

Rise in campus hate crimes targets Jewish students

Blame placed on rallies by pro-Palestinian groups

By Ellen Sorokin
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

College campuses around the country are seeing a rise in hate crimes against Jewish students — a trend that many Jewish leaders attribute to rallies organized by pro-Palestinian student groups.

A "Peace in the Middle East" rally last week at San Francisco State University, organized by Jewish students, turned into a violent demonstration when a group of pro-Palestinian students surrounded them and yelled racial epithets at them until campus police escorted the Jewish students from the scene.

Phrases like "God Hates Jews" or "Burn the Torah" have been shouted at Jewish students at University of California at Santa Barbara. Fliers denouncing Israel have been distributed at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The residence of a University of Illinois student was vandalized after someone saw an Israeli flag in the front window.

Jewish leaders said Thursday the verbal taunts, racial slurs and harassment of Jewish students have been escalating since pro-Palestinian groups began organizing protests that devolve from what Jewish leaders say is legitimate criticism of Israel into hateful attacks against Jews and the Jewish state. As a result, the Jewish leaders are calling on university officials to calm tensions between both groups.

"It's happening more often than we like," said Jeff Rubin, a communications director with Hillel-The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life in Washington. "It hasn't

happened everywhere, but in some places the exchange of dialogue has flared into irrational dialogue, where the worst Jewish epithets have been hurled."

The on-campus incidents have prompted the Anti-Defamation League in New York to call on Muslim and Arab-American groups to speak out against such acts.

"We have always said that there could be legitimate criticism of Israel, but what we are seeing at pro-Palestinian rallies goes far beyond legitimate criticism and often can be categorized as anti-Semitism," said Abraham Foxman, the league's national director. "This is a very troubling trend, and one that leaders within the Arab-American community need to speak out against."

Arab-American groups, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) in Washington, said they are hesitant to confirm that all of these incidents have occurred and warned the league against "blending legitimate and illegitimate actions" by students.

"It works both ways, it's all part of a political game," said Ibrahim Hooper, CAIR's spokesman. "There is nothing wrong with students protesting against Israel's brutal policies. That's not anti-Semitic. But in doing so, we encourage groups to maintain discipline, that they can't threaten bodily harm or intimidate anyone. If those incidents occur, it's very rare."

A majority of hate-related incidents primarily occur on college campuses because there's a perception among students that they can get away with it, said Jeffrey Ross, ADL's national director of campus/higher education affairs. "The

culture is different on college campuses," Mr. Ross said. "Students can say something is an educational experience if it's done on campus, an excuse they couldn't use if they did it off campus, in public."

So far, the worst case of intimidation seems to have been at San Francisco State where on May 13 a group of pro-Palestinian students surrounded a small group of Hillel students and faculty members and threatened them with bodily harm.

That incident came a month after Arab and Muslim students organized an anti-Israel protest that featured posters that had pictures of soup cans which listed as their contents "Palestinian children meat" and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as the manufacturer. The picture also said the "meat" is "slaughtered according to Jewish rites under American license."

"This is not civic discourse, and this is not free speech. This is the casual introduction of the medieval blood libel and virulent hatred smeared around our campus," Laurie Zoloth, director of the university's Jewish Studies Program, said in a letter to SFSU faculty members. Miss Zoloth was one of the people threatened during the May 13 protest.

San Francisco State's President Robert Corrigan asked the district attorney earlier this week to prosecute those students from both groups who shouted epithets at one another in the pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian rallies in recent weeks.

"I have never been as deeply distressed and angered by something that happened on this campus as I am by the events of last week," Mr. Corrigan said.

CAMPUS ANTI-SEMITISM

A sample of recent anti-Semitic and anti-Israel incidents on university campuses around the country.



- The Muslim Student Association at the University of California at San Diego on May 7 passed out fliers on campus titled "The Jenin Massacre." Other fliers appeared on campus with an anti-Semitic diatribe written by former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.
- Students representing the Muslim Students Association and Organization of Arab Students at the University of Maryland at College Park on May 1 set up a mock checkpoint and labeled a courtyard "Occupied Territory."
- An Israeli couple living near the campus of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was the target of vandalism on April 20. A rock was thrown through the students' front window, where an Israeli flag had been displayed.
- An anti-Israel rally, after an April 8 demonstration by Arab and Muslim students at San Francisco State University, featured posters with a picture of soup cans labeled "Made in Israel" and listed the contents as "Palestinian Children Meat," and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as its manufacturer.
- Campus police at the University of California at Berkeley on April 9 arrested 79 pro-Palestinian protesters who disrupted a Holocaust Remembrance Day event.
- The Hillel Center on the Berkeley campus was vandalized on March 27 with anti-Israel and anti-Semitic graffiti and its glass front door was smashed with a cement block.

Source: The Anti-Defamation League