

## Issue #14, November 2017 – Antisemitism

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Dear AJDS members and supporters,

This issue of the Australian Jewish Democratic Society’s newsletter, *Just Voices*, is focused on antisemitism. This is a broad topic that encompasses many different and related phenomena, past and present. It deserves our attention now no less than ever, especially since it is largely neglected in the Left, and concerns many developments within mainstream culture, including the American government openly spouting antisemitic views. Increased violence against Jews can be physical, but also rhetorical. At the same time, it is important to define new antisemitism, which stifles criticism of Israel, blames Islamic terrorism as the source of all conflict, allows Nazis to march in our name and defines many non-Zionist activists as self-hating Jews.



If you’re reading this and wondering about the spelling of ‘antisemitism’ used here, it is the one currently preferred by many scholars and institutions. I go along with the reasoning of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), who’ve rejected the hyphenated version of the word: “IHRA’s concern is that the hyphenated spelling allows for the possibility of something called ‘Semitism’, which not only legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology, but also divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews” (read more of the IHRA’s memo at [https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/memo-on-spelling-of-antisemitism\\_final-1.pdf](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/memo-on-spelling-of-antisemitism_final-1.pdf)).

Antisemitism requires constant redefinition: where is it located? What are its social and historical contexts? How does it manifest across the political spectrum? How has it been used to provide a platform for Islamophobia? What spaces can we create to challenge antisemitism? And how might we understand Jews along a spectrum defined by skin colour; are Jews White, and what is Whiteness? As written elsewhere, “Race is not just a matter of skin pigmentation or ethnic background. It is determined by both individuals and their observers, and the boundaries of who’s in or out of one group or another change constantly” (Emma Green’s in *The Atlantic*, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/are-jews-white/509453/>).

Antisemitism(s) cannot be fully covered in one issue of our newsletter. As such, this collection of articles is a beginning, and includes predominately Jewish perspectives on antisemitism. We are keen to provide more voices from other communities on countering antisemitism therein, as well as writing about Jewish and non-Jewish apologists for antisemitism in Palestine and the Arab world.

The views expressed in *Just Voices* are not official positions held by the AJDS. When in the last issue of this newsletter the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948 was described as a cataclysmic event, this was my personal view. Only AJDS statements reflect positions agreed upon at an executive level. The AJDS does not have a unanimous position on the subject of 1948 in Israel/Palestine.

Thank you to all those who helped and contributed to this edition of *Just Voices*.

Yours,

Keren Rubinstein

## Bodies, Histories, Antisemitisms

By Jordy Silverstein

We're all pretty familiar, I think, with the stereotype of the Jewish man who doesn't play sport. Living in Melbourne, we see Jewish sportspeople as the exception. The idea is that we're bookish, introverted, given to being studious and sitting around talking and studying rather than exerting ourselves physically. In both German and Yiddish this is the *luftmensch*, the 'air person', who exists in the world of ideas, rather than the physical world. In his vital book *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, US-based Talmudic scholar Daniel Boyarin has described this as 'a widespread sensibility that being Jewish in our culture renders a boy effeminate.' This effeminacy is part of an idea of the gender order, wherein Ashkenazi Jewish men have been seen as inadequate (and Jewish women, or Jews who have not fit into the gender binary, are not seen as worthy of inclusion in the conversation).

So whether one plays sport, what activities one does with one's body and brain, have implications for how a person is seen. That's hardly surprising – most of us understand this to be the case. Australian masculinity is saturated with ideas of sportsmanship, and one's place in society often sits in relationship to this.

But for Jews, and particularly Ashkenazi Jews, this relationship has long and complicated histories, which should be understood through a history of antisemitism and the ways that it has been scripted onto the Jewish body.

Sander Gilman, one of the foremost scholars of the European Jewish body, has written about the ways different parts of the body were given antisemitic meaning in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. One part he looks at is the so-called Jewish foot. In the nineteenth century, particularly in Germany and Austria, Jews were imagined to have a flat foot and to walk with a faulty gait. In Austria in 1804 the Jews' 'weak feet' were given as 'the reason that the majority of Jews called into military service were released, because the majority of Jewish soldiers spent more time in the military hospitals than in military service.' Nazi caricaturists drew Jews' deformed bodies, and showed Jews as having flat or ruined feet. Over these couple of hundred years, Gilman shows, Jews were seen as having feet which disrupted their ability to properly participate in social institutions such as the army, or the gymnasium, both of which were central to European society. Jews were not seen as having fit bodies, and thus as not being a proper part of the body politic. Because they could not participate in the army, they were not contributing to society. Jewish bodies were seen as lacking, and so Jews were seen as lacking. They could not be considered full members of the citizenry.

When antisemitism clings to the biological body like this – when it's seen as inevitable – it's hard to shake. And its thinking moves around, getting into everything.

Indeed, Herzl – the founder of modern political Zionism, whose memory is regularly invoked in celebratory fashion within the Melbourne Jewish community – wrote in the 1890s that he believed the Jewish people 'must train the youth to be soldiers. But only a professional army... However I must educate one and all to be *free and strong men*, ready to serve as volunteers if necessary. Education by means of patriotic songs, the Maccabean tradition, religion, heroic stage-plays, honor, etc.' In designing a Jewish nationalism, Herzl was profoundly influenced by the ways in which nineteenth century German nationalism was being shaped.

According to [Tamar Mayer](#), Herzl admired the way in which Germans had been mobilised around the nationalist cause and believed that 'a similar future for the Jewish nation' was possible. He thought that this could be the cure for the 'problems caused by 2,000 years of living in exile.' These problems materialised, Herzl believed, in the lacking masculinity of Jewish men in Europe. As such, the reform of the Jews needed to take place primarily at the level of the physical—with a changing of the body. Mayer writes that '[t]he *New Jew's* characteristics were to mimic those of the gentiles: tall, virile, close to nature and physically productive.' The *New Jew* was to be embodied by those Jews who would live in the Jewish nation-state, in Israel. They would reform their bodies to be substantially different to the bodies of those of us who would live outside Israel. This was, historians have come to agree, an ironically assimilationist move in the face of an experience of being persecuted on the grounds that Jews were not a robust national group. As in the antisemitic idea that Jews naturally have flat feet, in this formulation, the problems (and resolutions) of individual bodies were being mapped onto a national group identity.

So how does that continue today? And what can we do about it? Well firstly, I think it's useful to know the histories we're engaging with. When we celebrate strong Israeli Jewish bodies, the IDF, or the building of a Jewish nation-state in the mold of European nation-states, we're working to reform a Jewish body – both body politic and physical body – which has been seen by antisemites as lacking. When we participate in furthering these materialities and these ideas, we are rejecting some historically valuable notions of Jewishness in favour of others. Antisemitism is potent, and it's useful for us to remember that. Bookishness, and a rejection of an alignment of a

nation with a state and an army, and a rejection of hard physical bodies, can be useful. Antisemitism has a long history, and there are lots of ways in which we need to reckon with its impact. To understand current formations of Australian Jewishness, and the futures that we're seeking to produce for ourselves, we need to understand where our ideas of what it means to be Jewish come from.

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## Antisemitism in the Palestine Solidarity Movement?

By Vivienne Porzolt

*This is an abridged version of a paper presented at the National Conference, BDS – Driving Global Justice for Palestine, University of Sydney, 28-29 July 2017*

While others have spoken of the spurious charges of antisemitism used to silence opposition to Israel, I will examine and address the extent to which real antisemitism may exist.

First, let me deal with the term 'antisemitism'. It is a European term for a European phenomenon - hatred and fear of Jews. It implies that Jews belong to an alien pseudo-race, like Arabs. To spell it hyphenated with the 's' in antisemitism spelled uppercase, implies there is a race of 'Semites'. This is spurious. The term 'Semitic' can be legitimately applied to a group of languages, not to a supposed 'race'. To hyphenate the word gives credence to the racist paradigm. Hence 'antisemitism' should be one un-hyphenated word.

It is with some ambivalence that I address this question of

antisemitism in the Palestine solidarity movement. This arises from the attitude to it in the movement, an attitude with a partially reasonable basis. It is this hesitancy and ambivalence that I wish to examine.

After all, we are here to fight for the rights of the Palestinians. It is Jews in the form of the Zionist movement who have dispossessed the Palestinians. Not 'the Jews', but some Jews, even if for a relatively short historical period, most Jews. These Zionist Jews justify the crime of dispossession in the name of justice and historic and religious entitlement.

And world-wide, the official Jewish leadership is dancing the military two-step with Israel, endorsing its every action, right or wrong. It can appear inappropriate to even raise the question of prejudice against Jews.

So, why ask the question of antisemitism in the Palestine solidarity movement at all? To effectively fight the false charges of antisemitism, we need to be impeccable in challenging the genuine article. If we do not take our stand firmly on the basis of justice and universal human rights, we lose the ground on which we can effectively fight in support of the Palestinians. For the integrity of our movement, we need to fight *all* prejudice, including antisemitism.

Since in the movement, we are so often accused of antisemitism, it makes sense to check out the extent it may manifest.

We exist in a society where, historically, hatred of Jews has been deeply entrenched.

In the wake of the horrors of World War II, overt antisemitism has been very much on the nose. That is why the accusation of antisemitism is such an effective weapon for the Zionist Lobby for silencing criticism of Israel and Zionism.

The far right is rearing its ugly head.

Along with extreme nationalisms and xenophobia, hard-line antisemitism is growing across the world. Even the security agencies in this country have named the far right as an emerging threat.

Jeff Sparrow has shown in a recent article in **Overland** how News Ltd allows some really shady, outright antisemitic writers to hide behind more mainstream right-wingers like Mark Latham and Rowan Dean. Synagogues have been bombed, Jewish cemeteries desecrated. While isolated, these incidents are not trivial.

The Czarist forgery, **The Protocols of the Elders of Zion** has very wide global circulation, despite its being exposed as fraudulent by The Times of London in 1921.

The contemporary currency of the **Protocols** is fuelled by opposition to the Zionist project as well as classic antisemitism. I need to stress, right up front, that I have seen nothing of this hard-line antisemitism that Jeff Sparrow refers to in the Palestine solidarity movement in Australia.

More prevalent in ordinary conversation, both in our movement and in the wider society is what I call common garden antisemitism. This is long-standing. There is a surprising amount of casual antisemitism about the wealth of Jews, about Jewish power, Jews controlling the world and so on. It astonishes me how easily people can continue to express such negative stereotypes about Jews. How acceptable it is, without social sanction.

While there is a clear difference between common garden and hard-line antisemitism, it is only one of degree. Indifference to the minor forms can lead to growth and acceptance of the other. Insofar as these general social trends operate in our movement, we must be vigilant in noting and eliminating them.

Just because Islamophobia is centre

stage and much more prevalent doesn't mean we should close our eyes to signs of antisemitism or be held back from confronting it by the ambivalence I have noted.

Both antisemitism and Islamophobia are hatreds which grow from the same ugly roots and they feed each other. The poison spewed by the likes of the United Patriots Front is traditional hard-line antisemitism, lurking in the wings but gaining a foothold in the mainstream alongside Islamophobia and xenophobia. Its actual existence, even if currently at the margins, demonstrates its deep roots in European culture. It sits there, waiting to emerge at times like now, when people are attacked on all sides by uncertainty, injustice and rising inequality.

We can best challenge the spurious charges of antisemitism if we challenge its real manifestations in our movement.

Antisemitism is a peculiar form of racism. It targets a group for supposedly being privileged and powerful. Because the Left opposes the privileged and powerful, it is easy even for people on the Left, confused by these stereotypes entrenched in European culture, to direct antagonism to this ethnic group instead of to the class that really holds privilege, wealth and power. Even Marx was not immune. That is why August Bebel called antisemitism 'the socialism of fools'.

And the ambivalence about calling out antisemitism has even a stronger basis within our movement because it is a Jewish nationalist movement, Zionism, that is the direct historical cause of the injustices we fight.

Our task is very much complicated by the fact that anti-Zionism and antisemitism are declared to be the same by our opponents.

No matter how often we say we oppose the historic and current crimes of Zionism, not Jews or

Judaism, they declare us to be antisemites.

So we must simply uphold and pursue our goal of justice and rights for Palestinians and not be at all defensive.

I have had a number of experiences of calling out antisemitism in the solidarity movement that I have encountered. Often enough, I let it go. But when it seems useful, I try to deal with it.

One example was at a Palestinian solidarity event a few years ago. While people were arriving before the start of the event, an audio-visual compilation was being projected on to a screen. This was identifying the percentage of Jews in publishing, in education, in finance etc. It was the classic antisemitic trope of the hidden power of Jews, pulling the strings, controlling the world. I felt sick in my stomach. I wanted to walk out.

But I thought 'No, that wouldn't be constructive. I need to deal with this.' So when there was an opportunity to take the microphone, I did. I pointed out how classically antisemitic this presentation was. I didn't do a censorious song and dance about it. I focused on how it made me feel, the 'I' statements they teach you in communications courses. I pointed out the indivisibility of human rights and that racism of any kind had no place in our movement.

My intervention was generally well-received, but I wished it hadn't been left to me to respond.

In a sense, lack of awareness of antisemitism is understandable among those whose history is not European. We have different histories in our movement. Those of us of European background know about this stuff, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. We know about the long dark shadows of antisemitism. Others may not. All the more reason for all of us, especially of European background, to take responsibility for calling it

out. Not moralising, not finger-pointing, just clarification.

And this task should not be left to those of us who are Jewish. Just as other targeted groups feel isolated and abandoned if they are the objects of prejudice and vilification, so do we if we find no allies.

Another example that caused considerable controversy was the cartoon by Glen Le Lievre in the Sydney Morning Herald 26 July during the 2014 onslaught on Gaza by Israel. It showed a yarmulke-wearing man in an armchair with a Star of David on the back, on a cliff-top, TV remote in hand, watching the bombing of Gaza. Massacre as entertainment, as armchair TV spectacle.



It was a very strong cartoon. It accurately reflected a number of published photos of actual Israelis watching, evidently enjoying from afar, the slaughter in Gaza. However, the face of the man was drawn as a heavily antisemitic stereotype. It was worthy of the vile efforts in the Nazi propaganda paper, *Die Sturmer*. The identifying features, the yarmulke, the Star of David, were purely Jewish religious, not national Israeli. Had the man been shown with an Israeli flag and with other national identifiers, there would be no problem with the cartoon. It would stand as a valid, powerful statement which could not be challenged as it accurately reflected reality.

There was a huge uproar of protest at the cartoon from the usual suspects. The Editor-in-Chief of the Sydney Morning Herald apologised for the cartoon and said

'The Herald now appreciates that, in using the Star of David and the kippah, ... the newspaper invoked an inappropriate element of



religion, rather than nationhood, and made a serious error of judgement. It was wrong to publish the cartoon in its original form.'

Yet here's the rub. The State of Israel has *appropriated* the religious Star of David on its national flag. It is a national symbol of Israel as well as a faith. The Zionist movement claims to speak for all Jews, claims that Israel is the Land of all Jews. And the propagandists for Israel call *all* criticism of Israel antisemitic. They call Jews who don't support their project 'not real Jews' and 'self-hating Jews'. Given that they believe that Israel belongs to all Jews and all Jews have an inalienable right to the land, there is a kind of logic in calling it antisemitic. The error lies in the spurious elision of Jewish identity with Zionism. Primary responsibility for the confusion lies with the Zionist movement.

A number of the reports on the controversy put the word 'antisemitic' in quotes. As if the characterisation of Le Lievre's cartoon as antisemitic was open to question, when clearly, on the basis of the facial features, it was not. So the real antisemitism of the cartoon, the ugly characteristics of the face portrayed, was ignored.

The cartoon was accompanied by an equally strong article by Mike Carlton, attacking the horrors of the attack on Gaza. There was not a trace of antisemitism in it, yet he was as much a target for the attacks of the Lobby and its allies as Le Lievre's cartoon.

