

The Rise of Anti-Semitism in the 21st Century

By Philip Carl Salzman

At one of Canada's elite universities, McGill University in Montreal, a series of disturbing anti-Semitic incidents have drawn wide attention and unsettled Jewish students and faculty members.

There have been repeated campaigns to "Boycott, Divest, and Sanction" (BDS) Israel, the homeland of the Jewish People.ⁱ The *McGill Daily* student newspaper has an established policy of rejecting any article supporting or defending Zionism, the national movement of the Jews, or presenting Israel in any but a negative fashion.ⁱⁱ Most recently, in response to the failure of the BDS movement to be validated at McGill by the Student Society Judicial Board, disappointed supporters voted down three nominated members of the Student Society Board of Directors, one Jewish and two not, on the grounds that their ties to Jewish organizations and/or their supportive attitudes toward Israel made them biased.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some Canadian Jewish organizations have raised concern about this, and, for its own part, the McGill Administration, which does not support the BDS movement, and favours inclusiveness, has launched an investigation.

Anti-Semitism is not a new phenomenon. For two thousand years there was an element of anti-Semitism in Christianity, with Jews being blamed for rejecting the Messiah and even for the death of Jesus. Anti-Jewish texts can be found among both Roman Catholics and Protestants, most notably in the of Martin Luther and other reformers.^{iv} But over the years, traditional Christian anti-Semitism gradually declined in Western Europe and most of North America, although not in much of Eastern Europe and not in Quebec. After World War Two, and the Holocaust, anti-Semitism became less fashionable in Western Europe and North America. Nonetheless, in both the U.S.^v and Canada,^{vi} hate crime against religion has traditionally overwhelmingly targeted Jews.

In the 21st century, anti-Semitism has taken a new form, hatred of the Jewish people in their collective representations, particularly hatred of Israel. This is not a matter of criticism of government policies of Israel, as one might make of policies of the U.S., Russia, or China. Rather, this hatred is reflected in the demand and intention that Israel be destroyed. We hear this regularly from Iran, Palestinian Hamas, Hezbollah, and, more stealthfully from Palestinian Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, as well as from the European, Canadian, and American supporters of these organizations.

Hatred of Jews is also manifested in identifying Jews as a cause of evil in the world, which is common among Imams during mosque sermons, as well as in the intention to cleanse the world of all Jews: "the Islamic Resistance Movement aspires to the realisation of Allah's promise, no matter how long that should take. The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, has said: 'The Day of Judgement will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews)....'"^{vii} This hatred is seen in the double standard applied to Israel, in which it is uniquely condemned for crimes against humanity, without ever considering other states, such as Iran, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Syria, for their crimes against humanity. But, of course, for anti-Semites, only Israel in all the world is to be condemned.

There are two main sources of contemporary anti-Semitism, particularly of hatred of the Jewish People and of their

homeland, Israel. One source is the “progressive” left, which dominates higher education, especially in the social “sciences,” humanities, social work, and education. Remarkably, after Marxism failed in many places in the world, having mainly produced despotism, poverty, and death, it was wholeheartedly adopted by Western academics as the new Truth.^{viii} Marxism-Leninism became the framework through which most Western academics viewed the world. After celebrations of the classical Marxist class struggle which never arrived, attention turned to Lenin’s imperialism theories, and became the dominant model, under such labels as “political economy”, “globalization”, “political ecology”, and, most popular, “postcolonialism”.

This approach is applied to the Jewish state, arguing that Israel was a colony of the West, that it was an imperialist settler state, oppressing and supplanting the “indigenous” Palestinians, and, in the last weeks, that it is a white, supremacist state. This is the account of Israel taught by many professors in Western colleges and universities. In my own faculty, for example, dozens of professors from Anthropology, Political Science, Islamic Studies, History, and other departments published a letter announcing that they took this particular view of Israel and they supported BDS. In the BDS vote held last year by the American Anthropological Association, almost half of the anthropologists voting, voted in favour of boycotting Israel. In contrast, no boycotts were proposed in any BDS supporting academic organization for boycotting China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Syria, or even the Islamic State.

Nothing in the Marxist, postcolonial model actually fits Israel. As is well known, Jews occupied the entire area of ancient Judea and Israel, and were the only people there when the Romans invaded prior to the birth of Christ. It was, after all, the Romans who renamed the territory “Palestine,” to erase the memory of the Jews who fought against them for two centuries.

