

SAN DIEGO LEADERSHIP

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September 23, 2024

To San Diego County school administrators:

American Jewish Committee (AJC) is writing to you with grave concern about a document issued by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) regarding how teachers should discuss the anniversary of Hamas' horrific attack against Israel on October 7, 2023. We urge all San Diego County schools to disregard this deeply problematic document.

Utilizing the document, which has been distributed to many schools in the San Diego area, would harm students of all backgrounds, including Jewish and Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian Americans, and would be a disservice to the academic environments of San Diego schools.

Jews around the world, including here in San Diego, still acutely feel the pain of Hamas' October 7 massacre. We are also pained by the tragic loss of so many innocent Palestinian lives in Gaza.

We recognize that many in the Arab and Muslim American communities are concerned that nefarious actors will use discussions of Hamas' horrific actions to fuel hatred against their communities. This concern must be addressed, however, it must not prevent or shut down commemorations or discussions of the tragedy of that day.

The document callously dismisses the brutal attack of October 7, the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, as a "one-day attack on Israel." In its recounting of events, it makes no mention of the thousands murdered, wounded, raped, and abused that day by Hamas terrorists, let alone the 101 people—including seven Americans—still being held hostage, or the continued attacks launched at Israel from Gaza over the past year. These omissions alone undermine the credibility of the document and will lead to increased division in our schools.

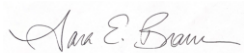
The document is also riddled with other distortions and outright falsehoods, such as claiming that Israeli life has returned to the pre-war norm. It omits mention of the 30,000 Israelis evacuated from the Gaza envelope who still cannot return home and the more than 60,000 people still uprooted from their homes in Northern Israel due to daily rocket attacks launched by Hezbollah from Lebanon since October 8, 2023—with more than 8,000 rockets fired in the last 11 months.

At a time when anti-Jewish hate crimes have skyrocketed and Muslim and Arab Americans have also been increasingly targeted, adding fuel to the flames of anger and hurt in our shared San Diego community will only sow more division and distrust. Multiple perspectives and critical discussion around Israeli-Palestinian relations are sorely needed, but approaching them irresponsibly does more harm than good for all of San Diego's students.

AJC has produced numerous fact-based resources to help educators and learners understand the war, what is at stake, and what it will take to ensure a lasting peace. We stand ready to offer training in how to understand, identify, and respond to antisemitism, which is not solely a Jewish problem but one all members and sectors of society must work to address. To be clear, this does not discount the need to educate about bigotry against Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians. Addressing multiple forms of hate should never be treated as a zero sum game; all forms of hatred should be considered antithetical to the fabric of our democracy.

The anniversary of the October 7 attack is an opportunity for schools in San Diego County to facilitate important conversations with students about the war and the complex history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These conversations will only be productive if teachers and students rely on reliable resources that provide context and nuance and lead with humanity and empathy, rather than misinformation and hatred. Our schools must be poised to create productive dialogue, increased social cohesion, physical and emotional safety, and the promotion of peace. AJC stands ready to help make that happen.

Sincerely,



Sara E. Brown, PhD
Regional Director
American Jewish Committee San Diego