

Addendum

This article is a snapshot from the [Mapping Project](#): a project created by activists and organizers in [eastern Massachusetts](#), investigating local links between entities responsible for the colonization of Palestine, for colonialism and dispossession here where we live, and for the economy of imperialism and war.

Dismantle the ADL: The Anti-Defamation League's record of racist counterinsurgency and espionage

"Zionism *never* spoke of itself unambiguously as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient."

-Edward Said

"I first met with you in the spring of 2014, when I was relatively new on the job..."

I sang your praises as an organization that fights for inclusivity and diversity, equality and justice...that works with us to fight hate crime and terrorism...

I labeled that last speech a love letter to the ADL. Three years later I can say, from the perspective of the FBI, we're still in love with you."

-FBI Director [James Comey](#)

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is a non-profit organization founded in 1913. Masquerading as a "civil rights" group, the ADL is a counterinsurgency organization with international reach. Its mission is to protect the mutual interests of the US and Israeli governments - and to eliminate solidarity among oppressed and colonized peoples, especially concerning Palestine.

The ADL carries out this mission by spying on and criminalizing activists, using its close connections to governments, police forces, schools, and corporations. When it is not directly attacking activists and organizers, the ADL undermines their work by pushing its own state-sanctioned, pro-Israel programs. And while the ADL claims to represent Jews and to fight "antisemitism" on their behalf, the organization has a record of supporting anti-Jewish state violence and normalizing Nazis.

The ADL wants to bury these facts, which is why it has been attempting to shut down the Mapping Project since it was released on June 3, 2022: [pressuring web hosts and even a foreign government](#) to take down our site, mobilizing the ADL's partners in the [FBI](#) and [district attorney's office](#) to try to [criminalize our project](#), and getting [politicians](#) to parrot the ADL's talking points. This behavior is consistent with the ADL's over a century long record of counterinsurgency and espionage, which we review below.

Reaching the “Zenith of Deliberate Injustice”: The ADL persecutes communists and Jews

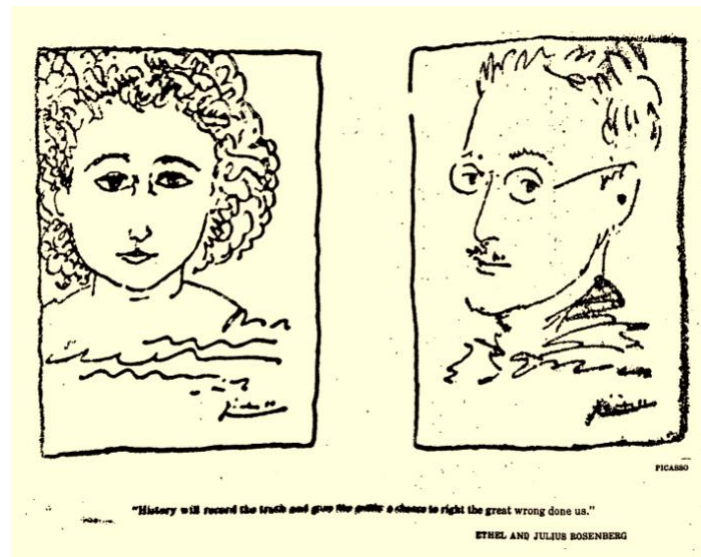
Liberal critics of the ADL mistakenly portray it as a “civil rights” group whose valuable work against racism is being “undermined” in recent years by its “Israel advocacy.” But the ADL’s history refutes this convenient narrative.

For one, the ADL and the order of B’nai B’rith that established it supported the zionist colonization of Palestine even prior to Israel’s founding in 1948. In the 1930s and ‘40s, B’nai B’rith funneled millions of dollars to the Jewish National Fund, an agency that works to dispossess Palestinians of their lands. The ADL sold millions of dollars’ worth of “Israel bonds” to support the new colony and also sent it “\$4,000,000 worth of materials and goods” in 1948. And already in the 1950s, the ADL was trying to stifle the “boycott of Israel” and “boycott[s] against gentiles doing business with Israel,” and handle those “firms complying with the Arab boycott” – which sounds very much like the ADL’s recent anti-BDS work.

Moreover, since the ADL is invested in Jews assimilating into US white supremacy, and since the zionist project it supports requires the backing of imperial powers, the organization has served the US government’s repressive agenda from the start.

After the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in 1917, the ADL joined the US government’s persecution of communists and other radicals challenging capitalism. The ADL began a media campaign that suggested that all Jews are anticommunists who support the US state. The ADL also signaled its allegiance by keeping quiet on the US government’s crimes. When the US government forced Japanese people into concentration camps in the 1940s, this so-called “civil rights” group briefly noted the events in its publication without taking a position (decades later, ADL co-opted the injustices of Japanese internment to promote itself and the US government’s “apology” for these crimes).

In the 1950s, during the anticommunist campaign spearheaded by US senator Joseph McCarthy, the ADL began spying on dissident Jews, turning over files to the House Un-American Activities Committee and FBI. The ADL and allied groups created their own “anticommunist committees,” and started a “purge of the Jewish left from the organized Jewish community” (the American Jewish Committee even told the US Congress in 1953 that “Judaism and communism are utterly incompatible”). Groups like the ADL leveraged their image as “Jewish organizations” to claim the persecution of dissident Jews had nothing to do with anti-Jewish racism.



