

# **Critical Assessments**

OF LEFT RESPONSES TO

**October 7**



# Contents

Contents . . . . .	1
Introduction . . . . .	2
Fetishized Weakness: The Denial of Agency Within Palestinian Solidarity Movements	
Keith Kahn-Harris . . . . .	4
Terror Versus Emancipation: On the Hamas Massacre of October 7, 2023	
Marcel Stoetzler . . . . .	7
Ambiguous Terms in Palestine Activism	
Texas Kossovskii . . . . .	10
The Long Game	
Prometheus Sphinx . . . . .	13
The Moral World and the Dying Future	
Jane Austen Marxist . . . . .	16
Two Dualities the Left Must Grasp on Israel/Palestine	
Daniel Randall . . . . .	19
I Wish I Knew	
Porpoise . . . . .	22
No to Brutality and Blind Allegiance to Nations or Parties	
Marina Brown . . . . .	25
Settlers?	
Francis Neuman . . . . .	28
October 7th Reaction	
Ralph Leonard . . . . .	30

How Colonial Is That? Anna Zawadzka . . . . .	33
Anti-Imperialism Is Unable To Grasp the Israel-Hamas Conflict Christopher Wright . . . . .	36
No Hope Left? On Antisemitism in Left-Wing Discourses After October 7, 2023 Simone L. Wiesengrund . . . . .	39
Critiquing Campism GA Matiasz (aka “Lefty” Hooligan) . . . . .	42
A Response to the New Wave of Antisemitism Moishe Einstein . . . . .	45
Physician, Heal Thyself: Jewish Inclusivity on the Left? Anonymous . . . . .	48

# Introduction

On October 7, 2023, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and others launched an armed attack on Israel, which resulted in more than a thousand deaths and the taking of over two hundred hostages. Since then, Israel has bombed and invaded Gaza, killing, at the time of writing, at least 27,000 people, most of them civilians. This situation is ongoing as of this anthology's press time in February 2024.

In October, too many leftists refused to condemn, legitimized, or even celebrated the October 7 massacre. Today, leftists are organizing around trying to stop the bombing and prevent more Palestinian deaths. But many have also doubled down on their initial support of the slaughter of Israelis. In many cities, key organizers of large pro-Palestine marches are among those who have supported violence against civilians. Instances of antisemitism have sometimes been tolerated in pro-Palestine mobilizations, and extreme antisemitism flourishes in online Left spaces.

Leftists who have dissented have been largely ignored. Some have been bullied into silence while others are afraid to speak out for fear of harassment. Some have been told that the time is not right for raising concerns, or that calling out problems on the Left damages solidarity. Condemnations of violence are met with responses such as “What did y’all think decolonization meant? vibes? papers? essays?” One widely shared Medium post more recently demanded that leftists “stop ‘condemning antisemitism’ amidst Zionist genocide,” arguing that *any* attention paid to antisemitism, even if it comes from extreme right actors jumping on the Palestine bandwagon, objectively empowers “Zionism.” If October 7 and its aftermath was a crucial test for the global Left, it feels like it might have already failed.

The right, including the right wing of the Zionist movement, as well as anti-Muslim racists everywhere, have capitalized on the failures of the Left, cynically offering a false haven to Jews feeling under attack or to feminists repulsed by those who casually deny sexual

violence committed in October. We reject attacks on Palestine activists made in order to defend Israeli nationalism and militarism; we reject the repression and criminalization of protest. But we do think there is an urgent need for a Left critique of where our movements have gone wrong.

This collection, therefore, brings together short pieces, written in October, November and December of 2023, from leftists—socialists, social democrats, anarchists, Marxists, feminists, anti-fascists, and others—who oppose Israel’s war crimes in Gaza, but also oppose apologetic narratives on the Left about the massacre specifically, and Hamas more generally. It brings together perspectives from different locations on the Left—the writers come from different traditions of leftism, while some no longer feel at home on the Left—and different locations globally. Some of the texts are deeply personal, articulating emotional responses to the Left’s positions, while others are more analytic, seeking to understand the Left’s missteps and chart a way out.

