



June 17, 2020

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John Thrasher, President
Dr. Amy Hecht, Vice President For Student Affairs
211 Westcott Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1470

Sent via email

Dear President Thrasher and Vice President Hecht,

We write to express our concern over public statements, social media posts, and a website apparently made by newly-elected Florida State University Student Senate President Ahmad Daraldik, including a recently-posted video addressing these prior incidents. The statements from years past, as well as the recent video, call into question whether he can, in his role, represent the interests and ensure security for all students – including Jewish and pro-Zionist FSU students.

Our concerns are based on the premise that Mr. Daraldik is a student leader who is both carrying the imprimatur of the University as its representative and is in a position of authority.

Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, ADL is a leading anti-hate organization with the timeless mission to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today, we continue to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination, or hate.

In a recent video shared on social media justifying a highly critical and offensive post about Israel made during a visit to the West Bank in August, 2019, Mr. Daraldik accused Israel of apartheid ("So yes, I took a photo with the statue of Nelson Mandela, given to my people, from the people of South Africa as a symbol of hope to end the apartheid.") and genocide ("Getting defamed on a Facebook page due to the fact that I expressed my frustrations with a racist system that continues to commit human rights violations and was created through the genocide of my people... my people."). While we understand that his experiences as a Palestinian American during this visit, as described by him, were

deeply upsetting, they reflect the ongoing complexities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

While the policies of the State of Israel can and should be criticized like any other country, questioning the legitimacy of the creation of Israel may isolate those who support or feel affinity with the Jewish State. This frequently can feel like an attack to Jewish students, a sizeable percentage of whom, like the majority of all American Jews, view a relationship with Israel to be an important part of their religious, cultural, or social identities. It also undermines efforts to normalize relations between diverse groups of students with differing political views.

Instead of using his platform as a student leader to elevate discussions about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or bring students together in unity, Mr. Daraldik's video may deepen rifts.

Zionism and/or a connection to Israel is not monolithic. The connection that many Jewish students feel with Israel may include a pride of peoplehood and history, religious heritage, celebrations of Israeli culture, pride in Israel's advancements in science and technology, a view of Israel as a safe-haven following millennia of anti-Jewish persecution, solidarity with fellow Jews who live there or even an appreciation of Israeli food. Condemning Jewish students who claim a connection to Israel as morally deficient or racist (or complicit in racism) is itself an expression of bigotry. Such generalizations are an attack on diverse Jewish identities.

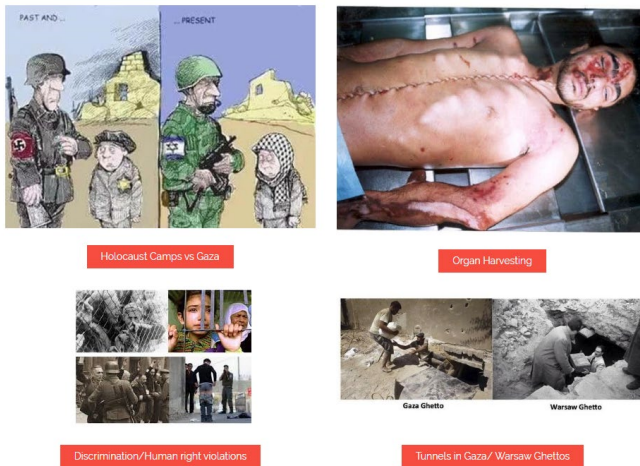
And, criticism of Israel or of Zionism is not inherently – but can be – antisemitic. Some expressions of anti-Zionism can be motivated by antisemitism, especially when they perpetuate antisemitic stereotypes. They may also create a climate in which antisemitism becomes more acceptable.

A significant cause for concern is the website that appears to have been authored and created by Mr. Daraldik (<http://76480233.nhd.weebly.com/>). It contains not only general analogies between the Holocaust and Nazis, but also accuses Israelis of harvesting Palestinian organs. This is a modern version of 'blood libel' - the myth that Jews murder non-Jews, especially non-Jewish children, in order to use their blood to perform religious rituals. Most prevalent in the medieval and early modern period, this peculiar accusation has plagued Jews and incited antisemitic violence for centuries.

Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis is not acceptable from anyone, much less a student leader (image below). It appears that the website 'A Contemporary Holocaust-Palestine' was created by Mr. Daraldik during high school. If this is indeed his site and his views have not matured since this site was created, it would be logical to presume that these views would manifest in his official capacity toward dealing with issues impacting not only Jewish and Israeli but also Zionist students.