A pamphlet with Pablo Picasso's drawing of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, from the FBI's extensive files on the Rosenbergs

The tragic consequences of the ADL's allegiance to the state were made clear in the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a Jewish couple (and US citizens) accused of espionage by the US government. The ADL wrote letters to Jewish organizations instructing them not to support "any meetings or attempts to develop pro-Rosenberg sympathy" in their communities. In 1952, at the height of the vicious campaign against the Rosenbergs, the ADL declared:

The Communists, in their worldwide propaganda attack defending the convicted atom spies, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, provide a vivid example of the technique of falsely charging anti-Semitism to hide conspiracy.

With this blessing from the ADL, the US government executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg by electrocution on June 19, 1953.

Unlike the ADL, some Jews at the time, from rabbis to poets, defended the Rosenbergs and tried to prevent their murder by the US government. Prominent Black activists, artists, and religious leaders also rallied to the Rosenbergs' defense, including Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois (who wrote a poem about the couple). In January 1953, months before their execution, Du Bois called the persecution of the Rosenbergs "the zenith of deliberate injustice":

...in the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg we reach the zenith of deliberate injustice. We are set to kill a mother and father and orphan their little children because we think that they believe in social remedies for evident ills which many others do not believe. This is the main charge...we use perjurers to say the Rosenbergs gave to the Soviet Union information which the Rosenbergs never possessed. We promise them pardon if they will betray persons they never knew and give information they never had.

This awful crime we threaten to commit in order to protect a nation which thinks it needs this sacrifice of blood to save its soul. Such a soul is not worth saving.

The ADL gave cover to this zenith of injustice, which hasn't stopped it from also co-opting Du Bois in recent years and watering down his radical message. The organization has since continued to criminalize those who fight against injustice, especially if they also dare to challenge zionism.

The ADL is a counterinsurgency and surveillance group with international reach

The ADL is a highly funded group: according to tax records, in 2020 ADL reported over \$221 million in assets and over \$91 million in total revenue, with roughly \$85 million coming from donations (ADL generally doesn't disclose the identities of its donors). The ADL uses its considerable resources to surveil and stifle organizations and individuals that challenge white supremacy, zionism, or US imperialism, along with liberal groups that don't but are still considered a threat to the ADL's agenda. We provide only a few illustrative examples below.

Defaming Black organizations that challenge white supremacy

During the 1960s, the ADL and other zionist groups attacked Black organizations in the US that fought against white supremacy and correctly linked zionism and racism.

In 1967, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) published an article in its newsletter that accurately described zionism as a colonial movement premised on white supremacy. The article explained that the zionist project "received maximum help, support and encouragement from Great Britain, the United States, and other white western colonial governments," noting that this support made it possible for colonizers to take over lands and homes of non-Jewish Palestinians through "terror, force, and massacres," wiping out Palestinian villages in order to create "Israel." The article gave statistics that showed that native Palestinian Jews were a small minority in Palestine at the time of the 1917 Balfour Declaration. The subsequent influx of Jews into Palestine, as the article argues, was part of a colonization effort that aimed to get rid of non-Jewish Palestinians and take their land (thus turning many Palestinians into refugees).

THE PALESTINE PROBLEM:

GAZA MASSACRES, 1956
Zionists lined up Arab victims and shot them in the back in cold blood. This is the Gaza Strip, Palestine, not Dachau, Germany.

12. THAT the Zionists (Israeli) armies immediately occupied (and still occupy) more than 80 per-cent of the total land area of Palestine?

DO YOU KNOW:

13. THAT this conquest of Arab land took place, for the most part, before May 15, 1948 before the formal end of British rule, before the Arab armies entered to protect Palestinian Arabs, and before the Arab Israeli War?

15. THAT the Zionists conquered the Arab homes and land through terror, force, and massacres? That they wiped out over 30 Arab villoges before and after they took control of the area they now call "Israel."

16. THAT the Zionist terror gangs (Haganah, Irgun, and Stern gangs) deliberately slaughtered and mutilated women, children and men, thereby causing the unarmed Arabs to panic, flee and leave their homes in the hands of the Zionist-Israeli forces.

Excerpts from "The Palestine Problem: Test Your Knowledge," which appeared in SNCC's July 1967 newsletter.

The SNCC article argued that this zionist colonization of Palestine fit within a broader imperialist agenda, noting that the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan was at first endorsed by “only by white European, American and Australasian states” – and that “ISRAEL WAS PLANTED AT THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA AND AFRICA WITHOUT THE FREE APPROVAL OF ANY MIDDLE-EASTERN, ASIAN OR AFRICAN COUNTRY!”

Finally, the article pointed out that zionism is a form of white supremacy that harms Jews as well: “dark skinned Jews from the Middle-East and North Africa are second-class citizens in Israel” because “the color line puts them in inferior position to the white, European Jews.” The article also acknowledged that Jews “who are not Zionists and cannot support the horrors committed by Zionists in the name of Judaism have spoken out,” but that their voices were being systematically suppressed.