As for modern Israel, no Western country sent Jews as a colonial force to their ancient homeland in Palestine; rather, Europeans, especially the British, did everything possible to keep Jews from emigrating to Palestine. As for being Western and white, half of all Israeli Jews are of *mizrahi* or of Sephardic origin, that is, of Middle Eastern ethnic background.^{ix} This does not include the Israelis from East Asian, South Asian, and Ethiopian origins, who add to population of non-European Jews in Israel. Arabs came relatively late to Palestine, initially in the 7th century, replacing the Roman Byzantines. Today, Arabs represent around 20% of Israelis, most of whom are Israeli citizens, and of whom around 80% are Muslims.^x All citizens of Israel, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, have the same legal status. All can vote in the only democracy in the Middle East. As well, Arabs and Muslims have positions in all professions and institutions, governmental and civilian.^{xi} Accusations of apartheid are risible.

The second source of contemporary anti-Semitism is the Arab ethno-nationalist and Muslim supremacist who are on the political right. Students for Justice in Palestine^{xii} and the Muslim Students Association^{xiii} are vocal opponents of the Jewish State, and are the organizers and supporters of the BDS movement, often using Western rhetoric of democracy and human rights to advance their criticism of Israel, or their war on Israel. Underlying Western rhetoric is a substratum of orthodox Islamic anti-Semitism^{xiv} which fuels the anger against the Jews. One example is the Facebook post supporting an anti-Israel event at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology calling Jews “rodents.”^{xv}

It is standard fare in mosques to hear Jews characterized as “sons of pigs and apes.”^{xvi}

Normal too is the call to murder Jews:

Montreal police are searching for a Palestinian-Jordanian Imam, a Muslim preacher, after issuing an arrest warrant for the crime of willful promotion of hatred in a sermon calling for the murder of Jews.

The *Montreal Gazette* reported that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Musa Al Nasr is wanted after giving a sermon in the local Dar Al-Arqam Mosque late last year in which he called Jews “the worst of mankind.”

Al Nasr also described Jews as “human demons” and said he looked forward to Judgment Day, the end of days, when they would be destroyed. He quoted a Hadith, verses which codify Muslim oral tradition, stating that at the end of time, “the stone and the tree will say: ‘Oh Muslim, oh servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me – come and kill him!’”^{xvii}

Speaking officially, the Students for Justice in Palestine and the Muslim Students Association know to emphasize democracy, human rights, and compromise, as in the two state solution. But on marches and demonstrations, in their enthusiasm, they chant “Palestine from the River to the Sea.” Their real goal, admitted explicitly by Palestinian Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, and indicated in Arabic by the Palestinian Authority, is the destruction of Israel. There are multiple reasons for this: First, Jews in Muslim states were regarded as the lowest of the low, were ritually humiliated according to Islamic law, were required to pay a high tax to avoid being killed, and exploited in the variety of economic and other ways.^{xviii} The idea that Jews could govern themselves independently, and even defend themselves, is anathema to the beloved identity of Islamic supremacy.^{xix} Second, lands governed by Muslims—such as Palestine, first governed by Arabs, and then Turks—according to Islamic law become *waqf*, Islamic endowments, inalienable, owned by Muslims in perpetuity.^{xx} To accept Israel, whether the 1948 or the 1967 borders would mean to allow Jews to steal God’s land. Third, the repeated military defeat of Arab armies by the Israeli military was a shameful loss of honour for the Arab states.

Honour comes from victory; shame from defeat. To regain Arab and Muslim honour, Israel must be conquered, and the Jews must be defeated.^{xxi} In this respect, BDS is presented as the more acceptable goal of peace and justice, but the real intention is the conquest of Israel and the defeat of the Jews, either killed or demoted to *dhimma* status.

The marriage of the progressive and Marxist left with the Arab ethno-nationalist and Muslim supremacist right in the war against Israel is remarkable, drawn together by an enemy that they can characterize as the essence of evil. In fact, having such an enemy is so attractive that feminists have joined the struggle, as has Black Lives Matter, bonded by so-called intersectionality^{xxii}, so have various Protestant churches, such as the Quakers and Mennonites, and various marginal academic associations, such as the National Women’s Studies Association, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, the Association for Asian-American Studies, and the Association for American Studies.^{xxiii}

It seems odd, to say the least, that the most intense and vehement political campaign on Western university campuses once again targets the Jews. Some had thought, some had hoped, that after the Holocaust, the Jews were going to get a respite from being the universal scapegoat. But that did not happen. Once Jews were no longer victims, they came to be condemned because they are victors. No longer sympathized as failures, they became despised as successes. And we in higher education could enjoy our self-righteousness in condemning them. That the attack on Israel has been engineered by Marxists, Arab ethno-nationalists, and Islamic supremacists raises doubts about the underlying motives, doubts which might give pause to objective and moderate observers as to the wisdom of supporting the new anti-Semitism.

