

Against Zionism Jewish Perspectives

'A Conference facilitated by the
Islamic Human Rights Commission and NEDA'

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The 1990 Trust
Neturei Karta
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Innovative Minds
Justice for Palestine Committee
Islam Channel
Muslim Weekly
Muslim Association of Britain
Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Date

Sunday 2 July 2006

Time

9:30am - 7pm

Venue

School of Oriental & African Studies
University of London, Thornhaugh
Street, Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

Speakers

Professor Yakov Rabkin
John Rose
Stanley Cohen
Rabbi Ahron Cohen
Rabbi Weiss
Roland Rance
Jeffrey Blankfort
Michael Warschawski
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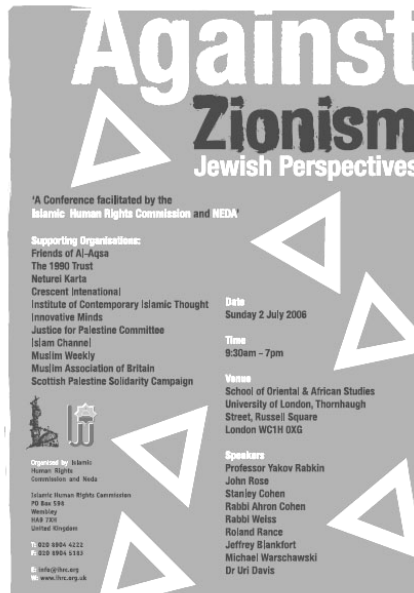
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First published in Great Britain in 2008
by Islamic Human Rights Commission
PO Box 598, Wembley, HA9 7XH

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ISBN 978-1-903718-34-6



Poster of 'Against Zionism Conference...' 2006

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Acknowledgements

The editors wish to thank all the contributors to the conference from which this collection has been compiled, as well as John Rose for his contribution and Jacqueline Rose for her valued advice. Particular thanks are extended to Musthak Ahmed and Abidah Merchant for their hard work in bringing the conference to being and the many other volunteers and participants who marked this event as a truly innovative and worthy occasion.

In particular we'd like to acknowledge Raza Kazim, Fahad Ansari, Beena Faridi, Mohammad Kamali, Aisha Abbasi, Sanjida Akhter, Shazia Ramzan, Sadia Ramzan, Sabiha Hanif, Sofia Dewji, Muhammad Dharas, Seyfuddin Kara, Sadia Majid, Humza Qureshi, Talha Qureshi, Hajira Qureshi, Faaria Ahmed, Ahmed Hassan, Abbas Nawrozadeh, Syed Rashidul Islam, Karin Lindahl, Sajed, Khadijah Islam and Cennet Dogenay.

Notes on Contributors

Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss is descended from a line of Hungarian Jews. His grandparents were exterminated by the Nazis at Auschwitz. He now lives with his family in New York.

Rabbi Weiss is International spokesperson for Neturei Karta, an Orthodox Jewish group that strongly opposes all forms of Zionism.

In 2001, he attended the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in South Africa as part of the Islamic Human Rights Commission delegation and helped the NGO conference adopt the historic declaration condemning Zionism as racism and Israel for genocide which resulted in a US/Israel walkout. He also attended the Second Conference of the International Union of Parliamentarians for the Defense of the Palestinian Cause, along with Rabbi Cohen, where he spoke about his group's anti-Zionist beliefs. The conference was held in Beirut, Lebanon in February last year.

Rabbi Ahron Cohen is one of many orthodox Jews who absolutely sympathises with the Palestinian cause. He is a UK-based member of the anti-Zionist group, Neturei Karta and has given a number of talks on the issue of Judaism vs. Zionism.

He takes part in ecclesiastical duties within the Jewish Community and is particularly involved in educating youth and in helping them to achieve healthy and correct attitudes.

Yakov M. Rabkin is Professor of History at the University of Montreal. His recent book, which appeared in the original French in 2004, has appeared in English in April 2006 under the title *A Threat from within: History of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*. The Arabic version appeared in May 2006 at CAUS in Beirut.

Uri Davis is an Israeli scholar, who prefers to describe himself as a Palestinian Jew. He was born in Jerusalem in 1943, when Palestine was still undivided. He currently lives in Sakhnin, in northern Israel. He graduated from Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1968 with a BA in Philosophy and Arabic.

Dr. Davis has written numerous books which focus particularly on citizenship, apartheid and democracy in Israel and the Middle East. In 1995, he published his autobiography entitled "Crossing the Border: an autobiography of an anti-Zionist Palestinian Jew." He is a founding member of the Movement against Israeli Apartheid in Palestine (MAIAP). Dr. Davis is also involved in several other organizations including Al-Beit (the Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Israel).

Dr. Davis is an honorary research fellow at the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Durham and at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter in the UK.

Roland Rance is an anti-Zionist British Jew who lived and worked for several years in Jerusalem, and has spent 30 years campaigning for a unitary, democratic and secular Palestine. He has been a socialist activist in Israeli, Palestinian and British politics for a number of years and is chairperson for the organisation, Jews Against Zionism.

He was editor of *Return*, a quarterly magazine “Against the Israeli Law of Return – For the Palestinian Right to Return” and wrote the 1987 Return statement of anti-Zionist Jews.

A collection of his articles on the Middle East have been published by the International Socialist Group, under the title *Palestine’s Second Intifada*.

(See: <http://www.isg-fi.org.uk/archives/press/psi/psi00.htm>)

Les Levidow has been an active supporter of the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC) since it was founded in London in early 2001. In opposing all ‘anti-terror’ laws, CAMPACC links human rights campaigners, lawyers, migrant groups and individuals targeted by those laws. In this work he brings a long experience of solidarity here with people demonised and targeted by state terror – in Ireland, Italy, Chiapas and Palestine. During the first intifada there, he was actively involved in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, especially as a member of the National Executive Committee. Along with several other members, he participated in Editorial Board of *Return* magazine, which opposed the so-called ‘Law of Return’ for Jews and counterposed the Palestinian right of return.

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Michael Warchawski is a veteran journalist and peace activist. A Rabbi’s son, he left for Israel to study the Talmud at the age of 16. He is co-founder of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem and has become a renowned figure of the Israeli left. The AIC is a Palestinian-Israeli news organization that publishes information, research and political analysis on Palestinian and Israeli societies, while promoting co-operation between the two sides.

His involvement in radical politics led him to form alliances with diverse groups and he became targeted by the Shin Bet, Israel’s notorious intelligence agents. He was incarcerated for 20 days and has written an award-winning memoir of his experiences.

Other books by Warchawski include *Israel-Palestine: le défi binational* and *Toward an Open Tomb: The Crisis of Israeli Society*.

Foreword

The papers published herein were presented at the conference 'Against Zionism: Jewish Perspectives' at the Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, London on 2 July 2006, organised by the Islamic Human Rights Commission and NEDA.

The audio of all the papers presented can be heard on-line at:
<http://www.ihrc.org.uk/060702/>

The publishers hope that the content of this volume will inspire discussion and thought at a time when such critical thinking is being demonised and pushed to the margins. All those whose work is contained in this volume, come from different and dynamic backgrounds through a spectrum of Orthodox to secular, from political 'left and 'right'. Yet all speak of a world that recognises and yet transcends difference to achieve real peace based only on full justice.

We hope that is inspiration enough for the reader to begin and continue a journey of critical reflection and solidarity with the oppressed.

Islamic Human Rights Commission

'The Religious Case against Zionism'

Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, Brooklyn, USA

With God's help I pray to the almighty that he may bestow upon me wisdom and allow me to convey his knowledge the truth of the Torah and that it should be understood and comprehended by all and in so doing we should be able to sanctify God's name and help complete the name of God which is *shalom*, Peace. And eventually the name of God and His truth should be throughout the world accepted and practiced. Amen.

I first would like to thank the Islamic Human Rights Commission and NEDA, the organisation NEDA, for inviting us here they have given me this great honour and privilege to sanctify Gods name and God bless this be a success and for their good endeavours and I thank all of you for coming and taking the bother to come here to listen to us even though there people here from the Muslim faith, Arabs, there are people from different parts of the world who may be so upset about what has been going on, what has happened to their people from, unfortunately my wayward brethren. That they should have the heart, the will to come and listen is something which is above and beyond the usual compassion of a person, and we are very thankful for that.

The issue today which we will be presenting, with Gods help is the difference between Judaism and Zionism. The whole world equates the two and considers it one and the same; Judaism is Zionism there a State of Israel, Zionist state, Jewish state. Usually in the view of the world it is one of the same. And that's a fact it is almost in cement, a fact. In truth Judaism and Zionism are diametric opposites. Judaism is a spirituality, practiced by the descendants of Abraham, Isaac of Jacob for thousands of years. And Zionism is a movement that is merely around one hundred years old, created by non-practicing Jews, Theodore Herzl, people who abhorred the religion, they left the religion, proudly and they wanted to transform this Judaism from a religion, from this Godliness into a godlessness, into a materialist entity, a goal for nationalism, for materialism, totally devoid of Godliness. Of course in every materialism, in every issue, you need to do things and make compromises for practical purposes. Zionism allowed the practice up to a point, whatever was convenient for them, of Judaism, or Islam or Christianity in the land. But in essence Zionism is Godless, it is totally the blasphemous, it is a rebellion against godliness, its goal is to uproot godliness from Jewish people, to totally change their goals, their aspirations, and what a Jew is.

Why it is so important to understand the difference between Judaism and Zionism, why it so important to listen to what I have to say, even though I am not a gifted speaker, we say that Moses, the Rabbis have a common saying amongst the teachings of Judaism, he had an impediment in his speaking. God specially wanted it this way so people wouldn't say that he was this terrific speaker, was able to say with his good tongue to sell a bag of goods to people, that it wasn't the truth. God wanted the people to understand that what he was saying was totally the truth, and that is why it was accepted and not the power of the speaker. I am not worthy of speaking of these great issue of sanctified God's name, but it is so

important, so be patient and try to comprehend because this is the truth, and we will clearly show it with God's help why it is the truth.

I am going to mention, in short, seven more times why it is important to understand the difference between Judaism and Zionism. First as I say is to sanctify God's name because everything that is done by Zionist is in the name of God, and this is totally false.

Secondly, we want to reconcile the Jewish people with the Muslim, with the Arab people throughout the world, we have been living together for over a thousand years, and a tremendous rift has been driven between the Jews and the Arabs, the Muslims. There is a tragedy, God's name is Peace, and we want, with God's help, if we live to correct this misnomer that if you look at a Jew that does not mean he is a Zionist – Judaism is not Zionism. This will, with God's help, this will help to begin this repair, the reconciliation between Jews and Arabs, and Muslims, which depends because you have the Iranian people who are Muslims but not Arabs, and you have Arabs who are not Muslims.

Thirdly, the bloodshed that has been caused by this movement called Zionism. It is now over a hundred years that Zionist a movement up to Palestine and they have caused this tremendous and endless river of bloodshed. They are the root cause of all this bloodshed and we will show you that, with God's help, so we want to, with God's help, try to stop that.

We want to stop the demonisation of the Muslim people, of the Arabs. When we come to the best of civilisation, they are not so well acquainted with the Muslim society. In their eyes, they don't know how to deal with them, or if they could co-exist – they call it Judeo-Christian here in western society. So they look at people that have lived together with them, they look at the Jewish people, and if they hear the truth from the Jewish people, the practising Jewish people who are telling the truth of history, then they would know that we had the best co-existence together in the Arab lands, they were the most hospitable to the Jewish people – they were a safe haven for us throughout history. Before there was any human rights groups, before there was anyone to stop the slaughter of the Jews, they would not have to answer to anyone, and still we lived amongst them. So it becomes obvious that there is no religious conflict here. When the people of the western civilisation understand, and comprehend that something is wrong with them being told the Muslim people were barbarians, they were people that they couldn't co-exist with, they should understand that this is another propaganda issue that is totally false. This we have to clarify, and dig up the truth, and reveal the truth and open the people eyes so they should be able to want to understand and realise that they are being sold a false history.

