

American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, is offering guidance to school administrators on how to best prepare for the one-year anniversary of 10/7 in school settings by proactively anticipating the needs of Jewish students, ensuring safeguards and resources are in place for them, and troubleshooting potential problems that may arise.

AJC recognizes that every school community is different and has distinctive needs. [We are here](#) to help you address them. Please [contact us](#) to discuss how we can assist.

BACKGROUND

Monday, October 7, 2024, marks the one-year anniversary of the October 7th terror attacks in Israel, in which 1,200 people were brutally murdered, and 251 were taken into Gaza as hostages by Hamas terrorists. At the time this document was written, over 100 people still remain captive, including 7 Americans. October 7th represents the deadliest terror incident in Israel's history, in which not only Israeli Jews, but also Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Israeli Arabs, and people from over 23 countries, including 45 Americans, were targeted and killed. For the worldwide Jewish community, October 7, 2023 also marks the most significant loss of Jewish life in one day since the Holocaust, and remains a painful open wound that may still directly impact Jewish students, faculty, and their families.

AWARENESS

Consider the impact of today's environment on your Jewish students and faculty.

- The 10/7 attacks occurred at the end of the 2023 Jewish fall holiday season on the holiday of [Simchat Torah](#). This year's fall Jewish holiday season, which begins with Rosh Hashanah on the evening of Wednesday, October 2, will be a challenging time for the Jewish community.
- Synagogues and other Jewish spaces now face added risk and need increased security. It is now routine for synagogues to be protected by armed guards. For students attending synagogue on the High Holidays, which fall just before and just after October 7th, armed guards and police presence may be a stressful and frightening experience.
- Many Jewish students have faced increasingly hostile rhetoric online and even among classmates and faculty in their schools because of their real or perceived connection to Israel and Zionism. Some of that rhetoric has included deeply problematic messaging about 10/7 that denies or minimizes the 10/7 attacks or dehumanizes Israeli victims of 10/7 (e.g., "no innocent Israelis"; tearing down or vandalism of hostage posters; denial of sexual assault committed against Israelis). It has also included attempts to reframe the violence and terror of 10/7 as justified resistance, decolonization, or liberation. Language that minimizes or denies the impact of 10/7, vilifies Israel and Zionism, or engages in victim-blaming for the atrocities committed on 10/7 will resonate painfully for many Jewish students, especially when it appears in the school spaces that are so central to their lives.

ACTION

Be prepared for activities or programs that may take place at your school, and anticipate potential needs of your Jewish students and faculty:

- Communicate to the appropriate school personnel, such as divisional principals, grade deans, and/or school mental health professionals that Jewish students and faculty may need extra support on or around October 7th. Plan ahead so that staff is ready to support the school's Jewish community members that day.
- Provide Jewish students and faculty time and space to reflect and commemorate the October 7th attacks, such as a "drop-in" space during lunch or affinity group time.
- Ensure that no important or required school events (such as Back to School Night, college

GUIDANCE FOR K-12 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER 7TH (CONT.)

guidance programs, etc.) are scheduled for the night of October 7th, when many Jewish community members will be attending memorial programs.

- Be aware that student walkouts or protests against Israel on October 7th will be extremely hurtful, frightening, and upsetting to many of your Jewish students and community members. Such activity should be avoided at all costs on October 7th.
- Recognize that Jewish parent affinity groups may want to create their own programming to memorialize October 7th. If your school has such a group, be prepared to support those programs by offering school space after school hours and by ensuring that the appropriate school administrator(s) is/are present at any such program.

COMMUNICATION

Different schools have different policies about issuing statements in response to national or international events. If your school is one that does issue statements, and you are planning to issue a statement about the anniversary of 10/7, or if you will be addressing your students or school community in some way about 10/7, remember to do so with sensitivity and purpose. While recognizing that statements from the school may not directly impact the affected communities, schools can affirm their commitment to fostering a diverse yet unified community by emphasizing the shared identity of the school community, their core values, and the role of education in promoting critical thinking and curiosity.

- Avoid using contested or vague language that may unwittingly distort your messaging or dilute your support for Jewish students at this difficult time. Use accurate statistics whenever you describe the events of 10/7 (see background above).

- There have been devastating civilian casualties on both sides of the Israel-Hamas war that followed from the 10/7 attacks; however, it can be painful and triggering to Jews when 10/7 victims are not given due recognition on their own terms, separately and distinctly from the casualties resulting from the ensuing war. We encourage you to find a different occasion to acknowledge civilian victims of the war in Gaza.
- Avoid incorrectly referring to those killed on 10/7 as victims of a war, military incursion, or occupation. Similarly, avoid using phrases such as “cycle of violence” in any reference to the day. These designations detract from the horror of the terrorist attacks that day that specifically targeted innocent civilians, including babies and the elderly, as well as non-Israelis and non-Jews. For similar reasons, messaging about 10/7 should avoid comparative accounts of Palestinian deaths that have ensued during the subsequent war. These deaths deserve acknowledgment on their own terms, and should be addressed separately from messaging about the October 7th terror attacks.

AJC’s Center for Education Advocacy is your partner in fostering a deeper understanding of the Jewish people, combating antisemitism, and helping build a school environment resilient against all forms of hate. **We’re here to help.** [Contact us!](#)