

How the 'Fight Against Antisemitism' Became a Shield for Israel's Genocide. Jonathan Cook

Western capitals no longer treat Israel like a state, a political actor capable of slaughtering children, but rather as a sacred cause. So any opposition has to be a blasphemy

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If you read the establishment media, you might conclude that a serious battle is being waged by [Israel](#) and its most ardent supporters to tackle an apparent new wave of antisemitism in the West.

In article after article, we are told how Israel and western Jewish leadership bodies are demanding our concern, and outrage, at a [rise in anti-Jewish hate](#) incidents. Organisations such as the Community Security Trust in the UK and the Anti-Defamation League in the US [produce lengthy reports](#) on the relentless increase in antisemitism, especially since 7 October, and warn that action is urgently required.

Undoubtedly, there is a real threat of antisemitism, and as ever it comes largely from the far right. Israel's actions – and its false claim to be representing all Jews – only help to stoke it.

This moral panic is transparently self-serving. It directs our attention away from the pressing, all-too-concrete evidence that Israel is committing a genocide in [Gaza](#) – one that has slaughtered and maimed many tens of thousands of innocents.

It redirects our attention instead towards tenuous claims of a deepening antisemitism crisis, one whose tangible effects appear limited and for which the evidence is all too clearly exaggerated.

After all, a rise in "Jew hatred" is all but inevitable if you redefine antisemitism, as western

officials have recently done via the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's [new definition](#), to include antipathy towards Israel – and at the moment when Israel appears, even to the World Court, to be [carrying out a genocide](#).

The logic of Israel and its supporters runs something like this: many more people than usual are expressing hatred of Israel, the self-declared state of the Jewish people. There is no reason to hate Israel unless you hate what it represents, which is Jews. Therefore, antisemitism is on the rise.

This argument makes sense to most Israelis, to its partisans, and to the overwhelming majority of western politicians and career-minded establishment journalists. That is: the very same people who interpret calls for [equality in historic Palestine](#) – “from the river to the sea” – as demands for a genocide against Jews.

The singer Charlotte Church, for example, found herself accused of antisemitism by the entire establishment media after a “pro-Palestinian chant” to raise money for Gaza’s children being starved by an Israeli aid blockade. The [offending song](#) had included the lyric “From the river to the sea”, calling for the liberation of Palestinians from decades of Israeli oppression.

At the weekend, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt once again [suggested](#) marches calling for a ceasefire were antisemitic because they supposedly “intimidated” Jews. In fact, Jews are prominent at those marches. He was referring to Zionists who excuse the slaughter in Gaza.

[#trevorphillips](#): "Are you seriously making the case that what we see each Saturday.. is mob rule?"

Jeremy Hunt says he's been contacted by Jewish people who are afraid to leave their house when pro Palestinian marches are happening. pic.twitter.com/I8n2ErqLZ9

— Saul Staniforth (@SaulStaniforth) [March 3, 2024](#)

Similarly, in the wake of George Galloway’s overwhelming by-election win “for Gaza” in Rochdale last week, a BBC reporter berated former Labour MP Chris Williamson for using the word “genocide” to describe Israel’s actions.

The reporter was [worried](#) that the term “might offend some people”, despite the World Court finding the accusation of genocide plausible.

A BBC News correspondent tried to stop me from calling Israel's onslaught on Gaza a genocide because it might "offend" people.

Since when did we worry about "offending" génocidaires? I will never accept such attempts at censorship. pic.twitter.com/RLkIRU4Zmz

— Chris Williamson (@DerbyChrisW) [March 1, 2024](#)

A Ghoulish Phenomenon

But the ambition of these Israel zealots runs much deeper than mere deflection. Israel's leaders and most of its citizens are not ashamed of their genocide, it seems, and neither are their overseas backers.

If my social media feeds are any guide, the slaughter in Gaza is not discomfiting these apologists, or even giving them pause for thought. They appear to revel in their support for Israel as the world looks on in horror.

