

“The War on Global Anti-Semitism” in the Age of Islamophobia

By [Julie Lévesque](#)

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Forget the worldwide rampant Islamophobia and demonization of Arabs. Haaretz reports that the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, has “institutionalized the fight against global anti-Semitism”, even though the US military and their allies have been destroying countries mostly populated by Muslims for over a decade. Or maybe is it precisely to support the war on Islam and the Arab World – a.k.a. “war on terrorism” – that the “war on global anti-Semitism” is being launched? ([Leaving post, U.S. official reflects on a new definition of anti-Semitism](#), Haaretz, October 17, 2012.)

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, which portrays itself as the leader of “the US efforts to promote democracy, protect human rights and international religious freedom, and advance labor rights globally” now requires State Department officials to take a “90-minute course on anti-Semitism at the Foreign Service Institute, the training school for diplomats.” (*Ibid.*)

For convenience “a 341-word definition of anti-Semitism” was drafted, which “included not only traditional forms — blood libel, stereotypes — but newer forms like Holocaust denial and Holocaust relativism” explained Hannah Rosenthal, former anti-Semitism monitor at the State Department. (*Ibid.*)

Rosenthal, who twice headed the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and is now president and CEO of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, also indicated that her team was “able to get included in [the definition] where legitimate criticism of Israel crosses into anti-Semitism.” (*Ibid.*)

This initiative is another demonstration of the Jewish “monopoly of victimization”. In the post-9/11 world, where Muslims and Arabs are victims of religious and racial profiling in Western countries, such a decision is logically unjustifiable. The hunt for “radical Islamists”, portrayed as the ultimate threat by the US State Department regardless of the party in office, has turned all Muslims and Arabs into suspects and potential enemies. The “war on global anti-Semitism” is nothing but another deceptive tool of the US “war on terror”, which undoubtedly benefits Israel.

This new anti-Semitism course for US officials is also a small fish in the ocean of the “Holocaust industry”. Pro-Israeli/Jewish lobbies are resolute in their mission to eradicate any legitimate criticism of Israel. Rosenthal tried to be reassuring however, saying “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic.”

Even though this statement sounds fair and balanced, it is not, nor is it logical. Not only is it impossible to balance criticism between countries, but Israel and the US are the champions

of unbalanced criticism. The best example is their criticism against Iran, which unlike the US and Israel, is not occupying any country at the moment, is not using its military force against any other nation and does not possess any proven nuclear weapon. Despite those facts, it is being portrayed as the most dangerous threat on earth.

Leveling of Criticism and Normalisation of Islamophobia

Whether used on purpose or not, the expression “leveled against countries” instead of “directed” or “aimed at” translates the desire to minimize the criticism against Israel. The “leveling of criticism” serves a major purpose pertaining to its occupation of Palestine: justify the unjustifiable; give the impression that it is protecting itself from an enemy fighting with equal means and putting its survival in great peril. It serves to justify the decades-long occupation, the collective punishment of the Palestinians, a war crime under the Nuremberg Principles, elaborated in the wake of the Nazi trials. When it comes to Israel and Palestine, one cannot logically criticize the two countries equally: how can an occupied country without an army, being denied self-determination and basic human rights be criticized as much as its brutal, heavily armed occupier?

There is a shallow set phrase that so-called neutral commentators will too often use to “level criticism”: “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complicated.” First and foremost, it is not a conflict, it is a war. A war fought with disproportionate means, where a whole population is being punished and the aggressor is victimized. Second, it’s not complicated, it is very simple. Israel occupies a territory and commits war crimes on a regular basis, while the “international community” sits idly by either because Israel is an ally or simply because their interests are not at stake.

This “criticism leveling” is part of a legendary process of legitimization of injustice and war crimes. Back in the 90’s the Oslo Accords trivialized the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Palestinian football player Mahmoud Sarsak recently became an icon of the fight against normalization. He was arrested at a crossing, jailed in Israel and freed only after a 96 day hunger strike. Adie Mormech writes:

Dr Haidar Eid has termed the struggle for Palestinian liberation as opposed to normalisation with Israel as “The de-Osloizing of the Palestinian mind”. He described [Palestinian football player] Mahmoud Sarsak’s stand against normalisation by refusing the joint hosting at Barcelona FC with former Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit as the fight against “The Oslo Virus”.

The “Oslo Virus” refers to what was behind the spate of normalisation initiatives that began in earnest in 1993 in the wake of the Oslo Accords, and agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the then Israeli Labour Government.

Edward Said, who immediately saw the perils of normalisation without justice, wrote in 1995 of the Palestinian leadership’s decision to endorse the Oslo agreement: “For the first time in the twentieth century an anti-colonial liberation movement had not only discarded its own considerable achievements but had made an agreement to cooperate with a military occupation before the occupation had ended.” (Adie Mormech, [De-Osloization and the fight against Normalisation](#), Scoop, October 25, 2012.)