There is a parallel with many of the cartoons of Margaret Thatcher. Her regime, too, deserved, and received, ferociously satirical cartoons. Some of it was very misogynist. Sexism was used to attack Thatcher's unjust policies, just as Le Lievre's cartoon used antisemitism to comment on Israel's savage attack on Gaza. It is totally unacceptable to use any form of hatred to expose and oppose any kind of injustice. It is

counter-productive. It is wrong.

We need to be clear about challenging ourselves and each other, when, as inevitable, we will from time to time, manifest the exclusionary behaviour we are fighting against in the wider society. This is especially so for antisemitism, that peculiar phenomenon of hatred and fear of Jews.

Despite the challenges and complexity of the situation of antisemitism in the Palestine solidarity movement, let us not shrink from exposing and confronting it. Let us do this appropriately, constructively, but let us not harbour it.



### Being Jewish in 'Swedistan'

By Yael W.

Shortly after moving to Sweden I was in touch with a relative who emailed with hopes for my safety, living in Malmö with the "Muslim problem." Having no idea what she was referring to, I went online and did some research. I couldn't seem to find evidence backing up her concerns. Much of what I came across were articles from obvious right-wing sources with inflammatory allegations of widespread sexual assault perpetrated by Muslims, yet little substantive journalism or reports to back up these claims. Around the world Islamophobes like to point to Sweden's "liberal" refugee policy as proof of what happens when you let in too many Muslims: Terrorism, rape, crime, "no go zones," (fake facts). Donald Trump made headlines when he said: "Look at what's happening last night in Sweden – Sweden!

Who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible." *Nothing actually happened in Sweden* (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-whats-happening-in-sweden-refugee-immigration-crime-stockholm-a7598536.html>).

A well-known US organisation that fights antisemitism - the Simon Wiesenthal Center, issued a warning to Jews to exercise "extreme caution when visiting southern Sweden." Cemeteries had been desecrated, the synagogue vandalised, and there was a high reported incidence of Jews being assaulted and threatened. A common perception I encountered was the location of antisemitism coming predominantly from Muslim Arab/Middle Eastern communities, and Sweden being the left leaning pleasant country enabling this through its support of Palestine. Is there antisemitism in these migrant communities? Absolutely. To what extent is hard to discern. However, what I was most shocked by was the prevalence of articles on the problem of Muslim antisemitism which were taken straight from far right and neo Nazi websites. Antisemitic networks provided a platform for blaming antisemitism on the Muslim population. And of course, fabricated facts were abundant. On a number of occasions, I read English articles which would conveniently insert the word Muslim before details of various perpetrators of crime where the original Swedish source made no mention of ethnicity or religion.

While distracted by these allegations of antisemitism amongst Muslim/Arab communities, the far right in recent years has grown in a seemingly welcoming political environment, and with it virulent and violent antisemitism. Violence which resulted in the Jewish

association in Umeå, Northern Sweden, closing its office space after threats from the Nazi group Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR). This same Nazi organisation was given a permit by the police to march on Yom Kippur this year in Sweden's second largest city, Gothenburg. Despite police briefings that the rally would be considered a threat against an ethnic or minority group (a crime in Sweden) should it use insignia, uniforms, banners or tactics reminiscent of Nazi Germany in the 30's and 40's, the rally went ahead. The fact that the rally was planned for Yom Kippur, something that was a frequent occurrence in Nazi Germany, and that the symbol of the Nordic resistance movement is taken straight from the Nazis, should be reason enough to have banned this hateful procession.



Images courtesy of the author.

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### **“It’s a disgrace for Sweden”**

Written by Robert Börjesson,  
translated by Yael W.

Originally published at  
<http://www.expressen.se/gt/qs/det-ar-en-skamflack-for-sverige/>

*They survived the concentration camps- now Nazis are demonstrating outside their synagogue.*

### **Nordic Resistance movement- Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen (NMR)**

This Nazi organisation NMR was given permission to demonstrate in Gothenburg on the 30th September. The Jewish

community in Gothenburg have protested against NMR being allowed to demonstrate near the synagogue and during the high holiday of Yom Kippur, the day of atonement.

Last Sunday a group from NMR protested through Gothenburg, despite not being given permission. Police in Gothenburg were strongly criticised for not stopping the demonstration.

They survived the horrors of the holocaust and found sanctuary in Sweden. Now Gothenburg's older Jewish population are trying to understand why the Nazi organisation NMR are permitted to demonstrate outside their synagogue during the high holiday of Yom Kippur.

Michael Ben-Menachem was only eight years old when he was sent to a labour camp. He is just one of the survivors who are critical of Swedish law and Gothenburg's police giving Nazis the right to demonstrate just 250 metres from the city's synagogue, and furthermore on the holiest of high holidays, the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. “It’s a disgrace for Sweden,” says Michael Ben-Menachem.

### **The symbols awaken memories.**

For Michael Ben-Menachem the Nordic resistance movement's symbol reminds him of Hungary's Nazi party. “The Nordic resistance movement has an arrow, and I am perhaps the only one who thinks about this, that we in Hungary had arrows. It awakens memories in me,” he says.

Since the Nazi NMR got permission to demonstrate on the 30<sup>th</sup> September many have reacted with concern for Gothenburg's Jews. The Prime Minister Stefan Löfven has deliberated over the conflict of interest between defending the rights of the demonstration and protecting

Gothenburg's Jewish congregation. Well known cultural figures have written debate pieces. But few have spoken with the men and women who likely feel the worst about the demonstration, those Jews that survived the horrors of the holocaust.

### **Many still have nightmares**

In Gothenburg's Jewish aged care home people want to speak about how it feels that Nazis are allowed to demonstrate nearby the synagogue on Yom Kippur. Many who survived the concentration camps still have nightmares. One woman describes that every night, 72 years after the end of the war, she still has the same nightmare: that she is back in the concentration camp and is being hunted by Nazis. One after the other they come to meet us, some in wheelchairs, others walking slowly with assistance from their carers. In the end, there are 23 pensioners in the room.

Nadia, 82, survived antisemitism two times, first in the Nazi concentration camp and then in Communist Poland. “I don't know if I will dare to go to synagogue now. I am scared. I fear what they can provoke.” She continues: “That they chose just this day. They knew what they were doing. And we support this. It's terrible.”

Another survivor, an older man who was in five different concentration camps, turns towards me.

“I will ask you one thing. Have you ever felt anxiety? Since this started with the march I have felt anxious. Everyone feels anxious that they permitted the march in the city centre on the same day that we have Yom Kippur,” he says. “When we came here in 1945 the thought was: ‘Never again,’ and now it's starting again. It feels horrible. And I wish that it wasn't true that they are permitted to

march out on the street and shout. It is a terrible experience.”

### “Why does it have to be the 30th September?”

Many in the aged care facility are pondering whether the police didn’t know it was Yom Kippur, or if they chose to ignore this. The latter alternative is the most painful to process. “The worst is that I believe that they knew, but didn’t care. This hurts,” says the man who survived five concentration camps. That the police on Sunday didn’t stop the Nazis who demonstrated without a permit in central Gothenburg triggers strong feelings in the aged care home. “In Germany it was exactly the same way Nazism started, that they demonstrated without asking first, and I remember this as a child,” says a woman who sat quietly for a long time. She continues: “I came to Sweden 42 years ago, after being in several concentration camps, and I remember how I felt when I arrived, I felt that finally we are free! Here nothing can happen. I am really saddened that we sit here and discuss these things now. The police saying that the Nazis can go on this route and do what they want as long as they are quiet and nothing happens is naïve. I was always very proud to have become Swedish. I am so disappointed in Sweden now.”

Many in the room want to share their thoughts. “Why is it so hard for the police in Gothenburg to change the date? Why does it need to be the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, the most important holy day that we have,” wonders an older man with glasses and a determined voice. A woman continues: “I don’t understand why they are allowed to march in Sweden. They are forbidden in Germany. We know too well who they are. They are murderers who will demonstrate.”

### One day for inner reflection, prayer and sanctity.

Next to her wonders a lady if there can be a counter demonstration and if so whether that can be violent. “There are a great many people who have expressed strong support for the Jewish community” says Benjamin Gerber. “They want to demonstrate, create a circle around the synagogue, but this is also problematic because this is a very special day. It’s a day for inner reflection, for prayer and sanctity. It is not a day for outer symbolism and demonstrations. There are other days when people can focus on this and on our part it takes a lot of energy and focus away from what the day means. So even if we have demonstrators that support us, in a sense we lose the atmosphere for this day.”

In the room sits Leopold who survived the second world war in Sweden. For him, antisemitism in Gothenburg is worse today than under the devastation of Nazi’s Europe. “I am born in Gothenburg and during the second world war there wasn’t the same pressure on us as Jews as there is now in Swedish society.” He says. “During the 30’s and 40’s we didn’t need protection, there wasn’t any. I remember that the front entrance was always wide open when I went to synagogue as a boy. Sure we were taunted many times when we left the synagogue, and sure, we felt the threat from the Germans, but we didn’t feel threat from local Nazis like we do now.”

Everyone in the room connects the NMR’s clothes and symbols with threat and death. “It’s a Nazi uniform,” many say at the same time.

Before we leave the old aged home one man, the man who asked if I had ever felt anxiety, explains that he dedicated a big part of his life to educated Swedish children on the Nazis evil and the holocaust. Recent headlines and Nazi demonstrations have made him

doubt if it helped. “The way things are today it seems I have failed.” he says.



### Excerpts from Emma Green “Are Jews White?”

The following excerpts were taken with the author’s permission from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/are-jews-white/509453/>

“As pro- and anti-Trump movements jockey to realize their agendas, the question of Jews and whiteness illustrates the high stakes—and dangers—of racialized politics. Over time, Jews have become more integrated into American society—a process scholars sometimes refer to as “becoming white.” It wasn’t the skin color of Ashkenazi Jews of European descent that changed, though; it was their status.”

“No matter how much prestige Jews may amass, their status is always ambiguous. “White” is not a skin color, but a category marking power. American Jews do have power, but they are also often viewed with suspicion; and having power is no assurance of protection. A majority of religiously motivated hate-crime offenses are committed against Jews.”

“‘White’ is a kind of cultural construct—a way of thinking of yourself, and a way that other people think about you,” said Goldstein. “Whiteness itself is a very fluid and contested category.” Race is not just a matter of skin pigmentation or ethnic



background. It is determined by both individuals and their observers, and the boundaries of who's in or out of one group or another change constantly."

*These excerpts were reproduced with the author's permission.*

European Christian collaborators to murder *a third* of our people. *In living memory.*

antisemitism is over and unrelated to other systems of oppression. It is also Trump egging neo-Nazis on.

*Jewish fear is not the same for every Jew.*

Jewish fear is smiling at a stranger on the street, getting a cold stare back and my thoughts immediately going to: *is it your yarmulke, is it your nose*, knowing that back then, Jews with a "good appearance" (i.e. Aryan-passing) were slightly more likely to survive. Knowing that we have been taught to hate and fear our own noses, to surgically smash and alter them to feel safe and beautiful. That when my father's study partner went hiking recently in upstate New York he was shot at in the woods by strangers because he was wearing Orthodox male clothing.

Jewish fear is not the same for every Jew. My own experience is shaped by being white, cis-male, traditionally observant, and of Ashkenazi heritage. Some of us descend from generations of Jews who have suffered from long centuries of European Christian violence; some of us descend from generations of Jews who for centuries on end received comparatively better treatment from their North African or Middle Eastern Muslim neighbours and rulers, only to have those relationships shattered by European Christian colonialism and imported antisemitism; others of us may have non-Jewish ancestors of various heritages in the recent or distant past. Some Jews, like me, are light-skinned, with whiteness that largely protects us from American state violence; some are Jews of colour, multiply targeted by the intersections of racism and antisemitism, and if they descend from Middle Eastern or North African countries, Anti-Arab racism and/or Islamophobia. Some Jews are increasingly afraid to walk the streets in Trump's America if



## **Jewish Fear, Love, & Solidarity in the Wake of Charlottesville**

By Jonah Boyarin

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### **Jewish Fear**

*Jewish fear is American Neo-Nazi chanting "Blood and Soil" on American soil.*

Jewish fear is that buzzing feeling in our bones that won't let us sleep at night, because we don't know when it will come next.

Jewish fear is American Neo-Nazi chanting "Blood and Soil" on American soil. In living memory, that chant ("Blut und Boden"), and the fascist ideology that birthed it, organized mass movements of German Nazis, and Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, and other

Jewish fear is googling "Blut und Boden" and knowing that some of the top hits will be contemporary calls for the extermination of my people. It is clicking on a Bustle article entitled, "What Does 'Blood & Soil' Mean? Charlottesville Protesters Heard This Disturbing Chant," and not seeing the words "antisemitism" or "Jews" mentioned once. It is the Charlottesville police declining to defend Charlottesville's synagogue from armed neo-Nazis.

Jewish fear is receiving death threats targeting me as a Jew who writes publicly. It is how terrifyingly common that is, all the more so for those who, unlike me, are multiply targeted for being female, gender-queer, and/or Jews of colour.

Jewish fear is the casual ease with which people compare Trump's America to Nazi Germany, without imagining those comparisons to be triggering to Jews, because they think



they are women, or visibly gender-or-sexuality queer.

*Jewish fear is antisemitic conspiracy theories alive and well in 2017*

Jewish fear is the risk of white Jews feeling so triggered and alone that we forget that the neo-Nazis marched on Charlottesville to defend the memory of Black slavery, or that Charlottesville itself sits on land haunted by white genocide and expulsion of indigenous people. It's white Jews caught up in whiteness, and terrified by the idea that any Jew might be vulnerable, forgetting or denying that Black Jews exist, that Black Jews stand doubly threatened by neo-Nazis who envision an America bereft of Black people and Jews. It is white Jews, afraid that any critique of Israel bears a hint of or is a prelude to attempted genocide, reflexively defending Israel's state violence toward Palestinians or rejecting the Vision for Black Lives wholesale over its single paragraph of critique of Israel.

Jewish fear is antisemitic conspiracy theories alive and well in 2017: Neo-Nazis in Charlottesville chanting "Jew will not replace us," holding up signs about overthrowing the "Jewish media," called to action by the Daily Stormer to "Unite the Right...[and] End Jewish Influence in America." In America, where ruling-class, white Christian Henry Ford popularized the fraudulent antisemitic conspiracy theory book, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an adapted version of which could still be found on Walmart's shelves in 2004. In America, which used racist immigration quotas in 1939 to turn away the S.S. *St. Louis* and its 900 German (overwhelmingly Jewish) refugees, back to Europe and the Nazis, who used antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jewish

wealth and control to justify their acts of genocide.

Jewish fear is all the well-meaning and ill-meaning friends, co-workers, and acquaintances who talk about how Jews are good with money. It is the way that Jewish wealth gets highlighted as Jewish/Jewish poverty gets invisibilised, while the overwhelming Christianity of the ruling class in this country goes unmarked. It is Jews structurally set up to be urban landlords to working-class tenants people of colour, with all of the on-the-surface exploitation that entails; while white Christians ruling class members own the luxury towers, the banks, the suburbs, whose operation runs smoothly and goes unmarked as exploitative.

*Jewish fear is we are still alone.*

Jewish fear is the recurring silence from non-Jews about the explicitly, particularly antisemitic language and behaviour of the neo-Nazis in Charlottesville. It is seeing, with rare exceptions, only Jewish friends of mine posting on social media when Jewish cemeteries are vandalized or when the Boston Holocaust memorial was destroyed this week for the second time this summer.

Jewish fear is if we bring up our struggle to non-Jewish comrades, we will be gaslighted and shamed into silence, because structural antisemitism functions by portraying us as conspiratorially, greedily powerful despite our repeated vulnerability to structural, white Christian male violence.

Jewish fear is I ask a dear friend of mine, a white man of Christian heritage, to learn about antisemitism, and he ignores me; I ask him a second time, and he evades; I ask him a third time, pained and confused, and our relationship badly falters. (He later apologizes, reads up, and reopens

the conversation, for which I am sincerely grateful.)

Jewish fear is time and again when white Christian male violence has come for us, we have stood alone.

Jewish fear is we are still alone.

## **Jewish Love**

Jewish love is we are never alone.

