

Jewish Voice for Peace Action
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Informational – HB1066

Jewish Voice for Peace Action is a multiracial, intergenerational movement of Jews and allies working towards justice and equality for Palestinians and Israelis by transforming U.S. policy. JVP Action has approximately 5,000 supporters throughout Maryland.

We are writing to provide supplementary information for the Maryland General Assembly to consider alongside HB 1066, legislation establishing a Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. In the current draft of the legislation, the Anti Defamation League (ADL) is listed as one of organizations that will have representation on this commission. The ADL has a long history of undermining social movements and organizations working to advance social justice and build safe communities.

Detailed below are just some of the examples of the ways the ADL has worked to undermine social justice movements for decades. The information below is taken from the Drop the ADL, a collection of hundreds of progressive organizations calling on institutions to end their work with the ADL due to its longstanding attacks on social justice movements.

The ADL has a decades-long history of attacking, surveilling and undermining Black, immigrant, Muslim, Arab and other marginalized communities.

In 1993, the San Francisco District Attorney investigated the ADL for collecting confidential information on nearly 10,000 activists and at least 700 organizations. The investigation showed that the [ADL had directly surveilled and infiltrated social justice and human rights organizations](#) in at least [seven cities](#), and its agents had received stolen police files from a surveillance program deemed illegal.

- The investigation found that among the groups they had surveilled included groups opposing South African apartheid and US racism, the NAACP, the United Farm Workers, the Vanguard Public Foundation, the San Francisco Labor Council/AFL-CIO, MADRE, Greenpeace, and the Center for Constitutional Rights.
- The ADL also heavily targeted surveillance at Arab groups, keeping files on 4,500 members of the [American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee](#) (ADC), and [Jewish peace groups](#).
- Upon collecting information on these social justice groups, the ADL agents supplied confidential information to foreign governments, including Israel and South Africa.
- The ADL's surveillance [mapped closely](#) to acts of violence against Arab-American and South African activists.

The ADL has been a strong partner in the Islamophobic [“Countering Violent Extremism”](#) strategy, calling for its [funding and expansion](#). Despite the ADL's more public reputation of monitoring white supremacists, CVE is perhaps most infamous for its increased [surveillance of Muslim communities](#).

In August 2017, following the white supremacist rallies in Charlottesville, the [ADL issued a “primer for law enforcement” advising cops to film and plant undercover agents](#) among anti-racist protesters

in order to use surveillance footage to prosecute them. The ADL advised police to search protesters before confining them in “assembly zones.” When news of the ADL memo surfaced, [the ADL took it down](#) and said they deferred to law enforcement to make the right choices when it comes to decisions around infiltrating and filming protesters.

The ADL seeks to silence and punish student activists across the country that dare to organize in support of Palestinian human rights.

The ADL’s repressive practices have targeted [student organizations](#) and faculty members who teach, write, or advocate on Palestine. The ADL is often allied with overtly right-wing organizations whose explicit goal is to shield the Israeli state of accountability, like [Campus Watch](#) and [AMCHA](#).

In some cases, the ADL’s advocacy has been successful in shutting down discussion of Palestinian rights by falsely portraying it as a violation of Jewish students’ rights. In others, it has validated groups orchestrating vicious, cyber bullying campaigns like Canary Mission that impose [high, career-long costs](#) on students and faculty talking and teaching about Palestine. The combined impact of these campaigns is to [dramatically chill](#) academic freedom and speech on campus, and the effects are felt particularly by Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab students and faculty, as well as from other marginalized communities.

The ADL has sought to [prevent students and faculty from studying](#) Palestinian perspectives and legal analysis of Israeli policies, labeling such study “anti-Semitic” and seeking to characterize it as outside the bounds of academic freedom. For instance, in 2009, the ADL targeted a University of California at Santa Barbara professor who assigned readings critical of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and military assaults on Gaza. The ADL met with university officials to press them to open an investigation into the professor and helped two students craft complaints that he had “assigned anti-Semitic material unrelated to the course.” The university eventually dismissed the case.

- The ADL worked with the San Francisco Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), and for three years blocked the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) — an established community-based organization with a long history of social justice and coalition work — from providing culturally-relevant education (CRE) and weekly Arab youth programming to San Francisco Bay Area students because of AROC’s “[position on Israel](#).”
- The ADL and JCRC also pressured the San Francisco Unified School District to halt AROC’s successful campaign to implement a resolution for an [Arabic language pathway](#) in K-12 schools, causing a three-year delay in its roll-out.
- The ADL’s repression of students’ political activities has often targeted Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a group with hundreds of chapters nationwide led predominantly by students of color. In 2013 the [ADL campaigned to punish students](#) at Florida Atlantic University. There, one student interrupted a talk by Israeli Colonel Bentzi Gruber, who has been accused of war crimes, while the other students silently walked out of the room.

- The ADL, along with other groups, [pressured](#) University of California at Hastings Law School to cancel a 2011 conference on legal avenues for pursuing Palestinian rights. The university ultimately withdrew funding for the conference, over the objections of nearly all of its tenured faculty and student government.
- The ADL is one of the main proponents of the controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which serves the sole purpose of equating criticism of the Israeli military and government with antisemitism. These efforts serve to criminalize and silence Palestinian rights defenders while diverting resources, advocacy, and focus away from fighting the biggest threat to Jewish safety: white supremacy and white nationalism.

The ADL has provided cover for white supremacists and antisemites

It has a well-documented history of supporting and even honoring white supremacists and antisemites. As a leading progressive Jewish organization, we believe that the ADL is not only a danger to our partners in anti-racist movements but also to Jewish people.

On the campaign trail, speaking to a Jewish Republican audience, Trump used [antisemitic stereotypes](#) about Jews and money. [The ADL defended him](#), saying, “Mr. Trump’s presentation was completely supportive of Israel and the Jewish community.” The ADL regularly honors right-wing figures, often for their work on “keeping us safe” or supporting Israel. Because of the ADL’s reputation as a civil rights organization, these awards confer a badge of good works on figures who have often been complicit in or directly responsible for state violence. Some of these include:

- [Rupert Murdoch](#) of [Fox News](#). The ADL awarded Murdoch with the ADL International Leadership Award.
- [Michael Chertoff](#), a main [proponent of the US/Mexico border wall](#) who threatened to prosecute sanctuary cities. Chertoff represents a lobbying firm pushing for increased full body scanning/data collection and [co-authored the Patriot Act](#). He served as Secretary of Homeland Security during Hurricane Katrina and was [partially responsible](#) for the [catastrophic neglect](#) of the federal response. During its 2018 National Leadership Summit, the ADL presented him with the ADL William and Naomi Gorowitz Institute Service Award.
- [Silvio Berlusconi](#), the notoriously corrupt, sexist, Islamophobic Italian prime minister who secured political power through alliances with anti-immigrant populist parties — and who called Mussolini’s dictatorship “mild”, claimed that he “sent people on holiday to internal exile,” and denied his role in the Nazi holocaust. (When Italian Jewish communities objected, the ADL did not respond.) The ADL awarded him with their Distinguished Statesman Award.
- [Cardinal Bernard Law](#), an anti-woman, anti-gay zealot who opposed AIDS treatment and protected priests who sexually abused children. The ADL honored him during the AIDS crisis over the protests of gay activists, then expressed ongoing [“reverence”](#) for him two decades later, shortly after he resigned over his role in enabling sexual abuse.