

Editorial

There is a general acknowledgment that October 7 saw the worst act of violence perpetrated against Jews since the Holocaust. Nevertheless, a global anti-Israel protest movement has taken to our streets, to social media, and to university campuses, to accuse Israel of perpetrating a “genocide” against the Palestinians, to denounce it as a “settler-colonial” state, and to justify October 7 as an “act of resistance.” This demonizing anti-Israel rhetoric has coincided with a record rise in antisemitism, as Jews are taken to be Israel’s proxies. In this Special October 7 Issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*, which has been made fully open access by the generosity of JCA associate editor, Dr. Steve Baum, we offer a handful of specially selected papers that address the accusation of genocide against Israel, the deployment of the settler-colonial narrative, and the hostile environment for Jews on American college campuses. We are happy for the readers of this issue to share it as widely as possible.

Israel stands accused in the United Nations principal court of perpetrating genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza during the 2023–2024 Hamas-Israel war. A genocide is the intentional destruction of a population group. In our first article, “When Military Targeting of Hamas Combatants was Misrepresented as ‘Genocide’: An Open-Source Data Analysis with a Focus on Israeli Airstrikes in the Gaza Urban Warfare 2023–2024,” Professors Lewi Stone and Gregory Rose test available open-source statistical data concerning Gazan civilian death rates. They find that the overall rate of women and child casualties, taken as an approximation for civilian casualties, significantly declines with the progression of the war and is far less than the claims made by media sources. The civilian-to-combatant death ratio also significantly declines over the war. The data show that the IDF does

not carry out indiscriminate attacks or bombings in Gaza, thus refuting politicized accusations that Israel targets civilians, which are widely represented in mass media. Conversely, the data substantiates the Israeli claim to target Hamas combatants but not Gazan civilians. Thus, in the mirror of history, false accusations of genocide in the courts of the United Nations more clearly reflect the revival of medieval blood libels against Jews than reveal anything about the actual war in Gaza. Lewi Stone is professor of biomathematics in the Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University, Israel, and professor of mathematics in the School of Science at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Gregory Rose is professor of law at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), Faculty of Business and Law, University of Wollongong, Australia.

The next article, “The Crisis of Critique and Academic Antizionism—Before and after October 7” by Balázs Berkovits, focuses on the criticism of Zionism and Israel as a Western-type of “white settler colonialism,” by having recourse to an epistemological, instead of a merely political, framework of analysis. It sets out to show that contemporary antisemitism, besides anti-Jewish motivations, stems largely from the epistemological shortcomings and radical ambitions of contemporary social critique. Jews are predisposed to figure at the juncture of social critique and the conspiratorial mode of thought, and to be categorized by rigid, binary conceptual schemes, thereby constituting a “Jewish problem.” Beyond this epistemological insecurity and “conceptually” directed radicalism, Jews are also affected by the “white” tag appended to them. The “white” label directly triggers the category of “colony”/“settler colony” applied to Israel, and, especially after October 7, accusations of genocide. Dr Berkovits is a senior

researcher at the Comper Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism and Racism and a lecturer in antisemitism at the University of Haifa. He is also a research fellow at the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism.

Next, the article “From 1967 to October 7: The History of an Antisemitic Cartoon from the Civil Rights Era to the Harvard Encampment” by Sara Yael Hirschhorn, restores to history the saga of an antisemitic cartoon and broadside first published by the Student National Coordinating Committee, a civil rights organization, in the summer of 1967. The cartoon and broadside were reprinted by Students and Faculty for Justice in Palestine at Harvard University immediately after October 7. It demonstrates the long duration of the vocabulary, solidarities, and platforms for these views over more than fifty years, and shows how a set of discourses was institutionalized within the progressive Left that later bore fruit on October 7. The article also points to similarities and differences in the way this imagery and text was received, and the possibilities for interventions after October 7 to break a cycle lasting half a century. Dr Hirschhorn is a senior researcher at the Comper Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism and Racism and an instructor in the Ruderman Program in American Jewish Studies at the University of Haifa.

Ivy League universities are thought leaders, making the pro-Hamas protests on these campuses since October 2023 likely harbingers of future US views towards Israel and, relatedly, societal levels of antisemitism. Journalistic accounts and some quantitative research offer evidence that, in the United States, twenty-first-century antisemitism is more common among elites than non-elites; yet, relative to studies of other forms of prejudice, little peer-reviewed research has explored elite antisemitism. In the fourth article, “Can Jews Speak Freely on Ivy League Campuses?,” US Senate staffer Mattie Harris and University of Arkansas Twenty-First Century chair in Leadership Robert Maranto use

survey data with a large, representative sample ($n = 44,847$) of undergraduate students from 207 campuses collected by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), to explore whether Jewish students are relatively more likely to report self-censoring on Ivy League campuses. Controlling for demographic and ideological variables, ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions indicate that Jewish Ivy League students are more likely than both gentile Ivy Leaguers and non-Ivy League Jews to report self-censorship on social media and regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The authors caution that, since the FIRE survey was implemented well before the October 7 attacks, these must be considered baseline findings. They speculate that Jewish self-censorship has increased since data collection, particularly on elite campuses. They conclude by urging researchers to use FIRE data to study trends in antisemitism, and self-censorship generally.

The final contribution to this issue is “‘Keeping our little corner clean’: An Interview with Matthew Feldman on Antisemitism after October 7” by JCA editor Lesley Klaff. Klaff and Feldman engage in a wide-ranging discussion that touches on various forms of antisemitism today: right-wing extremist—especially so-called “lone wolves”; Islamist; and far-left. The latter have emerged in prominence since 7 October as antisemitic hate crimes have reached postwar highs. Are they related? How relevant are comparisons with the Holocaust and other instances of genocide, violent antisemitism, or urban warfare? Moving on from this context, and the highlighting of other issues related to extremism in contemporary Britain, Klaff and Feldman dive directly into the attacks of October 7 and its transnational effects. Importantly, just *how* these issues are engaged by scholars is also a running theme in this conversation, which originally took place in person on April 19, 2024. Matthew Feldman, emeritus professor in the Modern History of Ideas, is a leading UK expert on the radical right, and has written and spoken extensively in this country and in Europe

on fascism and the radical right, and on radical right narratives and counter-narratives. His history of fascism will be published with Yale University Press in 2025.

This open access Special October 7 Issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* is

dedicated to the victims of October 7. May their memories be for a blessing and may those still in captivity be safely returned to their homes.

Lesley Klaff
Editor in Chief