The SNCC article, in short, was too truthful about zionism – so the ADL had to step in.

In an [August 1967 Jewish Telegraphic Agency bulletin](#), the ADL called SNCC a “Negro extremist” organization, accusing it of “[Anti-Semitism](#)” and comparing it to the KKK. Dore Schary, then ADL’s national chairman, stated in the 1967 bulletin that the ADL considers SNCC’s support for the Palestinian struggle to be “a tragedy in the race relations,” adding that:

‘Snick’ [SNCC] is no longer a responsible civil rights group. It ties itself to the Chinese-Soviet and now Arab propaganda machines in the United States...I do not think the majority of Negroes go along...‘Snick’ represents a minuscule minority of the Negro people. Americans generally rejected this kind of extremism, whether it comes from a group like ‘Snick’ or one like the Ku Klux Klan. It is an irony that ‘Snick’ should tie itself to the Arab cause when an Arab country, Saudi Arabia, still maintains slavery.”



JTA bulletin from August 1967 where groups including the ADL smear SNCC for publishing an article that was critical of Israel and zionism. The article was [written by Ethel Minor](#) and did not represent SNCC’s official position as an organization.

The ADL has continued to vilify Black social movements against white supremacy and to condescendingly tell them what counts as “responsible” resistance. In 2016, the ADL attacked the Movement for Black Lives for its statement of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, calling it “Anti-Semitic.” As Emmaia Gelman wrote, grassroots organizations oppose the ADL precisely because the organization undermines the work of “internationalist, intersectional anti-racism.” For this reason, parents, teachers, and staff asked the New York Department of Education in 2018 not to partner with the ADL, and called out the ADL’s usual maneuver of first suppressing and then co-opting social justice movements:

As a white-led corporate NGO, the ADL’s disrespect for rising leadership in communities of color is appalling. In 2016, the ADL denounced the Movement for Black Lives policy platform emerging from Black Lives Matter, because it linked Black and Palestinian experiences of violence and opposed genocide. The ADL scolded M4BL to “keep your eyes on the prize” by “sticking to” work that the ADL deemed appropriate. Disturbingly, the ADL now offers lesson plans on Black Lives Matter.

In 2020, a variety of social justice groups, including Palestinian Youth Movement and Critical Resistance, similarly called on grassroots organizations and various institutions to drop the ADL because of its “pattern of attacking social justice movements led by communities of color, queer people, immigrants, Muslims, Arabs, and other marginalized groups, while aligning itself with police, right-wing leaders, and perpetrators of state violence.”

Surveilling and criminalizing Palestinian and Arab activists – and anyone who might show solidarity with the Palestinian struggle

The ADL’s counterinsurgency efforts have largely been aimed at Palestinian and other Arab organizations that support the Palestinian liberation struggle. The ADL has surveilled, smeared, and even infiltrated such groups in attempts to frame them as “antisemites.”

A letter from July 7, 1961, written by then ADL national director Benjamin Epstein, explains the goal of these espionage operations:

Anti-Defamation League for many years maintained a very important, confidential investigative coverage of Arab activities and propaganda...we have maintained an information-gathering operation since 1948 relating to activities emanating from the Arab Consular Offices, Arab United Nations Delegations, Arab Information Center, Arab Refugee Office and the Organization of Arab Students...

Our information in addition to being essential for our operations, has been of great value and service to both the United States State Department and the Israeli government. All data have been made available to both countries with full knowledge to each that we were the source...In many cases our information has exposed Arab plans before they have been put into effect. [emphases added]

The ADL used its connections on college campuses to engage in such surveillance. In 1983, ADL created a booklet with names of individuals and organizations that the organization considers as “pro-Arab propagandists,” and according to the *New York Times*, “the list, stamped ‘confidential,’ was mailed to several dozen campus Jewish leaders in November 1983 by the Anti-Defamation League’s New England office.” The booklet came with a cover letter from then ADL of New England’s executive director Leonard Zakim stating: “Should you need more information on these individual groups or any

others, please call us. Also, if you have any knowledge of any individuals or groups not listed in the booklet, please pass the information on to us so that we can have a more complete and useful listing.”

But this booklet was only one small part of the espionage operation the ADL carried out in the mid to late twentieth century.

The wide scope of this operation became clearer in the 1990s, when the ADL was forced to settle in a lawsuit following revelations that it had worked with police in California to spy on organizations and individuals.

The files that emerged from the lawsuit show that the ADL had surveilled over 10,000 individuals and over 900 organizations engaged in a variety of causes – from Palestinian and Indigenous liberation to various anti-racist and migrant justice work, labor organizing, and gay liberation. This broad net was meant to catch any organization that might show solidarity with the Palestinian struggle or otherwise threaten US-Israeli interests. The files also confirm that the ADL colluded with governments, turning over information on anti-apartheid Black activists to the South African Apartheid government and information on Palestinian activists to the Israeli government.

