



BDS AND THE SYDNEY FESTIVAL

A story of Boycotts, Bullying and BS

A BIBI PLEA?

Is indicted former Israeli PM Netanyahu about to shake up Israeli politics again?PAGE 24

CHINA SYNDROME

The problem with Israel's relations with BeijingPAGE 30

UNSPOKEN TRUTHS

Lessons from an attack on a Texas synagoguePAGE 21

A NEW LOW

The UN takes an unprecedented new step in demonising Israel PAGE 7

TARRAWARRA

ESTATE

311 HEALESVILLE – YARRA GLEN ROAD,
YARRA GLEN, VIC 3775 +61 3 5962 3311
WWW.TARRAWARRA.COM.AU



With Compliments from

Pacific Group of Companies

**P O BOX 400
SOUTH MELBOURNE, 3205, AUSTRALIA**

TELEPHONE: (03) 9695 8700

EDITOR'S NOTE

The February *AIR* cover story is about the background, aftermath and implications of the much-discussed Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against the Sydney Festival for accepting some funds from the Israeli Embassy for a dance performance.

Judy Maynard exposes the tactics of the boycott proponents – which, despite denials, involved considerable bullying and intimidation of artists. In addition, academic expert Gerald Steinberg reviews the ugly history of BDS proponents claiming that Israel is an “apartheid” regime, as they did in this case, while Naomi Levin explores legal remedies employed internationally to regulate the discrimination BDS campaigns inevitably create. Additional comments on the Sydney Festival saga come from Colin Rubenstein, Jeremy Jones and social media expert Emily Schrader.

Also featured this month is British columnist Melanie Phillips’ examination of the troubling implications of the attack by a British Islamist on a Texas synagogue in an attempt to free an al-Qaeda-linked terrorist in a US prison. Plus, veteran journalist Matti Friedman looks at Israel’s complicated, and sometimes risky, relationship with China.

Finally, don’t miss Behnam Ben Taleblu on some troubling Biden Administration claims from the Iran nuclear talks and Amotz Asa-El on how rumblings of a plea deal for indicted former Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu are shaking up Israeli politics.

Let us know what you think about any of it at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

ON THE COVER

A man displays a sign at a protest calling for the boycott of the Sydney Festival for accepting Israeli funding (Source: Twitter)



CONTENTS

FEATURE STORIES

BDS BULLYING

JUDY MAYNARD

The 2022 Sydney Festival was one of the most controversial ever, but not for artistic reasons... The only unsafe environment was caused by boycott supporters – many of who subjected artists to blatant bullying, name-calling and moral blackmail.....PAGE 12



THE ISRAEL-APARTHEID LIE: A HISTORY

GERALD STEINBERGPAGE 15

BDS AS A COLONIALIST MOVEMENT

EMILY SCHRADERPAGE 17

WHAT LEGAL TOOLS TO FIGHT BDS?

NAOMI LEVINPAGE 18

UNSPOKEN TRUTHS IN TEXAS

Islamist antisemitism in a synagogue attack
MELANIE PHILLIPSPAGE 21

A MISGUIDED BLAME GAME ON IRAN

BEHNAME BEN TALEBLUPAGE 23

A BIBI PLEA BARGAIN

AMOTZ ASA-ELPAGE 24

AUSTRALIAN EXTREMISTS: “NUKE ISRAEL!”

RAN PORATPAGE 27

BIBLIO FILE: SOCIALISM’S JEWISH QUESTION

COLIN SHINDLERPAGE 29

ESSAY: CHINESE ITZIK COMES TO HAIFA

Beijing’s courtship of Israel has been canny and effective
MATTI FRIEDMANPAGE 30

REGULAR COLUMNS

FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEINPAGE 4

WORD FOR WORD.....PAGE 5

SCRIBBLINGS

TZVI FLEISCHERPAGE 6

DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

CLIFFORD MAYPAGE 7

ASIA WATCH

MICHAEL SHANNONPAGE 8

EUROPA EUROPA

ALEX BENJAMINPAGE 9

BEHIND THE NEWS.....PAGE 10

STRANGER THAN FICTION.....PAGE 11

NOTED AND QUOTEDPAGE 35

IN PARLIAMENTPAGE 36


MEDIA MICROSCOPE

ALLON LEEPAGE 39

THE LAST WORD

JEREMY JONESPAGE 40

HOW TO USE OUR INTERACTIVE EDITION

- Tap/click  to return to the Contents page
- All listed articles link to their page.
- Best viewed in your desktop browser or the Books (iOS) or equivalent e-book reader app in portrait mode.

Australia/Israel Review

Published by the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)

Editorial Chairman**Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM****Editor-in-Chief****Dr TZVI FLEISCHER****Senior Contributing Editor****JEREMY JONES AM****Staff Writers****ALLON LEE, JAMIE HYAMS OAM,
AHRON SHAPIRO, NAOMI LEVIN, OVED
LOBEL, JUDY MAYNARD****Publishing Manager****MICHAEL SHANNON****Correspondents****ISRAEL: AMOTZ ASA-EL****NEW ZEALAND: MIRIAM BELL****National Editorial Board****KEITH BEVILLE, RABBI RALPH
GENENDE OAM, GARY HERZ, MIRIAM
LASKY, STEVE LIEBLICH, RABBI JOHN
LEVI AC, Hon. HOWARD NATHAN AM,
IAN WALLER SC****AIJAC****National Chairman****MARK LEIBLER AC****NSW Chairman****PAUL RUBENSTEIN****Executive Director****Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM****Director of International &****Community Affairs****JEREMY JONES AM****Policy and Research Coordinator****Dr TZVI FLEISCHER****Executive Manager****JOEL BURNIE****Senior Policy Analysts****AHRON SHAPIRO, JAMIE HYAMS OAM,
ALLON LEE, NAOMI LEVIN, SHARYN
MITTELMAN****Policy Analysts****OVED LOBEL, JUDY MAYNARD****Research Associate****Dr RAN PORAT****Multimedia Designer****AREK DYBEL****Events Coordinator****HELEN BRUSTMAN OAM****Administration****MELBOURNE: ROSEMARY SANDLER,
RENA LANGBERG
SYDNEY: LOUISE DE MESQUITA****Israel Liaison****PETER ADLER****Founding Chairmen****ISADOR MAGID AM (OBM)****ROBERT ZABLUD (OBM)****HEAD OFFICE**Level 1, 22 Albert Road,
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia
Telephone: (03) 9681 6660
Fax: (03) 9681 6650
Email: aijac@aijac.org.au**SYDNEY OFFICE**140 William Street
East Sydney, NSW 2011, Australia
Telephone: (02) 9360 5415
Email: ldemesquita@aijac.org.au**SUBSCRIPTIONS**Please send all remittances, changes of
address and subscription inquiries to:
Australia/Israel Review
Level 1, 22 Albert Road
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia
ISSN No. 1442-3693
Print Post Approved – 100007869**www.aijac.org.au****FROM THE
EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN****COLIN RUBENSTEIN****FARCE AT A FESTIVAL**

Even before this year's Sydney Festival opened, Australians were treated to farcical political theatre, courtesy of a staged disinformation campaign by local anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement activists.

The boycotters aimed to intimidate event organisers into reneging on a sponsorship arrangement with the Israeli Embassy to facilitate the staging of a dance performance by the Sydney Dance Company created by the world-renowned Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin.

The stunt followed the well-worn playbook of strong-arm tactics BDS has followed at festivals internationally. Yet the fact is, they failed.

While a number of acts – some previously known BDS supporters – withdrew from the event, according to the anti-BDS artistic group the Creative Community for Peace, the vast majority of artists, performers and staff – some 800 in all – remained in the festival.

The Sydney Festival did nothing to deserve their attack. Sponsorship arrangements, of the kind the Sydney Festival reportedly solicited from the Israeli Embassy, have been the rule at such arts events, not the exception, here and abroad.

Indeed, the Chinese Communist Party, engaged in an ongoing genocide of the Uighurs, sponsored the Sydney Festival from 2013 to 2020, through the state-owned China Southern Airlines. There were no hints of any boycotts over that sponsorship.

Moreover, previous visits by Naharin to Australia's top-tier Melbourne and Sydney Festivals had also been supported in part by donations from the Israeli Embassy, and its logo appeared on official festival websites. Yet this year, boycotters hyped such sponsorship to artists and journalists as something unprecedented that made them somehow "unsafe".

While anti-Israel activists had been satisfied to protest on previous occasions, the level of intimidation at this year's Sydney Festival crossed all red lines.

Their attempt at sowing controversy relied upon the demonisation and delegitimisation of Israel; bullying and moral blackmail of artists; and the acceptance *a priori* that Israel, and all Israelis by extension, uniquely deserve to be ostracised and excluded from the global community in all respects, whether in commerce, sports, academia or, as in this case, the arts.

The supposed basis for such extremism rests on a mob mentality stoked by caricature-like distortions and outright lies and fabrications driven by hyperbolic, emotional slogans amplified over social media.

Such misrepresentations include claims that Jews are not indigenous in their own homeland; that Israel is an "apartheid" society, even though all its citizens have equal rights and Arabs are prominent across all sectors, including government; and never mentioning the ongoing terrorism emanating from Hamas-ruled Gaza or from the West Bank.

BDS is an insidious movement whose tactics, strategies and aims, as stated by its leaders, make it clear that they don't want a Palestinian state alongside Israel, but to effectively replace Israel through the so-called Palestinian "right of return" – a fanciful notion without any basis in international law – aimed at demographically erasing Israel's Jewish majority.

It is in this sense that the BDS movement flirts with antisemitism, because it is motivated by an intense animosity and extremism which amounts to an effort to deprive Jews of the right to self-determination afforded to other peoples.

Meanwhile, the BDS movement's formula of placing the blame for the ongoing lack of Palestinian statehood on Israel – which it demonises as a colonialist apartheid entity that has never and will never voluntarily seek peace – is not only ahistorical nonsense, but a

recipe for perpetuation of the conflict forever.

It is particularly counterproductive in these otherwise more promising times following the historic Abraham Accords, when we are witnessing genuine normalisation between Israel and several regional Arab and Muslim countries – Bahrain, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Sudan – and considerable interest in potentially following suit by numerous other nations.

Moreover, BDS supporters wilfully ignore the irrefutable fact that Israel's Arab minorities are themselves demanding from their Knesset representatives that they end their historical preference for sitting in opposition and take a more proactive role in government.

Israel's current government coalition could not have been formed last year without the participation of an Islamist Israeli Arab party, Ra'am. This bold political partnership has already delivered unprecedented political achievements for Israel's minorities in terms of budget allocations, resolving land disputes and improved public safety and infrastructure.

Ironically, across the Green Line, the Palestinian Authority's leaders don't practise BDS – President Mahmoud Abbas visited Defence Minister Benny Gantz's home for informal talks recently.

Still, they've essentially boycotted the negotiating table for almost a decade and rejected, without counteroffers, three comprehensive Israeli peace proposals over the past

two decades that would have realised the creation of a Palestinian state on practically all of the land area of the West Bank and Gaza.

Ironically, among Israelis, choreographer Naharin is well known for his criticism of Israeli government policies and his sympathy for Palestinian aspirations. He even told reporters he would support BDS if he felt it would help Palestinians – but he knows it does not.

This is not only the assessment of Naharin and other prominent Israeli peace activists but also of many Palestinians themselves. Veteran human rights campaigner Bassem Eid recently noted, "We have to tell people what the facts are... The facts are that BDS is hurting Palestinians more than Israelis."

Israel has its share of internal problems and is open to criticism, like all democracies. Yet the BDS movement doesn't criticise Israel for what it does, but delegitimises Israel for what it is – a Jewish and democratic state that offers equal rights to all of its citizens.

The majority of Australians, who reject BDS, must continue to speak out against this ugly discriminatory movement in Canberra, in state capitals and in homes and schools. Otherwise, they risk being drowned out by the megaphones and social media mob attacks of the zealots, with terrible implications for the health of Australian liberal democracy well beyond this important, but relatively narrow, bellwether issue.

AIR

WORD FOR WORD

"We commend and appreciate this decision that came in solidarity with the Palestinians' legitimate rights, and in opposition to the Israeli crimes against our Palestinian people. We declare our solidarity with the participants who have withdrawn from the festival, and we call on all participants to raise their voices in face [sic] of oppression and injustice."

Hamas statement backing the BDS campaign against the Sydney Festival (Jerusalem Post, Jan. 12).

"Iran's regional power is on the rise. Iran has never been as strong during the Islamic Republic era and has substantial power and influence in the region and internationally now. Americans confess that they have to deal with three powerful countries, [namely] Iran, China and Russia."

Ali Akbar Velayati, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and current foreign relations advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (Iran International, Jan. 18).

"While Iranian officials deliver educated remarks in nice suits in

Vienna, their proxies continue their aggressive attacks... Iran's double-dealing must be brought to the negotiation table. Any international effort must address both the nuclear issue, as well [as] Iranian aggression."

Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz in remarks welcoming his Greek counterpart Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos to Israel (Jerusalem Post, Jan. 20).

"Investing in Iran is not a sound investment whether there is a deal or not a deal... Why would anyone legitimize their right to enrich uranium at massive capacity... I don't see any rationale why it makes sense for the free world to sign a deal with them that would give them money."

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett speaking virtually at the 2022 Davos World Economic Forum (Times of Israel, Jan. 18).

"Today, the government approved my and Science Minister [Orit Farkash-Hacohen]'s proposal to establish a joint Israeli-Emirati fund for mutual investments in hi-tech. Israel and the UAE share a passion for the development of advanced technologies that will improve quality of life."

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid on a new Israel-UAE R&D fund (Twitter, Jan. 23).



SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

TWO WEEKENDS OF ABCTV NEWS

Over the nights of Jan. 16, 17 and 18, almost every Australian TV network's nightly news show found space to report on a dramatic story out of Colleyville, Texas. A British terrorist had pulled out a gun during a Saturday religious service at Colleyville's Congregation Beth Israel synagogue and taken the rabbi and three worshippers hostage, demanding the release of a convicted al-Qaeda-linked terrorist being held at a nearby prison. After 11 hours, the hostages managed to escape and the gunman, Malik Faisal Akram, was killed by an FBI counter-terror squad (see pp. 21-22 for more).

SBS TV "World News" covered the story on the nights of both Jan. 16 and 17. Channel 7, Channel 9 and Channel 10 News also all ran stories on the saga.

Notice anyone missing? That's right – ABC TV evening news, of all the traditional TV network evening news programs, never covered this story.

To be fair, ABC News Radio and ABC radio news bulletins did cover the Colleyville siege. Yet there was no coverage on the flagship ABC radio current affairs programs "AM" and "PM" – only on "The World Today", which has a much smaller audience, on Jan. 17. ABC-24's "The World" had a very brief and rather uninformative story on the same day.

Nonetheless, by failing to include the Colleyville attack in the nightly news, the ABC was clearly out of sync with both other Australian media outlets and similar overseas networks.

The ABC's decision to avoid the story on the evening news could be dismissed as a simple oversight if it were not for the heavily promoted feature story that appeared on ABC TV evening news the following Sunday – Jan. 23.

On that night, ABC devoted a full four-and-a-half minutes of the 42-minute evening news program to a story by ABC Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner on the earth-shattering news that a single Israeli teen named Shahar Peretz had decided to go to military prison rather than be drafted into the IDF, to protest Israeli policies. More than this, the news also devoted another 30 seconds early in the program to promoting the story. Apparently, producers at the ABC thought this was the most important international story of the weekend.

The story did include a façade of fairness by interview-

ing some Israeli soldiers who are proud to serve in the IDF as well as Peretz and her parents, but a façade is all it was. Joyner described the soldiers he spoke to as taking part "in the military occupation of Palestinian land" – effectively implying that Peretz is right to refuse to serve despite what the soldiers had to say, because they are involved in oppressing Palestinians by serving.

More than this, besides Joyner, Peretz and her parents, and some IDF soldiers, the only other voice in the story was Knesset Member Ofer Cassif. Indefensibly, Joyner did not reveal that Cassif is a left-wing ultra-extremist, a member of the Communist Party Hadash, which in turn is part of the anti-Zionist Joint Arab List. He calls Zionism "a racist ideology and practice which espouses Jewish supremacy."

While what Cassif said in the report was not obviously extreme, he is perhaps the only Jewish member of the Knesset who could be counted on to be sympathetic to the stance

of draft rejectionists like Peretz.

In other words, despite an ostensible appearance of balance, the story appears to have been set up to strongly imply that Peretz is right to reject service in the IDF and viewers should wholeheartedly support her stance.

The difference between ABC news on the weekend of Jan. 16 and Jan. 23 illustrates that it is not simply how stories are put

together, but also what is considered worthy of broadcast, that can indicate bias, unprofessional journalism and destructive groupthink.

Producers at ABC TV news decided that viewers did not really need to know about an attack on a US synagogue by an Islamist extremist. Perhaps they believed that Jews are "privileged" in line with current "woke" ideology, and their victimisation is not something viewers should care about. Perhaps they felt that Islamist terror is passe – we should only talk about white supremacist violence now.

What viewers really needed to know about, these producers apparently decided via their choices, is that there is at least one Israeli teen who holds the view – probably shared by some of those same producers – that Israel is awful, and what it is doing to the Palestinians is indefensible, to the extent that she was prepared to go to jail, albeit briefly.

AIJAC understands that Joyner is shortly going to leave his post as ABC correspondent in Israel and take up a new ABC post in Turkey. Turkey, like Israel, also has a conscript army. Five minutes of internet research shows that Turkey also has some conscientious objectors, who are subject to much more extreme punishments than the few weeks in military prison Israeli objectors typically face. According to the Association for Conscience Objection, Turks who refuse to be conscripted



A single teenager refusing to serve in the IDF is apparently an important world news story according to the ABC (Screenshot)

“face the possibility of a life-long cycle of prosecutions and imprisonment, and a situation of ‘civil death’, which excludes them from the normal social, cultural and economic life.”