*Jewish love is our deep lineage of resistance to abusive systems of power.*

Jewish love is we have each other. We have our ancestors/those who did Jewishness before us and our descendants/those will do Jewishness after us. We have a sense of being that stretches beyond immediate time and place, that broadens and deepens our capacity to love, care, and take action for all living things.

Jewish love is we have others, too. We live in an unprecedented time of possibility for close connection between Jews and non-Jews.

Jewish love is that *Hashem* chose us with love (הבוחר בעמו ישראל (באהבה)). Jewish love is connecting those words to my heart, spirit, and flesh with the utterance of my lips and with my *tefillin*.

Jewish love is our foremothers / aunties composing tkhines and other prayers to say in times of joy and plenty as well as prayers to say in times of fear and hardship, as well as love songs, and play songs, and songs of loss, and songs to pass the time. They bequeathed them to us in Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, Yiddish, Hebrew, and other Jewish languages. Jewish love is learning those languages so we can honour their gift and resilience.

*Jewish love is we have others, too.*

Jewish love is our deep lineage of resistance to abusive systems of power. It is the passion and *chutzpah* of a young, Yiddish-

speaking Clara Lemlich, who in 1909 incited the “Uprising of the 20,000, the largest strike by women workers in the United States to that time.” It is one-third of Ashkenazi Jewry belonging to the Jewish Socialist Bund or the Communist Party during the interwar period. It is the Mizrahi Black Panthers fighting white supremacy within Israeli society, in solidarity with Palestine. Jewish justice is, to paraphrase Dr West, what Jewish love looks like in public. It is generations of Jewish radicals committed to a fight for a better world, to this present day.

Jewish love is the unshakable dignity with which my severely disabled brother is treated by the ultra-Orthodox Jewish organization which cares for him. They have inherited a worldview from their ancestors that recognizes that my brother’s innate worth does not depend on his ability to produce.

Jewish love is true *ahavas yisrael*, building an accessible, beloved Jewish community that centres the experiences and leadership of Jews of colour, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jews, and honour our diverse array of diasporic Jewish traditions, which are resources and options for Jewish life today.

## **Jewish Solidarity**

Jewish solidarity is solidarity of non-Jews to Jewish people.

Jewish solidarity is also solidarity of Jews to other targeted peoples.

*Jewish solidarity is Jewish rabbis and rabbinical students laying their bodies on the line.*

Jewish solidarity is also solidarity of Jews to other Jews, particularly multiply targeted Jews: Jews of colour, Sephardi Jews, Mirzrahi Jews; female Jews; gender- and sexuality-queer Jews; disabled Jews; poor Jews, and others.

Jewish solidarity is non-Jews checking in with the Jewish people in their lives right now to see how they’re doing, to see if they can provide some harm reduction by offering to lend an ear, bring over some homemade soup, or take a shift at work. It is also white Jews checking in with the people of colour, Jewish and non-Jewish, in their lives to offer the same.

Jewish solidarity is white Jews organizing our communities to support Black, Brown, and Indigenous-led organizing, recognizing that this country was founded on and continues to organize itself around anti-Blackness and indigenous genocide.

Jewish solidarity is Jews for Racial & Economic Justice (JFREJ) in NYC showing up effectively for decades in feminist, anti-racist, anti-Islamophobic coalitions, building long-term relationships with sister organizations led by people of colour, immigrants, and Muslims; and those organizations now stepping up with JFREJ’s guidance to study and resist antisemitism.

Jewish solidarity is Jewish rabbis and rabbinical students laying their bodies on the line and “Standing Against White Supremacy in Charlottesville.”

*Jewish solidarity is Linda Sarsour helping raise over \$100,000 from Muslim communities to repair Jewish cemeteries.*

Jewish solidarity is non-Jews reading the writing (see below) of Jewish anti-racists in response to Charlottesville — reading and then lifting up those Jewish voices within their non-Jewish communities. It is Christian heritage friends of mine who have studied antisemitism when I ask them to, and have integrated resistance of antisemitism into their everyday interactions and their liberation work.

Jewish solidarity is naming the way that contemporary American neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and KKK feature a range of antisemitic language and behaviours that draw directly from German WWII Nazi ideology and goals, while also moving carefully because articulating this connection is terrifying and triggering to many American Jews. It’s acknowledging that Jews are responding to this difficult balance in a variety of ways.

Jewish solidarity is the Jewish self-defence clubs that Jews formed in Poland to protect our communities from fascists and the police who actively abetted them. It is German Christian accomplices like the White Rose who resisted the Nazi regime. It is Goodman and Schwerner going down South with Cheney to break Jim Crow.

Jewish solidarity is naming the ways patriarchy underpins anti-Jewish violence and all other forms of structural violence, and committing to feminist transformations of our communities.

*Jewish solidarity is white Jews showing up for racial justice.*

Jewish solidarity is Linda Sarsour helping raise over \$100,000 from Muslim communities to repair Jewish cemeteries, and JFREJ and Jewish Voice for Peace defending her from right-wing attacks for her solidarity to Palestine.

Jewish solidarity is solidarity for Palestine that follows the lead of Palestinian civil rights leaders and includes Jews in our vision of collective liberation. It actively resists Christian Western imperialism and structural antisemitism. It centres the voices of Palestinians and Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews.

Jewish solidarity is non-Jewish organizers of the March for Racial Justice scheduling their action for

the anniversary of the Elaine Massacre, learning that they had excluded many Jews because this date falls on Yom Kippur this year, and modelling open-hearted, creative accountability in response. It is non-Black Jews learning about the history of anti-Black violence in this country, including the Elaine Massacre.

Jewish solidarity is non-Jews taking responsibility for educating and organizing their people. It's anti-racist community organizing that studies antisemitism and Christian hegemony and integrates that analysis into all of our people's movements. The more our movements do that, the more we will effectively resist systems of white supremacy and capitalism, which are interdependent with structural antisemitism.

*Everyone is accountable and no one is disposable.*

Jewish solidarity is white Jews showing up for racial justice. It is moving our dominant American Jewish communal institutions and the state of Israel away from apathy, isolation, and complicity by building long-term, generous, mutually accountable relationships with communities of colour, Muslims, queer people, and Palestinians as our comrades in collective resistance of Christian white supremacy. It is moving our communities towards justice with fierce love, knowing that everyone is accountable, and no one is disposable.

Jewish solidarity is part of collective liberation.

Acknowledgment: I extend my heartfelt thanks to Nadav David, Elana Baurer, Jessica Rosenberg, Rebecca Ennen, Helen Bennett, and other dear comrades who encouraged me and helped shape this piece.

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the Jewish Community', an ardent defender of the Jewish State, a bigoted anti-Islamist, has attracted over 80,000 followers on his Facebook page. Yemini, who claims to have fought in the IDF, finds common ground with other Islamophobic organisations, Neo-Nazi extremists, who have not tried in the past to hide their antisemitism.

How far do these extreme and perhaps unhinged manifestations of an alliance between Jews, Fascist



Betar Youth Group, Sarny, Poland, 19/10/1932. My mother, Raya Bak, 15 years old, seated immediately below and to the left (facing) of Menachem Begin (centre).

### **Jews, Fascism and Antisemitism. A paradoxical alliance?**

By Ann Elizabeth Fink

In Israel, the son of the Prime Minister of the Jewish State, Yair Netanyahu, posts an image on his Facebook page that is laden with antisemitic imagery. He draws an equivalence between what he refers to as far-right "scum" and leftist "thugs". He also claims that lefties hate America and Israel and are the real threat. Fascism "and all that is in the past."

In Melbourne, Australia, a thuggish, muscle bound publicity seeking Gym owner, Avi Yemini, a self-proclaimed 'prominent figure in

and Anti Semites represent what is happening in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora? How far does the outrage expressed in Haaretz and in some Israeli social media extend? How much support do the Avi Yeminis of Melbourne enjoy in Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora? How did it even come to be a question we need to discuss?

### **Jews and Fascism**

Jewish support for fascist regimes is not a new phenomenon. As first articulated by Mussolini in Italy in the 1920s, it was a form of radical authoritarian nationalism. Placed on the far Right on the traditional Left-Right spectrum, Fascists

rejected assertions that violence is automatically negative in nature and accepted political violence, war, and colonisation as means to achieve national goals.

Many Italian Jews were sympathetic to the regime and occupied significant offices and positions in Italian political and economic life until the promulgation of the 1938 racial laws (Italian Jews were also active in anti-fascist organisations). Vladimir Jabotinski was an early admirer of the Fascist regime, which helped the establishment in 1934 of a navy officer training camp in Civitavecchia for Mandatory Palestine Jews, laying the foundations of the Israeli Navy. With the rise of Hitler in Germany, Italian Fascists, influenced by Nazism and its race theories, actively began promoting antisemitism; Jews were depicted both as "rootless cosmopolitan" capitalist bourgeois and as communists.

Until the mid-1930s, European Jews were divided in their allegiances all along the political spectrum. On the far Left, Jews were active in the Communist parties and on the far Right, followers of Jabotinski's Herut movement admired Mussolini. In South America, the Middle East, and in North Africa, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt, Jews were active in communist, socialist, nationalist and Fascist movements.

Among Zionist Jews, these divisions were deep and significant, both in Europe and in Mandated Palestine. There is no need to rehearse the bloody events which preceded the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel as Menachem Begin on the right, and Ben Gurion, representing the centre Left, vied for control of the Yishuv (the nascent State) with their separate militias.

In pre-war Poland, the Zionist youth group Betar, founded by Menachem Begin and HaShomer

HaTsair, the Zionist socialist secular youth movement, fought battles on the streets of Warsaw. To my parents, Avi Yemeni would not have appeared a singular phenomenon. The difference being that in Warsaw, Betar youth operated within the Jewish community and not alongside the Polish Fascist groups. In Italy, it was different. In the UK, while there were deep divisions within the Jewish community as to how to react to Fascism, there is no evidence that there was any active support for the fascists.

Among the most vociferous of the Jewish anti-fascist groups was the Bund. "The Bund... founded in 1897, in Poland, Russia and Lithuania... opposed assimilation, defended Jewish civil and cultural rights, and campaigned actively against anti-Semitism" (Phillip Mendes). The Bund was secular and socialist.

### **Jews and Pre-War Tolerance of Antisemitism**

For centuries, European Jews had survived within societies that were deeply and ineradicably antisemitic. The Middle East was at times more hospitable but this varied over time and place. Jews survived despite pogroms, cruelty, abuse, deprivations and restrictions on movement, trade, residence, social participation, communication and speech. They adapted strategies by cooperating, working within the system, and moving from one area to another when life became intolerable, or were expelled. They converted to the dominant religion when it was possible, and when personal ambition was so strong it would not tolerate the strictures placed upon it. But self-identification as Jews for the large majority appeared to be non-negotiable, nor for the most part, possible.

There were exceptions. The Association of German National Jews (*Verband*

*nationaldeutscher Juden*) was a German Jewish organization during the Weimar Republic and the early years of Nazi Germany. The goal of the Association was the total assimilation of Jews into the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, self-eradication of Jewish identity, and the expulsion from Germany of the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. It was opposed to Zionists and Eastern European Jews, whom they saw as racially and spiritually inferior. Some German Jews supported Hitler because they thought antisemitism was only for the purpose of "stirring up the masses". Politically, the Association was close to the German National People's Party, a national conservative party, which refused to recognise the association, despite the fact that they had come out in support of Hitler. Founded in 1921, it was dissolved in 1935.

In Vienna, there was also deep antagonism to the influx of Eastern European Jews and early support for Hitler. In 1978, Friedrich Hayek, the Vienna born, Nobel Prize winning economist, in support of Margaret Thatcher's immigration policy, warned of the dangers of immigration into the UK by "visibly different looking" populations. He attributed the rise in antisemitism in Vienna after WWI to the "sudden influx of Galician and Polish Jews" This was a view commonly held not only by Viennese and German Jews, but also by Anglo Jews in Australia who warned against the mass immigration of Eastern European AND German and Austrian Jews both before and after World War II (WWII).

### **World War II and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**

In the aftermath of WWII, the defeat of the Fascist forces of Germany, Italy and Japan revealed the full scale of the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe and the



barbarity of the Japanese in Manchuria and elsewhere.

With the end of the war, and the creation of the United Nations (UN), the international community vowed never to allow such atrocities to happen again. World leaders decided to complement the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere. This became the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, introduced at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946 and ultimately adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

The end of WWII also saw the establishment of the State of Israel by the UN in 1949 only a few months after the UDHR, and to which Israel itself became a signatory. In the 1950s, Jews worldwide identified strongly as anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi. The enemy was Communism and the most heinous, state-sponsored, postwar manifestation of antisemitism, was that of Stalin's USSR.

In the following decades, the world witnessed much progress but also huge population dislocations and mass slaughter (although not on the scale of WWII). Partition of India into Pakistan and then Bangladesh along a religious divide, just prior to the UDHR, made for an inauspicious introduction. The European Union, the success of Desegregation in the USA, the spread of the Civil Rights movement as well as the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, all seemed indications of a world adopting more progressive and liberal ideologies. The rise of nationalist movements which succeeded in overthrowing dictatorships and colonial powers in the Middle East, Africa and South America also raised optimistic spirits in the first two or three decades after the war.

These hopes were dashed as increasingly old conflicts re-emerged and were manipulated by

the superpowers, the Cold War protagonists. The dependence on oil fueled the rise of new powers in the Middle East. Crimes against humanity were again being committed, this time in full view: in Srebrenica, Bosnia, Rwanda, all under the watch of UN peacekeepers, claiming they were helpless to intervene. The colonial powers which had been overthrown in Africa, gave way to even more despotic regimes in Zimbabwe and Libya. The ousting of the Shah of Iran in a revolution fomented by secular democrats, was hijacked by a repressive theocracy.

### **Zionism and Racism**

In Israel and elsewhere, The UN (and the UDHR) came to be regarded as impotent and inconsequential, and open to manipulation by the member states, culminating in the passing of UN Resolution 3379, which determined that "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination." It has since been rescinded. The UN frequently criticised the behaviour of the Israeli state towards the indigenous Palestinian population, over whom it had gained sovereignty as a result of the War of Independence in 1948 and of whom a large proportion, approximately 700,000-800,000 people, had been expelled; very few of whom were ever to be allowed back to their homes. This action was contrary to the UDHR, a problem that had been expediently set aside during the vote for Israel's admission to the UN, but which was to become a very thorny issue in later years. The Nakba continues to be a central issue in the present conflict.

The mass expulsion of Jews from Arab lands in the early 1950s (in roughly the same numbers as expelled Palestinians) and the 'integration' of these 'Arab Jews' into the new state, appeased the consciences of many liberal

Zionists, fervent believers in human rights, and who had enthusiastically welcomed the UDHR. Indeed, the UN took 'temporary' responsibility for this population, albeit with disastrous consequences. It was hoped that just as Israel had settled the hundreds of thousands of Jews from Arab lands with full citizenship entitlement, the Arab Palestinians would be similarly absorbed by neighbouring states. This was not to happen.

In the Diaspora, Jews were becoming increasingly attached to the State of Israel, a homeland for the Jewish people, *and* one which promised to safeguard the rights of *all* its citizens. American Jewry which had in the past received the majority of refugees from Europe, was largely democratic and progressive. Jews had been active leaders of the trade unions in New York, and in the 1960s and 1970s were in the forefront of the Civil Rights movement. For these Jews, Israel was a beacon, a socialist-leaning, democratic State. David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Labour centre Left, had triumphed politically over Menachem Begin, whose ideological origins lay in Mussolini's Right wing Fascism. In South Africa, Jews were prominent in the fight against Apartheid.

Zionist organisations became the centre of Jewish life. Not only in the USA but in the Australia, South Africa, South America, Canada and the UK. It provided the networks and social and emotional security to a population dispersed across the continents. The USA and Israel now had roughly equal numbers of Jews and the USA was felt by most American Jews, in that postwar era, to be an alternate homeland to which they owed fealty, and which they were happy to subscribe and support. Rallying around the Zionist flag replaced what had been the 'kehila', the tight community of the shtetls, and Jewish cultural centres in the large European cities.