The organizations that the ADL spied on included:

- General Union of Palestinians Students (GUPS)
- Institute for Palestine Studies
- Palestine Congress of North America
- Palestine Human Rights Campaign
- Palestine National Council
- Palestine Solidarity Committee
- Search for Justice and Equality in Palestine
- The Organization of Arab Students in the United States and Canada
- Association of Arab-American University Graduates
- League of Arab Students
- American Jewish Alternatives to Zionism
- Jewish Alliance Against Zionism
- Union of Iranian Students

as well as:

- American Indian Movement (AIM)
- National Indian Treaty Council
- Asian Law Caucus
- Japanese-American Citizens League
- ACT UP
- Centro Legal de la Raza
- Irish Northern Aid

The San Francisco Labor Council and 20 trade union locals were also surveilled. The ADL also tracked individuals, from graduate students to prominent writers such as Edward Said, Walid Khalidi, Eqbal Ahmad, and Noam Chomsky.

The ADL used two key informants for their espionage operation in California: Tom Gerard, a San Francisco police officer, and Roy Bullock, a former weight lifter who presented himself to the activists he spied on as an “art dealer.”

Some of the people spied on by these ADL informants wound up dead.

One individual the ADL spied on in California was Alex Odeh, a Palestinian who served as the west coast regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). Odeh was killed in 1985 when his Los Angeles office was bombed by pro-Israel activists, after which investigators found a key and the floor plan to Odeh’s office in the files which the ADL-hired spy, Roy Bullock, had compiled on Odeh.



Alex Odeh, the west coast regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) who was surveilled by the ADL-paid infiltrator (Roy Bullock) and later killed by pro-Israel militants who bombed his California office.

Bullock had infiltrated the ADC and helped the ADL frame the group as “antisemites.” Jeffrey Blankfort, an activist who was himself also spied on by the ADL, reported that Bullock became a member of a local ADC chapter, and as a former weight lifter was tasked with handling the ADC’s security. As Blankfort wrote, Bullock obtained pamphlets from the ADC which he then planted “at the convention of the Holocaust-denying Journal of Historical Review” in order to frame the ADC for “working with anti-Semites.”



Chris Hani speaking in 1991. An ADL-hired informant spied on Hani while Hani was in California and turned the information over to the Apartheid South African government. Hani was later assassinated in South Africa.

Another individual the ADL spied on was prominent Black South African activist Chris Hani, who was assassinated in South Africa on April 10, 1993, shortly after a speaking tour in California. While on tour, Hani was followed by one of the ADL-hired police officers who prepared a lengthy report on Hani for the South African apartheid government. Israel, of course, long supported and armed South Africa’s apartheid government, and with the ADL’s help hoped to eliminate the solidarity between the

Palestinian and South African liberation struggles. The ADL and Israel understood that such solidarity could increase the use of shared tactics such as boycotts and divestments against both regimes. (Publicly, the ADL pretended to be critical of South Africa's apartheid while downplaying Israel's alliance with the regime, and later lobbied for post-apartheid South African politicians to support Israel.)

The ADL continues to surveil and encourage infiltration of groups that challenge white supremacy today. Following the white supremacist attacks in Charlottesville Virginia in 2017, ADL created a "primer for law enforcement" in which it encouraged US police to film and plant undercover agents in anti-racist and anti-fascist groups in order to gather intel for prosecution.

The ADL promotes a racist, pro-Israel agenda by working with police forces, schools, and corporations

In addition to attacking organizations that challenge white supremacy and zionism, the ADL also promotes a pro-Israel agenda by working closely with US police, as well as schools and corporations.

One of the ADL's main channels to police is through trainings. The ADL conducted its first police training in February 1951, titled "The Policeman and His Role in the Field of Human Relations," to an audience of fifty police officers. The ADL saw the police as key to ensuring the civil rights movement didn't get too radical. In its 1964 report, the ADL described "an increasing tendency toward extremism in both white and Negro communities," adding that "police forces and other law enforcement agencies have an increasingly crucial role these days in maintaining peaceful and harmonious relations in the community." The report states that the ADL had at that time provided trainings for "more than 130 top police executives from 31 states."

The ADL has since expanded its trainings for police substantially, while centering cops in its "educational" materials and downplaying the structural racism of US society. In the 1980s, the ADL's "A World of Difference" program, supposedly meant to "combat prejudice" in schools, heavily featured the police (who the ADL absurdly referred to as a "community organization").



Screenshots from ADL video about "A World of Difference" program, showing how the ADL got cozy with police, who are described in the video as one of the "community organizations."

As Emmaia Gelman writes, various anti-racist and queer groups opposed ADL’s “A World of Difference” because it “presented a narrow view of bias that elevated the Nazi holocaust and minimized experiences from slavery to internment” and “taught Islamophobia rather than challenging it.” These groups also called out the ADL’s omission of anti-gay violence from its programs “at a moment when it was a key project of white supremacists and predominant among ‘bias crimes,’ exacerbated by the AIDS crisis.” Because it is invested in white supremacy, the ADL also opposed the most modest anti-racist policies that such groups have advocated, like affirmative action in college admissions.

But resistance to the ADL’s racism from activists didn’t matter to the organization; it was set on working with the cops.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 gave the ADL an opportunity to expand its relationships with US police. In the climate of heightened anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism, the ADL ramped up its police trainings, arranging all-expenses-paid trips to the “National Counterterrorism Seminar in Israel” for US police and related agencies. By 2016, the ADL could boast in an annual report that “100% of major U.S. metropolitan police departments have sent participants to the ADL’s National Counterterrorism Seminar in Israel and the ADL’s Advanced Training School in Extremist and Terrorist Threats.” Through these collaborations, the ADL encourages domestic police to identify with Israel, to view Palestinians as “terrorists,” and to see those who speak or act in solidarity with Palestinians as “terrorist sympathizers.”



