

## **Jews Against the Occupation '48 – response to Inquiry's follow-up questions**

Below we respond to the three additional follow-up questions from the inquiry. The questions are given boldface, and our responses follow. We would be happy to respond to any points for clarifications or any additional questions that might arise.

### **(1) How many members does your organisation have?**

Given that this is an activist organisation rather than a community organisation, the effective membership is hard to assess.

Fifty members actively participate in organising activities.

Crowds of hundreds to thousands turn up to our activities. Our Instagram account has 2,200 followers and our Facebook account 2,600 followers, although our material is relayed through various channels to secondary follower lists.

### **(2) You assert that calls for Zionists to be made “uncomfortable” are legitimate. If you replaced the word Zionist with Palestinian or Muslim, would that not be hate speech?**

#### **(a) Do you concede that this is a double standard, or is that your intent?**

We do not recall discussing Zionist discomfort in the session. According to the preliminary transcripts, Zionist comfort was discussed in our session with the JCA. But we will respond to the substantive part the question nonetheless.

Importantly, this question is based on a very disappointing, fundamental ontological subterfuge. Zionism on the one hand, and Palestinians or Muslims on the other hand, are not the same kind of thing. Zionism is an ideology and political movement. It is neither an ethnic nor a regional nor a religious designation of people. In fact, there are Jewish Zionists and, indeed, Christian Zionists (a minority of whom are misguided philosemites, and a majority of whom are straight antisemites). By contrast, Palestinian in this context is a national/geographical designation of people, and Muslim is

designation of people based on a religious communal affiliation. Neither Palestinian nor Muslim is either an ideology or a political movement.

Making Palestinians or Muslims feel uncomfortable for being Palestinian or Muslim is indeed racist, intolerant and entirely unacceptable. It is for the very same reason that making Jews feel uncomfortable for being Jewish is racist, unacceptable and by definition, antisemitic. Banning the yarmulka (the Jewish skull cap also known as Kippah) is antisemitic. So is pulling snoods off of the heads of Jewish women. So is the forced removal of the sideburns (pe'ahs) of those Jews who choose to have them. The same applies to banning or restricting any other marks of Jewish identification that people might wear. By the same token it is no less racist to pull a hijab off the head of Muslim women or to ban the Palestinian keffiyeh.

Indeed, it takes unrepentant bigotry to do any of these, and we are distressed to note several instances of precisely such behaviour coming from NSW state and law enforcement agencies. For example, we note and condemn the NSW government's attack on Palestinian educators that resulted in a teacher losing his job for wearing a keffiyeh.

Doing these things under the pretence of fighting antisemitism is particularly perverse. It seeks to implicate Jews in what is an inherently racist campaign.

We would like to assert that being Palestinian, or being Muslim, is not an antisemitic attack, and the erasure of Palestinian or Muslim identity from our public sphere is not Jewish self-defence.

By contrast with the terms "Palestinian" and "Muslim", Zionism, as we pointed out above, is an ideology and political movement. Zionism is based on the rejection of diasporic Judaism and has borrowed much of its impetus from other antisemitic ideologies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zionism is the Jewish equivalent of National Socialism and other forms of white supremacy.

Indeed, contrary to the snide suggestion in question 2a, our struggle against Zionism is free of double standard and entirely consistent with our opposition to Nazis and White Supremacists whom we are equally happy to make feel uncomfortable by pointing out the reprehensible nature of their ideology and the horrific consequences it bears upon its victims.

Your question seems to be particularly concerned with challenging what you perceive to be our irksome, overly sympathetic view of Palestinians and Muslims. We are a bit perplexed about this line of questioning that began at the inquiry session that we attended. But let us assure you that our sympathies do not lead us to any double standards whatsoever.

The Muslim equivalent to Zionism and Israel would be groups and movements like Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, al-Qaida, or other forms of salafi Jihadism. And indeed, we vehemently oppose these as well, and we are quite comfortable making these groups feel uncomfortable about the craven depravity of their ideology and its

genocidal ramifications. In opposing these chauvinistic forms of Islamism, by the way, we join our Palestinian and Muslim partners.

In other words, our position is entirely consistent and free of double standard. We call for full, colour-blind consistency on rejecting genocide, ethno-nationalist chauvinism and religious chauvinism. This is the foundation upon which we approach Zionism both in Australia and in the Middle East.

