

Case Details

Levi and Eric work together at a small computer tech firm (30 employees). They on the occasional project together but don't know each other well and don't socialize after work. Levi shares a post condemning calls for genocide of Jews related to the Palestine/Israel conflict (see photos). Erik, a supporter of the Free Palestine movement, responds to Levi via direct message, saying any violence is justified against "Zionists" who support the current actions by the state of Israel.

Levi engages in a conversation with Eric on the topic. The conversation goes on for pages, with Eric arguing violence is justified against any Jew, anywhere, who supports a Zionist perspective. Levi brings the concern to the company's HR director, sharing that he feels unsafe.

Eric: "It just reads as deeply unsettling when the majority of your posts are about some theoretical genocide that nobody but wacko extremist have even mentioned, while there is a real genocide actually happening. There are real people dying. Even in America, Palestinians are getting shot"

Levi: "Speaking up shouldn't include violent threats."

Eric: "I agree that threats should not be made against Jewish people as a group. But violent threats are totally reasonable against Israel and Zionist. This kind of violent resistance is necessary against oppressive colonial settler groups."

Levi: "Wait, so should we be violent to against all Zionist? So my family in the US, my synagogue if Jews that are Zionist deserve violence?"

Eric: "Yes, in Israel. Just like Israel has been specifically and overwhelmingly been targeted Palestinians for decades? Calling them your family doesn't make them less problematic..."

Levi: "What about the man threatening fired the shotgun outside the Synagogue in New York? That was justified?"

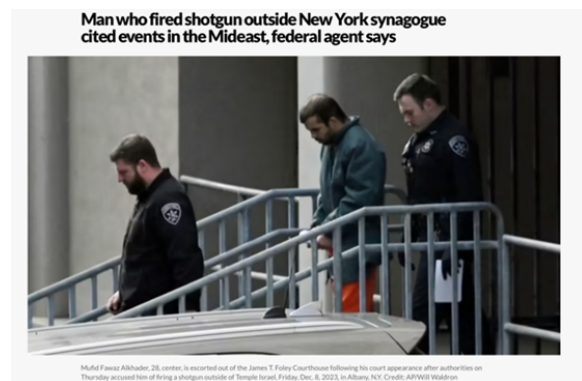
Eric: "Yes, you reap what you sow. He should have gone further than just firing it outside. The IOF doesn't shoot outside the homes of Palestinians in Gaza, they murder children from the air."



See how easy this was? More like this.



In the context of the national discourse, Stanford unequivocally condemns calls for the genocide of Jews or any peoples. That statement would clearly violate Stanford's Fundamental Standard, the code of conduct for all students at the university.



How would you describe the threats and violence risk in this situation (transient, substantive, hunting, howling, affective, targeted violence)?

The threats from Eric to Levi occur through a direct message process via a social media platform. The threat is vague and a bit rhetorical in nature, lacking specificity and elements such as fixation, focus, lethality, actionability, and immediacy. This also occurs against a backdrop of geo-political tension related to events in the Middle East. An initial hypothesis would characterize the threat as transient in nature with a howling quality. It is likely the initial post by Levi created an emotional, affective reaction in Eric, leading to his engagement. Another aspect of the case is that these potentially threatening statements are taking place in a semi-private chat rather than publicly available.

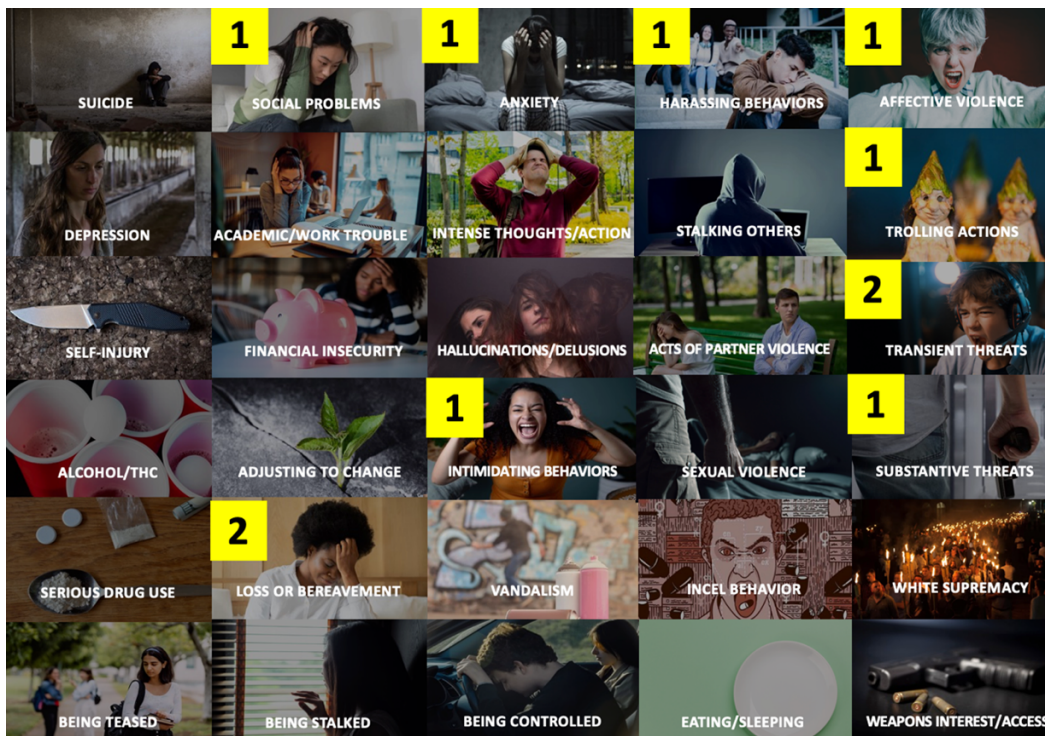
Was there a direct threat? Does there need to be a direct threat to act in this case?