In the first three postwar decades, Left wing Jews became increasingly disillusioned. First with Soviet Communism, then the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, followed by the invasion of the Soviet army into Czechoslovakia following the "Prague Spring". Simultaneously in Poland, a student-led revolt became the pretext for the Gomulka government to unleash an antisemitic purge which resulted in the emigration of tens of thousands of Polish Jews, 13,000 of whom arrived in Israel between 1968 and 1972.

### **The 1967 Six Day War: Expulsion and Colonisation**

Israel's victory in June 1967 led to further large-scale dislocation of the Palestinian population and the military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. The Golan was annexed as was East Jerusalem. The military occupation exists to this day, as does full military control over Gaza. The Occupation of the Palestinian Territories (OPT) also opened the areas of the West Bank, known to the Israelis as Judea and Samaria, to large scale colonial type settlement; a population which now exceeds 600,000.

### **Menachem Begin and the Rise of the Political Power of the Right**

In 1977, Menachem Begin became Prime Minister of Israel as head of the Likud party, whose origins as the Right wing Herut movement had, in the early years, been relegated to the political fringe. This victory of the political centre Right ended the three decades of Labor Party centre Left dominance.

The population that voted for Begin was one in which the Mizrahim, North African and Middle Eastern Jews were much more represented than in previous elections. 30 years on from the founding of the state, a new

generation of Israelis had reached adulthood and were expressing their dissatisfaction with the old guard. Conservative politicians around the world hailed Begin's victory. Those of us who remembered his origins were more pessimistic.

The ensuing 30 years saw Israel's increasing prosperity, the rise in influence of religious nationalism as well as the power of the Chief Rabbinate. The IDF remained entrenched in the OPT, and following the uprisings (intifadas) of 1987 and 2000 this Military Occupation became even more restrictive and punitive. The failure of the Oslo peace talks also diminished the influence of 'liberal' Zionists.

In the Diaspora similar forces were at work. Prosperity, generational change and security, all contributed to an increase in conservative political perspectives. In 1990 following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emigration to Israel of one million former Soviet citizens, the political scene was completely rebooted. Both in the Diaspora and in Israel, there was a growth in political conservatism along with privatisation of public assets and corporate globalisation.

### **Netanyahu: Consolidation of Right Wing and Religious Political Power**

In 2015, on the day of the general election and following Prime Minister, Netanyahu's urging in tweets and emails, "Hurry friends, the Arabs are going out in droves to vote, bussed in by the Left", the Israeli electorate voted into power the most Right-wing government in its history (it should also be noted that the Joint List, made up of largely Israeli Palestinian with some Israeli Jewish representation, formed the third largest of the political parties represented in the new Knesset). This Knesset proceeded to introduce the most divisive, ethnically biased laws in Israel's

history. The present Israeli government more commonly refers to Israel as The Jewish State. Divergent and critical opinions, while still possible, are increasingly threatened. In the OPT, settlements grow apace; the stranglehold by Israel from the outside, and the repression of Gaza from within, by Hamas, has impoverished and disempowered the population to the point of near starvation and desperation. All movement towards an independent Palestinian State is on hold.



*The Israeli Black Panthers (pictured) were disadvantaged Mizrahi Jews protesting the Israeli State's actions. Image taken from <https://972mag.com/palestinians-are-the-glue-that-holds-ashkenazim-and-mizrahim-together/128061/>*

Contributing to the success of the parties that comprise Netanyahu's Right-wing coalition are the Mizrahim, who have long complained of institutional bias rooted in Ashkenazi (European) dominance and control in the early years of the state. This discontent with the uneven distribution of power and economic advantage has become an important factor in the rise of the Right's political parties. Antipathy to Mizrahim does not seem to be obvious at the individual level, but social and economic structures dating from the early years are still factors influencing the distribution of wealth and power.

The ex-CIS (Soviet) émigré population is more Right wing and anti-Palestinian than other secular sectors of the the Israeli public. Most supportive of the continuing OPT, and the concept of a greater Israel are the Settlers, religious and secular nationalists, a large

contingent of whom are American citizens, or whose settlements depend on American philanthropy and who in 2016 come out in strong and very well organised support for Donald Trump.

Alongside and adding to this consolidation of right wing political power is the stranglehold of the Chief Rabbinate. Represented by two political parties in the coalition, this ultra nationalist government ultimately depends on their support. The Chief Rabbinate also assumes the power to decide who will be classified as a Jew and thus deserving of the full rights of citizenship. Not only does the Chief Rabbinate exercise its power within Israel in deciding who is a Jew, but it is extending that right worldwide. The Chief Rabbinate publishes lists of recognised Rabbis in the Diaspora whose marriages and conversions will be recognised and names those whose marriages and conversions will no longer be valid. The ramification of such policies will have serious consequences for citizenship both within Israel and in terms of rights of immigration from the Diaspora. The Jewish State now contemplates how to deal with first degree Jews and a second tier of 'would be Jews', whether by conversion, marriage, birth in Israel to non-recognised parents, or a host of other conditions as ordained by the Chief Rabbinate.

### **Racism within Israel**

In contemporary Israel, racial bigotry directed at fellow Israeli Jews is a fact of life. Manifestations of such bigotry in Israel are witnessed and suffered daily by the Ethiopian community. A visibly distinct community, they are regularly victims of police brutality and suffer systematic discrimination in the education system, workplace, in housing and throughout the bureaucracy. African refugees and asylum seekers are subjected to frequent

abuse by the general public and their status is not recognised by the Israeli Government.

The Palestinian Israeli population is also targeted most often in Jerusalem and particularly in East Jerusalem. Right wing fascist organisations such as Lahava and the Jerusalem Betar Football fans are often seen and recorded, intimidating East Jerusalem residents and are always present at protests and demonstrations held by anti-government groups.

### **The IDF in the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

In the OPT, the brutality of IDF soldiers, their terrorising activities aimed at the pacification of the Palestinian population and the blindness of the upper echelons to the murder of civilians recently came under close scrutiny with the prosecution of the soldier Elor Azaria, who shot at close range an already gravely wounded Palestinian, Abdel Fattah al-Sharif, lying prone and 'neutralised' on the ground. This deliberate murder was by no means singular, but it was filmed and the video widely distributed by the NGO B'Tselem. This action offends the rules of the IDF, and the decision of a particular commanding officer on that particular day, and prior to the distribution of the video, resulted in the arrest and subsequent prosecution and sentencing of the soldier. Azariya's action was by no means unusual. What followed was a public debate as to how tolerable were such actions and by implication many other actions of the IDF in the OPT. Moshe Ya'alon, the Defence Minister and no supporter of the Palestinian cause, resigned in the wake of public and political criticism of his declaration that this killing of a wounded prisoner was indefensible.

### **Political Fascism in Israel**

The recent proclamation by the Minister of Justice, Ayelet Shaked, supported by the Netanyahu cabinet, that henceforth she would seek to ensure that Israeli Jewish rights and interests would always trump human rights and civil liberties, clarified for even the most optimistic liberal Zionists, the essentially fascist nature of this present Knesset.

Liberal Zionists in Israel and much more prominently in the USA are increasingly uncomfortable with this openly Right wing, proto-fascist government and its toleration of the thuggish and brutal behaviour of some of its ardent supporters.

Netanyahu's very public courtship of Donald Trump, his supine silence in the face of openly antisemitic rants by Donald Trump's close advisors, does not seem to worry the majority of voters in Israel, but has stirred considerable controversy among Jews in the USA and elsewhere in the Diaspora. In publications such as Haaretz and in social media, there is outrage, moral indignation and disbelief that Jews are allying themselves, not only with Right wing, anti-democratic, but also transparently antisemitic forces. Charlottesville graphically illustrates the impotence of Israeli leaders to deal with what had originally been one of the prime goals of the establishment of the State of Israel.

In 1948, Israelis and Jews worldwide declared, 'Never again will we march like sheep to the gas chambers'. In 2017, Yair Netanyahu, the 26-year-old son of the Prime Minister of the Jewish State, posts statements on his Facebook page, in which he draws an equivalence between what he referred to as far-Right "scum" and Leftist "thugs" denying any elements of fascism, claiming "all that was in the past."

This statement from the very pinnacle of Israeli power, enables Zionist supporters in Israel and in the Diaspora to deny the ideological fascism informing the Jewish State's policies and to frame the opposition and anti-fascist forces as Leftist thugs, 'anti-Israel, anti-American'. This discourse has been quickly seized upon. The language of equivalence is repeated among pro-Zionists and attempts to characterise the anti-fascist movement as a danger to the State of Israel.

### **The Alliance of Jews, Fascists and Anti-Semites**

Jewish fascism has deep historical roots. This alliance with openly antisemitic political forces in the postwar era is not so familiar. Maybe the best analogy would be with Jews who supported Stalin's communism even after the Soviet pact with Nazi Germany. The contingencies of war, and later a sublime hope that the socialist goals of the Soviet Union and satellites such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, would excuse/justify this aberrant behaviour.

Much the same sort of thinking appears to lie behind many individuals' support for Trump and Netanyahu. Is it good or bad for Jews? Advantageous or disadvantageous for the Netanyahu government? What is being claimed is that the welfare of the Jewish State trumps all other considerations. This present alliance of Jews, Fascists and Anti Semites in the USA, is seen in many quarters as instrumental in furthering the Zionist project.

Nor are such alliances really new. All Israeli governments have dealt with despotic dictatorships, African, Asian, South American and Middle Eastern. Many of the countries to which Israel has supplied weapons, technology, and know-how, have had antisemitic and anti-Israel policies. What

distinguishes this government is its open and political support for such regimes. Israel's dealings with such hostile states were always covert. Their dealings did not serve to enhance their standing in the public eye. Despite its discriminatory policies toward Israeli Palestinians, and the facts of the OPT, Zionists have always maintained that they are committed to the values of Democracy.

This open espousal of fascist ideology, the lengths to which the present Israeli government is going to dismantle the institutions that supported the democratic project and the total failure to find a solution to the Palestinian Israel conflict have led some progressive Zionists to radically rethink their loyalty to the project.

So-called Liberal and Democratic Zionists, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, now face a stark choice between defending their beliefs in the principals of the UDHR, the belief that *all* citizens of the State of Israel are entitled to equality before the law, and in all other matters, including family reunion. The alternative is descent into an ethnic and religious autocracy, a fascist regime, whose declared aims are the annexation and colonisation of 60% of the Palestinian West Bank and the continuation of the denial of human rights and civil liberties to its 4.5 million inhabitants. Together with the prioritising of Jewish citizens in Israel, this effectively means holding 6 million Palestinians hostage in a Jewish State.

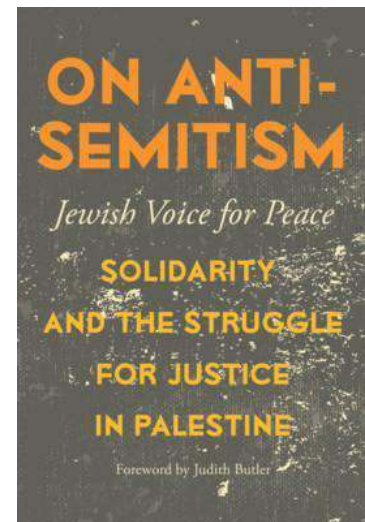
The question being asked is how far do the extreme and perhaps unhinged manifestations of an alliance between Jews, Fascist and anti-Semites as represented by Yair Netanyahu and the Avi Yemini of the Diaspora characterise what is happening in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora? In the USA there has been very loud and widespread condemnation. In Australia, a few hundred Jewish

anti fascists have been active in successfully opposing Avi Yemini's attempts to gain a respectable platform from which to disseminate his fascist and racist ideology. But many in the Jewish community seem happy to adopt the language of equivalence (of far Right and anti-fascists) and the characterisation of those who are anti fascists as 'Leftist' and anti-Israel. In contrast to the USA, there is no evidence that the support for the Jewish State is being eroded in Australia.

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### **On Antisemitism by Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP): book review**

By Yael W.



*On Antisemitism* is a timely collection of writings given the current increase in popularity and organisation of the Right and far Right. The work is relevant not only given the overt antisemitism from the far Right in Western countries, but also in light of Israel's most Right-wing government, which highlights the problematic discourse around the definition of antisemitism. That is, 'new antisemitism', which asserts that criticism of Israel is antisemitic. It is refreshing to see such a brave, critical and articulate collation of works addressing such an important issue for us. Indeed, if we don't engage with the issue of antisemitism, it is left in the hands



of pro-Zionist groups who use new antisemitism as a weapon to stifle dissent.

Featuring contributions from activists, academics, students, and religious leaders, the book brings together a broad diversity of voices and views on antisemitism, its definition, history, narratives and impacts, and reiterates the necessity of addressing the complexities of this issue. It is also the first book on the topic to include the voices of Christian and Muslim Palestinians, and Jewish and Christian African Americans. In the foreword, Judith Butler argues that to challenge antisemitism it needs to be defined, and emphasises having a nuanced approach which considers the different historical experiences of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi and Jews of colour. Indeed, JVP has done a great job including Jews who are often marginalised, and sometimes completely erased, in conversations around antisemitism. Tallie Ben Daniel is one such writer, articulately examining the Eurocentric deconstruction of antisemitism and Mizrahi erasure and oppression in the Left. She has given us permission to republish her chapter in this issue of *Just Voices*.

Each chapter engages with various issues pertinent to an examination of antisemitism, and while I would love to credit all contributors it is beyond the scope of this review. The book is split into sections on histories and theories of antisemitism, confronting antisemitism and islamophobia, and fighting false charges of antisemitism. Some of the topics covered include new antisemitism, a historical look at Christian antisemitism, the specificities of anti-Black racism in Jewish communities and antisemitism in Black communities, racism, orientalism, oppression of Mizrahi

and Sephardi Jews, Islamophobia in the context of Imperialism and the 'war on terror' and Israel's role in this, as well as colonisation, the influence of Christian European antisemitism introduced to the Middle East, and much more.

The Muslim and Palestinian voices presented in the book are inspiring, and a solid reminder of the intersections of our struggles, as Linda Sarsour writes: "Islamophobia is one branch on the tree of racism. Islamophobia, homophobia, anti-Black racism, and antisemitism are all connected and we cannot dismantle one without the other." Omar Barghouti tackles the false charges of antisemitism levelled at Palestinian solidarity movements and activists with a balanced approach which acknowledges the hurt caused by antisemitic language and advocating vigilance in accurate and respectful communication.

A strong theme in the book, one addressed by many of the contributors, is that of new antisemitism. New antisemitism is critiqued for obfuscating real antisemitism, thereby enabling it, and as some argue, also fuelling antisemitism by implicating Jewish communities at large with Israel's crimes. Antony Lerman provides an interesting look at the politicisation of antisemitism and Israel's hegemony over monitoring and countering it. The only shortfall of the book is that despite the strong focus on new antisemitism, there is little engagement with attempts to illustrate the location and definition of antisemitism and how we can challenge it. I believe that failure to engage these issues provides a platform to discredit the fantastic work of the book, almost presenting an apologist approach to antisemitism in the Left and within Arab communities, but also reveals that defining and

challenging antisemitism is a work in progress.

The importance of this body of work is best encapsulated in Rabbi Alissa Wise's remarks in the conclusion:

"The truth is that everyone who organizes for justice in Palestine must wrestle with antisemitism, either because a false accusation is being lobbed at them, or because of a need to be vigilant to ensure that critique of the Jewish state doesn't become blanket criticism of Jewish people..."

I have been asked countless times: "How do I deflect accusations that I am antisemitic?" I always respond: "Well, are you?"

You can purchase a copy of the book through the website: <http://onantisemitism.com/>

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### **Antisemitism, Palestine, and the Mizrahi Question**

By Tallie Ben Daniel

Chapter from *On Antisemitism*, Jewish Voice for Peace, Haymarket 2017, 71-80 and footnotes. Reproduced with permission.