The ADL’s Oren Segal – who in 2006 “was recognized by the FBI for his exceptional service” – conducting racist training for police on so-called “domestic Islamic extremism.”

As the Mapping Project has documented, Israel is frequently “a point of reference” for policing and counterinsurgency in the US. It’s not that the US needs Israel to teach it colonial brutality and counterinsurgency but rather that the two regimes continually exchange notes and tactics. The colonization of Palestine produces methods that can be applied not only in Jenin but also Los Angeles and Baghdad; it’s also telling that the Israeli army called the fake Palestinian town it has built for practicing urban warfare “Chicago.”

In our local area, the ADL of New England coordinates annual junkets to Israel to foster these exchanges. On these trips, Massachusetts police officials learn about “counterterrorism” from Israeli state agents (see appendix below for more information on ADL of New England). The ADL of New England used the [2013 Boston Marathon bombings](#) and the outpouring of anti-Muslim racism that followed as a [pretext](#) for [expanding such programs](#), much like the national ADL used the attacks of September 11, 2001. The ADL of New England [sponsored](#) Israel trips for numerous municipal police forces, as well as for Boston’s field office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), New England’s Homeland Security Department, US Marshalls Service, US Secret Service, various County Sheriffs’ offices, and university police forces. The ADL of New England’s director Robert Trestan [explained](#) that these trips are meant to align local policing tactics with Israeli ones:

It is critical that Massachusetts police departments be able to equally prevent and respond to crime while protecting us from the threat of terrorism. The Israel national police have been on the frontline combating terror for decades and are able to share their firsthand experience in keeping the public safe despite multiple threats.

Even when the trainings take place in the US, Israel is there. In 2019, for instance, ADL of New England coordinated a “Law Enforcement Seminar” in Foxboro, MA that featured [presentations](#) from an “Israeli counterterrorism expert” on “The Ten Commandments of Counterterrorism” and “Actionable Strategies for Securing Events and Open Spaces in Communities.” The ADL of New England also produced multiple [dossiers](#) on “extremism” which they shared with New England police departments. Moreover, the ADL is listed as an “official partner” of the Boston and [Massachusetts Countering Violent Extremism \(CVE\) programs](#) – programs that, as the Muslim Justice League [noted](#), work to “falsely legitimize discrimination against Muslims and dissidents.”



The ADL loves the cops, and the cops love it back. Photos of FBI director James Comey, who has professed his [“love”](#) for the ADL, speaking at the organization’s [conference](#) in 2017, and ADL giving [awards](#) to police officers in [California](#) and [Washington DC](#).

Along with other zionist groups such as the [AJC](#) and JCRC, ADL of New England has also [mobilized opposition](#) to local BDS efforts, including attempts in 2018 and 2021 to pass [BDS-like resolutions](#) in the city council of Cambridge, MA. This is a continuation of an old agenda: the ADL had already [declared in 1976](#) that “the Arab boycott [of Israel] is immoral because it is unfair, discriminatory and destructive of the open American marketplace” and that “there must be laws against it.” Over the last decade, the ADL has [played a leading role](#) in the (so far failed) attempts to pass such laws in Massachusetts, which if passed would impose civil and/or criminal penalties on Massachusetts residents that boycott Israel.



ADL CEO and former Obama administration staffer Jonathan Greenblatt at a ceremony celebrating the opening of US embassy in Jerusalem in 2018. Greenblatt said that “the opening of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem is a historic milestone 2000 years in the making” and that “Jerusalem is Israel’s eternal capital.”

The ADL also pushes its anti-Palestinian agenda through a slew of corporate partnerships. It works as a “content vetting” partner with companies such as Google and Microsoft to remove “antisemitic” - which often means “pro-Palestinian” - content from these companies’ platforms, and pressures these companies to continue to [suppress Palestinian voices](#).

The ADL also enforces a pro-Israel agenda through school partnerships. The ADL of New England and allied zionist groups worked with the [public school district](#) in Newton, MA to review the curriculum and train teachers, and [pressured the district](#) to change content that was deemed insufficiently pro-Israel. In 2019, the ADL [noted](#) the success of these interventions, explaining how it was able to change the school district’s “Understanding and Celebrating Middle East Day”: “thanks to our advocacy, combined with the [Israel American Council](#) organizing parents and working directly with teachers, the [Newton public] school changed the program and Israel was prominently and positively featured throughout the [Understanding Middle East] day.”

The ADL supports US empire’s projects around the world

The ADL’s activities are profoundly shaped by the US government’s interests abroad. As is [well-documented](#), Israel has long backed the US’s imperialist agenda by training, arming, and spying on behalf of US-backed regimes across the world. The ADL plays a supporting role in this alliance: it smears governments that threaten US and Israeli interests as “antisemitic,” while downplaying or ignoring the crimes of US-backed regimes.

