

Texas Holocaust, Genocide, and
Antisemitism Advisory Commission

STUDY ON ANTISEMITISM IN TEXAS

DECEMBER 2023 **ADDENDUM**

PREPARED FOR THE 88TH LEGISLATURE

SUBMITTED TO:

Gov. Greg Abbott

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick

House Speaker Dade Phelan

Members of the Texas Legislature

Overview

Nearly 10 months after the Texas Holocaust, Genocide, and Antisemitism Advisory Commission (THGAAC) submitted our Study on Antisemitism to state leaders, world Jewry faces its gravest threat in decades.

On October 7, the terrorist group Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing more than 1,200 Israelis, primarily civilians, and kidnapping approximately 240 more. This horrific act was the bloodiest day for Jewish people since the Holocaust. The atrocities included the maiming, decapitation, and torture of hundreds. Israel has since declared war on Hamas and initiated ground operations in Gaza to destroy the terror organization.

Hamas' charter makes clear that its intent is to annihilate Israel and kill Jewish people. During Hamas' 15 years of rule in Gaza, it has worked to achieve that goal through continual suicide bombings, rocket launches, and other deadly means, culminating on October 7.

Tragically, this terrorist attack also launched a worldwide wave of antisemitism from the Middle East to Europe to the United States, including many anti-Israel rallies on college campuses and elsewhere. Jewish communities in Texas have been on high alert for attacks in the Lone Star State, from social media and public spaces to high schools and universities.

THGAAC, an advisory commission to the Texas Historical Commission, immediately identified ways to serve Texans at this crucial moment. It connected with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and regional education centers to ensure educational resources were distributed statewide while also coordinating with state leaders, local communities, and museums to provide accurate information about the Israeli-Hamas conflict and rising antisemitism at home and opportunities to support Jewish Texans.

The Commission also issued the following statement in the days after the attack:

The Texas Holocaust, Genocide, and Antisemitism Advisory Commission was created to fight the type of antisemitism and hate that we saw on brutal display in Israel this week. We [join Governor Greg Abbott](#) and the entire state of Texas in strongly condemning Hamas' savage attacks on Israeli civilians, which tragically evoked memories of the Holocaust for many Jewish communities.

Our Commission's mission is to combat and confront hatred, prejudice, and indifference by educating all Texans about the Holocaust and other genocides. We will work with schools, museums, community organizations, public officials, and our other partners to ensure that Texans understand the impact of this week's events and the hate that drove them. We stand ready to support our fellow Texans if the attacks on Jewish people and communities continue to spread.

Governor's Office Response

Governor Greg Abbott has taken multiple steps in response to the Hamas attacks and accompanying surge in antisemitism, leading the nation's governors in identifying new ways to root out antisemitism and support the Jewish community, including:

- Directing his Public Safety Office (PSO) [to distribute more than \\$4 million in new funds to enhance security](#) for synagogues, Jewish schools, and other non-profit organizations in Texas. These grants included the first allotment from \$2 million in state general revenue, which was appropriated in the 2024-2025 General Appropriations Act in accordance with THGAAC's recommendation in the December 2022 Study of Antisemitism in Texas to create a state funding source for this purpose.
- [Prohibiting Texas state agencies](#) from purchasing goods produced in or exported from the Gaza Strip and from any organization or state actor with ties to Hamas.
- Working with the Texas Education Agency to [share optional resources and educational materials with school districts](#) to support lessons and conversations about the conflict. This built on the THGAAC's extensive work and included curriculum supplements, guidance from the Anti-Defamation League on having "conscientious conversations," and tactics for speaking with children.
- Traveling to Israel to [meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog](#), and other Israeli officials to discuss ways Texas can continue to support the people of Israel.

Recommendations

Governor Abbott also hosted an emergency meeting of the THGAAC on October 30 in his Capitol office. [He addressed the commissioners and tasked them with two directives:](#)

1. Devise ways to identify acts of antisemitism and quickly report them to law enforcement.
2. Identify ways law enforcement, the state, and local governments can take preemptive action against dangerous acts of antisemitism before they occur.

THGAAC is developing recommendations directly tied to Gov. Abbott's charge. They include:

Recommendation 1:

Develop a single, quick, efficient, and confidential statewide reporting system for antisemitic threats and actions that ensures tips from different geographic areas and time periods are integrated to link critical data and provide a more holistic picture to law enforcement.

This effort should resemble or be incorporated into the iWatchTexas initiative, which is part of the Department of Public Safety Intelligence and Counterterrorism Division. iWatchTexas serves as the central clearinghouse for the collection, management, analysis, and dissemination of law enforcement, homeland security, and school safety intelligence in Texas.

Law enforcement should have authority through the reporting system to save and disseminate specific information related to antisemitic threats that would otherwise be deleted so they can make matches and detect patterns across time and geography.

This system should enable citizens and police officers to report potential threats and other suspicious activity through a mobile application, over the Internet, or by telephone.

Recommendation 2:

Partner with a social media lab at one of Texas's public universities to monitor social media conversations for antisemitism and misinformation about Israel or the Holocaust, especially in our state.

The lab could provide quarterly updates to THGAAC while alerting law enforcement as direct threats emerge, creating an opportunity both to monitor antisemitism and to train Communications students in understanding and identifying these concerns.

About the THGAAC

The Texas Holocaust, Genocide, and Antisemitism Advisory Commission was established by the 87th Texas Legislature in 2021 as an advisory commission to the Texas Historical Commission. THGAAC's mission is to bring awareness of the Holocaust, genocides, and antisemitism to Texas students, educators, and the general public by ensuring the availability of resources and advising on relevant matters.

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