer, Vice President of Research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, testified to Congress regarding AMP's influential role in the campus movement, calling it "the most visible arm of the BDS campaign on campuses in the United States." AMP is linked to a robust network of Chicago-based detractors, including the U.S. Coalition to Boycott Israel, the BDS Campaign in Chicago, the Chicago Coalition for Justice in Palestine, and elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Through connections to these groups, AMP has transformed Chicago's campuses into hubs of anti-Israel activity, encouraging and training students to attack Israel. Alongside AMP's expanding influence, anti-Israel activists are supported by a host of resources in the Chicago area. Recognizing this strategic advantage, anti-Israel activists have re-focused on the Midwest, working to strengthen their efforts in the region.

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7. http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20160419/104817/HHRG-114-FA18-Wstate-SchanzerJ-20160419.pdf



Outreach to Communities

As noted in the ICC Fall 2015 Campus Trends Report, SJP chapters and members spent significant amount of effort building relationships with community members. The theme of the 2015 NSJP conference, "From Campuses to Communities: Building a Vision for the Future," set the tone for the remainder of the academic year. Community SJP groups formed in a number of metropolitan areas, including Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. These organizations provide support in the form of resources and manpower to local campus SJP chapters. In the Chicago area, organizations including SJP and JVP galvanized community support to stage a disruption at the 2016 Creating Change Conference.

At the 2016 Creating Change Conference in Chicago, a national gathering for the LGBTQ community, a Shabbat reception hosted by <u>A Wider Bridge</u> and featuring representatives from <u>Jerusalem Open House</u> was disrupted when dozens of anti-Israel activists stormed the hallways of the hotel where the event was taking place, chanting anti-Israel slogans and attempting to disrupt the reception.⁹

Anti-Israel Activity Among Graduate Students

Despite overall declines in anti-Israel and BDS activity at the undergraduate level, divestment initiatives continued to attract support among graduate students. During the 2015-2016 academic year, graduate student employee unions – which are affiliated with national labor unions and represent teaching assistants and other student employees – and graduate student governments – similar in structure and purpose to undergraduate student governments – were successful in passing BDS legislation at four universities: City University of New York; New York University (where students later successfully appealed this decision); University of Massachusetts Amherst; and University of Wisconsin-Madison. The sustained popularity of BDS in graduate student employee unions and graduate student governments, combined with a declining interest among undergraduates, indicates a shift in BDS activity to the graduate level.

Over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year, there was an increase in BDS activity among chapters of national labor unions. During the 2014-2015 academic year, one local union, UAW 2685, passed a BDS resolution, which was subsequently overturned by the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America. This past year, ICC observed three chapters – UAW Local 2110 at New York University, UAW Local 2322 at University of Massachusetts Amherst, and TAA/AFT Local 3220 at University of Wisconsin-Madison – that passed BDS legislation. ICC expects to see the number of graduate student employee unions that pass BDS increasing during the 2016-2017 academic year.

8. http://israelcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Fall2015CampusTrendsReport.pdf

9. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMMM56IW2i4



Jewish Anti-Israel Groups

The 2015-2016 school year saw a significant rise in the activity of anti-Israel Jewish groups on some U.S. campuses. Radical Jewish organizations – previously non-existent or little-known to Israel's detractors – emerged as influential forces on a small number of campuses in the anti-Israel community.

The tactics of radical Jewish groups reflect a philosophy of fierce opposition to the pro-Israel community. Throughout the academic year, these groups refused dialogue with Israel's supporters, requiring that they condemn Israel as a precondition for conversation. On several occasions, Jewish detractors issued "demands" for Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank, the return of Arab refugees, recognition of a Palestinian state, and other concessions unrelated to the decision-making of American Jewish organizations.

At the conclusion of the 2015-2016 academic year, ICC recorded JVP chapters on 23 campuses. Over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year, JVP solidified its position as a leader in the campus BDS movement. Boston, New York, Chicago, and San Diego became hubs of activity for JVP activists. For the first time, JVP chapters co-sponsored BDS measures, increasing their involvement in anti-Israel initiatives.

These trends represented dramatic changes in JVP's campus-based activism. In recent years, JVP has gradually broadened its campus footprint, introducing chapters to a small number of campuses each semester. In a transition from this pattern of steady but deliberate growth, JVP student activism surged throughout the 2015-2016 school year. Last summer, the group hired its first full-time director of campus affairs, and later appointed a coordinator for its new faculty Academic Advisory Council. In late 2015, JVP held its first national student summit, hosting 25 student representatives from 15 campus chapters.