Some of the questions addressed are: What does the Left mean when it uses contested terms such as “resistance,” “occupation,” “settler colonialist,” “genocide,” and “indigenous”? Does it understand Hamas as a reactionary, theocratic, or even fascist force—or is it seen as part of the axis of resistance or even the global Left? How does the Left understand the agency of Palestinians and Muslims? How has the Left ended up in alliances with the far right? Does the western Left reproduce colonial or U.S.-centric models of thought, even as it condemns coloniality? Does it have space for Jews who feel some affinity with Israel, even in a non-statist way? What are the limits of a “national liberation” or “anti-imperialist” framework, and can we envisage a consistently anti-nationalist response to Israel/Palestine? What resources for hope can be found in the Left’s history as it confronts today’s challenges? And what can we do to start to rebuild a genuinely internationalist and anti-fascist Left?

# **Fetishized Weakness: The Denial of Agency Within Palestinian Solidarity Movements**

KEITH KAHN-HARRIS

The massacres and kidnappings conducted by Hamas and allied groups on October 7, 2023 were brilliantly planned and executed. They demonstrated a shrewd use of intelligence and considerable operational acumen in essentially “conquering” a small slice of Israel for a brief time. While it is less clear whether it was intentional or not, the over-representation amongst the victims of secular Israelis with progressive politics, together with a number of Arab citizens of Israel, communicated a clear message: It doesn’t matter what kind of Israeli you are, you are irredeemable.

As was already apparent from responses to the bravura planning and execution of the 9/11 attacks, there appears to be a significant section of the “Western” Left that cannot and will not acknowledge the skill and patience with which at least some Islamist terrorists plan and conduct operations. Instead, the tendency is, all too often, to treat such operations as a kind of instinctual reflex, a howl of pain. This move allows mass killings to be treated as regrettable but understandable, or trivial compared to the oppression to which they are a reaction, or even worth celebrating to a degree. Such celebration was certainly the immediate reaction of far too many to the “invasion,” before its purpose became clear. And denialism is now spreading through Palestinian solidarity movements that there were more than a trivial number of civilian casualties at all.

The 10/7 attacks have raised embarrassing questions about how *agency* is understood in many leftist circles. A zero-sum conception of asymmetric conflict ties into an all-too-frequent denial that Palestinians are able to make any choices about what resistance should

look like. There is also more than a whiff of orientalism, particularly among “white” activists, that romanticizes Palestinians as victims who express their primitive and innocent heroism through instinctual acts of doomed violence.

But if far too many people on the Left are working with a simplistic notion of agency, they aren’t the only ones. Zionism was, once upon a time, intended to enable Jewish agency in the world. And while that remains its notional purpose, the dominant discourse of both the Israeli government and of many of its Diaspora supporters is to proclaim a lack of choice. The extraordinary violence inflicted by the Israel Defense Forces on Gaza is, somehow, framed as an expression of Israel’s weakness and vulnerability.

Across the board, from left to right, there is an unwillingness to confront inconvenient aspects of the thousands of Gazan deaths. Hamas initiated the October 7 massacre in the full knowledge of the bloody cost Palestinians would have to pay. The provocation of violence is a tactic that has long been used in insurgencies, in guerilla warfare and by resistance movements. When this results in enormous numbers of noncombatant casualties by the much stronger army, to campaign against this risks a bad faith denial that the death of innocents can, in fact, be a “good” outcome for the insurgent side. Similarly, for the stronger party, to take the bait while denying that you are doing what the enemy wants risks a bad faith denial of one’s own considerable power.

While I am not a Leninist, throughout this war I have been yearning for the bracing realism of a Leninist discourse of power. The fetishization of weakness, the inability to recognise agency; all of this would be laughable to an earlier generation on the Left. The Marxist-Leninism I studied at university may not have attracted me politically, but it was at least the basis for a shrewd analysis of how power is won and lost. (Likewise, I have more time for Jabotinsky than the hypocritical denial of power by today’s Likud).

I don’t doubt that much of the Left’s preoccupation with Palestine stems from genuine horror at their plight. But empathy with the oppressed is not, and has never been, enough on its own. There are hard questions raised by “resistance” as there are with any political project. When it comes to Israel-Palestine, the Left has little appetite for those hard questions. And I often wonder whether the



sheer vehemence and passion of pro-Palestinian protests may also perform the function of silencing the voice that would speak of the dilemmas of agency.

If that voice were allowed to speak, it would point to inconvenient truths about the *de facto* alliance between Hamas and the Israeli right; it would ask how the one, secular and inclusive state that some on the Western Left claim to want can possibly be furthered by massacre; it would ask whether Islamist terrorism could ever be the basis for liberation of any kind.

At the moment, the noise of protest is drowning out that voice.