There is an issue of anti-Semitism, if somebody speaks up against Zionism they are being accused of being anti-Semitic, and that's very clear because your against Jews, your against Judaism, your against the Jewish State, and so forth. Again it is important to differentiate the between Judaism and Zionism. We will very clear to you, with God's help, that there is a tremendous difference, and you will be strong, you will be able to have courage, once you understand the

difference, that you wont be intimidated to speak up against the atrocities being committed by Zionist State – the State of Israel, and stand here and not be fearful of being accused of being anti-Semitic.

If you go to a doctor and he just proscribes for you some painkillers when your sick, God forbid, that's not the solution, eventually it wears off, and it doesn't help, he can only help you if he knows the root of the sickness. If we know what the root cause of this tremendous animosity, bloodshed and suffering that is going on in Palestine, and if we know the root cause, then we can find the solution, so we must understand what is going on here. And finally, because God is Truth, knowing the truth itself is part of being Godly, and was required of us. That's a lot of things to do in such a short period time, and we will try, with Gods help, to touch on these subjects.

Judaism is thousands of years old, it is a spirituality. God has made a bond with the Jewish People that we have to serve him, and to emulate God, just as He is compassionate, we have to be compassionate. He gave Moses the Torah on Mount Sinai and he made a bond and required of us to follow all the commandments in the Torah, and in so doing we will be Holy, and in so doing he will promise us the Land of Israel, which is said in the five books of Moses. If we had been worthy then we would be able to practice this religion in the Land of Israel. God warned us in the Bible many times that it is a Holy land and we have be on a special elevation of Holiness in order to be able to stay in the Land of Israel. The Torah warns this many times, that if you will sin against God, if you desecrate the Land then the Land itself will reject you, regurgitate you. So we were warned many times that we have to be very careful to be on this high elevation, and if not the Land itself will reject us, as the Land has done to the Canaanite who sinned and committed impurities on the Land and were sent out. In fact it is interesting to note that the Jews were very reluctant to go to the land, as everyone who studies the Bible knows. They were not interested in coming in to take over the nation and land, it was totally against what they wanted, in fact they were punished because when God said we had to go in, then we had to go in. They were not aggressive, they were forced to go in, and were punished for not wanting to go in, at that time it was Gods Will. Did they go in with military might?

It happens to be clear if anybody studies the book of Joshua, that God made a miracle, they circled the walls of Jericho and the walls sunk in. it was a miraculous happening – it was Gods will. Lets see the Zionists with all their military might walk around the wall and the wall will sink in, and without the caterpillars. Then it was Gods Will, the Caterpillars are not Gods Will. So we see that it involves the issue of spirituality, and not what the Zionists are trying to misconstrue. Eventually, if you look at the books of the Prophets you'll find, very clearly in all of the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, wherever you look, it is very clear that the Jews were warned continually that they are going to be expelled from the land. Eventually, unfortunately, the Jews were expelled from the Land because we weren't at that high elevation of spirituality. So it wasn't because we were physically weak, if you study the 5 books of Moses, it was not the proper time for them to win a war they lost, it is because they started sinning or they had done something wrong. When it was time for them to win a war, they

miraculously won it - The Maccabis. They are used by the Israelis as their symbol of might, few against many. The Maccabis were at the time when the Greeks took over the Land, and they were in control and they said that the Jew are forbidden to practice, to sanctify the Sabbath, do circumcision, and are punishable by death. We have a rule that we have to be loyal to every country that we reside in, the Jews accepted that. If we are commanded to something against Gods commands then God is the King of Kings, then we have to give our lives for that. So the Jews obeyed the Greeks when they were ruling the land, when to do with taxation or other issues of being loyal to the kingdom, we will be loyal to you, but if you stop us from practising the Sabbath, or circumcision, from practising Judaism then you are nothing more than a dog, Daniel said that. If you look in Daniel, it says, if you are coming for taxation – you are our king, but if it has to do with issues of serving God – then we are ready to give our lives. Then the children of the high priest, the father of the children went out with swords and shields, because in those days they did not have tanks and Phantom fighters, they had swords and shields. They wrote on the shields, ‘the word is as strong as your God’. They went out and held war on thousands of thousands of people, and I am asking you, let’s just say the strongest person you can think of in all of the generations. Is it possible for five people with swords to fight against thousands of people, is it humanly possible? It is impossible. Eventually they will be killed, somebody will throw a big rock on their head, and they will kill them. It’s just not possible. It was a miraculous happening, why? Because they were Holy people and they coming to defend the Godliness, and God therefore took up the fight. The Zionists, of course, misconstrued the whole issue, and say it was few against many, the Zionists against the many Arabs. I just want you to understand how they are totally misconstruing history. It was impossible physically, the Maccabis did not have to go to America to ask for Phantom fighters, if they had asked for Phantom fighters – it wouldn’t have helped them either. They couldn’t have got the fuel for Phantom fighters in those days, but whatever it was it was not – it wasn’t the issue – the issue was spirituality, spirituality, and spirituality. But when the time came when we were sent into exile, we went into exile. Exile was commanded by God, and the Jews accepted it. Just as a father banished a child, when the child is bad, he puts the child in the corner, and says ‘you have to stay there for 10 minutes’. If the child picks himself up and says that ‘you know what I am good kid, and I love you dad, I am going to leave the corner and I am coming back to you right now’. The whole morning he did everything wrong, he spit out his breakfast, he pinched his kid sister, his father puts him in the corners, and after two minutes he decides that he is a good boy, and he loves his father and he is going to come out of the corner. Will his father be happy with that? Of course not, he is going to say you stay in the corner for 10 minutes. God banished the Jewish people from staying as a nation in the Land of Israel. We as Jews, who believe in God, we accepted this bitter medicine for thousands of years. It is said ‘the merit of Patience, we will taken out of exile’. God has more compassion than we have for our children. God feels our suffering and of every human being, and He sent us into exile, not because we were physically inept, it had nothing to do with that. We were lacking spiritually, and therefore God sent us into exile. What is the solution if you are spiritually lacking, to become very spiritual, and spirituality can shoot yourself out a spiritual problem. God, in his metaphysical and spirituality can take us out of exile, and that is what Judaism is. We as

Jewish people believe in one thing – we have to practice Judaism, the commandments of the Torah. We are forbidden to try to leave exile, we have to be moral citizens, and this is a command of God. We were dispersed when the time of exile came at the time of the destruction of the Temple, we were dispersed throughout the world and we were commanded by God that we have to be loyal citizens in every country. He put us in the three earths, it's a prophecy of King Solomon, and it is in the book of King Solomon. It is explained in the Talmud, that God put us in the three earths not to return en mass to the Land of Israel. Not to rebel against any nation, we must be loyal citizens in every country we reside in. Not to make any attempt to try to leave exile, in any manner whatsoever. The Jews accepted this, it made sense to them, they understood, there is a God and He sent us into exile, He can take us out. People ask us what does that 'leaving exile'. Leaving exile doesn't mean taking guns and we leave exile when we decide the time is right. It doesn't work that way. We pray for the day, and we say that in our prayer, in many prayers books translated in English and other languages so anyone can see it. Every Jewish person says this universally, we say every nation should make one bond to do the way of God. We yearn and we aspire and crave one thing; the day when Gods glory will be revealed throughout the world, when God will make a metaphysical change in the world. It is hard for us to comprehend this in this world we are living in. But there will come a day, and it could happen today, that God will make a metaphysical change in the world, when all humanity will recognise the One God. Then all the nations together will go up and serve God, and that is what aspire for not for a piece of land, to have a Maccabi, to have an Olympic team that wins a gold medal – this is nothing to do with godliness, on the contrary this is materialism. This is not what Judaism is about and we don't aspire to this. This did not happen today but maybe tomorrow it will happen. What will happen tomorrow, either the short term or the long term, is a day that God without a human intervention will bring an end of this concept of exile, not only of the Jews but of humanity. We will all go up and serve God. Any thing to do with trying to leave exile is strange and contrary to whole Jewish concept and defeats the purpose of exile – because God sent us into exile. You're taking God out of the equation saying, God forbid, that God is not capable of taking care of this people. That's ridiculous, he has allowed every human to breath, and how can he not protect you. It totally contradicts Judaism.

So this is the Jewish belief, and many times Jews went through the Spanish inquisition, and many different trails and tribulations and sometimes this response is in our books, that they asked about us, maybe we should buy a piece of land, not in Palestine, any place, but the Rabbi said patience, God feels everyone's pain, practice Judaism and we will know it with Gods help by serving God to be redeemed. That is the word of Jew. So God, who is perfect, had two issues for splitting us up throughout the world. He could have banished us to one place in the world, but he wanted to spread us out into the world, like the leader of German Jew, known as the leader of modern Jewry, and this does not Zionism, as he lived before Zionism, says "we know about the sin which brought about the destruction of the Temple. We take to heart the harshness which we have encountered in our years of wondering as a chastisement of a father closen us to our improvement. We learned the lack of observance to the Torah which that has

brought about. Not knowing how to shine as a nation among nations do we raise our prayers and hope for a union in our land in order to find a soul for the better fulfilment of our spiritual vocation”

He says that this vocation obliges us onto God, to live and work as patriots, He hasn't just placed us to correct the physical, material or spatial forces and to further the will of the nation that has given us shelter. It obliges us further to allow our longing for the ????? [25:00] to express itself only in mourning. In wishing, hoping and only through the honest fulfilment of all Jewish duties to await the realisation of this hope. But it forbids us to strive reunion or possession of the Land by any but spiritual means. Our sages say God imposed three vows when Israel to the wilderness. One, that the children of Israel should not re-establish their nation by themselves. Second, that they never be disloyal to nations which have given them shelter. Three, that these nations shall not oppress them excessively. It goes on and on.

A Rabbi says, behold even if Zionist were to be perfect with God and His Torah, and if it were possible for them to achieve their goal and gain the land, we must not listen to them, to redeem ourselves are we not forbidden from excessive pray, and certainly by force and physical means, as we are forbidden to leave exile by force.

[You can see more on www.NKUSA.org, also see the book 'Exile and Redemption: the Torah Approach' – which contains the universal views of all the Rabbis]

We believe that every human being is here to serve God, and every human being will inherit the world to come, not only Jews, that's not a concept that is accepted by Judaism that you have to be Jewish to serve God. On the contrary we made a bond and we have 613 commandments that we made this bond to be a nation of priests in order to be a light onto the nations by emulating God. But every human being has to serve God and commemorate God and to be a light onto other nations. In other words this whole concept of thinking that we as Jews only have God is totally false. This can be seen in many books which all say that every human being is here to serve God and must accept that God gave the Torah to Moses and commanded not to steal, not to kill, not to commit adultery and idol worshipping.

Zionism is something which came around 100 years ago and they said, look there anti-Semitism rampant across the world, that's what Theodore Herzl said. He took God completely out of the equation and said we must look for a solution for ourselves. What is the solution? It must have been that we are physically weak. He didn't recognise God and said lets just take a piece of Land. He wanted to take Uganda and decided that it wouldn't be practical because nobody would listen to him and follow him. So therefore they decided to take the Land of Israel. All the Rabbis stood up in opposition and said that this is blasphemous, it has nothing to do with physical weakness, and you just want to totally transform Judaism into materialism, into nationalism, and this is your concept because you abhorred religion, this is totally wrong. So they stood up in opposition to this, but unfortunately they did not listen to what the Rabbis had to say and they conned

the Jews and non Jews into accepting what they had to say. They told the non Jews and waived the bible, 'you see God gave the Jews the land'. They knew that they would not know the prophecies that we are forbidden to have the land and they were not going to ask, 'how come all the Jews for so many generations not go and do this, they were great leaders of Judaism, why didn't they do this?' Then no ones is going to ask too many questions, and they'll accept that because they read the bible and say, 'yeah, yeah, the Land of Israel, the Jewish State' and they will accept it. So that's how they conned the non-Jews and the ignorant masses of Jews because unfortunately most Jews are not even religious, unfortunately, and that's how they were able to fool the Jews.

