

Free speech should not excuse antisemitic acts, behavior



Your Turn

Norman Olshansky
Guest columnist

In his April 16 guest column – titled “Criticism of the government of Israel is not antisemitism” – Howard Simon makes some very good points about the importance of protecting our constitutional rights related to free speech.

However, Simon did not fully explain why student leaders of the antisemitic and anti-Israel protests on college campuses were targeted.

Most of the campus protests were protected by free speech. However, a significant number of the protesters committed crimes by destroying property, harassing Jewish students and faculty, refusing to obey law enforcement and obstructing classes by shouting down speakers who were identified as pro-Israel or who had academic relationships with Israel.

They promoted Boycotting, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against the Jewish state. They ignored

concerns related to atrocities committed in other parts of the world. Why only the Jewish state and not Russia, China, North Korea or the Sudan?

Only Israel, the one Jewish state in the world, was their focus.

Most of protesters were chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” What they were really saying was a call for the destruction and elimination of the Jewish state of Israel.

Criminals and those entering our country illegally have the right to a fair hearing and adjudication of their charges. This has not happened with many of the targeted students, and that is a threat to our democracy. On this we can agree with Mr. Simon.

However, campus protests that include violent attacks and hostility towards Israel, should not be defended as expressions of free speech. The protesters called for the elimination/annihilation of Israel and extolled terrorist groups in Gaza who are also anti-American.

Yes, you *can* support freedom of speech and also defend Jews and Israel from hatred.

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