



## HEAD TO HEAD

The Morrison and Albanese campaigns answer our exclusive pre-election policy questions

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PROPERTY INVESTMENT,  
DEVELOPMENT & ADVISORY

WITH COMPLIMENTS



**FOR A BETTER WORLD**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The May edition of the *AIR* is our customary pre-election special – continuing a long-standing tradition at the *Australia/Israel Review* of asking both major parties to answer a series of questions on key policy areas of special interest to the Jewish community before Australia goes to the polls. We invite everyone, before casting their ballot on May 21, to look closely at the answers by both parties to our 11 questions on issues including: Israel and the peace process; counter-terrorism and communal security; the Iranian nuclear issue; multiculturalism; and oversight of Australia's public broadcasters.

In addition, Jamie Hyams looks at the potentially game-changing Climate 200 independents in this election campaign – and the baggage some of those candidates bring with them.

Also featured this month is Khaled Abu Toameh's analysis of the real reasons many Palestinians celebrate terrorist attacks on innocent Israelis, while Iraqi-born Kurdish Australian Ali Aziz reminisces about the lies he and other Middle Easterners were taught about Israel.

Finally, don't miss Ehud Yaari on confronting the external sponsors of Palestinian terrorism, Amotz Asa-El on the increasingly shaky position of Israel's ruling eight-party coalition, and Naomi Levin's review of the important new memoir by former Australian hostage in Iran, Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert.

As always, please give us your views on any aspect of this edition at [editorial@aijac.org.au](mailto:editorial@aijac.org.au).

Tzvi Fleischer

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### ON THE COVER

Prime Minister Scott Morrison (right) shakes hands with Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese during the first leaders' debate of the 2022 federal election in Brisbane, April 20, 2022.

(Image: Jason Edwards/AAP Image)



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EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN****COLIN RUBENSTEIN****MAINTAINING AUSTRALIA'S  
DEMOCRATIC LEGACY**

**A**s campaign rhetoric reaches fever pitch ahead of the federal election on May 21, it is easy to forget the simple truth that what unites most Australians is far greater than what divides us.

This is equally true whether looking at the broad national agenda or narrowing the focus down to the issues that matter most to the Australian Jewish community.

As always, the devil is in the details, so we urge readers to closely examine the answers to the 11 policy questions AIJAC submitted to the Coalition and Labor campaigns (pp. 12-18) to better understand the nuances and make the most informed possible choice at the polls.

At the foundations of Australian policy, there are clearly broad areas of consensus where national interests and those more specific to the Jewish community meet.

Regardless of whether the parties of Prime Minister Scott Morrison or Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese come out ahead, a sea change in Australia's historic, mutually beneficial, close relationship with Israel is not on the ballot.

Both major campaigns stress the "steadfast" nature of Australia's friendship with Israel, built on shared interests; the need for increased trade; and oppose the destructive anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign and its false, inflammatory depictions of Israel as practising "apartheid".

Both also pledge to continue Australia's longstanding bipartisan support for a two-state peace framework negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians.

There is also a national consensus to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons (though, unfortunately, stubborn support for a return to the flawed and obsolete JCPOA agreement remains a shared, bipartisan blind spot), and against Teheran's destabilising and aggressive regional behaviours and sponsorship of terrorism.

On the last point, it's worth pausing to gratefully acknowledge the favourable shift in Canberra that recently took place on this front. When we quizzed the Coalition and Labor on policy issues before the 2019 federal election, neither party endorsed designating the entirety of the Iranian proxy Hezbollah as a terrorist group. Over the course of the last parliament, bipartisan support developed in the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for such a change and the Morrison Government implemented it. Moreover, bipartisan support was also extended to a similar, highly justified ban on all of Hamas.

Both parties also recognise the need to assist the Jewish community to protect itself against security threats and address antisemitism and the hate crimes this enduring and growing prejudice helps fuel.

Bipartisan support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism has been a great achievement in the fight against this scourge. We look forward to Australia's next government, no matter who leads it, proposing practical ways to apply the definition across government bodies and implement policies to reduce antisemitism throughout Australian society.

Meanwhile, Labor offers strong support for section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*, while the Coalition reaffirms it has no plans to change this crucial legislation. Furthermore, both political camps firmly back the policy of multiculturalism that has made Australia stronger, more diverse, and hopefully more harmonious – providing that the responsibilities as well as the rights of citizenship continue to be insisted upon!



Some of the policy responses, however, will raise questions. For example, on the one hand, Labor rightly says that “the only way a two-state solution can be achieved is through a negotiated outcome between [Israel and the Palestinians].” But Labor policy also refuses to rule out pre-empting that negotiated outcome through premature recognition of a Palestinian state (which simply does not currently exist). This contradiction is worrying.

Another difference in the answers Jewish voters may note is the ALP’s focus on right-wing extremism to the possible neglect of extremism and bigotry from left-wing and Islamist sources. The ALP also does not appear to share AIJAC’s belief in the need for greater independent, external oversight of the ABC. In addition, while the Coalition can point to a very solid and principled voting record on Middle Eastern issues at the UN, the ALP’s answers provide little guidance on how their election would influence Australia’s currently strong pro-Israel stance in UN bodies.


Additionally, the two major parties are not the only political players deserving of scrutiny in this election. As Naomi Levin documented in the April *AIR* edition, the Australian Greens, always dubious on Israel-Palestinian issues, have increasingly edged toward open embrace of BDS, with all the destructive and discriminatory implications that this conveys for Israeli-Palestinian peace hopes and for friends of Israel in Australia. Meanwhile, divisive, extremist rhetoric continues to flow from populist right-wing parties such as One Nation and the United Australia Party.

**“Both major campaigns stress the “stead-fast” nature of Australia’s friendship with Israel, built on shared interests; the need for increased trade; and oppose the destructive anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign”**

A potentially unique factor in this election is the substantial number of extremely well-funded “Climate 200” independents being significantly sponsored by multi-millionaire Simon Holmes à Court and his friends. These candidates claim to be chiefly concerned about climate change, women’s rights, and integrity, yet as Jamie Hyams (pp. 18-20) documents in this edition, many of them have problematic baggage in terms of stances on Israel and related issues, inappropriate past speech, and troubling associates. This background deserves careful scrutiny before

anyone considers giving these candidates their vote.

Indeed, given the worrying positions and plans of some minor parties and independents, there is good reason to hope that, whoever wins, they will have a workable majority government not dependent on cross-benchers.

Election campaigns can be jarring, emotional and frustrating, but throughout this process, we would do well to attempt to maintain a profound awareness of how privileged we are to inherit the great gift of Australian democracy. With Ukraine being battered by Russia in large part because of Moscow’s hatred and fear of Kyiv’s democracy, and Hong Kong’s democracy having been destroyed by Beijing, all Australians need to remember that democracy is a national legacy that should never be taken for granted. Holding on to that legacy requires us to always actively cherish, nurture and protect the free and open society that we are so fortunate to enjoy. 

## “” WORD FOR WORD

“Fatah in Jenin province... and the activists and institutions of our great Palestinian people in the Jenin province [all] accompany the martyred hero Diaa Ahmad Hassan Hamarsha to his nuptials [in Paradise]... Rest in peace... O heroic martyr. We promise to continue until [we attain either] victory or martyrdom.”

**Fatah’s Jenin branch praises the terrorist mass shooting in Bnei Brak on March 29, which left 5 civilians dead (MEMRI, March 30).**

“[Palestinians] repelled the incursions of the occupation and its settlers with courage and pride, assuring everyone far and wide that Al-Aqsa has men who protect it and defend its purity, despite the ugliness of aggression and terrorism of the occupiers.”

**Hamas statement praising Palestinian rioters on the Temple Mount (Times of Israel, April 21).**

“Allah, delight us with the extermination of the evil Jews, O

Master of the Universe, and [the extermination] of their hypocritical supporters who have evil in their hearts.”

**An apparent call for genocide by an Imam in a Ramadan sermon broadcast on official PA-TV on April 17 (Palestinian Media Watch, April 24).**

“When we began our nuclear activity, our goal was indeed to build a bomb... There is no need to beat around the bush... we wanted to build it as a means of intimidation.”

**Former Iranian Majlis (parliament) member Ali Motahari, admitting in an interview that the goal of Iran’s nuclear program was to build weapons, something the regime has always denied (MEMRI, April 25).**

“We are in a race against time. We want an agreement that has no expiration date, [a deal] that wouldn’t give Iran legitimacy to advance in the nuclear program that follows, with extensive oversight anywhere and anytime... if there is no agreement, Plan B must be used: to use force, to exert economic pressure, to exert political pressure.”

**Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz on Israel’s approach to a potential new nuclear deal with Iran (Haaretz, April 6).**



# SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

## A “BLOOD AND SOIL” MOTHER’S DAY

Here’s a lovely thought for Mother’s Day:

The most sacred mothers are the Martyrs’ mothers. They are the most beautiful mothers because they taught their children that victory is not achieved through words and slogans but through strong red blood... they taught their children that the land will not be liberated until it is saturated with the blood of its sons.

Whoops! That’s not a thought for Australian Mother’s Day, May 8, but Palestinian Mother’s Day, March 21. And the above words were part of the greeting given to Palestinian mothers by the host on official PA-TV, owned and operated by the “moderate” Palestinian Authority (PA).

What is notable about that greeting is not simply the veneration of martyrdom as the highest good, but the language employed to do so – language about “strong red blood”, and how the “land” can only be liberated by being “saturated with the blood of its sons.”

Idealising the shedding of sacred blood as the key to liberation of the land is hardly unique to the PA’s Mother’s Day statement. It is widespread in Palestinian discourse. For instance, PA head Mahmoud Abbas himself spoke in Sept. 2015 about welcoming “every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem. This is pure blood, clean blood, blood on its way to Allah...”

Rhetoric from Abbas’ Fatah party routinely describes “martyrs” killed while attacking Israelis as having “watered” the ground with their “pure blood”. For instance, during the so-called “knife intifada” in 2015, on social media Fatah described one stabber killed as having “watered the soil of Palestine with his pure blood,” another as having “watered the ground of Hebron with her pure blood,” and said of still another, “his blood was not spilled in vain, after he saturated his first love – Palestine – with it.” (All above quotes supplied by Palestinian Media Watch).

What is striking about such poetic rhetoric about sanctified “blood” soaking the land is that it bears some striking parallels with the ugliest form of European nationalism, so-called “blood and soil” nationalism. Developed mainly in Germany during the 19<sup>th</sup> century – though echoed by many other national groups – as part of the romantic movement there, it ultimately became a key part of Nazi ideology, under the slogan “*Blut und Boden*”. It was used as justification both for the German people’s need for

*Lebensraum* (Living space) conquered at the expense of supposedly inferior Slavs to the east, and for the exclusion and ultimately murder of non-“Aryans” to protect the supposed purity of the “blood” of the Aryan German Volk.

“Blood and Soil” is a chant still frequently heard at neo-Nazi rallies around the world today.

To be fair, there are some differences between the Palestinian rhetoric and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century European “blood and soil” nationalism – the “blood” in the original German concept was explicitly racial, and the soil element included a focus on idolising rural peasants over “cosmopolitan” city dwellers, neither of which is central to the Palestinian rhetoric. But the romantic, poetic invocation of blood and soil in such rhetoric still encourages a form of

nationalism with little emphasis on state-building, or national self-expression and cultural development, and a great deal on uncompromising violence, war and death.

The Palestinians had a weak national identity in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it is clear that the form of Palestinian nationalism that has developed since then

under the influence of leaders like Haj Amin Al-Husseini and Yasser Arafat – together with outside sponsors such as Egyptian President Gamal Nasser, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and Iraq’s Saddam Hussein – is one with which it is very difficult to coexist. It contains a large admixture of the worst sorts of nationalism – such as “blood and soil”. Even the supposedly “moderate” PA continues to tirelessly promote this extreme version of nationalism to new generations, even on occasions such as Mother’s Day.

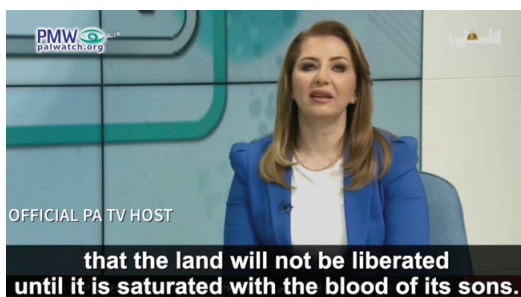
Given this, is it any wonder there is no Israeli-Palestinian peace?

## INCITEMENT INDEPENDENTLY VALIDATED

This column has repeatedly tried to call attention to the problem of widespread incitement to violence and hatred, and incentivisation of terrorism, by official Palestinian bodies, as in the above item on Palestinian Mother’s Day. But perhaps you are sceptical, and think things are not as bad as AIJAC says?

Well, here are two stories in which independent outside observers have agreed that such official PA incitement and incentivisation of terror are indeed very serious problems:

- On March 31, the European Parliament’s Budgetary Control Committee passed a resolution condemning the PA for failing to remove incitement from EU-funded textbooks as the EU had previously demanded. The resolution said the Committee “Deplores that problematic and hateful material in Palestinian school textbooks has still not been



Mother’s Day on official Palestinian Authority TV



removed and is concerned about the continued failure to act effectively against hate speech and violence in school textbooks..." A study done by the NGO Impact-SE found much material in the latest PA curriculum that lionises anti-Israel terrorism and was openly antisemitic.

• Meanwhile, on April 10, Israel's Supreme Court ruled that the PA can be sued by victims of terrorism as a result of the PA's "pay for slay" policy of rewarding terrorists and their families. Under this policy, the PA pays substantial stipends to Palestinian security prisoners in Israeli jails and to families of those killed while committing terror attacks. While the PA has claimed that these are social welfare payments for needy people, Palestinian families in need whose members have not been involved in violence against Israel get much smaller payments. The Israeli High Court, which all knowledgeable observers agree is one of the most independent, effective and legally impressive in the world, found in its judgment that, through "pay for slay", the PA "expresses consent to [Palestinian terrorists'] actions, in a way that takes responsibility for those acts."

AIR



Jonathan Levin

## UKRAINE EXPOSES THE UN'S FUNDAMENTAL FAILURES

On April 5, in a passionate speech to the UN Security Council, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said, "It is obvious that the key institution of the world, which must ensure the coercion of any aggressors to peace, simply cannot work effectively."

The outbreak of the greatest continental European conflict since World War II, resulting in 10 million refugees fleeing Ukraine and potential civilian fatalities being in the tens of thousands due to massacres and indiscriminate shelling of urban environments, raises questions about the UN's ability to maintain peace and ensure human rights.

The images of widespread devastation of cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol look like they could come from Guernica, Rotterdam and Leningrad – scenes that were common across the world when the UN was founded 76 years ago.

As war rages in Europe, the UN has found itself pushed to the sidelines as Ukrainian and Russian representatives duke it out in the crippled organisation – an organisation unable to negotiate a ceasefire nor penalise Russia; all sanctions, penalties and attempts for negotiations come from sovereign countries or other institutions.

Crippled and unable to do anything to end the conflict, the UN passed an emergency resolution in the General Assembly, suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council,

in a move that draws parallels to the League of Nations' expulsion of the Soviet Union after it invaded Finland in 1939.

The UN's suspension of Russia was one of three resolutions adopted in the General Assembly's emergency special session devoted to the conflict. These are the first emergency resolutions since 1981 that don't concern the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has exposed the price of the UN's abandonment of its founding principles and human rights, and of its persistent attacks on democracies, so prevalent throughout the body and its affiliated institutions.

The UN's actions over the years, well documented by the media and NGOs such as UN Watch, have weakened international norms and inhibited its ability to respond in moments of crisis. Over time, this has resulted in the institution being watered down to the point where it is now unable to respond to a major conflict other than by providing aid and appealing "in the name of humanity."

The UN's major forums, designed for protecting human rights, are comprised of non-democracies and brutal dictatorships that often use their positions to cover up human rights abuses and persecute democracies. Before Russia's suspension from the Human Rights Council, 68% of its members were non-democracies. Similar percentages are present in other UN forums, such as the Commission on the Status of Women.