On a number of campuses that saw BDS campaigns, collaborative initiatives became a pillar of JVP's activism. At Columbia University, JVP students cofounded the school's "Columbia University Apartheid Divest" campaign co-sponsored by SJP. In the spring of 2016, JVP co-organized Columbia's Israeli Apartheid Week, hosting anti-Israel speakers and erecting a mock apartheid wall on campus. Its members also protested the visit of Jerusalem's mayor Nir Barkat to campus, accusing Barkat of incitement and "ethnic cleansing" in Israel. 10 In the 2016 edition of the Barnard/Columbia "Disorientation Guide," a student-compiled document for incoming freshmen that highlights opportunities for campus' activism, pages showcasing JVP and SJP appear side-by-side.11

At the **University of Chicago**, JVP worked with SJP to promote a successful divestment resolution on campus. The Chicago chapter also organized several BDS events, including a

10. https://www.facebook.com/JVPColumbia/posts/1688580458068428

11. https://issuu.com/disguide/docs/final dis guide 2016 print



lecture presenting the "Jewish case for divestment". In March 2016, JVP students at **Vassar College** co-sponsored a BDS referendum. As a member of the Vassar BDS Coalition, JVP Vassar publicly endorsed the resolution and held promotional events with its anti-Israel partners.

These developments represented fundamental changes in JVP's campus advocacy efforts. Before the 2015-2016 school year, JVP students played a marginal role in BDS campaigns, focusing on solidarity with anti-Israel causes. For several years, JVP students offered only passive support to SJP chapters, whose members advanced the majority of anti-Israel initiatives. In 2015-2016, JVP emerged as SJP's equal partner, drafting BDS measures and providing resources to anti-Israel student groups. Moreover, JVP's rise legitimized SJP's efforts by demonstrating Jewish support for anti-Zionist sentiment. The perceived credibility of a Jewish anti-Israel organization, combined with its endorsement of SJP, enabled detractors to refute allegations of anti-Semitism. Taken together, these developments shifted the Israel debate on some campuses, presenting new challenges for pro-Israel activists.

JVP members and chapters have benefited from an array of professional resources. In April 2015, the group hired a campus organizer, the first JVP staff member dedicated to coordinating anti-Israel activism on college campuses. Students assumed independent responsibility for anti-Israel activities, establishing youth-led chapters with autonomous leadership structures. Through their public support for BDS, JVP-affiliated students distinguished themselves from members of the broader JVP community. While JVP supports BDS in principle, its off-campus community activism has focused minimally on divestment efforts. By contrast, JVP students have championed BDS initiatives, taking a radical stance relative to their community counterparts. Similarly, whereas community members have engaged in quiet forms of activism – such as small-scale events and meetings in private homes – student activists have embraced the aggressive tactics popular among campus agitators. As with SJP and other detractor groups, JVP chapters seek attention for their efforts, aiming to increase the visibility of demonstrations, disruptions, rallies, and other public activities.

Intersectionality and the Black Lives Matter Movement

Throughout the school year, anti-Israel groups continued to build coalitions with fellow campus activist organizations, growing and developing partnerships formed during previous years. These collaborative efforts sparked a number of major campaigns during the 2015-2016 academic year, during which time SJP and other anti-Israel groups inserted themselves into the programs, conferences, and activities of various social justice organizations.

This growing collaboration is based on the principle of 'intersectionality,' which was first formulated in the 1980s and which had a renaissance on college campuses during the past academic year. Intersectionality postulates that all systems of oppression are interrelated, and should therefore be fought against under the same banner. This trend has enabled anti-Israel activists to

12. https://www.facebook.com/events/1597052520621380/

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tie their demands to broader social justice causes, and to equate their grievances with the various forms of oppression suffered by other groups.

In July 2016, black Americans Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were killed in altercations with police officers, and protests erupted across the United States. In a Facebook post published a few hours after the shootings, SJP's NYU chapter attempted to pin the blame for the tragedy on Israel, pointing out that "many US police departments train with the #IsraeliDefenseForces" [sic]. The post then used explicitly intersectional language to link SJP to Black Lives Matter, calling on Palestinians to "stand with our black comrades... Palestinian liberation and black liberation go together." 13

In January 2016, students at **Northwestern University** launched UnshackleNU, a campaign to pressure the University to divest from private prisons. At the same time, NU Divest relaunched a BDS campaign, focusing specifically on the security company G4S, which was also named in UnshackleNU's resolution. The two groups co-sponsored multiple joint events during the winter 2016 quarter. One such event called on participants to "talk about how systematic racism in the U.S. and Israel robs black and brown youth of their childhood. On a separate occasion, members of the two groups co-authored a letter of support for one another's campaigns. In February 2016, the Northwestern Associated Student Government voted on a resolution, co-sponsored by UnshackleNU and NU Divest, to divest from the private prison system. Attempts to amend the resolution to include other countries in which G4S operates were unsuccessful, and the original resolution passed 28-5-8.