The ADL’s work in Latin America, which began prior to 1948, provides illuminating examples. As the [ADL’s 1941 report](#) states, the organization used its connections to Jewish communities in Latin America to promote a US-friendly agenda. The ADL collected information about the region’s “good-will movements, democratic trends and Fifth Column Activities,” and sought to strengthen “Pan-American ties” while keeping track of “subversive activities in other nations.”

As the ADL’s later work in the region shows, “subversive activities” is code for developments that threaten the US-Israeli agenda.

Consider Chile, for example, where Salvador Allende, a socialist, served as the elected president until he was assassinated in 1973 in a US-backed coup. Although Allende had expressed support for Israel,

his government's plans to nationalize industries threatened US capitalist interests. Zionists were also worried that Allende's left-wing government might show solidarity with the Palestinian struggle.

The director of the ADL's "Latin American Affairs Department," Morton Rosenthal, then smeared Allende, employing racist tropes that equate Jews with capitalism. In a 1971 article titled "Jews in Marxist Chile - On the Way Out?", Rosenthal concluded that:

The long term prognosis for Jewish communities of Latin America is not hopeful. As capitalists, they will be hurt by spreading socialism. As Jews they will be targets for followers of Moscow and nationalistic anti-Semitic elements who view them as alien. As part of the 'establishment,' they will be targets for the impoverished and exploited masses now groping for revolutionary changes in the social order and an end to their marginal, often sub-human, conditions.

Allende's government was replaced by the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, who was supported by both the US and Israel, and Chile became a testing ground for the neoliberal policies crafted by right-wing US economists and their protégés - policies enforced under Pinochet's regime of mass executions, torture, and disappearances of socialists and other dissidents.

The story is similar in Nicaragua. The Somoza family took power in Nicaragua with US assistance in the 1930s and was friendly to US corporations seeking to exploit Nicaragua's workers and natural resources. Both the US and Israel supported the Somoza dictatorship against the socialist Sandinistas. (The Somozas had ties to Zionist groups prior to 1948, and sold weapons to the Haganah Zionist militia.) In 1979, the Sandinistas went against US interests by overthrowing the Somoza government. The US and Israel trained and armed the Nicaraguan contras, which fought against the Sandinistas and were known for their brutal massacres and rapes. Israel, which was the major arms provider to US-backed militias in Central America in the 1970s, sent weapons captured from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the contras. The Sandinista government, which had a relationship with the PLO, cut diplomatic ties with Israel after Israel bombed Lebanon in 1982.

Predictably, the ADL began smearing the Sandinistas as "antisemites." The ADL's Latin America "expert" Morton Rosenthal accused the Sandinista government in 1983 of "exiling" the "entire Jewish community" of Nicaragua, claiming this was a result of the Sandinistas' "solidarity" with the PLO. These charges were refuted, including by a delegation of Jews from the US that visited Nicaragua and reported that they "found nothing to substantiate charges of anti-Semitism by the ruling Sandinista government." In fact, the ADL had falsely presented the experiences of a handful of right-wing Jewish families with strong business ties to the Somoza family as representative of Nicaragua's "entire Jewish community." Rosenthal later backpedaled. Yet, as the *Washington Post* noted at the time, after ADL's campaign "the Reagan administration has added anti-Semitism to its accusations against the Nicaraguans," and US politicians began condemning Nicaragua's "government-sponsored antisemitism."

As the *Los Angeles Times* reported, the campaign claiming the Sandinista government was "antisemitic" was revived in 1985, "less than a month before [US] Congress is expected to vote on a \$14-million aid package to fund anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua." The Somoza-supporting Nicaraguan Jewish families that the ADL based its charges of "antisemitism" on, by then living in the US, participated in the campaign, and appeared in press conference alongside contra leaders. Even the *Los Angeles Times* acknowledged that this campaign might have something to do with the Reagan

administration's interest in toppling the Sandinista government, and the fact that the Sandinista government supported the PLO and had cast votes against Israel in the United Nations.

In the same year, the ADL published propaganda to cover up Israel's extensive support for US-backed militias around the world, claiming that Israel works with "Third World countries to help them improve their economies through self-help projects," aiding farming, health care, and labor organization (as opposed to profiting from arms sales, raising international support for zionism, and doing the US's bidding).

In recent years, the ADL has continued to watch over Latin America, taking positions that magically mirror those of the US government. Consider two examples:

Venezuela: The US has been attempting to overthrow the Maduro government in Venezuela, which has resisted US encroachment while the country has been suffering from US sanctions. Unsurprisingly, the ADL labeled Maduro's government as "antisemitic," systematically interpreting every reference to "Zionist" as synonymous with "Jewish," while claiming that Venezuela is under "the influence of Iran, and its proxy Hezbollah." In 2019, Juan Guaidó, the politician the US hoped to install in place of Maduro, brazenly declared himself president of Venezuela in hopes of catalyzing a coup. The US and its allies quickly recognized Guaidó, although he had never been elected. The ADL, as expected, referred to Guaidó as "declared interim President Juan Guaidó, whose bid to take over the government is supported by more than 50 countries."

