

Sept. 13, 2024

## COMMUNITY ALERT – ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS SURGING

The Jewish community of Milwaukee has been targeted with sharply increasing incidents of antisemitism within the past week. The sudden rise began just after the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee lifted its suspension of five student groups originally suspended for violating student codes of conduct by threatening and intimidating Jewish and Israeli students and local Jewish organizations. Since the suspension was lifted, we have seen an increase in antisemitism on campus and in other parts of our city targeting Jewish events and Jewish institutions.

This past week, a staggering uptick in antisemitic rhetoric and misinformation has appeared on social platforms, posted in public and on and around the UWM campus and the city, creating a hostile and intimidating environment for Jewish students and community members. These threats are clearly intended to harass, intimidate and isolate members of the Jewish community and their allies, as well as Jewish organizations.

Antisemitism, often referred to as the world's oldest hatred, functions uniquely in relation to other forms of identity-based hate because of its ability to shapeshift and morph based on the socio-economic-political landscape in which it exists, and often peaks during times of instability and upheaval. Contemporary antisemitism can come across as both complimentary and dehumanizing, in part because it builds on centuries of stereotypes, tropes, and myths meant to isolate and disenfranchise Jews from mainstream society, such as accusations of dual loyalty; conspiracy theories; collective discrimination; and Holocaust denial, distortion and false comparisons.

### D)

#### **Sept. 9, 2024 — Targeting of Milwaukee Jewish Federation program**

The MJF, through its Jewish Community Relations Council, held a community-wide discussion on civility on Monday, September 9. The program, called “Civility in our Times” and composed of a panel of diverse community leaders, was created to help focus on civility from a non-partisan perspective as we head into a very heated presidential election. The program, which hosted 73 diverse members of Milwaukee, was designed to be a unifying opportunity to bring Milwaukee residents together for this important conversation on democracy.

Prior to the panel start, the non-Jewish members of the panel received an email from the executive director of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee filled with lies and misinformation, debunked fallacies, baseless innuendo and antisemitic tropes. It targets Milwaukee's Jewish Community Relations Council, whose council includes representatives of all 28 major Jewish organizations in the city. There is no JCRC without all Jewish community organizations. The email reads in part:

*Sadly, the JCRC and the Jewish Federation – groups that include support for Israel as part of their mission – have always served as cheerleaders for Israel and its policies, including its decades-long occupation of Palestine and its well documented oppression and subjugation of millions of Palestinians.*

*Shamelessly, even during Israel's current savage assault on the people of Gaza, groups such as the JCRC and the Jewish Federation continue to support, lobby for and help enable a regime that continues to violate international laws and commit multiple war crimes, including collective punishment, torture, ethnic cleansing and genocide. The JCRC and the Federation continue to support a regime that has intentionally targeted and murdered tens of thousands of civilians, including journalists, teachers, medical workers, first responders, human rights workers and others.*

*In addition, the JCRC and the Federation, like many other pro-Israel groups in this country, actively work to censor and defame anyone (including Jews) who expose and condemn Israeli atrocities and Israeli human rights violations and who advocate for Palestinian rights.*