How much does anyone want to bet that Joyner will never prepare, and the ABC will never run, a significant story on Turkish conscientious objectors? It simply wouldn't be newsworthy. But Israel is a different story – presumably because there is a groupthink operating within the ABC which sees Israel as exceptionally deplorable, and anything which appears to “educate” viewers toward that worldview as particularly newsworthy.

AIR



Clifford May

A NEW LOW IN UN DEMONISATION OF ISRAEL

Historians usually date the start of the Holocaust to June 1941 when German troops invaded the Soviet Union, identified Jewish civilians, lined them up and shot them by the thousands. Later, concentration camps equipped with gas chambers elevated the slaughter to an industrial scale.

But that timetable omits something important. After his accession to power in 1933, Adolf Hitler began a campaign to demonise and delegitimise Jews, accusing them of imaginary crimes, conveying the message that Jews are a vile and guilty race.

In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws officially made German Jews second-class citizens. In 1938, thousands of German Jewish stores and homes were ransacked and burned in the pogrom known as Kristallnacht. In 1939, after the Nazi invasion of Poland, Polish Jews were confined to ghettos.

All this and more laid the groundwork for the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question,” the Nazi euphemism for the genocide of European Jews.

Post-war, most countries of the broader Middle East, many of them influenced by Nazi ideology, drove out their ancient Jewish communities.

Refugees fled or, as many saw it, returned to a land in which Jews had survived for thousands of years despite multiple foreign conquests, massacres, enslavements and expulsions.

Israelis declared their independence following the departure of the British Empire from territories taken from the defeated Ottoman Empire after World War I. Israel's founding was thus an act of anti-imperialism and decolonisation.

Recalling this history now is relevant and urgent. For decades, the UN has been at the forefront of a campaign to demonise and delegitimise Israel. That campaign is now set to sharply escalate.

In early January, the UN approved a US\$4.2 million budget to establish a permanent so-called Commission of Inquiry (COI) – essentially a grand inquisition targeting and vilifying Israel.

Under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council, a body dominated by such notorious human rights violators as China, Russia, Cuba, Pakistan, Qatar and Venezuela, an 18-member staff will be led by Navi Pillay, a former UN high commissioner for human rights, with “an appalling record on Israel,” in the considered judgment of Hillel Neuer, Executive Director of UN Watch.

The COI will be “dedicated to manufacturing charges and mounting a global chase to arrest and incarcerate Israeli Jews,” as Anne Bayefsky, director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, wrote.

The ostensible inspiration for the COI is the 11-day conflict initiated by Hamas last May. More than 4,000 rockets were launched against Israeli cities, towns and villages. Israelis defended themselves, for which the COI will accuse Israelis of imaginary crimes. Hamas, by contrast, will not be seriously criticised for either its attacks on Israeli civilians or its use of Palestinians as human shields – both indisputably crimes under international law.


Expect the COI also to broadcast the slander that Israel is an apartheid state, implying that Israel has no right to defend itself – indeed, no right to exist.

I plan to say more about the bogus charge of apartheid in future. Still, for now, I'll just point out that Israel's Arab Muslim minority, roughly 20%, enjoys rights and freedom unavailable to Arab Muslims even in countries where they constitute a majority. No positions or jobs are denied to Israeli citizens based on ethnicity or religion. Mansour Abbas, head of the Islamic Ra'am Party and an elected member of the Knesset, serves in the current Israeli governing coalition.

Gaza, from which Israelis withdrew in 2005, is ruled by Hamas. The West Bank is governed by the Palestinian Authority. Israelis have repeatedly offered to withdraw from most of the West Bank in exchange for a conflict-ending agreement. Those offers were turned down. Should Israelis withdraw without an agreement, the West Bank would become a second Gaza. Is that not obvious?

The endless drumbeat of anti-Israeli vilification by the COI is sure to energise the economic campaign against Israel (echoing the 1933 Nazi “Don't buy from the Jews” campaign) and perhaps lead to prosecutions of Israelis by the International Criminal Court, a politicised entity whose authority is recognised by neither Israel nor the US.

The UN campaign will make settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict impossible for the foreseeable future. Why would any Palestinian leader compromise so long as there is a possibility that what happened to the Jews of Europe – defamation followed by extermination – could happen to the Jews of Israel with the assent of the “international community”?

The UN was established following World War II to prevent and resolve conflicts. Today, it promotes antisemitism and enables both terrorists and genocidaires. 

Clifford D. May is founder and President of the Foundation for Defence of Democracies (FDD) and a columnist for the Washington Times. © FDD, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

SIGN POSTS

Indonesia watchers in Israel and the wider Jewish world are long-accustomed to looking for hints that Jakarta will someday allow the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

The *Jerusalem Post* reported in January that developments over the previous six months suggest a warming of ties between the two, with encouragement from key individuals and the US Government.

In the final weeks of the Trump Administration, the US International Development Finance Corporation offered to double its investment in Indonesia as an incentive for Jakarta to normalise ties with Jerusalem, without success.

However, the central Indonesian figure in recent developments turns out to be serial presidential candidate and current Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, who met with Israeli National Security Adviser Eyal Hulata at a conference in Bahrain last November, and was seen speaking with Israel's *chargé d'affaires* in Manama, Itay Tagner, at the same event. After the photo was published, Prabowo issued a statement, saying it was not prohibited for him to speak to Israeli officials when it is in the national interest.

Prabowo was also revealed to be a partner in the development of an agricultural research centre in Indonesia, to which significant input has come from Shmuel Friedman, an Israeli agriculture consultant, entrepreneur and adviser to former Israeli agriculture minister Yair Shamir.

"Food security for a nation is no less important than security itself, and [Prabowo] totally agrees with me on that," Friedman told the *Jerusalem Post*. "At the end of the day, we bring results and see satisfied farmers, so it doesn't matter where it comes from."

Also connected is Joey Allaham, a New York-based entrepreneur with business interests in Indonesia and throughout the Middle East. In 2020, he liaised with Indonesian Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Pandjaitan to donate a shipment of Taffix, the Israeli-made anti-COVID-19 nasal spray, to Indonesian health workers and military personnel.

Follow-up is occurring. The *Associated Press* reported on Jan. 17 that a delegation of Indonesian officials recently visited Israel "to learn how to deal with the coronavirus pandemic" and met with Israeli officials, according to Israel's *Army Radio*. The date of the visit was not specified.

Without confirming the report, Israel's Foreign Ministry said that Israel "believes in international cooperation in every regard to the fight against the coronavirus" and is prepared to share information and experience.

The Biden Administration is continuing the push for Israel-Indonesia normalisation – a senior Israeli diplomat told the *Jerusalem Post* that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had raised the topic with his counterpart in Jakarta in December.

Normalisation could yet receive another gentle push from within Indonesia.

The new leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest mass-Muslim organisation, is very much inspired by the idealism, spirit of inclusiveness and humanity of former president (and long-time NU leader) Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, who was famously open-minded towards Israel and the Jewish world.

Yahya Cholil Staquf, a former presidential spokesperson for Wahid, was elected chairman in December, defeating two-term incumbent Said Aqil Siradj and three other candidates in a vote during NU's 34th congress. He, too, has visited Israel and faced criticism at home, after he accepted an invitation in 2018 from the Israel Council on Foreign Relations to give a speech in Jerusalem on the solution to religious conflicts, in which he emphasised the Islamic concept of *rahmah* (affection for and awareness of others).

Maintaining that he was not in Israel as an NU or government representative, "Gus Yahya" insisted he was continuing Wahid's mission to foster world peace and that he had not broken faith with Indonesia's traditionally strong support for the Palestinian cause. But when asked by the *Times of Israel* whether he would favour political relations between Jerusalem and Jakarta, he replied: "Yes, of course. See, we are in the middle of complex problems that need to be dealt [with] comprehensively in a global manner."

Addressing the question again in a recent interview, Yahya shifted emphasis somewhat, stating that the conflict needs to be resolved fundamentally, namely through clarifying territorial boundaries in accordance with international law.

"A lot of these territorial boundaries are just unilateral claims by both Israel and the surrounding Arab and Islamic countries. This must be resolved first. So if, for example, Indonesia says it is normalising relations with Israel, which [Israel] is it? The boundaries must be clear so as not to cause new problems," he said.

Although he served as a member of the Presidential Advisory Council during President Joko Widodo's first term, Yahya maintains that he doesn't seek to position himself

nor NU as political players. Rather, to “campaign as hard as possible to prevent identity politics. We must encourage political stakeholders to build consensus that they would not capitalise on identity, especially religious identity, as a political weapon,” he said.

AIR



Alex Benjamin

THE QUEST FOR A QUIET LIFE

“Progress would be wonderful – if only it would stop,” said Robert Musil, the Austrian author whose books were banned by the Nazis and who ended up escaping with his Jewish wife to Switzerland, where he died in 1961.

It seems an innocuous enough quote, but encapsulates how a lot of Jews feel about life in Europe today.

I’ll explain. Jews in Europe just want a quiet life. No fuss.

It’s a desire for life to stand still at any given moment of time. It might not be the most auspicious time. It might not be the most exciting time. But it’s a moment of relative comfort. And you know what tomorrow will bring. I’m not talking politics. Or implying that all Jews are conservative. I’m talking about life itself. A simple life.

In 2021, Jews across Europe dealt with: kosher meat bans in Belgium, Greece and Cyprus (and almost in Poland); rising antisemitism in most countries; vitriolic fall-out after the Gaza war; and students on campus targeted and ‘cancelled’ for being Zionists.

We’ve had anti-vaxxers using the yellow star; governments removing army security from Jewish buildings and openly discussing banning circumcision (Belgium again); and conspiracy theories about Rothschild money being behind the COVID-19 pandemic. I could go on (and on and on).

When I was asked to write a piece about Europe in 2022 from an Israel/Jewish perspective, I thought of three elections. One, German, has already happened. Two, in France and Hungary, lie ahead.

Germany first. Olaf Scholz is the new chancellor – the first Social Democrat to occupy the post since 2005. The youth wing of his party passed a resolution referring to Fatah as its “sister organisation”. His coalition of Greens and Free Democrats could be generously described as flaky on Israel, and after the Gaza war, a Germany that had hitherto been a bastion of boring reliability saw riots and the burning of Israeli flags.

The post-war generation, still dealing with the fresh bloodstains from the Shoah, was more circumspect. Jews were supported. The State of Israel was viewed by many

as an essential response to the horrors committed in the name of the German people. Whether out of guilt or genuine conviction was of little import: it meant stability for Jews, an ability to wear a *kippah* [Jewish skullcap] in public without fear.

We cannot and must not ignore the elephant in the room either: migrants and refugees from the Middle East have also changed the political dynamics in Western Europe. Never enamoured of the world’s only Jewish State to begin with, they brought this baggage with them to largely poorer areas where the Left tends to do best electorally, making the Palestinian cause a vote winner for left-wing German politicians.

That elephant, like Hannibal’s, has no difficulty crossing into France. France and its Jews have a tumultuous history. Dreyfus, Vichy, a strong Catholic tradition that tolerated, rather than welcomed, Jews. But in the post-war years, relative calm, relative peace. It would be a massive oversimplification to say Jewish life flourished, but we were left alone, by and large.

Then the elephant stomped all over that in the form of identity politics. The French stick to their post-revolutionary *laïcité* [political secularism] with fervour, and seeing the erosion of this sacrosanct principle within portions of the Islamic community, began a political war on clothing and religious/cultural signifiers. And the Jews got dragged into it. First on the kippah, then on Israel (the colonial narrative is a particularly sensitive one in France given Algeria), and so French Jews found themselves in a similar bind to their German brothers and sisters. The French election this year pits the centre against the far-right dogma of Jewish far-right leader Eric Zemmour or staunch nationalist Marine Le Pen. Lovely.

Which brings us neatly to Hungary and Victor Orban, a proponent of a new kind of politics – ‘illiberal democracy’ – who views Middle Eastern migration as a threat to Hungary’s Judeo-Christian values. He has little time for the European Western liberal democratic model and sees it as failing (whilst disingenuously, in my opinion, milking the EU funding teat until it is dry). But one can say this about Hungary: few elephants to speak of. It is consistently viewed in survey after survey of Jewish communities as one of the safest countries for Jews to live in.

I hope this gives you a sense of the terrible choice facing Jews in Europe in 2022. The direction that the Western liberal democratic states are going in is uncertain, difficult and increasingly hostile to us, our faith and to the State of Israel – an essential part of international Jewish life today. Then there are the largely ‘elephant-free’ countries such as Hungary and Poland that offer, despite their illiberalism, a relatively peaceful life.

Personally, I’m with Musil. If this choice is what passes for progress today, I can do without it, thanks very much. Happy 2022.

AIR

9

BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

On Jan. 1, for the first time since Sept. 12, rockets were fired from Gaza at Israel, with two landing off the coast of Tel Aviv and prompting retaliatory Israeli strikes against Hamas. Hamas claimed that the rockets were set off by adverse weather – as it has with other recent launches.

On Dec. 29, a sniper shot at an Israeli civilian working on the security barrier near Gaza, while machine guns were fired into Israel on Jan. 3.

On Jan. 4, the IDF downed a Hezbollah drone that crossed the border from Lebanon.

On Dec. 16, Palestinians ambushed an Israeli vehicle on the road between two Jewish settlements north of Nablus, killing one and injuring two. The IDF detained six Palestinians, including the two alleged shooters. Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility.

On Dec. 18, a Palestinian woman stabbed an Israeli civilian near the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, and another Palestinian attempted to stab an Israeli near Damascus Gate in Jerusalem. Both attackers were detained. On Dec. 31, the IDF shot a would-be stabber who charged out of a vehicle near Ariel.

On Jan. 11, a soldier was injured in a suspected car-ramming attack near Halamish in the West Bank. There was an attempted stabbing at Gush Etzion junction on Jan. 17, in which the attacker was killed.

IRANIAN ESPIONAGE RING EXPOSED

In early January, Israel's security agencies exposed a spy network set up by Iran within Israel which had operated for a few years. The network was run by an agent who presented

himself as a Jew in Iran named Rambood Namdar, and contacted several Israeli Jews of Iranian descent, mostly women, via various online platforms. Based on his orders, the Israelis involved conducted surveillance on government offices, shopping malls and the US embassy in Israel.

Another Iranian espionage effort was exposed by the US in January, in the form of the MuddyWater cyber hacking group. The US said the group was operated by Teheran's Intelligence and Security Ministry. Since 2015, MuddyWater hackers have conducted cyberespionage and cybercrimes on targets in Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE and against Iranian dissidents.

HAMAS' MAJOR FINANCIAL PROBLEM

Saudi media reported that the Lloyds Insurance Corporation, the world's largest insurance company, issued a caution at the end of 2021 to its many subsidiaries world-wide not to do business with certain listed Hamas-affiliated companies to avoid being associated with terrorist activities. As a result, Hamas is reportedly struggling to carry out financial transactions and has incurred massive losses. An official investigation has reportedly been launched within Hamas to find who leaked the sensitive financial information about the companies.

Meanwhile, in January, Israel increased the number of residents of Hamas-controlled Gaza permitted to work in Israel to 15,000. This is up from 5,000 in December, when Gazans were allowed to enter Israel for work in large numbers for the first time in 15 years.

IRAN'S NEW DEEP NUCLEAR FACILITY

A report from the US Institute for Science and International Security revealed that a new underground tunnel complex at Iran's main nuclear enrichment site at Natanz is buried even deeper than Iran's other enrichment facility at Fordow – which is constructed under a mountain to shield it from attacks. The new Natanz underground complex is also larger than the Iran Centrifuge Assembly Centre, the above-ground Natanz nuclear facility destroyed, allegedly by Israel, in July 2020. The size leads to concerns that in addition to a new advanced centrifuge assembly plant, Iran may also be constructing an additional uranium enrichment plant at the underground site at a time when International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors have very limited visibility into Iran's nuclear program due to the regime's obstruction.

IRAN SMUGGLING REVELATIONS

A confidential report by a UN Security Council panel of experts on Yemen points to Iran's Jask seaport as the main supply point for weapons to the Houthis, Iran's proxy in Yemen. Thousands of weapons recently seized by the US navy, including rocket launchers, machine guns and sniper rifles made in Russia, China or Iran, were shipped from that port in south-east Iran in breach of a 2015 UN arms embargo on the Houthis.

Meanwhile, Iranian flights to Myanmar in early January have raised suspicions that Iran has begun exporting weapons, including guided missiles, to that country's military junta.

Another smuggled Iranian export on the rise is oil, mostly to China, estimated to have reached an aver-

age 600,000 barrels a day in 2021, despite US sanctions. According to recent news reports, to evade detection, tankers carrying Iranian diesel have been anchoring at night in international waters in the Persian Gulf, switching off their automatic identification system. The cargo is then transferred via smaller vessels to other ships that bring the oil to its destinations.

YEMEN WAR ESCALATION



Houthi missiles strike the UAE (Screenshot)

Fighting between the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen and a Saudi-led coalition escalated when Houthis launched an attack on the UAE on Jan. 17, hitting an industrial zone outside capital city Abu Dhabi and a construction site close to Abu Dhabi's international airport. Three foreign workers were killed in the attack.

The following day, approximately 20 people were killed in a Saudi-led coalition airstrike on Houthi strongholds in the Yemeni capital Sana'a.

On Jan. 24, UAE media reported the Emirates had intercepted two ballistic missiles fired from Yemen over Abu Dhabi.

Meanwhile, a report released in December by the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies revealed that the Houthis carried out 702 attacks against Saudi Arabia in the first nine months of 2021, and 4,100 such attacks since 2016.

ISRAELI MEETINGS WITH MUSLIM NATIONS

There have been a number of reports recently of potentially ground-

breaking meetings between Israeli officials and those of Muslim nations, including some with which Israel does not have diplomatic ties.

Israeli media reports say an Israeli military delegation arrived in Khartoum, Sudan on Jan. 19 to meet with General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who seized power in a coup last year. Sudan and Israel have agreed to normalise relations as part of the Abraham Accords.