Every [Palestinian](#) child's bloodied body, and the outrage it provokes from onlookers, fuels their self-righteousness. They entrench, they do not retreat.

They appear to be finding a strange reassurance – comfort even – in the wider public's anger and indignation at the extinguishing of [so many young lives](#).

It mirrors very precisely Israeli officials' own reaction to the International Court of Justice's verdict that there is a plausible case Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

Many observers assumed that Israel would seek to placate the judges and world opinion by toning down its atrocities. They could not have been more wrong. In defying the court, Israel became even more brazen, as attested to by its horrifying assault on [the Nasser hospital](#) last month and its [lethal attack](#) on Palestinians scrambling to reach an aid convoy last week.

Israel's [war crimes](#) – [broadcast](#) on every [social media platform](#), including by [its own soldiers](#) – are even more [in our faces](#) than before the World Court ruling.

This phenomenon needs explaining. It looks ghoulish. But it has an internal logic that shines a light on why Israel has become an emotional crutch for many Jewish people, both inside the country and abroad, as well as for others.

It is not just that Jews and non-Jews who strongly subscribe to the ideology of Zionism identify with Israel. It runs deeper still. They are utterly dependent on a worldview – long cultivated in them by Israel and by their own community leaders, as well as by oil-grabbing western establishments – that places Israel at the centre of the moral universe.

They have been drawn into what looks more like a cult – and a very dangerous one at that, as the horrors of Gaza are revealing.

Albatross, not sanctuary

The claim they have internalised – that Israel is a necessary sanctuary in a future time of trouble from the supposedly innate, genocidal impulses of non-Jews – should have come crashing down on their heads over the past five months.

If the price of reassurance – of having a “just-in-case” bolthole – is the slaughter and maiming of many tens of thousands of Palestinian children, and the slow starvation of hundreds of thousands more, then that bolthole is not worth preserving.

It is not a sanctuary; it is an albatross. It is a stain. It must go, to be replaced by something

better for Jews and Palestinians in the region – “from the river to the sea”.

So why have these Israel partisans not been able to reach a conclusion so morally self-evident to everyone else – or at least those not suborned to the interests of western establishments?

Because like all cults, hardcore Zionists are immune to self-reflection. Not only that, but their reasoning is inherently circular.

Israel, Zionism’s creation, is not in the least concerned with providing a solution to antisemitism, as it professes. Quite the reverse. It feeds on antisemitism and needs it.

Antisemitism is its lifeblood, the very reason for Israel’s existence. Without antisemitism, Israel would be redundant, there would be no need for it as a sanctuary.

The cult would be over, and so would the endless military aid, the special trading status with the West, the jobs, the land grabs, the privileges and the sense of importance and ultimate victimhood that allows for the dehumanisation of others, not least the Palestinians.

Like all true believers, Israel’s partisans overseas – who proudly call themselves “Zionists” but are now [pressuring social media platforms](#) to ban the term as antisemitic, as the movement’s goals become more transparent – have too much to lose from self- and communal doubt.

The fight against antisemitism means nothing else can take priority – not even genocide. Which, in turn, means no greater evil can be acknowledged, not even the mass murder of children. No bigger threat, however pressing, however urgent, can be allowed to come to the fore.

And to keep the doubt at bay, more antisemitism – more supposed existential threats – must be generated.

Racism in New Garb

In recent years, the biggest difficulty facing Zionism has been that the true racists – on the right, often in power in western capitals – have also served as [Israel’s strongest allies](#). They have dressed up their traditional racist ideologies – that once fed antisemitism, and could again – in new garb: as Islamophobia.

In Europe and the United States, Muslims are the new Jews.

Which is ideal for Israel and its partisans. A supposed “[global, civilisational war](#)” – ideological cover to justify continuing western domination of the oil-rich Middle East – always places Israel, the regional attack dog, on the side of the angels, firmly alongside the white nationalists.