In 1947 the Chief Rabbi in 1947, its in the UN documents, he sent a letter to the UN and pleaded with them. The UN sent a delegation asking the communities do they want to join the State of Israel, obviously the Christians and the Muslims did not want it. The Jewish population did not want it. The orthodox community that were living there for hundreds of years, by world war one, they were the vast majority and only 5% were not and I have the documentation for that. In 1947 he sent this letter after he saw that it was imminent that he was going to create this state because the UN totally ignored the Jewish inhabitants, because the Zionists had the ear of the leaders of western civilisation because they were from Europe. The leaders of Zionism became the *ipso facto* representatives of Judaism. So the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem said, I am begging with you to leave Jerusalem to be an international zone, we don't want to be under this Jewish State. You can see a picture of this Rabbi with a long beard, he was a holy man, he said I have 60,000 under me and we do not want to be under this Jewish State – he didn't even know it would be called the state of Israel. If it was so holy and precious to the Jews why did he not want to be part of it? He didn't know there was going to be opposition by the Palestinians.

There are hundreds of thousands of people world wide, who do not accept this Zionism, they know it is blasphemous, it is saying that God is not with us, and it is ignoring Gods commands. There are hundreds of thousand who are still loyal to the Torah. We have a rule; Abraham is one, he went against the whole world and accepted that there is one God in the world. So even if you are one, go with the truth.

This is Judaism, there is no other Judaism, even if, God Forbid everyone was to turn away, we happen to have thank God, hundreds of thousands of people world wide, who are intimidated, we can show images of them being beaten on our web site, therefore they are afraid to stand up, but there is many who do stand up against this. We pray for the speedy and peaceful dismantlement, we urge you to do the same. Differentiate between Judaism and Zionism, you shouldn't be accused of being anti-Semitic. Recall history because we lived together totally in peace, and it is only with Zionism which misconstrued this and we shouldn't be considered barbarians.

We all pray for the speedy and peaceful dismantlement of the state and let us all pray for the day when Gods reign will be revealed throughout world and we all serve together in harmony.

Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism

Rabbi Ahron, Manchester, UK

I am what is known as an orthodox Jew (that is a Jew who endeavours to live his life completely in accordance with Judaism, the age old Jewish religion). I am here under the banner of the group known as Neturei Karta, which can be loosely translated as Guardians of the Faith. We are not a separate party or organisation but basically propagators of a philosophy on the subject of Zionism, held by a large section of orthodox Jewry.

The title of my talk is Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism, meaning of course by implication that anti-Semitism is not to be approved of, whereas anti-Zionism is something to be applauded and I hope to explain why. This subject is particularly relevant to us in the light of the current situation in Palestine and the claimed rise in anti-Semitism. Also because in the eyes of the world Zionists are equated with Jews and Zionism is equated with Judaism. It is the error of this assumption, which I wish to bring out today. Discussion and debate on the subject is important because the matter tends to be very confusing both to Jews and non-Jews. On the other hand the discussion and debate tends to be stifled because, particularly to Jews, the subject is very emotive.

In order to understand the statement 'anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism', I think we have to go back to basics and understand the terms used. What do we mean by 'Semitism' (or Judaism, Semitism is a misnomer. What we really mean is anti-Jews or anti-Judaism)? What do we mean by 'anti-Semitism'? What is 'Zionism' and what is 'anti-Zionism'?

Firstly we have to understand that basically anti-Semitism is a dislike or hatred of a people, a particular section of society. The hatred is directed at the Jewish people and not at the Judaism.

Where we find opposition to or hatred of the Jewish Religion, this is usually an extension or manifestation of the hatred of the People. Although we do find a specific hatred of the Jewish Religion where it is a form of religious zealotry, whereby believers in one religion will not tolerate belief in another religion. In this case the intolerance is usually directed against all other religions and is not specifically anti-Jewish.

Anti-Zionism is an opposition to a philosophy, an idea. The opposition is directed, at least initially, at the idea rather than at the people.

Anti-Semitism, which although it has existed for as long as the Jewish People have existed, is an illogical bigotry. Anti-Zionism, however, is a perfectly logical opposition, based on very sound reasoning, to a particular idea and aim.

But let us look at the matter in more detail. Judaism is a very wide ranging and far reaching religion, or way of life. Zionism, however, is a comparatively narrow

and restricted concept, as I hope to explain. I can only give you here today an overview and try to bring out some aspects of Judaism which are relevant to Zionism.

Let me firstly state quite categorically that Judaism and Zionism are incompatible and mutually exclusive, but let us compare Judaism and Zionism in general and in particular.

Firstly let us look at Judaism in general. Judaism is for us a total way of life. Showing us how to live a moral, ethical and religious life in the service of the Almighty. It affects every aspect of our life from the cradle to the grave. We are taught and we believe, that it was revealed to us by Divine Revelation, as described in the Bible, some three and a half thousand years ago, and that is when the Jewish People came in to being. All of our religious requirements, practical and philosophical, are set out in our religious teachings, the Torah, which comprises the Bible and a vast code of Oral Teaching based on what is known as the Talmud handed down to us through the generations.

Zionism, on the other hand, before looking at its particular positive aim, is a secular irreligious philosophy engendered some one hundred years ago by some secular Jews, that is Jews who had in the main cast off their connection with their Jewish way of life handed down to them through the generations.

So there you have the first general difference between Zionism and Judaism. Zionism is secularism, materialism, no, particular religious belief, no particular moral or ethical obligation. Judaism is G-dliness, morality, ethical standards, religious belief. So obviously an opposition to Zionist secularism would have no logical connection with an opposition to people who adhere to or have a connection with Judaism.

But now let us look at aspects of Judaism which have particular relevance to Zionism. The first of these aspects is the question of a land or country. As mentioned, our religion is a total way of life covering every aspect of our life. Included among those aspects is the matter of a land. Right from the beginning, our Torah taught us that subject to certain conditions we would be given a land, the Holy Land, now known as Palestine, in which to live our lives in the service of the Almighty.

What were the conditions? They were basically that we had to maintain the highest of moral, ethical and religious standards. We were taught, and it was foretold, that if the conditions were not fulfilled the Jewish People would be sent into exile. We did have the land for approximately the first one thousand five hundred years of our existence. However, regrettably, the conditions were not fulfilled to the required degree and the Jews were exiled from their land. For the last two thousand years or so the Jewish people have been in a state of exile decreed by the Almighty because they did not maintain the standards expected of them. This state of exile is the situation that exists right up to the present day. It is a basic part of our belief to accept willingly the Heavenly decree of exile and not to try and fight against it or to end it by our own hands. Judaism teaches

that we are forbidden under oath to attempt to come out of this exile by our own efforts and to form a State of our own in Palestine and certainly not by force. We are taught that exile means acceptance of the authority of the people occupying the countries in which we live, including Palestine, and not to rebel against that authority, but only to support its well-being. Finally, we are taught that non-compliance with these prohibitions constitutes a rebellion against the wishes of the Almighty and would produce dire consequences.

What about Zionism. This was founded approximately 100 years ago, as I mentioned earlier, mostly by secular people who were discarding their religion but still retained what they considered as the stigma of being Jews in exile. They considered that our state of exile was due to our own subservient attitude - 'the Goyim (exile) mentality' - and not by Divine Decree. Their aim was to propagate what was a new idea among Jews and that was to form a Jewish State in a Jewish homeland. The land they chose for their aim was Palestine. Not for any religious reason, remember they were a completely secular group, but probably because of the historical and cultural attachment to Palestine held by the Jewish People and thereby they hoped to attract the Jewish masses to their new idea. In principle, they were prepared to consider any land. In fact at one time Uganda was suggested. The underlying philosophy of their aim was that they wished to force their way out of exile by their own efforts.

It will be clear that this Zionist ideology flies in the face of the Jewish Religious attitude to exile outlined above and is entirely incompatible with Jewish teaching. In fact as soon as the Zionist ideology was appreciated at the inception of Zionism it was pronounced as total heresy by the great Jewish religious authorities.

So here again anti-Zionism, that is opposition to the Zionist aim of forming a State for Jews is certainly not anti-Semitism. Since Judaism itself is in total opposition to this aim as I have explained.

A further aspect of Judaism relevant to Zionism is on the question of Jewish identity and Jewish nationality. The age-old way of life of Judaism is in fact the measure of the Jewish national identity. I would say that it is demonstrably true that the identity of a Jew, that is a member of the Jewish People, is established by his or her attachment to Judaism, and not as with most nations an attachment to a particular land or country. This is borne out by the fact that the Jewish People have been without a land for two thousand years, have been dispersed to the four corners of the earth, but have retained their identity by virtue of their attachment to Judaism.

Many will of course argue that we see that the majority of Jews to day, even those in the Diaspora who do not even have an attachment to a land, do not appear to have an attachment to Judaism and yet have retained a Jewish identity. However, you will find that they only have to go back three or four generations at the most and they will find that their forbears were practicing Orthodox Jews. In other words they have retained a degree of Jewish identity by virtue of the continuing but fading effect of their forbears' attachment to Judaism. I say fading because the continuing effect does fade away. You will not find people aware of

their Jewish identity today if they are descendants of Jews who forsook their Judaism, say, five hundred years ago.

The Zionist concept of Jewish identity is a completely secular typically nationalistic identity based on a land. This, however, is not a Jewish identity but a Zionist or Israeli identity which is something completely different.

So once again it will be apparent that to be anti the Zionist identity is totally different to being anti the Jewish identity, since the two are different concepts.

I have spoken until now about concepts which may be somewhat intangible and divorced from the consciousness of the everyday person, perhaps from most of you here today - theological theory. However, there is a further aspect of Judaism relevant to Zionism with which I believe most people can identify. That is the question of Jewish Religious values of humanitarianism.

The Jewish teaching on basic humanitarian values is compassion and consideration for one's fellow man and scrupulous respect for the rights and property and of course lives of one's fellow men. This would quite rightly imply that Orthodox Judaism is in total sympathy with the Palestinian Cause. Zionism is the exact antitheses of these values. Determined to further its aim of a State irrespective of the effect on those standing in the way whether Palestinians and even Jews.

It is very well documented in the writings of the founding Zionists and recorded in their public statements that they fully intended to implement their aim irrespective of its effect on the indigenous population, the Palestinian people. The lives, property and right to self-determination of the Palestinians were of no relevance to them what so ever against the idea and aim of forming their State. To a significant degree even the lives and well being of their own Jewish brethren, whether physical or spiritual, is secondary to the aim of forming and maintaining a State. As is now well known, it is with this philosophy that they eventually achieved the formation of their State. This philosophy continues to this very day and in fact is the underlying cause of the strife and bloodshed in Palestine, nothing else. Zionism has the ideal, and has always had the ideal, of imposing a 'sectarian' State over the heads of the Palestinians, the indigenous population and this has resulted in a terrible confrontation. This confrontation as we all know has resulted in horrific bloodshed and brutality with no end in sight unless there is a very radical change.

So here again, it will be abundantly clear that the very logical and reasonable opposition to the anti humanitarian attitude of Zionism has no relevance what so ever to the old bigotry of anti-Semitism.

So anti-Zionism is a logical opposition to a philosophy, held by some apparent members of the Jewish People, which is racist, fascist-like, totally unacceptable. Anti-Semitism is an irrational bigotry and dislike of a whole people. So I would think that it is very obvious that anti-Zionism is not by any stretch of the imagination the same as anti-Semitism.