On Jan. 12, there were unconfirmed reports of a meeting in Jordan between Mossad Director David Barnea and Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Mohammed Al-Dabaiba to discuss normalisation and security cooperation.

An Indonesian delegation of health officials was reported on Jan. 17 to have visited Israel "in recent weeks" in order to learn strategies for dealing with the coronavirus.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

A FLOOD OF MISINFORMATION

Some say history never repeats itself, while others believe everything old is new again. The latter certainly applies when it comes to bizarre Palestinian claims made against Israel.

In early 2015, Palestinian allegations that Israel had flooded Gaza by opening nearby dams, allowing the water to inundate the blockaded strip, were duly reported as fact by media outlets and agencies including *AFP*, *Al Jazeera* and Britain's *Daily Mail*. They subsequently had to print retractions because the claims were easily disprovable – no such Israeli dams exist.

However, that hasn't prevented Palestinian authorities from making the exact same claim again and again. Thus, on Jan. 13, 2020, Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported, "Israel's uncontrolled opening of a dam's gates has caused \$500,000 worth of damage to agricultural areas in Gaza, the Pal-

COVID UPDATE

The past month saw a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases in Israel due to the highly infectious Omicron wave currently afflicting much of the world. There were a total of 1,061,376 cases between Dec. 24 and Jan. 24, but experts predict the wave will soon peak.

Israel had 551,160 active cases as at Jan. 24, with 732 people in a serious condition on Jan. 23.

The virus has also recently started to spike in the Palestinian ruled areas of the West Bank, with 14,325 active cases of infection on Jan. 24, and 19,744 new cases recorded since Dec. 24 – 3,620 of them on Jan. 24 alone.

Similarly, in the Gaza Strip, there were 3,617 new cases between Dec. 24 and Jan. 23, but 990 of them were on Jan. 23 alone.

estonian Agriculture Ministry said."The report concluded that Israel periodically opens the gates of its "many dams in the region... leading to the flooding... in Gaza."

The following year, on Jan. 22, Iran's Qods News Agency reported that, in an exclusive interview with Anadolu, Ahmed Fatayer, director of the Palestinian Agriculture Ministry branch in Gaza, had claimed that Israel "has opened the rainwater dams east of the Shuja'iyya neighbourhood in the east of the Gaza Strip, which led to flooding hundreds of dunams of agricultural land."

Again, this January, central Gaza's Nusseirat municipality claimed Israel "opened the dams around of [sic] Wadi Beit Hanoun, threatening an environmental catastrophe" – claims repeated by the head of Hamas' Winter Emergency Committee, Zuhdi Al-Ghariz (translation from "Elder of Ziyon").

However, the claims do not seem to have appeared in any outlet in English this year, and have been ridiculed by Palestinians on social media. Perhaps those recycling these claims have gone to the well once too often.

COVER STORY

BDS BULLYING

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SYDNEY FESTIVAL BOYCOTT

Judy Maynard

The 2022 Sydney Festival was one of the most controversial ever, but not for artistic reasons.

At the festival management's request, the Israeli Embassy in Australia provided \$20,000 to help stage a production by the Sydney Dance Company of "Decadance", a work that has been performed in theatres and festivals all over the world since its creation 20 years ago by renowned Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin.

The donation was acknowledged on the festival's website by an Israel logo alongside those of other government and community partners.

This angered local pro-Palestinian activists, who demanded the festival return the embassy's donation and remove the logo. When the board of the Sydney Festival refused to meet their demands, the activists launched a boycott campaign, supported by the global Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, calling on artists to withdraw from the festival, nonsensically branding it a "culturally unsafe" environment for Palestinian and Arab artists.

A number of artists acceded, some willingly. But as festival chairman David Kirk revealed, the only unsafe environment was caused by boycott supporters – many of whom subjected artists to blatant bullying, name-calling and moral blackmail.

On Jan. 13, Kirk told the ABC *Radio National* "Breakfast" audience that many of the artists were being pressured to withdraw their performances. Some were receiving an unacceptable "battering" on social media, and were as a consequence feeling "unsafe and compromised".

The *Australian* newspaper reported Kirk's comment that some artists and festival staff had been subjected to "emotionally damaging" attacks. He called on activists to



Protesters (left) outside the production of "Decadance" by the Sydney Dance Company (right) choreographed by Israeli Ohad Naharin, and supported by a small grant from the Israeli Embassy (Images: Twitter/ Sydney Festival)

behave like "decent human beings".

In a tweet on Jan. 13 Jennine Khalik, one of the boycott organisers, said that claims that the "artists were bullied + pressured to withdraw [were] completely untrue." This article will demonstrate otherwise.

BDS GOALS AND TACTICS

The anti-Israel boycott movement likes to present itself as a non-violent resistance, encamped on the high moral ground, but its tactics in securing martyrs for the cause show otherwise. In many cases, it claims it has gained the solidarity from those it has in reality intimidated.

BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti does not prevaricate about the movement's real goals, having declared "No Palestinian will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine." In a recent interview, he expressed the view that "Jewish culture is part of Arab culture," negating any concept of self-determination for Jews after centuries of persecution (see p. 17).

As the BDS movement cannot physically eliminate Israel, it aims instead to "cancel" the Jewish state in whatever ways possible, trying to render it unseen and unheard. Activists campaign for the ostracisation of Israeli artists and academics internationally, and attempt to sabotage the normalisation of relations between Israelis and Palestinians, and between Israel and Arab states.

Having no success with the latter, as the Abraham Accords attest, the ire of BDS is directed at vulnerable targets – and this often does not involve simply putting one's case and asking nicely.

In June 2018, the BDS movement claimed a campaign victory after the Argentinian national football team cancelled a friendly match scheduled in Israel. BDS activists shared widely a “quote” from star player Lionel Messi in which he supposedly said he could not play against “people who kill innocent Palestinian children. We had to cancel the game because we are humans before we are footballers.” But Messi never said any such thing.

Claudio Tapia, head of the Argentine Football Association, said the team actually had been forced to cancel due to serious threats against the players, and would try to play in Israel at a future time. The then Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie said the threats had exceeded those of Islamic State.

Jibril Rajoub, the President of the Palestinian Football Association, who claimed he had only been involved in peaceful protests against Israel, was suspended by FIFA for a year and given a hefty fine for “inciting hatred and violence.”

Another own goal for BDS was its “triumphant” campaign against the Israel-based manufacturing company Sodastream. As a result of activist bullying, the company relocated a plant in the West Bank to the Negev region, resulting in 500 Palestinians losing their jobs.

Yet the welfare of Palestinians has never been the real focus of the anti-Israel boycott movement; its ultimate desire is the elimination of Israel, as Barghouti noted.

Anti-Israel activists are always seeking new ways to “cancel” Israel. A recent example is the Australian “Do Better On Palestine” campaign, which called for media coverage that avoids “bothsiderism” – a euphemism for insisting that only the Palestinian viewpoint should be aired when news organisations report the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The same local activists who introduced that campaign to Australia are also responsible for attempting to disrupt the Sydney Festival because of the Israeli logo on its website. That logo is to them symbolic of Israel being afforded a space like any other country in international affairs and in the public consciousness, and must therefore be removed. They seek to impose on Australia their discriminatory view that Israel must be always treated as uniquely, irredeemably evil.

DENYING THE UGLINESS

These anti-Israel stoushes always become ugly, but the boycott organisers' strategy entailed depicting themselves

as principled and noble, simply setting out their case while remaining above the fray.

Responding to festival chairman Kirk's bullying allegations, Khalik tweeted “we have approached artists with love and empathy... and left the decision with them.”

Co-organiser, Sara Saleh, told the ABC that they “had approached their conversations with artists with care and sensitivity” and that they were trying to “build a movement and a future... on freedom, liberation, love and equality.”

But even from information available on the public record it is obvious that many of the targeted (and pro-Palestinian) artists were not feeling the love.

THE ABUSE OF KATIE NOONAN

Well-known Australian singer-songwriter Katie Noonan posted on Facebook on Jan 7:

“I decided to not get involved in this boycott, despite repeated, vigorous and quite aggressive attempts to do so. I simply said I was not contracted by Sydney Festival and was in fact contracted by SIMA [Sydney Improvised Music Association] – an awesome and very important independent cultural org [sic] I love, and I could not ask my fellow indie artists to turn down paid work after the hardest 2 years of their lives. Simple.”

She continued that she was “deeply saddened by the nature of online discussion and wish we could have respectful robust discussions without vitriol, but it does not seem possible in these difficult times.” She also revealed that she'd been called “a racist, mysogonist [sic], anti-feminist, POC [people of colour] hating, WOC [women of colour] hating, homophobic, transphobic, Palestinian hating, colonial loving, cis white, pink wash-priviliged [sic] hetero c**t.”

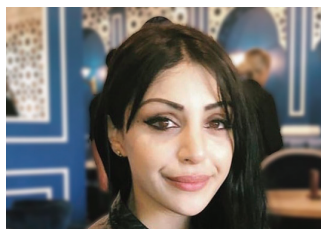
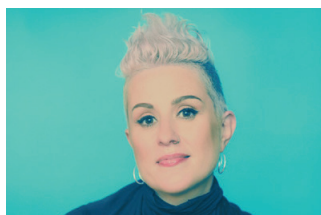
This post then received over 1,000 comments, a mostly negative pile-on, in which Noonan was accused of being racist, Islamophobic, ignorant and a liar. Many claimed to be from disappointed fans.

A couple of the more supportive comments suggested “that a group of people who likely never even followed Katie in the first place have been told to come on over here and play stack's [sic] on”, and “this isn't public sentiment, this is organised mob outrage.”

At no point had Noonan suggested that any of the unacceptable messages she'd received had come from the boycott organisers, but several of them nonetheless took the opportunity to attack her as if she had – while saying she was a “racist” for making such claims.

Khalik posted a series of tweets on Jan 8:

“So Katie Noonan claims she was repeatedly and aggressively told to withdraw. There was one exchange on behalf of the campaign... Not sure why she is lying — feels like



(From top) Katie Noonan and Jennine Khalik (Images: Twitter)

some nasty racism towards Palestinians...I'm literally stunned lmao [laughing my arse off] how do people lie through their teeth like this. She told us she wouldn't withdraw and we said best of luck, and we're always here to chat. but this is aGgReSsIvE [sic] the crocodile tears here are next level."

In a tweet on Jan. 9 Khalik called Noonan's statement "impossibly racist and untrue."

Saleh commented on Noonan's Facebook page:

"Katie, with all due respect, as one of the organisers I have screenshots of the conversation that took place, and your replies, which ended congenially. We would never be anything less than respectful because what we are fighting for is our freedom – underpinned by justice and love...I'm sorry you felt you needed to implicitly smear us this way..."

Another organiser, Fahad Ali, also left a comment on Noonan's Facebook page:

"We were immensely respectful when we reached out to you and we have the screenshots of these interactions and your replies.

This post is dishonest and disingenuous. There was no reason to smear our movement and delegitimise the Palestinian struggle for freedom because you felt personally offended in some way. You have put your own ego before millions of Palestinian lives..."

To both Saleh and Ali, Noonan gave the identical response:

With Compliments

R L Webb
Nominees
Pty. Ltd

Property, investment,
development & finance

"pls [sic] don't presume the boycott organising peeps [people] were the only people who contacted me.

Unfortunately that is a naive and incorrect assumption.

Unfortunately they have disingenuously shared parts of our exchange, rather than the entire exchange and that unfortunately created another incorrect narrative.

I never accused the boycott organizers of anything.

The incorrect and nasty slander has been v upsetting but I choose to rise about it and not engage."

Yet these organisers, having called Noonan a liar and a racist, have not publicly apologised for, nor retracted, their potentially inflammatory comments, despite Noonan's response and the lack of any basis on which to allege that she was actually attacking them.

It is also curious that they seemed oblivious to the possibility that some of their fellow travellers just might have engaged in aggressive exchanges, especially when Saleh and Ali's comments on Noonan's Jan. 7 post appear alongside many that are openly demeaning. Did they really not notice them?

They did, of course, but took no responsibility.

Indeed, both Saleh and Ali implicitly acknowledged the aggression – even while condemning Noonan for calling attention to it. Saleh told the ABC she "could not control the actions of passionate fans who felt strongly about the issue," while Ali was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as saying "We can't control the reactions of fans or other commentators."

Meanwhile, Ali, displaying his "immense respect", tweeted on Jan 8:

"So my best guess of what happened with Katie Noonan is this: she saw [comedian] Judith Lucy coming thru with now something like 7k likes on FB for withdrawing from Sydney Fest and she thought "hey, I want some of that" but figured she could get even more attention if she went pro-Israel."

Ali is correct in one respect: Noonan certainly received attention. On Jan. 12 she posted again on Facebook:

"It's been an educational and very upsetting 5 days. I have listened and learned from various disparate points of view – informed and ill-informed, from lived on-ground experience and from the anonymity of a faceless keyboard 14,000 kms away, and I have observed behaviour I abhor and behaviour I admire.

...Twitter is a new hellhole of mentall [sic] illness and vitriol that I am quite happy to never engage with again, and I am really disappointed my name was used in am[sic] inaccurate post that was presumptive and incorrect.

...I am saddened a twitter shitshow was incited without my consent (as I posted no twitter content regarding this issue)...Sending peace/shalom/salaam and kindness to all."

Noonan was subjected to bullying and aggression, but not just because she refused to join the boycott. It started

before she made that decision. What clearly emerges is the harassment and intimidation of artists by persons probably unknown to try to force compliance with boycotts.

VICTIMISED, EVEN AFTER COMPLYING WITH THE BOYCOTT

Musician Sarah Mary Chadwick sides strongly with the Palestinians and did withdraw from the Sydney Festival. She wrote about the experience, posting the following on her Instagram and Facebook accounts *after* she'd already withdrawn:

"Me and my baby Filter are getting pretty pissed off ... by pressure exerted on artists to boycott festivals and events. I do not appreciate unsolicited mail from people who have zero un-

derstanding or knowledge of my financial situation or life in general. Before you contact your 'favourite' artist and encourage them to 'do the right thing' maybe consider the following.

- do you have any knowledge as to whether the artist currently has any income due to Covid?
- is it really your place to instruct other people essentially to make significant donations to causes YOU have prioritised, regardless of the validity of the cause?
- do you have any knowledge of medical or personal costs the person you are contacting is managing and do you know (sic) if they are in fact, able to manage them at all?
- is it the artists (sic) role to give up their livelihoods when the gov[ernment] continue to underfund arts? Anyway, stop telling me what to do, strangers. I have my own moral compass and I use it effectively."

Again, Chadwick did not directly accuse the organisers of aggressive tactics. As she had already withdrawn, it was courageous of her to blow the whistle on the bullies.

Yet this "respectful" response was received from someone operating the "Boycott Sydney Festival" Instagram account:

"This post is gross, Sarah. Yes, it's been a rough year for artists. On the other hand, Palestinians are resisting 7 decades of massacre and dispossession. You've made your choice, but don't centre yourself. And don't try to police the ways that Palestinians or their supporters choose to expand a boycott against literal violent oppression."

Another response comes from an account which appears to belong to Matt Chun, an organiser of the boycott:

"A public post about choosing the wrong side of a picket line is weird. You have agency, as you've pointed out, and you've used it. Nobody has prevented that. But manufacturing victimhood in opposition to those who are resisting an apartheid regime is appalling."

Boycott organisers frequently boasted of the number of artists who withdrew, and posted their photos in a gallery

on their Instagram account. Yet strangely Chadwick's photo is missing, despite her stance.

Some of the artists who were heavily critical of festival management for putting them in what they regarded as an invidious position also confirmed the bullying tactics used to encourage withdrawal.

The band Tropical F**k Storm, led by Gareth Liddiard, issued a strongly worded statement, saying the decision to accept Israel as a sponsor "would inevitably mean that hundreds of unwitting artists (who are having a rough enough time with the pandemic as it is) would

become the targets of online harassment, bullying, smear campaigns, ridiculous accusations, misrepresentations and abuse from total strangers who have no idea what's actually going

on behind the scenes, what any artist's position is or even what they're talking about."

Performer Jaguar Jonze joined the boycott in mid-January and released a statement criticising the festival for creating "an environment where artists and audience are put at risk and forced to endanger their careers and well-being. Because of this, the safest decision that is left – to protect myself, my team and the audience in a way the festival has decided not to – is to withdraw and cancel my performance at Sydney Festival."

Saleh retweeted this, calling it a "principled, sensitive show of solidarity", which is surprising as it seems to indicate a more immediate fear of harm to one's physical "well-being" from supporters of a boycott.

CROCODILE TEARS

The boycott's organisers give an impression of respectful direct dealing with the performers. Statements by the few artists who dared go public give a glimpse into the murk below.

And then there are the crocodile tears.

In response to festival chairman Kirk's apology to artists for putting them in a position "whereby they've felt pressured or compromised to withdraw their acts," Ali demanded the board divest itself of the Israeli funding to protect artists. "If [the decision to accept the funding] has had the effect that it has left artists feeling compromised and unsafe, why continue to put artists in harm's way?"

Such impeccable logic – as if it were the funds that endangered the artists, and not the menacing BDS trolls.

In similar vein, how touching the concern expressed in Saleh's tweet of Jan. 15: "We hope that Sydney Fest board recompenses artists for harm and loss incurred."

Anti-Israel boycotts have never achieved anything for the Palestinian people. They have only hurt them and now, in the case of the Sydney Festival boycott, also hurt vulnerable local artists coping with the aftermath of a pandemic.

THE ISRAEL-APARTHEID LIE: A BRIEF HISTORY

Gerald Steinberg

One of the most potent means of vilifying Israel is through the use (and abuse) of the “racism” and “apartheid” labels. In 1975, the Soviet and Arab blocs in the UN sponsored a notorious resolution branding Zionism as racism, and the campaigns have continued in waves since then.