At **Harvard University**, anti-Israel activists joined the 'Reclaim Harvard Law School' campaign, which was founded to combat racism. In April 2016, the campaign co-sponsored an event titled "Toward Justice: The Black/Palestine Solidarity Tour," in collaboration with four Boston-area SJP chapters. Peclaim Harvard Law also hosted anti-Israel speakers Amer Zahr and Remi Kanazi. Kanazi's talk was titled "Building Solidarity from Baltimore to Bethlehem." 20

SJP activists at **Temple University** piggybacked on a number of social justice campaigns, partnering with local organizations in a series of area conferences and protests. The Philadelphia SJP group was represented at the Black Radical Organizing Collective's (BLOC) January conference, at which anti-Israel academic Steven Salaita spoke on "Resistance to the U.S.

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- 13. https://www.facebook.com/NYU.SJP/posts/1109663052432704
- 14. https://www.facebook.com/events/1889615631264846/
- 15. https://www.facebook.com/events/1016506118413131/
- 16. https://www.facebook.com/BlackLivesMatterNU/posts/545630302265328
- 17. http://www.northbynorthwestern.com/story/letter-divestment-and-mass-incarceration-are-inext/
- 18. http://www.northbynorthwestern.com/story/letter-why-i-voted-no-on-unshackle-nu-but-support-/
- 19. https://www.facebook.com/events/253949538273006/
- 20. https://reclaimharvardlaw.wordpress.com/gallery/



Empire."^{21, 22} BLOC reciprocated by attending SJP East's March conference at Temple University.²³ SJP endorsed the self-described radical Marxist group Take TU in its campaign for the Temple Student Government.²⁴ SJP activists also took part in a "Day of Action" campaign, which mobilized 33 campus and community organizations to oppose the construction of a new stadium at the university.²⁵

Anti-Israel activists will continue to use the tools and the language of intersectionality to lend themselves legitimacy in the eyes of campus social justice movements. Pro-Israel groups must refocus on building meaningful personal relationships across the campus community, and work to prevent SJP from appropriating the energy and commitment of student social justice activists for its own ends.

CONCLUSION

The anti-Israel movement on American campuses is changing rapidly. BDS campaigns are in decline, and Israel's detractors are now focusing on a broad range of anti-Israel activities. During the 2015-2016 academic year, anti-Israel activists disrupted Israel-related events in record numbers, attempting to silence speakers through verbal harassment. Radical Jewish groups became powerful forces in the anti-Israel movement, expanding their presence on campuses across the country and strengthening ties to SJP. These ties have given SJP the legitimacy to dismiss accusations that their activities perpetrate anti-Semitism.

During the 2015-2016 academic year, ICC observed a modest increase in overall pro-Israel activity on U.S. campuses. Visible support for Israel, including pro-Israel rallies and demonstrations, increased by more than 151 percent, coinciding with a 36 percent increase in cultural programming. Pro-Israel activism rose by 29 percent in the Tri-State area, where student involvement expanded in response to last year's surge in anti-Israel activity. Pro-Israel campus activity increased by 32 percent in New England, but dropped or remained constant in other areas of the country. Despite the significant rise in visible support for Israel, pro-Israel students proposed fewer student government resolutions, marking a slight decline in traditional forms of advocacy.

The 2015-2016 school year saw key structural changes in the anti-Israel movement. Detractor activity declined on the West Coast, and Chicago became the new hub of campus anti-Israel programming. Whereas undergraduate student governments have not focused as heavily on BDS as in previous years, graduate student unions have taken up the mantle, crafting sophisti-

- 21. http://www.theblackradicaltradition.org/about-us/
- 22. http://www.theblackradicaltradition.org/program-schedule/
- 23. https://twitter.com/brtconf/status/714285079493783552
- 24. https://twitter.com/taketu2016/status/713018987613913088
- 25. http://temple-news.com/news/stadium-protesters-plan-large-walkout-for-later-this-month/



cated, precedent-setting resolutions. SJP has capitalized on the emergence of social movements, forming alliances with social justice organizations under the banner of 'intersectionality,' and presenting joint lists of demands to campus administrations.

ICC and its partners empower college students to stand up for Israel. What drives action on campus is the confidence of student activists, and too often the confidence of pro-Israel students is eroded by Israel's detractors. As detractors test the limits of what passes for acceptable anti-Israel action on campus, the pro-Israel community must continue to work to bolster the confidence of student activists who seek to engage with their peers, foster dialogue and understanding, and work toward peace.