As a Mizrahi Jewish person, I am often shocked by the ways mainstream US Jewish histories and cultural scripts erase Mizrahi experiences and histories.<sup>1</sup> This erasure becomes even more acute when discussing antisemitism. In this essay, I argue that in order to have a comprehensive analysis of antisemitism that truly tackles the operations of power in the United States, one must not only take Mizrahi experiences and analysis into account, but also account for the existence of the State of Israel. The essay starts by thinking through some of the more ubiquitous understandings of antisemitism, then moves to a brief

analysis of Iraqi Jewish experiences and their relationship to the conventional understanding of antisemitism. Finally, the essay takes on one of the “alternative” definitions of antisemitism, and argues that it too participates in the erasure of Mizrahi experiences. The essay concludes by asking how we can link our analysis of antisemitism to both the global struggle for Palestinian rights and to the fight against the marginalization of Mizrahi Jewish communities.

The first, and perhaps most popular, understanding of antisemitism in the United States is one I have come across both in mainstream Jewish institutions and in more alternative leftist spaces. It goes something like this: anti-semitism began, so the story goes, with the scapegoating of Jews in ancient times, because of the Jewish adherence to monotheism, culminating with the destruction of the Temple by the Romans; continued through the spread of Christianity and the Crusades, manifesting in accusations of blood libel; and endured through the social and economic discrimination of the Enlightenment in the form of “the Jewish question.” That was followed by pogroms, culminating in the Holocaust. Antisemitism, then, has always been with us and always will, and we have to live with this legacy. Jews, as perennial social outsiders, are blamed for economic and social problems associated with money or the media or other powerful, disembodied forces. In some cases, this story ends (happily or otherwise) with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Of course, in some interpretations, the violence in Israel/Palestine (or any criticism of Israeli policy) is further evidence of antisemitism.

While this is obviously overly succinct, I wonder if those reading this would have any trouble with this as a summary of the history of

antisemitism. Although missing nuance, I am going to assume that for most, this encapsulates the major events. And the final conclusion must be that antisemitism is a problem that has always been with us, and will always be with us.

This narrative sits uncomfortably with me, and has for a long time. There are three major reasons: first, as an Iraqi Jewish person, this narrative often erases the experiences and histories of non-European Jews. Like all religious minorities, Jews are incredibly diverse, and there have been significant Jewish communities all over the world, not only in Europe. Second, in a US context, this narrative of antisemitism can lead to seeing it as a kind of urtext for other forms of racism, which often lets white US American Jews off the hook when confronting white dominance and structural racism. Third, this narrative, in this form, often ends with a justification for the dispossession of Palestinians—the establishment of the State of Israel was necessary, so the story goes, to correct for the centuries of antisemitism. Antisemitism, in this interpretation, is ongoing and unfixable because Jews are always outsiders, and in Israel, Jews can be the majority, and so never have to worry about such violence again.

Of course, any casual follower of Israeli and Palestinian politics should know that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 did not mark an end to violence. Rather, Palestinian communities worldwide commemorate the establishment of the state in 1948 as the Nakba, or “catastrophe,” a military event that decimated Palestinian villages and created the second-largest refugee population in the world.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish majority in Israel is maintained only through dispossession, deeply unequal laws, and a demographic war against Palestinians.<sup>3</sup> The

establishment of Israel created a new Jewish identity, in which every Jewish person, for better or worse, is hailed by the Jewish state. For some Jewish people, this relationship is one of liberation and triumph, or is characterized by a sense of belonging, even if they don’t physically reside there. For others, this relationship is one of trauma and discrimination, and/or painful culpability, as the Israeli government continues to maintain systems of oppression and discrimination against the Palestinian people. And I should point out that the relationship of Jews worldwide to Israel is not limited to those I’ve outlined here, nor are any of these relationships mutually exclusive. But regardless, a relationship is seemingly unavoidable.

Yet, when we talk about antisemitism, even in spaces that are ostensibly aware of the occupation and displacement of Palestinians, European experiences are presented as the template for all Jews, everywhere, along with a cautionary tale of the unchanging, endless, permanent, or cyclical nature of antisemitism. We also live in a world where Western Europe, and Western European history, is dominant, so the tropes that characterize European antisemitism—like conspiracy theories in which Jews are secretly in control of financial systems or the media—are dominant as well. I do not doubt that antisemitism exists, nor do I think we should let it go unchecked. But I want an analysis of antisemitism that interrogates, rather than replicates, the Eurocentricity of the current most common narrative.

### **The Experiences of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews**

I want to offer an alternative narrative to the one so roughly outlined above: A Jewish community develops in Iraq after

the destruction of the Temple and for thousands of years flourishes in the major metropolitan areas. Jewish Iraqis are found in nearly every sector of society, while maintaining a unique cultural and religious identity. They have deep cultural connections to other Jewish communities, notably in India and France. When the British colonize Iraq after World War I, anti-Jewish sentiment is imported along with a different set of colonial hierarchies.<sup>4</sup> In 1941, the Jews of Baghdad experience the *farhud*, an anti-Jewish riot that was, according to historian Orit Bashkin, a result of “German propaganda disseminated into the Iraqi print market,” “an intense debate among intellectuals concerning Nazism and fascism,” and the general conflation of Zionism with Judaism in a nationalist, postcolonial era of Iraqi politics.<sup>5</sup> After the State of Israel is established in 1948, a backdoor deal with the government of Iraq expels the Jews from Iraq, making them leave their possessions behind; they are then put in refugee camps (*ma’abarot*) and are marginalized as uncivilized, too close to the Arab neighbors of Israel in language, culture, and demeanor.<sup>6</sup> Israeli identity continually valorizes Western European Jewish culture in all segments of society, including the anti-occupation left.<sup>7</sup> The experiences of Iraqi Jews are unique, but they connect to the experiences of Jews from Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Iran, India, Morocco, and other Middle Eastern and North African countries in that they are continually marked as “other” in Israeli society. The term “Mizrahi” is symbolic of that otherness—a Hebrew term that translates literally to “eastern.” While Mizrahi Jews constitute a majority of Jewish Israeli society, Ashkenazi Jewish culture and history dominates. Mizrahi Jews are told that the history of European Jews is the history of all

Jews, everywhere. Many scholars, most notably Ella Shohat, have remarked on the position of Mizrahi Jews within Israeli society: simultaneously included and excluded from the Israeli national collective, both a potential bridge between Jewish, Ashkenazi Israelis and Palestinians and more often, a fence that marks the Israeli collective’s borders.<sup>8</sup>

The narrative above may be just as overly simplified as the one I began with, but I am using it to make the following point—that when talking about antisemitism, one cannot focus only on the experiences of white Ashkenazi Jews. To do so is to contribute to the ongoing erasure of Mizrahi Jews in Jewish communities in the United States and in Israel, and to perpetuate the idea that European Jewish history is the history of all Jews. At the same time, it is equally problematic to assume that antisemitism as it presented in Europe can be “found” in the histories of Mizrahi Jews.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, when we start with the assumption that antisemitism is a natural and eternal part of the Jewish condition, or the human condition, it can lead to orientalizing the Mizrahi experience, by attempting to “discover” the equivalent of a pogrom or a ghetto in Mizrahi history, essentially analyzing Mizrahi history through the lens of European history.<sup>10</sup> We assume that the status of Iraqi Jews in the early twentieth century must have been similar to those of Polish, German, or Bavarian Jews, when in fact, they were living in a totally different political context, and grappling with totally different histories. If one focuses only on antisemitism as the primary, or only, way Jews have been oppressed throughout time, and define antisemitism through the events of European exclusion and discrimination, then one is perpetuating a European-centric understanding of history and erasing the exploitation of Mizrahi

Jews at the hands of Ashkenazi Jews.

In the United States, many Jewish historians lack an analysis of how antisemitism works alongside and intersects with other systems of oppression, like racism, sexism, and classism.<sup>11</sup> I saw a version of this history of antisemitism while at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual conference, at a panel discussing what kinds of pedagogical tools one can bring to a social justice-grounded Jewish Studies classroom. One panelist discussed how her Jewish American history class is often confronted by what she saw as the contradictions of US history: how did American Jews move so quickly from marginalization and discrimination to almost total acceptance, a journey so unlike that of other minority groups?

What was remarkable to me in her discussion of the ways labor, capitalism, and “up by the bootstraps” perseverance had transferred American Jews from margin to center was the complete absence of any acknowledgment that race may have played a role. Many people of color in the United States have probably heard the phrase “I’m not white, I’m Jewish” from white, Jewish US Americans. At the same time, many scholars have examined the social processes in the United States before World War II that established “Jewishness” as ethnically separate, while allowing (some) Jews full entrance into whiteness in the decades that followed.<sup>12</sup> Keith Feldman, in particular, has made a compelling case for looking at Israel and Palestine and the ongoing occupation as a series of events that deeply influenced the meaning and function of race in America.<sup>13</sup> Rather than focus on the Jewish involvement in the civil rights movement or simplistic understandings of “Black-Jewish relations,” Feldman traces the rise

of Zionism in US American Jewish institutions, the vexed relationship to Israel within Black liberation and Black power movements, and the impact of the events of 1967 on Arab communities in the United States, Israel, and beyond to explain not only how Jews became white, but how in the end Palestine became “America’s last taboo.”<sup>14</sup>

We cannot fully understand the experiences and histories of Mizrahi Jews unless we also confront the ways Zionism and the State of Israel contributed to—and in some cases, may be the source of—Mizrahi Jewish oppression. And in the United States, the cultural articulation that equates Jewishness with whiteness, without accounting for the impact of Zionism on Jewish racial identity, furthers and perpetuates white Ashkenazi dominance in Jewish spaces. The collective impact of this is to allow progressive white Jewish communities in the United States to avoid confronting racial oppression within the Jewish community, within the United States more broadly, and within Palestine/Israel.

### Things Are Not Better on the Left—on Mizrahi Erasure in a Common Analysis of Antisemitism

Attempts to theorize antisemitism “from the left” equally ignore the impact of whiteness and white supremacy on Jewish communities. In the past few years, I’ve come across a common theory of antisemitism in leftist organizing that often perpetuates Mizrahi erasure and assumes that all Jewish people are white and of European descent. For the purposes of this essay, I’m going to focus on one iteration of this theory, April Rosenblum’s 2007 zine, “The Past Didn’t Go Anywhere: Making Resistance to Antisemitism a Part of All Our Movements.”<sup>15</sup> I chose this zine because it is incredibly popular in leftist spaces, and precisely because it tries—and fails—to think about the experiences of Mizrahi Jews and Jews of color.

The zine treats antisemitism as equivalent to “anti-Jewish oppression.” The core assumption in the zine is that antisemitism, or “anti-Jewish oppression,” looks and works differently from other forms of oppression. As Rosenblum states, anti-Jewish oppression “can make its target look extremely powerful.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, antisemitism makes the “ruling classes invisible” by “diverting anger at injustice toward Jews instead.” According to this theory, Jewish people are a scapegoat for the rage produced by economic and racial injustice: “The point of anti-Jewish oppression is to keep a Jewish face in front, so that Jews, instead of ruling classes, become the target for peoples’ rage.” Therefore, “it works even more smoothly when Jews are allowed some success, and can be perceived as the ones ‘in charge’ by other oppressed groups.”<sup>17</sup> My first problem with this analysis of antisemitism is a seemingly minor one—the passive voice used to describe the position of Jewish people. Jews “are allowed some success” rather than “achieving” success, therefore erasing the ways some Jewish communities actively participated in cultivating whiteness in the United States, not to mention the active participation in the European colonization of Palestine.<sup>18</sup> This analysis of antisemitism works as an explainer for the Jewish position in medieval Europe, but falls short in taking the current realities of race and ethnicity in the United States and Israel into account.

For example, Rosenblum’s analysis of internalized oppression claims that

on an individual level, Jewish people—especially men—



*Itzik*, by Zoya Cherkassky-Nnadi, 2012



often perceive themselves as physically weak. We were legally banned from being allowed to carry weapons for substantial periods under Christian and Muslim rule. European society excluded us from mainstream professions (e.g., farming) that strengthened the body. We were literally unable to protect ourselves and our families from mass violence and rape.<sup>19</sup>

This analysis, while factually suspect,<sup>20</sup> also lacks an acknowledgment of white Ashkenazi dominance—in that the value of a strong, masculine body is a European, Christian invention, directly tied to the emergence of nationalism.<sup>21</sup> It also completely ignores the ways Zionist masculinity developed as a direct response to this invention, with the settler-pioneer-farmer in the figure of the *sabra*, and that white Jewish belonging in the United States was contingent on participation in the same settler-colonial narratives.<sup>22</sup>

It also lacks an intersectional analysis of Jewish communities by collapsing all Jewish people together. Black and Latino Jewish men confront a totally different set of cultural scripts around masculinity. Rather than weakness, they contend with a racialized hypermasculinity that enables state violence against them, often by portraying them as those “we” must protect “ourselves” from. The fact that Jewish men of color experience such racism does not mean that they don’t also experience antisemitism, but one would not know that from this analysis. For another example, Rosenblum claims that “Jewish people—especially women—often feel disgust about ourselves and our bodies, because, as the main racial ‘Other’ in Europe, European society and popular culture created its images of what was ugly

and disgusting based on our Jewish faces, and its fantasies of what our bodies looked like.”<sup>23</sup> This analysis assumes that all Jewish women are of European descent, that there is a particular kind of “Jewish look” that is shared among all Jews. This excludes converts, Mizrahi Jews, and other Jews of color.

My basic problem with this theory is that it lets white Jews off the hook—it excuses the ways racism, white supremacy, and classism manifest themselves within Jewish communities. It is one thing to say that Jewish power is a myth of antisemitism; it is something else entirely to say that powerful Jewish people are a symptom of antisemitism. For example, the idea that there is some kind of secret cabal of Jews that control the media or foreign policy is a deeply anti-Semitic trope that has contributed to violence against Jews in Europe and in the United States, among other places. But white people, including white Jews, can and do hold power in the United States, and Jewish institutions, by and large, do not work to combat the ways white supremacy and racism manifest themselves in Jewish communities. This theory claims that antisemitism “works more smoothly when it allows certain Jews success.” I argue that it is whiteness, not antisemitism, that allows (some) white Jews success in the United States.

As a queer person, I see parallels in queer activism and communities, where a focus on white, male, upper-class gay issues contributes to the erasure of, and violence toward, working-class queers and queers of color. While the lack of marriage rights in the United States certainly contributed to queer oppression, the fight for same-sex marriage often railroaded the issues that had an impact on poor and working-class queer people and queers of color (homelessness and the

disproportionate targeting of trans women of color by the policing and prison systems, for example).

The questions of racialization that come up when thinking about the history of Jewish identity in the United States are ever more fraught when thinking about Mizrahi Jews in this country. Sigal Samuel artfully thinks through the question of Mizrahim vis-à-vis race in the United States in an op-ed published in *The Forward* titled “I’m a Mizrahi Jew. Do I Count as a Person of Color?”<sup>24</sup> She takes multiple aspects of the question into account—her personal experiences, which includes racial profiling in airports; her family’s heritage; the US Census, which as of this writing classifies Arab and Middle Eastern people as white; and academics, who are decidedly mixed in their interpretation of the location of Mizrahi Jews in the United States. She ends by claiming herself a “woman of color”—a politicized, coalitional term that comes to us via feminist thinking and activism.<sup>25</sup> But even that term can hold its own complexity, its own way of masking difference between those who inherited a racial category due to the settler-colonial violence in the United States, and those of us who come to our racialized identities due to historical events elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Keren Soffer-Sharon writes that “as Arab Jews, our very existence calls into question some of the most basic values that our mainstream Jewish community has tragically come to hold about the ‘threat’ that Palestinians and Arab Muslims in general pose to our collective safety.”<sup>27</sup> While Mizrahi Jews are uniquely positioned to point to the damage done by assuming all Jews are European, or that Jews are somehow in opposition to Arabs, we are not immune to perpetuating and participating in racisms. There are many ways this can manifest, but for now, I would like to focus on a US-based organization, JIMENA:

Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa.