# Terror Versus Emancipation: On the Hamas Massacre of October 7, 2023

MARCEL STOETZLER

In this debate, a lot rides on whether or not to call the perpetrators “terrorists,” a discussion governed by the old adage that “one person’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter,” as if these words did not have any determinate meanings. Freedom is the negation of terror, though. Those who *take* power by spreading fear can only end up *exerting* power by spreading fear, which is the opposite of emancipation: this is why terrorists usually are, or aim to be, potentates in the making. They draw the consequence from the insight that state power is strengthened by being based in unambiguously divided and antagonistic constituencies. Acts like those of October 7 serve precisely this function: peaceniks and refuseniks on either side are reminded that they will not be given a chance. Action that aims at genuine liberation, by contrast, must always intimate in its means the emancipatory goal. It cannot afford the calculating cynicism of terror. Terrorist tactics only serve those who seek “freedom” by taking or creating state power, i.e., unfreedom.

Only metropolitan arrogance assumes that the wretched of the earth are not able to choose their tactics and their weapons discerningly. Poverty, destitution, undignified, unhealthy and frustrated lives provide the necessity and the urge to act but do not dictate what is to be done, the steam but not the direction. The long lists of liberals who assert that October 7 “had to happen” because Israel’s elites have been for such a long time insufficiently liberal speak as the benevolent arbiters they imagine themselves to be, and look upon the downtrodden as subject to fate. Even fiercest oppression does not rob anyone of the ability and responsibility to make decisions,

though, and contrary to vulgar-existentialist rumors, there is no natural law that requires the oppressed to commit massacres so as to regain authentic selfhood. The opposite is the case: terrorism is the business of disaffected, power-hungry elites. Rather than predetermined by their misery, the reactions of the most oppressed are too complex to call, and sometimes they even turn out to be the most humane. However racist Israeli policy may be, it helped facilitate but did not *cause* October 7. Treating the actions of the fascistic, antisemitic, misogynistic strongmen of Hamas as the natural outcome of the circumstances demeans the people of Gaza. Here as elsewhere, not attributing responsibility and agency to the oppressed makes the oppressors seem even more debilitatingly powerful than they actually are. To be solidary, one must not write “lachrymose histories” of absolute victimhood.

Although it might mean something else for bourgeois states and their judicial systems, the word “terrorism” denotes quite specifically a tactic in political struggle, usually based on highly moralistic thinking, driven by a strong sense of all-determining “virtue,” often desperate and paranoid when on the defensive, whose centerpiece is the spreading of indiscriminate *fear*: hence the name. (Robespierre spoke of “terror” as “justice, prompt, severe, inflexible ... an emanation of virtue.”) Since when, in the nineteenth century, it was dubbed “propaganda of the deed,” it is performed as spectacle, for media consumption, because that is how fear spreads. Terrorism differs from ordinary warfare as well as from assassinations of particular individuals (autocrats, politicians, judges) whom their assassins see as *actually* responsible for, central to, or at least symbolic of specific institutions. Warfare and assassinations depend on being precise and specific, whereas terrorism is the more effective, the more indiscriminate the killing. Its point is to destroy life in the borderlands, gray zones and interstices which is where hope and transcendence survive.

When some Israeli politicians scream that they are “fighting Nazis” they obscure the fact that the Nazis were not just some militia of deluded fascists (of which there were many at the time, as there are now): they were fascists that had one of the most powerful modern industrial nations and its state apparatus at their command. Ideology is not everything: even though Hamas’ ideology is Nazi-like, this does not mean they *are* in fact Nazis, and this affects how one has

to fight them. One cannot destroy a death cult by killing, while the murderous insanity kills off the less irrational competitors.

It is not difficult to see that prodding the mightiest military machine of the region into unleashing fire and brimstone on the crumbling, dirt-poor city of Gaza cannot serve anyone but the slum landlords of Hamas (whose top leaders don't live there, obviously). For them, escalating violence creates a win-win situation: no matter how many militants are killed, the very slaughter will help recruiting the replacements. Did not even October 7 give the metropolitan activists reason to stop and think and realize they need to be more specific than just abstractly "pro-Palestine"? Does it not matter to them *what kind of Palestine*? Do they love the idea and the myth of "Palestine" so much that they care so little about Palestinians? All "fundamentalist" movements, whichever religion happens to be their idiom, explicitly fight secular modernity and all that goes with it: women's liberation, the workers movement, Jewish and other emancipations, gaiety and queerness of all sorts. No such movement can ever be "part of the global Left," whatever the circumstances.