In 2001, the UN’s Durban “World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance”, ostensibly organised to support anti-racism, revived the campaign in the form of an action plan to promote the “complete isolation of Israel as an apartheid state.”

This form of political warfare was led by the powerful NGOs in cooperation with the Palestinian leadership and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and the text was written at a Teheran preparatory conference from which Israelis and Jews were excluded. The Durban NGO Forum marked the launch of another major round of political warfare against Israel which continues today, seeking to delegitimise Jewish national self-determination.

The use of the “apartheid” libel as the primary vehicle for delegitimation, cynically copied from and exploiting the South African struggle, is not directed against specific Israeli policies. The rhetoric and the campaigns explicitly target the existence of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

In the words of Irwin Cotler, former Canadian attorney-general, “Let there be no mistake about it: to indict Israel as an apartheid state is prologue and justification for the dismantling of the Jewish State, for the criminalization of its supporters, and for the consequential silencing of their speech.”

The US-based NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW), whose Executive Director Ken Roth has a long-standing obsession with Israel, played a central role in Durban and in implementing the strategy through frequent publications, campaigns, and social media posts in the subsequent 20 years.

In 2021, it published a 223-page “report” under the heading “A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the

Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution”. To make sure that the label resonates, HRW included 200 references to the word “apartheid”, approximately one per page. It held press conferences and its researchers were interviewed widely by journalists. With a budget of over US\$90 million and a major PR operation, it gained a great deal of favourable media coverage, repeating the “Israel apartheid” message.

The report, for those who actually read it, consisted of a chaotic mix of allegations, distortions and falsehoods, many copied from other NGOs, condemning everything from “discriminatory settlements” to the essence of Israel’s

existence as the nation state of the Jewish people. These claims were based on a “new definition” of apartheid, which was uniquely tailored for Israel. The 1950 Law of Return, enacted in the shadow of the Holocaust, was condemned, as were counterterror measures which, the authors claimed (without foundation), were used “to advance demographic objectives” without “legitimate security justifications”. The accusations were facilitated by the complete absence of any reference to the thousands of victims of Palestinian terror

— as if Israeli Jews were not entitled to human rights or security.

In drawing a direct comparison with South Africa, the goal is to delegitimise Israel and the concept of Jewish sovereign equality. The South African regime was characterised by cruel and systematic institutionalised dehumanisation, while Israel’s non-Jewish citizens have full rights. But in the delegitimation process, these basic facts are ignored.

This campaign, which has been echoed by Amnesty International and other powerful NGOs with anti-Israel biases, immorally exploits the suffering of the real victims of apartheid and racism, and transforms a political dispute into a racial conflict. The comparison was categorically rejected and denounced by Judge Richard Goldstone in the *New York Times*. Goldstone, appointed by Nelson Mandela to the South African Constitutional Court, wrote: “In Israel, there is no apartheid. Nothing there comes close to the definition of apartheid under the 1998 Rome Statute...”

Goldstone added that “while ‘apartheid’ can have broader meaning, its use is meant to evoke the situation in pre-1994 South Africa. It is an unfair and inaccurate slander against Israel, calculated to retard rather than advance peace negotiations.”

Many others who had experienced the real apartheid expressed similar views. Benjamin Poggrund, who was a



The accusation that Israel is an “Apartheid” state dates back to a strategy deliberately developed by pro-Palestinian groups at the UN’s 2001 Durban “anti-racism” conference (YouTube screenshot)

journalist in South Africa, wrote, “Use of the apartheid label is at best ignorant and naive and at worst cynical and manipulative.”

This cynicism is illustrated by the immunity given to the highly discriminatory regimes, particularly in the Middle East, not subject to serious investigation or criticism in the United Nations or by groups claiming a human rights agenda. In countries where women and religious, ethnic and other minorities are systematically denied

equal rights, terms such as “apartheid” are never used. This language is also not applied to Egypt, despite often violent friction involving the Coptic minority, or to Turkey, which deprives its Kurdish citizens of equal rights.

In the face of these blatant double standards, the power of the “apartheid” campaign is derived from resources that are available in both political and financial forms. Beyond the NGOs’ campaigns, this divisive agenda is supported in the United Nations and associated institutions, providing numerous platforms as well as access to media.

Financially, significant European government funding for ostensible human rights organisations that actively promote the “apartheid” libel, including al-Haq, Adalah, Badil, and al-Mezan, fuels this demonisation.

Finally, the crude exploitation of the “apartheid” libel and the accompanying BDS campaigns are the antithesis of the mutual acceptance required for peace. As Judge Goldstone wrote, “The mutual recognition and protection of the human dignity of all people is indispensable to bringing an end to hatred and anger. The charge that Israel is an apartheid state is a false and malicious one that precludes, rather than promotes, peace and harmony.”

AIR

Dr. Gerald Steinberg is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at Bar-Ilan University, and heads the Institute for NGO Research in Jerusalem.

BDS AS A COLONIALIST MOVEMENT

Emily Schrader

It’s no news that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is deeply problematic.

To its very foundations, it is enormously hypocritical and largely ineffective. In the few instances it actually was successful, it was deeply damaging to the livelihoods of Palestinians and the targets of the campaigns, such as the musicians and artists participating in the recent Sydney Festival.

While the movement self-identifies as a progressive human rights cause which is non-violent, in fact, its goals, as stated by co-founder Omar Barghouti, are to destroy the State of Israel. The movement has also given cover to terrorist organisations to carry out their activities.

In interviews over the years, Barghouti has admitted increasingly what both he and the BDS actually stand for – and it’s nothing progressive.

In an interview in January 2022 with

French network *Paroles D’Honneur*, Barghouti reiterated that BDS is unequivocally against any form of “normalisation” – meaning against the existence of the State of Israel altogether. “We will not accept it [Israel] as a normal part of the region, of Arab culture,” he explained.

More interestingly, however, Barghouti explained at length how BDS has been successful in unifying Palestinians against “colonialism” and demanding the right of return – adding that this has also become consensus among progressive groups abroad as well. The irony, of course, is that his movement is promoting colonialism that erases the heritage of millions of people in the Middle East.



BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti is very clear that his goal is Israel’s elimination (YouTube screenshot)



WESTERNPORT
MARINA

GREAT BY DAY – MAGIC AT NIGHT
MORNINGTON PENINSULA

PHONE (03) 5979 7400

EMAIL: clientservices@westernportmarina.com.au



Barghouti stated explicitly that Arab culture is diverse and includes Imazighen, Kurds, Armenians, Jews and others. “Jewish culture is part of Arab culture,” he claims. He seems to have forgotten that it includes those groups because Arabs colonised them, and in many cases brutally oppressed them, erasing their history, language and culture. Barghouti speaks with the language of a coloniser while decrying colonialism and accusing others of doing what he does.

If that’s not enough, he also claims that BDS embraces, and encourages Jewish and other minority cultures within Arab identity. However, history tells a different story. It was

“The blatant lies of Barghouti and BDS are just another attempt at gaslighting Jews and all minorities in the Middle East who have suffered under Arab colonialism for hundreds of years”

made abundantly clear to the Jews of Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia and other Arab states that Jews are not welcome in their countries. Yet now, when Jews have the right to self-determination, they have a problem with that and want to rewrite history.

In Yemen, Jewish children were taken from their parents and forcibly converted

to Islam, Jews were subject to apartheid laws, and had their property and businesses confiscated because of their faith. In Iraq, Jews were arrested, tortured, murdered, forbidden from learning with Muslims in school, had their businesses and homes stolen by the government, and had their citizenship revoked before being expelled.

In Egypt, Jews were expelled from the country with only a suitcase in hand, after Egypt revoked their citizenship.

In Syria, Jews were subject to curfews and house arrests, banned from owning businesses, banned from working in certain professions or for the government, and eventually had their businesses, homes and bank accounts stolen by the state. As well, they were held hostage and forbidden from leaving.

These are but a few examples of the Arab culture that Jews in Arab countries have experienced.

Imazighen, Kurds, Armenians, Jews and other indigenous minorities in the Middle East are not Arabs. The blatant lies of Barghouti and BDS are just another attempt at gaslighting Jews and all minorities in the Middle East who have suffered under Arab colonialism for hundreds of years. There’s nothing progressive about erasing indigenous identity and any person of conscience, progressive or not, should not fall for the deceit of BDS.

AIR

Emily Schrader is the CEO of Social Lite Creative LLC (www.sociallitecreative.com). Reprinted from the Jewish Press (www.jewishpress.com). © Emily Schrader, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

WHAT LEGAL TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE TO FIGHT BDS?

Naomi Levin

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel seeks to convince – or pressure – individuals, organisations and corporations around the world to cancel all commercial, cultural, academic and other ties with Israel and Israelis.

Officially, BDS advocates argue that these actions will, according to the BDS Australia website, “pressure the State of Israel to end the illegal occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the blockade of Gaza, to allow the internationally recognised right of return to Palestinian refugees to the land and homes from which Israel forcibly expelled them in 1948; and to ensure equal rights for all Palestinians living in Israel according to international law.”

Many BDS advocates are adamant their cause is not a call for the elimination of Israel and is not antisemitic. Yet if just one of their demands came about – implementation of the legally-baseless and historically unprecedented right of return for all Palestinians to Israel – Israeli Jews would be forced into minority status in their own country.

It is also hard to take these claims seriously when the movement’s co-founder, Omar Barghouti, has openly said he is seeking to eliminate a Jewish state – as have other leading BDS adherents.

Following attempts by a group of BDS activists to bully the Sydney Festival board into rejecting sponsorship from the Israeli Embassy for a dance performance – sponsorship the festival itself sought – some have suggested that Australia needs new laws to limit the discriminatory effects of BDS campaigns.

While Australian political leaders from both the Coalition and Labor – as well as the Greens – have expressed public opposition to the BDS movement, Australia has no legal tools in place specifically to deal with such boycotts.

This report looks at selected jurisdictions and the legislation and policies they have implemented to address the discriminatory effects of BDS campaigns.

UNITED STATES

Attempts to legislate some form of anti-BDS law at a federal level in the United States have been unsuccessful. However, 35 of the 50 US states, representing both sides of politics, have passed laws regulating BDS.

Professor Eugene Kontorovich, a legal expert at George Mason University, explained the nature of these laws:

“What these laws typically say is they do not ban anyone from boycotting Israel, they do not require anyone to

support Israel, they do not, in any way, restrict criticism of Israel, but they are based on the understanding that boycotts of Israel are a form of discrimination, which is a proxy often for antisemitic discrimination.

The notion of not doing business with people, simply because they are Jewish Israelis or Israelis is a form of bigotry because it determines your actions towards people, not based on what they've done, but what group they belong to.

So 26 states [ed: now 35] have said a company is free to boycott Israel, a company is free to not do business with Israeli companies, but if it chooses not to do business with Israelis, as a matter of boycott, then we, the state, will not do business with that company."

By December 2021, at least seven US states had utilised their anti-boycott laws to respond to a 2021 decision by food giant Unilever, owner of Ben & Jerry's, to fire its Israeli distributor as part of a new policy to stop selling ice cream in the West Bank, which the company said was "inconsistent with our values."

In these states, state-held pension funds divested from Unilever shares. The Israeli business publication *Globes* noted that New York state's pension fund alone held US\$100 million worth of Unilever stocks. Unilever's company value has reportedly fallen by some US\$28 billion since the Ben & Jerry's decision was announced (although not all that fall can be attributed to backlash against the boycott decision).

While there is no federal legislation, a resolution did pass the US House of Representatives in 2019 criticising and condemning the BDS movement, saying it "is not about promoting coexistence, civil rights, and political reconciliation but about questioning and undermining the very legitimacy of [Israel] and its people."

UNITED KINGDOM

In 2019, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced he would "stop public bodies from taking it upon themselves to boycott goods from other countries to develop their own pseudo foreign policy against a country which with nauseating frequency turns out to be Israel." This statement followed by three years a UK Government procurement policy, which detailed that "public procurement should never be used as a tool to boycott tenders from suppliers based in other countries, except where formal legal sanctions, embargoes and restrictions have been put in place by the UK Government."

Similar guidelines were introduced in 2017 by then Communities Secretary Sajid Javid to prevent local councils from boycotting companies and countries contrary to the UK Government's own position. Javid said BDS-inspired boycotts "have led to the removal of kosher food

from the shelves of supermarkets, or calls for Jewish films to be banned."

These plans came unstuck, however, when the Palestine Solidarity Campaign challenged the anti-boycott guidance in the Supreme Court. A three-to-two majority ruled in 2020 that Javid did not have the power to regulate local council procurement and investing.

Media reports say that Johnson and Javid's Conservative Party still stands by its 2019 pledge to eventually introduce formal anti-BDS laws.



US state laws mean individuals, groups and companies are free to boycott Israel – but are not eligible for government funds if they do (Image: Shutterstock)

FRANCE

While it is not a BDS-specific legal framework, a section of France's anti-discrimination law, called the Lellouche Law, extends anti-racism laws to those who discriminate against specific countries. Some have claimed that France's willingness to apply the Lellouche Law – charges have been applied against French boycotters of Israel – demonstrates France is leading the global movement against

BDS. The Lellouche Law was challenged in France's highest appellate court, the Court of Cassation, and upheld.

However, others claim the Lellouche Law is an attack on free speech – a claim supported, in one case, by the European Union's Court of Human Rights (ECHM). In 2020, the ECHM cancelled the Court of Cassation's conviction of 11 BDS activists, saying its ruling had violated their freedom of expression, and ordered France to pay compensation.

GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

While Germany does not have laws affecting boycotts of Israel, in 2019 the Bundestag issued a strong statement on the nature of the BDS movement.

The non-binding resolution, submitted by a coalition of parties including Germany's Greens, labelled BDS as "antisemitic" and noted that attempts by BDS activists to place "don't buy" stickers on Israeli goods "remind us of the most terrible phase of German history ... [and] inevitably kindle memories of the Nazi 'kauf nicht bei Juden' (don't buy from Jews)."

The Austrian National Council, the lower house of the Austrian parliament, adopted a similar resolution condemning BDS as antisemitic in Feb. 2020.

CONCLUSION


There is no single approach to legislating to limit boycotts of other countries. While measures have been undertaken in North America and Europe to do so, challenges against such legislation have been frequent. The above examples need to be reviewed if anti-BDS legislation is considered for Australia.


Gelatissimo


MADE FRESH IN-STORE



With over 40 stores Australia-wide,
find your nearest location at
[gelatissimo.com.au](https://www.gelatissimo.com.au)

 @GelatissimoAU

 @gelatissimogelato

 @gelatissimogelato

Unspoken truths in Texas

Islamist antisemitism in a synagogue attack

Melanie Phillips

The Jan. 15 attack on Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, where the rabbi and three other Jews were taken hostage until they managed to escape unharmed, was shocking enough.

What has subsequently emerged, however, is even more disturbing.

The attacker, Malik Faisal Akram, was a British Muslim from the English town of Blackburn. It turns out that he was able to enter the United States two weeks earlier because of a major foul-up by Britain's intelligence service, MI5, and the police.

In 2020, MI5 investigated Akram as a possible terrorist threat but concluded that he posed no risk and effectively closed his file.

Now Britain's *Jewish Chronicle* (JC) reports that in May last year, at a meeting in Blackburn called to discuss "escalating tensions" between Israel and Gaza, Akram declared in a diatribe that Jews needed to be punished and should be



Colleyville gunman and Islamist antisemite Malik Faisal Akram

"bombed". A locally elected politician who attended the meeting was so concerned by this that he told the police. To his astonishment, he heard no more about it.

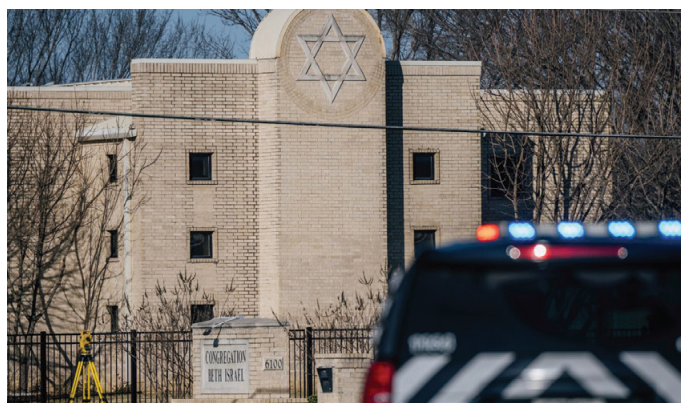
The JC has also obtained a recording of the phone

call during the Colleyville siege between Akram and his brother, Gulbar, who was trying to persuade him to surrender.

On the recording, Akram ranted and raved against America. Rambling semi-coherently about American involvement in overseas conflicts, he said: "Why do these f***ing motherf*****s come to our countries, rape our women and f*** our kids? I'm setting a precedent... maybe they'll have compassion for f***ing Jews."

Clearly, British intelligence has much to answer for. But there's also the question of how Akram was allowed into America in the first place. For he had a long criminal history, which included jail terms for harassment, theft and attacking a cousin with a baseball bat.

Yet he was able to enter the United States as a tourist, presumably by lying about his criminal record on his entry



Scene of a siege: Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas (Source: Twitter)

form, and he was able to obtain a gun there.

In both Britain and America, the security agencies have allowed themselves to become increasingly focused on a reportedly rising threat from white supremacism. But the overwhelming threat to the West comes from Islamist extremism.

The security establishment is reflecting a wider state of denial. In both countries, the political, media and cultural establishment has blocked itself from acknowledging the true nature and extent of Islamist radicalisation.

People have allowed themselves to become either persuaded or intimidated by the designation of all such acknowledgment as Islamophobic – the catch-all denunciation of any adverse comment about Islam or the Muslim world. While terrorist attacks by lone white supremacists provoke instant claims of a dangerous cultural trend, terrorist attacks by lone Islamists tend to provoke instead the claim that the perpetrator was mentally ill and therefore his actions had no wider significance.