These problems are not isolated to the composition of these bodies alone, and manifest themselves across the organisation and its affiliates. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been accused of handing over the names of Uighur dissidents to the Chinese Government, endangering their lives and the lives of their families.

The International Criminal Court, a UN affiliate although independent, is currently investigating the US and Israel for alleged war crimes but has declined to investigate China for its genocide against the Uighurs, citing its non-signatory status to the Rome Statute, the UN-brokered treaty that governs the body. (The US and Israel are also non-signatories, but the ICC found a way to investigate them regardless.)

The UN also has had a long fixation with Israel, which has blinded the body and prevented it from doing its job effectively. Last year, out of the 18 resolutions that the General Assembly adopted condemning individual countries, 14 were directed at Israel.

While it is true that Russia's permanent veto power on the Security Council gives it the ability to block attempts at penalising it, that doesn't account for the entirety of the UN's utter helplessness in addressing the conflict.

The truth is that the UN's actions over the years have degraded its moral authority on human rights, causing it

to lose respect and weakening its institutional ability to respond to crises.

As Russia invades Ukraine and as the spectre of a great power conflict looms in Asia, governments must ask themselves whether the UN can operate effectively, as Zelensky questioned, and what they could do to reform the institution so that it can prevent conflict in the future. AIR

*Jonathan Levin is a student at Yeshiva University in New York, and an editor of the Commentator, one of the university's student papers. © Jerusalem Post (jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

### NAME RECOGNITION

As the days count down to the national elections on May 9, when Filipinos will elect a successor to President Rodrigo Duterte, polls show the son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos remains well in front of nine other candidates vying for the presidency.

Yet, as his campaign swung through the southern island of Mindanao in late March, the very name of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. stirred painful memories for many older inhabitants of this heavily Muslim region of the mainly Catholic Philippines, recalling the regime under which thousands died and disappeared under the iron-fisted rule of Marcos Sr. (1965-1986).

Among the 3,250 known extrajudicial killings that occurred during the Marcos regime, the most notorious incident in the south was in September 1974 when Marcos' troops allegedly massacred about 1,500 Muslim males aged from 11 to 70 inside a mosque during the month of Ramadan.

"We are concerned of a Marcos win and an eventual return to power in Malacañang," Murad Ebrahim, the leader of the former insurgent group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), told *BenarNews* recently. "While Marcos Jr. was not the one behind the atrocities, he carries his father's name. And if Muslims hear that name, they also relive the pain of the dictatorship," he said.

Accordingly, surveys show that while Marcos Jr. is popular in the Manila region and the broader northern island of Luzon, he has consistently struggled in the south, where the Dutertes are dominant.

Marcos Jr. has often said that his father's sins were not his own, and his trip to the south was meant to bolster the unity he forged with the Dutertes – his running mate is Sara Duterte-Carpio, the president's popular daughter, who is the mayor of Davao City in Mindanao.

As a southerner himself, President Duterte has pre-

sided over the staged implementation of the 2014 peace agreement with the MILF, the largest Muslim separatist group in the region. Former MILF officials currently head a transitional government in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), which came about as a result of the agreement.

According to government data, the autonomous region accounts for only 1.9 million of the roughly 65 million Filipinos eligible to vote this year. However, winning the Muslim vote is considered crucial for stability.

The thousands of Filipino Muslims who turned out for Marcos Jr.'s rallies suggest that a new generation has arisen, unburdened by memories of historic brutality.

Mariam Sangki Mangudadatu, the Muslim Governor of Maguindanao province, told reporters that fellow Muslims should let bygones be bygones. "Nobody is perfect, but under the leadership of Bongbong, he will bring back the progressive image of our country," Mangudadatu said, using the nickname of Marcos Jr. "Anyone can make mistakes."

Less forgiving is the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) in Thailand, a separatist group sidelined from peace talks for the southernmost provinces. It carried out twin bombings on April 15 that killed a villager and injured three police before declaring that it would not take part in negotiations with Bangkok if independence is off the table.

"PULO is ready to talk, but will not talk or negotiate under the framework of the Thai constitution because PULO wants freedom from Thailand," PULO leader Kas-turi Mahkota told the media via text message.

Patani is the name given to Thailand's deep south by armed groups, like BRN and PULO, which have been waging a decades-long separatist insurgency in the mainly Muslim and Malay-speaking region.

The bombings disrupted a Ramadan-period truce agreed between the Thai Government and Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), the region's main insurgent group.

At the conclusion of Malaysia-brokered direct peace talks between BRN and the Thai Government on March 31 and April 1, the Thai delegation said both sides agreed that future discussions would be done "under the Unitary State of Thailand in accordance with the Constitution."

This raised some doubt about whether BRN – the largest armed insurgent group in the deep south – has abandoned its cause of fighting to break free of Bangkok and establish a separate state in the border region.

In talks which commenced in 2015, also brokered by Malaysia, two branches of PULO as well as BRN and two other rebel groups were represented on MARA Patani, the panel that negotiated with the Thai side. That process fizzled out after the BRN began talking directly with Bangkok in January 2020.

Assessments of the threat posed by PULO differ. Sup-



porters claim PULO has trained more than 2,000 combatants, including those with expertise in rocket attacks, but Thai security officials say PULO has only a few dozen foot soldiers in its ranks.

AIR



# AIR NEW ZEALAND

**Miriam Bell**

## NEW REPORT PROMPTS DEBATE OVER ANTISEMITISM

There are concerning levels of antisemitism and widespread ignorance about the Holocaust in New Zealand, according to a new report.

The Antisemitism Survey of New Zealand 2021, conducted by Curia Research for the NZ Jewish Council (NZJC), put 18 internationally recognised statements of anti-Jewish sentiment to 1017 New Zealanders.

The study produced some disturbing results. Sixty-three percent of respondents agreed with at least one of the antisemitic views posed by the statements, while six percent expressed agreement with nine or more of the 18 anti-Jewish statements.

Twenty-one percent agreed with two or more classical antisemitic views, for example approving of statements such as “Jews have too much power in financial markets” and “Jews in NZ are more loyal to Israel than to NZ.”

Twenty-five percent expressed support for two or more extreme anti-Zionist views, characterised as “Zionophobic”, such as “Israeli government policies are similar to those of the Nazi regime” and “Israel is an apartheid state.”

Only 42% of the respondents could correctly identify that six million Jewish people were killed in the Holocaust, while 17% said they knew virtually nothing about the Holocaust.

In many ways, the findings were not a surprise. They came after a year which saw the 2021 Israel-Gaza military conflict and pandemic-related protests, both of which prompted a surge of antisemitic rhetoric and imagery.

Over the last two years, the NZJC has recorded the highest number of antisemitic incidents since records began in 1990.

Massey University Professor Paul Spoonley, an expert on far-right extremism, told *AIR* that antisemitism on the far-right has been on the rise since around 2016. But the findings of the survey highlighted how much antisemitism levels have increased over recent years.

After the new report’s release, Spoonley wrote on *Stuff* that he had been involved in four surveys of the Jewish community since 1983. In the first three, the majority of respondents had not experienced antisemitism, and most did not see New Zealand and New Zealanders as being

particularly antisemitic.

But by the 2019 survey, a different story had begun to emerge, and antisemitism was being experienced by a much larger proportion of those surveyed, he said.

His research on the radical right in the last few years has led him to conclude that “local antisemitism has migrated from being largely the preserve of an extreme fringe to a much more substantial component of local racism.”

While the report was received with dismay by many, there was immediate pushback about the “Zionophobia” aspect of it from others. Much of this came from well-known pro-Palestinian advocates, such as activist John Minto and the Alternative Jewish Voices (AJV) group.

They criticised the application of the widely-used International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism in the survey, and referenced reports on Israel by NGOs, such as Amnesty International’s recent, widely contested effort to dispute that there was anything extreme or controversial about saying Israel is an apartheid state.

AJV said the NZJC report was “weaponising antisemitism” in a dishonest and dangerous way, while Minto said it missed the mark and was “trying to cower human rights activists with false smears of anti-semitism.”

Most of the criticism came from a handful of outspoken, ardent anti-Zionist members of the Jewish community and their “progressive” friends on social media, according to NZJC spokesperson Juliet Moses.

“They seem to believe that antisemitism only comes from the far right and that any statement that mentions the words ‘Israel’, ‘Zionist’ or ‘Palestinian’ can’t be antisemitic because it is not antisemitic to criticise Israel, even if the statement in question does not actually involve criticism of Israel at all.”

Moses said the questions put to survey participants were arrived at after considerable thought and applied international standards.

“It is possible to criticise Israel and advocate for Palestinians without antisemitism. It is also possible that Israel is demonised, delegitimised and subjected to standards applied to no other state, which true authorities on antisemitism understand as being a modern form of it.”

Several themes emerged from the survey which could help inform the formulation of practical solutions for the future, she added.

“One is about the need for Holocaust education. But also, the survey indicates that knowing Jewish people reduces the likelihood of harbouring antisemitic beliefs.

“I believe interacting with people face to face is the best way to combat prejudice and hatred, and the survey backs that up. So, the more we do to meet people of different backgrounds, and promote initiatives to do so, the better – not just for Jews but for social cohesion generally.”

AIR

# BEHIND THE NEWS

## ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

The terror wave that started with an attack which killed four Israelis in Beersheva on March 23 continued into April. A shooting attack by two Israeli Arab Islamic State supporters killed two police officers and wounded several other people in Hadera on March 27. Two days later a Palestinian conducted a shooting attack in Bnei Brak, killing five.

On April 7, a Palestinian gunman opened fire in Tel Aviv, killing three and wounding nine, before being found and killed following a manhunt. Both the Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak shooters were members of Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade.

In response, Israel launched counter-terrorism operations in the West Bank that resulted in the deaths of at least 14 Palestinians, including three Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives reportedly en route to conduct an attack. Numerous suspects have been rounded up and weapons and explosives confiscated.

There have also been several stabbings inside Israel in which Israelis were wounded.

On April 18, terrorist groups in Gaza fired a single rocket into Israel, followed by five more on April 20-21 and another three on April 22-23, most of which were intercepted by Iron Dome. Israel struck Hamas targets in Gaza in response to the rockets. On April 25, a rocket was launched into Israel from Lebanon, causing no damage and prompting retaliatory Israeli shelling.

## FALSE RUMOURS SPARK TEMPLE MOUNT VIOLENCE

Violent clashes broke out repeatedly on Jerusalem's Temple Mount



Militants filmed using the inside of the al-Aqsa Mosque to prepare for violence (Source: Twitter)

during Ramadan, after Palestinian youths aligned with groups such as Fatah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, were incited, largely on social media, to "defend" the holy site from the Jews.

The worst violence took place on the morning of Friday April 15, when rocks, fireworks and other projectiles previously stockpiled inside the al-Aqsa Mosque were thrown at police and at Jewish worshipers at the Western Wall below the Temple Mount. Police waited until the completion of dawn services before deploying crowd control techniques such as tear gas and rubber bullets, entering the mosque and arresting rioters. A few hours later, tens of thousands of Muslims were able to gather there for midday prayers without incident.

The pretext for the riots was the false claim that the mosque required protection from Jews planning to make a Passover sacrifice on the Temple Mount, contrary to Jewish law. Israeli police had already informed the Muslim Waqf that administers the Temple Mount that no such activity would be allowed to occur.

## JOSEPH'S TOMB DAMAGED

On April 15, at the beginning of the Jewish Passover holiday, mobs of rioters from Nablus broke into the nearby Jewish holy site known as the

Tomb of Joseph. The rioters set fire to the site, smashed the cenotaph above the grave, destroyed electrical lighting, and burned prayer books. Similar attacks have taken place in the past.

Repairs were later made by the IDF. The status of Joseph's Tomb and the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority to protect it and those visiting it were agreed upon in the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement.

## EU MILLIONS FOR ILLEGAL WEST BANK BUILDINGS

A report from Israel's Intelligence Ministry revealed that EU states are illegally financing Palestinian activities to construct buildings and grab territories in Area C of the West Bank, designated as under complete Israeli control by the Oslo accords.

The report, authored in June last year but only recently made public, says millions of euros have been funnelled into the building of up to 40,000 unauthorised structures, being constructed as part of a major effort by the Palestinian Authority (PA) to seize control over around 80 square kilometres of industrial and agricultural lands in Area C. European money was also used by the PA to construct illegal quarries which directly harmed archaeological sites and nature reserves.

All of this is in breach of EU commitments to uphold the Oslo accords, the report noted.

## NEW IRANIAN NUCLEAR FACILITIES

In its April periodic report on Iran, the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) noted the opening of a new Iranian underground facility at Natanz, for the production of uranium enrichment centrifuge parts.



The workshop's equipment was transferred from a previous above-ground factory at Karaj, which was shut down after a reputed Israeli attack on it last year.

The new facility, as well as a similar one at Esfahan, is expected to produce advanced centrifuges which significantly speed enrichment, and which Iran was forbidden from deploying under the 2015 JCPOA nuclear deal.

The IAEA has installed surveillance cameras in both new sites, but Teheran is refusing to allow the IAEA to access any footage captured by these cameras, at least until a new nuclear deal is signed. Analysts warn that withholding the footage undermines the IAEA's ability to detect illegal Iranian nuclear activities.

## NEW IRANIAN CYBERMISCHIEF

A suspected Iranian distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack temporarily restricted access to several Israeli government websites in mid-March. Shortly thereafter, Iranian hackers compromised what was allegedly an old cellphone belonging to Mossad chief David Barnea's wife and released some material from it.

The Iranian proxy group al-Tahira in Iraq targeted the Israeli Airports Authority website on April 21.

Also in April, a long-running Hamas cyber-espionage campaign against Israeli soldiers and policemen, using mainly fake "honeypot" profiles to lure them into downloading malware, was revealed and said to demonstrate a "new level of sophistication" by the terror group.

## UNPRECEDENTED NEGEV SUMMIT CONSOLIDATES NEW REGIONAL ALIGNMENTS

On March 27-28, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid hosted his counterparts from the Abraham Accords

partners – the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco – together with the Foreign Minister of Egypt, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, at a historic summit in the Negev.

The summit took place at Sde Boker – home and burial site of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion – and represented an unprecedented consolidation of the alliance between Israel and several Arab countries across the region.

It also highlighted how the warming ties between Israel and the Gulf states has encouraged greater involvement by Egypt, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

Foreign Minister Lapid said at the summit, "What we are doing here today is making history – building a new regional architecture based on progress, technology, religious tolerance, security and intelligence cooperation."

## ISRAEL THE NINTH HAPPIEST COUNTRY

Israel is now ranked the ninth hap-

piest country in the world, according to the UN sponsored World Happiness Index 2022 published on March 18. The index considers a nation's levels of GDP, social support, personal freedom and corruption in government, as well as local respondents' assessments of their own happiness. The survey ranked Finland the happiest country and Afghanistan the unhappiest. Australia came in eleventh.

## COVID REPORT

The growth in Israeli COVID cases has slowed after a recent surge, with 201,866 new cases from March 27 to April 26, and 254 more deaths. 28,455 Israelis were listed as currently infected on April 26, down from 725,754 on Jan. 26. The Palestinian-ruled areas of the West Bank reported much lower figures, with only 1,067 new cases reported between March 27 and April 26, and eight deaths. There were 497 new cases reported in Gaza from March 24 to April 23.



## PUTIN IT ON THE JEWS

Palestinian Islamic scholar Mraweh Nassar is the Secretary-General of the Jerusalem Committee of the International Union of Muslim Scholars. That means he has really small writing on his business card. It also means that his pronouncements on Islam might be regarded as having some authority. However, we hope his pronouncements on international affairs, and in particular the Jewish role in them, are taken less seriously by his audience.

In a March 22 interview on *Channel 9* in Turkey, an Arabic-language channel affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, he warmed up by claiming that during the "false Holocaust" the Nazis offered Jews to save other Jews at a cost of five dollars each, but "they took one look, saw that most of them were old, and said, 'We don't want them.'"

He continued that the Jews are now turning to Russia and China for help because "America has forsaken them," telling them, "Your [Zionist] project is a failure."

