

# Missing in Action—the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

By [Eric Rozenman](#) (October 2024)



Eclipse of God [After the Uccello Panel Called Breaking Down the Jew's Door], (R. B. Kitaj, 1997-2000)

**Jew-hatred had been re-emerging** in the West since at least al-Qaeda's Sept. 11, 2001 murder of nearly 3,000 people in the United States. A recurrent, if at times tacit, answer to the question, "Why do they hate us?" became "the Jews." Then Hamas slaughtered 1,200 people and kidnapped another 250 in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. This gleeful barbarity perversely intensified the antisemitism already seeping through democratic countries.

One institution particularly well-placed to help combat the new-old anti-Zionist antisemitism in America is the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Yet it has remained almost entirely on the sidelines.

Efforts by established agencies like the Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee and Community Relations Councils of major Jewish Federations to counter resurgent antisemitism have proved largely ineffectual. Newer initiatives such as the Combat Antisemitism Movement and the Adam and Gila Milstein Family Foundation struggle to succeed.

An alliance of convenience between the anti-Zionist left and Islamic fundamentalists provides the intersectional ideology, leadership and foot-soldiers for today's campaign to destroy the Jewish state and socially and politically re-ghettoize diaspora Jews. Otherwise, oxymoronic partners (LGBTQ activists for jihad, anyone?) cooperate under the progressive banner of anti-racist anti-Zionism. They thereby "woke-wash" antisemitism.

Mostly secular, mostly politically liberal Jews, including leaders of major U.S. Jewish organizations, are often tongue-tied by cognitive dissonance. Instead of spotlighting their enemies' bigotry and lies, they make generalized appeals to oppose "hate" and embrace "tolerance."

This observation, although hardly new, fails to penetrate. But facts speak for themselves. Immediately after Hamas led the biggest one-day slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust, anti-Israel manifestations flared around the world. One memorable example in the United States saw 31 Harvard University groups issue an October 10 letter holding "the [Israeli regime entirely responsible](#) for all unfolding violence."

In late October, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (not an American Jewish institution but one initiated mostly by Jewish American Holocaust survivors) issued a statement noting it "is

gravely concerned about the unprecedented antisemitism erupting—sometimes violently—on college campuses; city streets in the United States, Europe and beyond; all over the Internet ... creating an environment of intimidation and threat to all Jews all over the world.”

### **Learning Whose Lessons?**

Museum Chair Stuart E. Eizenstat said, ‘In the wake of Hamas’ terror attack on Israel ... we are witnessing a horrific rise in antisemitism. College students, leaders, and the broader public need to learn the history and lessons of the Holocaust—the dangers of unchecked antisemitism, the power of propaganda, and potential for complicity in group-targeted violence. All of us need to [understand the lessons of the past](#) and take responsibility for the future.”

In April, the museum issued a press release calling on universities to address rising Jew-hatred. “The shocking eruption of antisemitism on many American college and university campuses is unacceptable and university and all other appropriate authorities must take greater action to protect Jewish students,” it asserted. Eizenstat noted that many Holocaust survivors rebuilt their lives in the United States and “they never could have imagined that eight decades after the Holocaust, Jewish students would face blatant antisemitism, including intimidation and violence, on college campuses across the U.S.” The future leaders universities are shaping “need to be embracing the lessons of the past,” he said.

Of course. But where did those “pro-Palestinian” demonstrators chanting “Hitler didn’t finish the job” and “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” get their lessons of the past? Why does what they take as their responsibility for the future pivot on destruction of the Jewish state and

marginalization or worse of its supporters?

Opened in 1993 just off the National Mall in Washington, D.C. and dedicated to educating the public about the genocidal nature of Nazi Germany's antisemitism, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is a leading tourist destination. Its permanent exhibition and temporary displays have highlighted numerous aspects of the destruction of European Jewry, both as a major element in 20th century history and as a warning to the present and future about the lethal potential of intolerance and hatred. It has used contemporary examples to help educate, for example with a temporary exhibition [spotlighting Myanmar's \(Burma\) genocidal repression](#) of its Muslim Rohingya minority.

Several emails and calls to the museum asking about exhibitions, speakers' series, publications or film focusing on Soviet and Nazi propaganda and anti-Western, anti-Jewish, Arab nationalist and Islamist hostility to Israel and Jews yielded little. Yet the bigots show as well as shout their roots. Anti-Jewish slogans, intimidation, encampments and episodic violence after October 7 featured Palestinian flags carried by *keffiyeh*-wearing demonstrators. The *keffiyeh*, garment of choice for Palestinian terrorists even before Yassir Arafat sported one at the United Nations in 1974, is a fashion statement. As I've argued before, it functions as a cloth swastika proclaiming that people who kill Jews are again fashionable. When wrapped mask-like across the face, it works also as an updated Ku Klux Klan hood.