# Ambiguous Terms in Palestine Activism

TEXAS KOSSOVSKII

Palestine activism is a diverse movement with no organizational center, and its members come from many different political traditions. Nonetheless, it seems to have coalesced around several slogans.

After October 7, a number of these slogans were used to justify war crimes. At the same time, other Palestine activists have claimed the same words have more moderate meanings—but they have not separated the more moderate from the more extreme interpretations. This dual use has allowed both a wider circulation of extreme views than would otherwise have been possible, but also creates plausible deniability when called out, by switching meanings depending on the audience.

“From the River to the Sea” has recently become popular again, and its use has caused trouble for several prominent people. Historically the slogan has had just one meaning in the West: driving Jews out of Israel and creating a single Palestinian state. Today some still hold to this meaning, while others claim it merely refers to justice for Palestinians wherever they live, including for Israeli citizens. So it means murdering Israeli Jews if you want, and civil rights if you don’t.

Calling Israel’s actions “genocide” has become obligatory. Today it is applied to either claim that Israel seeks to kill everyone in Gaza, or, in contradiction, that Gazans will be expelled. (To be fair, Israeli officials have made statements to this effect). In fact, accusations of genocide have been hurled at Israel since at least the early 1980s and have been invoked even during minor skirmishes. So the current accusations of “genocide” are just a recycling of a term that’s been around for decades in wildly different circumstances.

The term’s proponents invoke a United Nations definition of genocide that may not be total slaughter but “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” In fact, their use of “genocide”

intentionally leans on its everyday meaning: to murder everyone in a group. Israel has clearly never tried to do that, which would be physically impossible, if only because of Israel's own population and the large Palestinian diaspora. Here, this ambiguous language means both the popular one understood by most people, and a simultaneous appeal to a technical definition. Even the fact that the UN ruling, which did not label the conflict a genocide, only proves that activists invoked it without having a firm grounding. (Meanwhile, the UN's 1949 recognition of Israel, as well as its war crimes definition which unambiguously applies to Hamas, are ignored.)

While supporters of Israel as a Jewish state have called the West Bank occupation “apartheid,” others use it also for Israel itself. Again, the two are used without distinction. Some anti-Zionists will also claim that famous people who use the term to refer especially to the West Bank—such as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter—actually mean the whole of Israel. The term “occupation” is used in the exact same way: for some, this means the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights. For others, all of Israel is “occupied.”

There are also linked claims that Israel is a “settler-colonial” state and that Palestinians are “indigenous.” These are particularly important because they neatly fit into the popular theory of “settler-colonialism.”

Muslims came to the area in the seventh century CE, long after Jewish habitation started at least a thousand years before (Jews also maintained a continuous presence there). As an oppressed group, European, as well as Yemenite, Jews moved to Palestine starting in the 1890s, then a province of the Ottoman empire. Zionism was not an attempt to build a colony of any European empire, but rather an attempt to escape them. The Ottoman empire was similar to its European counterparts including practicing imperialism, at one time occupying parts of Europe. Its citizens, including those in the province of Palestine, had money, land ownership, and literacy.

Zionist-Palestinian tensions arose not from a colonial army killing and expelling indigenous people, but resentment at the effects of the legal purchase of property. Comparisons with what happened to indigenous people in the Americas and Australia could not be more stark. Palestinians are the only group commonly called “indigenous” whose property-owning class sold their land to the “settlers,” and

these Jews in turn are the only “settlers” whose presence long predated the “indigenous” people. For example, Al Aqsa, Islam’s third most important site, was built on the ruins of the Second Temple—the most holy Jewish religious site.

Nonetheless, claiming Palestinians as “indigenous” is now an unquestionable article of faith. While academics dodge behind technical definitions—claiming “indigenous” refers to “colonized” people, which in turn they claim can’t apply to Jews—again most activists see this as a literal comparison.

Because of the ambiguous nature of these terms, they need to be either discarded or clearly defined. But more importantly, we need an analysis that both accurately describes the conflict and contributes to resolving it.

# The Long Game

## PROMETHEUS SPHINX

The history of war between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the surrounding Arab states, has been extensively analyzed by commentators from across the political spectrum, so there's no need to retrace it. I will instead focus on Palestine as seen by the Situationist International and the Arab Surrealist Movement in Exile in the 1960s and '70s.