This, Nasser revealed in his masterful analysis, is what really caused the Ukraine war: "Even the Jews themselves... are now convinced that Palestine cannot be the state for the Jews. So, they started saying that holy Jerusalem is in Ukraine and not in Palestine. Ukraine is now the candidate to become the future Jewish state."

And then he offered this "obvious" conclusion: "Perhaps one of the reasons they instigated this war was to empty out Ukraine."

In fact, Nasser insisted, there already is a Jewish state in eastern Ukraine, which "the whole world knows about," but the Jews "did not want to spread the word about it, so they would not be told to go there rather than come to Palestine." So that explains everything! (Translations from the Middle East Media Research Institute)

## COVER STORY

## HEAD TO HEAD

## THE MORRISON AND ALBANESE CAMPAIGNS ANSWER AIJAC'S EXCLUSIVE POLICY QUESTIONS

In keeping with a long-standing pre-election tradition, AIJAC submitted a series of 11 policy questions to the campaigns of both Prime Minister Scott Morrison, leading the Liberal-National Coalition, and Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese, leading the Australian Labor Party (ALP), to help our readers and supporters make an informed decision as they go to the polls on May 21.

The questions – designed to focus on political issues of special concern to the Australian Jewish community – deal with matters include:

- Ties with Israel
- The Peace Process and Recognising a Palestinian State
- Voting in the United Nations
- Aid Funding to the Palestinians
- BDS in Australia
- The Iranian Threat
- Counter-Terrorism
- Communal Security
- Racial Hatred and Antisemitism
- Australian Multiculturalism
- Complaints Handling for our Public Broadcasters

The answers from both campaigns are presented here in full:

**If you win Government, what action will your party take to encourage the ongoing development of bilateral ties between Australia and Israel?**

#### COALITION

The Morrison Government is committed to further strengthening our valuable bilateral relationship with Israel. Australia has been a steadfast friend to Israel since its



Australia's Choice: Morrison (right) versus Albanese (Image: AAP)

creation. The last two years of COVID-19 travel and other restrictions have hampered efforts to increase in-person engagement, but we will continue to enhance our practical work together.

Bilateral ties are strong, starting at the top, from those of the Governor-General and the President, to the Prime Ministers, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and other Ministers and parliamentarians.

Prime Minister Morrison said in Parliament on 19 February 2019 that the Morrison Government would not walk back or shrink from the recognition and support that Australia has afforded Israel since 1948. Australia played a leading role in Israel's founding in 1948 and we will continue to play a role as a strong partner of Israel in the international community.

Under the Morrison Government, Australia recognised West Jerusalem – being the seat of the Knesset and many of the institutions of government – as the capital of the State of Israel.

Our Government opened Australia's Trade and Defence Office in West Jerusalem. The Office is focused on building



partnerships in trade, investment, bio-medical commercialisation, business, education, technology, and innovation with Israeli industry. This will include maximising opportunities for Australia's high-tech and defence exports industries. It will also facilitate commercial meetings and visitor programs and take appropriate opportunities to build awareness of Australian capabilities in Israel, consistent with its mandate.

## ALP

An Albanese Labor government will remain a steadfast friend of Israel. We will work with the Government of Israel and the private sector to deepen our people-to-people and trade and investment links.

**If you win Government, what concrete measures will your party take to promote peace between Israel and the Palestinians? Under what circumstances do you believe the Australian government should recognise a Palestinian state?**

## COALITION

The Morrison Government remains strongly committed to a two-state solution, where Israel and a future Palestinian state exist side-by-side in peace and security within internationally recognised borders. The Morrison Government has repeatedly said that Israel has the right to self-defence consistent with the UN Charter, and Israel has the right to take reasonable and lawful security measures to protect itself and its people from terrorism and other security threats.

In the spirit of a two-state solution, we acknowledge the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a future state with its capital in East Jerusalem. Australia has long held that aspirations for Palestinian statehood can only be realised through direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel, which is a longstanding position of the United Nations and many other countries. The negotiated resolution of final status issues remains the key to peace. There must be a renunciation of terrorism and terrorist acts, and an end to the cycle of violence.

The Morrison Government's position is consistent with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. We continue to encourage both Israel and the Palestinians to take the steps needed to reinvigorate the peace process and recommence negotiations.

## ALP

Labor has long supported and continues to support, an enduring and just two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the right of Israel to live in peace within secure borders internationally recognised and agreed by the parties, and reflecting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to also live in peace and security within their own state. Labor will continue to call

on both sides of the conflict to refrain from any actions that hamper peaceful outcomes for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

The 2021 Australian Labor Party Special Platform Conference replicated the decision taken at the 2018 National Conference to support the recognition and right of Israel and Palestine to exist as two states within secure and recognised borders. Labor's national platform makes clear the desire of the conference to recognise Palestine as a state while acknowledging this will ultimately be a matter for a future Labor Government.

Any lasting resolution to the Middle East conflict cannot be at the expense of either Palestinians or Israelis. The only way that a two-state solution can be achieved is through a negotiated outcome between the two parties. An Albanese Labor Government will ensure that any decision taken contributes to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to progress towards a two-state solution.

**What principles should underlie Australia's decisions with regard to voting on Israeli-Palestinian issues at the United Nations General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council? If you win government, do you anticipate any changes to the way Australia currently votes on these issues at the UN?**

## COALITION

Under a returned Morrison Government, Australia will continue to strongly support Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognised borders, and the right to self-defence as guaranteed in the UN Charter. The Morrison Government will stand by Israel in the face of biased and unfair targeting in the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies, including the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). This was our consistent approach when Australia held a seat in the HRC in 2020 and 2021. In the past, Australia abstained on UN resolutions where anti-Israel sentiment was cloaked in one-sided language about human rights. Under the Morrison Government, Australia changed its voting pattern to oppose anti-Israel bias and one-sided resolutions in the United Nations.

The Morrison Government remains disappointed that a specific resolution condemning Hamas for its terrorist attacks failed to pass in the UN, and that a bloc of nations continues to use the UN's procedures to mount a campaign directed against Israel. The Morrison Government has listed both Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code.

The anti-Israel bias and one-sided resolutions introduced each year in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) under permanent Item 7 of the Council's agenda do not, in the Morrison Government's view, contribute to lasting peace and stability for Israel or the Palestinians, nor do they assist the negotiated resolution of 'final status' issues. In her speech to the HRC in Geneva on 25 Febru-

ary 2019, Australia's Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, outlined Australia's principled opposition to the existence of Item 7. Foreign Minister Payne has been consistent in this approach ever since, reflected in Australia's voting pattern.

## ALP

Labor is a strong supporter of the State of Israel – that will never change.

UN bodies that are perceived to be biased or unbalanced are diminished in their credibility. Human rights abuses and authoritarianism are rising around the world – that's why it is important that all countries and actors are held to account for violations of human rights. That's why Labor questioned why Australia was the only country along with the Trump administration to vote against a UNHRC investigation into human rights violations in the Palestinian Territories – including violations committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups. In all of our engagement with the UN, we will be guided by our national interest, taking into account the facts on the ground and our strong support for a just and enduring peace.



**In recent years, Australia has raised concerns that aid and development funding to the Palestinian Territories may be used to pay stipends to terrorists, distribute textbooks that spread hate or otherwise undermine a future two-state peace. What would your party do to ensure any development aid provided to the Palestinian people advances the cause of peace?**

## COALITION

The Morrison Government has overseen rigorous systems put in place to ensure all aid activities in the Palestinian Territories are comprehensively monitored and proactively managed to ensure humanitarian and development assistance funds are not misdirected, or used in ways that have unintended and unacceptable consequences. Under the Morrison Government, funding has been suspended, cut, or re-directed for NGOs and international organisations that have used Australian Government funding in ways that risk undermining peace processes or that do not assist the provision of services and support for Palestinians in the manner intended by the Australian Government.

The Morrison Government has shifted funding into health, COVID response, and humanitarian programs. This process will be continued under a re-elected Morrison Government. The Morrison Government will continue the program of close oversight, audit, and other compliance measures it introduced to reduce risk in assistance funding delivery.

## ALP

Labor will ensure that appropriate due diligence is undertaken to ensure that Australian development assistance is not diverted to fund violence or the encouragement of violence.

**The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel – whose leadership makes clear they seek Israel's destruction as a Jewish homeland – recently garnered major headlines through its boycott of the Sydney Festival over Israeli government money it received for a dance performance. What is your party's policy toward the BDS movement? Do you see a government role in helping limit the discriminatory effects of BDS campaigns?**

## COALITION

Australia is a free country, and businesses, customers, festivals, artists, and any others may choose to support or not support enterprises as they see fit. Australians also have the right to peaceful and lawful protest. The defence of these freedoms does not extend to organised campaigns of coercion and public pressure targeted against one nationality, religion, or minority group as a form of passive-aggression, or an expression of coercive collective punishment, for a perceived relationship with a foreign national government.

The funding model of the Sydney Festival is a matter for the festival organisers, and the decision of performers and artists to participate or not is a matter for the individuals concerned. Concerted programs of economic attack against private individuals or companies because of perceived grievances with a foreign national government are misguided, misdirected, and manifestly unfair.

The Morrison Government does not support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Campaign that actively targets Israel and Israelis, or Jews and Jewish institutions, especially when coercion or public pressure campaigns are weaponised to create the appearance of broad public support.

The Morrison Government's view is that boycotting businesses or activities because of religion, citizenship, or other minority status is unacceptable, and contrary to Australia's multi-cultural society.

## ALP

Labor believes that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only come from open dialogue and discussion between the parties, not from a policy of exclusion. This underpins the Labor Party's opposition to the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign.

Viewing any conflict from only one perspective will not advance the cause of peace. It will take leaders recognising their respective roles in the cycle of escalation and conflict, and returning to meaningful dialogue and negotiation, for a just and enduring peace to be achieved.

**If you win Government, what action will your party take to assist the international community in preventing Iran from continuing to pose a threat to regional and global security, including tackling its nuclear weapons programs, its dangerous cyber capabilities and its support for terrorist groups?**

## COALITION

Under the Morrison Government, Australia continues to apply sanctions required under UN Security Council Resolution 2231 on nuclear and ballistic-missile related materials. We also continue to apply Australian autonomous sanctions on the export of arms and related materials.

Working with our partners, and consistent with our obligations under UN Security Council resolutions, the Morrison Government works to tighten the net on Iran's missile proliferation networks and Iran's support for

**Both the Coalition and Labor have embraced the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism**

activities that are destabilising the region, including in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and on the waters of the Gulf. We keep the option of additional Australian autonomous sanctions under active review for Iran and other countries of nuclear and missile technology prolifera-

tion concern, and for those countries that engage in armed aggression, cyber-attacks, and support for terrorism.

Noting Australia is not a party to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Morrison Government will maintain Australia's support, subject to the progress of negotiations with stakeholders on Iran's compliance. The Government's assessment is that our conditional support for the JCPOA serves our national interests in nuclear non-proliferation, and in reinforcing a rules-based international system where agreements once made must be upheld, and international security undertakings once made must be delivered.

Under a returned Morrison Government, Australia will continue to work closely with the US, UK, Canada, New Zealand, France, Germany, and other like-minded in reinforcing the global nuclear non-proliferation and ballistic missile arms control frameworks that we all rely on to deliver regional and global security and stability. |

We will continue to act decisively against cyber-attacks, including by funding and establishing the new REDSPICE (Resilience-Effects-Defence-Space-Intelligence-Cyber-En-

ablers) program. This will introduce new offensive cyber capabilities, persistent cyber-hunt activities, new technology using Artificial Intelligence, and create 1,900 new analyst, technologist, corporate and enabling roles across Australia and around the world.

## ALP

Labor will act with urgency and determination to rid the world of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. Labor will build on Australia's strong history of leading international action by working with our partners and allies to build consensus for action, negotiate new treaties and instruments, and promote adherence to and implementation of existing treaties and instruments.

Labor is alarmed at the potential nuclearisation of conflicts in the Middle East, particularly with Iran moving towards nuclear weapons capacity. We support the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with reservations, and agree with Britain, France, Germany and the US that the interests of global security are best met through an Iran nuclear agreement with robust verification requirements. Iran must whole-heartedly co-operate with UN, International Atomic Energy Agency and other inspections and monitoring as provided in the Action Plan. We remain concerned about Iran's destabilising activities across the Middle East – which is why Labor supported the listing of Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation in its entirety. It is also why Labor members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security called for the listing of the entirety of Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.

**Terrorism remains an ever-present threat in Australia and around the world emanating from Islamist, far-right and other ideologically extremist sources. If you win Government, what will your party do to improve Australia's counter-terrorism capability, counter violent extremism and enhance deradicalisation initiatives? Do you believe that there are any additional groups that need to be considered for listing as terrorist organisations in Australia?**

## COALITION

Australia has a 2022 National Counter-Terrorism Strategy to account for the evolving nature of terrorism and terrorist support, and a 2022 Counter-Terrorism international engagement program designed to advance our capabilities for the next five years. Led by the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism, Australia will continue to work with like-minded nations to counter-terrorism in all its forms, including terrorist financing, terrorism support networks, and on-line radicalisation. The Morrison Government has listed Hezbollah, Hamas, Atomwaffen and other religiously motivated terrorist or neo-Nazi terrorist groups under the Criminal Code.



Inside Australia, the Morrison Government is working hard to protect Australians from terrorism. The Morrison Government has passed more than 20 packages of national security legislation to help our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to investigate, monitor, arrest and prosecute extremists. The Morrison Government also changed the Criminal Code Regulations on terrorist organisations to add dozens of offshoot terrorist cells to the list of groups that can be prosecuted.

The Morrison Government has boosted funding of our law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies and we have passed new laws to revoke the citizenship of dual nationals who engage in terrorism. We will continue to work with local Australian communities to prevent terrorism, counter radicalisation and violent extremism, and remove online terrorist propaganda.

### ALP

Our national security agencies have repeatedly warned that right-wing, nationalist and racist violent extremism is on the rise in Australia. We know it now accounts for 50 per cent of ASIO's domestic counter-terrorism caseload, up from 16 per cent just a few years ago.

The Morrison-Joyce Government has not kept pace with this evolving threat and won't censure those in its ranks who peddle the dangerous and divisive disinformation and conspiracy that drives people towards extremist ideas.

Mr Morrison allowed Australia to fall behind our like-minded partners in taking this threat seriously, being the last of our Five Eyes allies to designate a far-right group as a terrorist organisation.

While we welcomed moves to designate groups already proscribed by our partners, we urge the Morrison-Joyce government to proscribe groups actively recruiting and training in Australia.

Labor will address the rise in right-wing extremism by ensuring our security and law enforcement agencies have the powers, priorities and resources to counter this threat.

And we'll do more with online platforms to remove what the community agrees is abhorrent material.

We also want to work with communities to fight racism and anti-Semitism where it starts, through education and deradicalisation interventions.

Social cohesion is vital in responding to this threat. In Government, Labor will support multiculturalism and inclusion, and unite the country, not divide it.

Labor members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security called for the listing of Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organisations in their entirety.

**The Jewish community is particularly vulnerable to manifestations of racist hatred and violence. If you win Government, what measures will you take to address the significant security costs imposed on the Jewish community by the need to protect Jewish community institutions and schools?**

### COALITION

Religious freedom is not just an inalienable right for citizens, it is important for the cohesion of our society. The Morrison Government is committed to protecting the freedom of Australians to worship and meet safely without fear.

The Morrison Government continues to stamp out crime and improve community safety right around Aus-

tralia through our highly successful Safer Communities Fund.

Since 2016, investments through the Safer Communities Fund have ensured local schools, councils, community groups, religious institutions, including Jewish institutions, and others have the funding they need for programs that reduce

crime and violence, decrease anti-social behaviour, and make communities safer and more secure.

A \$50 million expansion of Round 6 of the Fund in the 2022-23 Budget focussed on supporting organisations who support young people to build resilience, strengthen community connections and hone their everyday skills will further help ensure that everyone, including Jewish communities, can go about their lives free from violence, harassment and anti-social behaviour. This expansion has brought the total investment through the program to \$315 million.