Thus, Akram has been widely reported as having had serious mental health problems. Yet the JC talked to his former doctor, who said Akram had been "a confident man who didn't need any mental help" and had no mental health complaints in his medical notes.

It's important to acknowledge that most Muslims have no truck with anti-Western or anti-Jewish attitudes. After the Colleyville synagogue attack, some courageous Muslims have spoken out against antisemitism in their community.

A Duke University professor, Abdullah T. Antepi, said members of his faith had a "moral call for action for the soul of Islam and Muslim" to address the hatred towards Jews.

Nevertheless, antisemitic attitudes and attacks on Jews are disproportionately far higher among Muslims than among the rest of the population in the UK.

In early January, Tahra Ahmed – a volunteer during London's 2017 Grenfell Tower apartment block fire disaster that claimed the lives of 72 people – was convicted of stirring up racial hatred.

In two Facebook posts, she referred to the fire's victims

WHO IS AAFIA SIDDIQUI?

Tarek Fatah

Until the Jan. 15 hostage-taking at a Texas synagogue, few Americans had heard the name of convicted terrorist Aafia Siddiqui, a 49-year-old Pakistan-born scientist serving an 86-year sentence in a federal penitentiary near Fort Worth.

The daughter of an English-trained, Pakistani doctor, Siddiqui attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and earned a Ph.D. from Brandeis University.

“While a student in Boston, Massachusetts, Siddiqui had undertaken training and instruction on the handling and shooting of firearms,” the FBI said in a 2010 statement. Siddiqui also volunteered with the Muslim Students Association (MSA), a network of Islamist students across North American schools and universities. They proselytise Islam and are accused of following the Muslim Brotherhood agenda of Islamising the West from within.

Siddiqui lived in the United States from roughly 1991 to June 2002 and returned to Pakistan for about a week beginning Dec. 25, 2002, federal prosecutors said. After the 9/11 attack, Siddiqui apparently became radicalised, and divorced her husband who was in the US completing his studies. She disappeared with their three children.

She later married a nephew of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. By 2008 US officials were calling her a wanted terrorist and she was arrested inside Afghanistan and accused of attacking American law-enforcement personnel who went to interview her there.

The Americans claim that during her arrest, she grabbed a rifle and shot at US soldiers, one of whom shot back and injured her. She was charged in a New York federal court with attempted murder and armed assault on US officers.

Siddiqui is actually a celebrity in Pakistan and among some Muslim groups across the West. She is the icon of Islamists who

are steeped in Jew hatred and mostly originate in Pakistan and other South Asian countries where “son of a Jew” is a common slur.

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan is one of her champions and his party’s manifesto explicitly declares her innocent of any crime, designating the convicted terrorist as the “Daughter of the Nation.”

US President Joe Biden called the hostage standoff in a Texas synagogue an act of terror. Speaking in Philadelphia on Jan. 16, he also said the hostage-taker, identified as British national Malik Faisal Akram, purchased weapons on the street.

Profiling jihadi terrorists, former CIA terrorism expert Robert Baer told CNN: “In their mind, Israel is a Western conspiracy, an American conspiracy and the Jewish community in the United States and around the world is somehow responsible for this.”

Siddiqui was one of those people. She has a long history of antisemitic statements – even though she studied for an advanced degree at a university closely tied to the Jewish community.

In 2009, while awaiting trial on charges that she tried to kill American servicemen, Siddiqui tried to fire her lawyers because of their Jewish background. Siddiqui later demanded that jurors in her trial be DNA tested to prove they weren’t Jewish.

“If they have a Zionist or Israeli background, they are all mad at me,” she said. “They should be excluded if you want to be fair.”

Since her capture and conviction, she has been a symbol and rallying cry to extremist Muslims worldwide, many of whom echo the delusional antisemitic theories she promoted.

No wonder the Pakistani Briton who took hostages to free Siddiqui chose to target a synagogue and not any ordinary meeting centre.

AIR

Tarek Fatah is a Robert J. and Abby B. Levine Fellow at the Middle East Forum, a founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, and a columnist at the Toronto Sun. Reprinted from the Toronto Sun. © Middle East Forum, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

as “burnt alive in a Jewish sacrifice.” She said: “Jews have always been the ones behind ritual torture, crucifixion and murder of children, especially young boys, as a way of atoning for their sins in order to be allowed back into Palestine.”

People in Britain have been shocked and horrified to learn what she said. They are shocked because no discussion of Muslim antisemitism is generally allowed.

This is also true in America, where a recent report by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) asserted that mainstream Jewish and allied charities were spreading “Islamophobia” by opposing radical Islamic terror.

Numerous Islamist terrorists have made it clear that, in attacking the West, their most fundamental target is the Jews. At war against modernity, they believe that behind

modernity stand the Jews – who they think are behind everything in the world that the Islamists have decided is bad.

This doesn’t mean every Muslim antisemite will turn into a terrorist. But it does mean that virtually every Muslim terrorist is an antisemite.

Antisemitism doesn’t just endanger the Jews. It is the marker for Islamic extremism. Until this is realised, the West will continually fail to understand the threat it faces.

AIR

Melanie Phillips, a British journalist, broadcaster and author, writes a weekly column for the Jewish News Service (JNS) and is a columnist for the Times of London. Her personal and political memoir, Guardian Angel, has been published by Bombar-dier. © JNS.org, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

A MISGUIDED BLAME GAME ON IRAN

Behnam Ben Taleblu

A fool throws a stone into a well and a hundred wise men can't get it out," is a popular Persian saying stressing the lasting consequence of actions taken by unlearned or inexperienced people.

The Biden Administration is channelling this maxim – with former President Trump as the “fool” and the decision to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal as “the stone” – as its go-to response for why things have gone from bad



US President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken: Their efforts to blame the failure of nuclear negotiations with Iran on Trump are counter-productive (Credit: Whitehouse.gov/Flicker)

to worse on Iran policy under President Joe Biden's watch, despite his promise of a “smarter” approach.

On the sidelines of a conference in Rome last October, Biden blamed his predecessor for the deadlock in negotiations and Iran's atomic advances. “We're continuing to suffer from the very bad decisions President Trump made to pull out of the JCPOA,” he said, using the acronym for the 2015 agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Less than two months later, Secretary of State Antony Blinken amplified that assessment, saying, “we are where we are because of what I consider to be one of the worst decisions made in American foreign policy in the last decade, and that was getting out of the Iran nuclear agreement.”

While the former president did indeed cease US participation in the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, the Islamic Republic's enmity with America far predates this decision. Moreover, the main vectors for Iranian escalation since 2018 – nuclear, missile, regional, maritime, and cyber – have all been problem areas in the past and are what make

it such an outsized threat. They are not new aggressions Iran has chosen to develop or employ, as White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki incorrectly alleged recently.

Should Iran's post-2018 heightened uranium enrichment levels, growing uranium stockpile, use of advanced centrifuges, and other activities be seen as the problem, then it is worth recalling that Trump merely expedited what the JCPOA already ordained, just on more favourable financial terms for Washington. The JCPOA was at best, a time-out temporarily halting select Iranian nuclear activities. Leaving the JCPOA simply meant not choosing to pay for that time-out.

One of the deal's myriad shortcomings was these nuclear time-outs, technically known as “sunset clauses”, which paved the way for a rapid expansion of Iranian

nuclear capacity. One example pertains to advanced centrifuges, which can be gradually employed starting six years after the deal is in effect. President Obama invoked these machines when he famously said in 2015 that starting from year 13 of the deal, Iran's “breakout” time could be near zero.

As indirect nuclear talks to resurrect the JCPOA lurch into the new year with no agreement to date, a recent revelation by *Axios* confirms that the Administration is predictably embarking on a domestic political messaging campaign that can be summarised as follows: We failed in our objectives because of Trump.

This strategy is likely to be employed for a range of suboptimal outcomes, which might include an agreement worse than the JCPOA, or a collapse in the talks that

leads to war, a potential Iranian nuclear weapon, or a threshold capability in which the regime could end up being a screwdriver's turn away from the bomb.

Amid the political blame game, the Administration cannot see how its conciliatory approach toward Iran over the past year has underwritten both Iranian diplomatic intransigence and “irreversible” nuclear knowledge and capability.

AsheMorgan

INTUITIVE CAPITAL

A Specialised Real Estate Investment Group

At AsheMorgan, we have been involved in real estate for over 30 years and have a demonstrated capability in earning superior returns for our investors. We invest in quality assets that meet strict risk guidelines and asset investment profiles.

We actively seek commercial and retail opportunities across the east coast of Australia where we are able to achieve value add returns through our specialist management skills and an active participation in asset delivery.

Investments all have a high degree of transparency, including documentation, reporting and fee structures.

Contact us to find out more about how to invest with AsheMorgan.

Property Investment
Funds Management

Intuitive Solutions

Level 12
139 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

p (02) 9240 1000
w www.ashemorgan.com.au

ties. After a year in office, Biden now owns the Iran policy impasse. The Administration consciously chose to denigrate and shed leverage created by the coercive and punitive economic pressure policy of its predecessor. And throughout 2021, it failed to take a range of actions like diplomatic censure in multilateral forums or vigorous enforcement of existing US oil sanctions that could have improved the chances of even its stated aim of resurrecting the JCPOA.

The Biden Administration's Iran policy on non-nuclear matters has similarly failed to convince Teheran that Washington means business. The Administration's delisting of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen has not brought peace to the Arabian Peninsula. Allowing Iran to pay its UN dues using funds previously frozen in South Korea has only emboldened its desire to access these revenues and press US allies holding them to violate sanctions. And Washington's vacillation between occasional military responses and turning a blind eye to increasing Iran-backed escalation and attacks on US positions in the heartland of the Middle East has not deterred Iran and its constellation of proxies, the "Axis of Resistance," from engaging in more attacks.

Rather than squander precious time laying the groundwork for a domestic political blame game, the Administration should be developing tools that can make diplomacy more efficacious and its military deterrence more credible. This means enforcing existing sanctions on the Islamic Republic, including on its oil sales, smuggling, and regional trade networks, as well as convening a previously threatened special session of the International Atomic Energy Agency to censure Iran. On the military front, this means working with regional partners to make sure they have the necessary air and missile defence systems to devalue and offset Iran's growing long-range and precision-strike capabilities and those of its proxies, as well as actively interdicting the flow of arms from Iran that continue to keep regional hotspots like Yemen, Syria, and Iraq engulfed in conflict.

Staying the political warfare route would not only be tantamount to a retreat from the promise of "non-partisan-

ship" in US foreign policy that Blinken promised in his first major speech in 2021, but a true fool's errand to begin 2022 with.

AIR

Behnam Ben Taleblu is a senior fellow of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) in Washington DC, where he focuses on Iranian political and security issues. This article first appeared in the Dispatch (thedispatch.com). © FDD (www.fdd.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

A BIBI PLEA BARGAIN?

Amotz Asa-El

Israel's Netanyahu era – more than a quarter-century of drama, achievement and controversy – may soon end if plea-bargain negotiations between the prosecution and Israel's most famous defendant mature.

Reports of indirect negotiations between Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit and Binyamin Netanyahu have been confirmed by former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak, who mediated between the two. At the time of writing, the deal appears stalled following criticism that it is too generous to Netanyahu, but it remains possible that it will ultimately materialise. If so, it will likely unsettle Israel's political system.

Netanyahu, now Leader of the Opposition and before that Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has been facing court in the wake of indictments in three cases.

The first is about receipt of ~US\$200,000 (A\$279,000) worth of illegal gifts, cumulatively over five years, from Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan and Australian gambling kingpin James Packer. The second case is about an alleged abortive deal with the publisher of the mass-circulation daily newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* involving favourable coverage of Netanyahu in return for policy changes that would hurt a key *Yediot* competitor. The third case is about alleged regulatory favouritism to telecom giant Bezeq in return for favourable coverage of Netanyahu on a news website owned by Bezeq's owner at that time.

In court, Netanyahu has flatly denied all allegations, in line with his repeated public statement about the cases against him: "there will be nothing because there was nothing." In the plea bargain talks, however, he has reportedly agreed to admit to most of the charges he currently faces.

The plea bargain would reportedly leave intact the first case, drop the second case entirely, and in the third case, remove the most serious charge of bribery. Netanyahu would plead guilty to charges of fraud and breach of trust, and promise to retire from politics for at least seven years. In return, prosecutors would recommend his punishment



AIR CONDITIONING & VENTILATION SOLUTIONS

Orion Mechanical Services Pty Limited

ABN 20 101 402 411

Factory Unit 40/34-36 Ralph Street
Alexandria NSW 2015

Phone: +61 2 9669 1404

Fax: +61 2 9669 2404

Mobile: +61 414 877 516

Email: info@orionmechanical.com.au

www.orionmechanical.com.au

DESIGN - INSTALLATION - SERVICE - MAINTENANCE
RESIDENTIAL - INDUSTRIAL - COMMERCIAL - PROJECTS



Binyamin and Sara Netanyahu: Said to be considering their options
(Credit: IGPO/ Ashernet)

be community service of less than one year, instead of the jail term, potentially of several years, he would have likely faced if convicted.

Most controversially, the deal was originally to refrain from explicitly convicting Netanyahu of crimes of “moral turpitude”, leaving that aspect of the case to a court’s decision. Israel’s *Basic Law: The Knesset* disqualifies a person from election to public office for seven years after completion of a sentence for a crime involving “moral turpitude”.

News of the plea deal negotiations sparked a heated public debate in Israel. “The Netanyahu trial is a disaster for Israeli solidarity,” wrote law professor Yedidya Stern of Bar-Ilan University in the *Jerusalem Post*. Arguing that the trial has become “a maelstrom that is sweeping Israeli society into a deep abyss” he backed the deal, calling it “the least bad option.”

It was the same line that Justice Barak voiced, saying that the plea bargain he helped broker would “heal the national rift that the trial has caused.”

Others, however, viewed the deal as a sham that would not only whitewash severe abuses of power, but also ignore Netanyahu’s verbal attacks on the judiciary and his allegations that a cabal of investigators, prosecutors, judges and journalists had conspired to unseat him.

“Netanyahu’s campaign created a reality that deprives both sides of a plea bargain’s moral basis,” wrote one of Israel’s most influential journalists, Nahum Barnea, in *Yediot Aharonot*. Barnea’s view was shared by a battery of other pundits.

Whether because of this criticism’s impact or not, Mandelblit reportedly stiffened his line. “It would be inconceivable to have a deal without ‘moral turpitude’,” Mandelblit’s deputy, Shlomo Lemberger, said in a speech to the Israel Bar Association.

Mandelblit’s six-year term is set to expire in the first week of February, and his successor, who has yet to be selected, will only assume office a month later, with State Attorney Amit Isman temporarily filling the post in the interim. Mandelblit was reportedly eager to end his term with the Netanyahu case sealed, but at press time, chances

of the deal being finalised before his departure seemed slim.

At the same time, a plea bargain remains likely, as both sides’ interest in a deal has become clear. Whatever a prospective deal’s exact terms, its repercussions would be potentially far-reaching in both the short and longer term.

In the short term, a plea-bargain announcement would throw Israel’s political system into a tizzy, because it would abruptly remove from the arena the man who has dominated it since 2009.

Such a departure would first of all require that the Likud, Israel’s largest political party, elect a successor for Netanyahu, the party’s head for the past 17 years, as well as another seven years back in the 1990s.

Jockeying to replace Netanyahu as Likud leader is already underway, involving at least seven candidates – most notably Yisrael Katz, a former minister for transport, finance and foreign affairs; Yuli Edelstein, a former speaker of the Knesset and minister for health; and Nir Barkat, a former mayor of Jerusalem.

Likud elects its leaders in a primary election involving some 120,000 party members, a process that would take an estimated three months to organise and complete. Until that process can be completed, Likud’s 3,700-member Central Committee would appoint an interim party leader who would immediately succeed Netanyahu as Israel’s Leader of the Opposition.

But this would not be strictly Likud’s internal affair – because Netanyahu’s replacement might in fact also result in the downfall and replacement of Israel’s current Government, led by PM Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid.

The current coalition is an ideologically eclectic confederation of eight parties with a razor-thin parliamentary majority that would not have come into being if not for Netanyahu’s indictment and subsequent insistence on continuing to lead the Israeli right despite his legal troubles.

Three of the current Government’s parties are right-wing, including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett’s *Yamina* (“Rightward”) and Justice Minister Gideon Sa’ar’s New Hope.

Bennett, Sa’ar, and Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who heads the *Yisrael Beiteinu* (“Israel is Our Home”) faction, are working relatively smoothly with the ruling coalition’s two centrist parties, but are less comfortable with its three left-wing factions, especially the Islamist party Ra’am.

If a plea bargain matures and Netanyahu departs, Bennett, Sa’ar and Lieberman, who between them command 20 of the Knesset’s 120 members, will likely face pressure from their constituents to dismantle the current government and create a conservative coalition dominated by the Likud under Netanyahu successor.



The formation of Israel's ideologically diverse current government was driven mainly by a shared desire to keep Netanyahu out of the premiership. What happens if he leaves the political scene? (Source: IGPO/ Flickr)

Such a coalition would likely be joined by 22 lawmakers from three religious parties currently in the opposition. Coupled with Likud's 30 seats, such a conservative coalition could easily command a solid 60% parliamentary majority.

The main victims of such a rearrangement would be Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, whose rotation agreement calls for the latter to become prime minister in mid-2023. In addition, a Likud-led coalition could marginalise Lieberman as well as Defence Minister Benny Gantz and his centrist Blue and White party. That is why all the above can be expected to circle their wagons and fight for the current coalition's survival.

At the same time, any new Likud leader might learn that cobbling together an alternative coalition is more difficult than meets the eye. Likud has effectively been split by Lieberman and Sa'ar in recent years. Netanyahu's departure will not necessarily offset this dynamic, and in fact, might even accelerate it.

The struggle to succeed Netanyahu might not produce a clear victor, and the winner might find some of his or her rivals difficult to control. Bennett, Sa'ar and Lieberman might thus potentially be able to snatch some of Likud's

lawmakers and bring them into the existing coalition without incorporating Likud itself.