It is, in fact, the Zionist position, articulated by some of the Zionist groups as well as some members of the inquiry, that epitomises a disgraceful double standard and shameful racism.

**(3) You argue that Israel has no right to exist as a Jewish state. Do you believe that other nations have the right to self-determination?**

The issue of self-determination is a red herring. It is like convening us all during the Holocaust to ask us whether we argue that Germany has no right to exist as an Aryan state, and whether we believe that Aryans should not have the right to self-determination. But given that the question is being posed, we will try to answer it as best we can as if it were genuine.

The proposition that Zionism and the State of Israel are in any way expressions of Jewish self-determination is preposterous. We will get to that below.

But before we do, we would like to point out that no matter where one stands on the question of self-determination, we assume that it is taken for granted that nobody has the right to self-determination on other people's land or at the expense of other people's lives. (If anybody on the committee thinks otherwise, please do let us know. We know quite a few struggling renters who would appreciate the opportunity to self-determine in your living rooms.)

In other words, regardless of the legitimacy of Zionist claims to being Jewish self-determination (which we will thoroughly reject below), such a claim in no way justifies the dispossession or extermination of Palestinians or the creation of a Jewish ethno-state anywhere in Palestine.

In fact, in the years since the Holocaust, it has generally been accepted in the international halls of power that chauvinist, genocidal "self-determination" is neither normal nor acceptable. Serbian "self-determination" in Bosnia was rejected as was Hutu "self-determination" in Rwanda as was Islamist "self-determination" in Iraq and Syria, as was White "self-determination" in South-Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) as is Buddhist-nationalist "self-determination" in Myanmar (Burma) today.

Given these generally accepted norms, and given the precedents set in response to these instances of genocidal “self-determination”, consistency would require that whether it is bombed into submission like Yugoslavia was in 1999, or whether it is bombed into oblivion like ISIL was in 2014-7, Israel should be subjected to as much force as is necessary to, once and for all, force it to:

1. stop carrying out the genocide in Gaza;
2. stop carrying out the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians across the areas under its control; and
3. stop obstructing the immediate, complete and unconditional implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 194, granting the Palestinian refugees of 1948 the full right of return.

Historically, appeasement has had a very poor track record with genocidally minded regimes in general, and with Israel in particular.

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Returning to the Zionist claim to being Jewish self-determination, we would like to make two points. One, as we pointed out above, the question is irrelevant to the question of whether Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish ethnostate in Palestine. It does not. Two, not only is Zionism’s claim to Jewish self-determination utterly false, Zionism is, in fact, inherently antisemitic, and as such deserves to be thoroughly investigated and condemned by your inquiry.

Jews are an ethnically diverse group. Jews have existed as a loose collectivity of sorts for many centuries under many different guises, but never, before colonialism, as a cohesive community and never as a nation. In fact, one way Jews have been able to maintain a pluralistic existence is precisely by avoiding collective self-determination altogether.

The Zionist movement emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe out of an ideological and visceral rejection of diasporic Jews and Judaism, as an attempt to reinvent Jewishness and remould Jews in the image of European “master races”.

Yet Jews have never collectively agreed to the Zionist project, and most Jews have rejected Zionism. Indeed, even diasporic Jews who support Israel do not see Israel as the locus of their national self-determination (whatever that might mean). Most Jews, even today, continue to vote with their feet against the Zionist notion of a Jewish nation state. (Jews have similarly avoided the Jewish Autonomous Oblast that has existed since the 1930s with its capital in Birobidzhan.)

Jews continue by and large to prefer diasporic existence, and we squarely condemn any attempt – by Jews or by non-Jews – to deny Jews the right to exist in whatever diasporic form they choose on a fully equal basis with non-Jews. Suggestions that Jews are somehow temporary residents in their diaspora are squarely antisemitic.

The State of Israel and its political class has neither the authority nor the legitimacy to speak for Jews or “self-determine” on behalf of Jews. In its zeal to do away with the diaspora, the Zionist movement destabilised and destroyed Jewish communities, engaged in the forceful erasure of traditional Jewish cultures, and has aligned itself with antisemitic groups and political forces.