### ALP

Labor will consider changes to the Safer Communities Fund to address Jewish community concerns. In particular, we will consider whether the Commonwealth's Safer Communities Fund should now be further expanded to allow for grants to pay for security at facilities other than schools and pre-schools, and for security infrastructure and personnel at the community level.

**The Australian Jewish community is concerned by rising global antisemitism and bigotry. Both the Coalition and Labor have embraced the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism. Can you detail how a government you lead would implement this definition across government? Also, is your party considering any changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act?**

### COALITION

The Morrison Government does not have any plans to



introduce legislation to amend section 18C. Australia is a proud multicultural society. The Government is committed to ensuring that freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom from discrimination, including on the basis of race or religion, are all protected and promoted. Whilst all Australians have a right to express their views, including people with controversial views, they must remain within the framework of Australian law.

In federal law, section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 makes it unlawful to do an act otherwise than in private that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate people because of their race, colour or national or ethnic origins. This provision appropriately balances Australia's international obligations within our domestic context, and balances the right to free speech with the right to be free from racial vilification.

## ALP

Labor deeply appreciates the work of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in raising awareness of genocide and countering the scourge of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

Labor believes that no faith, religion, or set of beliefs should ever be used as an instrument of division or exclusion, and condemning anyone, discriminating against anyone, or vilifying anyone is violation of the values we all share. Labor will continue to combat racism and expressions of intolerance and discrimination with strength and where necessary, the full force of the law.

That is why Labor supported an amendment to the government's Religious Discrimination Bill to prohibit vilification on the basis of religious belief or practice. Disappointingly, the Liberal Party voted against that amendment and ultimately, Mr Morrison abandoned his bill when amendments to protect school children from discrimination succeeded.

Labor will also continue to defend section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, which for over 20 years has helped to protect Australians from racist hate speech. Labor pays attention to history, and we understand where the acceptance and normalisation of racist hate speech can lead a nation.

In contrast, the Liberal-National Government has launched two separate attacks on section 18C in the last nine years, which former Attorney-General George Brandis famously declared to the Senate was a Liberal Government priority because 'people have a right to be bigots, you know'. It is astonishing that any Australian government would work to give a green light to racist hate speech in support of an imagined 'right to be bigots'. Labor stood with thousands of individuals, legal experts and organisa-

tions, as well as community groups from across our nation, including the Jewish Community, to successfully defend section 18C from these reckless, ideological attacks by the Liberals.

With the rapid rise of right-wing extremism in Australia, Labor believes it is even more important now that the major parties stand united against racism and bigotry in our community.

**There is bipartisan agreement that Australian Multiculturalism – which balances rights with responsibilities to uphold core Australian national values – is the policy framework which anchors a harmonious, ethnically diverse democracy. What policy proposals will your party implement to enhance Australian Multiculturalism?**

## COALITION

The Morrison Government is working to keep our economy strong, keep Australians safe and keep Australians together. Australia is stronger and more prosperous as a nation because of our multicultural heritage.

The Morrison Government recognises the importance of keeping Australians together and fostering social cohesion. We have done this by actively investing in programs that embrace our diversity and help all commu-

nities actively become part of, and benefit from, Australia's economic and social development.

This builds on a solid record of policies and programs supporting Australian multicultural communities, including labour agreements to support migrant communities access the specialised skills that will support older Australians from multicultural backgrounds; as well as new measures to help religious institutions access the skills they need. These changes recognise increasing difficulties in sourcing locally skilled professionals to work in aged care and religious institutions.

WITH COMPLIMENTS



## ALP

Labor recognises that Australia's multicultural fabric and our First Nations identity are national assets. An Albanese Labor Government will bring Australians together in celebration of our rich diversity, and work to end all forms of discrimination.

Labor will have more to say about this during the election campaign.



**The ABC is an important national institution but many are concerned about its ability to meet its statutory charter obligations of balance and fairness. The ABC has commissioned an independent inquiry into its complaint handling, which has yet to hand down its recommendations. What steps, if any, will a government led by your party take to strengthen accountability and improve the independence of complaints procedures at both the ABC and SBS? If the ABC inquiry recommends a new body to review complaints, will you commit to attempting to ensure that these recommendations are implemented?**

## COALITION

A robust complaints process is a critical foundation to the ABC meeting its legislative obligations to be accurate and impartial. All too often people who have complained about perceived bias or inaccuracy in an ABC story have said they have not been given an adequate response from ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs.

The ABC has legislated independence for all operational and content matters, but the Coalition is encouraged that the ABC recognises these serious issues and has initiated an independent review into its handling of complaints. We look forward to the outcome of this process and consider that it must lead to constructive change.

## ALP

Australians have a high regard for the ABC and the trust and respect of the community depend on the ABC's editorial independence and integrity. The ABC has a duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is accurate. There are a range of complaints

mechanisms in relation to ABC reporting that anyone can take advantage of. It is also open to people to complain to the Australian Communications and Media Authority if they feel the ABC has not dealt with a complaint appropriately. The ABC is also subject to regular external scrutiny, including through regular appearances at Senate Estimates and performance audits conducted by the Australian National Audit Office.

Labor will consider the outcomes of the ABC independent inquiry closely.

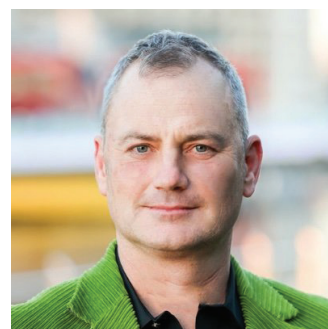
AIR

## A CONCERNING CLIMATE

Jamie Hyams

One relatively unusual feature of the upcoming Federal election is the large number of candidates that are receiving funding from the group Climate 200, headed by Simon Holmes à Court, son of 1980s corporate raiding billionaire Robert and his wife Janet. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, as of April 21, Climate 200 had received \$9 million to disburse to these 22 candidates, some of whom had already received hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Most recipients are challenging sitting coalition members, and they include several "Voices of" or so-called "teal" candidates, although there are also two challengers for a Canberra Senate seat, and four current independent MPs. And several of these candidates have past activities or links that may well be of concern to Jewish voters.



Climate 200 sponsor Simon Holmes à Court (Twitter)

This is perhaps unsurprising, given that on Oct. 25, 2017 and again on ANZAC Day in 2018, Holmes à Court himself repeated, in honour of Yassmin Abdel-Magied's controversial ANZAC Day 2017 tweet, "lest we forget (manus, nauru, syria, palestine)," and then, on ANZAC Day 2019, tweeted, "remember when a bright young Australian woman was remorselessly bullied for writing 'LEST. WE. FORGET. (Manus, Nauru, Syria, Palestine...)'? can't believe that medieval episode in Australian history was only two years ago."

Holmes à Court also took a keen interest in the legal challenge mounted by Michael Staindl against Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's eligibility to serve in Parliament on the



basis of alleged dual citizenship, which was dismissed in 2020. The case caused disquiet among many, as it was seen as seeking to take advantage of the circumstances under which Frydenberg's mother's family fled Hungary at a time of anti-Jewish violence in the aftermath of the Second World War, leaving her stateless. Yet Holmes à Court was regularly seen in the gallery, and explained he was giving "moral support" to Staindl.

His mother, Janet Holmes à Court, has a history of anti-Israel activism, including being one of 23 signatories to a 2011 letter prepared by the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) urging Australia to vote at the UN for a Palestinian state, and also signing a 2017 letter opposing the visit of then-Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to Australia.

There are also links between Climate 200 and the GetUp! organisation, which promoted anti-Israel videos and activities last year. Three Climate 200 candidates, Sophie Scamps in Mackellar, Allegra Spender in Wentworth and Kylea Tink in North Sydney, are using the GetUp!-affiliated communication firm, the Populares Agency.

Perhaps the most contentious action by a Climate 200 candidate was the decision by Zoe Daniel, who is standing against Liberal Tim Wilson in the Victorian seat of Goldstein and has received \$460,000 from Climate 200, to sign the "Do Better On Palestine" letter in May 2021. That letter completely misrepresents the cause of the May 2021 Gaza conflict, blaming Israel when it was started by Hamas rocket barrages against Israeli civilians; refers to Israel's very founding as the Nakba – "catastrophe" in Arabic; echoes baseless and malicious accusations that Israel practises apartheid; and essentially urges the media to cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a one-sided and unbalanced way that gives priority to the Palestinian perspective.

Daniel has since, in media interviews and in her "Jewish Community" policy on her website, stated that she will "always be a strong supporter of the state of Israel as a Jewish State, existing within safe and secure borders." She

states that her signing of the letter was "narrowly framed" to express her concern for the safety of journalists, and that she didn't write it.

Given how diametrically opposed the contents of the letter are to her stated position on Israel, it's fair to ask if she actually read it. She defends her refusal to remove her name from the letter by saying that seems to her to be "insincere, or a cheat's way out." Again, it could alternatively be suggested that her stated position on Israel itself looks insincere if she insists on remaining a signatory.

Daniel also claimed, in an article she wrote as an ABC journalist in December 2017, that by announcing he would move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, then-US President Donald Trump had sabotaged efforts to bring peace to the Middle East and was "satisfying his wealthy Jewish donors."

Potential concerns Jewish voters might have regarding Daniel extend to her campaign staff. As revealed by Sharri Markson in the *Australian*, her



The Climate 200 candidates for Goldstein Zoe Daniel (top) and Wentworth Allegra Spender (bottom)

campaign manager, Sue Barrett, compared Scott Morrison to Adolf Hitler, writing on social media in 2020, "@StrayMutts shared insights from a book he's reading about Hitler and his boys... Hitler altered reality with drugs and Morrison uses religion." Barrett's husband, Jobst Schmalenbach, the campaign operations manager, said on social media in response to Jewish criticism of former ALP politician Melissa Parke, "The Jewish right-wing lobby group should simply shut up. Palestine is an open-air prison."

Allegra Spender, an independent challenging Liberal MP Dave Sharma in Wentworth in NSW, also courted some controversy with an anti-Israel individual affiliated with her campaign, Blair Palese, who has complained on social media about "Australia's shocking support of Israel in killing unarmed children and civilians," and shared articles and tweets supporting the BDS campaign against the Sydney Festival for accepting sponsorship from the Israeli embassy.

Palese was one of the four core members of Wentworth Independents who drafted the group's platform, but Spender, who personally opposes BDS and says she supports Israel, states Palese has never been a part of her campaign team.

Most egregious in terms of sheer quantity of anti-Israel activity by Climate 200-supported candidates is a current MP, independent Andrew Wilkie, who holds the Tasmanian seat of Clarke. In February 2020, while then-Israeli President Reuven Rivlin was visiting Parliament House in Canberra, Wilkie addressed a “Vigil for Palestinian rights” outside. He accused Israel of “treating its domestic Palestinians” and “Palestinians outside its borders” as “second-rate citizens,” invading and occupying surrounding territories, and denying people in surrounding areas their sovereignty.

Following a June 2013 visit from APAN, he put out a statement claiming then-Opposition Foreign Affairs spokesperson Julie Bishop “appears to be beholden to Israeli interests at the expense of the Palestinian people,” because she had “refused to call the settlements illegal.”

On Nov. 26, 2015, in Parliament, Wilkie stated, “What Australia must do is recognise the need for a Palestinian state and condemn Israel’s illegal acts of settlement and violence. It is alarming that too many of our political leaders appear to be beholden to Israeli interests at the expense of the Palestinian people.”

On May 12 2021, during the Gaza conflict, he told the Parliament that “the context” was “the Nakba, where, in 1948, Jewish militia razed hundreds of villages and an estimated 700,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes, becoming refugees.” He added that “illegal Israeli settlement of Palestinian territory” was “at the heart of the ongoing conflict” and called on the Government to “formally recognise Palestine.”

On Sept. 14, 2017, Wilkie spoke about the upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Beersheva, concluding, “The best way to commemorate this battle and the part the Australians played is to now recognise Palestine and work decisively towards its independence even if it is 100 years too late.”

Wilkie, together with fellow Climate 200-supported independent MP Rebekha Sharkie, the Member for Mayo in South Australia, signed a petition in Nov. 2016 making various allegations about Israel’s treatment of Palestinian children, and calling for “urgent action to end the ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system.” Sharkie also spoke on the matter in Par-

liament that month, and addressed a pointed question to the Foreign Minister about it in September 2017, as well as one in July 2020 asking about the Government’s position on Israel’s “proposed annexation of the Jordan Valley.”

Monique Ryan, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg’s independent opponent in his seat of Kooyong, was forced to apologise for a social media post she shared in 2017. The

post, obtained by the *Australian*, mocked up Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* to show Donald Trump on the cover, with the book renamed “Mein Covfefe” after Trump’s mysterious tweet using that word.

In January 2021, Kylea Tink, now challenging Trent Zimmerman in North Sydney, also compared Trump to Hitler. She retweeted the comment, “When you read about how Hitler failed at his first attempt to overthrow the government on November 8, 1923, being tried for treason and briefly imprisoned, yet within 8 years had succeeded, then you understand how important it is to convict trump and ban him from future federal office.” She added, “History should never be repeated x.”

Jo Dyer, who is standing as an independent in the South Australian seat of Boothby, previously held by retiring Liberal Nicolle Flint, tweeted that an article by Jeff Sparrow was “lucid” and “persuasive”. The article states, “The Israeli state depends on the dispossession of Palestinians, and so, by its nature, will constantly create and recreate violence,” and effectively calls for the destruction of Israel by creating a “single, democratic state for all.”

Former ABC *Triple J* breakfast show host Alex Dyson is contesting Wannon, held by Trade, Tourism and Investment Minister Dan Tehan. In August 2012, he and co-host Tom Ballard played a game on air they called “Six Degrees of Hitleration” based on the linking game “Six Degrees of Separation”. Ballard, a staunch BDS supporter, was forced to apologise after “joking”, “Wind farms, fan-forced ovens, let’s not go there.”

Of course, the Climate 200 candidates are far from alone when it comes to candidates showing hostility to Israel or making inappropriate comments about Adolf Hitler, or having top staff and supporters who have done so. However, given the potential impact of these candidates, it is appropriate for Australian voters to consider all of this baggage and history when deciding whether to vote for them, or to financially support Climate 200.



Other beneficiaries of Climate 200 funding: Longstanding Tasmanian Independent MP Andrew Wilkie (top) and North Sydney candidate Kylea Tink (bottom)





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# Celebrating Terrorism

## Palestinian opinion backs the murder of Jews

**Khaled Abu Toameh**

**T**he celebrations that took place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the recent terror attacks in Israel are yet another sign of growing radicalisation among Palestinians and their refusal to recognise Israel's right to exist.

The expressions of joy, when Palestinians took to the streets to hand out sweets and chant slogans in support of the terrorists, are reminiscent of the celebrations that took place when then Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein fired missiles at Israel in 1991 during the First Gulf War, or when Hamas, Fatah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terror groups carried out suicide bombing attacks, murdering hundreds of Israelis during the Second Intifada, which erupted in 2000.

Apart from demonstrating the Palestinians' disrespect for human life and support for terrorism, the celebrations once again prove that a Palestinian who murders a Jew is a hero, whereas one who seeks peace with Israel is a traitor.

A public opinion poll published on March 22 found that Palestinian support for an "armed struggle" against Israel has risen from 42% three months ago to 44%.

In the lexicon of the Palestinians, "armed struggle" is a euphemism for various forms of terrorism against Israel, ranging from rock-throwing to shooting, stabbing, car-ramming, rocket salvos and suicide bombing attacks.

The poll, conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, showed that a majority of 70% oppose a resumption of the peace process with Israel.

If new elections for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority (PA) were held today, Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, the Iran-backed terrorist group that seeks to destroy Israel, would defeat PA President Mahmoud Abbas, according to the results of the survey. Additionally, a majority of Palestinians said that they would vote for Hamas in a parliamentary election.

Seventy three percent of the Palestinian public wants the 86-year-old Abbas to resign. Previous polls have indicated that nearly 80% of the public wants to see Abbas step down.

## AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH FOR BLINKEN

While most Palestinians are saying that they want to see their president depart from the scene, the US Administration seems to be among the few parties in the international arena that continue to deal with Abbas and pin hopes on him regarding the so-called two-state solution and peace with Israel.