### **JIMENA and the “New Antisemitism”**

Since at least 2004, a group of pro-Israel advocates, notably Kenneth Marcus of the Brandeis Law Center, have attempted to redefine antisemitism to include criticism of Israel. Such advocates have argued that when antioccupation activists target Israel, they are singling it out as the only Jewish state, while other human rights abuses go unobserved. While this argument has very little merit—many anti-occupation activists come to their activism through a sense of moral outrage that is not limited to human rights abuses in Israel and Palestine, and we should stringently distinguish between antisemitism and anti-Zionism—these pro-Israel advocates nonetheless use false charges of antisemitism to target activism on behalf of Palestinian human rights, as noted elsewhere in this volume.

JIMENA is an organization that ostensibly works to educate US American Jewish communities about the histories and cultural practices of Mizrahi Jews. A project of the San Francisco Jewish Community Relations Council, it uses the claim of indigeneity via Mizrahi Jews to further the aims of the State of Israel, that is, to undermine the struggle for Palestinian human rights. The most explicit example of this is the fact that JIMENA currently uses the website “nakba.com” to redirect to its website.<sup>28</sup> In JIMENA’s view, “Nakba” does not connote the Palestinian expulsion from Palestine in 1948, as the term is more commonly known, but rather what they refer to as the “expulsion” of Mizrahi Jews from other Middle Eastern countries (ostensibly to safety in Israel). On its website, JIMENA applies its interpretation of the “new

antisemitism” to claim, “Though veiled as political activism, BDS campaigns are in effect vehicles for anti-Semitism, as they target the world’s only Jewish State, and lead to silencing and bullying of Jewish and pro-Israel students.”<sup>29</sup> This blatant misinformation obscures the ways Palestinian human rights activism is often targeted on university campuses.<sup>30</sup> BDS, as a nonviolent set of tactics, is responding to a call by Palestinian civil society to enact boycott, divestment, and sanctions until Israel complies with international law. But JIMENA’s purpose is to use Mizrahi identity to further silence such activism:

BDS and anti-Israel activism relies on a false narrative which portrays Jews as white European colonialists who invaded a third-world country, displaced a significant portion of the indigenous Palestinian population, oppressed and segregated the remainder. As North America’s primary organization representing Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, JIMENA is uniquely positioned to refute these myths by empowering students with the personal narratives of former Jewish refugees indigenous to Arab countries and Iran. We teach students that: ‘Jews and Israelis are not white colonists, we are indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa. We speak Arabic. We have been made refugees from countries we lived in for over 2,500 year [sic]. In today’s value, we had \$6billion confiscated when we fled.’ BDS messaging preys on college student’s ideologies of empathy and support for the ‘third-world victim’ while singling out those with ‘white privilege’ as the oppressors. This has

had a catastrophic effect on Jewish students [sic] confidence, willingness, and ability to support Israel. This damaging BDS messaging has effectively served to isolate, unaffiliate, and disempower many of our Jewish students and potential student supporters of Israel. There is no better counter defense to this propaganda than the story of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.<sup>31</sup>

Here, JIMENA is using a claim to indigeneity to further a settler-colonial project. “Jews are not white colonists, we are indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa” is a flipping of the centrality of white Ashkenazi experiences, but also does so to intentionally erase the participation of European (and non-European) Jews in the Nakba, the occupation, and the creation of the Palestinian refugee population. I am personally outraged by their use of my family’s heritage to justify the continual dispossession of Palestinians, but it is essential that we understand Mizrahi positionality in all its complexity, including the potential to be used to further the aims of the Israeli government, or to continue the injustices of the occupation. JIMENA is, at its core, a “brownwashing” organization, albeit a sophisticated one—using the experiences of Jews of color and Mizrahi Jews in particular to justify the occupation. I’m using the term “brownwashing” as a derivative of the term “pinkwashing” to note the ways both cynically use marginalized identities— Arab and queer—to promote anti-Palestinian aims. To fully combat this use of Mizrahi history, progressive Mizrahi Jews and Jews of color must take collective action, and work to produce an analysis and a language to address our heritage, histories, and inheritance in ways that fight

back against the exploitation of Palestinians.

### Notes toward a Conclusion

What would an intersectional understanding of antisemitism look like? If we take the particularities of multiple Jewish histories in the United States into account, does that mean that we are left without a way to confront the legacies of violence against Jewish people, or an accounting of the ways Jews were seen as the “other” of Europe?

My answer, as is my answer to most things, is not an either/or formulation, but a both/and one. European antisemitism has had a real impact on American culture, and continues to proliferate as European nationalism enjoys a kind of resurgence.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the current manifestations of antisemitism are not a recurrence of past forms of antisemitism, and we do ourselves a disservice if we think they are. We must contend with the ways some Jews have access to power and privilege, with the racial differences within the Jewish community, and, crucially, with the ways Muslims and Arabs have been targeted in the United States after 9/11. We must learn about our histories, and for those of us who fight for a better future, think carefully about what kinds of lessons we learn. As David Biale notes, “Traditional Jewish memory, with its emphasis on recurring persecutions, can only reinforce the traumas of recent Jewish history; history itself, in all its complexity, may provide the needed therapy.”<sup>33</sup> My hope is that we can move into a future where the fight for justice—what Rabab Abdulhadi calls “the indivisibility of justice”—takes all of this into account.<sup>34</sup>

### Notes:

1. Of course, this erasure is not isolated to the United States. The term “Mizrahi,” which means

“Eastern” in Hebrew, is an imperfect umbrella term that refers to the Jewish communities descended from the Middle East and North Africa, including but not exclusively Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Lebanon, Kurdistan, Yemen, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

2. Michael Dumper, ed., *Palestinian Refugee Repatriation: Global Perspectives* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006) 6. Until 2011, Palestinians constituted the largest refugee population in the world. From 2011 to the present, the Syrian refugee population has been the largest.
3. For more on this, see Rhoda Kanaaneh’s *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
4. Please see Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2005), and Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).
5. Orit Bashkin, *The New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 110.
6. Although I am focusing for the moment on the Jews of Iraq, many non-European Jewish communities underwent similarly exploitative treatment in Israel, and often worse. See Rachel Shabi, *We Look Like the Enemy: The Hidden History of Israel*, and Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel,” 1-35.
7. Shabi, *We Look Like the Enemy*, 23; Smadar Lavie, “Mizrahi Feminism and the Question of Palestine,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 7, no.2 (2011): 56-88. There is an argument to be made that the banning of Yiddish in Israel is connected to a kind of European assimilation as well. See Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).
8. Lavie, “Mizrahi Feminism”, 57.
9. Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel,” 15.

10. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
11. See Kimberlé Crenshaw’s seminal work, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no.6 (1991): 1231-99.
12. Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*.
13. Keith Feldman, *A Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
14. Feldman, *Shadow over Palestine*, 10.
15. From my research, it seems Rosenblum’s zine borrows heavily from the thinking of Cherie Brown. I have come across versions of this theory in multiple progressive Jewish spaces. My hope is that my writing here is taken as my own honest attempt to work through what I find problematic about this analysis, not an indictment of those who may find it useful.
16. Rosenblum, “The Pat Didn’t Go Anywhere,” 2-3.
17. *Ibid.*, 8.
18. See Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992); Ran Greenstein, *Zionism and Its Discontents: A Century of Radical Dissent in Israel/Palestine* (New York: Pluto Press, 2014); and Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (New York: One World Publications, 2007).
19. Rosenblum, “The Past Didn’t Go Anywhere,” 8.
20. In 1938, Jews were banned from owning or possessing firearms in Nazi Germany, one of many anti-Jewish laws throughout the decade before the Holocaust, and there have been other points in history – under Catholic rule in the Middle Ages, for example – where similar laws were enacted. However, it is factually inaccurate to say that Jews “were legally banned from being allowed to carry weapons for substantial periods under Christian and Muslim rule.” For more, see David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in*

*Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

21. See Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
22. See Tallie Ben Daniel, "Zionism's Frontier Legacies: Colonial Masculinity and the American Council for Judaism in San Francisco," *American Studies* 54, no.4 (2016): 49-72.
23. Rosenblum, "The Past Didn't Go Anywhere," 8.
24. Sigal Samuel, "I'm a Mizrahi Jew. Do I Count as a Person of Color?" *The Forward*, August 10, 2015, [forward.com/opinion/318667/im-a-mizrahi-jew-do-i-count-as-a-person-of-color](http://forward.com/opinion/318667/im-a-mizrahi-jew-do-i-count-as-a-person-of-color).
25. Loretta Loss, "The Origin of 'Women of Color'", *Racialicious*, March 3, 2011.
26. Janani, "What's Wrong with the Term 'Person of Color,'" *Black Girl Dangerous*, March 20, 2013, [www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/03/2013321whats-wrong-with-the-term-person-of-color](http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/03/2013321whats-wrong-with-the-term-person-of-color).
27. Keren Soffar Sharon, "Mizrahi Jews, Jews of Color, and Racial Justice," *Jewschool: Progressive Jews and Views*, April 28, 2016, [jewschool.com/2016/04/76596/Mizrahi-jews-jews-color-racial-justice/](http://jewschool.com/2016/04/76596/Mizrahi-jews-jews-color-racial-justice/).
28. Richard Silverstein, "San Francisco JCRC steals 'Nakba,'" *Tikun Olam*, May 17, 2016, [www.richardsilverstein.com/2-16/05/17/san-francisco-jcrc-steals-nakba/](http://www.richardsilverstein.com/2-16/05/17/san-francisco-jcrc-steals-nakba/).
29. JIMENA, "JIMENA Response to BDS & Campus Anti-Semitism," June 4, 2015, [www.jimena.org/bds-anti-semitism-on-campus](http://www.jimena.org/bds-anti-semitism-on-campus).
30. Jewish Voice for Peace, *Stifling Dissent*.
31. "JIMENA Response to BDS & Campus Anti-Semitism."
32. I write this conclusion a week after Britain voted to leave the European Union, which many are analysing as a result of a

nationalist, isolationist and racist campaign.

33. David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness*, 8.
34. David Finkel and Dianne Feeley, "An Interview with Rabab Abdulhadi," *Against Apartheid: The Case for Boycotting Israeli Universities*, Ashley Dawson and Bill Mullen, eds. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 123-35.

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### Interview with: Jews against Fascism (JaF)

#### Can you start by telling us how it was that Jews against fascism was formed?

In April 2015 Melbourne saw the largest street mobilisation of the far right for decades when Reclaim Australia held their rally. This was also one of the largest counter rallies that was held at the time. I think a number of us were pretty shocked not just by the comfort with which the organisers felt they could just arrive with a racist message in the heart of Melbourne, but with the arrival of out and proud neo-Nazis as back up support. On that day neo-Nazis came as neo-Nazis, they did not hide the fact - as they usually would: it was pretty distressing seeing swastikas on the street. But

it also made it perfectly clear what we were up against. Neo-Nazis clearly saw this as an opportunity to build and consolidate their movement. Jews against Fascism slowly formed over 2016 in response to the various splitting and splintering of Reclaim Australia and the growth of the various far-right, fascist and neo-Nazi nationalist movements that grew out of it.

#### Why do you think it is significant to challenge fascism specifically from a Jewish platform?

Jews have experienced the logical end of fascism. We know where fascism takes us. One of the things that we have tried to emphasise is the importance of historical consciousness and of memory, whilst also elevating the voices of those experiencing the sharp end of racism and fascism today. Jews not only have a very important, indeed a vital stake in combating fascism, we have a heap of culture, politics and history that is entangled in this fight. By bringing our Jewishness to the foreground in anti-fascist work we seek to open space for others targeted by fascism and racism to formulate new, radical anti-racist political subjectivities. The rise of the far right has brought antisemitism back as a vital issue for the left. While we appreciate all the allies we can get in this fight, we're not going to let non-Jewish people speak on our behalf or make us antisemitism into an abstract issue.

#### What do you hope to achieve with this group? What are some of your objectives?

For now it is pretty simple. This is to expose fascists, to isolate them, where possible refuse them a platform, to build and be a part of an anti-fascist movement. There is also an element that might have once been referred to as "consciousness raising", we want

to - and we think we have quite successfully in many ways - get people thinking about and acting on these issues. A couple of times we've been in the right position to call for and organise demonstrations against far right events in the Jewish community. We see mobilising a physical presence to challenge events like these as hugely important and we have been very successful so far. (see below)

We also want to create something of a home for lefty Jews to feel connected with their Jewishness, and to feel like they too can stretch Jewishness so that it is something that they too can wear. I guess presenting a model of Jewishness rooted in an uncompromising social justice ethic. We really want to be part of community, and the way we do that is not by looking at crusted on leadership, but by looking to ourselves and what we can create.

### **How antisemitic is the far right and fascist movement in Australia?**

These things are a spectrum, but when you look the Islamophobia of these movements it is like they have modelled it directly and unselfconsciously on classic anti-Semitism: from international conspiracies, blood libels, accusations of corrupting culture, etc. Even when these movements are not speaking directly about Jews they need antisemitism, or something that looks like it, to be the engine for their racialised conspiratorial worldview.

### **What are your ideas around the best ways of defeating fascism?**

In a way this is nothing new. As we said we are interested in ways of exposing and isolating fascists. Our Facebook page has been a good (and sometimes fun) platform for

doing this. We are interested in ways of building and contributing to mass movements. We have a particular interest in working with other Jews to see what kind of magic we can make together. However, this, really, is only a part of our work and the work that needs to be done. The rise of fascism in Australia has not occurred in a vacuum, but has been bolstered, encouraged and fostered by systemic racism, particularly towards Aboriginal people, to refugees, to Black and people of colour, and Muslims. We see this day in day out in the words and actions of politicians, in the media, in the cops, in cultural institutions. It will be impossible to really defeat fascism unless we can in a very serious way build responses to this in our movement. White supremacy and white nationalism is bigger than the knuckledraggers that we meet in the street. As things stand this is probably the harder struggle we face.

### **Jews against fascism have been central in leading campaigns to prevent racists and fascists from having a platform, with amazing success. Can you talk a little bit about that?**

I guess we really found our feet when local Jewish fascist Avi Yemini decided he wanted to bring Pauline Hanson and Malcolm Roberts to Caulfield to speak to Jews. We organised a demonstration that promised to follow the event anywhere it decided to go. As a result of our work the organisers got cold feet and cancelled the event. This was helped along by mates in the broader anti-fascist movement, as well as the broader Jewish community who were pretty happy to tell Hanson and Roberts to bugga off. We've had similar success when Yemini was planning to protest over a shul construction

denial in Sydney where he'd made a weird connection with Muslims and he wound up begging his neo-Nazi mates not to come. There was also an event held by some far-right "respectable racists" called 'The Threat of Islam to Jews' where we had two conservative Jewish groups cancel the venue bookings for event because it 'fomented hatred and fear'. In the end they had to hold the event in secret - we had someone leak us the info an hour or so before the event but it was too late by that point to do anything. When Yemini organised a rally to "Make Victoria White Again" (or whatever it was about) we were really proud of the numbers we - both Jaf and the Australian Jewish Democratic society together - were able to bring and to march behind our banner, both from within the Jewish community and the broader anti-fascist solidarity movement. These are all small wins, but they are wins nonetheless.

### **Is there a strong history of Jewish involvement in anti-fascist movements?**

Indeed there is! Jews were involved inter alia in fighting fascism in the Spanish civil war, in defeating Oswald Mosley and the BUF at the battle of Cable Street, and of course fighting against Nazis in Europe a multitude of ways including the famous Ghetto revolts. In Jews Against Fascism we take particular inspiration from the Melbourne based Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, a left wing Jewish antifascist body formed in the early 1940s that combined practical monitoring and exposure work with public advocacy, propaganda work and campaigns in alliance with left wing groups and civil society to combat fascism, authoritarianism, racism and colonialism. The Jewish Council understood that a Jewish fight against antisemitism could not be



solved by nationalism it could only be solved by joining with non-Jews in a common fight against the international system that produces fascism and racism.

**That brings me onto the next question, from your experience and online presence, can you tell us your experience of antisemitism? Where its coming from and how does it manifest amongst different political and cultural communities?**

We have been involved in the left for a good period of our lives and have indeed come across small instances of what could be deemed lazy antisemitism and insensitivity there. This is not something to be ignored and any left movement worth its salt needs to address this. To be honest though these instances pale in comparison to the type of organised antisemitism propagated by the far right. Modern racialised antisemitism should be understood as a political movement and worldview with roots in 19th century Europe. Anti-Jewish prejudice is of course much older than this but modern antisemitism is different because it involves 1. the racialisation of Jewish people 2. Jewish people as central to a conspiratorial worldview, and 3. antisemitism as the basis of a racist, anti-democratic, irrational and illiberal political movement. Low level antisemitic views, including stereotypes about Jews are relatively prevalent across different political and cultural communities in Australia. The root of these ideas and their weaponisation however is in the far right.

