

## Op-Ed: Diligence in the fight against Israel Apartheid Week

By Stephen Kuperberg · March 9, 2011

WASHINGTON (JTA) – It is that “most wonderful time of the year,” as pro-Israel professionals say with tongues firmly in cheek, when Israel Apartheid Week appears in cities around the world, including on many campuses. The annual hate-fest has spread internationally from its beginnings seven years ago in Toronto.

In many important respects, Israel Apartheid Week on U.S. campuses is little more than a branding campaign. Anti-Israel events that otherwise might occur around this time of year latch on to the IAW label and therefore are included. They differ little in substance than events that could occur under a different label at another time.

Despite events under the IAW brand occurring over the past six years, they have shown little tangible evidence of lasting effect on the discourse of the larger campus community.

But the lack of effectiveness by Israel’s detractors to date is no reason for complacency. This year, the campus Israel community has been more diligent than ever in preparing for such anti-Israel events.

Dating back as far as last June, the partner organizations involved with the Israel on Campus Coalition began formulating strategic approaches to campus Israel advocacy that would sharpen our collective approach. Some partners launched efforts to provide new materials, such as the online “Cookbook” at [stopbds.com](http://stopbds.com) and other Web sites with resources to counter boycott, divestment and sanctions efforts.

Others focused on strategic relationship-building on campuses to reverse the efforts by Israel’s detractors, gain a foothold on campus and build positive relationships between campus decision-makers and Israel. Among those efforts was the Israel Intensive training led by the Israel on Campus Coalition at the Hillel Institute last summer.

This year, interns and fellows from StandWithUs, the David Project, Hasbara Fellowships, the Israel on Campus Coalition and Masa Israel Journey, along with AIPAC-trained student activists, Hillel-Jewish Agency Israel fellows and others, have been among those who have spread out on campuses trying not only to promote the same Israel programming of the past, but also to find new ways to connect to the decision-makers on their campuses in ways that promote a positive understanding of Israel.

Those efforts have resulted in, among other things, student government and leadership statements in support of a strong U.S.-Israel alliance or reminding the campus community of the still-present threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. And at the same time that Israel Apartheid Week again raises its dreary head, a student-driven initiative called [Israel Peace Week](#), originally conceived by a handful of students at a Hasbara Fellowships program just a year ago, will reach more than 50 campuses, with thousands of participants highlighting Israel’s historic quest for peace with its neighbors.

The Israel Campus Beat, the Israel on Campus Coalition’s online campus Israel news journal, covers both the challenges as well as the successes that the campus Israel network experiences along this journey.

All this effort will not prevent Israel’s campus detractors from speaking; thankfully our nation (and Israel) permits and defends the very free expression of ideas that millions in the Arab world are now rising up to demand. As a result, “apartheid” events again will occur this year on campus and elsewhere.

But a smarter campus Israel network, working year-round to promote a positive agenda regarding Israel, may begin to reframe the issue from one of reaction to one of positive action.

*(Stephen Kuperberg is executive director of the [Israel on Campus Coalition](#), which promotes a positive Israel environment on campus.)*