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Municipal Antisemitism: The Use of Local Government in Western Countries to Promote Antisemitism and Harm Israel

How fringe organizations exploit the authority of Western cities to boycott Israel and exclude Jews, and how to stop them

In recent years, we have been witnessing a new phenomenon in the field of antisemitism and the struggle against the State of Israel, which has become increasingly organized and systematic: in order to exert governmental power against Israel and Jews, Israel-haters no longer wait for national foreign policy to change. They are turning to the municipal arena. In city councils, under the guise of "local resolutions," procurement, investment, enforcement, and resource allocation powers are being mobilized to promote boycott, exclusion, and defamation. This hatred does not remain a mere opinion: it receives a public budget, an operational mechanism, and an official stamp of approval.

This is the pattern that this document seeks to place at the center of governmental and public attention: leveraging local mandates for political activity

International activities by local authorities are not inherently objectionable. The practice of "City Diplomacy" is recognized and accepted worldwide, with the legitimate aim of enhancing a city's status, attracting investment, promoting professional collaborations, and serving the welfare of its residents. The conceptual and practical problem begins when the direction of service is reversed: instead of foreign activity serving the city's needs, municipal authority and local resources are abused to promote an external, hostile, and inherently anti-state ideology.

This is the pattern that this document seeks to place at the center of governmental and public attention: the externalization of the local mandate

The local political stance does not emerge in a vacuum. It is heavily fueled by pressure from fringe groups and extremist communities, mostly radical Islamic ones, operating within these cities and using their electoral and political power to dictate discriminatory policies. The direct and immediate result is the creation of a hostile environment, which in turn undermines the sense of personal security and leads to the persecution of Jews and Israelis in the local public sphere.

The emphasis is not on the promises made by one public official or another in an election speech, but rather on the tangible damage caused when they harness the mechanisms of government to exclude Jews and harm the State of Israel.

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Why the Local Arena?

The local arena has become fertile ground for antisemitic organizations and boycott movements because it allows them to achieve institutional gains without having to bypass the hurdle of balanced national foreign policy. A municipal grassroots campaign does not require the approval of the central government to cancel a contract, exclude an Israeli vendor, or condition support for a Jewish institution on its disavowal of its identity.

The vulnerability of the municipal arena also stems from the structural nature of local government. As is well known from other areas of public administration-most notably public corruption and integrity issues- local government is often characterized by lower transparency, sparse media coverage, and far weaker oversight and auditing mechanisms than those governing central government. This structural weakness makes local authorities an easy target for penetration by extremist pressure groups, who exploit the lack of checks and balances to hastily pass resolutions that contradict the principles of good governance.

Another advantage of this arena for anti-Israeli and antisemitic moves is the ease and availability of replication. A discriminatory decision in one local authority instantly becomes a political precedent, a model for imitation, and an operational infrastructure for other authorities. The cumulative effect of dozens of municipal resolutions creates an economic, cultural, and symbolic siege, whose primary goal is to legitimize the exclusion of Jews and Israelis at every level.

Contracts, grants, municipal assets, and operating permits are not abstract symbols. They are the primary artery of civic life. For an excluded Jewish institution or a disqualified company, this constitutes a severe and direct blow. Monitoring focused solely on speeches or social media misses the most critical arena: the stage where **antisemitism enters routine administration and becomes a binding, official working procedure.**

A dominant and well-known question in debates on antisemitism concerns the relationship and identity between antisemitism and anti-Israelism, and what lies between them. In our view and for our purposes, we see this connection as robust. While it can be debated and examined on various theoretical levels, the impact of anti-Israel actions and statements directly undermines the personal security of Jewish residents in the cities and countries where these anti-Israel maneuvers are promoted.

Operational Mechanisms on the Ground: Case Studies

These various initiatives are not accidental; they are part of an organized strategy to inject boycott and discrimination into the local governmental apparatus.

1 Hamtramck: The Boycott Enters the Public Apparatus

Hamtramck, Michigan, serves as a clear case study of the electoral and ideological takeover of local government mechanisms by a dominant Muslim community. The city, which became the first in the U.S. to have a Muslim-majority council and a Muslim mayor, has in recent years become a vibrant and declared hub for anti-Israel activity, including extensive public events and displays of force in support of pro-Palestinian movements.