Brazil: The Bolsonaro government in Brazil is notoriously white supremacist. The government has systematically attacked Brazil's Indigenous communities, making way for US corporations that exploit Brazil's resources. Bolsonaro has associated with contemporary Nazis, while some officials in his government have echoed Nazi propaganda. He was also endorsed by former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, who said Bolsonaro "sounds like us" and praised him for "talking about the demographic disaster that exists in Brazil and the enormous crime that exists there, in the black neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro." But Bolsonaro is a close ally of the US and Israel, which is why the ADL hasn't launched a major campaign against his government, but only condemned his egregiously racist behavior when it got media attention and was condemned by other zionist groups and avoiding comment was impossible.

The ADL will also deny historical atrocities when doing so suits the interests of the US and Israel. The ADL long denied that the Armenians suffered a genocide under the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. This reflected the position of the US and Israel, who have long been allied with Turkey, a NATO member, that denies the genocide. Israel also arms Turkey, including through Israeli companies such as Elbit. The ADL was strongly criticized by Armenian communities in the US for its genocide denial, and later by US politicians when the US government's position shifted. Eventually, the ADL was forced to apologize and acknowledge the Armenian genocide. It's notable that this eventual acknowledgment came only after US and Israeli relations with Turkey began to grow more strained over a series of confrontations set off by the war in Iraq, and after the Turkish government gave open support to breaking the Israeli siege on Gaza.

All these cases illustrate how the ADL's positions have nothing to do with facts or history but are narrowly pinned to Israeli and US imperial interests.

The ADL sanitizes Nazis when doing so aligns with US imperial interests

The ADL's allegiance to US empire can lead it to sanitize threats of racist violence, even from Nazis. The current situation in Ukraine demonstrates this fact.

Prior to the recent war in Ukraine, in 2019, the ADL [reported](#) that the [Azov battalion](#) - a Nazi-filled group that is now part of the Ukrainian national guard - "has ties to neo-Nazis and white supremacists." But when the war that the [US government](#) and [weapons companies](#) are deeply invested in broke out, the ADL began downplaying Ukrainian Nazis. Responding to the war, the ADL [stated](#) in February 2022 that "Ukraine is a democracy with equal rights for its Jewish citizens, including the right to be elected to its highest office, as President Zelensky has demonstrated," and suggested that reports of Nazi elements in Ukraine's government are "antisemitic" and amount to Russian state propaganda. The US state department later adopted the same line, asserting that "[To Vilify Ukraine, The Kremlin Resorts to Antisemitism.](#)"

The ADL proceeded to promote materials that downplay Ukrainian Nazism. In March 2022, the ADL [published an interview](#) of David Fishman, a Jewish Theological Seminary professor, conducted by ADL Director of European Affairs Andrew Srulevitch, titled "Why is Putin Calling the Ukrainian Government a Bunch of Nazis?" In the interview, Srulevitch asked Fishman about segments of the contemporary Ukrainian nationalist movement that venerate [Stepan Bandera and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army](#) (also known as UPA), who are known to have collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. (Members of the Azov battalion, for example, [revere](#) Bandera and the UPA.) Fishman responded: "For Ukrainian nationalists, UPA and Bandera are symbols of the Ukrainian fight for Ukrainian independence. The UPA allied with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union for tactical - not ideological - reasons."

But as Daniel Lazare notes in [a 2015 article about Bandera](#), "although Bandera and his followers would later try to paint the alliance with the Third Reich as no more than 'tactical,' an attempt to pit one totalitarian state against another, it was in fact deep-rooted and ideological." Bandera and his supporters, Lazare explains, "played a leading role in the anti-Jewish pogroms that broke out in Lviv and dozens of other Ukrainian cities on the heels of the German invasion," and "served the Nazis by patrolling the ghettos and assisting in deportations, raids and shootings." In recent years, the Ukrainian government has [named streets after Bandera](#) and other Nazi collaborators, and officially embraced groups such as the UPA as national heroes.

Despite this record, as *Electronic Intifada* [reported](#), ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt featured the [interview](#) with Fishman in an ADL national newsletter with the framing that "anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and other misinformation are spreading in the wake of the invasion." (Imagine what the ADL's response might have been if a country that wasn't allied with the US had a Nazi army unit like the Azov battalion, one in which soldiers have swastika tattoos and whose [commander once said](#) his nation must "lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade for their survival...against the Semite-led Untermenschen.")

Much like the ADL's [insistence](#) seventy years earlier that defenders of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were "falsely charging anti-Semitism to hide conspiracy," the ADL's framing of the war in Ukraine shows that the organization is willing to excuse anti-Jewish violence when doing so aligns with the geopolitical [objectives of the US government](#).

The ADL's position on Ukraine isn't unique; there is a broader and disturbing push by zionists to sanitize Ukrainian Nazism given the US-backed war. Some zionist organizations have been trying to rehabilitate the image of the Azov battalion, which ironically is armed by Israel. The *Times of Israel*, a newspaper owned by hedge-fund billionaire and zionist donor Seth Klarman – whose foundation gave over \$3.6 million to the ADL between 2001-2019 – tried to convince readers that a group of armed Nazis with swastika tattoos isn't as bad as it might seem. The *Times of Israel's* March 2022 interview with Jewish Ukrainian nationalist Konstantyn Batozsky attempted to pull off this feat:

“I was shocked when I saw guys with swastika tattoos,” he [Batozsky] said about the Azov members he got to know. “But I talked with them all the time about being Jewish and they had nothing negative to say. They had no anti-Jewish ideology.”