The Zionist instrumentalisation of antisemitism continues to date and directly endangers Jews in NSW. For example, we tabled during the live session the piece of propaganda that was put on social media in Arabic on behalf of Israel’s ruling party’s Member of Knesset Edy Cohen, where he goads his Arab readers and informs them that: "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion are actually being implemented in reality. We are those who will rule the world with wisdom and not force, with guile and not with arrogance." (The tweet is reproduced at the end of this document for your convenience.)

If the inquiry were serious about dealing with antisemitism, it would prioritise rather than ignore Zionist antisemitic incitement. We cannot begin to imagine how NSW parliamentarians would have reacted if Arabs or Muslims had circulated such antisemitic narratives. But when such antics come from Israel, the silence is deafening.

Zionist disruption of Jewish life has not been confined to the diaspora. Within Palestine, too, since the early years of the British Mandate, Zionist gangs used intimidation, coercion and violence (including murder) to eliminate Jewish opposition, beginning with the infamous murder of religious, anti-Zionist author and activist Jacob Israël de Haan in 1924. In parallel, they goaded and provoked Palestinian Arabs to break the bonds between local Jews and non-Jews.

We also note that even within Israel’s contemporary Zionist Jewish mainstream, Jewish self-determination remains contentious. Many Israeli Jews have rejected the idea of Jewish self-determination and have sought alternative ethno-national idioms (Israeli, Canaanite etc.), and some have continued to identify with alternative national identities such as Arab (e.g. the great Baghdadi author Samir Naqqash).

In essence, Jews are neither inherently an ethnicity nor a nation. Some Jews may experience their Judaism in those terms. Most do not. Some Jews experience their Jewishness as a religion (itself a very diverse and often contradictory set of approaches), some as a cultural affiliation, some as a community by birth, some as a nebulous social category, some as a commitment to rootless cosmopolitanism, and so forth.

Incidentally, our discussion here is primarily focused on Jewish Zionism. We are also horrified and alarmed at some of the trends that permeate Christian Zionism, such as ideas of forced migration of Jews to Palestine or the engineering of an Armageddon and the conversion of Jews to Christianity. But for brevity’s sake, we will leave this topic for other contexts and just note that we are perplexed that an inquiry into antisemitism should choose to overlook Christian Zionism.

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Finally, if the logic of some national self-determination is applicable to Palestine – by which we refer to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea – Jews should presumably be included on an equal footing with other religious or ethnic communities in a broad, Palestinian self-determination.

There is neither historical nor essential justification for Jewish separatism in Palestine. Jews were never a unified community apart from the general population (with Karaite vs Rabbinic groups for a long time, then Sephardi vs Ashkenazi divides, different, hostile religious groupings, different linguistic and ethnic groups etc.) Jewish communities were part of a continuously evolving, diverse tapestry of religious, cultural, ecological and linguistic groupings. This has been the way Jews have lived in Palestine for centuries before European colonial intervention.

We would like to remind the inquiry that Palestinians are the people of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and descend, inter alia, from the Jews who had inhabited the land before the emergence of Christianity as a distinct religion and before Rabbinic Judaism spread in the diaspora. Even with the recent mass migrations of Jews to Palestine, Palestinian Arabs continue to form the majority of people *on* the land, indeed an overwhelming majority of the people *of* the land given the refugees' guaranteed rights of return under UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

Pluralistic citizenry is only common sense these days throughout the world. Even in less sophisticated polities like NSW the political class pays lip service to ideals of diversity and multiculturalism, and most people (however disingenuously) profess to no longer accept the exclusion of Aboriginal people in the name of some exclusively White Anglo self-determination. Why should Middle Easterners be denied pluralism and equality?

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To recapitulate, then, Israel and Zionism are not legitimately Jewish self-determination, and it is antisemitic to argue that they are. Israel as a genocidal ethnostate has no right to exist and it is a gross double standard, and profoundly racist, to argue that it does or to refrain from stopping it in its tracks by any means necessary.

## Antisemitic incitement in Arabic by Israeli Knesset Member for the ruling Likkud Party Dr Edy Cohen

An example of the State of Israel deliberately fanning the flames of antisemitism, this times among Arabic readers around the world, including NSW.

A tweet from an Israeli member of Knesset, from Netanyahu's ruling Likkud Party, Dr Edy Cohen.

For the benefits of those who do not speak Arabic Cohen is tweeting to his Arabic-reading followers: "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion are actually being implemented in reality. We are those who will rule the world with wisdom and not force, with guile and not with arrogance."