At the time, the municipality was led by Amer Ghalib, a Muslim mayor who spearheaded an aggressive anti-Israel line and was even publicly exposed for antisemitic expressions, including liking and sharing content that denies the Jewish state's right to exist and expresses support for extremist elements.

On May 28, 2024, this atmosphere was translated into governmental power when the city council adopted Resolution No. 2024-51, which officially declared support for the BDS movement. The resolution directed the city to make "best efforts" to avoid procurement and investment in Israeli companies or those with links to Israel, and even called on residents to participate in the boycott.

This is a grave pattern in which an extremist boycott movement, relying on a distinct demographic and political base, succeeds in dictating the procurement and budget policies of an American municipality and harnessing public funds to exclude Jews and Israelis.

2 New York: An Attempt to Harness Enforcement Powers

In New York, mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani-a Muslim-Socialist politician from the most extreme wing of the Democratic Party- demonstrated how riding on identity politics and mobilizing radical Muslim communities in the city translate into attempts to harm the State of Israel. Mamdani, who built his political career on a fierce anti-Israel platform and active participation in public events condemning Israel, tried to turn New York into a legal front against Israel.

During his tenure, Mamdani attempted to harness municipal legal and enforcement mechanisms against Israeli leaders and individuals, exploring options to arrest Israeli leaders based on International Court of Justice warrants. The initiative was only halted after the municipal legal counsel made it clear that the city has no independent authority to carry out such measures.

These steps are being taken in a city where antisemitism is rampant and physical harm to Jews is skyrocketing: according to NYPD data from October 2026, hate crimes against Jews accounted for over 52% of all confirmed hate crimes in the city (245 out of 463 cases).

When a municipal leadership driven by a radical Muslim agenda focuses on persecuting Israel instead of protecting its Jewish residents, it provides a tailwind for violence, legitimizes hatred, and abandons the security of the Jewish community.

3 Barcelona: Administrative Sanctions Under a Moral Guise

In recent years, Barcelona has established itself as one of the prominent urban arenas in Europe for political and institutional activity against Israel. The city features collaborations between left-wing parties, civil society organizations, and pro-Palestinian movements, which have manifested in both widespread public protests and the promotion of institutional steps to boycott Israel and reduce ties with it. At the same time, incidents such as the publication of a map marking Jewish and Israeli businesses and institutions in Catalonia demonstrate the risk of transforming opposition to Israel into targeted marking of the Jewish community and businesses with Israeli ties. This array of phenomena justifies an examination of the links between political, organizational, and community activity in the local arena, while distinguishing between legitimate political protest and patterns of activity that promote discrimination, incitement, or harm to Jews and Israelis.

This charged atmosphere led, among other things, to the Barcelona City Council passing a resolution in November 2023- about a month after the October 7 massacre-to sever institutional ties with Israel and introduce discriminatory exclusion clauses in municipal contracts. Following a determined legal battle by ACOM, a Spanish pro-Israel organization that protects the rights of Israelis in Spain, the High Court of Justice of Catalonia in October 2026 overturned these measures, ruling that they constituted unacceptable discrimination and a severe exceedance of authority.



The Legal Test as a Reflection of the Phenomenon's Essence:

The fact that in two of the main case studies, Barcelona and New York, the steps were ultimately blocked by judicial tribunals and legal advisory bodies, is not evidence that the problem has been solved, but rather conclusive proof of the illegal nature of the phenomenon. The overturning of these initiatives by the local systems themselves demonstrates that, even according to Western legal systems, these are discriminatory mechanisms, a severe exceedance of authority, and an improper use of public power against the Jewish people.

The Direct Cost: Harm to Security and Jewish Identity

The connection between the institutional decisions of authorities and the harm to Jews on the ground is direct and immediate. The hostile atmosphere led from the top of the municipal pyramid trickles down to the streets, public institutions, and civic spaces.
Data from the AJC and Hillel International survey (February 2026) paints a harsh picture of this reality:

42% **of Jewish students reported experiencing antisemitism directly.**

34% **refrained from expressing opinions or connecting with Israel out of fear of harassment.**

38% **were forced to hide their Jewish identity and avoided wearing identifying symbols.**

55% **of those who experienced antisemitism reported feeling a lack of physical security and discomfort in public spaces.**

According to this trend, the implicit message currently conveyed to Jews in many municipalities is extremely severe: *To be part of the community, participate in civic life, or receive municipal service, you must disavow your identity, your religion, and your connection to the State of Israel. This is institutional antisemitism in every sense of the word.