In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly rewarded Arafat, leader of the Soviet bloc-supported Palestine Liberation Organization, with passage of the [infamous Moscow-inspired](#), PLO-promoted *Zionism-is-Racism* resolution. Having rejected 1960s diplomacy to condemn antisemitism as a form of racial discrimination, Moscow in the 1970s determined to tar Zionism—the Jewish national liberation movement—as itself racist. Psychological warfare incantations of “Zionist

racism,” “Israeli genocide,” and “Jewish colonialism” followed. They began infiltrating the liberal left after Israel’s 1967 Six-Day War victory and conquest of the Jordanian-occupied West Bank (Judea and Samaria) and eastern Jerusalem and Egyptian-occupied Gaza Strip. The more Israel fought back against its enemies, from the 1973 Yom Kippur War through the 2000–2005 second Palestinian intifada, and Hamas-instigated conflicts beginning in 2008, the more discomfited many of its liberal supporters, including Jews, became.

### **The 1930’s wants its antisemitism back**

FBI figures publicized by ADL last October—compiled before the escalation of post-October 7 antisemitism—showed a 37 percent jump in anti-Jewish incidents, from 817 in 2021 [to 1,122 in 2022](#). The league called this “the highest number recorded in almost three decades and second-highest on record.” The numbers are partial and no doubt lower than the actual total. Many anti-Jewish incidents go unreported and not all law enforcement agencies tally those that are and notify the FBI.

According to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, in the first three months after October 7, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, as well as other Palestinian Arabs raped, mutilated and murdered Israelis and foreigners and anti-Israel protesters called supporters of the Jewish state ‘pigs’ and chanted ‘gas the Jews’ at pro-Hamas rallies across the globe. Many pro-Palestinian rallies held across the United States and elsewhere are as much about [intimidating and purging Jews](#) from the public square as supporting Palestinians. ‘From the river to the sea,’ a popular refrain, appearing on banners and chanted by demonstrators, is an open call for the destruction of the State of Israel. Pro-Palestine protesters disrupted congressional hearings, the annual Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, and attempted to disrupt the annual [Christmas] tree lighting ceremony at New York’s Rockefeller Center.”

And there were the proliferating “pro-Palestinian” anti-Zionist, antisemitic encampments on American college campuses. At December’s watershed congressional hearing, the presidents of Harvard, Columbia, and MIT, when pressed by Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.) on whether calls for the genocide of Jews violated their schools’ codes of conduct, evaded direct answers. Claudine Gay, soon to resign as head of Harvard, replied [“it depends on context.”](#)

With 1930s European-style antisemitism echoing rhetorically and sometimes in deeds, the USHMM has remained nearly mute on the primary causes of rising 21st century Jew-hatred. As noted, it has issued statements recognizing and condemning the phenomenon. But it has not spotlighted today’s new-old anti-Zionist antisemitism.

After Harvard’s Gay waffled on Capitol Hill, rabbi and visiting professor David Wolpe resigned from the school’s advisory group to combat antisemitism. He called her testimony “painfully inadequate” and charged that “an ideology of wokeism and attendant antisemitism is deeply rooted” at the institution and other elite universities. Wolpe noted Harvard and other colleges spoke out against racism “but retreated to [‘transparently hypocritical’](#) defenses of free speech on more contentious issues” like combating Jew-hatred.

ADL, AJC, JCRCs, and American Jews in general have been accustomed to countering antisemitism from neo-Nazis and other far right fringes. These were perhaps the most visible Jew-haters when the USHMM opened. They are still present, exemplified not only by synagogue murders in Pittsburgh, Pa. in 2018 and Poway, Calif. the next year, but also in 2009 when a white supremacist shot and killed a Holocaust Museum security guard. However, in 2024—and at least since Sept. 11, 2001—the mass movement to destroy the Jewish state and marginalize American Jews comes from the left. Under the woke-progressive DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) taxonomy, Jews are “white adjacent” and they are deemed not as an always

vulnerable if currently successful minority, but as oppressors in the neo-Marxist binary of oppressor/oppressed. Palestinian Arabs rank as poster children of the oppressed. Substituting “oppressor/oppressed” for “capitalist/worker” and “settler Zionist” for “Western imperialist” amount to a cosmetic makeover of the Marxist dialectic.

The Holocaust Museum not surprisingly embodies a Western liberal assumption that knowledge of the evils spawned by intolerance and hatred, exemplified by Nazism, will minimize the appeal of such deadly bigotry. But what if the assumption is wrong?