About the Author



Philip Carl Salzman B.A. (Antioch), M.A., Ph.D. (Chicago) is Professor of Anthropology at McGill University, appointed in 1968. He founded the Commission on Nomadic Peoples of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, and its international journal, *Nomadic Peoples*, for which he received the IUAES Gold Award. In recent years he has also served as Senior Fellow at the University of St. Andrews, Open Society International Scholar at the American University of Central Asia, Erasmus Mundus International Fellow at the University of Catania, and Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney. Extensive ethnographic field research in Baluchistan (Iran), Gujarat and Rajasthan (India), and Sardinia (Italy) provided the foundation many articles in academic journals, and for book publications such as *The Anthropology of Real Life: Events in Human Experience* (1999), *Black Tents of Baluchistan* (2000), winner of the Premio Pitr–Salomone Marino, *Understanding Culture: An Introduction of Anthropological Theory* (2001), *Pastoralists: Equality, Hierarchy, and the State* (2004), *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (2008), *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2008), and *Thinking Anthropologically* 3rd Ed, (2010). His latest book publication is *Classic Comparative Anthropology: Studies from the Tradition* (2012). In public affairs, he was a member of Middle East Strategy at Harvard (2008-2010), a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (2004-2012), and is currently a Senior Fellow at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, a member of the Academic Council of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Studies, a Fellow of the Middle East Forum (2015-), and a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (2016-). His articles have been published by the Frontier Centre, the Middle East Forum, the Gatestone Institute, the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, the Macdonald Laurier Institute, and *Areo Magazine*.

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- ⁱ <http://www.mcgillbds.com/>
- ⁱⁱ <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/outrage-mcgill-daily-confirms-ban-zionist-opinion>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/mcgill-student-council-again-in-turmoil-after-jewish-student-removed-from-board-over-bds-issue>; <http://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/opinions/bds-campaign-stop-jews-serving-mcgill-student-council>
- ^{iv} http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/martin-luther-paved-the-way-for-the-holocaust/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=939a000c98-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_10_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-939a000c98-55537425
- ^v <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime>
- ^{vi} <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170613/t001b-eng.htm>
- ^{vii} Hamas charter, article 7, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp
- ^{viii} <http://www.meforum.org/5781/marxism-academia>
- ^{ix} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizrahi_Jews_in_Israel
- ^x <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/latest-population-statistics-for-israel>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_citizens_of_Israel
- ^{xi} <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/364746/arabs-are-prominent-israels-government-deroy-murdock>
- ^{xii} <https://nycsjp.wordpress.com/>
- ^{xiii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Students%27_Association
- ^{xiv} *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism: From Sacred Texts to Solemn History*, by Andrew G. Bostom (Editor), Ibn Warraq (Foreword). Prometheus Books, 2008; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_and_antisemitism
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- ^{xvi} *"The Sons of Pigs and Apes": Muslim Antisemitism and the Conspiracy of Silence* by Neil J. Kressel. Potomac Books, 2012
- ^{xvii} https://worldisraelnews.com/imam-who-called-to-kill-jews-flees-canadian-police/?utm_source=MadMimi&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Netanyahu+Blasting+of+EU+Caught+on+Tape%21+Knesset+Backs+Bill+Preventing+Division+of+Jerusalem%3B+Saudi+King%27s+Secret+Contacts+with+Israel&utm_campaign=20170719_m140480683_Netanyahu+Blasting+of+EU+Caught+on+Tape%21+Knesset+Backs+Bill+Preventing+Division+of+Jerusalem%3B+Saudi+King%27s+Secret+Contacts+with+Israel&utm_term=more_btn_dark_jpg; <http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/arrest-warrant-issued-for-imam-who-called-for-jews-to-be-killed>
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- ^{xix} <https://www.algemeiner.com/2017/11/02/jewish-action-not-balfour-created-israel>
- ^{xx} <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waqf>
- ^{xxi} <http://www.meforum.org/5966/arabs-strive-for-honor-not-peace>
- ^{xxii} <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/8956/black-lives-matter-antisemitism>
- ^{xxiii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_boycott_of_Israel