



**NONE SHALL
BE AFRAID**
FIGHTING ANTI-SEMITISM

The State of Anti-Semitism Around The Globe – Latin America

With a membership that includes 20 countries in Latin America, B'nai B'rith International is at the forefront of tackling anti-Semitism in the Western Hemisphere.

In Latin America, anti-Semitism presents in classic manifestations of populist scapegoating and hyper nationalism on both the political right and the left, including in the form of conspiracy theories, particularly in times of economic or political crisis. Anti-Zionism and Iran's malign axis of influence in the region also play significant roles.

Israel

Latin America played a pivotal role in Israel's founding. On Nov. 29th, 1947, 13 of the then 20 Latin American member nations voted in favor of United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly Resolution 181 (the partition plan), which called for the establishment of the Jewish state. In May 1949, 18 Latin American countries supported Israel's admission to the U.N. Today, most countries in the region have significant and growing bilateral relations with Israel.

Nevertheless, there is a strong tendency to equate Jewish communities with the State of Israel. When there are growing tensions in the Middle East, anti-Semitic incidents elsewhere in the world tend to increase. Latin America is no exception.

In Venezuela, even though there is no legislation discriminating against Jews, for years the government of former President Hugo Chavez (and now that of President Nicolas Maduro) have created a hostile atmosphere for the Jewish community. Particularly during the Chavez days, there were manifestations of open hostility toward Israel, and the Jewish community suffered several anti-Semitic incidents that were directly promoted by the government.

Home to around 500,000 inhabitants of Palestinian descent — the largest Palestinian community outside the Middle East — Chile also experiences an aggressive anti-Israel agenda bordering on anti-Semitism. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, an initiative that seeks to eliminate Israel as a Jewish state, is more solidly anchored in Chile than anywhere else in Latin America.

Anti-Zionism also manifests politically at the U.N. and other multilateral organizations, where hostile governments continue to cast anti-Israel votes. B'nai B'rith's tireless advocacy work aims to change this behavior by demonstrating that it runs counter to Middle East peace and to the foreign policy principles and self-interest of these countries.



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Iranian Influence

Iran's ferocious anti-Semitism has historically been promoted — and continues to be — through its alliances in the region, most of the time disguised as anti-Zionism. Tehran capitalized on shifting power dynamics and a tide of anti-U.S. sentiments in Latin America in order to assert Iranian influence, most notably in countries where left-leaning governments were in power, like Cuba and Venezuela, which maintain links with the rogue state and Hezbollah. For years, the Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay tri-border area has been a base for operatives of terrorist organizations and those who support them, representing an extension of Iranian influence into South America. Venezuela is also a haven for Hezbollah and its activities in drug trafficking, arms sales and money laundering.

In the 1990s, two bombs devastated the Argentinean Jewish community and marked the arrival of Middle Eastern terrorism to South America. The Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires was the site of the first explosion — a car bomb — on March 17, 1992, killing 29 people and injuring more than 250 others. Two years later, an even deadlier terror attack was carried out on the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires — the heart of the Jewish community in Argentina — killing 85 and injuring 151. Both attacks were perpetrated by terrorists linked to the government of Iran and Hezbollah.

To learn more about B'nai B'rith's work in Latin America for the global Jewish community and Israel, [click here](#).

The Organization of American States

The Organization of American States (OAS) consists of governments and civil society organizations from 34 countries and is the most influential political body in the Americas. The OAS deals with economic, social and political matters affecting the region and the world.

B'nai B'rith International members in Latin America have attended OAS events regularly since the 1980s, when international leadership began to focus on the joint work and issues of Washington, D.C. and the burgeoning Jewish Latin American communities. B'nai B'rith gained prominence at the OAS as the first Jewish organization to be recognized as a civil society organization by the body and has used its influence to push for human rights and anti-discrimination measures.

For decades, B'nai B'rith has urged the Organization of American States to highlight the fight against anti-Semitism. At the OAS General Assembly in 2007, B'nai B'rith focused on the passage of the "Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance" and the "Inter-American Convention against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance." 2013 marked a significant milestone in these efforts, when the OAS ratified both conventions. As a member of the working group drafting this measure, B'nai B'rith successfully advocated for the inclusion of language identifying anti-Semitism as a form of discrimination in the Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance. In our advocacy work today, B'nai B'rith prompts member states of the OAS to ratify both of these conventions and bolster local efforts to combat acts of discrimination effectively.



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In 2019, the secretary general of the OAS, Luis Almagro, declared that the General Secretariat would formally adopt language defining anti-Semitism from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Not only does this declaration signal an important acknowledgment of this social ill, but it also guides governments in acquiring more sophisticated tools for combating anti-Semitism in the form of data collection, law enforcement training, hate crimes legislation, education and other measures. B'nai B'rith joins the OAS call for individual members states to adopt the IHRA working definition.

To learn more about B'nai B'rith's work at the Organization of American States, [click here](#).



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