I mentioned earlier and I think it became clearer as I continued that Judaism and Zionism are incompatible and mutually exclusive.

This Zionist movement is a complete abandonment of our religious teachings and faith in general, and, in particular, an abandonment of our approach to our state of exile and our attitude to the peoples among whom we live. The practical outcome of Zionism in the form of the State known as 'Israel' is completely alien to Judaism and the Jewish Faith. The ideology of Zionism is not to rely on divine providence but to take the law into ones own hands and to try to force the outcome in the form of a State. This is completely contrary to the approach to the matter of exile which our Torah requires us to adopt, as handed down to us by our great religious teachers. Furthermore, Zionism flouts completely the basic Jewish values of humanitarianism in its treatment of the Palestinian People.

There was and is however, an additional Zionist phenomenon which confuses the picture. That is the Religious Zionists. These are people who claim to be faithful to the Jewish Religion but they have been influenced by the Zionist secular nationalistic philosophy and have added a new dimension to Judaism - Zionism, that is the aim of setting up now and expanding a Jewish state in Palestine. This they try to fulfil with great religious fervour. (I call it Judaism-plus). They claim that their nationalistic philosophy is inherent in the Jewish religion and have attempted fallaciously to rationalise Zionism in the light of Judaism. This is a phenomenon, which has developed mainly since and perhaps because of the Second World War but remains a total departure from the teaching of Orthodox Judaism throughout the ages. These Religious Zionists too, flout completely the basic Jewish values of humanitarianism in their treatment of the Palestinian People.

But we do have a problem and that is that the Zionists have made themselves to appear as the representatives and spokespeople of all Jews and, with their actions, arouse animosity against all Jews. Then those who harbour this animosity are accused of anti-Semitism. So although it is abundantly clear that opposition to Zionism and its crimes does not imply hatred of Jews or 'anti-Semitism, however the wrongs of Zionism are a cause of anti-Zionism overflowing into old fashioned anti-Semitism. Paradoxically Zionism itself and its deeds instead of being a remedy for anti-Semitism are in fact the biggest cause of modern anti-Semitism. Furthermore Zionism actually feeds on anti-Semitism by using it as a means of attracting more immigrants to its State

The confusion between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism reaches up to the highest levels of government and is the only explanation I can give for something that amazes me constantly and that is when I observe the protestation of nations such as the USA and the UK that 'Israel' is a 'democratic State', when actually the whole concept of Israel was and is patently non-democratic and when by a short look back in history it can be seen that the whole Zionist State was begat by the very violence (and the UK was a victim of this violence) against which these countries now protest. The free world waged the Second World War in order to eradicate the very policies, which they are now condoning by supporting the State

of Israel!

To sum up. According to the Torah and Jewish faith, the present Palestinian Arab claim to rule in Palestine is right and just. The Zionist claim is wrong and criminal. Our attitude to Israel is that the whole concept is flawed and illegitimate. So anti-Zionism is certainly not anti-Semitism.

I would like to finish with the following words. It is often said that Jew and Arab cannot live together. We want to tell the world, especially our Arab neighbours, that there is no hatred or animosity between Jew and Arab. We would wish to live together as friends and neighbours as we have done mostly over hundreds even thousands of years in all the Arab countries. It was only the advent of the Zionists and Zionism which upset this age-old relationship. Historically, the situation frequently was that when Jews were being persecuted in Europe they found refuge in the various Arab countries. Our attitude to Arabs should only be one of friendliness and respect.

We consider the Palestinians as the people with the right to govern in Palestine.

The Zionist State known as "Israel" is a regime that has no right to exist. Its continuing existence is the underlying cause of the strife in Palestine.

We pray for a peaceful solution to the terrible and tragic impasse that exists. Perhaps based on results brought about by moral, political and economic pressures imposed by the nations of the world.

We pray for an end to bloodshed and an end to the suffering of all innocent people - Jew and non-Jew alike - worldwide.

We are awaiting the annulment of Zionism and the peaceful dismantling of the Zionist regime, which will bring about an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people. We would welcome the opportunity to dwell in peace in the holy land under a rule, which is entirely in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the Palestinian People.

May we soon merit the time when all mankind will be at peace with each other.

The Use of Force in Jewish Tradition and in Zionist Practice

Yakov M Rabkin

[...] for it is not by strength that man prevails (Samuel I 2:9)

FORCE, AND ITS USE, is no stranger to the Torah. The Pentateuch and several of the Books of the Prophets (Joshua, Judges) teem with violent images. But far from glorifying war, Jewish tradition identifies allegiance to God, and not military prowess, as the principal factor in the victories mentioned in the Bible. Yet, today Israel's army - that many associate with Jews and Judaism - is considered one of the best and motivated in the world. How did this change come about?

Codified Pacifism

Tradition interprets the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the ensuing exile nearly two millennia ago as divine punishment for transgressions committed by the Jews, including armed resistance against the Romans. "If the warriors had heeded the rabbis, the Temple would still be standing."

Jewish tradition disdains physical force. The relationship with iron, the instrument of murder *par excellence*, provides illustrates this attitude. Iron tools would not be used to hew the stones of the Temple, and many Jews remove the knives from the table, associated with the altar of the Temple, before reciting grace after the meal.

Tradition praises humility before adversity. This led many secularized Jews to revolt in the early 20th century. Patience in the face of injustice and persecution filled them with shame, and impelled them to take the fate in their own hands.

The Founding Fathers

According to Jewish tradition, two figures created a Judaism that was at once more personal and more cosmopolitan. The first is Yohanan Ben Zakkai, a Torah scholar who fled the Roman besieged Jerusalem, hidden in a coffin. He put emphasis on Torah study that replaced the struggle for political independence.

The second is Judas the Prince (135-219), revered as the redactor of the Mishna. A signal aspect of the life of Judas the Prince, as preserved in the Talmud, was his friendship, even his intimacy with Antoninus, the Roman Emperor of the day.

Both figures, Yohanan Ben Zakkai and Judas the Prince, embody a conciliatory attitude toward any occupying power. They stand in sharp contrast with the patriots who perished in armed struggle or collective suicide (Masada or Gamla).

Jewish continuity owes much to these two “collaborationist” rabbis.

Throughout history, some wondered whether these pacifist values were firmly anchored in the Jewish worldview. In a work of religious polemic, the Spanish poet and scholar Judas Halevi (1080-c. 1141) presents a dialogue in which in response to the rabbi who praises the Jews for their pacifism, the King of the Khazars responds with a touch of cynicism: “Such would be the case had you freely chosen humility: but you were so constrained. And should you gain hegemony, you too would kill.”

Frustration and Violence in Russia

In 1861, the liberal reforms of Alexander II gave every appearance of leading the Jews to emancipation. But when a terrorist bomb killed the Tsar in 1881, the period of liberalism came to an end and a wave of pogroms swept across Russia.

While other Jewish communities the world over remained faithful to the tradition of non-violence, and contemplated no armed action against the populations amongst which they lived, that tradition came under increasing attack in Russia, as ever-greater numbers of Jews discovered the allure of political violence. Russian Jews flocked to radical political parties.

The pogroms of the late 19th century deepened the insecurity of the Jewish populations of the Russian Empire. In contrast to Jewish reactions during the pogroms of the 17th century, which had been far crueller and more violent, for a growing number of secularizing Jews the suffering they encountered at the end of the “century of progress” had lost all religious significance. 20th century Jews who had broken with the Torah reacted in an entirely different way. Rather than scrutinizing their own behavior and intensifying their penitence while they fled the violence, they asserted their pride and called for resistance. It was a radical departure from tradition.

Zionism used to be multifaceted: it included, among others, Ahad Haam who saw Zion as a cultural beacon and Martin Buber who advocated an Arab-Jewish state in Palestine. However, the varieties of Zionism that won out and continue to dominate Israel’s public life were inspired by exclusive varieties of European nationalism and articulated mostly by Jews from Russia. This kind of Zionism would seek to transform the meek traditionalist Jew into a brawny, assertive Hebrew. The radicals proclaimed it necessary to straighten the spine of the Jew, long curved before his oppressors and long bent beneath the weight of the volumes of the Talmud. Implicit in this process of liberation was an increased reliance on the use of force. Nihilism and contempt for life, common among Russia’s revolutionaries, generated an upsurge of terrorism whose spectre haunts the world to this day.

Zionism emerged from a climate of shame, of insulted dignity. Even though the Torah, both written and oral, repeatedly cautions Jews against personal or

collective pride, it was precisely in these traits that the Zionists sought the kind of respect that they defined in European terms: a country, an army, political independence. What gave the Zionist movement its extraordinary vigor were not the suffering of pogrom victims, but the humiliation of the rejected supplicants, of those whose hopes of integration into Russian society the pogroms had shattered.

It was Haim Nahman Bialik, a Russian author who later became a cultural icon in Israel, that stoked the fires of revenge. In a poem written following the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, he castigated the survivors, heaping shame upon their heads and calling upon them to revolt not only against their tormentors, but also against Judaism. Bialik lashed out at the men who hid in stinking holes while their non-Jewish neighbors raped their wives and daughters. He mocked the tradition that attributed all adversity to shortcomings in the behavior of the Jews: “let fists fly like stones against the heavens and against the heavenly throne.”

Brenner, another Russian poet, and like Bialik the son of a pious Jewish family, also rebelled against the Jewish tradition. He radically transformed the best-known verse of the Jewish prayer book “Hear, O Israel, God is your Lord, God is one!” into “Hear, O Israel! Not an eye for an eye. Two eyes for one eye, all their teeth for every humiliation!”

Honor, pride, the thirst for power and revenge: these were the new motives that swept into Jewish consciousness at the beginning of the 20th century. The shift in outlook that took place in the late 19th century radically modified the meaning of Jewish history in the eyes of the youth, who thirsted after a specifically Jewish activism. The secular version of Jewish history had eliminated the privileged relationship between God and his people, and made the Jews the victims of an historical injustice. This vision stimulated a powerful impulse to action. Several of the founders of armed Jewish units, both in Russia and in Palestine, also recognized the importance of the use of force as a way of wrenching the Jew from his Judaic past. Hatred of traditional Judaism has been an important dimension of the Zionist movement.

The Russian dimension of Zionism cannot be overestimated. Despite the almost total prohibition of emigration from the Soviet Union since the early 1920s, more than 70% of the members of the Israeli parliament in the 1960s were Russian-born, with 13% born in Palestine/Israel of Russian parents. The emergence of the Jewish elites of Russian origin contributed to the shift, between the two wars, of Jewish public opinion in the United States in favor of Zionism. The Russian aspect of Zionism stands revealed in its concepts, its methods and the support it drew from the most powerful section of the Diaspora, that of the United States.

Israeli right-wing parties, which draw much of their support from voters of Russian origin, bear out the Russian dimension of the Zionist enterprise. *Moledet* is a nationalist party which call for deportation of the Palestinians. It also affirms that without the historical experience of the Russian Jews, the Israelis will remain unable to attain their historical destiny and purify the nation of its many illusions. *Moledet*'s stance has won admirers among the nationalists in Russia, who lament that the Russian fighting spirit has survived only in Israel, among

Israelis of Russian origin. While Moledet's web-site in Russian modifies the World War II slogan, "For Our Soviet Fatherland" to read "For Our Jewish Fatherland", its URL in Russian is almost identical to that of a Russian ultra-nationalist one (<http://nasha-rodina.ru/> and <http://www.rodina.org.il>) and the two sites contain reciprocal links.

Joseph Trumpeldor, a Russian war veteran, is the incarnation of romantic heroism in the Zionist curriculum. Killed in a skirmish with the local Arab population, he apparently managed to utter the last words: "How good it is to die for the fatherland." The phrase was to become, with the officers' oath at Masada, one of the symbols of the new determination to take up arms.

