

‘No Accountability, No Justice, and No Integrity’

**Why a federal panel recommended suspension of
psychology’s top accreditor.**



"FACULTY MEMBERS, PRACTITIONERS, AND ADVOCATES HAVE FLOODED THE APA WITH COMPLAINTS," WRITES SALLY SATEL. (ILLUSTRATION BY *THE FREE PRESS*)

By Sally Satel

For years, the American Psychological Association has had a problem it has been unable or unwilling to address, summed up by Rep. Ritchie

Torres (D-NY) as a “persistent and pernicious pattern of antisemitism.”

Now, a bipartisan federal advisory committee to the U.S. Department of Education has decided to do something about it. Late last month it recommended, in a 7 to 4 vote, that the federal government suspend its recognition of the APA's accrediting arm, its Commission on Accreditation (APA-CoA).

The current accreditor of 1,320 professional education and training programs at the master's, doctoral, doctoral internship, and postdoctoral residency level in psychology, the APA-CoA has an important hand shaping the standards and best practices of trainees at a time when the standing of higher education has drawn widespread skepticism.

Explaining its recommendation, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) pointed to the APA-CoA's failure to “maintain nondiscrimination policies.”

Unlike Rep. Torres, the report never uses the word *antisemitism*, and uses the words *Jewish* and *Israel* only once. But a parade of psychologists testifying about the treatment of APA members who reject the rhetoric, symbols, or therapeutic application of a violent ideology built around the destruction of Israel and whose complaints have been ignored, offers a damning indictment of an association with representative authority over a profession whose credibility rests on its claims of providing evidence-based treatment, empathy, and a respect for the individual.

The staff report issued just prior to September's two-day hearing by NACIQI—an independent, bipartisan federal advisory body that advises the Department of Education—included the APA's failure to identify discrimination in its programs, or to demonstrate how its procedures are capable of preventing institutional discrimination.

NACIQI heard over two dozen testimonials, predominately regarding antisemitism. Deena Margolies, staff attorney at the Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, testified that Jewish and Israeli psychologists faced exclusion, hostility, and discrimination in professional and clinical settings. Joshua Simmons, a psychologist and psychoanalyst in San Francisco, reported that some of his “LGBTQ graduate students hesitate to identify as Zionist for fear of being judged differently by classmates, faculty, or supervisors.” Dean McKay, professor of psychology at Fordham University, told of colleagues who “refer to Zionism as an oppressive ideology, Jews as colonists, and [express] other intimidating rhetoric” in their classrooms.



A student wears a Star of David yarmulke during a Congressional hearing about antisemitism at Columbia University on April 17, 2024. (Drew Angerer/AFP via Getty Images)

Caroline C. Kaufman, an assistant professor at Bowling Green State University, recalled the APA's 2025 annual convention, where she found herself aggressively confronted, at a public meeting of Psychologists

for Justice in Palestine, by a member aware of her support for Israel who accused her of spying. She testified that the APA, after agreeing that the psychologist had violated the association's Meeting Code of Conduct, and pledging to remove him from the conference, not only failed to take action but honored him the following year for "addressing society's pressing challenges across diverse settings."

"This man's receipt of an award from APA tells you everything you need to know about how this organization views Jews and antisemitism," Kaufman told the committee. "There is no accountability, no justice, and no integrity."

Miri Bar-Halpern, a lecturer in psychology at Harvard Medical School, presented several incidents sounding the same theme. One involved an American Israeli patient who "came to me with anxiety after leaving her LGBTQ therapy group, for the clinic, which displayed 'Globalize the Intifada' and therapists and supervisors wore keffiyehs during treatment." When I spoke to Bar-Halpern after the hearing, she added that the therapists in that clinic told patients to cancel sessions and go protest Israel.

Lack of accountability spurred Daniel Hoffman to address the committee. Hoffman, who directs psychology continuing education for a large hospital system in New York City, twice complained to the APA about the antisemitic content of an association-approved training module delivered last winter, "Scholarly Dialogue: Despecializing Psychoanalysis for Psychic Militancy." The instructor, a former George Washington University psychologist who referred to the Israel Defense Forces as "genocidal fucks," and insisted that "Zionism is a form of fascist white supremacy," held an APA leadership position. (In 2023, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights began investigating that same psychologist's program at George Washington in response to allegations about the treatment of Jewish and Israeli students. Strikingly, the APA-CoA knew nothing about it, according to the NACIQI staff report.)