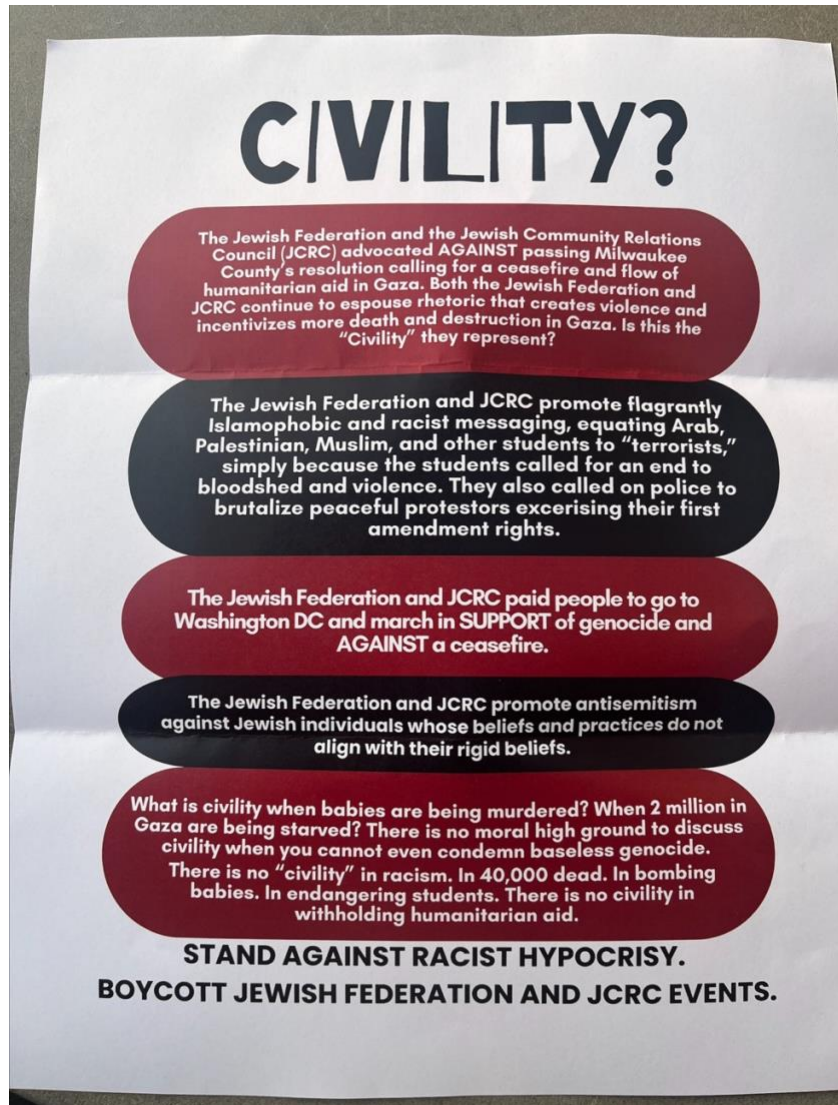
*Given all of the above, we find it to be hypocritical, dishonest and double-faced for the JCRC and the Jewish Federation to recruit the leaders of other community groups to engage in a discussion on “civility”.*

*We just want you to be aware of the views and position of the sponsors of tonight's program. We also want you to be aware of the fact that members of the Israeli government have publicly called on their proxies, supporters and enablers in the United*

*States to try and establish stronger connections with African American, Latino, religious and other community leaders in order to blunt or curtail the worldwide criticism of Israel.*

*We hope you do not fall for the lobbying efforts of Israel's proxies in the U.S. and that you continue to adopt a moral and ethical stance based on the recognition of the human, political and civic rights of all people, including Palestinians.*

**II)  
Sept. 9, 2024 - Flyer handed to Civility event attendees and appearing on cars after the event:**



**This flyer is filled with antisemitic tropes and rhetorical lies:**

- MJF and JCRC supported an amended cease-fire agreement that included the release of all hostages.
- MJF and JCRC have not, and will never, make Islamophobic comments. MJF and JCRC did not call the police on protestors.
- MJF and JCRC did not pay people to go to D.C.; the groups organized attending a march in D.C. for the release of hostages and marched against antisemitism.
- Milwaukee's Jewish Community Relations Council comprises members of all 28 Jewish community agencies, schools and synagogues and represents the voice of Jewish Milwaukee. The local council is part of the National Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

### III)

#### Sept. 11, 2024 — Incidents at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

During a student fair at UWM, there were student organizations affiliated with the uwm4pcoalition who broke University rules by attempting to set up tables that were not preapproved for the event. The groups targeted and flanked the Hillel Milwaukee table. The group also handed out a brochure resembling material distributed by Hillel Milwaukee. Some of the wording included:

