

StandWithUs

Supporting Israel & Fighting Antisemitism

What is the “Deadly Exchange”?

“Deadly Exchange” is an anti-Israel campaign and antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), an organization made up of a fringe minority not representative of the majority of Jews, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), and other anti-Israel groups. It falsely blames Israel and American Jewish organizations for police brutality and institutionalized racism against people of color in America. This campaign jeopardizes progress by dividing communities that largely agree on many racial justice issues.

“Deadly Exchange” is based on misleading rhetoric and outright lies about United States-Israel police exchanges. These programs focus on saving lives from threats like terrorism and gun violence, rather than other aspects of policing. It is the latest in a long pattern of Jews being scapegoated for social ills and injustices that they have little or no responsibility for.

“Deadly Exchange” has focused on universities with campus police officials who have participated in police exchanges with Israel. The campaign generally calls for an apology from the university and officials who attended the trip and a commitment from the university to end police exchanges with Israel in the future. The whole purpose of the campaign is to spread antisemitic and anti-Israel propaganda.

Roots

Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP) officially launched their “Deadly Exchange” campaign in 2017. They claim that their aim is to end police exchange programs between the United States and Israel. This effort is based on the false idea that these exchanges share worst practices in an effort to promote and extend discriminatory practices and repressive policing in both the United States and Israel. These claims of “worst practices” include extrajudicial executions, shoot-to-kill policies, police murders, racial profiling, mass surveillance, deportations, detention, and attacks on human rights defenders.¹ Such rhetoric echoes centuries of antisemitic propaganda blaming Jewish people and the Jewish state for the world’s problems.²

¹ Jewish Voices for Peace, “Deadly Exchange, Ending US-Israel Police Partnerships, Reclaiming Safety”, *Jewish Voices for Peace*, 2017 at <https://deadlyexchange.org/>

² Anti-Defamation League, “A Brief History on Antisemitism”, *Anti-Defamation League*, 2013 at <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Brief-History-on-Anti-Semitism-A.pdf>

Unfortunately, this is not the first time we have seen groups scapegoat Jews. For example, in the Middle Ages, Jewish people in Europe were wrongly accused of causing the Black Plague. Jews were accused of engaging in the ritual murder of Christian children, also known as ‘blood libel’. The most recent example is Jews being blamed for the creation or spread of COVID-19.³

Connections to the BDS Movement

“Deadly Exchange” is part of the larger Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, which seeks to eliminate Israel and strip away Jewish rights to self-determination in their ancestral homeland. The ultimate goal of BDS is not to change Israeli policies, but to isolate and pressure Israel until it collapses as a Jewish and democratic state. As such, this campaign fuels injustice and conflict rather than helping Israelis and Palestinians achieve a just and lasting peace.

JVP cites their “Deadly Exchange” as a “direct response” to the global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement.⁴

In addition, Omar Barghouti, the founder of the BDS Movement and member of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) sits on the advisory team of the “Deadly Exchange” movement. Garik Ruiz an employee of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) (One of the groups in the BNC is the Council of National and Islamic Forces (CNIF) – a coalition of Palestinian groups which includes the racist terrorist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad) also sits on the “Deadly Exchange” advisory team.⁵

Finally, other extremely biased anti-Israel NGOs and individuals who have been very active in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have either endorsed the deadly exchange or also sit on the advisory team. These include American Muslims for Palestine, whose leaders and speakers have engaged in racism, [homophobia](#), support for terrorism, and genocide denial⁶, the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, which unfortunately has many biased and extremist members including the International Socialist Organization, who published a call for “unconditional” support of the terrorist organization Hamas, Samidoun, a proxy for the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a U.S. designated terrorist group and was recently designated as a terror group itself by the Israeli government⁷, and more.