Sarsak explained his decision as follows:

“There is a difference between a person arrested with his weapon, in military uniform from inside his tank... and the arrest of an athlete at a crossing who was on his way to a professional sports club in the West Bank. I announce my readiness to meet Barcelona or any other Spanish club outside of the context of a joint invitation with Gilad Shalit, inviting me as a Palestinian athlete who experienced... the suffering of a hunger strike for freedom and dignity.” (Adie Mormech, [Mahmoud Sarsak and the end of Oslo-era normalization](#), Mondoweiss, October 26, 2012)

The narrative according to which the “conflict” between Palestine and Israel is complicated is part of the trivialization of Israel’s brutal and illegal occupation of Palestine. By an absurd and macabre distortion of reality we are led to believe the Israelis are the sole victims of racism and discrimination.

The injustice has been standardised and downplayed to such an extent that, according to a recent poll, a majority of Israelis accept and admit there is a form of apartheid in their own country, and around 50% of the population supports segregation and discrimination against Arabs:

A new poll has revealed that a majority of Israeli Jews believe that the Jewish State practises “apartheid” against Palestinians, with many openly supporting discriminatory policies against the country’s Arab citizens.

A third of respondents believe that Israel’s Arab citizens should be denied the vote, while almost half – 47 per cent – would like to see them stripped of their citizenship rights and placed under Palestinian Authority control [...]

The poll, conducted by Israel’s Dialog polling group, found that 59 per cent out of the 503 people questioned would like to see Jews given preference for public-sector jobs, while half would like to see Jews better treated than Arabs.

Just over 40 per cent would like to see separate housing and classrooms for Jews and Arabs. (Catrina Stewart, [The new Israeli apartheid: Poll reveals widespread Jewish support for policy of discrimination against Arab minority](#), The Independent October 23, 2012.)

Noam Sheizaf, an Israeli journalist wrote that the “findings reflect the widespread notion that Israel, as a Jewish State, should be a state that favours Jews. They are also the result of the occupation ... After almost half a century of dominating another people, it’s no surprise that most Israelis don’t think Arabs deserve the same rights.” (*Ibid.*)

This domination of Palestinians by Israelis has been fostered and is maintained by countries claiming to be defending freedom, liberty, human rights and democracy:

The Palestinian Authority was created with Oslo in 1994 as an interim Palestinian governing body with limited powers and even more limited geographic independence from Israel, whose lifespan should have been only five years according to the stipulated timeline by which “final status agreements” should have been reached.

Tens of millions of dollars poured in to the Palestinian Authority (PA) from ardent Israeli supporters such as the United States and the European Union and similar investment continued in [smaller joint Israeli-Palestinian projects](#) that again made no effort to change the political and socioeconomic status quo for Palestinian life on the ground.

The prominent discourse around newly formed groups such as One Voice and other collaborations was that the Israeli-Palestinian “conflict” was a problem of ignorance and prejudice as opposed to an issue of injustice and the ongoing dispossession and subjugation of one people by another. (<http://www.maan-ctr.org/pdfs/Boycott.pdf>)

The wave of collaborations that followed Oslo increased Israel’s global legitimacy such that bilateral agreements with the European Union and other countries multiplied, as did other agreements [including closer ties with NATO and the OECD](#). Between 1994 and 2000 there was a six-fold increase in direct foreign investment to Israel, from \$686 million to approximately \$3.6 billion. ([De-Osloization and the fight against Normalisation](#), op. cit.)

In a way, the “Oslo Virus” has normalized ostracism of all Arabs and Muslims and the mistreatment of Palestinians was a prelude to the acceptance of today’s patent Islam- and Arabophobia (Since Arabs are also Semites, Arabophobia is also anti-Semitism, but it is virtually impossible to use the latter in relation to anti-Arab sentiment due to its strong Jewish connotation.)

The Western world accepts the US and Israeli occupations of Arab and Muslim land to protect financial and geostrategic interests and the “global war against anti-Semitism” as well as the “global war terror” are the chosen pretexts for military invasion wherever the “humanitarian intervention” is unsuited. Those who resist US occupation in Afghanistan or Israeli occupation of Palestine are portrayed as terrorists. Those who kill civilians and elected government officials in Syria are presented as freedom fighters. You resist occupation, you get bombed, you fight for it, you get armed.

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as American war propaganda tools

Some argue that Israel is just an American imperial outpost: “The United States is fundamentally aligned with Israel because it uses Israel to project its imperial influence in the resource-rich region.” (Michael Fiorentino [Israel: An outpost of empire](#), SocialistWorker.org, April 16, 2010.) With that in mind, the “war on global anti-Semitism” can be viewed as an American imperial war propaganda tool.