### **‘Holocaust inversion’–‘Jewish Nazis’**

Shortly before his death in 2015, Robert Wistrich, professor of European and Jewish history at Jerusalem’s Hebrew University, and head of the school’s Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, wrote that “even today, Jews in Israel and the Diaspora are fixated on the dangers of far-right traditional antisemitism—whether racist, religious or nationalist. While neo-fascism has not altogether disappeared, it is in most cases a secondary threat.”

Further, “there is an illusory belief that more Holocaust education and memorialization can serve as an effective antidote to contemporary antisemitism. This notion, shared by many governments and well-meaning liberal gentiles, [is quite unfounded](#). On the contrary, today ‘Holocaust inversion’ (the perverse transformation of Jews into Nazis and Muslims into victimized ‘Jews’) all-too-often becomes a weapon with which to pillory Israel and denigrate the Jewish people...”

Wistrich saw that by “libeling the Jewish state as ‘racist,’ ‘Nazi,’ ‘apartheid’ ... its enemies have turned Zionism into a synonym for criminality.” Hence, anyone “who supports the

totally 'illegitimate' or immoral 'Zionist entity' is thereby complicit in a cosmic evil." As I have noted elsewhere, this cosmic evil is "nearly identical to that of the satanized Jews of the early Church fathers and their medieval followers."

The United States' more than two dozen Holocaust museums have attracted tens of millions of visitors and developed curricula for 20,000 schools, according to Edward Rothstein. So, "one might expect, then, that recent generations, dutifully exposed to this history, would have a heightened sensitivity to such matters—particularly to antisemitism." But, he noted in *The Wall Street Journal* in August, "over the past 10 months, as hate-crime statistics, campus protests and urban disruptions have demonstrated, [the opposite is the case](#). Moreover, the words 'genocide' and 'Holocaust' have become so profligately applied that the situation seems to illustrate the comically coined Latinate fallacy, '*reductio ad Hitlerum*': Any disliked opponent is a 'Nazi'; every act of war, a genocide; and any large-scale suffering, a Holocaust."

Opposition to "hate" and calls for "tolerance" avoid the 800-pound gorilla of contemporary Jew-hatred: Antisemitism was and is a bedrock element of the anti-democratic left. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels drew on classic Jew-hatred while advocating "scientific socialism." In his 1843 essay, "On the Jewish Question," Marx updated Martin Luther's 1543 book *On the Jews and Their Lies* by elevating money, not the devil, as the Jews' god. To advance a utopian workers' paradise, Engels desired the annihilation of Europe's many small "reactionary" minorities, none more reactionary than religious-nationalist Jews. Pointing to Jewish resettlement in *eretz Yisrael*, the Holy Land, Marx and Engels' followers deployed anti-Zionism—as at the 1920 Congress of the Peoples of the East in then-Soviet Azerbaijan—to try to incite Arab-Islamic rebellions against British and French colonialism.

Politics being not linear but horseshoe-shaped, Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi), like



Marx and Engels, also condemned Jews. Nazis did so by blaming them for Germany's World War I defeat and post-war misery. Thereby they began laying the foundation for the Third Reich's "final solution to the Jewish question." Promoting this solution included, among other examples of Nazi-Islamist cooperation, World War II Arabic short-wave radio broadcasts to the Middle East from Berlin. Most notable among such broadcasters was Haj Amin al-Husseini, a virulent anti-Western antisemite and the "George Washington" of Palestinian Arab nationalism. At their 1941 meeting, before Pearl Harbor and Germany's declaration of war against the United States, al-Husseini-British-created Grand Mufti of Jerusalem-asserted to Hitler that [Nazis and Arabs had the same enemies](#): Great Britain, Jews and Communists. Al-Husseini also was a font of early Islamist agitation. One of his countless listeners was a young Iranian the world later would know as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Since October 7, "pro-Palestinian" marchers in their tens of thousands in Berlin, London, and Washington, D.C. have condemned "Israeli genocide" and demanded an Israeli-Hamas ceasefire—"let Hamas live!" as one critic described such calls. As they have done so, attempts to combat leftist-Islamist antisemitism get neutered by concern over "Islamophobia." This sleight-of-hand works thanks to the red-green overlap. Never mind that open hatred of American Muslims and attacks against them rank as miniscule compared to anti-Jewish incidents. The number of anti-Muslim encampments on college campuses can be counted on no fingers.

### **The 'Islamophobia' dodge**

On May 7, President Joe Biden, in a speech at the Holocaust Museum, properly [linked Nazi Jew-hatred with Hamas' massacre](#) the previous autumn. But he went no further in highlighting the leftist-Islamist alliance. The White House's 2023 National

Strategy to Combat Antisemitism illustrated the conundrum Democratic Party leaders face. Tucked into its 60-page pudding was this sentence: “The hatred of Jews shares much in common with other forms of hate, such as [racism](#), [Islamophobia](#), [homophobia](#), transphobia, and misogyny; it also has unique characteristics that require tailored responses and can manifest distinctively.”