The broadly defined Left in the United States, while defending Palestine in the abstract, is rather lacking in analysis at the moment. Anti-imperialists cite the right of the Palestinian people to resist, which in itself is a given. But it is not uncommon in these currents, often dominated by Stalinists and Maoists, to make common cause with Islamic fundamentalists and "red-brown" regimes. After the October 7th attack, quotes from Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah appear alongside images of Hamas hang-gliders. This is true when it is clear that Hamas does not represent all residents of Gaza, much less all Palestinians.

Rewinding many decades, we can find a more critical spirit in two different texts from the social revolutionary Situationist International movement from its heyday in the 1960s. In "Address to Revolutionaries of Algeria and of All Countries" (1965), the Situationists denounced "the dominant policy in the Arab states—a policy that insists on the destruction of Israel and thereby perpetuates itself since this destruction is impossible." Indeed, Israel is armed with nuclear weapons, heavily defended with missile shields and support from the United States and Britain. They won't simply be driven into the sea. The Situationists continued, "The repressive forces of the state of Israel can be undermined only by a model of a revolutionary society realized by the Arabs."

"Two Local Wars," written in the aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967, analyzed Israel as being created by a combination of "Anglo-American imperialism" and the "surplus-value" from European Jews. But the same essay also denounced the Arab regimes, the



Ba'ath Party, and reactionary fundamentalists that claimed to speak for Palestinians. The Situationists also rejected whatever remnants of “labor Zionism” could be cited as more humane, given ongoing discrimination against Arab workers in labor unions once outright exclusion was lifted, and rejection of solidarity with Arab peasants.

The Palestinian question, in 1967, had “no immediately evident solution...the Arab regimes can only crumble under the weight of their contradictions and Israel will be more and more the prisoner of its colonial logic. All the compromises that the great powers try to piece together are bound to be counterrevolutionary in one way or another.”

The Situationist International asserted that “only an Arab revolutionary movement...resolutely internationalist and anti-state can dissolve...Israel while gaining the support of that state’s exploited masses...only through the same process will it be able to dissolve all the existing Arab states and create Arab unity through the power of the Councils.”

A few years later, this would be re-affirmed by the Arab Surrealist Movement in Exile—Arab surrealists living in Paris, London, and Vienna. As Don LaCoss wrote in 2010, the core of the exile group rejected “the intense misery...rampant in the Middle East: despotic police-state politics, nationalism (particularly Ba’athism in Syria and Iraq), militarism, patriarchal oppression, neo-colonial European interference, grueling poverty, and suppressed imaginations.”

The Arab Surrealists “argued that state terrorism in the Middle East was at least partially rooted in traditional patriarchal Muslim violence against women and gay men, much in the same way that fascism has been understood by writers like Wilhelm Reich, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, Klaus Theweleit, and George Mosse.”

As Franklin Rosemont wrote in 1976 in the U.S. Surrealist journal *Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion*, “The Arab surrealists...in 1973 took the lead in preparing a tract, *Against Nationalist Illusions, For the Internationalist Alternative*, opposing all forms of nationalist chauvinism and calling for the overthrow of all established regimes in the Middle East. It urged the unification of the proletariat of all the Arab countries, as well as of Israel, on the basis of socialist revolution, ‘founded on the power of the workers’ and peasants’ councils.’ This tract was signed by the Israeli Socialist Organization (Matzpen), the

Arab Group “le Pouvoir des Conseils,” and the Algerian Group for the Propagation of Marxism.”

If the Situationist and Surrealist propositions seem totally “impractical” now, given the bitter decades that have passed, they nonetheless offer something more than the left rhetoric we’ve seen lately. The Situationist International and the Arab surrealists suggest “the long game.” This is in contradiction to the modern Left, which tends to uphold the national and cultural divisions that the more radical Situationists and surrealists tore down, at least theoretically, long ago.

Whatever urgent steps must be taken to stop the bloodshed and carnage now, we can keep that long game in mind when analyzing the continuing tragedies in the Middle East. Regional transformation depends not upon the ephemeral victories of Apartheid states or national gangs, but upon a global transformation that rejects all the capitalist and pseudo-socialist factions who poison the dialogue.

# The Moral World and the Dying Future

JANE AUSTEN MARXIST

I remember feeling in the days after October 7 that the moral foundations of the world had crumbled.

Which foundations? I honestly do not know. This is not to downplay the true horror that I and many others felt, seeing people we had loved and admired cheer on the mass murder, kidnapping, and rape of Israeli Jews (and others, murdered for their proximity to the Jew). But the world ends in big and small ways every day: when the factory collapses, when the money runs out, when the bombs begin to fall. The world ended for who-knows-how-many as they watched American Jewish and Democratic Party leaders take the stage with warmongering Pastor John Hagee, who seeks Christ in a wave of Muslim and Jewish blood. No, there is nothing special in Western Jews watching the death of the moral world; if anything, it merely makes us more of a *diaspora* than we have been for some time.