Trumpeldor, who had been decorated by the tsar for his bravery in battle, inspired Zionist youth throughout the Russian Empire. Vladimir Jabotinsky, a promising Russian author and Zionist leader, in 1923, set up a Zionist organization that took the name *Brit Yosef Trumpeldor* (the Josef Trumpeldor Alliance) its acronym—*Betar*—harked back to Bar Kokhba's last stand. The organization quickly became a Zionist educational institution with a strong military component. Betar shock units drew stern opposition from many Jews of Palestine, who insulted the participants in a military parade organized by Jabotinsky in Tel-Aviv in 1928. The spectators spat upon them, calling them "Militarists! Generals!" Albert Einstein was among the Jewish humanists who denounced the Betar youth movement in 1935, described it as being "as much of a danger to our youth as Hitlerism is to German youth." Reform Rabbi Stephen Wise expressed his indignation at what he saw as a slogan to fit the times: "Germany for Hitler, Italy for Mussolini, Palestine for Jabotinsky!" He maintained that "the whole tradition of the Jewish people is against militarism."

Most traditional Orthodox rabbis rejected Zionism, accusing it of turning a Torah-based identity into a national one, centered on the land and the language. They were theologically bound to reject military action altogether. Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, believed that "the Torah in no way permits the loss of one Jewish life for the sake of the entire Zionist state. Even in a nation of *tzaddikim*, righteous people, there is no authorization in our era to subject Jews to war... It is clear as day that the Torah obligates us to make every effort to mediate for peace and avoid war. These evil people, the Zionists, do the opposite of the Torah view and quarrel with the nations constantly." This may be another reason why most Haredi Jews do not serve in the Israeli army to this day.

A Sharp Break

Jabotinsky's "offensive ethos" became overtly dominant in Israel only in the 1980s. Ben-Gurion preferred the "defensive ethos," a discourse, which accepted the use of force only as a last resort, in reaction to living in a "dangerous neighborhood." But, as the New Historians have shown, the deeds of the Zionist military under the command of Ben-Gurion reflected the offensive ethos of his political competitors more than he would publicly admit.

While the early Zionist settlers had projected onto Palestinian reality the images of bygone Russia - the Arab threat was likened to the murderous shadow of the pogroms - their actions were like those of all settler groups in a foreign territory: they took up arms to defend their settlements. The arrival of masses of European Jews following World War II, and the Zionist interpretation of the Shoah created a cultural fusion of immense power: a self-image of the just victim. An expression frequently heard in Israel is *ein berera* ("there is no choice"), which often means that the State of Israel is the only place for the Jews, and that there is no other choice but to use force to maintain its Zionist nature.

The millennia-long pacifist and moralizing tradition of Judaism became eroded under the impact of the Palestinian question. Each succeeding generation was less ambiguous than the one before it about the use of armed force: "You can't build a state wearing white gloves" wrote Nathan Alterman, a leading Israel poet born in Imperial Russia.

While most traditional rabbis deplored the militarism of secular Zionists, it found strong support among the National-Religious in the wake of the conquest of Biblical territories in 1967. The mystical teachings of Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), a Russian rabbi whom the British would appoint as first Chief Rabbi of Palestine, were reinterpreted many years after his death by his son to create a potent brand of religious militancy. Rabbi Yitzhak Blau, who teaches at a yeshiva in the West Bank, has demonstrated how Judaic sources have been deformed to yield warlike teachings and to transform the possession of the Land into the supreme good. He notices that the National-Religious, like the secular Zionists, glorify concepts foreign to Jewish tradition, such as 'national honor' or 'national pride'. "It would be quite an irony," concedes Blau, "to discover that a virulent critic of Judaism, Friedrich Nietzsche, indirectly influenced the religious Jewish community."

Anyone who regularly sees televised images of ostensibly pious Jews with machine guns from the West Bank can only conclude that Judaism inspires militancy, a conclusion that may have consequences for the Jews all over the world. This is why it is important to remember that Zionism constitutes a revolutionary break with Jewish continuity. The emphasis on military action that it has brought in its wake makes this rupture all too visible.

Apartheid Israel And The Political Zionist Claim For National Self-Determination

Uri Davis

I have spent good proportion of my life in academic framework and we gather here in the hospices of London University and SOAS, also we are not a massive audience. So with your permission I hope I will make a fairly rigorous presentation and ask you to walk with me at least some way I hope that the consequence of the conceptual journey will bring useful products.

So let me begin with one or two conceptual or definitional comments. First perhaps with reference to the introductory comments by the sponsors and professor Rabkin. I don't describe myself as a Palestinian Jew, I actually happen to be a Palestinian Jew, I was born in Jerusalem in 1943 in a country called Palestine and the title of my birth certificate is 'Government of Palestine'. That is neither here nor there because it is significant only in a political context and the political context that is relevant to my work, my advocacy is critique of Zionism. I'm an anti-Zionist Jew. But in what sense do I justify the projection of my identity or stranding my identity as being Jewish, I do not subscribe to any or most of the 613 commandments or prescriptions which define Jewish lifestyle and observant obedient Jew. So in this respect if I am Jew, I am very much a sinning Jew. I am non believer, at least a non believer in the deity as described in scriptures that are alleged to be the word of God, the holy scriptures, so in what sense can I justify the projection of my presence here as a Jew. I have an answer for me is satisfactory and I invite you to challenge my answer. I am a member of one of the many Jewish tribes. There is a rainbow of Jewish tribes, there is a rainbow of European Jewish tribes, Arab Jewish tribes, of African Jewish tribes, Indian Jewish tribes and I happen to be a member of these tribes the Ashkenazi Jewish tribe. I am regarded by mainstream political philosophy in Israel, mainstream political Zionism as being, to an extent radical and again I wish to descent at least to a degree because at least philosophically and in terms of philosophy and political science theory I am in no way radical, I am a disciple of the values of the French and American, American and French Revolutions of the principle of separation of religion from the state and I take that principle on a one or two step further and I advocate, I subscribe to the derivative principle separation of nationalism from the state and tribalism from the state. So I have no problem with my tribal identity, I pick and chose some of the cultural baggage that I inherited being born into this particular concept, celebrate the parts that are consistent with the values of the universal declaration of human rights and mind you there aren't too many and reject and deny the sections of my cultural baggage cultural heritage that are not consistent with the values of universal declaration of human rights. So it is in this capacity that I address you and we have agreed among us that we would devote one hour to presentation and the latter hour to discussion and I would welcome challenge or support for the position that I represent.

I did suggest or did ask for you permission to walk with me somewhat, it could be a controversial narrative and it might rub some of you the wrong way but give the

credit of a guest and a speaker and perhaps my previous record and allow me go that way. I suggest that we go at least to an extent with the political Zionist narrative and see where it takes us. A mainstream argument of the political Zionist advocacy in defense for the right of the state of Israel to exist as Jewish State is that the Jewish people, the Jewish community worldwide represent a Jewish people and I am old enough to remember vicious and ferocious discussions within and outside the ranks of Palestine solidarity are Jewish communities worldwide a people or a religion. A person whom I regard as a teacher and who I very much admire Rabbi Elmer Berger, he is now deceased, spent much of his, massive intellectual and other resources in defending the position that Judaism is only a religion and projecting Jewish Communities Worldwide is as a Jewish people is wholly unfounded and wrong logically, politically, morally and in every regard.

And as much as I admire Elmer Berger, I want to suggest that we suspend this debate and that we go along with the mainstream political Zionist advocates and say, 'ok, lets accept that there is a Jewish People', and the next step is, well there is, and you accept there is a Jewish People then like all other people, they have the right to self determination. And again the debate has raged for many decades whether the Jews have the right to national self determination, and I again suggest that we suspend the debate and work along with the argument and say, 'ok, the Jewish People have the right to national self determination'. So if they have the right to national self determination they have a state of their own, a Jewish state, now if anyone of you could care to do their homework and research properly they would come along articles and debates in which I have been an active participant and a vocal opponent to the idea of a Jewish state arguing that a Jewish state is by definition an apartheid state. You can't have a Jewish state that is not and apartheid state. And again I suggest that at least for the purpose of this conference, this discussion, we bracket the question and say, 'ok, if there is a Jewish people, they have the right to national self determination; there is a right for a Jewish State'. I also belong to the camp that for many decades have argued that the entire gamete of UN resolutions relevant to the question of Palestine represent and important defence of Palestinian rights, all UN resolutions, and not those that I like or dislike, or those that the opposite party likes or dislikes, all UN resolutions taken together, bundled together, represent a good defence of Palestinian rights. That includes not only resolution 194, underpinning the rights of 1948 Palestine refugees to return to their titles, their properties inside Israel. It also includes resolution 181, recommending the Partition of a country called Palestine into 3 components, not just two components; a Jewish State, an Arab State, and the city of Jerusalem under an international regime administered by UN. So all UN resolutions, and of course at least until the past fifteen or twenty years mainstream Zionist advocates anchored their arguments on the legitimacy of Jewish State in that resolution. So if I accept all UN resolutions I really shouldn't pin my primary quarrel with the term the Jewish State, it entered through the resolutions into international legal narrative. So there we go, there is a Jewish People, they have the right to self determination, and a state of their own, within the context of all UN resolutions.

Now the interesting question, at least provisionally, let us grant the opposite

party this argument, there remains a critical question; what do you claim you have the right to do in the name of the Jewish people, in the name of the right for national self determination, in the name of the Jewish State. If you claim that the fact there is a Jewish people, and the people have the right for national self determination and to a State, entitles the leadership and the army of that people to perpetrate crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, destroy and raze to the ground hundreds of indigenous localities, rural and urban, if that is your claim, then its just not on. The only response to such a claim is resistance. If on the other hand that you would claim that the Jewish people and the right to national self determination and the entitlement to a Jewish State should be implemented in conformity to all UN resolutions and values the thirty articles of the universal declaration of Human Rights, then there is something to talk about. For instance, implement, not just recognise, implement the right of all 1948 Palestine refugees to freedom of choice of return and definitely the titles to their property. Implement all UN resolutions including resolutions on Jerusalem, and that means that Jerusalem is not the eternal capital of the state of Israel but an international city. Implement UN resolution 181 including its constitutional sections and citizenship and its constitutional sections outline for the Jewish State and Arab State a liberal democratic constitution very much akin to the constitution of South Africa, the new South Africa, or the Constitution of the United States. Not the practice of the United States, the Constitution of the United States. Implement the stipulations of citizenship, where they say, in Resolution 181, that any person ordinarily resident in the territory allocated for the Jewish State has the right to Jewish State citizenship, and any person ordinarily resident in the territory allocated by the UN for the Arab State has the right to Arab State Citizenship.

What do you get if you implement all UN Resolutions in this framework? You get a, basically a federal arrangement consisting of three components; Jewish State, Arab State, and international city of Jerusalem. Bound together by an economic union, and we know what an economic union can do, we have it unfolding in the European Union today. And you have a democratic constitution, you have freedom of residence, freedom of choice of location of neighbour, and access to housing. There is what emerges, to at least my mind, is a fairly decent environment to raise a family, there is only one thing missing in this environment; there is no demographic majority of ethnic Jews, there is no demographic majority of Jewish tribes in this arrangement. And the crux of our argument against political Zionism, is not about a conceptual argument of whether or not Jews constitute a people or otherwise, whether the Jewish people have a right to national self determination or otherwise, whether the idea of a Jewish State is an idea which stinks or otherwise. It is whether it is justified to attempt to establish in a country called Palestine, a sovereign entity called a Jewish State or the State of Israel, that attempt to guarantee in law and in practice a demographic majority of the Jewish tribes. The party that says that it is justified, it is necessary, it is inevitable, it is progressive or it is enlightening, or whatever, belongs to the political Zionism camp, and make no mistake, argues for apartheid. Implementation in law and in practice, not just in practice but in law, to guarantee a demographic majority of any constituency is Apartheid, Apartheid uses the legal instrument available to the state in order to guarantee

discrimination and implement discrimination. And reference was made to a work that I had published by Z Books, two or three years back, 'Apartheid Israel', that is exactly the case. Immediately after the first decade after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the strategic piece of legislation was put in place in order to secure that in the area that is at the core of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, question of control of land and sub-soil, land tenure in Israel, access to land and housing, access to water is controlled and legislated on an apartheid basis, implemented through the legal system, the law enforcement instruments of the State and the practical result of that is the ethnic cleansing of the country of Palestine in the wake of the 1948-1949 war.