Because Israel and its apologists cannot expose the true racists and antisemites in power, they must create new ones. And that has required changing antisemitism’s definition beyond recognition, to refer to those who oppose the colonial domination project into which Israel is profoundly integrated.

In this upside-down worldview, one that prevails not only among Israel partisans but in

western capitals, we have arrived at a nonsense: to reject Israel's oppression of Palestinians – and now even its genocide of them – is supposedly to reveal oneself as antisemitic.

Palestinians Dehumanised

This was precisely the position in which Francesca Albanese, the United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, found herself last month after she criticised French President Emmanuel Macron.

Israel has, as a consequence, declared it is banning her from entry to the occupied territories to record its human rights abuses.

But notably, as Albanese pointed out, nothing has changed in practice. Israel has excluded [all UN rapporteurs](#) from the occupied territories for the past 16 years, during its siege of Gaza, so they cannot witness the crimes that foregrounded the attack on 7 October.

Last month, Macron made a patently preposterous statement, though one promoted by Israel and treated seriously by the western media. He described Hamas' attack on Israel as the "[biggest antisemitic massacre](#) of our century" – that is, he claimed it was driven by hatred of Jews.

One can criticise Hamas for how it carried out its attack, as Albanese has done: undoubtedly, its fighters committed many violations of international law that day in killing civilians and taking them hostage.

Exactly the [same kind of violations](#), we should note in the interests of balance, that Israel has committed day in, day out for decades against the Palestinians forced to live under its military occupation.

Palestinian prisoners, seized by an occupying Israeli army in the middle of the night, [held in military jails](#) and denied proper trials, are no less hostages.

But to ascribe antisemitism as Hamas' motivation is intended to scrub out those many decades of oppression. It airbrushes out the very abuses faced by the Palestinians that Hamas and the other Palestinian militant factions were established to resist.

That right of resistance to belligerent military occupation is enshrined in international law, even if the West rarely acknowledges the fact.

Or as [Albanese put it](#):

"The victims in the October 7 massacre were not killed because of their Judaism, but in response to Israeli oppression."

Macron's ridiculous remark also wiped out the past 17 years of the siege of Gaza – a slow-motion genocide that Israel has now put on steroids.

And he did so precisely because western colonial interests – just like Israel's interests – must rationalise the dehumanisation of Palestinians and their supporters as racists and barbarians, in the West's pursuit of domination and old-fashioned resource control in the Middle East.

But it is Albanese, not Macron, now fighting to [save her reputation](#). She is the one being smeared as a racist and antisemite. By whom? By Israel and the genocide-supporting leaders of Europe.

Sacred Cause

Israel needs antisemitism. And armed with a ludicrous redefinition adopted by western allies that classifies as Jew hatred any opposition to its crimes – any rejection of its bogus claims of “self-defence” as it crushes resistance to its occupation and its oppression of Palestinians – Israel has every incentive to commit more crimes.

Every atrocity produces more outrage, more resentment, more “antisemitism”. And the more resentment, the more outrage, the more “antisemitism”, the more Israel and its supporters can present the self-declared Jewish state as a sanctuary from that “antisemitism”.

Israel is no longer treated as a state, as a political actor capable of committing crimes and slaughtering children, but as an article of faith. It is transformed into a belief system, one immune to criticism or scrutiny. It transcends politics to become a sacred cause. And any opposition must be damned as wicked, as blasphemy.

Which is precisely the state to which western politics has devolved.

This battle against “antisemitism” – or rather, the battle being waged by Israel and its partisans – is to turn the meaning of words, and the values they represent, on their head. It is a fight to crush solidarity with the Palestinian people, and leave them friendless and naked before Israel’s campaign of genocide.

It is a moral duty to defeat these “antisemitism” warriors and assert our shared humanity – and the right of all to live in peace and dignity – before Israel and its apologists pave the way to an even greater slaughter.

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