Direct Attack Under Political Guise: The Real Test

Attempts to disguise these moves as "legitimate criticism of Israeli policy" or as innocent practices of city diplomacy do not hold water. The test on the ground is simple and sharp: when governmental action translates into discrimination, boycotts, the imposition of discriminatory conditions, and harm to Jews and their rights-it is, in our view, antisemitism and a severe exceedance of authority.
To conceptualize and identify these unacceptable practices, we propose five characteristics and indicators to identify improper and antisemitic activity that crosses a red line and demands attention and action:

Diagnostic & Identification Template:

5 Red Lines for Antisemitic Municipal Activity

Diversion of Tax Funds (Exceeding Authority):
Exploiting municipal budgets and public resources to promote an external agenda that does not serve the welfare of the city's residents.

Use of Coercive Power:
Using municipality mechanisms and converting political views into official procedures, such as contract conditions, denying budgets, procurement bans, or sanctions.

Exclusion Based on Identity (Collective Criterion):
Identifying and boycotting vendors, artists, businesses, or Jewish institutions with a connection to Israel.

Harm to Personal Security:
Creating a hostile urban environment that prevents Jews from showing their identity in public out of fear of harassment.

Lack of Transparency and Oversight:
Adopting boycott resolutions in hasty maneuvers without legal review, under pressure from radical groups, and without legal authority or oversight.

Moving from Defense to Offense: The Call to Action

The local government in Western countries has become the newest and most dangerous front in the fight against antisemitism. When public funds are used to launder hatred, condemnations are not enough.

The Required Response: From Passive Monitoring to Active Fight

To nip the phenomenon in the bud, governments and authorized bodies must shift from passive documentation of events to a planned legal, diplomatic, and public offensive.

Aggressive Institutional Monitoring:

Establishing a municipal-intelligence mechanism for the early detection of boycott proposals, changes in procurement procedures, and enforcement initiatives in local authorities worldwide.

Early Legal Obstruction:

Deploying local legal counsel in target countries, filing administrative petitions, and demanding the cancellation of discriminatory resolutions due to exceedance of authority and illegal discrimination (as successfully carried out in Barcelona).

Firm Defense of Communities:

Documenting every instance of exclusion of a Jewish institution or demand to disavow Israel, and applying direct political and legal pressure on the discriminating local authority.

Public Exposure of the Drivers of Hatred:

Targeted campaigns exposing the connection between local public officials and extremist Muslim organizations and antisemitic entities operating behind the scenes.

Coordinated and Integrated Response:

Concentrating the efforts of legal, diplomatic, and community bodies into a single fist, creating a heavy political, legal, and financial cost for any local authority that chooses to harm Israel and Jews.

In Conclusion

Local government in Western countries is slowly becoming a new and dangerous front in the fight against antisemitism. Municipal procurement, investment, and enforcement mechanisms are being exploited by extremist fringe actors to launder old hatred and give it legal and institutional validity.

This document seeks to expose another dimension and angle of antisemitic and anti-Israel conduct, one that is less visible and less monitored and covered, but carries a real and official danger. The risk potential inherent in leveraging municipal powers to boycott Israel and indirectly attack Diaspora Jewry constitutes a step up and a further, diverse expansion of the emerging antisemitic threats worldwide. The examples provided in this document as case studies are prominent, but far from the only ones of their kind around the globe. From time to time, additional cases emerge in the news where local mechanisms and frameworks are used to promote antisemitic and anti-Israel actions, the essence of which is boycotting Israel and directly and indirectly harming Israel and Jews.

It is the duty of the bodies taking part in the fight against antisemitism to lift the veil from these attempts, fight every manifestation of discrimination and boycott, and allow Jewish communities and the State of Israel to act safely, with heads held high, and with full equality of rights anywhere in the world.