So the lines are clearly divided and the core arguments are; Are you for or are you against, can you justify or can you not justify, do you support or do you resist a settler-colonial project that attempts to consolidate in law and in practice and apartheid system in the country of Palestine.

The pro-Zionist or pro-Israel lobby has lost much of its ground in the arena of moral or principled discussion. They are in defensive position in universities or in any other environment that regards as relevant normative and ethical references and references to a sense of fairness or decency. The retreat of the Zionist lobby from the universities campuses represents an achievement of which we can be very proud, it's an important beginning. The achievement was gained through decades of Palestine solidarity work at many levels, both inside and outside Palestine, both at trade union levels at student levels it had not been able to get to this stage without the consistent and heroic resistance of the Palestinian people themselves represented by the PLO, and the achievement of the PLO in gaining UN recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people. As all of us are aware the PLO has had a period of an achievement of progress and success and as well as achievement of decline, notably since the strategically horrendous mistake of engaging in the Oslo peace negotiations, alleged peace negotiations peace process. We are facing today a circumstance that is perhaps more difficult to negotiate than immediately in the wake of the 1967 war. In the context of this difficulty I want to point out to the indications of resurgence on a very sound and strategically promising basis; the campaign for divestment, boycott and sanctions against the State of Israel. I would like to add my voice to all fora, academic, trade union and other, working towards the development of divestment, of boycott, of sanctions against the apartheid government of the State of Israel, the government of the State of Israel that stands in violation of most UN General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions. To do so on an apartheid basis is productive. We, to the extent that I am allowed to say we, we lost one massive achievement of the Palestinian resistance and the passage of the UN of the resolution identifying Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination. That resolution has been struck off the book of resolutions of the UN. The opposite party worked very hard to get it struck off, they knew the significance of that resolution, they were aware that this resolution represented the international legal basis for sanctions against Israel, it's a setback, it's a massive setback. But we don't have to concern ourselves to that setback, we can bring the import of what we want to bring in to the international arena on a better basis, a basis that is supported by the achievement of our brothers and sisters in Southern Africa, on an anti apartheid

basis. And if I have hope that I can share with you that within the next decade or fifteen years in the UN, through the UN a covenant for the suppression of political Zionism as a crime against humanity.

Opposition to Zionism: The core strategy of a solidarity movement

Roland Rance

The root of the Palestine conflict is the alliance of Zionism with western imperialism and Arab reaction. Together, these forces act to prevent any moves towards real democracy in the Arab world, or the use of the resources of the region for the benefit of the peoples of the region.

In this alliance, Zionism is more than an ideology and a powerful propaganda network. It is a well-organised political movement, with real power and influence on the ground. Before 1948, the Zionist movement built the institutions which became the infrastructure of the state of Israel. Since 1948, the Zionist bodies have been in effect part of the structure of the state of Israel, in alliance with the Israeli government. However, they are answerable, not to the people of Israel – not even to the Israeli Jews – but to the fictitious “Jewish people”.

Any strategy for the liberation of Palestine, or for solidarity with the Palestinian people, has to confront the reality of Zionism. A solution to the conflict will require dismantlement of the Zionist structures of the state of Israel, and the redress of the wrongs committed against the Palestinian people; in particular, the return of the Palestinian refugees and their compensation.

Such a transformation will not be brought about through the benevolence of the western states who have sponsored Israel’s war crimes, nor of the Arab regimes who have failed to mobilise their resources in support of the Palestinians. An effective solidarity movement must be built in alliance with those forces in the west who are challenging the roles of their own states, and in practical solidarity with forces in Palestine who are daily confronting Zionism.

A few weeks ago, I was at another discussion about Zionism in this same hall. Some of you were probably here too, when the author Alan Hart introduced his new book “Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews”. As it happens, I found the meeting very disappointing – a failed opportunity. There was no real sense that participants (except for Israeli historian Ilan Pappé) recognised that Zionism was a political movement, operating in the material world, rather than something going on inside people’s heads. Admittedly, Hart did attempt to draw a false distinction between what he saw as “acceptable” spiritual Zionism, and unacceptable Political Zionism, but even in this misleading schema, political Zionism was reduced simply to an ideology and a propaganda network.

In order not to fall prey to delusions similar to those of Alan Hart, it is worth recalling a comment by Amos Oz. Although often presented in the west as “Israel’s conscience”, Oz is in reality an accurate reflection of the politics of Israel’s Zionist mainstream. Some twenty years ago, he was interviewed on Channel 4’s “Book Programme” by Hermione Lee, who asked him about the distinction between Labour Zionism, religious Zionism, cultural Zionism and revisionist Zionism. Oz’s response was “Listen, all these terms are personal names, which we use within the family. Our family name is Zionism, it is as a family that we address the world, and that is how we expect you to address us”.

So we need to identify and locate Zionism politically if we are to stand any

chance of confronting, and eventually defeating it. If we just lump together everything we dislike and oppose about Israel's presence and behaviour in the Middle East, and label this "Zionism", then the term ceases to have any specific meaning, and is no longer a useful description. Our starting point must be the recognition that Zionism is an active political movement, with real influence on events on the ground in Palestine. We need to look at how Zionism, in alliance with the forces of western imperialism and Arab reaction, has acted to transform Palestine into Israel, to prevent any moves towards real democracy in the Arab world, and to ensure that the resources of the region are not used for the benefit of the peoples of the region.

The Arab world has been divided by imperialism, in its own interests, into states with no material historical, geographical, economic or social basis. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, Britain and France rushed to stake their claims in the Middle East. Having encouraged nationalist risings against the Turks, they then made it clear that they had no intention of honouring the promises which they made, nor even of observing US President Wilson's famous "Nineteen Principles". This has served to dissociate the peoples of the region from its resources, and has fostered the development of local military or feudal leaderships with no local legitimacy and no reason to act in the interests of their subjects.

Some of these states were established in order to limit the independence of potentially powerful neighbours. Thus Kuwait was established in order to deny sea access to Iraq, with its vast oil reserves; while Saudi Arabia was ringed by a chain of feudal monarchies with strong defence ties with Britain. Others, notably Lebanon, were established on a spurious religio-ethnic basis, in order to deepen the confessionalism of the Middle East and undermine the appeal of Arab unity. Within this division of the Middle East, the state of Israel and the Zionist movement have played a key role. They have been the cutting edge of imperialist domination in the region, because, unlike other regimes in the region, Israel has no option than a strategic alliance with imperialism.

This strategic imperative was recognised by both parties. Herzl wrote in 1895 of forming in Palestine "a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism", while the British Military Governor of Jerusalem Sir Ronald Storrs, noted in 1917 that the Zionists would form for England "a little loyal Jewish Ulster in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism".

Israel has introduced a complicating factor into the Middle East patchwork. Not only has it been the unshakeable ally of imperialism, and a potential threat to any radical or popular regime in the area. The very existence of Israel, as a Jewish state, its dispossession of the Palestinians, and its aggression against other states has contributed towards diverting the resources of the region and distorting the economic and social development of the Middle East, and has encouraged the establishment throughout the region of reactionary regimes, who have for the most part seen their own populations as a greater threat than Israel or imperialism.

Liberation in the Middle East thus requires the integration of Israeli Jews into the Arab world. Any approach based on the recognition and legitimation of Zionist separatism means a continuation of the present tendency towards ever-more-explicit apartheid. This integration will not be easy, but is the only way that we can break the spiral of oppression and violence, and begin to consider how to use the region's resources for the benefit of the people of the Middle East.

The Zionist movement set itself three major tasks: the colonisation of Palestine, the recruitment of the Jews to bring this about, and gaining an imperial sponsor. In all three of these aims, it has been remarkably successful.

When we now face the organised Israel/Zionist lobby, which does not hesitate to throw accusations of “anti-Semitism” at anyone who has the temerity to challenge Israel and Zionism, it is all-too-easy to forget that historically Zionism represented a small minority of Jewish opinion. We have heard already the arguments of religious Jews against Zionism. It was also opposed by liberal Jews (such as Edwin Montagu, the only Jewish cabinet minister at the time, who described the 1917 Balfour Declaration as “the Anti-Semitism of the Present Government”), by socialist Jews (who correctly saw that Zionism, in alliance with reactionary European governments, was undermining the revolutionary position of many European Jews), and even ultimately by many early Zionists themselves (notably Ahad Ha'am, who wrote after a visit to Palestine “If this is the Messiah, I do not want to live to see his arrival”).

In the thirty years before the First World War, when the Tsarist regime sponsored pogroms and racism against Jews in order to deflect the anger of the Russian masses away from the government, some two million Jews fled Eastern Europe for safety. Of these, only about 50-60,000 actually went to Palestine, and half of these left soon after. Zionist parties had little success in communal elections in Eastern Europe. In fact, it was not until the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the state of Israel, that Zionism began to acquire its hegemonic status among Jews.

The colonisation of Palestine was carried out through what the Zionists referred to euphemistically as the “conquest of the land” and “the conquest of labour” – or, in plain English, through appropriation of land, expulsion of its residents, and their exclusion from the economy. It's worth noting that the Hebrew word for conquest, Kibush, is also used in Hebrew to refer to the 1967 Occupation. So when as anti-Zionists we stand in Israel shouting “Down with the Occupation”, for some of us this is an explicit slogan against the entire Zionist project; the occupation did not begin in 1967.

Once again, Herzl was explicit about the nature of these “conquests” at the beginning of the Zionist project. In June 1895, he wrote in his diary “We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and circumspectly”.

Israel's apologists often attempt to justify the acquisition of land before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, by claiming that it was purchased. This claim is at best misleading. It ignores the complex nature of land ownership in Palestine, and throughout the Ottoman Empire, where land was rarely owned by the families who had traditionally farmed it and lived on it for generations. Land was indeed frequently purchased from absentee landlords, who treated their tenants as goods to be bought and sold. But, in a breach with customary practice, the peasants themselves would then be removed, often with brutality. For some early examples, you can read the descriptions in the diaries of early Zionist officials, which I translated for Uri's book on the Jewish National Fund.

A clash with the indigenous population was thus not only inevitable, but foreseen and planned for. In many ways, Zionism is a classic colonial-settler movement, analogous to the Dutch and British settlers in South Africa, the British in Kenya, and many others. However, it had certain distinct features. One of the most significant is that, unlike these other colonisatory projects, Zionism did not intend to exploit, but rather to supplant and replace, the indigenous Palestinian Arab population. It is this feature which has led Moshé Machover to suggest that a closer analogy than South Africa would be the US elimination of the Native Americans.

The Zionist project could only be carried out with the support of a major imperial power.

The Zionist political movement is embodied in serious political institutions. The central one of these is the World Zionist Organisation, which was originally established by Theodor Herzl at the Basle Congress in 1897. The WZO continues to meet regularly; the 35th Congress took place last week in Jerusalem. I haven't yet seen the voting figures, but among the dozens of resolutions there were calls for "immediate action" in a "unified strategy to struggle against assimilation"; for "legislation that will outlaw anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial"; and for "the nations of the world to act aggressively and immediately to remove the Iranian threat".