A CONTEMPORARY HOLOCAUST-PALESTINE

HOME THESIS JEWS REJECT ZIONISM A COMPARISON RESEARCH



The 'Thesis' section of the site reads:

The mainstream media portrays the holocaust as that of Nazi Germany. While an atrocity, we must not ignore the holocaust of today. Over 11 million Palestinians have either been massacred, raped, imprisoned, put under siege or bombed with illegal chemical weapons. This research serves to prove that the contemporary Holocaust in Palestine is very similar to that of Germany.

The 'Holocaust Camps Vs Gaza' page includes the following:

During the German holocaust the Jews were all crammed together in small spaced concentration camps. Anything that happened in those camps was most likely to be horrible and now the Deputy Speaker of Israel (Moshe Feiglin) wants to do that to the Palestinians in Gaza. He even had a whole plan set up on how to get rid of them. Did he learn anything from the Jewish Holocaust? There is a contemporary Holocaust going on at this very moment and most don't even know it. The Palestinian people in Gaza are trapped and have nowhere to go. the Israeli government has them boxed in from all directions!! Going south towards Egypt not an option. Going west towards the Mediterranean sea, also not an option. All that they can try and do is escape by air, but even that's not an option. The Israeli government has bombed the one and only airport in Gaza. Therefore, the Palestinians in Gaza are imprisoned by the Israel and can barely do a thing about it. Just like the Jews were trapped in camps like Auschwitz and not able to escape the Palestinians are also confined to the limited space permitted for them to use.

Gaza

-Bombed

Both

- Deaths
- People have no space
- Not enough food
- Electricity is manipulated by oppressor
- Both made under ground tunnels to escape
- They are captives
- If they do or dont do anything wrong they are killed
- People are terrified
- ETC....

Holocaust camps

-Brought by train and tricked

The website's 'Organ Harvesting' page includes the following:

The Nazis justified their actions of organ theft with the idea that some human beings do not deserve the universal human right of life. Nazi doctors believed that their victims were of less value. They even coined the term, lebensunwertes Leben in reference to their victims. Lebensunwertes Leben means 'life unworthy of life'.

The Israeli military has admitted to Channel 2 TV that in the 1990s, specialists at Abu Kabir harvested skin, corneas, heart valves and bones from the bodies of Palestinians and foreign workers, without permission from the victims or their relatives. Dr. Yehuda Hiss -- who was once head of the Abu Kabir forensic institute -- discussed the practice. If there was a chance that the victim's relatives might discover it, he said, organs were not harvested. Otherwise, they were free to do as they please with the Palestinian bodies. He even admitted to cases where glue was used to close the eyelids of slain Palestinians in order to hide missing corneas.

These views and expressions go beyond a rejection of Zionism on philosophical grounds. Such views have more to do with the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* than a principled opposition to any actually existing Zionism. Blood libels are not anti-Zionism, they are expressions of classical antisemitism.

ADL urges the Florida State University administration to address the current situation involving Mr. Daraldik's statements, and we offer our resources to you, including:

- [Think. Plan. Act. Tools for Dealing with Anti-Semitic and Anti-Israel Incidents on Campus](#)
Resources to help Jewish and Zionist students respond to anti-Semitic incidents and stand up to anti-Israel bias.
- [Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era](#)
A comprehensive resource with historical context, fact-based descriptions of prevalent antisemitic myths, contemporary examples and calls-to-action for addressing this hate.
- [Hate/Uncycled](#)
A guide to addressing incidents from many lenses, including prevention, preparation, response, healing, and education. The vision is to dismantle the complexities of bias and hate through regular assessment and implementation of campus climate initiatives and incident response practices — Prevention is just as important as response.
- We also would like to offer you trainings for student leaders and other relevant target audiences to address antisemitism and bigotry.

In addition, a cursory glance of the Florida State University Student Code of Conduct did not show language related to hate speech or discrimination, other than on the basis of gender/sexual orientation. While such language might be codified elsewhere, we would recommend that the administration consider adding a section into the Student Code of Conduct pertaining to discrimination related to race, religion, national origin, and other identity-based discrimination.

While all students have the freedom of speech, those who run for leadership positions also have responsibilities that come with that authority to use their speech in a manner that unites, empowers, and uplifts. The university administration should use its speech rights to unequivocally condemn and reject rhetoric that demonizes Jewish and Zionist students, who have a right to an educational experience free from harassment, intimidation, and discrimination. Given Mr. Daraldik's expressions to date, Florida State University should examine whether he will contribute to the marginalization of Jewish/Zionist students on campus.

ADL stands ready to assist Florida State University in addressing these matters and ensuring fair treatment to all students.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheri Zvi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "Z".

Sheri Zvi
ADL Florida Regional Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lonny Wilk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "W".

Lonny Wilk
ADL Florida Senior Associate Regional Director