Yet the meaning of October 7 cannot be washed away so easily, if only because the Holy Land retains an extraordinary aura in our not-so-secular West. I daresay that everyone – *everyone* – feels their trust narrowing. There are too many betrayals to count, too many scores to settle in a lifetime. The fear is that we have all stopped pretending; that there is nothing remaining even to pretend for; that there was never anything there in the first place.

Such an atmosphere is only worsened by the state assault on civil liberties and Palestinian solidarity in North America and Europe. In Europe, the crisis has brought anti-migrant and anti-Arab hatreds further into the political mainstream than ever. And the enthusiasm with which many North American political leaders speak of shutting down rights to assembly and protest are of concern to everyone. In identifying themselves with Israel's vengeful war in Gaza, in their longstanding failure to respond to the fascist element

in Israeli politics, Western governments chip away at their capacity to fight fascism internally.

None of these facts excuse the failure of unions, academics, activists, and journalists to respond firmly to antisemitism. Jews worldwide suffered through the effervescent joy of October 7 and the fury of the weeks that followed. The security requirements on Jewish institutions across Europe and North America creep upward, as Islamists and purported radicals seek to push Jews from public existence. Far too many remain indifferent at best – and they wish we would not speak so much about antisemitism.

There exists a real danger of conspiracist paranoia rooting itself in organizations and newsrooms across the Western left, much as happened in Britain through Corbyn’s term. Structural faults feed off this conspiracism: a collapse of accountability, opaque operations, cults of personality. Denialism about the crimes committed on October 7 is already entrenching. Any talk of antisemitism is seen as a Zionist smear, and those who face consequences for antisemitism are venerated as martyrs. An incipiently ethnonationalist economy of belonging is emerging under the guise of anticolonialism. A performative cruelty and glorification of violence is reenacted in symbolic violence against posters of hostages. The overlaps between these ideologies and the European New Right are not subtle, and we are already seeing their result in the online rise of white nationalists and Holocaust deniers riding the coattails of anti-Zionism.

A final factor worthy of consideration here is the segment of the mainstream right now engaged in open antisemitism, with examples including Elon Musk, Tucker Carlson, Charlie Kirk, and Candace Owens. Figures like Kirk and Musk manage to distinguish between the state of Israel – which they admire as a reactionary model – and a world Jewry that defends Israel but promotes “anti-whiteness”: for them, a truly pro-Israel right can only exist through a muscular, Christian-guided “America-first” policy. But some even take a more Israel-skeptical position. While the Republican establishment is still ardently pro-Israel, the evangelical base and neoconservative ideology that sustained this position have decayed through recent decades. Without faith in the arc of history (towards rapture or global American Empire), all that remains for the American right is eternal

struggle. And then it is much more difficult to answer those, such as Nick Fuentes, who demand from the right: what are the Jews doing here? The reentry of Pat Buchanan-style Jew-baiting into conservative politics now seems inevitable.

Both moral humility and clarity are required, and it is my hope that the two can coexist in equal measure. I write forcefully because I am horrified by the present and frightened by the future. But war and hate horrify because we see humanity in one another. So, we find a future in the million cracks and collapses, in the feelings of absence and exile. Our grasp on this shared future remains the first and last barrier against nihilism and eternal struggle.

# Two Dualities the Left Must Grasp on Israel/Palestine

DANIEL RANDALL

**The conflict is a struggle for national liberation from colonial oppression *and* a clash between the national claims of two peoples, both rooted in the territory, both with nowhere else to go**

The mere use of the word “conflict” to talk about Israel/Palestine is often attacked on the Left, on the basis that “conflict” somehow implies symmetry between the forces involved. Definitionally, this is nonsense: history is full of asymmetrical conflicts, and a conflict between a colonized people and a colonizing state is still a conflict.

In Israel/Palestine, the root of the conflict is national oppression—the suppression of the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination by the Israeli state, carried out by means of force. In this fundamental sense, the conflict is a struggle between a colonized people and a colonial power.

