



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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On Viewing The Movie *October 8th*...

The 2025 documentary *October 8*, directed by Wendy Sachs and executive produced by Debra Messing, takes a deep and unsettling look into the surge of antisemitism that followed the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. The film seeks to examine how the aftermath of the attack led to a rise in hostility toward Jewish communities, especially in the United States, where tensions on college campuses and public discourse escalated rapidly. Through a mix of firsthand testimonies, expert analysis, and real-world footage, the documentary serves as both a historical record and a wake-up call to a growing issue.

Many *Israel Matters* readers experienced this antisemitic onslaught directly on February 20, 2024 at Hamden Town Hall when a so-called “ceasefire resolution” was entertained by the Hamden Town Council. For many of us, this was the most direct antisemitic experience of our lives, where protestors dressed up in keffiyehs resembling Hamas fighters celebrated October 7 as the date the “Hamas Resistance Army” (to quote one protestor’s exact words) began to liberate Gaza from its “Israeli settler-colonialist oppressors.” As awful as that evening was for us, it was of a piece with the much more extreme protests and vitriol that took place on the campuses of Columbia, Harvard, Cornell, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, Yale, and many other colleges. *October 8* thoroughly documents these events including shocking footage (and “soundage”) that makes the viewer feel like you were there when it happened. It is

impossible not to feel your blood pressure rise when viewing such events.



Anti-Israel Protest at Yale

The film documents the horrific antisemitic protests and vandalism on university campuses after October -- the tearing down of posters depicting Israel’s hostages taken by Hamas, or breaking into and occupying of university buildings. *October 8* also exposes something of which most Americans are unaware. The protest movement was completely pre-planned and orchestrated by the National Students for Justice in Palestine in concert with known terrorist groups even before the world could comprehend what happened on October 7.

On October 8, National Students for Justice in Palestine sent an e-mail to all of their student chapters at universities across the United States. Attached was a document titled “Day of Resistance Toolkit.” This document included the following text:

“On the 50th anniversary of the 1973 war, the resistance in Gaza launched a surprise

operation against the Zionist enemy which disrupted the very foundation of Zionist settler society. On the morning of October 8th, the Palestinian resistance stormed the illegitimate border fence, gaining control of the Gaza checkpoint at Erez, and reentering 1948 Palestine. Referred to as Operation *Towfan Al-Aqsa* (Al-Aqsa Flood), the resistance has taken occupation soldiers hostage, fired thousands of rockets, taken over Israeli military vehicles, and gained control over illegal Israeli settlements.”

Remember – this was sent to American university students on October 8.

The document continued:

“Today, we witness a historic win for the Palestinian resistance: across land, air, and sea, our people have broken down the artificial barriers of the Zionist entity, taking with it the façade of an impenetrable settler colony and reminding each of us that total return and liberation to Palestine is near. As the Palestinian student movement, we have an unshakable responsibility to join the call for mass mobilization.”

As if there could be any remaining doubt, these words show that National Students for Justice in Palestine was not simply protesting against Israel; they were actively participating in the war by providing material support to Hamas.

This national toolkit did not stop with simple rhetoric. This “how to” manual told students what to do, what to say, and even what placards to display, including a template of a Hamas terrorist on a paraglider with “insert org name” and “organization logos at the bottom” helpfully situated on the graphic. This direction from above is why all the student tactics – chanting, hunger strikes, calls for divestment, tent encampments – have looked the same; the Hamas kids were just doing what they were told.



Poster Distributed Nationally With “Day of Resistance Toolkit”

Back to the film -- featuring interviews with Jewish students, university administrators, and activists, the movie *October 8* explores how institutions struggled to address rising hate speech, protests, and confrontations between student groups. The documentary sheds light on how social media played a role in amplifying misinformation and fueling hostility, making it difficult for individuals to distinguish between political criticism and deep-seated prejudice against Jews.

The documentary also highlights the role of public figures and policymakers in addressing—or failing to address—the rise in antisemitism. Interviews with high-profile figures such as Sheryl Sandberg, U.S. Representative Ritchie Torres, and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand provide insight into the broader societal implications of these events. Their perspectives help frame the issue as not just a concern for the Jewish community but as part of a larger struggle against hate speech, extremism, and misinformation in modern society.

Beyond the political and social implications, the film takes a personal approach, telling the stories of Jewish individuals who faced harassment, threats, or even violence in the

wake of October 7. These personal narratives add an emotional depth to the documentary, illustrating the real-world consequences of antisemitic rhetoric. By giving voice to these experiences, the film *October 8* ensures that the discussion goes beyond statistics and policies, instead grounding the issue in human experiences.

As the documentary unfolds, it presents a broader discussion on free speech, censorship, and the responsibilities of institutions in addressing hate. It asks difficult but necessary questions: Where is the line between political activism and hate speech? How should universities and public platforms respond to rising antisemitism while preserving freedom of expression? What is the difference between free speech and hate speech? The film does not claim to have all the answers but aims to spark critical dialogue on these urgent issues.

Ultimately, *October 8* is a compelling and thought-provoking documentary that challenges viewers to confront uncomfortable truths about modern antisemitism. It serves as both a historical document and a call to action, urging audiences to recognize and address the dangers of rising hate in their communities. By blending investigative journalism with deeply personal stories, the film seeks to educate, inform, and inspire meaningful change in the fight against antisemitism.

The movie *October 8* is playing currently at theatres nationwide and is also available via Amazon Prime.