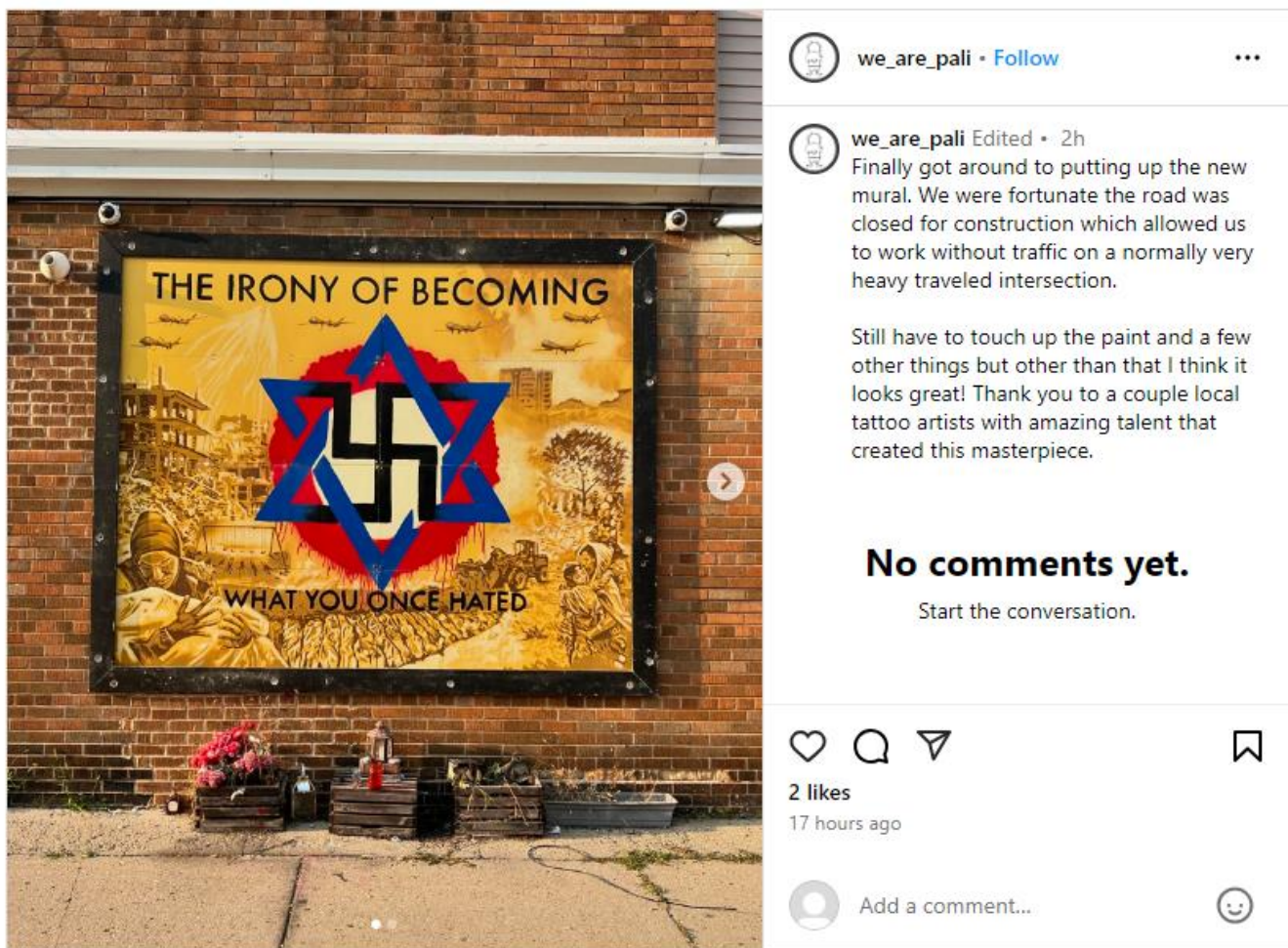
- You are not “building a community” or “finding your people” in college if join Hillel MKE, you are simply acting as a pawn to support the slaughter of fellow students like you.
- It is crucial for organizations such as Hillel that indirectly fund the genocide to recruit naïve students straight out of high schools; such students make easy targets to manipulate.

Hillel and another Jewish student organization ultimately decided to leave the student fair due to the level of harassment and the fact that the University was not taking action to ensure the protection of Jewish students or staff.

This incident on Sept. 11 follows the Sept. 8 reinstatement of the student organizations that were suspended on July 19 for an inciteful and inflammatory social media post targeting Jewish students and local Jewish organizations.

### IV)

#### Sept. 12 - Antisemitic Mural with Swastika posted on private property wall at Holton and Locust



This mural is a classic example of propaganda that manipulates and creates false comparisons meant to influence public opinion about Jews in a harmful way. With the absence of an Israeli flag, it is clear that this mural is not about Israel; the use of the Star of David with a swastika is a direct affront to the Jewish people. **Facts on what makes this mural antisemitic:**

- Holocaust comparisons and use of imagery such as swastikas are never appropriate, because they dehumanize the victims and survivors of the genocide, are inaccurate and fuel Holocaust denial and misinformation, and create narratives that prevent us from understanding the complexities of both the past and the present.
- It is extremely dehumanizing and antisemitic to use the trauma of the Jewish people as a weapon against them.
- The text "what you once hated" clearly shows the artist referring to all Jews, holding all Jews responsible for the actions of Israel. This is also problematic because all of humanity should hate the Nazis, not just Jews.
- This was hung on a wall in public view, and the intent was to intimidate and isolate, which is reminiscent of approaches taken by antisemites throughout history to limit Jewish access and acceptance in the public sphere.

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