But unlike other historic anticolonial struggles, in Israel/Palestine the group on which the colonizing force is based is not a colonial bureaucracy linked to an imperial metropole, like Britain in India. Nor is it a narrow settler caste exploiting the labor of the indigenous majority, like the whites in South Africa, who were a 13% minority by the time apartheid fell. Rather, it is a fully class-differentiated national populism in its own right. West Bank settlers should return to the “metropole” of pre-1967 Israel, but the Israeli Jews as a whole have no collective metropole to go back to.

As such, any programme for Israel/Palestine that does not take account of the basic reality that there are two distinct national peoples inhabiting the territory will be, at best, a form of utopian romanticism. At worst, it will be a revanchist programme for reversing the poles of expulsion and dispossession. The endeavor of democratic

politics must therefore be to develop a programme for leveling up rights, including national rights, between the two peoples.

As Palestinian socialist leader Ayman Odeh has put it: “The truth must be told to the citizens. There are two peoples here, two peoples will remain here, and both have the right of self-determination.”

**Hamas is a movement of resistance against Israel *and* a theocratic-fascistic force pursuing a reactionary project**

“The Palestinians are a colonized people. Socialists support the right of colonized peoples to resist colonization. Hamas is resisting Israel, the colonial power. Therefore socialists should support Hamas.”

This sequence of affirmations is broadly descriptive of much far left thinking on the subject. Until the last sentence, it is self-evidently correct. What it fails to acknowledge is that it is possible for something bad to be opposed—“resisted”—in the name of something just as bad, or worse.

There is no such thing as abstract “resistance,” characterized purely negatively in reaction to the thing it is resisting. All “resistance” is proactive as well as reactive, the pursuit of a definitive social and political project. Socialists should assess a given political force primarily on the basis of what it is *for*, not only what it is against. Hamas’s project has violently oppressive implications not only for the Israeli Jews it aims to kill or expel, but for most Palestinians—especially women, LGBT+ people, and religious and political dissidents.

We should remember that we are internationalists, not nationalists. The reason socialists support struggles for national rights in the first place is not because we believe whichever group can prove it was “there first” has an essential and exclusive right to rule a given territory. This is a politics of ethnonationalism, a perspective Hamas has in common with its equivalents on the Israeli far right. Socialists support national liberation struggles because equality of national rights is a more favorable condition for the development of the working-class unity essential for advancing socialist politics than the strangulating effects of occupation and national oppression.

But Hamas does not aim to win a leveling up of rights, to achieve Palestinian self-determination on an equal basis to Israeli Jews. Its aim is to provoke a “permanent state of war” via which Israel will one day be conquered and replaced with an Islamic state. There is no

possible basis for socialist or democratic support for this.

Socialists should support the Palestinian people's struggle to claim their national rights on the basis of a universalist-democratic politics that fights for equal rights for all. Those politics cannot be advanced by a political agency committed to its opposite. Whilst Hamas is undoubtedly grateful for the "unconditional support" it receives from groups such as the Socialist Workers Party (UK), socialists' activist energies would be better directed to building practical solidarity with those forces in both Palestinian and Israeli Jewish society fighting for equal rights for both peoples.



# I Wish I Knew

## PORPOISE

As dawn broke in Israel on October 7, 2023, I lay in bed with my beloved partner on a warm autumnal Pacific Northwest evening. Eventually my partner nodded off to sleep, and I turned on my laptop to briefly check Twitter before hopefully falling asleep myself. “Thousands of rockets fall across Israel,” my notifications blared. The news of the land, sea, and air incursion gradually made their way out and horror and grief crystallized in my gut. Watching the video of Shania Louk’s body desecrated and paraded about on a truck did something physiological to me, as a mixture of fear, anger, and grief entered my being. Eventually in the small hours of the morning I fell asleep.

What I see from many friends and erstwhile comrades on the anti-Zionist Left is a form of reality filter. Information about the world is only believed and acknowledged to exist when it conforms to an anti-Zionist vision of the past, present, and future. In this worldview the Israelis are always racist, fascist, and oppressive, and the Palestinians and wider Islamic and Arab societies are always oppressed, just, and righteous. In this rendering, pre-Israel Palestine was a safe and free society for Jews and other minorities until racist Zionists destroyed this equilibrium. In this belief system it was the Zionists and not the Palestinians who were in league with the Third Reich, and it was always the Israelis who broke their word and sabotaged all the peace negotiations. In this rendering, the Israelis are all White Europeans with dual passports and the Palestinians are all indigenous to the land of Palestine who have been there since time immemorial. Only Jews, and for that matter Muslims, who conform to this worldview are allowed to speak and have agency. In this ardent belief system the divisions in Israel are all racial and not religious, and Israel is thought to be the only country in the world to prioritize an in-group. Zionism too is not the national liberation movement of Jewish people (plagued with the same pitfalls that befall all nationalisms) but a unique belief system of racial superiority akin to Nazism. These people will happily tell you too that no one threatens Israelis, and all that the Palestinian resistance wants is

