

McCarthyism and Fascism in Israel

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Global Research, March 05, 2014

Alternative Information Center (AIC).and
Global Research 28 August 2010

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

When a state awards itself the right to demand from its citizens an expression of loyalty to the state and when it conditions their citizenship on this same loyalty, it no longer possesses any connection to democracy. In a democracy, the state is loyal to its citizens and obligated to protect them unconditionally. Loyalty to the state and a demand from its citizens to serve it are characteristics of fascist regimes.

In the past two years Israel has taken several steps toward becoming a fascist regime. True, Israeli democracy, defined as a “Jewish and democratic state,” is problematic in several aspects: it removes from the democratic norm approximately 3 million residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory who are living under its rule for more than four decades, together with the 1.2 million Palestinian citizens of Israel – who do enjoy various civil rights but are not part of the governing landscape as the state of Israel defines itself as “the state of the Jewish people” and not as a state of its citizens and absentee residents.

On the table of the Knesset are various legislative proposals, proposals which are strange from the perspective of accepted democratic norms, and which question even the ethnic democracy existing in Israel to date. Only in fascist regimes, and under Stalinist authoritarianism, the citizenship of one born a citizen (and not those naturalized as a mutual decision between the person and the state) is dependent on the good will of the state: Nazi Germany, for example, annulled the citizenship of Jews, as did Vichy France. The USSR annulled the citizenship of Leon Trotsky.

The state of Israel is marching on the path to becoming a fascist regime, and on the way there are benchmarks. One of them is McCarthyism. The essence of McCarthyism is to compile lists of disloyal citizens, to delegitimize them and primarily to sow fear in the hearts of others such that they will not consider questioning the boundaries of national consensus, much less to cross them. The Institute for Zionist Strategies is the seemingly respectable side of “Im Tirzu,” while the latter is composed primarily of right wing young people who crudely attack real and imagined leftists, while the Institute for Zionist Strategies researches the level of “objectivity” of institutions of higher learning, counts what it dubs post-Zionism and demands “balance”. “The group of critical sociologists,” write researchers of the Institute, “gradually took over the departments of sociology in some of the campuses, control that continues to this day despite the weak identification with the Israeli public in all of the universities. Apart from Bar Ilan University, there exists a clear post-Zionist bias in the department of sociology, and it is particularly pronounced in the campuses of Tel Aviv and Beer Sheva...what is common to all of the “post-Zionist” researchers is an undermining of the foundations of the Zionist ethos.

"It is not serious to catalogue researchers according to whether they are Zionists or post-Zionists, as if these are the only two possibilities...a step reminiscent of the work of Senator Joseph Mcarthy," said one lecturer, and another added "

"this is a threatening message toward everyone who does not think and teach in "the correct manner". This is part of a mechanism of intimidation."

In a normal country the university presidents would throw these arguments out the window: academia is not a pirate institution between right and left, between Jews and Arabs, between Ashkenazis and Mizrahis, but an institution composed of the best experts in the subjects taught there, with no regard for origin or opinion (in another blog I will write of the need for affirmative action in Israel). Alas, this is not so with the president of Tel Aviv University, Professor Joseph Klafter, who demanded to receive the reading lists for several courses in the Department of Sociology. "Figures on the right are attempting to categorise and label academics in a step intended primarily to cause intimidation. The university president should not have cooperated with such a thing," said one lecturer.

If we intend to halt the continued deterioration of Israel into a fascist regime in which a lecturer or public servant will be forced to express loyalty to the regime and its leaders, the witch hunt in universities must be stopped immediately, and the sooner the better.

Translated to English by the Alternative Information Center (AIC).

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