After his last meeting with Abbas in Ramallah on March 27, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken again repeated the Biden Administration's "commitment to the basic principle" of the two-state solution:

"Palestinians and Israelis alike deserve to live with equal measures of freedom, of opportunity, security, of dignity, and we believe that the most effective way, ultimately, to give expression to that basic principle is through two states."

Here is an inconvenient truth for Blinken: the poll that was conducted one week before he arrived in Ramallah, the de facto capital of the Palestinians, showed that most Palestinians (58%) are opposed to the two-state solution. Why? They do not believe in Israel's right to exist.

These Palestinians want peace without Israel, not peace with Israel. The only peace they envision is one

where Israel would cease to exist.

## A RELIGIOUS DUTY

That is why – like this and previous polls have shown – most Palestinians continue to support Hamas, whose charter openly calls for the elimination of Israel.

For them, it is a religious duty to work toward the "liberation of all of Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea." Article 11 of the charter states:

"The Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas] believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered; it or any part of it, should not be given up."

Article 15 says:

"The day that enemies usurp part of Muslim land, jihad [holy war] becomes the individual duty of every Muslim. In face of the Jews' usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of jihad be raised."

The Hamas charter also reminds Muslims of the famous



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with PA President Mahmoud Abbas: Despite Blinken's pronouncements, two states remain elusive (Image: Flickr)

saying of the prophet Mohammed:

“The Day of Judgement will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind the stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Muslims, O Abdullah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”

## GRADUATE FROM PRISON, NOT UNIVERSITY

Moreover, the poll found that a vast majority of Palestinians (73%) believe that the Koran contains a prophecy concerning the demise of Israel. However, the majority (57%) do not believe the assessment, put forward by a few Muslim scholars, that verses in the Koran predict the exact year of the demise of Israel: 2022.

So the vast majority of the Palestinians are convinced that the Koran does include a reference to the demise of Israel, they just are not sure what year that will happen.



Palestinians in Gaza hand out sweets to celebrate a terrorist attack against Israelis (Source: Twitter)

This conviction is a clear expression of wishful thinking on the part of most Palestinians, especially those who were cheering, dancing and distributing sweets to celebrate the terror attacks that took place in the Israeli cities of Beer-sheva, Bnei Brak and Tel Aviv over recent weeks.

Praising the recent wave of terror attacks in Israel, Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said on April 9, “These recurring heroic operations prove a clear fact – that there is no future for the Jews on our Palestinian land.”

As shown by the poll, it is leaders such as Zahar whom the Palestinians would prefer as their president. A Palestinian leader who talks about destroying Israel or murdering Jews has a better chance of being elected than one who states that he is opposed to terrorism and wants to work towards achieving a two-state solution.

For the Palestinians, it is much more important if one graduates from an Israeli prison than from any university.

That is why former PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, a world-renowned economist and reformer educated in the US, won only two seats when his slate ran in the last parliamentary election in 2006. Fayyad’s lack of popularity is mainly attributed to the fact that he never served time

in an Israeli prison for murdering or wounding a Jew or engaging in terror activity against Israel.

## PRETENDING THE PA IS A CREDIBLE PARTNER

One of the reasons behind the rising radicalisation of the Palestinians is the vicious incitement by Abbas and the PA against Israel and Jews.

In the days and weeks before the wave of terrorism began, the Palestinian leaders were telling their people that Jews are planning to desecrate and commit crimes against the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. It is such libels that fuel the terrorists and increase their motivation to murder Jews. It is also this type of incitement that drives more Palestinians into the welcoming arms of Hamas and other extremists.

The Palestinians who are celebrating the murder of Jews have been told by their leaders that terrorism aims to stop Israel from “committing crimes” against the al-Aqsa Mosque. This of course is completely false because since the beginning of Ramadan, tens of thousands of Muslim worshippers have been freely and safely accessing the mosque for prayers.

That is another example of how Palestinian leaders have radicalised their own people to the point where the murder of young Jewish men enjoying their time in a bar in the centre of Tel Aviv becomes a cause for public celebration. Palestinians have been radicalised and brainwashed by their leaders to the point where peace with Israel or a two-state solution is seen as an opportunity to murder.

The Biden Administration, meanwhile, continues to pretend that Abbas and his Government are credible partners and that Israelis and Americans can do business with them.

It would have been more useful had Blinken denounced the celebrations and publicly pressured the Palestinian leadership immediately to halt the massive campaign of incitement against Israel and the glorification of Palestinians who murder Jews.

Ignoring the scenes of jubilation on the Palestinian street and continuing to pretend that the Palestinian Authority is a reliable partner for peace will only lead to further violence and bloodshed.

It is time for the Biden Administration and other Western donors to start banging on the table and demanding an end to the poisonous campaign to delegitimise Israel and demonise Jews. Until that happens, we will continue to see Palestinians dancing and handing out candy because Jewish blood flows at their feet.

AIR

*Khaled Abu Toameh is an award-winning journalist based in Jerusalem. Reprinted from the Gatestone Institute (www.gatestoneinstitute.org). © Khaled Abu Toameh, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

# TO FIGHT TERROR, CONFRONT ITS ABETTORS

Ehud Yaari

The Biden Administration has been making a significant effort to ensure that Israeli-Palestinian tensions do not flare up again and that steps are taken toward improving the West Bank economy. This effort, led by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, is threatened lately by the surge in terrorist attacks inside Israeli cities and the countermeasures taken by Israel to foil further attempts, as well as by the riots on Temple Mount. Unfortunately, calls on the Palestinians for restraint fall on deaf ears as long as certain other players are continually encouraging Palestinian youth to resort to violence. But the US has leverage among a number of these players and should use it to dissuade them from providing a favourable climate to ISIS, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front and Hamas, as well as “lone wolves.”

First on the list is Qatar. Recently crowned by the US as a Major Non-NATO Ally and preparing to host later this year the prestigious soccer World Cup tournament, this tiny, affluent emirate has become the primary cheerleader for Palestinian terrorism. Not only does the ruler, Sheikh Tamim, refrain from expressing any criticism of killing sprees on the streets of Israeli cities or speak out against youth turning the al-Aqsa court into a scene of violence, but he also directs his media empire led by the Al Jazeera broadcast network to pour oil onto the flames, constantly exacerbating tensions. For years Doha has been hosting and financing Hamas’ leadership, including many operatives involved in initiating attacks on Israel. The country has become an important link in the supply chain of terrorism.

True, Qatar maintains unofficial ties with Israel, even after 2000 when it closed the Israeli trade bureau in its capital, but it exploits the relationship mainly in order to gain permission to channel funds to the Gaza Strip. Through coordination between Jerusalem, Hamas, the Quartet (including the US) and the UN, the Qatari special envoy Muhammed al-Emadi has been allowed to move large sums of cash to assist needy families there and finance some development projects. Sure, Israel sees an advantage in preventing an implosion of the Gaza Strip into dangerous impoverishment – however it is high time to alter the equation: The US should back Israel serving notice that Mr. Emadi and the monies he brings are no longer welcome as



Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani: While Qatar may be a nominal US ally, when it comes to terrorism, it is very much part of the problem (Source: Flickr)

long as Qatar persists in encouraging violence. The arrangements for delivering aid should be suspended – not abolished – until Tamim reassesses his attitude.

No doubt such a move would create a serious crisis with Hamas and might ignite fresh protest salvos of rockets, but as has happened several times before, a new round of hostilities will not last too long and the Qataris will be ultimately compelled to modify their position. Hamas simply cannot afford to lose the Qatari funds. And the opportunity must not be missed to get Qatar out of the choir singing the praise of whoever kills Israelis.

The Qataris’ closest ally, President Erdogan of Turkey, who has permitted Hamas military headquarters to operate from Istanbul, is a case in point. Erdogan “strongly” condemned the latest terrorist attacks in Israel and was also very restrained in his reaction to the Ramadan skirmishes on the Temple Mount. Following his meeting last month with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Erdogan is expected to exercise restraint on Hamas in the coming months while maintaining his relationship with the US-designated terrorist group. This precedent should help Qatar’s Sheikh Tamim assess his own position.

Half a dozen Arab governments have already made statements denouncing the attacks and all Arab parties and

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municipal councils inside Israel have joined in. Now pressure should be applied on Qatar to adhere to zero tolerance of terrorism and commit to stop egging terrorists on.

At the same time, the US should not object to Israel informing Hamas – first quietly and if necessary publicly – that it has to tone down preaching to young Palestinians that their sacred national duty is to carry out acts of terrorism. Israel can warn that it would be forced to suspend the implementation of understandings that are designed to improve the welfare of the population in Gaza; for example, repeating or extending this week's closure of the Erez crossing, a move that bars the entry of 20,000 Gaza labourers daily into Israel, and freezing a long list of other measures to improve conditions that were agreed upon over recent months. Again, Hamas might respond with rocket fire, but Israel would be better served fighting another round over that matter of principle.

Lastly, one might thank President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority (PA) for the half-hearted condemnation he deigned to issue in the wake of the recent terror attacks after repeated requests by the US, but this isn't enough. The PA played a major role in incitement to demonstrate on the Temple Mount, spreading fabricated claims that Israel is seeking to change the status quo there. The PLO Executive Committee, Fatah's Central Committee and the Palestinian Government are expected to issue clear statements of condemnation, in keeping with the commitments they undertook in the

**“Allowed to proceed in the current mode, the combination of Qatar, Hamas and the PA is guaranteed to cause an expansion of the cycle of brutal violence”**

Oslo Accords. If they fail to meet this demand, Israel could apply pressure by suspending some programs in the long list of those designed to improve the economic situation in the West Bank. The PA must also be required – as the US makes plain in every conversation with PA officials – to commit to discontinue paying

monthly salaries, welfare allocations and other subsidies to people arrested from now on for engagement in terrorism. Naturally, a move like this is bound to heighten tensions, but challenging a culture sanctifying violence will never come without risks.

A principled policy aimed at changing the bloody rules of the game should have been enacted years ago, but it isn't too late to do so now. We may yet discover that there is broader international support for this demand than we imagine. A decision to adopt this course of action will indeed temporarily ratchet up tensions and invite crises, but what exactly are we waiting for?

Allowed to proceed in the current mode, the combina-

tion of Qatar, Hamas and the PA is guaranteed to cause an expansion of the cycle of brutal violence inflicting pain on both Jews and Arabs. If the US truly aspires to achieve a settlement of the Middle East conflict, it cannot turn a blind eye to those seeking to obstruct further progress by igniting cycles of terror and counterterror.

A good first step would be to persuade Jordan, Egypt, the Emirates, Morocco and others to denounce the Palestinians' violation of the sanctity of al-Aqsa in return for a clear Israeli commitment to maintaining the status quo. There's no time like the present to get started in the right direction – better now than waiting around to find out what might happen during next year's Ramadan. AIR

*Ehud Yaari, author of eight books on Israeli-Arab relations, is a Lafer International Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Israel Television Channel 2's Middle East Commentator. © Times of Israel (www.timesofisrael.com) reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## ISRAEL'S IMPROBABLE COALITION ON A KNIFE'S EDGE

Amotz Asa-El

Hardly ten months since its unexpected emergence, the most improbable coalition Israel has ever seen looks ready to dissolve.

The political bundle of eight parties ranging from an Islamist preacher to West Bank settlers lost its razor-thin parliamentary majority when coalition chairperson Idit Silman bolted the coalition on April 6. As of this writing, both Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's Government and the Likud-led opposition each wield exactly 60 lawmakers.

A modern-Orthodox health administrator and mother of three, Silman was elected as part of Bennett's *Yamina* (“Rightward”) party, a collection of religious and secular nationalists who lacked a religious agenda other than the commitment to both respect freedom of religion and uphold Jewish tradition.

Even so, Silman said she felt the Government was doing “harm to [Israel's] Jewish identity” after Health Minister



The Defector: Departing Israeli coalition chairperson Idit Silman (Image: Wikipedia)



Israeli PM Naftali Bennett (front left) is scrambling to save his fraying coalition, but may well hold on for some time (Source: Flickr)

Nitsan Horovitz of the secularist Meretz faction, acting in response to a court decision, ordered hospitals not to forbid visitors from entering during Passover with bread and other foods forbidden under Jewish law during the seven days of the holiday.

Pundits questioned whether this was Silman's real motivation, as her defection was reportedly obtained in return for a Likud promise to make her health minister in an alternative, right-wing government. Silman did not deny these reports. Some believe Silman was overwhelmed by the pressure placed on her by activists who showed up regularly outside her home in Rehovot with bullhorns and called her "traitor" and other slurs.

Whatever drove her decision, Silman's move seems irreversible.

Meanwhile, the coalition came under additional pressure when its Arab component, the Ra'am faction, facing

Arab community anger over Israeli police handling of Muslim rioters on Jerusalem's Temple Mount during the Passover and Ramadan holidays, decided to suspend its membership in the coalition until the end of the Knesset's spring break on May 9th.

This suspension is largely symbolic, since there are no legislative votes during the Knesset's spring break, but it both underscores and aggravates the fragility of an already fraying coalition.

The coalition crisis threatens to return Israel to the political paralysis that

gave rise to the improbable Bennett-led Government in the first place.

While the opposition currently does not have a majority for a no-confidence vote, under Israeli law, if the Government does not pass a new budget by March 2023, it automatically falls and new elections are called.

Lacking a majority, the Government will be unable to pass another biennial budget, which under Israeli law requires the votes of at least 61 lawmakers. With little prospect of getting

such an absolute majority, Bennett and Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman may be able to potentially make do with a one-year budget, which the law allows to pass with a simple majority.

However, even achieving that may require getting backing from at least one lawmaker from the current opposition. The only politically available candidates right now to supply that backing appear to be the radicals from the mostly-Arab Joint List. Such deals are not unprecedented, but they are very unlikely to keep the Government alive for the remaining three years of the Knesset's four-year term.

What goes for the budgetary process goes also for all other legislation. As a stopgap policy, Bennett intends to limit the Government's legislative initiatives, and to table only bills that can be backed by parts of the opposition.

Having said all this, an early election is not necessarily imminent. The Knesset can initiate an early election only with a 61-member majority. For the government to be replaced by the existing Knesset without a general election, the opposition needs to produce an alternative candidate

**"The coalition crisis threatens to return Israel to the political paralysis that gave rise to the improbable Bennett-led Government in the first place"**

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backed by at least 61 lawmakers. This looks extremely unlikely, since the opposition's 60 seats include six from the aforementioned Joint List, and there is no chance they would back a Likud led alternative government.

The opposition has been trying feverishly to recruit more defectors like Silman, but these efforts have so far not succeeded. This means that Israeli politics appears to be returning to the state of limbo that produced four inconclusive elections over the past three years.

All polls suggest that if an election were held today, little would change, since voter movements seem to be almost exclusively to alternative parties within the same political bloc, and seldom between the two major blocs.

The roots of this ongoing crisis are both personal and partisan. The personal aspects concern current Opposition Leader and former PM Binyamin Netanyahu's legal situation and political status.

Netanyahu is currently in the middle of a trial on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust over three different cases. Despite this, he enjoys the firm backing of about one quarter of the electorate – which is nearly twice as much as any other Israeli political leader. That is why his Likud party has been unwilling to replace him as party head.

At the same time, Netanyahu is deeply unacceptable to an even larger part of the electorate. This includes many right-wing voters, represented by three parties in the current governing coalition.

Of those three, Justice Minister Gideon Saar, whose New Hope party won 5% of the vote, is so staunchly anti-Netanyahu that he vowed not to sit in any government headed by the former PM, saying he must step aside due to his indictments.

The coalition's two other right-wing parties, Bennett's Yamina and Lieberman's *Yisrael Beiteinu* ("Israel is our Home") made no such pledges, and their leaders have in fact avoided any statements about Netanyahu's legal situation.

However, there is considerable bad blood between each of them and Netanyahu as well, harking back to the years both Bennett and Lieberman spent working with him, first as aides, then as ministers in his many cabinets. The likelihood of either of the two returning to a Netanyahu-led coalition is therefore low.

One exception in this regard may be Bennett's Yamina

party colleague and long-time ally Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked. Charismatic, opinionated, and ideological, the 45-year-old electrical engineer has avoided clashing with either Netanyahu or Likud, and many believe her long-term aim is to return to the Likud, where she first entered politics, and become its leader.