³ Anti-Defamation League, “A Brief History on Antisemitism”, *Anti-Defamation League*, 2013 at <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Brief-History-on-Anti-Semitism-A.pdf>

⁴ Jewish Voices for Peace, “Deadly Exchange, Ending US-Israel Police Partnerships, Reclaiming Safety”, *Jewish Voices for Peace*, 2017 at <https://deadlyexchange.org/>

⁵ Jewish Voices for Peace, “Deadly Exchange, Ending US-Israel Police Partnerships, Reclaiming Safety”, *Jewish Voices for Peace*, 2017 at <https://deadlyexchange.org/>

⁶ Max Samarov and Philippe Assouline, “Who’s Really Driving ‘Grassroots’ Anti-Israel Activism in America?”

⁷ Udi Shaham, “Israel Designates PFLP International Branch as a Terrorist Organization” February 28, 2021, *The Jerusalem Post* at <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/samidoun-declared-terrorist-organization-due-to-dflp-ties-660464>

Deadly Exchange

- Co-opting and exploiting the pain and fear of the Black community to blame racism and police brutality in America on Israel is inaccurate, disingenuous, and only fuels more hatred.
- Deadly Exchange falsely blames Israel and Jewish organizations for racism and police brutality in the US, distracting from the real causes of this injustice and dividing communities that otherwise agree on this issue.
- Former Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed publicly rejected the Deadly Exchange campaign. He said, “there was a demand that I stop allowing the Atlanta Police Department to train with the Israeli Police Department. I’m not going to do that. I happen to believe that the Israeli Police Department has some of the best counter-terrorism techniques in the world, and it benefits our police department from that long-standing relationship.”⁸
- The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns also expressed support for the exchanges and rejected the claims made by anti-Israel activists.⁹
- The police exchange programs in Israel is focused solely on preventing terrorist attacks and saving lives, which is especially crucial in an era of mass shootings carried out by white supremacists and other extremists.¹⁰
- These programs do not include training on riot control, street arrests, or any type of policing implicated in the murders of unarmed black people.
- Exchanges in Israel are only for senior police staff, not patrol officers. There is no evidence that a single officer who traveled to Israel to learn counter-terrorism techniques has killed an unarmed person of color.
- Israel is just one of twenty-five countries that have police exchange programs with the United States, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, Colombia, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan,

⁸ The Tower Staff, “Atlanta Mayor: Israel ‘Has Some of the Best Counter-Terrorism Techniques in the World,’” *The Tower*, July 22, 2016 at <http://www.thetower.org/3676-atlanta-mayor-israel-has-some-of-the-best-counter-terrorism-techniques-in-the-world/>

⁹ Miriam Elman, “National Black Law Enforcement group backs Georgia-Israel police exchange program,” *Legal Insurrection*, February 24th, 2019, at <https://legalinsurrection.com/2019/02/black-law-enforcement-group-backs-georgia-israel-police-exchange-program/>

¹⁰ Steve L. Pomeranz, “I am the architect of the U.S.-Israel Police Exchange. Don’t Believe the Lies,” *J/INSA*, June 19, 2020 at <https://jinsa.org/i-am-the-architect-of-the-u-s-israel-police-exchange-dont-believe-the-lies/>

Kazakhstan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Russia, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, and many others. The fact that only Israel's exchange program with the United States is mentioned shows inherent bias.

- Scapegoating Israel for racism and police brutality in America shifts blame away from those who are actually responsible. The United States has a well-known history of racism and brutality against black people that began hundreds of years before Israel was founded.
- Unfortunately, anti-blackness and other forms of racism exist in Israel like in many other societies, and that is unacceptable. That said, this does not justify blaming Israel for social injustices that are entirely of the United State's own making.
- Falsely blaming Jews for societal injustices is classic antisemitism, which has led to violence against Jewish communities many times throughout history. In fact, there is [evidence](#) that the antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by Deadly Exchange helped [influence](#) the shooter who murdered Jews in a New Jersey deli in December, 2019.
- Addressing the structural causes of racism in the United States should be our number one priority right now. Singling out and scapegoating Israeli and American Jews can only derail that crucial work and make progress more difficult to achieve.