The WZO, and its affiliated bodies including the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Jewish National Fund/Keren Kayemet le'Israel, and the Keren Hayesod/ United Israel Appeal, is officially and explicitly allied to the state of Israel through the 1952 WZO Status Law, and the later covenant with the state of Israel. In fact, given the position of the WZO within Israel's political infrastructure, it would not be an exaggeration to describe it as an extra-territorial part of the state of Israel, parallel to the government, but not answerable, even in theory, to the citizens and residents of Israel; not even, in fact, to the Jewish citizens of Israel.

It is through the constitutions of these bodies, rather than any explicit Israeli law, that residence on over 90% of the land in the state of Israel is permitted to Jews alone. It is through the networks of these explicitly discriminatory bodies that much health, educational and welfare provision is made available for Jews in Israel, but not for non-Jews – without any need for the government to make explicitly racist decisions. This is what Zionism means in practice – dispossession and exile for most Palestinians, discrimination and impoverishment for those

remaining on their lands as citizens of Israel (some 20% of the population of Israel).

When anti-Zionists talk of dismantling the Zionist structure of the state, it is this that we are referring to. The history, ideology and mythology are important, but secondary. A resolution of the Palestine conflict must address precisely these issues, and must bring about an end to the exile of the Palestinian refugees, the partition of the Palestinian people as much as the land of Palestine, and the institutional discrimination of the Zionist state.

It is an illusion to believe that this will be achieved through lobbying and persuading the western states to alter their policies. Support for Israel is not accidental, and the possibility of a free Palestine, with control over its own resources and coexistence among its peoples, is as unwelcome to the US as is a free Iraq.

This has obvious implications for the building of a solidarity movement in Britain. The explicit demands must be for the return of Palestinian refugees, for the dismantlement of the Zionist structure of the state of Israel and the abolition of the Zionist institutions, and for a unitary democratic and secular Palestine. These demands are the minimum required in order to achieve justice and coexistence in the Middle East; all attempts to resolve the conflict without redressing the effects of the Zionist project are ultimately certain to fail. But they are not demands which the British government is likely to accept or adopt until forced to do so.

In raising these demands, our most dependable allies will be those forces fighting for their own freedom and liberation, whether political, social or economic. The oppressed minority communities, the labour and trade union movement, anti-imperialists and supporters of other liberation movements all experience the reality of the British state and its alliance with the USA. The support for Palestinian rights shown by the massive movement against the war in Iraq is one example of the forces that we could mobilise through adopting an explicitly anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist position.

Our solidarity should also be expressed through direct support for those forces confronting Zionism daily inside Palestine. The recent growth of the twinning movement, which has led to direct contact between Palestinian communities and organisations, and their counterparts in Britain, is one positive development. We should also consider how we can support the work of, for instance, Ta'ayush <<http://www.taayush.org/>>, "a grassroots movement of Arabs and Jews working to break down the walls of racism and segregation by constructing a true Arab-Jewish partnership", which has been organising material support for besieged Palestinian communities, while also demonstrating against the ongoing oppression. And we should also do whatever we can to support and encourage the burgeoning movement of draft resistance inside Israel. We don't have to agree with the expressed political positions of all of the resisters; what is important is to recognise that they are refusing to take part in the repression of the Palestinian people, and exposing the deep – and ultimately irreconcilable – contradictions within Israeli society.

Once we recognise that Zionism – as a political movement as well as an ideology – is at the heart of Israel’s oppression, and that it can be confronted politically on the basis of respect for universal human values, then we can begin to reconstruct an effective movement in solidarity with those daily confronting Zionism in practice.

Western government support for Zionism: implications for strategy

Les Levidow

The Zionist project has gained systematic support from Western governments. Consider the \$5bn/year from the USA, military supplies (even nuclear weapons components) from the UK, quasi-honorary membership of the EU through access to research funds, government denunciations of Palestinian terrorism as a cause of the conflict, and the EU's collective punishment of Palestinians for electing the wrong government. How to explain this support? The reasons have expanded in recent years.

Here I will draw analogies between strategies of Zionist occupation and the wider 'war on terror'. The analogies bear upon strategies for Palestine solidarity and for resistance to imperialist plunder in general.

As a racist colonialist project, Zionism guaranteed Arab hostility. Zionism has always attributed the persecution of the Jews to an innate anti-Semitism of non-Jews. This was later projected onto the Palestinian population to explain its hostility to being colonised. In parallel, the Zionist project sought to eliminate the indigenous Arab-Sephardic Jews as a cultural category. Likewise Zionism adopted Western anti-Semitic stereotypes of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe.¹ They were all pressed to become 'new Jews' according to the Zionist model of European colonialism, or else become enemies of the state.

Israel has remained dependent upon Western imperialism for material and political support. Perversely, it has earned this support by suppressing anti-imperialist forces throughout the Middle East.² Zionism has always meant occupation, colonisation and war – directed against the indigenous Arab population and neighbouring states. Early on, Zionism demonised any resistance as 'Arab terrorism', thus projecting its own barbarism onto its victims, in ways analogous to European colonialism.

Eventually the Zionist project faced legitimacy problems from the rise of the PLO, especially the mass uprising of the intifada starting in 1987. A politicised, mobilised Palestinian civil society posed an existential threat to the 'security' of the racist Zionist state. To contain the revolt, Israel used physical repression, collective punishment, economic theft, etc – as well as new political strategies

¹ Les Levidow, 'Zionist Anti-Semitism', originally published in Return magazine no.1 (London), December 1990, available at <http://www.aldeilis.net/zion/zionrac12.html>, or <http://www.vancouver.indymedia.org/news/2003/05/48327.php>

² The USA has had a debate about the role and importance of the Zionist lobby, sometimes mis-named 'the Jewish lobby', perhaps because some organisations claim to represent US Jews. In reality, the Zionist lobby includes anti-Semitic Christian fundamentalists as well as Jews. Overall this political-economic force plays a crucial role in suppressing debate within mainstream politics and the mass media. Perversely, the recent debate has mainly asked whether the Zionist lobby forces the US government to act contrary to 'US interests'; this question blurs any distinction between the interests of US imperialism and of its population. Such a distinction is crucial, lest we get diverted into a futile debate about elusive 'US interests'. Instead we should debate the interests of class and justice.

which had a wider resonances in the Middle East.

With backing from the USA and UK, and other governments they were promoting political Islam – i.e. groups which politicise religion, while Islamising politics – as a weapon against secular nationalist movements. Israel developed its own version of this strategy. Palestinian organisations could not legally receive funds from abroad without permission; the government gave permission to only one such organisation, Hamas, which attacked projects of the PLO and intimidated women activists in particular.

As a parallel strategy, Israel aimed to create an alternative Palestinian leadership which could be incorporated into the occupation, by analogy to the strategies of indirect rule under 19th century British colonialism. Eventually the Palestine National Authority (PNA) was created along these lines under the Oslo Accord. This was designed to delegitimise resistance as ‘terrorism’, while normalising the Occupation. Under imperialist pressure, and enticed by an illusory legitimacy, the PLO ‘recognised Israel’ – an inherently expansionist state which has never defined its borders.

Since the mid-1990s, more and more Palestinians rightly saw the PNA as policing the occupation for Israel. Its collaborationist role discredited secular Palestinian politics in the eyes of many. Meanwhile Hamas had been providing basic welfare services, in lieu of the PNA fulfilling its responsibilities to the people. Partly by default, Hamas remained a more credible basis for resistance to the occupation and gained more popular support, even if its Islamist agenda created divisions among Palestinians.

Since the mid-1990s, especially with the rise of the Likud government, the Zionist project has extended its colonisation through more settlements, fragmentation of the West Bank and the ‘separation wall’. It has systematically attacked Palestinian civil society as a ‘terrorist infrastructure’, in the name of protecting Israeli ‘security’ and ‘democracy’. With the rise of Hamas, the Zionist storyline could blame ‘Islamic terrorism’, as if the systemic violence of the occupation arose from religious extremism. In all these ways, the Zionist project offered a prototype for the neoconservative Project for a New American Century, which sought permanent war in the name of defending or even spreading ‘democracy’, i.e. a state which imposes market relations.

Likewise the Western ‘war on terror’ justifies its global plunder, illegal wars and systematic brutality along similar lines: as a defence against terrorism, amidst a ‘clash of civilisations’. This ‘war’ draws upon colonialist counter-insurgency strategies, which conflated all types of anti-colonial resistance as ‘terrorism’. But the ‘war on terror’ has new elements, especially a ‘blowback’ effect: Western societies now find themselves being attacked by Islamic terrorist networks descended from (or related to) those which their own governments had sponsored for their foreign intrigues.³

³ See two books by Nafeez Ahmed: *The War on Freedom and The War on Truth*; and *The London Bombings – An Independent Inquiry* (Duckworth, 2006), <http://www.independentinquiry.co.uk>

This feature provided an opportunity for greater convergence between the Zionist project and Western imperialism. Former Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu happened to be in New York during the 11th Sept 2001 attacks, so journalists asked him what this meant for Israel. He replied: 'It is very good. It will strengthen the bonds between the two peoples. Israelis have suffered from terrorism for years, and now so does the US population.'

In a similar vein, said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon: 'Together we can defeat the forces of evil.' Thus he rhetorically equated the 'counter-terror' campaign of Israel and its Western allies. The equation has become more than rhetorical. As Tony Blair has said, Middle East peace would be easier to achieve if it were not for terrorism; this diagnosis blames those who resist the Zionist occupation. Western governments have adopted Israeli demands, e.g. that Palestinians 'renounce terror', as a condition for any support.

Moreover, these governments have appropriated elements of Zionist strategy for their own activities. They have learned from Israel for their occupation of Iraq, e.g. by intensifying ethnic divisions and inflicting collective punishment upon communities which resist. Also by analogy, Western governments persecute migrant and Muslim populations at home, turning them into an internal colony; this aims to deter or disorganise dissent from foreign policy.⁴ Governments maintain close links with organisations of political Islam, while demanding that community representatives help to counter a vaguely defined 'extremism'⁵. These manoeuvres have several aims: shifting blame away from the government, Islamising Asian politics, marginalising progressive Muslim forces, and justifying political surveillance of entire populations.

In all these ways, the Zionist project has an affinity with strategies for global counter-insurgency, even within Western countries. To stop the constant threat of Zionist aggression, opponents will need to raise the cost to its perpetrators and imperialist allies – i.e., both there and here. At the same time, opponents will need to build unity for a different vision, so that the Zionist division of colonisers versus colonised is challenged and transformed into equal rights for all.

This analysis has implications for strategies to oppose the Zionist occupation and imperial plunder more widely. First, what not to do.

It would be misguided to make appeals to Muslim religious affinity or allegiances, because this reinforces the Zionist storyline of a religious conflict, intensifies political divisions among those who oppose the occupation, and diverts attention from its colonial basis.

Also it would also be futile to appeal to the humanity of Western governments, which support Zionist terror as serving Western strategic interests and imperial

⁴ 'Embedded Experts in the War on Terror', 2005, www.campacc.org.uk

⁵ Tony Blair has asked the 'moderate majority' of Muslims to challenge extremist groups: 'If we want to defeat the extremism, we have got to defeat its ideas and we have got to address the completely false sense of grievance against the West', quoted in A. Grice and B. Russell, 'Blair lays down the law to Muslims on extremists in their midst', *The Independent*, 5 July 2006

plunder.

Rather, we should build an alliance of all those who resist imperial plunder, and all those targeted by the 'war on terror', both here and abroad. Although this 'war' persecutes Muslims in particular, it targets anyone who resists – Palestinians, Kurds, Tamils, Colombians, etc. – regardless of their religious background. A secular basis can more effectively achieve the unity needed to oppose our common enemy.