Whatever such a plan's prospects, the partisan situation right now is such that an early election sometime next year, or perhaps even earlier, is now overwhelmingly likely. This is despite the fact that no Israeli leader has put forward a credible formula for ending the political stalemate Israel has grappled with for three years.

Barring the unpredictable effect of an external shock, change seems possible only as a result of some kind of change in Netanyahu's situation. This can happen in one of three ways.

The first is that Netanyahu's ongoing trial ends quickly, and he emerges fully cleared. In such a scenario, he would likely easily win a return to the premiership, rallying behind him the entire Right, and, if he so wishes, also gaining support from parts of the Israeli Centre as well.

The second scenario is that Netanyahu is convicted, or accepts a plea bargain, and is left no political choice but to vacate the political stage. In such a case, Likud will hold a primary election to elect a successor. There

are already at least seven candidates to replace him as head of Likud, all incumbent lawmakers.

Any of these would-be successors would likely be in a position to put an end to the political limbo, not because of his or her abilities, but because, without Netanyahu's legal troubles, the anti-Netanyahu segments of the Right would not view him or her as similarly disqualified from the top job.

Moreover, if led by someone else, Likud might be in a position to gain coalition support from centrist parties, like Foreign Minister Yair Lapid's *Yesh Atid* ("There is a Future") and Defence Minister Benny Gantz's Blue and White, both of which currently refuse to join a Netanyahu-led government.

Another scenario is that, if a stalemate produces another early election which then produces another hung parliament, Likud might potentially replace Netanyahu regardless of what happens to him in court. "You have been our leader since last century," they may then tell the 72-year-old statesman who was prime minister for an aggregate 15 years, "it's time to retire."



An end to Israel's multi-year political stalemate seems likely only if there is some sort of resolution to the legal status of former PM Binyamin Netanyahu (Image: UPI/Alamy Live News)



# TEHERAN'S AUSTRALIAN PROPAGANDISTS BACK PUTIN'S UKRAINE WAR

Ran Porat

**A**mong the first countries to support Russia in its murderous invasion of Ukraine were the authoritarian regimes of Syria and (more cautiously) Iran. Hence, it is not surprising that Australian propagandists for Teheran and Damascus quickly followed suit and started pushing Moscow's narrative to Australian audiences, including fake news, conspiracy theories and lies.

## ANDERSON – BUCHA MASSACRE “STAGED BY UKRAINIAN NAZIS”

Disgraced Sydney University academic Tim Anderson is the most prominent public persona among this pro-Iranian and pro-Russian group in Australia. As revealed previously in the *AIR*, Anderson is a leading figure in the local branch of Iran's global propaganda organisation *Al-Tajamu*, which disseminates in Australia the hatred-infused, anti-West and antisemitic messages dictated by Teheran. This includes support for Iran's proxy terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Yemen's Houthis, and cheering for the murderous Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.

On social media, Anderson has been sharing Moscow-fabricated – or at least inspired – content with his more than 60,000 followers. Below are a few examples from recent weeks.



After 'cry wolf' stunts and false flag atrocities, like the #WMDs in Iraq, the #Houla massacre and CW attacks in #Syria, critical analyses emerge. Like this one on #Bucha. But the war propaganda machine moves on, creating new scams.  
[covertactionmagazine.com/2022/04/06/was...](https://covertactionmagazine.com/2022/04/06/was...)

**Was Alleged Russian Army Massacre of Civilians at Bucha Actually a False Flag Event Staged by Ukrainian Nazis?**

9:41 AM · Apr 7, 2022 · Twitter for Android

Anderson's Twitter post (Screenshot, April 7)

On April 7, Anderson labelled the accusations Russia committed war crimes during the attack on the Ukrainian town of Bucha “‘cry wolf’ stunts and false flag atrocities.” This recalls his previous online efforts to paint as ‘false’ the allegations (later proven true) that Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people.

“But the war propaganda machine moves on, creating new scams,” concluded Anderson regarding Bucha. His post was accompanied by a picture saying: “Was alleged Russian Army Massacre of Civilians at Bucha Actually a False Flag Event Staged by Ukrainian Nazis?”

A few weeks earlier (March 23) Anderson offered Twitter praise for an online interview with pro-Russian propagandist Gonzalo Lira, arguing that “The Russian invasion, unlike US invasions, has not attacked civilian infrastructure like electricity, telephony, internet, water.” In fact, Moscow has attacked Ukraine's internet and the power grid during the war. The Russians may not have destroyed other infrastructure because they themselves are using it, for example, for communications and intelligence gathering.

Anderson persistently toes the Moscow line in calling the Ukrainians ‘Nazis’. “It cannot be ignorance that drives the #NATO embedded media to support #NeoNazis in #Mariupol,” he said in a tweet. “There are dozens of reports on

the history, ideology and practice of Ukraine's far-right groups, and how they are embedded in the #Kiev regime.”

Anderson depicts the Russian army as the ‘saviors’ of Ukrainian citizens from their own soldiers, in this social media post from Mar 21: “#NATO war media writes about but doesn't listen to #Mariupol residents: “#Ukrainian army threw us out of our homes to take firing positions, old people and kids. They locked families in the basements and abandoned them. The #Russian troops rescued us, they are our brothers.”

The fact that Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky is Jewish created an opening for Anderson to add anti-Israel slurs to the mix. Following the Ukrainian President's speech to the Israeli Knesset (March 20), Anderson argued that Zelensky “plays the #Zionist card to the #Israeli Knesset knowing very well that #Apartheid #Israel has already helped arm #NeoNazis embedded in the #Kiev regime which he currently represents.”

## THARAPPEL – UKRAINIAN-ISRAELI BUSINESSMAN “WANTS WW3”

Jay (José) Tharappel, a former student of Anderson's,

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is another senior member of Al-Tajamu Australia. Accordingly, he is also busy spreading the Russian narrative here.

Blaming Washington for the conflict, Tharappel argued (March 18) in a Twitter post that “The Ukrainian tragedy begins with the US cultivating those Ukrainian elements who collaborated with the German invasion of the USSR, and eventually weaponising them against Russia.”

Adding an ugly touch of conspiracy and perhaps antisemitism, he also argued (March 18) that Ukrainian-Israeli-Cypriot billionaire, businessman, and politician Ihor Kolomoisky is behind the war: “Zelensky to Russia: We won’t join NATO. Zelensky to NATO: Shoot Russian planes. Kolomoisky clearly wants WW3”.

On March 17, Tharappel shared on his Twitter account a post promoting a conspiracy theory that Ukraine is faking the killing of its own people to satisfy the media. “The neo-Nazi Azov false flag in the Mariupol Drama Theater was known by local residents 3 days before the explosion. On social networks, they explained how ‘Azov have gathered women and children in the drama theater and are going to blow it up to blame the Russian military’.” The original post he cited has since become unavailable after Twitter suspended the account which posted it. While the reasons for the suspension remain unclear, it is not unlikely this was because it was a Russian fake news account.

## CCHS: JUSTIFYING RUSSIA’S INVASION AGAINST “UKRAINIAN FASCISM”

The Centre for Counter Hegemonic Studies (CCHS) is an allegedly academic body headed by Anderson which is in fact just a platform for dispensing yet more pro-Teheran and pro-Damascus propaganda. Recently, the centre’s website was enlisted to aid the Russian public relations effort in Australia.

For that purpose, CCHS published (March 23) a piece by Canadian apologist for the Syrian government Aaron Maté, titled “By using Ukraine to fight Russia, the US provoked Putin’s war.” In it, the author puts the blame for the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Washington: “The US policy of using Ukraine as cannon fodder has accompanied a bid to incorporate it into NATO. Compounding the dangers of a hostile military alliance on Russia’s borders, the US has also methodically dismantled the Cold War-era arms control treaties that limited the arsenals of the world’s two top nuclear powers.”

CCHS has strongly pushed the Russian fable that

Ukraine is a Nazi country. Maté claims that the Ukrainian army includes neo-Nazis: “In the fall of 2014, the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion was formally incorporated into Ukraine’s National Guard, making post-Maidan Ukraine ‘the world’s only nation to have a neo-Nazi formation in its armed forces,’ the Ukrainian-American journalist Lev

Golinkin later observed.”

Other articles published on CCHS’s website include texts highlighting past ties between the Ukrainians and the Nazis during WWII, as well as stories such as “Russian communists call for anti-fascist front against ‘Nato-led nazification of Ukraine’” and “The roots of Ukrainian fascism.”

A popular Russian-manufactured propaganda line repeated by CCHS is

to argue that Washington is behind the rise of supposed fascist elements ruling Ukraine. For example, the centre republished claims that first appeared on the conspiracy website CovertAction, alleging ties between the US trade union federation the AFL-CIO and a “Nazi Friendly Union in Ukraine.” CCHS also featured a video by anti-Israel US academic John Mearsheimer, arguing (March 6) that “the Obama regime orchestrated the 2014 Kiev coup” which, Mearsheimer claims, “wrecked” Ukraine.

Similarly, the pamphlet “25 Questions about Crimea” frames the issues using Russian terminology to back Russian claims – for example, one question is “Why isn’t the reunification of Crimea with Russia considered a Russian occupation?”

On March 11, CCHS ran “The Ukraine War Propaganda Blitz” – an alleged media critique by the UK-based extreme left-leaning Media Lens, a website which has been accused of repeatedly minimising the atrocities of dictators such as Syria’s Bashar al-Assad. According to CCHS, the Media Lens critique concerning Ukraine “reflects on the latest propaganda storm from the NATO embedded war media.”

Anderson and his followers have once again demonstrated that their supposed “work” is not so much an example of “free speech”, but a vehicle to spread propaganda generated by authoritarian and hostile foreign governments.

AIR

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Jay #HouthiWillWin @JayTharappel · Mar 19  
Meanwhile in Kiev.



3 4 22

Former Anderson student and fellow pro-Iranian propagandist Jay Tharappel joins in his pro-Moscow pile-on (Screenshot)



## THE BIBLIO FILE

# An 804-day nightmare in Iran

### The Uncaged Sky: My 804 days in an Iranian Prison

**Kylie Moore-Gilbert**, Ultimo Press, 2022, 416 pp., A\$35



Naomi Levin

An oft-overlooked aspect of Australian academic Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert's false imprisonment by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is the actual charges she was convicted of.

Dr Moore-Gilbert was sentenced to ten years in jail for "cooperation in espionage for the tyrannical Zionist regime," or in plain language, spying on behalf of Israel.

This is a truly unbelievable charge to level against a University of Melbourne lecturer who travelled to Iran in September 2018, after being invited – and receiving clearance from the University of Melbourne – to attend an academic conference in the holy city of Qom.

Dr Moore-Gilbert was arrested at Teheran's airport and spent 804 days in Iranian prison, including unimaginable months in solitary confinement. After much political game-playing, a complex diplomatic arrangement was negotiated involving the swap of Dr Moore-Gilbert for three IRGC operatives convicted of plotting a terrorist attack against Israeli diplomats in Thailand.

A memoir of her imprisonment, *The Uncaged Sky: My 804 Days in an*

*Iranian Prison*, was published in late March by Ultimo Press.

This important book adds to the growing library of first-hand evidence of the cruelty of one of the Iranian regime's favourite diplomatic tools – hostage diplomacy. From Barry Rosen, who in 1979 was one of 52 Americans detained in the US Em-

**"Early in the saga, her IRGC interrogators... discovered she was married to a Russian-Israeli man, speaks Hebrew and had spent time studying in Israel. This information was like a red rag to a bull"**

bassy in Iran for 444 days, to *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian, who was detained on false charges in 2015 for 544 days, numerous victims have bravely put their experiences into words to draw attention to Iran's brutal and blunt instruments of diplomacy.

Moore-Gilbert also uses her new book to raise awareness of the plight of her former fellow inmates, some of whom became genuine friends. These include Niloufar Bayani and Sepideh Kashani, Iranian conservationists who remain in prison after being falsely convicted of espionage; Fariba Adelkhah, a French-Iranian anthro-

pologist who remains imprisoned more than 1,000 days after her arrest; Soheila Hijab, who has been jailed for 18 years for campaigning for women's rights; and Nasrin Sotoudeh, an Iranian human rights lawyer sentenced to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes.

*The Uncaged Sky: My 804 Days in an Iranian Prison* is fearlessly and warmly written. As readers are confronted with the details of the author's ordeal, they cannot help but wonder whether, if placed in the same situation, they would act with the courage and strength shown throughout by Dr Moore-Gilbert.

While initially shocked at her arrest, Dr Moore-Gilbert soon realised she was in real trouble. She writes: "The IRGC considered a person to be guilty from the moment the decision was made (by them) to admit him or her into prison for interrogation. The court, the trial, the judge – they were all mere rubber stamps. There was no presumption of innocence."

The book goes on to provide unprecedented insight into the inner-workings of the secretive IRGC, as well as some remarkable revelations into how Iranians view Israel and the Jewish people.

Early in the saga, her IRGC interrogators – who Moore-Gilbert labels a "morally corrupt Islamist mafia" – discovered she was married to a Russian-Israeli man, speaks Hebrew and had spent time studying in Israel. This information was like a red rag to a bull. Iran's leaders have openly stated they would like to see Israel destroyed and the country targets Israel militarily via proxies including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza.

The IRGC spent months trying to cut deals with Dr Moore-Gilbert. Initially, they asked her to lure her husband to Iran. She resisted, knowing this was a trap. The IRGC then changed tack, trying to convince her to use her "cover" as an Australian



Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking academic to spy on Iran's behalf. Again, she steadfastly refused.

Most of her incarceration was spent in the notorious 2A wing of Evin Prison – an area controlled not by Iran's criminal justice system, but by the IRGC, specifically for political prisoners. For a short time towards the end of her ordeal, she was moved to Qarchak Prison where she mixed with other inmates. One she met was a woman called Marzieh who had been jailed for the “crime” of calling a person in Israel on Skype and posting pro-Israel comments on social media.

In Evin Prison, a senior IRGC interrogator – a man who calls himself Qazi Zadeh, but who Dr Moore-Gilbert discovered is actually named Lashgarian – tried to strike up a friendship with her. From him, we discover a great deal about Iranian views regarding Israel and Jews.

‘If there's somewhere you don't want us to bomb in Israel tell me. We can make an exception.’ Qazi Zadeh was sitting close to me, his eyes locked on mine. This was flirty banter, Rev Guards style. ‘Our Supreme Leader says in fifteen years' time we'll be praying at Al Aqsa Mosque [on the Temple Mount]. If you have an address for your husband's family, give it to me and I'll make sure it's not targeted.’

The interrogator then asked Moore-Gilbert “Whether the ‘evil Zionist lobby’ in the US, funded by the ‘uber-rich Jewish puppets of the settler movement’, controlled all of US policy or just Middle Eastern policy?”

During one of these lengthy interrogations, Qazi Zadeh/Lashgarian finished his questioning by asking his offside, Mohandas, to show their prisoner some CCTV footage. Moore-Gilbert was astonished to see him bring up real-time security footage from a Tel Aviv art museum. She asked why the IRGC had hacked into the art museum's security cameras. Mohandas replied “for fun” and Qazi



Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert as she was being released from her long ordeal in November 2020

Zadeh/Lashgarian added “in fifteen years we will be there.”

Another time, Qazi Zadeh/Lashgarian opened an Israeli newspaper on his phone and asked Dr Moore-Gilbert to translate. On that day, Yaakov Litzman, then Israel's Minister for Health, had contracted COVID-19. The response from the IRGC interrogator – who Dr Moore-Gilbert had already explained to readers believed COVID-19 to be a Western conspiracy – was, “Maybe the Jews will wipe themselves out in the end, and we won't have to do it for them!”

The conversation continued:

‘I've heard that the Jews actually killed Jesus and that in Europe they used to drink the blood of Christians during some of their festivals,’ Qazi Zadeh said.

I looked at him in disbelief. There was no malice in his voice or expression. He didn't seem to be trying to provoke me.

‘That's absolutely not true,’ I said firmly. ‘Those are antisemitic conspiracy theories.’