**One of the arguments often used by the far right is freedom of speech. What is your response to that?**

They are not actually interested in free speech. If they were they would not sustain ongoing campaigns against people - Muslims in particular - exercising their free speech. If they were they wouldn't be sooking every time we turn up and protest outside their event. I'm not sure about everyone involved but we probably take a view that limits on free speech is something that governments do. If you want to say hateful things then they cannot expect us to be tolerant, or to tolerate that. We will speak back. And we will be disrespectful and impolite and obnoxious when we do.

I don't know where they got the impression that we were free speech warriors, but they do seem to think our activism is hypocritical for some silly reason or another. What they have done is appropriated a 'free speech' discourse for a hate speech platform, as if their struggles to bash Muslims were in some way equivalent to civil rights marchers in Selma, or anti-Nazi organisers of Berlin. They call us fascists regularly, as if the defining element of fascism is getting in someone's face when they are being racist. This kind of infantile, narcissistic understanding of fascism is so outside of the earth's orbit as to be farcical.

**In what ways can people get involved and support the work that you do?**

We are really keen to build networks with other anti-racism activity, and particularly other networks of Jews in Australia and internationally out there doing good work. We'd love to sit down with different groups to see how we can best work together (even if we don't always agree!). Otherwise people can support Jews against Fascism by liking and sharing our posts on Facebook, or if they are really keen to make a small donation (we will send

stickers! Message our page for more info).

**What's your advice for people working to stop the growth of the far right in Australia?**

Come together. Inspire your mates. Be creative. Work with other groups. Be a part of mass movements. Find people with similar interests. Don't forget the systemic sources of fascism.

**Thank you JaF for your time, and keep up the great work!**

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**The Israeli Occupation and the Rise of Antisemitism – Is There a Connection?**

By Tony Klug

This paper was delivered at the Pears International Conference on Zionism and Antisemitism, Birkbeck, University of London, 25 May 2017. Also available online at [http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/archive/audio/2017\\_05\\_25/2017\\_05\\_25\\_Zionism\\_Klug\\_talk.mp3](http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/archive/audio/2017_05_25/2017_05_25_Zionism_Klug_talk.mp3).



In this talk, I pose the question of whether there is a connection between the Israeli occupation and the rise of antisemitism. Or to put it another way, if Zionism was, at least partly, conceived as a way of normalizing relations between Jews and all other peoples, is the state it spawned and the policies that state has been pursuing normalizing antisemitism instead?

It's a sensitive and multilayered question but what I want to focus on and share with you is what I have learned over my five decades of close engagement with Israelis and Palestinians. There is no question in my mind that over this period there has been a marked rise in anti-Jewish sentiment, particularly in the Arab and Muslim worlds and, furthermore, that this is primarily a product of the ongoing conflict, in particular the unceasing Israeli occupation. But this is only one side of the equation.

The other side is the corresponding phenomenon of mounting anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment in the Jewish world. In turn, the conflict's toxins have spilled over into other areas of the globe and, in some cases, have fanned latent prejudices against

Jews, Muslims and Arabs, reawakening old stereotypes of cunning, manipulation and secret power on the one hand, and marauding hordes threatening western or Christian civilization on the other. The parallel rise in these phenomena is not a coincidence. Each of them feeds off and nourishes the others. So they need to be viewed not in isolation but alongside each other.

There are, to be sure, some voices within the Jewish world that deny any link between Israeli policies and anti-Jewish sentiment. Rather, current enmity towards both Jews and Israel, notably from within the Arab and Muslim worlds, is explained as a phase in "Jew-hatred" stretching back centuries. The columnist Melanie Phillips promotes such a theme in her controversial book *Londonistan*, where she writes: "the fight against Israel is not fundamentally about land. It is about hatred of the Jews" who, she says, are viewed by Islam as "a cosmic evil".<sup>1</sup> From this, it follows that the way Israel conducts itself is at most a minor factor in the hostility directed towards it.

But the evidence does not bear this out. Quite the contrary. During the "Oslo years" in the 1990s, which

temporarily stirred hopes for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, the political culture was, for a time, transformed. Jewish-Arab dialogue groups and other

co-operative projects blossomed. I was myself co-chair of the UK-based Council for Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue, whose monthly meetings were invariably packed to capacity. New friendships across the divide were struck and Israel's stock in the Arab world, and indeed globally, shot up. According to leading Jewish research institutions at the time, "a general lessening of antisemitic pressure was recorded".<sup>2</sup>

The potential for a change in the atmosphere had been foreshadowed nearly two decades earlier following President Sadat's extraordinary visit to Israel in 1977. At the so-called peace conference held in Egypt a few weeks later, the international press corps, including myself, was told by the head of the press office that Egyptian spiritual leaders were being urged to downplay those portions of the Koran that spoke ill of the Jews and to stress instead those parts that called on Muslims to make friends with the Jews. The broader political mood is all-important.

I shared a taxi into the centre of Cairo with the venerable Israeli journalist and old friend, David Landau who, defying my advice, immediately declared himself to the Egyptian cab driver as Israeli. To my astonishment, this led to a most agreeable half-hour conversation, culminating in the manifestly destitute driver refusing to take a penny in fare from his "Israeli cousin". Sadly, David died two years ago.

Later that week, with not much happening, I spent a day riding in the desert with a local peasant horseman who literally jumped with joy at the prospect of reaching peace with Israel. He had lost brothers in the past wars and taken in all their children. I encountered similar attitudes among the villagers we met during our various café stops. Not a word, by the way, about the Jewish cosmic evil.

A year or two down the line, I joined an Israeli delegation at a ceremony in Cairo marking the re-opening of an old synagogue in the city. Almost everywhere in Egypt I went during that period, the message to Israelis was the same: "withdraw from our territory and let the Palestinians have a state, and there will be no more animosity between us". In the meantime, Israeli embassies stopped circulating literature depicting President Sadat as a Nazi sympathizer.

The contemporary claim of endemic "Jew-hatred" through the ages in the Islamic world is, moreover, repudiated by the testimony of no less an authority than the veteran historian Bernard Lewis, a Middle Eastern scholar of impeccable pro-Israel credentials. He has distinguished three kinds of Muslim/Arab hostility to Jews: opposition to Zionism; what he termed "normal" prejudice; and, thirdly, "that special and peculiar hatred of Jews, which has its origins in the role assigned to Jews in certain Christian writings and beliefs..."<sup>3</sup>

Using the term "antisemitism" to refer to the third kind of hostility

only, he remarked: "In this specialized sense, antisemitism did not exist in the traditional Islamic world". Although he held that Jews "were never free from discrimination", they were, he said, "only occasionally subject to persecution". Indeed, at different times in history, Jews fleeing European Christian persecution were often welcomed in Muslim lands and given refuge there.

Professor Lewis identified Jewish resettlement in Palestine along with the creation of Israel and subsequent Israeli-Arab wars as precipitating a more recent "European-style antisemitism in the Islamic world". "The real change", he said, "began after the Sinai War of 1956 and was accelerated after the ... war of 1967".



What distinguished that war from previous battles was that it concluded with Israeli military rule over occupied territories that contained over a million Palestinian Arab inhabitants, a number that has more than quadrupled since then. In a pamphlet authored in the mid-1970s by a more youthful incarnation of myself, I contemplated the likely effect on future attitudes towards Jews in the hypothetical event of a prolonged Israeli occupation over the Palestinian people, suggesting there would be "ever more frequent and more intensive acts of resistance ... by a population yearning for independence ... and feeling encroached upon by a spreading pattern of Jewish colonization" – although at that time this amounted to fewer than 5,000 settlers, compared with more than a hundred times that number today.

This would leave Israel, I continued, with "little choice but to retaliate in an increasingly oppressive fashion -- just to keep order ... the moral

appeal of Israel's case will consequently suffer ... and this will further erode her level of international support, although probably not amongst organized opinion within the Jewish diaspora. This sharpening polarization [I concluded] is bound to contribute to an upsurge in overt antisemitism, of which there are already ominous indications."<sup>4</sup>

To me, as an earnest young researcher with no axes to grind, these prognostications were self-evident, and unfortunately played out over the following decades pretty much as projected. However, at the time, I doubted they would ever be put to the test, as I did not expect the Israeli occupation to continue beyond a few more years. Nor, by the way, did most Israelis.

Nonetheless, I was sharply wrapped over the knuckles by an assortment of outraged Israeli readers who, among other criticisms, pointed out that latent anti-Jewish feeling had always resided in some segments of international civil society -- lamentably true -- and that its manifestations had nothing to do with the way Israel behaves -- demonstrably false.

I don't expect to be around to shamelessly quote myself again in another forty years but, as passions continue to rise, it is surely as plain as can be that if Israel does not end the occupation soon, and if organized Jewish opinion in other countries appears openly to back it, there will almost certainly be a further spike in anti-Jewish sentiment, potentially unleashing more sinister impulses. To anticipate or explain is not to justify, but it is hardly rocket science to see what lies ahead under these circumstances.

I want to suggest to you that historical Palestinian animosity towards Israel had little to do with it being a Jewish state as such. Had it been, say, a Hindu or a Buddhist state, the Palestinians would have been no less embittered about being exiled and dispossessed and, in subsequent years, seeing their would-



be mini state subjected to acts of annexation, expropriation and colonization.

Any animosity aroused by such an imaginary scenario might have been falsely experienced on the receiving end as stemming from deep-seated anti-Hinduism or anti-Buddhism, just as Israelis often attribute the actual animosity towards them as deriving from deep-seated anti-Jewish prejudice.

The analogy, however, can be taken only so far. For what distinguishes the Jewish case from hostility, real or perceived, towards most -- possibly all -- other population sets, is that waiting in the wings ready to pounce is the all-embracing, centuries-old, dogma of classical antisemitism, purporting to explain all Jewish behaviour. To my knowledge, there is no equivalent anti-Hindu or anti-Buddhist dogma.

Like other closed ideologies, authentic antisemitism is immune to evidence or, inversely, is capable of absorbing all evidence, however contradictory, to back up its underlying contentions. The actual behaviour of its prey is inconsequential. Imported into the Muslim and Arab worlds where once it was alien, the antisemitic "explanation", with its demonic conception of the Jew, is now increasingly embraced by disaffected populations with mind-sets primed to be receptive to a simple, "it's-all-the-Jews-fault", answer to many problems.

Thus, anti-Jewish sentiment, kindled by the *actual* deeds of the self-proclaimed Jewish state may, where the ground is fertile, metastasize into full-blooded antisemitism. But they are not the same thing. Objectively, the distinction is all-important. This said, anti-Jewish sentiment may be experienced, subjectively, as antisemitism, and be no less demoralizing or hurtful, especially for Jewish students on campus and other unsuspecting young people who often don't know what has hit them and have certainly not been served well by the blinkered perspectives of

those who pose as their mentors. My heart goes out to them.

I don't wish to be a harbinger of doom, but it gets worse. If Jews around the world fail to apprehend the connections drawn attention to here and continue to identify uncritically with policies almost universally regarded as unjust and oppressive -- policies that would never be condoned by the custodians of Jewish values if enacted by any other country -- then we will continue to rely on spurious explanations for the rise in anti-Jewish feeling, even if there is some truth in them.

In our bafflement, we will also continue to unfairly charge genuine supporters of universal human rights with being covert antisemites because their commitment to human rights principles does not stop at the Palestinian doorstep. An acquaintance quizzically remarked to me recently "I thought an antisemite was someone who hated Jews, not someone who Jews hated."

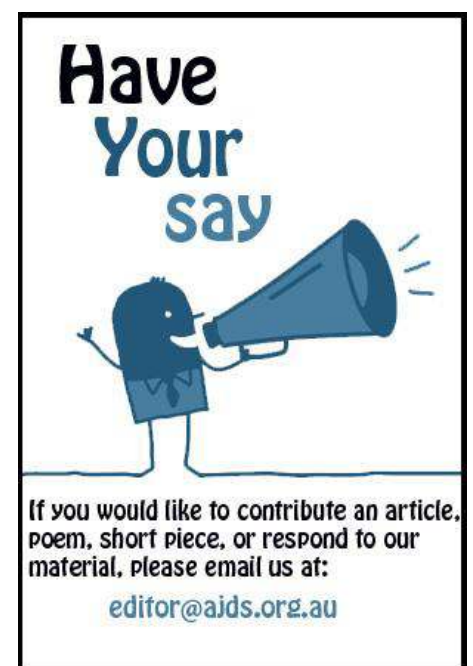
What all this points to is that Israel's endless military occupation of the land and lives of another people is not just seriously endangering Israel itself -- to say nothing about deepening the despair of the Palestinians -- but it is also making the situation of Jews around the world increasingly precarious. As if that's not troubling enough, the contemporary tendency to cry antisemitism when it's really something else, carries with it the parallel but opposite peril of failing to perceive brazen antisemitism when it stares us in the face.

For years, the ardently pro-Zionist but ultimately -- at the risk of over-generalizing -- deeply antisemitic fundamentalist evangelical Christian right in the US has been serenaded by some pro-Israel groups and by the Israeli government. The *Jerusalem Post* invited the openly Islamophobic Sebastian Gorka, a security aide to President Trump, to address its annual conference in New York only this month, despite having been exposed by the Jewish newspaper

*The Forward* as a member of a virulently antisemitic Hungarian group with Nazi ties.<sup>5</sup>

This was not without precedent. In 2009, two right-wing Hungarian politicians who had repeatedly vilified their country's Jews, participated in the annual Global Forum to Combat Antisemitism in Jerusalem, sponsored by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. You couldn't make it up! Meanwhile, certain Zionist circles in Britain had courted two far-right members of the European Parliament, from Poland and Latvia, who had also been accused of having had neo-Nazi links. There was a time when Jews and official Jewish bodies wouldn't touch such people with a bargepole. However, their records as "friends of the Jews" have been defended partly on the ground that their political parties could be relied on to take Israel's side at the European Parliament.

In a similar vein, Nick Griffin -- when he was leader of the neo-fascist British National Party -- disavowed his antisemitic past by arguing on BBC television that his party "stood full square behind Israel's right to deal with Hamas terrorists".<sup>6</sup> In all these cases, professed support for Israel or Israeli actions was employed to relieve the charge of antisemitism, even by an avid antisemite with a record of Holocaust denial.



In essence, it now seems that it is the stance taken towards the Israeli state and the policies of its government of the day, that is becoming, bit by bit, the standard by which antisemitism is measured and assessed, steadily replacing the former gold standard of enmity toward the Jews *qua* Jews. Traditional antisemites are no longer – necessarily – antisemites. They may even be regarded as philosemites. Their place is being taken by people – including a growing number of Jews themselves -- who have no quarrel with Jews *qua* Jews but have a strong objection to the policies of the political leadership in Israel, particularly with regard to its practices in occupied Palestinian territory. They are, in this worldview, fast becoming the “new antisemites” or, as the case may be, “self-hating Jews”.

In sum, the charge of antisemitism against Palestinians, and others who champion their cause, is often made too flippantly, lumping together real antisemites with the real victims of oppressive Israeli policies, while tending to give a free pass to ostensibly “pro-Israel” antisemites.

On the other hand, many Arabs, Muslims and their supporters too easily dismiss the accusation of antisemitism as just a device for defending indefensible Israeli policies. While this is sometimes true, the accusation is sometimes true too -- just consider the extremely crude, albeit largely imported, antisemitism of the unamended Hamas charter. However, it should also be noted that some leading Palestinian figures have not only acknowledged the infiltration of antisemitism into Arab society but have been outspoken in their rejection of it.<sup>7</sup>

None of this is to say that anti-Zionism or hostility to Israel in the wider world is not sometimes used as a cover for antisemitism or, in some cases, that it does not spring from similar impulses, whether on the part of the far right or the far left or elements in between. Nor is it to say that the propensity -- carelessly or maliciously -- of some anti-Zionist

jargon to propagate many of the familiar, sinister antisemitic notions – such as ubiquitous Jewish power, Jewish money, Jewish control of media and governments, Jewish vengeance or even child murderers – is not of major concern.