In *The Holocaust Industry*, Norman Finkelstein writes: “Just as mainstream American Jewish organisations downplayed the Nazi holocaust in the years after World War II to conform to the US government’s Cold War priorities, so their attitude to Israel kept in step with US policy in the US.” With the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, “The Holocaust became a fixture in American Jewish life.” (Finkelstein, Norman. *The Holocaust Industry*. New York: Verso, 2003, p. 16-17.)

It is a secret for no one. The US wants to expand and maintain its hegemony and the infamous Project for a New American Century stated clearly what needs to be done to that effect:

The military’s job during the Cold War was to deter Soviet expansionism. Today its task is to secure and expand the “zones of democratic peace;” to deter the rise of a new great power competitor; defend key regions of Europe, East Asia and the Middle East; and to preserve American preeminence through the coming transformation of war made possible by new technologies [...]

America's global leadership [...] relies upon the safety of the American homeland; the preservation of a favorable balance of power in Europe, the Middle East and surrounding energy producing region, and East Asia. ([Rebuilding America's Defenses](#), Project for a New American Century, September 2000.)

It is very telling that expanding "zones of democratic peace" is the only goal in brackets, since they usually indicate sarcasm and irony. Apart from "democratic peace", the hegemonic objectives are quite clear and the new "war on global anti-Semitism" can only help further America's imperial design, which Israel is both being used for and profiting from.

Heavily armed by the US, Israel's foreign policy is an extension of American foreign policy. Since the creation of Israel we've been used to the mistreatment of the Palestinians: it has been "normalized". The collective punishment inflicted to the Palestinians by Israel, a crime the Jews have undergone under the Nazis, is accepted and perpetuated by the US. Without the help and permission of America and the acceptance of the so-called international community, the Palestinians would not be persecuted.

Just like Israel uses the Holocaust to justify the collective punishment of the Palestinians and attacking its neighbours, the US uses 9/11 to justify the collective punishment of Muslims worldwide and various military invasions. Long before the Bush administration's Torture Memos sanctioning torture, Israel did officially authorize torture with the Landau Report in 1987. Islamophobia is without a doubt the most accepted form of discrimination today and in this context the institutionalisation of "the fight against global anti-Semitism" is clearly another twisted expression of it.

In *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*, Nathan Lean "traces the arc of the Islamophobic sentiment that has exploded in the West" and which is strongly connected to the "Holocaust Industry":

"It exposes the multi-million dollar cottage industry of fear mongers and the network of funders and organizations that support and perpetuate bigotry, xenophobia, and racism, and produce a climate of fear that sustains a threatening social cancer" [...]

It is a relationship of mutual benefit, where ideologies and political proclivities converge to advance the same agenda." [...]

They come, principally, from right-wing Zionism and evangelical Christianity, uniting to form a Judeo-Christian front in their battle against Islam. Their funders, too, come from these worlds-though the right-wing Zionist world has fueled the majority of anti-Muslim activists [...]

It is this Christian Zionism that closely binds right-wing evangelicals with strong supporters of the Jewish state. The Zionists who spread anti-Muslim bigotry can be placed in three camps, according to Lean: religious (Jewish) Zionism, Christian Zionism and political Zionism. "For Religious Zionists, prophecy is the main driver of their Islamophobic fervor. For them, Palestinians are not just unbidden inhabitants; they are not just Arabs in Jewish lands. They are not just Muslims, even. They are non-Jews-outsiders cut from a different cloth-and God's commandments regarding them are quite clear," he writes. And there is the political Zionism that sheds religious language but is still hostile towards Muslims. As Max Blumenthal wrote, these figures, some of

whom are neoconservatives, believe that "the Jewish state [is] a Middle Eastern Fort Apache on the front lines of the Global War on Terror." (Alex Kane, [Islamophobia: How Anti-Muslim bigotry was brought into the American mainstream](#), Mondoweiss, October 29, 2012.)

The US is using Israel for its dirty wars and, in turn, Israelis are using the US to fight their neighbours. They are unswerving allies, each gaining power and expanding their control over foreign territories and their populations, and their allies are benefiting from it. Whatever pretext is being used, the reasons for waging wars remain the same: power and money. And that is always achieved by demonizing whoever is in the way.

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About the author:

Julie Lévesque is a journalist and researcher with the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal. She was among the first independent journalists to visit Haiti in the wake of the January 2010 earthquake. In 2011, she was on board "The Spirit of Rachel Corrie", the only humanitarian vessel which penetrated Gaza territorial waters before being shot at by the Israeli Navy.

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