In the longer term, the prospective plea bargain can be expected to affect the relationship between the branches of Israel's political system.

Unlike the conviction of former President Moshe Katsav for sexual offences in 2010 and former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert for bribery in 2014, Netanyahu's trial constituted a trauma for Israel's judiciary, which has never before faced public attacks on it like the ones launched by Netanyahu and his supporters.

One result of the recent Netanyahu-judiciary clash has been a bill that limits an Israeli premiership to a maximum of eight consecutive years. The Bennett Government presented such a bill last year, and the Knesset passed it in a first reading. Conceived by Justice Minister Sa'ar, a former Netanyahu protégé, the bill reflects Sa'ar's conclusion that his former mentor's alleged crimes resulted from an overextended incumbency.

The bill, which allows a prime minister's return to office three years after an eight-year stint has ended, will likely be passed in second and third readings. It will thus loom as a monument to the Netanyahu era's acrimony between the government and legislature on the one hand and the judiciary on the other.

However, the crisis runs deeper than one man. The effectiveness of Netanyahu's assault on the judiciary, as reflected by his electoral success even while under indictment, means that a significant part of Israeli society is antagonistic to the judicial system, and especially the High Court of Justice.

A plea bargain will likely make people on both sides of this conflict seek means of reconciliation – and possibly also rewrite some of the rules that define the different branches' powers vis-à-vis one another.

During the 11-year presidency of Justice Barak, which ended in 2006, Israel's Supreme Court assumed unprecedented powers, including annulling considerable legislation that it judged unconstitutional.

Barak's so-called "activist" legalism came under political attack from conservatives and legal criticism from liberals, most notably Barak's predecessor as High Court President, Meir Shamgar (1925-2019).

A prospective plea bargain could help create a lull in that historic war, and potentially inspire a dialogue based on a new consensus – namely, that excessive power can be bad for anyone, whether towering jurists like those on Israel's Supreme Court or accomplished statesman like Binyamin Netanyahu.

With Compliments

Martell Pty. Ltd.

AUSTRALIAN EXTREMISTS: “NUKE ISRAEL!”

Ran Porat

Below is some material from our ongoing coverage of extremist voices within the largely law-abiding and peaceful fabric of Australian society.

HIZB UT-TAHRIR AUSTRALIA

Evidence accumulated over recent months has again called attention to the urgent need to rein in the activities in Australia of the extremist Hizb ut-Tahrir Islamist movement – which has repeatedly engaged in antisemitism and incitement to violence.

On Nov. 19, 2021, the Facebook page of the Australian branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT Australia) posted a message from the movement’s central media office regarding recent Palestinian casualties in clashes with the IDF. The statement, titled “Zionists and the West’s ‘shared values’ of Genocide”, is full of extreme vilification against Israel. “This Jewish entity is defiling and desecrating the graves of Muslims in Palestine,” it said. “The Jewish entity slaughters Palestinian children with impunity.”

Employing Holocaust distortion, Hizb ut-Tahrir refers to the recent trial of an alleged German Nazi war criminal, Irmgard Furchner, accused of being an accessory to the murder of more than 11,000 Jews. “In Germany, a 96-year-old woman is on trial for ‘contributing to murder’ – she was a typist at Stutthof concentration camp – over 76 years ago.” Her crimes of allegedly having helped murder thousands are unimportant according to Hizb ut Tahrir, since “the Jewish entity forces have murdered over 100,000 Palestinians since 1948; 3,000 children over the past 20 years alone. Will any Zionist be held accountable? Or any of the Western leaders with ‘shared values’ who facilitated and armed them and prevented the Muslims even from the right of defence? Or indeed will any 96-year-old female office assistants be hauled to court from their retirement homes?”

Wartime history is also rewritten by Hizb ut-Tahrir, which falsely claims that “these Jews [Holocaust survivors]

were initially welcomed and given refuge in Palestine, which makes the treachery all the uglier.” In fact, the British Mandate prevented many survivors from reaching Palestine, sending them to camps and into exile, while the Arabs of course launched a war against the Jews in general, and the best-known Palestinian leader of the time, Haj Amin Al-Husseini, openly allied himself with Hitler and supported the Holocaust.

On Dec. 28, HuT Australia’s Facebook page shared a press release by the Pakistani branch of the movement urging Arab soldiers to attack and destroy Israel. Addressing a joint Pakistani-Saudi Arabian military exercise, the post called on Muslim armies to defeat the Jewish state: “these exercises are not to dispose of the shackles that

have prevented the Muslim forces from liberating the First Qibla [the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem] and occupied Kashmir. These shackles are none other than the agents of the kuffar [infidels] that are currently ruling the Muslim World. Indeed, had the Pak-Saudi military manoeuvres cleansed and disposed of the Jewish occupation of the First Qibla and the Hindu State occupation of Kashmir, there would have been a real cause for announcement, celebration and rejoicing.

“In 1967, the Jewish occupation thrust the dagger in deeper, seizing Al-Quds and Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa,” the message says. “Yet, more than a hundred years since the kuffar occupation of Palestine began, none of the Muslim rulers

have made any effort to liberate Palestine, eradicating the Jewish entity, which works actively to demolish the First Qiblah until now.”

The post finishes with what can be understood as a call to use nuclear weapons against Israel, noting that the Pakistani army has in its arsenals “nuclear weaponry and are the seventh largest in the world, whilst the power of Iman makes them supremely brave and capable on the battlefield.”

On his personal Facebook page, HuT Australia leader Ismail al-Wahwah (Abu Anas) echoes the messages of his movement. On Jan. 3, he shared the video of a Friday sermon by Sheikh Yusuf Mukharara (31 Dec., 2021) given at Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa Mosque. Al-Wahwah commented on the video: “A word of truth from the heart of Palestine.”

In the sermon, Mukharara harshly attacks the Palestinian Authority (PA) over the meeting between PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Defence Minister, Benny

HTA HT Australia
28 December 2021 at 18:00 · *

Press Release

Had Pak-#Saudi Military Maneuvers Eliminated the #Jewish #Occupation of the First #Qibla and the Hindu State Occupation of #Kashmir, They Would Have Been Truly Worthy of Mention

The Pak-Saudi military exercise “Al-Kassah-III” began on 14 December 2021, at the King Khalid Military City, Hafar Al-Batin, Saudi Arabia. According to Pakistan’s ISPR, these exercises are to enhance the cleansing and disposal of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Such IEDs are used ... [See more](#)



17 4 shares

A Hizb ut-Tahrir Australia Facebook post implying Pakistan should use its nuclear weapons on Israel (Screenshots)

Gantz that took place on Dec. 28, 2021.

The preacher also does not mince words when it comes to “Jews” (not bothering with euphemisms such as “Zionists” or “Israel”).

“The Jews took our homes... They killed our children, imprisoned many of them, and displaced most of us. There is no country on earth that does not have a brother, son, uncle or sister with people [Palestinians] dispersed into the horizons. And the Jews settled our home and slayed our roots.”

Speaking about the Oslo Accords, Mukharara claims the Jews were cheap and greedy: “the Jews were stingy with crumbs. And they divided her [the land] into scattered pieces – this is A and B and C [areas] so there is nothing left of the land under the hands of the people of this country.”

Mukharara ridicules security cooperation between Israel and the PA, arguing the Jews see all of Islam as their enemy: “Their common enemy is terrorism, and what is terrorism? It is the rest of Islam in the hearts of people.

The enemy of the Jews is Islam. If the Jews agree to a war with them on terrorism, he [Mahmoud Abbas] agrees with them on the war against Islam.”

Mukharara’s sermon finishes with a declaration that anyone who negotiates with Israel is a traitor in God’s eyes: “I bear witness to God, Lord of the Worlds, who put souls into muzzled bodies, that whoever goes along with this [talks with Israel], fills, defends, promotes and justifies it, is a traitor to God and Muslims. Anyone who defends this shameful and abhorrent image is a traitor to God, his messenger [prophet Muhammad], and the believers. [...] God bears witness to those whom my word has reached in all parts of the Earth, that whoever accepts this of the people, their money and their fear, and remains silent about it and its harm, is one of the criminal traitors.”

ASWJ

Ahl As-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah (ASWJ – “the family of the way of the Prophet and the community”) is regarded as one of the most radical Muslim groups in Australia, and is an Australian branch of an international fundamentalist Salafi organisation. In 2018, AIJAC exposed the antisemitism, calls for jihad against Israel and general radicalism of ASWJ.

In May 2021 ASWJ held a conference titled “Al-Quds: Past, Present and Future”, at the Al-Azhar Mosque in Belmore, a suburb of Sydney.

One of the speakers at the conference was ASWJ preacher Mohammad Doar. In 2017, Doar told followers that the Muslims today “are disgraced by the most disgraced nation, the Jews.” He also taught followers that “the doors of Al-Aqsa become closed by those who illegally occupy its land.” According to Doar, Al-Aqsa was Muslim “since the beginning of creation” – promoting the false historical revisionist narrative that rejects any connection between Judaism and Jerusalem’s Temple Mount.

In the 2021 conference, hinting at Israel, Doar told the audience that “No matter what the enemies plot, no matter what the enemies spend, from wealth, from artillery, from ammunition – no matter what! [...] Islam will remain in the areas of Palestine and Syria] until the day of judgement.”

He then discusses the notoriously controversial Islamic *Hadith* (traditional story attributed to the prophet Muhammad and his followers) *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih Bukhari*, which prophesises that Muslims will kill all the Jews on Judgment Day, and the rocks and trees will tell Muslims where Jews are hiding so they can be murdered. “The last

hour [Judgement Day] will not happen unless the Muslims engage in battle against the Yahud [Jews]”, said Doar. At the end of time, “the Muslims will defeat them until the Yahud begin to hide themselves and the rocks begin to speak, and the trees begin to speak, and everything from the creation begins to speak to inform the believers.”

Discussing interpretations

by Muslim scholars of that story and of some verses from the Qur’an “which speak about the Yahud causing corruption on earth,” Doar noted that “it never came to their [the scholars’] imagination that the Muslims will reach a weakness again in the future. And that Bani Isra’il [‘the sons of Israel’, meaning the Jews] will have an authority over the Muslims again.”

He suggests that current conflicts over the Temple Mount presage the day when this murderous prophecy will come true.

“These texts”, explained Doar, “show that the battles which take place is at a time where the Yahud have strength and authority, and then the trees, they begin to speak: ‘oh slave of Allah’, and ‘oh Muslim’ [the trees say:] ‘He is a Yahudi behind me.’”

AIR

Dr. Ran Porat is an AIJAC Research Associate. He is also a Research Associate at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University and a Research Fellow at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Centre in Herzliya.



Sheikh Yusuf Mukharara: Ranting against the “Jews”, and calling anyone who negotiates with them “a traitor to God”



Socialism's Jewish question

The European Left and the Jewish Question, 1848-1992: Between Zionism and Antisemitism

Alessandra Tarquini (editor), Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 348 pp., A\$264.75



Colin Shindler

This book of accessible essays by specialists examines the Jewish question, not internally from the perspective of Jews themselves, but externally by European socialist thinkers.

Since Zionism was a singular ideology and did not fit into accepted theory, many socialists such as Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin dismissed it out of hand. This did not always imply antisemitism but more a blind and political rejection of Zionist ideology.

In this detailed tome, French historian Michel Dreyfus pinpoints the affair of his namesake, Alfred Dreyfus, in the early 20th century as a turning point in the relationship between the Left and the Jews. He lists five different forms of antisemitism on the Left. He interestingly describes how pacifism in the 1930s – as a reaction to the slaughter in the trenches during World War I – became “a vector of antisemitism.”

In those pre-Shoah days, Jews were seen by some pacifists as pushing for and provoking a war with Hitler.

In his chapter, Andrea Pinazzi dissects the views of Antonio Gramsci, the well-known Italian socialist theorist, on the Jewish question through his letters to his sister-in-law. Gramsci comes over as profoundly superficial. He died in Mussolini's prisons in 1937 just before anti-Jewish legislation was

introduced in Italy. Would this have changed Gramsci's views if he had lived?

The last part of this book is devoted to “the Israel Question” and covers familiar topics. Gregorio Sogronà however breaks new ground in describing the influence of Mao's China on the New Left in the 1960s. After the Soviet-Chinese schism, Beijing regarded both the USSR and the US as imperialist. Mao deemed the Middle East as fertile territory for a new anti-imperialist struggle after Vietnam.

As many writers in this book indicate, the Left was never monolithic, but too many of its component parts were remarkably limited when it came to the Jewish question. Lenin was ignorant of the suffering of the Jewish masses in Tsarist Russia and knew nothing about the socialist Zionism of figures such as Moses Hess, Nachman Syrkin and Ber Borochov. Lenin's indifference however was superseded by Stalin's ingrained antisemitism and his chosen instrument of slow death, the Gulag Archipelago.

The early writings of Karl Marx are still seen by many as exuding “a contempt for the Jews.” This cemented the link between Jewish landlords and speculators for succeeding generations such as the German New Left, a hundred years later

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the French socialist philosopher, a 19th century contemporary of Marx, was unapologetically antisemitic.

As several contributors to this book remark, socialism took on the form of a quasi-religion. Belief rather than analysis became the centrepiece of endeavour. For many, Jews simply did not count when it came to discrimination.

Several authors highlight external factors that have influenced groups on the Left. The Spanish Left imbibed ideas at the altar of historical anti-Judaism during the Inquisition. The Christian Left promoted the vision of a Jesus who identified with the poor – and thereby with the Palestinian refugees.

In France during the 1950s, many embraced anti-colonialism and supported the National Liberation Front's struggle for independence in Algeria. Decolonisation during the 1960s allowed the New Left in Europe to identify more with the nascent Palestinian national movement than with the Israeli one – and this was before the West Bank settlement drive.

In an effort to express solidarity with discriminated Muslim minorities in Europe, some on the French Left maintain a mistaken silence about the reactionary politics of the Islamists. And anti-Zionism sometimes tips over into overt antisemitism. There were antisemitic killings in Toulouse, Montauban and Vincennes in recent times.

This volume is unusual because it goes into the origins of contemporary antisemitism and anti-Zionism within the European Left, mainly in France and Italy. Pushing the slogans and clichés of campaigners against antisemitism to one side, it looks at the roots of the problem today.

AIR

Colin Shindler is an Emeritus Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and founding chairman of the European Association of Israel Studies. He is the editor of *Israel and the World Powers* (I. B. Tauris/ 2014). © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.



ESSAY

Chinese Itzik Comes to Haifa

Beijing's courtship of Israel has been canny and effective

Matti Friedman

Recently I drove up to Haifa to see with my own eyes a sight that, for most Israelis, has yet to sink in: the country's brand new port, our third, which is beautiful, automated, efficient, and operated by the same Chinese company that runs the megaport at Shanghai. The first full container ship dropped anchor the day after my visit. Chinese characters adorn the soaring ship-to-shore cranes, freshly painted red and white; Israeli workers staff joysticks opposite computer arrays running Chinese software; and in the managerial offices sit Chinese executives. To get to the port, I paid a toll and drove through the Carmel Tunnels, which were dug a few years ago by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation. At a petrol station on the way I bought a pineapple yoghurt made by the iconic dairy-products giant Tnuva, founded as a cooperative by Labor Zionists and now controlled by Bright Food – 263 Huashan Road, Jing'an District, Shanghai. China was far, far away, until suddenly it was right here.

The most prominent face of China in Israel belongs to a guy named Itzik. His real name is Xi Xiaoqi, and he's a 35-year-old resident of Beijing, but here he's known as Itzik ha-Sini, or "Chinese Itzik". He gets recognised

on the street. He stars in hundreds of internet videos about life in Israel from a Chinese perspective, and about life in China made accessible for Israelis. Some of these appear on his own YouTube channel, but sometimes he



YouTube sensation (in Israel) Xi Xiaoqi, known as "Chinese Itzik" (Screenshot)

appears on Israeli outlets like *Channel 12* or *KAN 11*, the public broadcaster, where journalists are delighted to have a Chinese figure – the first – who speaks perfect, slangy Hebrew and has an acute grasp of the Israeli audience. He's impossible not to like.

I caught Itzik on Zoom from Beijing. He was born in the city of Jiangyin, he said, son of a traffic cop and a real estate agent. He'd never met a Jew or heard a word of Hebrew before arriving at university at age 18. The school offered Japanese, Nepali,

Dutch, and a few other languages, but his grandfather told him that Jews were smart – people of the book. Everyone thinks this in China, he said. If his years communicating with real Jews in Israel have disabused him of this notion, he was too polite to say so. During his Hebrew studies, first in Beijing with an Israeli teacher and then at Tel Aviv University, he adopted his Hebrew name, a diminutive of Yitzhak, or Isaac.

In 2009, with China taking a greater interest in Israel, he was selected to run the Hebrew desk at China Radio International (CRI), a state outfit that might uncharitably be called a propaganda arm or, more generously, a showcase for China's best self. (The Hebrew desk doesn't actually broadcast radio, only videos.) The CRI website has a lot of upbeat content about, for example, the many plusses of life in Xinjiang. In Itzik's rise from an obscure city to an elite

college, then to studies abroad, and then to an official media job, it's possible to sense the hand of the state identifying and promoting a gifted young person.

In one video, he joins Golani Brigade soldiers in basic training, getting his shaggy hair buzzed by an army barber and struggling to clear a concrete wall in the obstacle course. He's impressed! The tough guys from Golan play along, hands on their rifles. They look down on their funny guest from China and miss the real power

dynamic — that the visitor represents a superpower that is rewiring the planet, while they represent a country whose entire population is the size of minor Chinese cities that even people in China probably haven't heard of.