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Shortly after NACIQI announced its decision on September 24, and mere hours after the testimonials ended, the APA-CoA released a statement. “We disagree with NACIQI’s statement that there is a ‘pervasive culture of antisemitism’ within psychology programs,” it read, citing only two complaints made to them about antisemitism ever. Days later, the APA-CoA sent an open letter to psychology students with information on how to submit a complaint about antisemitism or other discrimination.

Cassondra L. Feldman, who practices in South Florida and participated in the hearing that morning, offered context for the improbable claim. “I know of students who have experienced antisemitism but were discouraged from speaking up or reporting it,” she told me. She also noted that faculty who mentor trainees may be hesitant to encourage formal complaints if those complaints could ultimately prompt scrutiny of their own program’s accreditation.

Indeed, faculty members, practitioners, and advocates have flooded the APA with complaints. In early 2025, for example, more than 3,500 mental health professionals calling themselves Psychologists Against Antisemitism called upon the association to address “the. . . systemic problem of antisemitism/anti-Jewish hate” and spotlighted APA-hosted conferences for educational credits in which speakers made “official statements and presentations includ[ing] rationalizations of violence against Jews and Israelis; antisemitic tropes; Holocaust distortion; minimization of Jewish victimization, fear, and grief.”



What will happen now? Over the coming months, the Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent will decide whether to suspend the APA's accrediting authority. If he does, the APA-CoA has one year to address the problems identified by NACIQI.

So far, the APA's accrediting commission has focused on the impact that loss of accrediting authority could have on students and institutions, rather than on ways to address the failures that occasioned its suspension. It warned that many accredited psychology programs could lose access to federal funding, and that the ability of students to meet requirements for licensure could be jeopardized—especially in states whose licensing boards require or favor degrees earned in APA-accredited programs.

For those who recognize that the problems are real, however, this is a time for mobilization. Suzannah Alexander, the chair of the accreditation committee at the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism, sees “the potential suspension as an opportunity for psychology professionals to build new things, perhaps a new accrediting entity,” she told me. “And, very importantly, psychologists must also focus on state licensing boards because they often restrict who gets licensed based on which accreditor approved their college program.”

The APA's accreditation standards exert considerable influence on the culture of psychological practice, but its reach is not limited to the United States. As the world's largest association of psychologists, the APA “sets the standards for other countries to emulate,” psychologist Jon Mills of the University of Essex, UK, told me.

The NACIQI report and hearing represent the third time in under a year that the APA has come to federal attention. In December 2025, the House Committee on Education and Workforce told the association that it was “gravely concerned about antisemitism” within its domain. The committee's ongoing investigation could threaten millions in federal funding now flowing to the APA for training programs and contracts.



Rep. Ritchie Torres has called out a “persistent and pernicious pattern of antisemitism” at the American Psychological Association. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades via AP Photo)

Then, this June, the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services opened a civil rights investigation into the APA following a Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law complaint.

The APA deserves whatever reputational damage it sustains—and a challenge to its accrediting power is perhaps the most effective way to get the attention of its leadership.

The problem of antisemitism, and the obsessive anti-Zionism that serves as its proxy, is part of the wider politicization of training. After the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the APA intensified its embrace of what it considered social justice imperatives, including the endorsement of diversity, equity, and inclusion; wholesale support for gender-affirming approaches to youth; and decolonization, which requires psychologists to confront “colonialism within mainstream knowledge and education.” This approach not only discounts individual autonomy, a key to change and growth, but imposes group identities

onto the whole of society, a subjective taxonomy that turns the purported healers of psychological distress into social engineers, conferring “minoritized” status on favored identities in a hierarchy of oppression that rewards suffering with elevated status.

These changes were made without evidence of any benefit they might offer to trainees, psychologists, or their patients. Advancing therapy, as an instrument of social change, is proceeding, more broadly, in parallel developments in the professional training of counselors, social workers, and psychoanalysts.

The list of grievances brought before the hearing represents more than the sum of its parts. It is a symptom of systemic failure and a profound betrayal not only of Jewish trainees but of all students learning how to be professionals and, by extension, of the patients they will treat. As part of the process, overt symbols and phrases of terrorists who murder and rape have been normalized, so that instead of reacting with outrage—as we would to news of a black psychologist, or any other American, being subjected to the sight of her colleagues’ Klan hoods and giant Confederate flags—we will accept the manifest antisemitism within psychology programs as mere “political difference.”

Fortunately, NACIQI has refused to do that. I anticipate suspension of APA-CoA’s accrediting authority, but whatever final decision the Department of Education makes, this interim period demands deep introspection from the APA, an organization that failed to protect its members, future psychologists, and the profession itself by capitulating to bigotry.

