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By Tom Hall

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## **Republicans launch “anti-Semitism” smear campaign against Representative Rashida Tlaib**

Republican politicians and right-wing media outlets have initiated a smear campaign against Michigan Representative Rashida Tlaib over bogus allegations of “anti-Semitism.” The *World Socialist Web Site* has deep and well-documented political differences with Tlaib, a supporter of American capitalism and member of the pseudo-left Democratic Socialists of America, whose function is to promote illusions in the Democratic Party. But the attack against her is reactionary and must be opposed. It is part of a continuing campaign to construct a fictional “left-wing anti-Semitism” in order to discredit growing anti-capitalist sentiment among workers and youth.

The campaign against Tlaib is based on a deliberate distortion of remarks she made during an interview on the Yahoo! News *Skullduggery* podcast.

“There's kind of a calming feeling I always tell folks when I think of the Holocaust, and the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the fact that it was my ancestors, Palestinians, who lost their land and some lost their lives, their livelihood, their human dignity, their existence in many ways, have been wiped out,” Tlaib said.

“I mean, just all of it was in the name of trying to create a safe haven for Jews,” she continued, “post-the Holocaust, post-the tragedy and the horrific persecution of Jews across the world at that time, and I love the fact that it was my ancestors that provided that, right, in many ways. But they did it in a way that took their human dignity away,

right, and it was forced on them. And so when I think about a one-state, I think about the fact that, why couldn't we do it in a better way?

“I want a safe haven for Jews. Who doesn't want to be safe? I am humbled by the fact that it was my ancestors that had to suffer for that to happen, but I will not turn my back and allow others to hijack it and say that it's some extremist approach because they're coming from a place of ... whatever it is ... of division, inequality.”

In other words, Tlaib, while expressing sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust, entirely legitimately criticizes the use of the Holocaust to justify the ethnic cleansing and oppression of Palestinians by the Zionist state. At the same time, Tlaib proposes a “one-state solution” in which the rights of both Palestinians and Jews are respected.

If anything, Tlaib's statements are an extremely generous interpretation of the history of Zionism, implying that the Zionist settlement of Palestine was an understandable response to the horrors of the Holocaust which unfortunately involved the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, but which might have been done “in a better way.”

In fact, Zionism, which predated the Holocaust by several decades, was always a reactionary bourgeois movement, steeped in the racist nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which the forced displacement of the indigenous Arab population of a future Jewish state was always taken for granted.

Within the Jewish working class, which was heavily influenced by socialist internationalism, Zionism enjoyed little support before World War II, but the movement was able to capitalize on the mood of despair following the Holocaust. The founding of Israel, moreover, would not have been possible without the critical support of the imperialist powers, which saw a Jewish settler state as a key foothold for maintaining the colonial subjugation of the Middle East.

However, congressional Republicans seized upon this statement to present Tlaib as an open supporter of genocide, twisting her words into saying that she has a “calming feeling” when she thinks about the massacre of Jews. This absurd inversion of Tlaib's statement has been largely accepted without comment within much of the media.

Leading the charge over the weekend was Wyoming Representative Liz Cheney, the third-highest ranking Republican in the House, who tweeted, “Surely now [Democrats] will finally take action against vile anti-Semitism in their ranks. This must cross the line, even

for them.” Cheney is the daughter of former vice president and unindicted war criminal Richard Cheney.

“There is no justification for the twisted and disgusting comments made by Rashida Tlaib just days after the annual Day of Holocaust Remembrance,” moralized Louisiana congressman and Minority Whip Steve Scalise in a press release. “Unfortunately, this is far from the first display of heinous anti-Semitic comments coming from Democrat House members this year, and it’s clear this is now the norm for their caucus. It’s long past time for Speaker Pelosi to take swift action and make it clear that these vile comments have no place in Congress.”

The most disgusting sanctimony, however, came from President Donald Trump, who tweeted: “Democrat Rep. Tlaib is being slammed for her horrible and highly insensitive statement on the Holocaust. She obviously has tremendous hatred of Israel and the Jewish people. Can you imagine what would happen if I ever said what she said, and says?”

This is from the same person who has herded thousands of immigrant families into concentration camps along the border, is seeking to build a far-right, fascistic movement in the United States, and declared that there were “many fine people” among the neo-Nazi rioters in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017.

Moreover, Trump’s comments came shortly before his meeting with Viktor Orbán, the right-wing prime minister of Hungary. Orbán is a public admirer of his country’s pro-Nazi dictator Miklós Horthy, who collaborated in the murder of more than half a million Jews. The Orbán government’s attacks on US billionaire George Soros (a Hungarian Jewish Holocaust survivor) has overtly anti-Semitic and fascist overtones, accusing the investor of funding migrant aid groups in order to destroy Europe’s identity.

At a joint press appearance, Trump and Orbán saluted each other as allies in the struggle to defend “Christians” allegedly under attack in Europe. This is nothing more than a recycling of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim agitation which is a hallmark of neo-fascist groups in Europe like the Alternative for Germany, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and Orbán’s regime in Hungary.

It is a matter of record that it is the Zionist regime, not its opponents, which enjoys close relations with neo-Nazis, Holocaust deniers and other extreme right-wing forces. Orbán, together with representatives from the FPÖ, the Italian Lega, Philippines president and Hitler admirer Rodrigo Duterte and other extreme-right politicians were state guests last year in Israel.

While the Republicans are taking the lead in this instance, they have had the support of numerous Democrats in an earlier effort directed against Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. Omar and Tlaib are the first two Muslim women elected to the US House of Representatives. Omar is Somali-American and Tlaib is Palestinian-American.

Last month, Democrats joined with Republicans to pass a resolution effectively censuring Omar's criticisms of Israel and Zionist lobby groups as "anti-Semitic." Among those Democrats who voted for the resolution were Omar herself, Tlaib and fellow DSA member Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

The allegations against Tlaib are so transparently concocted that even the Democratic leadership in the House was compelled to strongly disavow them. Late Monday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tweeted: "Republicans' desperate attempts to smear @RepRashida & misrepresent her comments are outrageous."

Pelosi further called on Trump and Republicans to apologize to Tlaib and the "American people" for their "gross misrepresentations."

The frame-up methods of the Republicans and the right-wing media have exposed Omar and Tlaib exposed to large numbers of death threats from right-wing and racist layers mobilized by Trump. Tlaib's office reported receiving 60 threats in the two weeks after her swearing-in earlier in the year.

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