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Jewish Students Opposing Gaza Genocide, a Powerful Antidote to Antisemitism



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

The many Jewish students in the campus encampments, along with other Jews protesting the Gaza phase of the Palestinian Genocide, deserve the highest praise for many reasons. One reason is that by their deeds they are countering what might otherwise turn into a wave of antisemitism.

The portrait of the encampments in much of the mass media and at Congressional hearings is a seething cauldron of anti-Jewish hatred and bigotry. Joe Biden has joined the chorus, labelling the students' actions to oppose Israel's genocide as "antisemitic protests"!

This charge is false amounting to a smear of the protests and an easy way to dismiss the them. And it is dangerous because it de-legitimizes a movement that may help to stop a genocide. But it is dangerous in another respect, for it increases the possibility of a real wave of antisemitic backlash.

Let's begin with the slaughter of Gazans which is simply the latest phase of a long slow genocide of the Palestinian people which began with the Nakba of 1948, the forced expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes accompanied by a campaign of terror and atrocities. The Nakba and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from historic Palestine, aka Greater Israel, over the following 76 years, have largely been hidden from view. In contrast, as has been widely remarked, the present massacre in Gaza is highly visible over alternative media on the internet. The more than 35, 000 deaths, the majority of them women and children, and the bombed-out, smoking rubble that once was cities, schools, mosques, churches, hospitals and homes and even cemeteries are there for all the world to see.

The Biden administration has provided the weaponry for this genocide. And since US taxpayers are footing the bill for the bombs, US citizens have *the right and responsibility* to raise their voices in opposition. And the students have led the way in doing just that.

Those who oppose the protests, whether Congresspersons of both Parties, pundits, both liberal and conservative, AIPAC or Joe Biden tell us that the protests are antisemitic. What is their justification for this charge? Because, they say, Israel and Jewry are one and the same, and to condemn Israel's policies and actions is to condemn all Jews. Declaring that anti-Zionism amounts to antisemitism is another way of saying the same thing. But this equation of Jews and Israel is not only false, it will come back to bite. Why? *Because the acceptance of this false equation can easily lead to blaming all Jews for the atrocities committed by the state of Israel. And this in turn can generate a great deal of hatred of Jews in the world.* Have those who equate Jewry and Israel understood this? Do they care that their view can lead to a wave of antisemitism? Do those in Congress who spout this view in public hearings know the consequences of what they are doing? Does Genocide Joe have a clue about it?

Jewish organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace, IfNotNow and others are participants in the protests and are often among the leaders. Senior US government officials from the Interior Department and the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency who are Jewish have resigned in protest over the Biden administration's support of Israel's genocide. And both cited their Jewish heritage as reasons for so doing. And there are certainly many more who feel the

same way but, for any number of reasons, do not resign. In the face of this, how is it possible to say that opposition to the Biden administration's policies is antisemitic?

When we see the Zionist government of Israel carry out genocide in full view of the entire world, we must conclude that the government of Israel cares less about Jews than it does about the Zionist project. And that may well be the most decisive refutation of the equation between Israel and Jewry.

Finally, those who cry antisemitism when there is none and use the charge for their immediate political purposes, cheapen the suffering caused by real antisemitism. And like the boy that cries wolf, they render warnings of the real thing impotent when it comes along.

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