The threat is more vague than direct in nature. While it is reasonable for Levi to make the connection between Eric's arguments and statements and his own beliefs and background, there is not a direct threat from Eric to Levi to kill him or cause him harm. His support of the man who fired a shotgun outside a New York synagogue indicates that Eric supports violent action directed at Jews, yet the lack of specificity and details of his threat lessen the concern.

How would you see free speech coming into the discussion here?

Since the conversation occurred after hours on a social media chat platform, which is assumed to be an opt-in process where either party could leave, block the other user, or ignore the conversation, there is an element of free speech to the conversation. There are also some limits to what human resources or the company would be able to do in terms of risk mitigation between the two. If the conversation were in public, over company email, or the threats had more specificity or a potential call to action to harm Levi, there would be more options in terms of addressing the issues (for example, involving law enforcement).

Score the case on Pathways.



Pathways Interventions

Loss or Bereavement

- Encourage counseling referral and refer to EAP
- Discuss any interruption of work, social and life skills
- If there was a breakup, identify boundary and conduct risks

Anxiety

- Normalize their feelings and offer support and care
- Identify triggers and any comforts or reducers
- Discuss a voluntary referral to counseling or EAP services

Social Problems

- Normalize their feelings and offer support and care
- Identify triggers and any comforts or reducers
- Consider a referral to counseling or EAP
- Consider a referral to HR/supervisor
- Discuss the need for accommodations

Intimidating Behaviors

- Identify the range of behaviors and parties involved
- Use the progressive disciplinary policy through HR and set clear limits
- Explore goals and strategies for improvement

Harassing Behaviors

- **Identify the range of behaviors and parties involved**
- **Consider the HR process to address their behaviors**
- **Offer both parties referrals to counseling/EAP support**

Trolling Actions

- Identify areas of difficulty (social, workload, etc.)
- Discuss social and HR implications of their behavior
- Explore alternative behaviors and ways to support them

Affective Violence

- Explore stressors and identify escalation triggers
- Consider the HR process to address their behaviors
- Offer support, normalization, and advice/guidance

Transient Threats

- Gather information on the nature of the threats and any plan
- Set clear conduct limits and monitor for compliance
- Consider emergency contact notification

Substantive Threats

- Explore stressors and identify escalation triggers
- Connect the individual to supports and resources
- Consider the HR process to address their behaviors

Pathways Summary

The overall risk level here is moderate, based on the intensity and context of Eric's anger toward the Jewish community and the potential for Levi to be a direct target of that. The threat itself is vague and transient, lacking specifics regarding lethality, actionability, and the time or place it would be carried out. Given that the threat occurred as a direct message, in private, outside work hours, and assuming on non-work owned wi-fi and computers, there are some limits in terms of a human resources response. With that being said, a conversation with Eric about his intent and potential follow-through on his ideas would be warranted. A full violence risk assessment would also assist in identifying issues of previous violence, posts or comments on other social media or to other employees, access to weapons, prior conduct, or law enforcement involvement. Further, exploration of supportive and protective factors such as family, friends, and access to an EAP or counseling would also be useful.

While there may not be a direct action HR can take toward Eric at this time, a meeting with Eric to explore what else he may be feeling or communicating, reminding him of the expectations in the office and on office equipment (e.g., wi-fi, work computers) as well as offering support through counseling and the EAP would be recommended. It would also be important to support Levi during this time through meetings with human resources and a referral to the EAP. Depending on Eric's response and Levi's willingness, some kind of mediation between the two may prove helpful moving forward. Communication about these events with Eric and Levi's direct supervisor would also be recommended.

Given there is not much context related to the case detail, come up with 3-4 questions you would want to ask Eric and 3-4 questions you would want to ask Levi related to the case.

Eric Questions:

- This is an issue that seems to hit near and dear to your heart. Can you tell me more about that?
- How would you describe your relationship with Levi at work and outside of work?
- Can you recall what motivated you to respond to Levi's post?
- You made a choice to talk directly to Levi via direct message versus making a more public comment. Do you recall why you used that approach?
- Your comments could be taken as advocating direct violence against Zionist Jews. Would you advocate that?
- Should Levi be concerned that you would act violently against him, given what you said about violence being directed at the Jews?
- Are you willing to talk more directly with Levi and me about this conversation so that you can both continue in a positive work environment?

Levi Questions:

- Have you experienced other conversations and/or threats because of the ongoing events in Israel and Gaza?
- Would you be willing to share more about your faith and connection to the Jewish community?
- What concerns you about Eric's conversation with you?
- If you could have any outcome, what would you like to see occur in this situation?
- I don't want to imply that any of this is your fault for what happened and what Eric said to you. However, when Eric began direct messaging you, did you consider ignoring him or blocking him from your account? What kept you from doing that?
- Are you willing to talk more directly to Eric about what he said in a mediated session with me?