While there are indeed some deeply worrying questions, they do not warrant the levels of hysteria witnessed in recent months on the part of some commentators and media -- arguably fuelled by ulterior motives in some cases -- which serve only to confound the issues, debase the coinage and often foment the very anti-Jewish feeling they claim to be combating.

If they truly wish to take the heat out of the disturbing rise in antisemitism, their energies would be better directed towards agitating for a swift end to the Israeli military occupation, without further pretext, and a fair settlement of the conflict with the Palestinians and the wider Arab world while the opportunity still presents itself. In this day and age, this is the single most important key to advancing the yearning to normalize relations between Jews and other peoples.

#### Notes:

1. ‘Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within’, Melanie Phillips, Gibson Square, 2006. Quoted and reviewed by Jackie Ashley, The Guardian G2, 16/6/06, pp.6-9.
2. ‘Antisemitism World Report 1996’, The Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the American Jewish Committee, p.xvii.
3. ‘Antisemitism in the Arab and IslamicWorld’, Bernard Lewis, Proceedings of the Eighth International Seminar of the Study Circle on World Jewry, 29-31 December 1985, published by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University, 1988.

4. ‘Middle East Impasse: the only way out’, Tony Klug, fabian research series 330, January 1977, p.14
5. <http://forward.com/news/national/364085/sebastian-gorka-trump-aide-forged-key-ties-to-anti-semitic-groups-in-hungary/>
6. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCAdS6gVZjM>
7. For an insightful Palestinian examination of the roots and effects of antisemitism, see ‘The minutiae of racism’, Azmi Bishara: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/667/op2.htm>. Bernard Lewis (footnote 4) refers to a (non-referenced) book published in 1970 by the PLO Research Centre in Beirut in which the writer “protested against the use of such tainted materials, which ‘are regarded with contempt by the civilized world,’ and which dishonour and discredit the Arab cause.”

*Tony Klug has written extensively about Israeli-Palestinian issues for some 45 years and has long-maintained a close affinity with both peoples. He is a special advisor on the Middle East to the Oxford Research Group and serves as a consultant to the Palestine Strategy Group and the Israel Strategic Forum. His doctoral thesis was on the Israeli occupation of the West Bank between the wars of 1967 and 1973, during when he called for a Palestinian state alongside Israel. For many years he was a senior official at Amnesty International, where he headed the International Development programme.*

#### Jews and revolutionary Jews

From the Facebook group ‘juives et juifs révolutionnaires’  
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1464355826967525&id=795943817142066](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1464355826967525&id=795943817142066)

#### Are you antisemitic?



1) If you think the words "Israel", "Zionists" and "Jews" are



interchangeable; you may be antisemitic.

2) If you think that a Jewish conspiracy controls the media / international finance / politics / lobbies, you are antisemitic. There is no conspiracy, end of argument. Sorry, conspiris and other scrapings of bidets that keep alive and spread this idea of a Jewish conspiracy. It's at least 120 years that we hear this kind of shit and frankly you should perhaps get some new material...

3) If you use the term "Rothschild" to involve "Jews", you are an antisemite. And congratulations by the way for the exact use of the same phrases that the Nazis and those who incited tsarist pogroms, etc.

4) If your only defense is "Jews are not a race then I'm not racist" or "the Jews are not the only Semites, so I'm not an antisemite, then you're probably an antisemite.

5) If you think / demand that the Jews should condemn Israel with every word, tweets, comments, etc., you are an antisemite (see point 1).

6) Supporting the legitimate Palestinian desire for self-determination to enforce human rights and having its own state, and condemning the policies of the Israeli government does not in itself make someone an antisemite. BUT see points 1-5.)

7) If you talk about Palestine whenever we talk about crimes against Jews / Antisemitism / Holocaust / etc., you're most certainly an antisemite.

8) If you use violence instilled in Palestine by the Israeli government as an excuse to turn away from conversations about antisemitism and violence suffered by Jews, you are not just an antisemite, but you are

instrumentalising Palestine and the Palestinian suffering, of which you really do not care.

9) If you think that any Jewish person, or even any Israeli Jew, is guilty of the crimes of the State of Israel and human rights violations, you are an antisemite and also very likely a hypocrite living in a country who has committed many crimes and human rights violations against colonised countries and you do not expect to be held responsible for the violence and oppression of your own country.

Watch your consistency.

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## **On the Nakba and the Jewish Left**

### **By Robin Rothfield**

A few months ago the Jewish Left remembered the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Six Day War and the occupation which followed this war. On the occupation the Left was united in its condemnation of the government of Netanyahu in its failure to curb the expansion of the settlements and to prevent the ongoing severe abuses of the rights of the Palestinians. On the issue of the retroactive legislation on settlements passed in the Knesset, leading figures in the Australian Jewish establishment expressed their disapproval.

Supporters of Netanyahu defend the existence of the occupation by arguing that it is in Israel's security interests. So it may be noted that Ehud Barak, former Prime Minister and former Minister for Defence, addressing a security conference in Herzliya in November 2015, pointed out that in the opinion of 80 – 90% of Israel's defence and intelligence establishment, Israel would be better able to defend itself from the recognised international borders than from the current borders.

But a serious rift in the Jewish Left emerged when elements argued that we cannot issue a statement on the occupation without mentioning the

Nakba because the Nakba is understood as a founding act of violence. I would argue that the founding act of violence was the decision of five Arab states to declare war against the fledgling state of Israel. Members of the hard Left are aware of the 1948 war of Independence but are reluctant to give it serious consideration as the primary cause of the violence and dispossession of Palestinians which followed. Had the Arab states decided to accept the decision of the United Nations General Assembly in 1947 to create a Jewish and an Arab state in Palestine, and to recognize and make peace with the subsequently declared state of Israel in 1948, does anyone seriously believe that the dispossession of more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs would still have taken place?

Members of the Jewish hard Left find that they have a bond with Palestinians whom they see as the underdog, and that is perfectly understandable. But they also need to consider events such as the following:

- The holocaust survivors who tried to reach Palestine in 1947 but who were deported back to Europe by the British Royal navy;
- The 20,000 Israeli soldiers killed in combat between 1948 and 1997, the 75,000
- Israelis wounded during this period and the nearly 100,000 Israelis considered to be disabled army veterans;
- The fighters of Kibbutz Negba, who in the 1948 war of independence, using only small arms, overcame Egyptian heavy armour and halted the advance of the Egyptian army.

To some extent I believe that the difficulty of the hard Left in coming to terms with the above events is a generational issue. While one might be aware of these events at an intellectual level, it is not the same as living through them.

It should be noted that the following five organisations devoted to human rights issued a statement on the occupation without mentioning the Nakba:

- Amnesty International
- Machsom Watch
- New Israel Fund
- T'ruah – Rabbis for human rights (USA)
- Meretz Australia



*The Palestinian exodus from the newly declared Jewish State, 1948.*

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### Excerpts from ‘The panel: Australian views on the Gaza conflict.’

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/24/the-panel-australian-views-on-the-gaza-conflict>

By Fahad Ali, medical student and president of the Students for Palestine Society at the University of Sydney.

“All I know of my country is through song and story, through books, faded photographs, my grandmother’s heavy sighs and an overwhelming, communal sense of loss. I have never set foot in Palestine, and sometimes I fear that I never will. A little over a year ago, I came to the realisation that wallowing in fear and despair was going to do absolutely nothing to change the status quo, and so I stepped slowly and cautiously into Palestine solidarity activism.

I made the decision very early on that I would not accept to be a part of any campaign that vilified the Jewish people. I know what it feels like to be

reduced to a caricature. My dark skin and Arabic name have earned me the label of "terrorist" in the past. It did not matter that I hated the bombings, "Arab" became synonymous with violence and explosive vests.

What do we gain from Shylockian representations of the Jewish people? What do we gain from equating the star of David with a Nazi swastika? Many Arab Australians, I'm sure, will share the same experiences of racism that I have; how is it any different to equate the star and crescent with the terrors of ISIL?

The nature of the issue makes it easy for latent anti-Semitism and anti-Arabism to be mobilised by either side... The leaders of the Palestine solidarity movement in Australia and the organisers of these rallies must make efforts to combat anti-Semitism. This does not prevent us from condemning, in the strongest terms, the violations of international law committed by Israel, or the recklessness of the Israeli Defence Force, which has led to a 76% civilian casualty rate in Gaza. The organisers may not be responsible for the offensive banners that often turn up, but they do have a duty to speak out and remind the community that the liberation of Palestine is fundamentally a question of human ideals.”

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*This excerpt has been reproduced with the author’s permission.*

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### AJDS Statement on Avi Yemini and the Rise of Far-Right Racism

The Australian Jewish Democratic Society is deeply concerned by the protest being organised by local personality Avi Yemini who is cultivating a cynical branding campaign based in racism and fear.

Hate speech is always violent, and Yemini is trading in it. Right now Avi Yemini is the online equivalent of a racist street thug charging onto a train carriage and attacking the first Muslim he sees. The flow-on effect of this incitement contributes to a culture of Islamophobia and hate that is not limited to online hate speech. It spills over into physical violence and verbal harassment in cities and towns across Australia. The effects - unsurprising yet horrific - are happening with alarming frequency.

We’re seeing here the perpetuation of a fantasy of being beset: by imagined immigrant and refugee gangs attacking white purity; by imagined anti-white racism; by imagined social problems caused by racialized groups; by the imagined degeneracy of others; by imagined conspiracies; by imagined threats on so-called traditional ways of life; by imagined attacks on free speech; by an imagined spectrum of possible traitors, especially the dreaded leftists. Yemini’s harassment is marked by intolerance, militarism, xenophobia and endless snivelling. Combined, these are all classic hallmarks of neo-fascism, and they are leading to a harmful call for increased policing and securitisation of our communities.

Jews are, of course, familiar with the baiting and provocations that extend from racist paranoia. As Jews we cannot say it more clearly: we know what hate looks like, we know where

hate takes us, we know that we can never be safe until racist hate in all its forms and systemic sources are eradicated.

Avi Yemini is not a neo-Nazi. He has, however, not shied away from ingratiating himself to neo-Nazi and fascist gangs across Australia, including Nationalist Uprising and the United Patriots Front. Nationalist Uprising leader Neil Erikson, besides bouncing between various neo-Nazi incarnations for over fifteen years, has received a non-custodial sentence for racially harassing a rabbi. Fellow patriot leader of Nationalist Uprising Shermion Burgess is well known for his antisemitic tirades. Blair Cottrell, leader of the United Patriots Front and formerly imprisoned arsonist, has described how he would like to see a photo of Hitler in every classroom and a copy of Mein Kampf issued to every school student. Chris Shortis, who claims not to be a neo-Nazi, but does claim to support National Socialism, has had senatorial aspirations for neo-

Nazi leader Jim Saleam's Australia First Party, and was in 2016 deemed unfit by authorities to own a firearms licence as a direct consequence of his hate activism. Erikson, Cottrell and Shortis all received slaps on the wrists and convictions for inciting serious contempt for Muslims recently. *Be afraid of extremist criminal terrorists*, Yemini howls to the moon.

It can't be of any surprise that some neo-Nazi factions have turned on Yemini (and, by extension, all Jews), jealous at the growing space he takes up on the far-right. Sooner or later the far-right comes for us all.

This is all happening at the same time that Yemini calls himself (and is called by numerous media outlets) a "Jewish leader." He is not a leader of any organisation or institution. He is not recognised as a leader through the esteem of the community. He calls himself a leader because he has lots of Facebook followers. While this has made Yemini a punchline in the Jewish community, non-Jews who want to spend their days spitting on

people have flocked to him. He might be a joke, but he is not a funny one.

We encourage the Jewish community to continue speaking up and speaking out about racism, xenophobia and the rise of fascism in the community. We encourage everyone struggling against racism and fascism to expose Avi Yemini for hate speech, and for links with neo-Nazis and fascist gangs. We hope that the Jewish and broader community will become more involved in organising both in mass movements and in whatever means might be effective.

#### **Statement issued 14 September 2017**

Hate speech is always violent, and Yemini is trading in it. Right now Avi Yemini is the online equivalent of a racist street thug charging onto a train carriage and attacking the first Muslim he sees.

^ ^ ^

Our website is currently undergoing some serious maintenance. Please contact [editor@ajds.org.au](mailto:editor@ajds.org.au) with any queries, comments or contributions, or get in touch with us on Facebook.

Dear friends,

Please join us at our annual dinner to share a meal with our vibrant and passionate community, celebrate the work we have done this year and be a part of an inspiring future for the AJDS.

When: Sunday Dec 10th, 6:30 pm

Where: [Flying Saucer](#), 4 St Georges Rd, Elsternwick.

Upstairs. There is an elevator to get upstairs

Cost: \$60 or \$45 concession

Vegetarian or fish options

Guest speaker: Tim Lo Surdo from Democracy in Colour

Bookings online at: <http://www.ajds.org.au/annual-dinner-17/>

If you would like to support us but can't make it to the dinner, you can now book a 'Pay it forward: Chanukah sponsorship of new AJDS ally' ticket through our online booking!



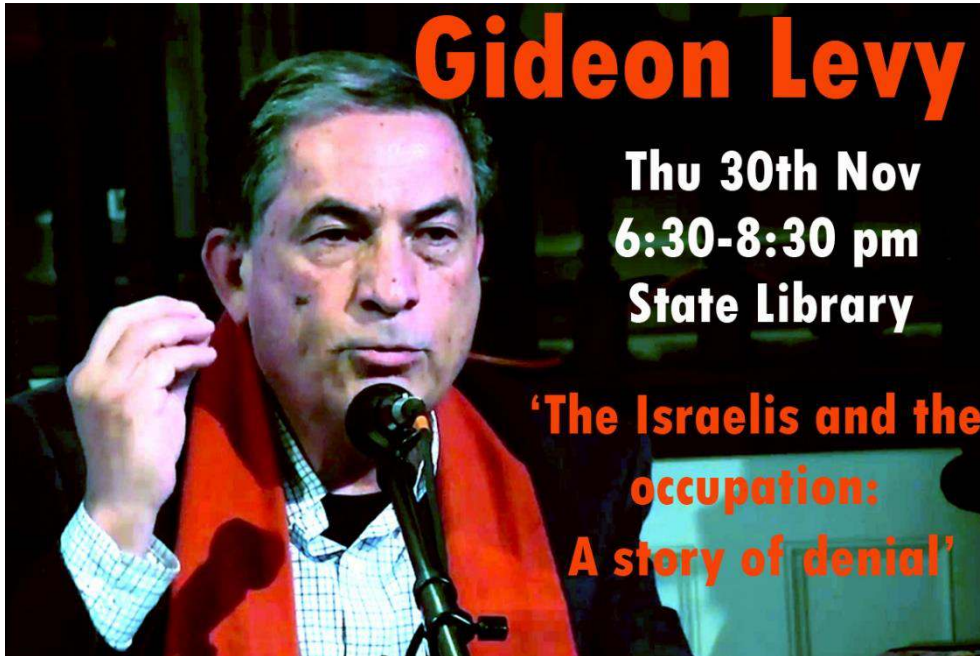
We are very honoured to have Tim Lo Surdo joining us from Democracy in Colour as our guest speaker this year. You can get a taste of this passionate and inspiring activist and the work that Democracy in Colour does in this short [video](#).

Contact Yael for any enquiries: [co@ajds.org.au](mailto:co@ajds.org.au). 0423 234 069

## Gideon Levy

Get your tickets quick to hear Gideon Levy speaking in his only Melbourne appearance, hosted by AJDS, Australia Palestine Advocacy Network and Australians for Palestine.

Purchase tickets [visiting our website](#).



### **The Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS):**

A progressive voice among Jews,  
a Jewish voice among progressives.



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and a Jewish Voice among Progressives

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