Postscript, early August 2006

The Israeli destruction of the Lebanon has extended Zionist colonialism, terror and collective punishment – all in the familiar name of 'self-defence'. With its loyal UK ally, the US government initially opposed demands for an immediate ceasefire because Israel was carrying out useful dirty work that would be politically more difficult for those governments to do themselves. (Consider analogies to UK-French instigation of the 1956 Suez crisis, though now with somewhat different inter-imperialist alliances and rivalries.)

Destruction of the Lebanon – for what aims? According to the Israeli Prime Minister, extending the US President's demonological metaphor, Israel has been defending us from 'the axis of evil that stretches from Teheran to Damascus'. Along similar lines, the UK Prime Minister identified 'an arc of extremism right across that region, that wants to disrupt the process towards democracy and freedom...' Here 'extremism' means any effective opposition to imperial plunder, while 'democracy' means a neoliberal regime which helps the private sector to plunder public funds, to privatise services, to substitute economic competition for cooperation, etc.

According to the US Secretary of State, we must defeat terrorist threats, remake the map of the Middle East, help the Lebanon to police its southern border, etc. Or put more bluntly, according to an Israeli analyst, '[Hizbollah leader] Nasrallah makes it impossible for any pro-Western leader to stay in power in an Arab country.' Perhaps not impossible, but more difficult to stay in power, as long as an armed anti-imperialist guerrilla force sets a strong defiant example.

For those reasons, the current destruction and mass murder aim to turn the Lebanese government into imperialist police, dependent on Western governments. The Israeli aggression there highlights the permanent terrorist threat from a racist, expansionist state and its Western patrons.

Israel in the context of the “clash of civilizations”

Michael Warschawski

The State of Israel is the product of a political movement, Zionism, aimed at providing a solution to “the Jewish question”, i.e. the rise of modern Anti-Semitism in Europe at the end of the 19th Century. “The Palestinian question” is the direct result of the unilateral drive to resolve the Jewish question by creating a Jewish State in Palestine, without taking into account the existence and the rights of the indigenous population.

A colonial movement for an Ethnic State

Zionism is an ideology and a political movement which is doubly the product of its time, the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century:

- on the level of its objective: an ethnic conception of political normality and the aspiration to create an ethnic state;
- on the level of the means to achieve this objective: colonization.

In that sense, it will be totally wrong to look at the roots of Zionism in the Jewish religion or in the Jewish experience: Zionism is rooted in the political history and philosophy of European modernism. Religion provided only some of the justifications and narratives to a modern nationalist ideology and a colonialist movement.

Like any other colonial movement, Zionism is in its very nature, unilateralist: the fate and the rights of the indigenes are of no relevance in the fulfillment of the colonial project. As a project aiming at creating a Jewish State – in the demographic sense of the concept, i.e. composed, as much as possible, of Jews only – Zionism combines ethnic-cleansing and apartheid features.

A marginal current

When Zionism emerged among the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe, it was a marginal phenomenon and remained so until 1933. The great majority of European Jews were either religious or socialists. In both cases openly opposed to Zionism.

For the religious Jews, the idea to create a political movement to end Exile was a kind of blasphemy: God expelled us from our Land and sent us into Exile as a punishment for our bad behaviors, and only God will bring us back to the Holy Land. Moreover, as – basically – an anti-religious movement, Zionism was

perceived by the Rabbis as a potential threat to their hegemony, as all other modern movements, especially the socialist movements.

As for the various social movements at the turn of the century, they were (with the exception of the tiny Left Poalei Zion) opposed to Zionism considered either as a bourgeois trend or an “escapist ideology” and preaching that the solution to the Jewish question will be possible only through democratization, which will be the result of a successful socialist revolution. While for some the solution for the Jewish question will be their assimilation into the majority, for others, like the Bund, the solution will be national cultural autonomy.

In Palestine too, at the beginning of Zionist colonization, the Zionist pioneers were no more than a group of lunatic idealists, a small minority among the Jews of Palestine, who were, by large, opposed to these intruders whom they perceived as some kind of disturbing hippy communities, completely disconnected from reality.

Nazism contribution

The rise of Nazism in Germany, and Nazism mass terror later in the whole of Europe, provided the material ground for the transformation of Zionism into a reasonable, viable and realistic political option. This transformation occurred in two stages, first in the thirties, and then after the war.

Nazi anti-Jewish laws and practices in the thirties, brought about not only a mass Jewish immigration to Palestine, but an immigration with a high technological, scientific and intellectual level as well as with a relatively big amount of capital to be invested in the Jewish economy and society. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, the Jewish colony (Yishuv) was transformed from a utopian community to a modern social reality.

After the war, the mass of Jewish refugees, survivors of the Nazi genocide, provided not only a human reservoir for the coming Jewish State, but also a solid argument for the international community to support the Zionist project of a Jewish State, which will host the hundreds of thousands of survivors whom Europe was not interested to integrate.

The fate of the Arabs of Palestine and their legitimate rights were of little weight in the cynical calculations and the bad conscience of the international community, and they became the victims of the victims of European anti-Semitism, while having no part whatsoever in the genocide of European Jewry.

A wall of separation

Separation is at the heart of Zionist ideology. Like many nationalist philosophies

at the end of the 19th Century, Zionism identifies normality with homogeneity. A normal society is a society with few minorities as possible; a normal state is an ethnically homogenous state.

This is why, according to Zionism, Jews have to leave Europe and to establish a state of their own, demographically as Jewish as possible. This is why such a state – the State of Israel – could have been built only by a war of ethnic cleansing, expelling the great majority of the indigenous Arab population.

In that sense, even before the actual wall has been built, Israel surrounded itself by a wall of separation, and a series of laws, regulations and practices aimed to keep the Jewish nature of the state, and to make as difficult as possible any kind of integration with the surrounding environment. Ehud Barak's terribly racist definition – “we are a villa in the heart of the jungle” (sic) – summarizes this approach of Israel being an island of civilizations to be protected against the barbarian environment.

This perception integrates itself in a broader conception of the place of Israel in the world, and its function against those who are defined as barbarians.

A Wall against Barbarians

Since its inception, and in order to receive the necessary support from the major powers, Zionism was trying to sell to these major powers the benefit that a Jewish State could provide them. “A wall to protect (Christian) civilization against (Muslim/Arab) Barbarians” promised Theodore Herzl to European powers; a client to defend British interests against the Arabs... and the French, promised Haim Weizman to Lord Balfour; “an iron wall which the native population cannot brake through”, explained one of the main Zionist ideologists of the twenties, Zeev Jabotinsky, and the first editor of Haaretz daily, Gershom Shoken, readapted this wall-conception in the context of the cold war: Israel as a protection of the “free world” against communism.

In its own perception, the State of Israel is an extension of a civilizational-camp in a hostile environment. In most of its history, this “civilizational camp” was the “free world” led by the United States of America against the “communist camp” and, in a lesser extent, the “third world” and national liberation organizations throughout the world.

The neo-conservative strategy

In the mid eighties, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new global strategy was elaborated for the United States, as a unique super-power in the world. This strategy was looking for a new global enemy and identified this enemy as « international terrorism », soon to be synonymous to « Islamist terrorism ». The

think tanks and research centers which were behind this new strategization – the neo-conservative trend – were composed of US right wing Republicans and Israeli Likud politicians and theoreticians. The influence of the Israeli partners was so big, that often their American counterparts were labeled as “The Likudniks of the Republican party”.

Among the neo-conservatives, a current developed the (very questionable) descriptive analysis of Huntington on “Clash of Civilization” into a strategy based on a non-ending crusade between Judeo-Christian civilizations against Islam. Gradually, the differences between the non-ending preventive war against global (Islamist) terrorism and the clash of civilization against Islam almost vanished.

Israeli neo-conservatives conquered political power six years before their US counterparts - with the assassination of Yitshak Rabin, which they largely provoked – and were able to test the neo-conservative policy and rhetoric before George W Bush’s political advisers. Palestinians (and Arabs in general) were replaced by “terror”, and the Israeli-Arab conflict was defined as a permanent preventive war against Islamist threat. Israel perceived itself, and tried to convince the world that it was the frontline of the defense of (Judeo-Christian) civilization against terrorism (Islam), and that its total war of destruction against the Palestinian people was a necessity for the safeguard of civilization.

The coming to power of the Bush Jr. Administration, in 2001, gave full legitimacy and support to this brutal and bloody strategy, especially after 9/11. Until this very day.

In that perspective, the same way that the destruction of Palestine is part of a global permanent and preventive war, the wall which is being built in the West Bank is not only a separation between Israelis and Palestinians, but a global wall between the “civilized world”, i.e. Israel, Europe, North America and, on the other side, the Barbarians – the Palestinians, the Arabs, the Muslims, and eventually the entire “third world” countries.

Neo-anti Semitism – manipulations and realities

At the beginning of this century, a huge media campaign was conducted in Europe around the purported rise of a mass “neo-antisemitism” all over Europe, and in France in particular by the right-wing pro-Israeli (minority) leaders of some European Jewish communities. The fact that all serious researches conducted by well known and respected institutions proved that the general trend was on the contrary, a retreat of Anti Semitism in Europe, and in fact a substantial decline of anti-Jewish sentiments and behaviors, did not stop the campaign which was not interested in fighting anti-Semitism, but to manipulate their campaign for three main objectives:

- to shut the mouths of everyone daring to criticize the Israeli crimes being committed in the occupied territories by accusing every critic as anti-Semite;
- to delegitimize any kind of Muslim or Arab activism as being anti-Semite (the use of neo anti-Semitism was aimed to claim that the new and real danger was not classical right wing anti-Semitism (which is currently existing) but new Muslim and leftist (hidden!!!) Judeo-phobia, disguised as anti-Zionism or even criticism of Israeli policies.)
- To try to force the Jews to join their 'tribe', for, in the neo-conservative world perception, each one belongs to a tribe which should remain hermetic.

Moreover, throughout Europe, Jewish leaders connected to the Israeli right-wing, are ready to position themselves and the communities which they – falsely – claim to represent, at the for-front of the anti-Muslim crusade in their respective countries, using often anti-Semitism as a central weapon in such an attack (The 'Tariq Ramadan affair' in France, is a classical example). As a result, some Muslims – especially amongst the youth – start to perceive the Jews as their main enemies, and the ones who are responsible for their discrimination, exclusion, and the racism which they suffer from.

Is it an accident that most of the ideologist of the so call “Jewish-Christian civilization” who are pushing the Jews as a vanguard of their crusade are well-known anti-Semites, like, for example the US Protestant Fundamentalists of the Republican Party or some currents of the French Catholic far-right. By positioning the Jews at the front-line of their own crusade, they are cynically preparing the ground for a new wave of mass anti-Semitism, while hiding their own responsibility in the fate of the oppressed Muslim minorities in their countries. A very old story: Jewish leaders playing into the hands of their enemies and so preparing their own grave...

Ta'ayush

Against the “clash of civilizations” strategies aimed to re-colonize the world and established a globalized apartheid system, one must set as a top priority a counter-strategy of breaking the walls of apartheid, and building a trans-civilizational alliance. In Israel/Palestine we are doing it under the title of Ta'ayush – an Arabic word meaning “leaving-together” – a Jewish-Arab partnership aimed not at creating the illusion of peace and coexistence, but at creating a joint struggle to make it possible in the future.

Ta'ayush should be the banner of all women and men, throughout the world, who reject the globalized apartheid system, and aspire to struggle for a new global dividing line: not between races or religions, but between the neo-liberal crusaders and all the peoples of the world who, from Mumbai to Liverpool, from Porto Alegre to Seattle, Genova, Seoul and Jenin, are shouting, together, “another world is possible!”

This struggle for another world possibly will be a joint and trans-civilizational struggle, or is doomed to fail. Let us not wait until it will be too late.



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ISBN 978-1-903718-34-6