‘Well it's true that the Jewish lobby in the United States controls the world through international finance, and that no American can be elected president without Israel's support,’ he retorted.

As the interrogation ended, Qazi Zadeh/Lashgarian told Moore-Gilbert these are the official stances of his organisation, the organisation that

is directly responsible for protecting the Islamic revolution in Iran.

A marathon diplomatic effort, spearheaded by Australia's Ambassador to Iran Lyndall Sachs and Nick Warner, the former director general of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and Office of National Intelligence, saw Moore-Gilbert flown back to Australia on November 25, 2020.

In the book's epilogue, Dr Moore-Gilbert writes that her captors were “complex human beings”, not just two-dimensional manifestations of the brutal Islamic Republic. While a few of her captors showed compassion, others, like the IRGC judge who sentenced her, are “truly evil people”. She finishes with commentary on Iran's brutal human rights violations, including its obsession with “hostage diplomacy”:

[Hostages] are cynically used as pawns by a regime which has few other cards to play to secure its interest on the international stage. However, we are only the tip of the iceberg. The regime has long persecuted civil, political and women's rights activists, as well as member of religious minorities such as the Baha'i.

Moore-Gilbert concludes with the following message: “We who live in freedom must speak out for those who are still struggling for the everyday liberties we too often take for granted.”



# ESSAY

## Lies we learned about Israel

And how we came to see through them

Ali Aziz

We spent our childhood, my generation and I, in the wars and politics that were swarming in all fields of life in the Middle East. This kind of life accelerated our awareness and understanding of what was going on around us, so we were like grown men in the skin of children.

In Iraq, we lived in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, yet sectarian society. When I grew up, and met citizens from various parts of Iraq, I found that we shared thoughts, obsessions and feelings. These spontaneously resulted in common questions about the practices of the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein, as well as the other regimes in the Middle East – Arab, Turkish and Iranian. The most

frequent question among the Middle Easterners of my generation I encountered was, why do the regimes in the region accuse Israel of injustice and aggression when they treat us incomparably worse than Israel's treatment of the Palestinians?

In the eighties, and up until the late nineties, we did not have the internet. Our only window to the world was media controlled by the totalitarian regimes of the Middle East. Television, radio and the press were owned exclusively by national ruling parties, and it all had the same messages, which we saw on television, heard on the radio, and read in the press. This media we grew up with portrayed Israel as a bogeyman – absolute evil, with no motive other than spreading destruction and aggression against humanity – imposing the most severe forms of injustice against Palestinians and all Arabs.

Yet, with our naked eyes, we witnessed the reality of such evil and injustice on the ground in our daily lives, embodied in the Iraqi regime and other dictatorial governments across the Middle East.

In addition to the absurd wars there, such as the Iran-Iraq war, we saw how these regimes did not hesitate to target civilians with the heaviest weapons, torture the innocent in prisons using the most horrific methods, suppress freedoms, seize people's

wealth and put it at the disposal of a ruling minority, and on top of that, prevent the exercise of the most basic human rights, such as expressing one's language, culture and identity.

No one in the world chooses their identity, language and culture. Rather, every human being is born bearing these traits as a gift. However, the regimes of the Middle East have assumed the right to ban identity, language, and culture of any ethnic and cultural group whose existence the state finds inconvenient. This is what was happening in Iraq during my childhood, and it is happening today in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and the rest of the countries in the Middle East – with a few exceptions. Amongst those exceptions, Israel stands at the forefront.

In the eighties, I used to listen to overseas radio news and programs, including stations in London and Monte Carlo, as well as the Voice of Israel's Arabic station. In addition to the news, I especially loved listening to a program called "Judiciary Files" (written by Iraqi émigré Shaul Menashe) which was broadcast late in the evening. It was an entertaining program.

Meanwhile, on Iraqi state television, and later other Arab national media, I watched Palestinian children stoning Israeli soldiers and military vehicles, while Israeli forces responded with tear gas. Like many others, I wondered, what if we threw stones at Iraqi military vehicles? Would the Iraqi army be satisfied with merely deploying tear gas against us?

I witnessed, with my own eyes, how the Iraqi army destroyed villages and farms in Kurdistan. The villagers and farmers had committed no sin except that God had created them as Kurds. I witnessed how the Iraqi forces loyal to Saddam Hussein purged the country's north and the south horribly, following a popular uprising by Iraqis, suppressed by the most brutal methods, in 1991.

This is what I knew was happening in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and other

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The persecution that Kurds and others endured from their own governments helped many Middle Easterners see through the demonisation of Israel they were force-fed (Source: Twitter)

Middle Eastern countries, directed against different ethnicities, sects and groups. So tear gas by the Israeli army appeared like child's play to us. And what really surprised me was Israel's interest in Arabic language and culture – completely unlike other countries in the Middle East, which were obliterating the cultures and language of groups that were different from the state's official culture and language.

Israel, the epitome of absolute evil, did not fight to eradicate the culture and language of the Palestinians. On the contrary, the Palestinians enjoyed full freedom to express their identity and culture in their own language. Ironically, we were able to reach this conclusion from the propagandistic reporting of the anti-Israeli state media, even though it wanted to achieve exactly the opposite result.

In the course of my life, I have encountered many Arabs, Iranians, Kurds, Turkmen and other people of Mideast origin ready to admit that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians is not the epitome of "absolute evil" portrayed to us by the media of the ruling parties of the Middle East. Using basic logic, people were able to make simple comparisons between Israel and other states in the Middle East, which have never had any compunction about deploying any abuse

or horror against their own citizens, especially members of minorities.

While the Palestinians have been expressing themselves loudly and widely with seemingly little hindrance, there were and still are large groups in the Middle East – ethnic, religious and cultural – that cannot publicly exhibit the simplest expression of their identity.

In the mid-1990s, while living in Beirut, I read *A Place Among the Nations* by Benjamin Netanyahu in Arabic. This book reflected feelings and thoughts that had grown in my own mind, and that of many other people I know, nurtured over time through many bitter experiences.

I remember from the book an interesting chapter titled "The Palestinian Question and the Sacred Cows", where the author explains how there had been certain sanctified ideas similar to sacred cows – postulates no longer subject to logical or rational discussion – since the establishment of Israel in 1948. Among these postulates is the accusation that Israel is behind all the evil, war and tragedy that is going on in the Middle East. The author then lists many tragic historical events in the region – most of them conflicts and rivalries between different countries, regimes and groups that have nothing to do with Israel.

In 2017, a referendum was held in Iraqi Kurdistan for independence,

and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan rushed to accuse Israel of being behind the referendum. I couldn't help recalling what Netanyahu had written in 1993, and feeling regret that this kind of pathological thinking still exists in the Middle East even today.

Israel is an existing reality, and this fact cannot be removed even if all military forces and energies of its enemies were somehow deployed against it. Israel's Arab enemies have initiated many wars against the Jewish state, but these have only increased Israel's strength and prestige.

Jews lived among us in the Middle East for more than two thousand years, and brought to Israel the cultures, heritage and languages of the various other people with whom they once co-existed.

There are communities in Israel representing all the countries of the Middle East. These Israelis should be serving as the key to building cultural, scientific and commercial bridges with the peoples of the region, away from traditional political disputes and military conflicts. The UAE and some other countries in the region have taken important, rational steps in creating a new openness to Israel, which should serve as a basis for building a new era. The precedent and potential now exist for Israel to be an important friend, partner and neighbour – putting an end to the furnace of enmity that has only increased the region's failure and miseries.

Israel has actually won the admiration of many in the Middle East despite the constant media propaganda against it, because Middle Eastern people were able to see the truth through the anti-Israel media, given their own bitter experiences on the ground in their own nations.

AIR

*Ali Aziz is a proud Kurdish Australian. He is an expert on Middle Eastern politics and history, and Islamic Sharia law and has an MA in Philosophy and International Relations from Macquarie University.*



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# NOTED AND QUOTED

## THE MONTH IN MEDIA

### ABC GETS THE MEMO

An ABC *News Radio* report (April 20) on violent Palestinian protests in the West Bank appeared to be sourced from a British pro-Hamas propaganda outlet.

According to the ABC script, “dozens of Palestinians... suffered temporary asphyxiation during clashes with Israeli army forces in the West Bank city of Nablus. Israeli forces used live bullets and tear gas to disperse demonstrators. Tensions mounted across the Palestinian territory since Friday, when Israeli forces raided the al-Aqsa Mosque courtyards in east Jerusalem.”

Tear gas is widely used by police everywhere for crowd control and is not normally referred to as causing “asphyxiation”.

The text of the report – including the language about “temporary asphyxiation” – appears to be practically word-for-word identical to segments of an article from the notorious UK-based anti-Israel propaganda website Middle East Monitor (MEMO), long-recognised for its pro-Muslim Brotherhood slant and sympathy for Hamas. This is hardly an appropriate news source for the taxpayer-funded ABC.

Earlier, on April 15, ABC *News Radio* ran an inflammatory interview from the BBC with Palestinian propagandist Nour Odeh, who refused to accept that Palestinians were throwing “projectiles” at Israelis on the West Bank and said Israel refuses to negotiate an end to the occupation.

### WHIPPING UP A STORM

Visits to Jerusalem’s Temple Mount by small numbers of religious Jews during the Passover holiday were repeatedly described on SBS *TV* “News in Arabic” reports as “storming” of the compound.

On April 18, the lead-in to the bulletin claimed that “Israeli settlers continue to storm al-Aqsa Mosque while protected by the army” – falsely implying they had entered the mosque.

Later in the program, the newsreader again claimed “tens of settlers stormed” what this time was more correctly referred to as “the courtyards of al-Aqsa Mosque.”

Apparently, any Jews visiting the Temple Mount are “storming” settlers.

The bulletin also included a factually challenged account of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

This included the reporter saying “incursions began” after “the storming of al-Aqsa Mosque in 1967, but the most serious attack came two years later when a settler set the mosque on fire.”

The so-called “settler” who set that fire was in fact an Australian Christian fundamentalist who was mentally ill.

The reporter claimed the Israeli right wants to “build what the Israelis call the Third Temple in place of the Dome of the Rock.” Whilst it is true that a very small number of Jews advocate rebuilding the Temple, the vast majority of Jews accept mainstream Jewish teachings that this will only occur after the Jewish messiah arrives.

### SEEING ISN’T BELIEVING

An SBS *TV* “News in Arabic” newsreader on April 20 again claimed Israeli police and settlers were “storming” the al-Aqsa Mosque. The reporter’s claim that “For the third day in a row, dozens of settlers storm al-Aqsa” was belied by video footage clearly showing Jews calmly walking, some pushing prams.

Citing the Islamic authorities who

administer the site, the reporter said, “settlers did some provocative tours and Talmudic rituals in [the] mosque [court] yard under protection of Israeli forces.”

In fact, the aerial footage purporting to show Jews “provocatively” performing rituals near the al-Aqsa Mosque actually showed them on the plaza in front of the Western Wall, and not on the Mount at all.

The report also claimed this “angered Palestinians” who were “prevented from entering the mosque, but some women managed to stay... [and]... confront... forces with prayers and *takbeers* [chants of ‘Allahu Akbar’].”

In fact, the women shown belong to the “*Murabitat*”, and are paid by Islamist organisations to harass visitors, mostly Jews – but sometimes even visitors from Muslim countries who dared to make peace with Israel.

### INCLEMENT REPORTING

ABC *TV* “7pm News” (Vic.) also succumbed to the “storming” trope, with the April 23 bulletin featuring a graphic stating “Holy site stormed”.

The newsreader said, “witnesses say [Israeli] police entered the holy site after morning Ramadan prayers, firing rubber bullets and throwing stun grenades. Israel says officers were responding to a group of Palestinians who were hurling stones towards an area where Jewish worshippers are allowed to pray.” That is a strange way to refer to the Western Wall, Judaism’s most sacred site for prayer for many centuries.

Earlier, SBS *TV* “World News” (April 15) reported a similar targeted attack, correctly noting that “Palestinians began throwing rocks towards the nearby Jewish prayer space of the Western Wall.”

## PRAY DOTELL

An *SBS TV* “News in Arabic” report on April 22 referred to a “fifth day of incursions” by Israelis, with one Palestinian interviewed accusing Israel of enacting a “siege” of the “blessed al-Aqsa Mosque”, and preventing “worshippers” from accessing the site.

Israel has not blocked Muslim prayer sessions at the mosque, and many tens of thousands have prayed there during Ramadan whenever it is not being used by extremist

youth as a base for violence against Israelis.

The report also said “tensions increased” after Israel fired four rockets at “ Hamas military positions in Gaza,” before later acknowledging this was in response to a rocket fired into Israel from Gaza.

In contrast, *SBS TV* “World News” (April 22) noted that “worshippers”, who were “waving Hamas flags, hurled rocks and fireworks.”

SBS reporter Abbie O’Brien noted Israeli security forces said they “waited until prayers ended before

engaging with the rioters” and that the previous day, “dozens of Palestinians, some masked, were hiding in the mosque after throwing rocks and fireworks at officers.”

Showing footage of a few orthodox Jews on Temple Mount, O’Brien said that when they “arrived” [*Ed note: no “stormed” this time*] they were met by Palestinians “chanting”.

The report included a statement by Israel’s Foreign Ministry that “Israel is maintaining the status quo which includes the freedom of prayer for Muslims and the right to visit for non-



## IN PARLIAMENT

Senator **Eric Abetz** (Lib., Tas) – April 7 – Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Estimates hearing: “I am assuming that agenda item 7 [which singles out Israel] remains on the UN’s so-called Human Rights Committee? And just confirm to me again that North Korea, China and Cuba aren’t on that agenda as a standing item.”

**Josh Burns** (ALP, Macnamara) – March 30 – “[the late Senator Kimberley Kitching] was unflinchingly passionate about the Jewish community. Kimberley deplored anti-Semitism and loved the State of Israel...”

Senator **Eric Abetz** (Lib., Tas) – March 28 – “Senator Kitching was... my loyal deputy of the Australia-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group, Israel being the only democratic country in the Middle East. ... Unpopular as it was—and still is, in some quarters—Senator Kitching stood up for the right of Israel to exist in secure borders.”

Minister for Finance Senator **Simon Birmingham** (Lib., SA) – March 28 – “Standing against anti-Semitism and in support of freedoms provided by democracies, alongside basic human rights for all, was to be a lifelong focus of Kimberley’s public life.”

The following speeches were made in the NSW Legislative Council on March 23:

**Scott Farlow** (Lib.) – “The divisive and destructive BDS movement, in this case backed by terrorist organisation Hamas... works to entrench division and embolden antisemitism and... against the goal of a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine.”

**Anthony D’Adam** (ALP) – “Israel... is engaging in a process of systematically dispossessing the Palestinian people... Israel is not interested in a two-state solution... and there is no prospect for the Palestinians to get a state of their own... [Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians] is nothing less than apartheid. It is appropriate that we use a boycott-sanctions system when con-

fronted with a regime that engages in the systematic oppression of people living under its jurisdiction.”

Reverend **Fred Nile** (CDP) – “I move... that this House endorses and adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism together with its contemporary examples...”

**Abigail Boyd** (Greens) – “The definition is liable to suppress legitimate criticism of human rights abuses against Palestinians by defaming critics of Israel as antisemitic... Included in [the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism] are examples that are antisemitic and examples that are not. Examples that, on the face of it, are not antisemitic include... criticising or opposing Zionism as a form of nationalism... and boycott, divestment and sanctions.”

Shadow Minister for Counter Terrorism, Police, the Arts and Heritage and the North Coast **Walt Secord** (ALP) – “Only a tiny fringe are advocating an alternative definition, and they are being manipulated by a disingenuous group of anti-Israel activists and people on the far left and far right of politics.”

**Shaoquett Moselmane** (ALP) – “The so-called definition conflates criticism of Israel – an apartheid State and settler colonial State – as being antisemitic. That is wrong... It is a political tool being used to deflect criticism of Israel as an apartheid State, which for the past 70 years has subjugated, oppressed and dehumanised the Palestinian people.”

**David Shoebridge** (Greens) – “It is not antisemitic for Palestinian people to criticise the divisive and racist actions of the Israeli State.”