When I asked Itzik about human rights abuses in places like Xinjiang, which have been widely reported in the Western press, he replied, "I think the Israelis can understand China better than anyone else." He meant that Israel is also the target of misleading coverage from the same outlets reporting on China, and that Jews are used to being lied about. "There's the blood libel," he said, "the idea that Israelis are drinking the blood of Palestinians. Speaking honestly, before I came to Israel, I heard things like that as well. But I wondered if it was true. And I came and checked and saw that it wasn't." He noted the abuse of the term "genocide", which of course has been thrown around by Israel's opponents as well as China's, and has lost much of its meaning.

When one of Xi's bosses, the vice president of CRI, was in Israel a few years ago, he was asked a similar question. "This is my first time in Israel," he said, "and my impression is that the country is different from what I saw on CNN." Leaving aside the question of what's actually going on in places like Xinjiang, and disregarding the undoubted cynicism of the Chinese Government, these observations about the West's addled media and Israel are true, and this messaging for an Israeli audience is smart.

Americans increasingly see China as an adversary, but Israelis don't. When the Pew Research Centre carried out a survey on global attitudes in 2019, two-thirds of Israelis said their view of China was "favourable", and just a quarter said the opposite. This was close to a mirror image of the American public, where it was 60% unfavourable and just 26% positive. Unlike Americans, Australians, and Canadians, Israelis haven't yet seen China's teeth. There hasn't been

a high-profile incident like the humiliating muzzling of NBA teams, for example. Stories like the disappearing tennis star Peng Shuai, or the erasure of freedoms in Hong Kong, haven't made much of an impression. Israelis have many problems, and China has never been one of them.

Israel and China go way back; how far back depends on what you mean by "Israel" and "China".

In the mid-1940s, before the Communist revolution and Israel's War of Independence, the Zionist movement tried to mobilise Chinese support at the United Nations by calling in Morris "Two-Gun" Cohen, a onetime Saskatchewan hoodlum who'd become a bodyguard to Chinese leader Sun Yat-sen in the '20s and remained close with the family. For a few months in 1948, Israel had relations with the Chiang Kai-shek Government, but then came Mao. Although the new state of Israel became the first Middle Eastern country to recognise the even newer People's Republic in January 1950, those tentative feelers quickly fell victim to the Cold War and pan-Arab politics. It was 1992 before official relations resumed, complicated by American sensitivities.

In a great game between two powers there are always opportunities for

agile little players who can work both sides, but getting that right isn't easy. There have been a few defence deals signed and then dramatically junked because of pressure from Washington, like the US\$1 billion Phalcon airplane snafu of 2000 and the Harpy drone debacle of 2004. The latter, according to Professor Aron Shai, the dean of Israel's China scholars, "dragged US-Israel relations to a low point unknown since the imprisonment of Jonathan Pollard." Defence deals have been off the table since then. And China continued to sell all kinds of things to our enemies in Iran: Four Israelis who died aboard a navy vessel in the 2006 war with the Iranian proxy Hezbollah, for example, were killed by a Chinese Silkworm missile.

And yet the relationship survived, and over time the flow of shekels and renminbi grew from a Jordan River trickle to a Yangtze torrent. For much of the last decade Chinese tech investments were the talk of the local venture capital scene. Barely a week went by without Chinese executives in Tel Aviv on the "startup nation" tour, and if in 2011 there were only five China-Israel tech deals, worth a total of US\$31 million, by 2018 there were 72, worth US\$4.8 billion. But about three years ago much of that unexpectedly petered out, and the capital hustlers who cluster in



China-Israel ties have been expanding rapidly, but many Israelis seem unaware of the potential risks (Image: IGPO/ Flickr)

hot new markets moved on. Today, as financial analyst Sam Chester, a veteran Israel-China hand, told me, all the investment guys you used to see around the Chabad House in Shanghai or Chengdu are in Dubai. The end came, Chester said, partly because of a Chinese crackdown against citizens trying to move wealth out of the country. It was also because early Israeli sanguinity about breaking into the China market was dampened by too many failure stories, and because Israeli CEOs realised that state-linked Chinese stockholders affect potential American investors like citronella affects mosquitos.

But ties have only grown closer, cemented by – well, by cement. Last year I was driving up to Belvoir, a Crusader fortress above the fields of the Jordan Valley, when I came upon construction signs with lovely Chinese characters that looked as out of place as a pagoda in an Iowa cornfield. It turned out that Sinohydro, the state contractor raising dams and ports from Nigeria to Sri Lanka, was building Israel a hydroelectric plant. Israel's second new port, at Ashdod, will be run by a Dutch operator, but it's being built by China Harbour. There's so much action that a group of big Israeli contractors just appealed to the Supreme Court to stop what they called a Chinese "takeover" of our infrastructure. (It didn't work.) Trade between the two countries, worth barely US\$1 billion in 2001, is now 10 times that, mostly in the form of Chinese exports to Israel.

Beyond the realms of concrete and steel, a notable feature of China's presence in Israel can be found in the two Confucius Institutes that opened at Tel Aviv University and Hebrew University. The centres for China studies have brought Israeli scholars and students into greater contact

with Chinese people – and with their government, which funds the institutes and shapes their content. Some scholars in Israel, like many colleagues abroad concerned by the approximately 500 Confucius Institutes that have opened worldwide, have warned that the centres compromise the academy. Once you're in bed with "Confucius," enjoying Chinese funding and scholarships, you'll think twice before antagonising the people who write the cheque.

One critic is Noam Urbach, who fell in love with China after a post-army trip in the 1990s, followed by a few years of travel and study at Shandong University. He later spent more than a decade teaching Mandarin at Bar-Ilan University and the Interdisciplinary Centre in Herzliya. He found himself feeling increasingly unwelcome in the field as his criticism of Chinese government policies was frowned

upon by colleagues and administrators eager to cooperate with Chinese institutions, less in the cash-strapped humanities than in science and tech, where real money is at stake. Israeli academics who study China, he said, have learned to speak very differently in public and in private. I asked if this meant that a department head, for example, might quietly suggest that a doctoral student change a research topic, or decide that a proposed academic conference might best be indefinitely postponed. "All the time," he said.

"Let's say an academic department in the sciences is studying a certain plant, and starts accepting funding from that plant to say good things about it," he said. "Once that happens, those botanists aren't botanists anymore." Urbach isn't describing an obscure academic spat: He's saying that Israel's China-watchers are being neutralised by the people they're

supposed to be watching. Urbach has let his doctoral studies lapse and currently runs an art gallery.

A moment of understanding came, he said, when he served as a translator at a meeting for executives from an Israeli company and the Chinese firm that had just bought a controlling share. (He wouldn't name the companies.) The Chinese executives, he said, had studied every nook of the Israeli operation and knew every detail of every government regulation in the market. The investment, he understood, combined political and economic goals that were meant to serve each other.

Let's take the dairy giant Tnuva. Any internal Israeli decision – about, say, fat content in processed cheese – now impacts a state-linked Chinese company. That decision is thus tied to our relationship with China, which includes tunnels and hydroelectric plants and ports, and might result in the phone ringing in the office of Israel's foreign minister. *Ni hao!*

We have "entered the stage in which the Chinese have begun to create economic centres of power, which in time can be transformed into strategic and geopolitical centres of power," Shai, the China scholar, who is a proponent of ties with the Chinese, wrote in his 2019 book *China and Israel*. "Realistically, we must anticipate that in Israel as well as in the region that it occupies, China will have influence at a level that currently seems the stuff of fantasy."

Just two years after those lines were published, I was at the new port in Haifa and met Israeli guys named Dima, Yasser, and Chris, who were training on the mechanical claw that moves containers remotely from a control room overseen by a skilled operator from Shanghai. This is the first foreign venture for SIPG, the company that operates the Shanghai port, which moves about 43 million shipping containers a year. That's

"The Chinese have begun to create economic centres of power, which in time can be transformed into strategic and geopolitical centres of power"



A Chinese firm now owns an entire port in Haifa, raising serious potential conflicts with the US Sixth Fleet, which also makes use of Haifa (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

nearly 15 times what comes in and out of the entire state of Israel.

The Americans expressed concern about this deal, in part because the old Haifa port, just across the bay, has long been used by the US Sixth Fleet. But no American company bid when the contract was up for grabs. The deal went ahead, and when I was there the new port crew was preparing to handle their first full ship, a Chinese Ocean Shipping Company vessel due the next day.

As one of the Chinese managers, a man in glasses and a neon yellow vest, told me proudly, the port was actually operational last summer, half a year ahead of schedule. The Israeli government, on the other hand, was supposed to provide a rail link to the coastal train line about a mile from the pier—and is running three years late. China, the manager said, opens 30 miles of new track every single day.

Contracts with the Israeli government limit the autonomy of the Chinese company. Israeli security officers stationed at the port answer to the Israeli police. But the Chinese are in charge. The lease runs until 2045, but the Shanghai company is playing an even longer game than that. Part of the idea of the new port isn't about


Israel at all, but about consolidating containers from the smaller ships that come through the Suez Canal from China and the East, loading them onto larger vessels at Haifa's deep-water port for transit west, thus streamlining global shipping and saving money.

Another part of the idea is to be here when trade expands between Israel and its neighbours, including current enemies. In such a scenario, Haifa goes back to being what it was before 1948: a portal to the region, not just to Israel. SIPG wants to be here when that happens.

I said I wasn't sure about the chances, but the manager was unim-

pressed with my scepticism, and with our local problems. "We are here for business," he said, "and the businessmen want peace." The way he said it, "peace" didn't sound like a fluffy Western dream. It sounded as blunt and necessary as an iron pipe.

I found myself wondering about this new world. The immediate threat to Haifa and its port facilities comes from Hezbollah, the Iranian proxy in Lebanon, which rocketed the city during the last war in 2006 and threatens to do so again if another war breaks out. China does billions of dollars of business with Iran. A major Chinese firm now has an entire port in Haifa. Imagine the port is disrupted or damaged, costing millions. A phone rings in Teheran. *Ni hao!*

What happens then? What does all this mean for the Middle East? And what happens if the US-China cold war becomes hot, with Israel in an increasingly convoluted minefield of interests—a Sixth Fleet port-of-call on one side of the bay, Shanghai on the other? It's impossible to say. All we know is that a ship has sailed, and we're on board. 

Matti Friedman is a Tablet columnist and the author, most recently, of Spies of No Country: Secret Lives at the Birth of Israel. This article originally appeared in Tablet (tabletmag.com). Abridged and reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.

WITH COMPLIMENTS

JAGEN

L1 26 BEATTY AVENUE
ARMADALE VIC 3143

TEL: (03) 9661 8250
FAX: (03) 9661 8257





DELMONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

**Mental health care leaders in our
community for over 50 years.**

300 Warrigal Road, Glen Iris
Phone: 03 9805 7333
www.delmonthospital.com.au

With Compliments



r&mpersand.

Investing in the next generation of Australian startups

www.rampersand.com

NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

A NEW MACDONALD?

On Jan. 12, *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” host Hamish Macdonald – who the *AIR* has criticised many times over the years – pushed Palestinian activist Sara Saleh to justify why a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign was “target[ing] the whole [Sydney] Festival” rather than just the Sydney Dance Company’s performance of Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin’s “Decadance,” which had received \$20,000 in funding from the Israeli Embassy.

Macdonald questioned the depth of genuine support for the campaign, saying that some artists had complained they were “badgered”, “fear[ed]... being cancelled on social media” and felt “forced” to participate.

Saleh responded “I can’t control... very passionate fans who feel strongly about human rights.”

Performer Katie Noonan was named by Macdonald as an example of an artist who was harassed but ultimately didn’t support the boycott, with Saleh accusing her of giving a “platform” to “people who are known misogynists and Islamophobes.”

Saleh disingenuously asserted that “the BDS campaign has always been and is an uncontroversial appeal to universal human rights.”

A movement that seeks to replace the world’s only Jewish state with a 23rd Arab majority state in the Middle East is hardly “uncontroversial”.

Macdonald also interviewed Israeli Embassy in Canberra *charge d’affaires* Ron Gerstenfeld, who accused many BDS activists of “call[ing]” for “the river to the sea,” which is code for Israel’s destruction. Gerstenfeld’s revelation that Festival organisers had approached the Embassy to fund the performance prompted further media reports, including by the *Guardian Australia* (Jan.

13), which corroborated his claim.

Earlier (Jan. 6), whilst co-hosting *Network Ten*’s “The Project”, Macdonald also suggested to boycott co-organiser Jennine Khalik that Festival funding given by the NSW Government does not mean “artists participating... support the New South Wales government or... premier.”

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

On (Jan. 18), *ABC TV* “7.30” reporter Dan Conifer filed a story on the Sydney Arts Festival controversy.

The report featured statements from Arab acts who withdrew in protest and BDS co-organiser Jennine Khalik saying that Israel “use[s] cultural institutions... and partnerships... to whitewash its human rights abuses and its ongoing occupation and colonisation of Palestinians.”

The Israeli Embassy in Canberra’s Ron Gerstenfeld explained that the activists “hate Israel. They want to see the destruction of Israel.”

Conifer clearly did not grasp the subtleties of the debate. His history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not begin as it should in 1948 when Palestinian Arab leaders rejected a chance to establish their own state.

Instead, with an animated map illustrating his narration, Conifer said it began in “1967 [when] Israel... occupied Palestinian East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank.”

If Conifer had investigated what Gerstenfeld told him about BDS, maybe he could’ve asked Khalik and the others if they support the two states for two peoples formula for peace? Or, whether, like BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti, they are committed to eliminating Israel.

NOT VERY FESTIVE

On Jan. 14, *2GB* radio host Joe Hildebrand ridiculed an apology by Sydney Arts Festival organisers to artists who joined the BDS campaign.

An incredulous Hildebrand said, “the... Festival actually approached the Israeli embassy to get this \$20,000 in funding... they’re not going to give the money back. But they’ve apologised to the artists who are boycotting... costing it money... jobs and hurting its reputation. And they’ve apologised to them!”

Hildebrand revealed he was a Festival emcee in the past and no one complained when South China Airlines, wholly owned by the Chinese government, gave much larger sums of money. “I’ve never seen this level of activism, animosity, ferocity directed at pretty much any other country. I mean, not even North Korea. It seems very, very strange that it’s this tiny amount of money from this tiny country that has, you know, brought one of Australia’s premier arts festivals to its knees,” he added.

CALLING BS ON BDS

A letter against the boycott campaign, organised by Creative Community for Peace and signed by approximately 120 prominent local and international figures in the arts including Australian musician Deborah Conway and legendary Kiss bassist Gene Simmons, was widely covered in the media.

In an interview with *Channel 7*’s “Sunrise” program (Jan. 7) ostensibly to discuss Kiss’ upcoming Australian tour, Simmons said everyone was entitled to their political views but the boycott unfairly impacted artists.

In the *Guardian Australia* (Jan. 7) Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore

also questioned the boycott, arguing that “there are people overseas who are angry about [Australia’s policy] on climate change... refugee[s]... our First Nations policy, but we wouldn’t want to see our Sydney Symphony or our Sydney Theatre Company boycotted for those reasons.”

SILENT TREATMENT

The *Australian’s* Nicholas Jensen reported (Jan. 22) on the silence of Federal Labor MPs on the BDS campaign against the Sydney Festival.

Former Australian Ambassador to Israel and current Federal Liberal MP Dave Sharma was quoted saying [Fed-

eral Labor Opposition leader Anthony] “Albanese has made a big point about his opposition to the BDS movement ... but this is one of the most obvious manifestations of the BDS movement in Australia we’ve seen for several years, and to have no Labor voice at the federal level come out publicly against is very troubling.”

The article said Federal Labor Arts spokesman Tony Burke who “has previously been critical of Jewish settlements on the West Bank, describing them in 2014 as a ploy to block a two-state solution” had “refused to answer questions regarding the boycott.”

ABBAS GOES TO ISRAEL

BDS’s moral and intellectual bankruptcy was palpable to anyone who read media reports that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was a guest at the home of Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz in central Israel.

The *Australian’s* report (Dec. 31) on the visit stated that Gantz had announced a package of financial measures to help Palestinians and quoted Hamas officials condemning Abbas’ visit because it “weakens” Palestinian “rejection of normalisation” of relations with Israel.

Abbas’ visit was also reported by *SBS TV* “World News” (Dec. 29) and the *Mercury* (Dec. 31). On Jan.



OUT OF IN PARLIAMENT

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts, **Paul Fletcher** (Lib., Bradfield) – Jan. 21 – opinion piece in the *Australian*: “The [BDS] collective’s views about Israel are, to put it politely, difficult to reconcile with reality.

“When Australians look at Israel, what they see is the only multi-party democracy in the Middle East – not an ‘apartheid state’. They see an ally and friend: a country with which Australia has excellent diplomatic relations and longstanding cultural and people-to-people ties.

“The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions campaign is not supported by either of the major political parties. The principal cheerleader for this boycott has been Hamas, which is proscribed by the Australian government as a terrorist organisation.”

Senator **Eric Abetz** (Lib., Tas.) – Jan. 12 – Statement: “The boycott adds nothing to the immensely complicated situation between Israel and Palestine. It displays ignorance of Israel and its people and what the Sydney Festival performance can achieve, including bringing people together from different nations and cultures.

“Israel has a distinguished record of being a light in the [Middle East] for democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The boycotters would be well served to honestly recognise these facts. The boycott is a regrettable distraction from, and a profound ignorance of, the real efforts to bring peace and stability between Israel and Palestine.”

Dave Sharma (Lib., Wentworth) – Jan. 10 – Opinion piece in the *Australian*: “The idea that a boycott of the Sydney Festival is going to have any influence whatsoever on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fanciful. But the discredit it does to its proponents is substantial. They have chosen to jump on a bandwagon and

endorse a fiction that the immensely complicated Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a simple solution, and that one side alone is to blame for its continuation. And the damage it threatens to do to Australia is real.”

Senator **Mehreen Faruqi** (Greens, NSW) – Jan. 10 – Twitter: “My full support to the courageous artists who have withdrawn from @sydney_festival due to its partnership with the Israeli Embassy, especially given how hard they’ve had it in the pandemic. Solidarity with everyone standing against artwashing apartheid. Justice for Palestine!”

NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Arts and Regional Youth **Ben Franklin** MLC (Nat.) – Jan. 8 – Facebook: “It was a real privilege to attend the opening of Ohad Naharin’s Decadance, performed by the Sydney Dance Company, two nights ago... Sadly though, the piece has been caught up in controversy surrounding the Israeli Embassy’s sponsorship of the Festival to help fund its staging. Other acts have been encouraged to boycott the festival in response and a small number have agreed to do so... I do have significant concerns about trying to shut down specific creative voices simply on account of their nationality.”

NSW Shadow Minister for the Arts and Heritage, Police, Counter Terrorism and the North Coast **Walt Secord** MLC (ALP) – Jan. 9 – J-Wire: “Put simply, I believe that if an organisation takes the decision to institute or support a boycott of Israel, that is their prerogative – but then it should not expect to receive any State government funding. This is a minimalist approach when compared to overseas laws...”

“Unfortunately, I fear that the 2022 Sydney Festival experience will see NSW arts groups reluctant to invite Israeli performers and artists to our shores – or refuse to stage Israeli or Jewish-themed plays. This will also inhibit important cultural exchanges. And ironically, a boycott of Israel is utterly counter-productive. It hurts not just the Israeli government, but Jewish and Arab citizens, and the Palestinian people too.”

25, News Corp papers reported that Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met with PA Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh.

Meanwhile, Israeli PM Naftali Bennett's historic visit to the UAE – the first by a sitting Israeli leader – was widely covered. *SBS TV* "World News" reported on the visit on Dec. 13 and 14. The latter report included a odd and ignorant statement that "Israel once saw Arab countries as enemies."

A SPERM TALE

An online puff piece from ABC Middle East correspondent Tom Joyner and the ABC's Palestinian fixer Fouad Abu Gosh (Jan. 2) reported on an old story about Palestinian terrorists in Israeli prisons who father children by smuggling vials of sperm to their wives during visits, with the wives then impregnated at Hamas-subsidised fertility clinics in Gaza.

Although the report mentioned the lengthy prison sentences of the two terrorists featured in the story, their actual crimes went unstated.

Israel arrested Hossam Al Attar during the First Gaza War fighting for Hamas. Sherine Al Sakany was arrested for carrying out and organising terror attacks for Palestinian Islamic Jihad during the Second Intifada.

On Joyner's ABC webpage, the report was headlined, "The parents smuggling semen out of prisons and across borders to bring precious babies into the world." The summary underneath similarly gushed they "put... their lives on the line to bring new life into the world."

EMBARRASSING ADVICE

Canberra Times columnist Mark Kenny (Jan. 2) called for the media to give a voice to Independent candidates who might "question... Australia's embarrassingly uncritical support for Israel" before this year's federal election, but failed to provide even one example of what he meant.

Does Kenny think Australia should uncritically support the United Nations' anti-Israel activities? As AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* (Dec. 28), "UN processes are often cynically exploited by undemocratic countries... for decades... Israel, the only Jewish state, has... [been] singled out and vilified out of all proportion and context. This occurs in almost every UN forum... even seemingly apolitical ones like the World Health Organisation... or... UNESCO.... Australia... has an excellent, honourable record of opposing the farcically one-sided anti-Israel votes that reappear every year."

Or does he oppose Australia's recent listing of Iranian-backed Lebanese proxy Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, which Anthony Galloway in the *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* (Dec. 27) said Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid welcomed?

CARR IN A SPIN

In the *Sun Herald* (Dec. 12), former Gillard Government Foreign Minister Bob Carr crowed "we reinforced a commitment to a two-state solution in the Middle East, by voting for the recognition of Palestine in the UN General Assembly."

Actually, Australia did not support the UN vote recognising Palestine in 2012 – a vote which has of course actually been a barrier to two-state peace by discouraging negotiations. Then PM Julia Gillard intended to vote no. A furious Carr worked the numbers to convince his Labor colleagues to force Gillard to back down and Australia abstained.

DEFECTIVE RETROSPECTIVES

Age/Sydney Morning Herald Foreign Editor Michelle Griffin and Lia Timson's 2021 retrospective (Dec. 31) said, "in mid-May... Israel began amassing troops at the Gaza Strip border following days of violence. The

crisis began earlier with Israeli troops entering the al-Aqsa Mosque resulting in clashes that were condemned the world over."

In fact, troops "amassed" only after Hamas began indiscriminately firing hundreds of rockets at Israel, and entered the Mosque when Palestinians started lobbing Molotov cocktails and rocks they had stockpiled in it.

On Dec. 27, *Channel 10's* "The Project" year in review highlighted Palestinian suffering in Gaza during the May war, without attributing any responsibility to Hamas for starting the conflict.

In contrast, *SBS TV* "World News" (Dec. 26) was strictly non-partisan in describing events retrospectively, noting that, on a specific day in May, "the Israeli military says Hamas has fired around 2,300 rockets from Gaza since Monday. Israel has responded with more than 1,000 air and artillery strikes."

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

Hobart Senior Pastor Simon Clemow's Christmas message in the *Mercury* (Dec. 24) said, "we are living in a time very much like that into which Jesus was born: First-century Palestine was dominated by big government oversight and control (the Romans)... and there was a systematic oppression of minorities and religious groups."

Jesus was born in the Jewish kingdom of Judea. The first four books of the Christian Bible do not mention "Palestine". One hundred years after Jesus died, the Romans tried to obliterate the Jewish identity of the region by renaming it Palestine.

ARCH CLAIMS

The *Australian* (Dec. 24) reported allegations made by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem Hosam Naoum that "fringe, radical groups" are driving Christians in Israel and east Jerusalem away, while the "growth of

settler communities” and restrictions on movement are having a similar effect on Christians in the West Bank.

The *AFP* report included Israeli denials and noted that Israel’s Christian population increased by 1.4% in 2020 to 182,000 people. In fact, Israel is the only Middle Eastern country whose Christian population is growing.

SHOT IN THE DARK

News Corp’s report (Dec. 18) of a Palestinian gunman shooting dead one Israeli religious student and wounding two others minimised the severity of the violence with the headline “Religious Students Shot”.

The report correctly stated that “the shooting follows a string of attacks by Palestinians on Israelis in Jerusalem and the West Bank.” However, a *Sunday Telegraph* follow-up report (Dec. 19) implied a false equivalence between victims of violence, stating that the past month had seen “Palestinian attacks on Israelis and the killing of Palestinians by Israeli troops during clashes.” Palestinians killed resulted from Israeli security responses to Palestinian violence, whilst Israelis were deliberately targeted for attack by Palestinians.

HAMAS SAYS GAZA UNOCCUPIED

SBS TV “The World” (Dec. 18) reporter Claudia Farhart’s story on the above terror attack included Hamas co-founder Mahmoud al-Zahar’s admission, not for the first time, that Gaza is not occupied.

Al-Zahar praised the attack, saying, “we have used these means in Gaza and we drove the occupation out. Negotiation can’t liberate an inch of Palestine. Only weapons can.”

Meanwhile, in the *Australian* (Dec. 29), Israeli Embassy in Canberra *charge d’affaires* Ron Gerstenfeld called for Australia to proscribe all of Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

NEED, NOT GREED

An *Age* report (Dec. 23) on the huge sums needed in public funding to provide security to Jewish schools, synagogues and communal buildings in Melbourne elicited a nasty letter published in the paper the following day.

The letter writer suggested the Jewish community “is not the only one to bear the brunt of occasional and unfortunate prejudice” and receives special treatment.

But as AIJAC’s Jamie Hyams explained in a letter the *Age* published Dec. 27, “threats faced by Jews are vastly more serious than the prejudice confronted by Greek, Italian or Lebanese communities.”

He noted “the numerous deadly attacks on Jewish facilities overseas” and the “many instances of anti-Semitic violence” in Australia, before adding that the Jewish community contributes millions of dollars of its own on security, which it wouldn’t do “if it wasn’t necessary.”

UGLY INCIDENTS

December/January saw a slew of media reports of the perennial challenge posed by antisemitism.

On Dec. 15, the *Courier Mail* reported the trial of a man who flew a Nazi flag above a Brisbane synagogue. On the same day, the *Age* reported that Scouts Victoria had suspended three boys who allegedly made antisemitic comments to fellow scouts who were Jewish, including telling them they should be gassed.

On Dec. 10, the *Australian* reported the terrifying experience of a rabbi trying to book a venue at Melbourne’s Crown Casino who was confronted by a man shouting “you’re one of those who Hitler didn’t finish.”

News Corp papers reported on Dec. 22 that a teacher in the US ordered eight and nine-year-old Jewish students to re-enact scenes from the Holocaust.

TOO, TOO MUCH

Coverage of South African anti-apartheid fighter Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s passing included his vocal support for Palestinians.

The *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* (Dec. 27) said Tutu “spoke out on... Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories.”

The *Australian*’s obituary (Dec. 28) said “he... condemned... Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians.”

On Dec. 31, the *Guardian Australia* ran a paean by former *Guardian* Middle East and South Africa correspondent Chris McGreal who said Tutu attracted the ire of “Israel’s most unrelenting supporters” by likening its “rule over the Palestinians to apartheid and then refus[ing] to back off in the face of an onslaught of abuse.” McGreal dismissed accusations that Tutu was antisemitic.

Yet unlike anti-apartheid colleagues such as Nelson Mandela – who wasn’t accused of antisemitism when criticising Israel and supporting Palestinian aspirations – Tutu frequently resorted to crude antisemitic tropes when talking about Jews and Israel.

In 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada when Palestinian suicide bombers were killing Israeli civilians, he denounced the “Jewish lobby” as being “powerful – very powerful” and said it should be defeated just as “Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Pinochet, Milosevic, and Idi Amin” were. He called Jews “a peculiar people” who “can’t ever hope to be judged by the same standards which are used for other people” and accused Jews of “think[ing] they have cornered the market on suffering.”

In 1987, Tutu threatened that “South African Jews will be punished if Israel continues dealing with South Africa.” As US academic Edward Alexander noted, despite Israeli trade with South Africa being only 7% of America’s, and less than a 10th of Japan’s, Germany’s or England’s, “Tutu never threatened South African... citizens of Japanese, German or English extraction with punishment.”

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

A PAIN IN THE ARTS

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign may have convinced – or cajoled – about 30 acts out of the 800 or so artists, performers and staff at the Sydney Arts Festival to withdraw, but in the media the majority of articles opposed it.

BDS co-organiser Jennine Khalik's op-ed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Dec. 28), was boilerplate propaganda. Accusing Israel of apartheid, it warned that BDS is a "litmus test for progressives." If so, Khalik has repeatedly flunked that test by ignoring Hamas' terrorism and genocidal ambitions.

On Dec. 30, AIJAC's Jamie Hyams' letter in response noted that "the truth about the BDS campaign, as often stated by its leaders and as clear from Khalik's article, is that they don't want a Palestinian state alongside Israel, they want one instead of Israel."

Greg Barns' pro-BDS *Mercury* column (Jan. 10) asserted that critics of Israel are accused of being "anti-Semitic".

The *Mercury* ran an op-ed from Hyams responding to Barns (Jan. 13). Quoting BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti's statement, "we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine," Hyams said, "the movement therefore denies for Jews the right to a state in the Jewish homeland, where Jews are indigenous and have lived for thousands of years, while demanding that right for others. This is one reason it has been widely described as antisemitic."

On Jan. 24 in the *Guardian Australia*, BDS co-organiser Randa Abdel-Fattah claimed Festival organisers refusing to "listen to artists is a form of silencing." Wouldn't ignoring the majority of acts who rejected the campaign also be a form of silencing?

Age/*SMH* columnist Osman Faruqi supported boycotts, including implicitly this one, (Jan. 13) and said NSW Labor MP Walt Secord and federal Liberal MP Dave Sharma opposed it because of their "pro-Israel politics".

In the *Australian* (Jan. 10), Dave Sharma explained his opposition, noting that the campaign's "endorsement from Hamas tells you all that you need to know."

Australian columnist Gerard Henderson (Jan. 15) highlighted the incongruity of comedian Tom Ballard who "identifies with the LGBTQI movement" supporting a campaign endorsed by Hamas, which has "executed Palestinian gays".

The BDS movement was scrutinised in an *SMH* article (Dec. 29) from Executive Council of Australian Jewry Co-CEO Alex Ryvchin, who asserted that most people don't

understand "peace has always meant something different to the anti-Israel activist" who is not interested in seeing a two-state outcome.

Daily Telegraph columnist Piers Akerman wrote, "the history of the conflict is known... The Palestinian leadership has rejected every offer to devise a just solution." (Jan. 9)

Australian columnist Henry Ergas (Jan. 21) took on accusations of Israeli apartheid, saying that every metric shows Israel's Arab citizens have far greater freedoms than their regional compatriots. He noted that surveys show not only do Israeli Arabs "persistently define themselves as Israelis" but even Jerusalem's Palestinians "overwhelmingly preferred Jerusalem to remain under Israeli control."

In the *Daily Telegraph* (Jan. 14) indigenous leader Warren Mundine called BDS "a biased political campaign... the idea that the State of Israel is colonisation is laughable if it wasn't so dangerous. It's a false narrative... Jews come from the Middle East and have always lived in the Middle East."

Similarly, lawyer Craig Emanuel in the *Australian* (Jan. 11) noted that "more than half of Israelis [descend from Jews who] never left the Middle East when Jews were dispersed around the world by invaders centuries ago."

In the *Daily Telegraph* (Jan. 7), AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein said BDS undermines "the climate of compromise [needed for] any genuine reconciliation between the two traumatised peoples" and is counter to the mood for peace as evidenced by the normalisation agreements recently signed between Israel and four Arab nations.

Some pieces argued that BDS is antithetical to the ethos of arts festivals – including Surinder Jain, Hindu Council of Australia vice-president in the *Daily Telegraph* (Jan. 12), who said BDS pushes "a message of intolerance" and "exclusion", while NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO Darren Bark said it "undermines our multicultural way of life" in the same paper on Dec. 30.

Claire Lehmann argued in the *Australian* (Jan. 13) that "the notion that [artists] must now defend or justify their participation in large-scale events because others wish to politicise them is an indignity that will only wear down our already demoralised culture."

With tongue planted firmly in cheek, the *Spectator Australia* (Jan. 15) welcomed the exit of "several dozen dreary lefties" and called for more such boycotts.

"Indigenous leader Warren Mundine called BDS 'a biased political campaign... the idea that the State of Israel is colonisation is laughable if it wasn't so dangerous'"

THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

NEIGHBOURHOOD BULLIES

Throughout its existence, the Sydney Festival has presented a smorgasbord of entertainment, celebrating diverse cultures and the even more diverse ways cultural creativity is expressed.

Some of the performances I have seen have been visually stunning, often bringing internationally-renowned artists to Australia for the first time.

Some have been memorable for the skill in set-construction, in choreography and in the overall quality of the performances.

Be it the weird and wonderful expressions of cutting-edge political theatre, homages to particular cultural epochs, even the Australian debut of a play based on aphorisms or lyrics of great writers, each year Sydney-siders, and many visitors, have much to talk about by the time the event has ended.

This year, media space otherwise available to give acclaim and critique to art has been hijacked by those past-masters of news-cycle hijacking, the organised, maximalist anti-Israel movement.

The verbal gymnastics as anti-Israel extremists tried to argue why their attitude to Israel was not malicious, let alone destructive, was unimpressive. Yet the reality is that there were Australian journalists who allowed offensive ignorance to be spread by not challenging, and often repeating as if “news”, demonisation of Israel.

The political theatre engaged in by the bullies, defamers and slanderers of the self-ascribed BDS movement was unsurprising, given that movement’s track record – but is nevertheless disturbing on a number of levels.

Support of governments for arts is hardly a secret – in fact many countries proudly promote their support for training, development and production of local regional and national performers and programmes. Yet it seems there are some in the BDS movement who think such support is immoral if, and only if, that government is Israel.

Political panic by BDS is not a shock, given the success to this point of the Abraham Accords and the growing, highly visible, evidence that Israel is less diplomatically isolated than ever.

It appeared that some who gave in to BDS had decided on an homage to the great Stephen

Sondheim and sent in the clowns – some of the media statements and “explanations” for why certain performers would not participate in the Festival were almost comical in their moral contortions.

In the lead-up to the 2021 Sydney Festival, the flagship performance was “Girl from the North Country”, a musical with songs by Bob Dylan – which brings me to the heart of the BDS movement’s activities relating to the Festival.



Bob Dylan responded with remarkable prescience to BDS claims in a notable 1983 song

Last year, Dylan released *Springtime in New York: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 16 (1980-1985)* which included “Neighbourhood Bully”, one of Dylan’s most political songs from the past 50 years, originally on 1983’s *Infidels* album.

*“Well, the neighborhood bully, he’s just one man
His enemies say he’s on their land
They got him outnumbered about a million to one
He got no place to escape to, no place to run
He’s the neighborhood bully.
The neighborhood bully he just lives to survive
He’s criticized and condemned for being alive
He’s not supposed to fight back, he’s supposed to have thick skin
He’s supposed to lay down and die when his door is kicked in
He’s the neighborhood bully.
The neighborhood bully been driven out of every land
He’s wandered the earth an exiled man
Seen his family scattered, his people hounded and torn
He’s always on trial for just being born
He’s the neighborhood bully.”*

The song goes on to talk about the disingenuity of anti-Israel faux pacifists, the way the historical experiences of Jews have morphed in to the national experience of Israel and continually asks nothing more than that the bullying end, in the process noting:

*“Every empire that’s enslaved him is gone
Egypt and Rome, even the great Babylon”*

The real bullies of BDS found some willing dupes and victims in a small percentage of Sydney Festival acts.

It is a pity that even one act would side with the bullies – and that well after their artistic credentials are forgotten, their moral cowardice will be remembered.

AIR



9 771442 369017 >

Australia \$7.95 (inc GST)