He insists that the image of Ukraine as a hotbed of antisemitism is absurd.

“I don't practice, but still everyone knows I am Jewish – I have such a Jewish face! And I never experienced antisemitism from Ukrainians,” he insisted. “The military guys I am working with now really don't care that I am a Jew.”

Because of their commitment to US empire, zionists end up condoning Nazis in these absurd ways.

Dismantle the ADL

Despite the ADL's atrocious record, we often hear that the group nonetheless collects valuable information about racist incidents and white supremacist groups, and ADL's statistics are frequently cited – sometimes even by independent anti-fascist or anti-racist organizations. Unfortunately, any potentially useful information the ADL might collect gets distorted by the organization's own racist agenda: its advocacy for a white-supremacist colonial project in Palestine, its commitment to strengthening US police forces, and its devotion to US imperialism. The ADL's statistics on “antisemitism” are hopelessly confounded with challenges to Israel and zionism, and as many have observed, the ADL doesn't even say how exactly these statistics are compiled, making the numbers useless.

The truth is that the ADL is a racist counterinsurgency and surveillance group that cannot be reformed. Like other repressive organizations, the ADL should be dismantled. Whatever resources the ADL has should go towards repairing the many harms it has done.

Further reading on the ADL

Friedman, R. How The Anti-Defamation League Turned the Notion of Human Rights on Its Head, Spying on Progressives and Funneling Information to Law Enforcement, *The Village Voice* (1993)

Blankfort, J. ADL Spies, *Counterpunch* (2013)

Ames, M. The Kings of Garbage, or, the Adl Spied on Me and All I Got Was This Lousy Index Card, *Pacific Standard* (2014)

Gelman, E. The Anti-Defamation League Is Not What It Seems, *Boston Review* (2019)

Abunimah, A. Israel lobby group ADL rehabilitates Hitler's accomplices in Ukraine, *Electronic Intifada* (2022)

Drop The ADL: Communities say no to the Anti-Defamation League in our schools, coalitions, and movements

Select documents on ADL's counterinsurgency operations and police trainings

- ADL letter reporting its surveillance of Arab organizations and individuals (July, 1961)
- Files emerging from investigation of ADL's California espionage operation
- ADL's "counterterrorism" Israel trips for Massachusetts state police

Appendix: The ADL in New England

In 2016 alone, the following senior officials from the police and related agencies participated in the ADL-sponsored, all-expenses-paid "Massachusetts Counter-Terrorism Seminar in Israel": Joseph Carafelli, Chief of Police, Revere Police Department; Dan Conley, District Attorney, Suffolk County; Kevin Coppinger, Chief of Police, Lynn Police Department; Matthew Etre, Special Agent In Charge, ICE-Homeland Security Investigations; Randall Halstead, Superintendent of Police, Boston Police Department; Rabbi William Hamilton, Chaplain, Massachusetts State Police, ADL Board Member; Michael Kent, Chief of Police, Burlington Police Department; Daniel Kumor, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Joshua Margulies, Environmental Safety Officer, Mount Auburn Hospital; Kevin Molis, Chief of Police, Malden Police Department; Richard McKeon, Colonel, Massachusetts State Police; Helena Rafferty, Deputy Chief of Police, Canton Police Department; Marian Ryan, District Attorney, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office; William Taylor, Superintendent of Police, Lowell Police Department; Steven Tompkins, Sheriff, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office; Richard Wells, Chief of Police, Milton Police Department.

Other senior officers who have participated in ADL-sponsored trips to Israel include (but are not limited to): Cambridge Police Deputy Superintendent Paul Ames; Boston Police Chief William Gross; MBTA Transit Police Deputy Chief Joseph O'Connor; MBTA Transit Police Deputy Lewis Best; MBTA Transit Police Chief Ken Green; Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police Kerry Giplin; Massachusetts State Police Lieutenant Colonel Sharon Costine; Bedford Police Chief Robert Bongiorno; Chelsea Police Chief Brian Kyes; Everett Police chief Steve Mazzie; Framingham Police Chief Ken Ferguson; Gloucester Police Chief Len Campanello; Marblehead Police Chief Robert Picariello; Newton Police Chief Howard Mintz; Wellesley Police Chief Terrence Cunningham; United States Marshalls Service Marshall John Gibbons; United States Secret Service Assistance Special Agent in Charge Tom Baker; Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian; Chief of Police of the Arlington Police Department Frederick Ryan; a representative from New England Homeland Security; The Chief of Police from the Somerville Police Department; The Chief of Police from the Watertown Police Department; The Chief of Police from the Worcester Police Department; The Chief of Police from the Haverhill Police Department; The Chief of Police from the Foxborough Police Department; The Chief of Police from the Wakefield Police Department; The Sheriff from the Plymouth County Sheriff's Department; Chief of the Cambridge Fire Department Gerard E. Mahoney. Local university police departments that have participated in ADL's Israel junkets include Tufts University Police Department, Boston University Police Department, Northeastern University Police Department, MIT Police, and Suffolk University Police Department.