**Anthony D’Adam** (ALP) – “I would argue that Israel has made Jewish people more unsafe. The core problem [with] the motion is that the agenda to close down debate around Israel is problematic.”

Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter **Taylor Martin** (Lib.) – “The Premier’s endorsement in December 2021 of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism is another step towards ensuring that we can continue to have a peaceful and vibrant multicultural society in New South Wales.”



Muslims. The police enforce the ban on Jewish prayer.”

## WAR, WHAT'S IT GOOD FOR?

Despite the fact that Palestinians have been responsible for initiating ongoing violence on Temple Mount, SBS TV “News in Arabic” (April 15) promoted a narrative suggesting Israel’s Government was deliberately prolonging the current tensions for its own political gain.

The report included a Palestinian claiming “Israeli governments in the face of political crises... have usually resorted to escalation, because Palestinian blood again does not bear a cost to the Israeli politician, but can attract votes.”

Actually, Israel’s current coalition Government relies on the Arab Islamist Ra’am party for its survival, and thus is made more likely to collapse as a result of clashes with Palestinians, especially at Jerusalem’s sacred sites.

## MILITANTLY MIA

A Reuters report tallying up Israeli and Palestinian fatalities in recent months was mischaracterised by SBS TV programs “World News” and “News in Arabic” (April 14) which claimed that “14 Israelis have been killed by Palestinian assailants in recent weeks, while according to the Reuters news agency, Israeli forces have killed more than 20 Palestinians since January.”

On April 12, Reuters’ statement in full was highlighted by the *Canberra Times* in a pull quote. It stated, “More than 20 Palestinians, *many of them armed militants*, have been killed by Israeli forces since January [emphasis added].”

## WELCOMETREND

Some media reporting on the latest wave of Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians bucked a trend

in recent years to avoid labelling Palestinian attacks as terrorism.

A report in the *Herald Sun* (March 31) of the March 29 attack in Bnei Brak was headlined “Gun attacks kill 5 in Tel Aviv terror.” The headline used with an article in the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* (April 9) print editions covering the attack on a Tel Aviv bar on April 7 said “Palestinian terrorist killed after attack.”

*Guardian Australia* (March 29) used an AFP report on the Hadera attack which pointed out “an Israeli counter-terrorism force happened to be in a restaurant nearby and they ran out and neutralised the terrorists.” Earlier, ABC TV “The World” (March 28) incorrectly said the attackers were killed by “undercover Israelis”.

## CAPITAL OFFENCES

SBS TV “News in Arabic” reports were inconsistent on the identity of perpetrators in recent terror attacks in Israel.

A March 28 SBS TV “News in Arabic” report on the Hadera terror attack failed to state the identity or the political affiliation of the terrorists and claimed Tel Aviv is Israel’s capital.

However, on March 30, the program’s report on a terror attack in the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Brak which left five dead correctly identified the assailant as a Palestinian and noted two previous attacks were carried out by Islamic State sympathisers.

On April 8, “News in Arabic” reported on the deadly Tel Aviv pub attack, but again failed to identify that the attacker was Palestinian.

An SBS TV “World News” report by Omar Dehen that same day identified the perpetrator as a Palestinian from the West Bank and noted that it was “the fourth deadly shooting in three weeks.”

## INSIGHTFUL ON INCITEMENT

In the *Australian* (April 16),

analyst Jonathan Spyer linked recent Palestinian terrorism to the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan which “is remembered and marked as a period in which a number of famous Islamic military victories took place...and since Ramadan involves a heightened focus on religious messages, those wishing to incite – via social media or in live lectures at houses of prayer – find a ready audience.”

## EVANS CAN'T WAIT

The launch of former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans’ monograph *Good International Citizenship: The Case for Decency* was featured on ABC Radio National “Big Ideas” (March 16).

Evans insisted Israeli policies on the West Bank “satisfy all the criteria” of “apartheid”.

He said Australia’s major political parties refuse to use the term, and implied this was because “the Melbourne branch of the Likud Party is alive and well and flourishing.”

Maybe Labor and the Coalition demur from the comparison because, unlike Evans, they understand the West Bank situation has nothing to do with apartheid and everything to do with the Palestinian Authority rejecting three Israeli offers to create a Palestinian state and Hamas’ vow to never make peace.

## STUCK IN NEUTRAL

*Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent Latika Bourke’s article (April 13) on Israel’s ongoing challenge in how to respond to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was given the misleading headline “No apologies for neutral Putin stance.”

The article correctly explained that Russia’s military presence in neighbouring Syria gives it leverage over Israel, which is why “Israel has been restrained in its criticism of Russia.”

But this has not led to Israel being “neutral”. Israel’s Government has backed UN General Assembly resolutions censuring Russia and supported its removal from the UN Human Rights Council, while Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has strongly and repeatedly condemned Russia’s actions under Putin.

## VIEWS FROM THE SUMMIT

Commenting on a historic summit in Israel attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken as well as the foreign ministers of Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain and the UAE, the *Australian* (March 29) noted that the “top Arab officials’ willingness to meet at Sde Boker, a kibbutz that was the retirement home of Israel’s main founder, David Ben-Gurion, is indicative of the geopolitical realignment, which has potentially far-reaching implications for the entire Middle East.”

The paper said, “Israel’s new-found ability to work closely with major Arab states to oppose Tehran’s drive for regional hegemony... is one of the most promising developments in the Middle East for years.”

In the *Herald Sun* (April 25), AIJAC’s Ahron Shapiro wrote, “Summit participants have not just ceased to be antagonists, they are also now allies in all but name. Moreover, Saudi Arabia gave its blessing to the meeting, and has been openly saying it sees Israel as a ‘potential ally’. That alliance is directed against conventional, nuclear, terror and destabilising threats from Iran and its proxies.”

## IHRA IRE

An *SBS TV* “News in Arabic” report (April 5) of an Arab Australian Federation (AAF) meeting to discuss its opposition to the NSW Parliament adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism failed to offer viewers context or balance.

The report aired baseless accusations that critics of Israel could now face possible criminal prosecution.

One person was quoted saying “what’s happening in other countries under this law, people are losing their jobs, because they don’t sign a pledge that they won’t criticise Israel.”

Another person warned the meeting was “an important message for Israeli politicians, that they should know that the community is totally against this decision.” Why “Israeli politicians” were considered to be involved in this NSW decision was not made clear.

To be clear, the NSW Parliament did not enshrine IHRA into law, but merely endorsed a document that offers practical examples of how to recognise antisemitism when it occurs. Meanwhile, claims that employees have been fired and/or forced to sign declarations promising not to criticise Israel because of IHRA are false. SBS Arabic viewers should have been given an opportunity to hear these simple facts, or at least an alternative view.

## COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT

The *Australian’s* report (April 4) on an ABC Board-commissioned inquiry into its woeful complaints handling system quoted AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein saying “in many years of lodging complaints, AIJAC has never managed to win a complaint arguing that ABC content lacked context, was biased, or failed to fulfil ABC editorial standards about providing all sides of contentious issues. Our successes have generally been limited to pointing out simple factual errors.”

Dr Rubenstein attributed this failure to “the fact that the organisation handling those complaints... is entirely funded by the ABC and staffed by ABC appointees who make findings based on a set of procedures developed by the ABC.”

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (April 20) included Dr Rubenstein’s criti-

cism of an Australian Communication Media Authority (ACMA) finding that a May 2021 episode of *ABC TV* “Q+A” did not breach its charter obligations despite stacking the show with pro-Palestinian panellists.

Dr Rubenstein was quoted saying, “ACMA absurdly accepted the ABC’s contention that [former Australian ambassador to Israel] Dave Sharma represented an ‘Israeli perspective’ on the conflict, despite his presence on the program being to put the government’s position on a range of issues, not as an advocate for Israel.”

The article correctly noted one reason ACMA decided the program was not biased was because “the ABC had invited Israeli ambassador Jonathan Peled to appear on the program but he was unable to attend.”

In fact, as was reported shortly after the episode aired, Ambassador Peled declined the offer to appear because he was asked on not as a panellist but only to be part of the audience and possibly given a chance to ask a question.

## NOT SO GOOD FRIDAY

Discussing Jesus’ teachings, Melbourne Anglican Archbishop Philip Frier’s Good Friday message in the *Herald Sun* (April 15), erroneously claimed that he lived in the “highly charged world of Roman-occupied Palestine.”

“Roman-occupied Palestine” only came into existence about 100 years after Jesus died.

More accurate was Graeme Roberts of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, who wrote in the *Mercury* (April 15) that “Jesus... lived... in a Roman colony in Israel.”

The *Advertiser’s* April 17 report of Israeli-Palestinian clashes on Good Friday said, “Jews refer to [the area] as the Temple Mount, referencing two temples said to have stood there in antiquity.” Reputable historians and archaeologists do not question the location of the Second Temple.

Allon Lee

## CLIMATE OF CONTROVERSY

Some federal election candidates on the Climate 200 ticket organised by businessman Simon Holmes à Court came under media scrutiny for their public statements and past actions related to Israel.

Former ABC reporter Zoe Daniel, running against Liberal MP Tim Wilson in the seat of Goldstein, was asked to justify her signing of the “#dobetteron-palestine” open letter in May 2021.

Daniel was quoted in the *Australian* (April 6) explaining that “my signing... was narrowly framed to express my profound and abiding concern for the safety and welfare of journalists.”

*Australian* columnist (April 16) and veteran media critic Gerard Henderson criticised sections of the media who ignored the issue, including *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” host Patricia Karvelas who had interviewed Daniel. Henderson said the letter “ignored the fact that the 2021 conflict commenced when Hamas fired missiles into Israel.”

On April 16, media reports, including in the *Age* and *Herald Sun*, noted that when reporting for the ABC in 2017, Daniel claimed US President Donald Trump had recognised Jerusalem as Israel’s capital to “satisfy... his wealthy Jewish donors.”

The papers ran a statement from Daniel apologising for the “mischaracterisation of Jewish people, including myths such as their enjoying outsized wealth or power.”

What Daniel and most of the media failed to note was that it was actually Trump’s evangelical Christian base that was the key domestic motivator for his Jerusalem announcement, as the *AIR* noted at the time.

Coincidentally, on April 19, the *ABC Religion & Ethics* website ran Professor Marcia Pally’s unrelated op-ed on US evangelicals, which observed that “When [Trump] moved the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he said unambiguously, ‘That’s for the evangelicals’.”

Earlier, the *Australian*’s Sharri Markson reported (April 8) a 2020 social media post from Daniel’s campaign manager Sue Barrett saying “Hitler altered reality with drugs & [PM Scott] Morrison uses religion” and a 2019 social media post from Barrett’s husband and fellow campaign worker Jobst Schmalenbach asserting “the Jewish right-wing lobby should simply shut up.”

On April 5, Blair Palese, an organiser on the campaign of Climate 200 candidate Allegra Spender, who is running

**“Joe Hildebrand commented that Sharma’s electorate ‘with a huge Jewish community... is being targeted by a so-called ‘independent’ campaign supported by activists who call Israel a murderous apartheid state’”**

against Wentworth MP Dave Sharma, the former Australian Ambassador to Israel, was the focus of an *Australian* report. The paper said Palese supports the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel and had slammed Australia’s “shocking support of Israel in killing unarmed children and civilians.”

On April 9, News Corp columnist Joe Hildebrand commented that Sharma’s electorate “with a huge Jewish community... is being targeted by a so-called ‘independent’ campaign supported by activists who call Israel a murderous apartheid state. When some people liken Israelites to white supremacists it is little wonder that others start branding Jews as Nazis.”

The *Australian* (April 22) reported an apology by Climate 200 candidate Monique Ryan, who is challenging Kooyong MP Josh Frydenberg, for sharing an image on Facebook of Donald Trump photoshopped on the cover of Adolf Hitler’s “Mein Kampf”. AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein was quoted saying “such comparisons risk trivialising the crimes of the Nazis.”

The *Advertiser* on April 23 noted that Climate 200 candidate, Jo Dyer, who is running in the Adelaide seat of Boothby, tweeted support for an article arguing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be solved only with the “creation of single [sic], democratic state for all.”

On *Sky News* “Paul Murray Live” (April 19), Michael Kroger alleged that Holmes à Court has a history of anti-Israel social media posts, while his mother Janet called for then-Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu to be prevented from visiting Australia. Kroger also claimed that Climate 200 targeted four seats specifically because the members are Jewish or strong supporters of Israel.

The *Australian* (April 11) reported that Warren Mundine, “chair of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation... was attacked on Twitter by Mr Holmes à Court, who labelled the former Liberal candidate a ‘grub’ and a ‘flog’ after he reposted an article by the *Australian* about Climate 200-backed candidate Zoe Daniel’s criticism of Israel.”

Meanwhile, on *Sky News* “Credlin” (April 19), commentator Jennifer Oriel said regarding the anti-Israel cloud surrounding some of the independent candidates that criticising Israel is “legitimate” but if “you are not looking at the policies of Hamas which routinely attacks Israel from Gaza, then... that needs to be addressed.”



# THE LAST WORD

Fred Maroun

## WHEN PRAYING IS A CRIME

The Israel-Arab conflict is full of contradictions and astounding facts, but to an outside observer like me, nothing is quite as contradictory and bizarre as the situation on the Temple Mount, the Jews' holiest site (known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif and their third holiest site).

On the Temple Mount, it is forbidden for Jews to pray. Yes, pray. No matter how quietly, and no matter how discreetly, Jews are not allowed to pray. In fact, it is forbidden for any religious group other than Muslims to pray on the Temple Mount.

It doesn't matter that the Temple Mount is the site of the Jews' First Temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia in 587/586 BCE. It doesn't matter that the Temple Mount is the site of the Jews' Second Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. It doesn't matter that forbidding prayer is a blatant violation of freedom of religion and freedom of thought.

And it gets more bizarre yet. This highly discriminatory rule was agreed to by Israel, the Jewish state, and it is enforced by the Israeli Police.

This agreement occurred between Israel and Jordan after the war of June 1967 during which Israel conquered east Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount.

On April 18, 2022, Jordanian Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh issued a statement saluting rioters who are "hurling their stones in a volley of clay at the Zionist sympathisers defiling the Al-Aqsa Mosque." How did the "Zionist sympathisers" do that, you might ask. Well, according to the *Times of Israel*, "Palestinian rioters throw rocks at Israeli buses en route to the Western Wall, as well as in the Temple Mount compound, in an attempt to prevent non-Muslims from touring the site." In other words, mere Jewish presence on the holiest Jewish site constitutes "defiling" in the eyes of even Israel's Arab peace partners, and violent opposition to that presence is seen as virtue.

Some Arabs try to rationalise their opposition to Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount by citing the fact that some rabbis believe that according to Jewish law, Jews should not enter the Temple Mount at all. A disagreement among Jews on Jewish law, however, is not for non-Jews to rule on, and it certainly does not justify violence against Jews.

From a moral point of view, the solution to this issue

is simple. Anyone from any religion should be able to pray anywhere they want if they respect the rights of others to do the same. This is an internationally recognised fundamental human right.

From a realpolitik point of view, however, the solution is much less clear. The exercise of this fundamental human right by a small number of Jews angers Arabs, including pro-Israel Israeli Arabs and

including Arab states who have signed peace agreements with Israel. To maintain internal peace and peace with its neighbours, Israel is forced to compromise even on the fundamental freedom of religion of its Jewish citizens.

On this fundamental issue of basic human rights for Jews, the Jewish state finds itself at the mercy of Arabs. This is ironic considering that Israel was meant to be the one place on earth where Jews are guaranteed equal rights with everyone else.

At the same time, the stubborn and sometimes violent Arab opposition to basic Jewish human rights is a reminder of why Israel exists. If Jewish rights are limited in the Middle East even within the Jewish state, one can easily imagine how much more limited they would be if Israel did not exist.

AIR

*Fred Maroun is a Canadian of Arab origin who lived in Lebanon until 1984, including during 10 years of civil war. He supports Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, and supports the Palestinians' right to self-determination in their own state. © Times of Israel (www.timesofisrael.com) reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



On Jerusalem's Temple Mount, Jewish prayer is forbidden, and fanatical violence is encouraged (Source: Twitter)



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