Those “unique characteristics” yield political bedfellows such as Nihad Awad, a leader of CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations), [a Hamas spin-off](#). News media persist in mischaracterizing the council as a civil rights organization, but Awad praised the October 7 murders. For that CAIR lost its bizarre role as one of many organizations recruited to promote the National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism. Also embraced by the Democratic Party’s activist left has been Black Lives Matter. Its founding manifesto included the red-green libel of Israel as “an apartheid state” committing “genocide” against Palestinian Arabs.

The USHMM’s mission statement asserts responsibility “to remember the [Holocaust’s] victims and to stimulate leaders and citizens to confront hatred,” as opposed to confronting Jew-hatred. This reflects its difficulty in transcending U.S. politics. The president appoints museum board members. Congressional appropriations fund the institution’s operating budget, [\\$65 million for fiscal 2023](#). Spotlighting Islamist antisemitism can cause indigestion for Democrats whose House members include Reps. Ilhan Omar (Minn.) and Rashida Tlaib (Mich.) and their Israel-hating, antisemitism dabbling fellow-travelers. This indigestion was displayed at a September 17 Senate hearing. After minority Republicans finally compelled majority Democrats on the Judiciary Committee to hold a hearing on contemporary antisemitism, Chairman Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) opened the session this way:

“Since the horrific Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, we have seen an increase in attacks on Jewish Americans, Palestinian

Americans, Arab Americans, and Muslim Americans.” Committee Democrats “All Lives Matter’d [the meeting] into oblivion by making it a generalized ‘hate crimes’ hearing and calling only witnesses who were at odds with the Jewish victims of antisemitism across America’s elite university campuses.” According to Seth Mandel in *Commentary* online, “Republicans were allowed one witness, and he served as the [sole voice of the put-upon campus Jew.](#)”

To support the struggle against resurgent Jew-hatred, the Holocaust Museum must confront the old-new roots of anti-Zionist antisemitism. There is a reason the pan-Arab Ba’ath [Renewal] Party, branches of which ruled Iraq for 45 years and Syria for 50, was launched on the European fascist model. As co-founder and former Syrian Prime Minister Sami al-Jundi explained, “we had been racist admirers of Nazism. We ... were among the first who liked to translate Hitler’s book [*Mein Kampf*].”

There is a reason the Hamas Charter of 1988 grounded its Jewish conspiracy theories in *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Although an early-debunked Czarist Russian forgery, *The Protocols* became enduringly successful. Reprising medieval European obsession with the Jew as responsible for all great calamities, Hamas’ charter alleged, *Protocols*-style, of Jews that “with their money, they took control of the world media... They were behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution, and most of the revolutions we heard and hear about... With their money they were able to control imperialistic countries and instigate them to colonize many countries...” Even more, “they were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate [Ottoman Turkey]” and “were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments, and paved the way for the establishment of their state ... to enable them [to rule the world.](#)” The solution? Replacement of Israel with an Islamic theocracy also comprising the West Bank and Gaza

Strip, and genocide of the Jews.

A [museum timeline notes](#) that Iran's Islamic Propagation Organization published an English-language version of *The Protocols* in 1985, an Egyptian satellite TV network ran a 41-episode series based on them in 2002, and Syria's Ministry of Information authorized a 2005 edition that claimed The Elders coordinated al-Qaeda's Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. But the museum does not deal with *The Protocols*' wide dissemination and continuing popularity in Arab-Islamic states.

Dressed in academic language, Hamas' anti-Zionist indictment of "imperialist, racist, genocidal" Israel and its backers is conventional wisdom in faculty clubs across the country. Entwined like DNA's double-helix, Jew-hatred from Bolshevik, fascist and Islamist sources passes subliminally when not overtly from the campus through the newsroom and entertainment studios to the general public. Rothstein argues that Holocaust museums' focus on Jews as victims and on "feel-good affirmations of tolerance" clouds understanding of the roots of contemporary antisemitism. Needed instead is highlighting Jews as members of a people with a long, influential history including—as a response to and champion against antisemitism—reestablishment of a Jewish state.

The U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum can perform an urgent service combating escalating anti-Zionist Jew-hatred. It could connect the dots from early Bolshevism through Adolf Hitler's Berlin to post-World War II anti-Israel, pan-Arab nationalism and today's neo-Marxist left and anti-Western, anti-Jewish Islamic fundamentalism. Will it? Time is short.

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