



Champaign-Urbana
Jewish Federation
Committee Against Antisemitism
503 E John St, Champaign, IL
cujf.org/antisemitism

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May 19, 2025

Principal Joe Williams
Central High School
610 W. University Ave.
Champaign, IL. 61820
willajoe@u4sd.org

Dear Principal Williams,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding images that appeared in this year's Central High School yearbook. The images in question depict (i) a map of the Middle East in which the State of Israel has been entirely removed and (ii) a student wearing a shirt which features a person with their face covered by a keffiyeh.

According to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, one example of antisemitism is: "Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor." The removal of Israel from a map directly aligns with this definition, as it implicitly denies Israel's right to exist and undermines the identity and self-determination of the Jewish people.

Furthermore, the image on a student's shirt of a person with their face obscured by a keffiyeh may raise additional concerns. While the keffiyeh is a traditional garment with cultural significance, the imagery of keffiyeh-covered faces is also widely used in association with violent movements that openly advocate for the elimination of Israel. In the context of the yearbook photo, the combination of this image and the map from which Israel has literally been erased, on the same page, creates a deeply troubling message.

We appreciate that the school has privately acknowledged to individual parents that the inclusion of these images was a mistake. However, the yearbook has now been printed as an official school publication going out to hundreds of students and families. We believe that this calls for a public acknowledgement to the wider Central High School community informing them of the specific actions being taken to address this matter and to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Central High School can address this responsibly by sending a letter to all families who receive the yearbook. This letter should (i) explain why the images were inappropriate, (ii) explain how the erasure of Israel from the map is a form of antisemitism under the IHRA definition, and (iii) offer an apology. It would also be appropriate to ask families to insert the letter as a corrective page into their yearbooks to ensure that the original harmful message is addressed visibly and clearly.

This is an opportunity for Central High School to model accountability and education, which are both key pillars of a respectful and inclusive environment. We trust that you share these values and will act accordingly.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
The CUJF Committee Against Antisemitism
caa@cujf.org

cc: Dr. Sheila Boozer, Superintendent, Champaign Unit 4 School District
boozersh@u4sd.org