to democratize Israel akin to how post-Apartheid South Africa was transformed. Never mind any polling data from Israelis or Palestinians, those polls can be preemptively dismissed as flawed. Mizrahi Jews (and other Jews of Color) are erased or dismissed as manipulated by conniving White Zionists. Never mind the near complete Jew cleansing from almost the entire Arab and Islamic worlds. This worldview of course has a robust counterpart in the far right of Zionist politics.

Many Leftists justify their support for groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and even Hamas with the idea that the world is overwhelmingly biased in favor of Israel that they are simply evening the playing field even if they might be supporting unjust movements. Most are unaware of the role that the global Left had in fomenting the PLO, and its strategy. Folks will assert that the aid the U.S. government gives the Israeli government necessitates our support for the Palestinian factions. Never mind that these are people who generally advocate for building autonomous institutions and readily acknowledge that we have far more influence (and arguably responsibility) over our social movements than over our governments. What are we to make then of the widespread support for the PFLP and Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Liberation Network, and that Samidoun is fiscally sponsored by the Alliance for Global Justice nonprofit (an influential group from the alterglobalization movement of the late 90s and 00s)?

The North American context cannot be ignored, that the self-described antiracist and global justice movements are hardly responsive to Jewish concerns. The various hydras of the antisemitic movement are largely ignored, particularly when they are difficult or dangerous to oppose. Jewishness is posited as a “privileged” position even in North America.

How are we to raise hell for Palestinian civilians when we are inundated with a movement that ignores and deflects away from the atrocities perpetrated against Israeli civilians and the hostages still in bondage? How are we to enter into solidarity with advocates for Palestinian liberation when they gaslight us that there aren't any threats to Jewish freedom and safety at all? How do we hold hands with those who boycott co-existence education and deny the very existence of any Palestinian politics of supremacy, forced population transfer, and even extermination?

I know I have a far greater tolerance for risk than the average person and that if the pro-Palestinian movement is losing and alienating me, there are far, far more people who long for peace, equality, and liberation who are being pushed away. I wish I knew of a single Palestinian faction I could support in good conscience, but my sense is that they are all being mowed down by their compatriots before they blossom.

# No to Brutality and Blind Allegiance to Nations or Parties

MARINA BROWN

For the most part, my activism around Gaza has been community defense for demonstrations. I have been lucky with my crews.\* We have not had Putin, Assad, Israeli government, or Hamas supporters try to stay. The only one who left was supporting Putin in his bloody war against Ukraine.

My crews and I have seen an uptick in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and transphobia because of the war on Gaza. I had to help a trans man who was dog-piled by pro-Israel activists for his distaste at using people's deaths to promote the current war; his trans status was used to further attack him. Jewish comrades have been pushed out of some leftist spaces. A Vermont publication I refer to as Vermont Daily (right wing) Cesspool used a montage of pride flags arranged to make a swastika as the header image for an article about the Israel/Hamas conflict, even though there was no LGBTQ+ related content in the article. Thankfully the sole owner of the site removed the article.

I became a leftist because I care for PEOPLE. I have no need or patience for those who, for some reason—ideological or otherwise—support bloody dictators and cruel organizations. If a group does horrible things to innocent people, I oppose them regardless of their ideological bent. As an anarchist I find no need to bow before king, country, or creed.

With regard to Ukraine, I was supporting BOTH PEOPLE who were defending their communities and PEOPLE who were fleeing the war. Some fleeing might be considered deserters, but I find them as worthy of support as those staying to defend their towns. The fact that many of the local defense groups got subsumed by the Ukrainian government made me queasy. And while I have no doubt

that the Ukrainian government has done many awful things, they are fighting against a worse government. I support the PEOPLE, not their governments.

In the same way, I don't support Hamas or their attack on civilians. Nor do I promote both-side-ism. The state of Israel has been occupying and oppressing Palestinian people for over 75 years. As an antifascist, I see no reason to support either a right-wing authoritarian fundamentalist militia (Hamas) or the government of Israel. I cannot abide the cruelty and callousness that states do in the pursuit of their "interests." Attacks on civilians, whether it be the Israeli neighbors of Gaza or the Palestinian neighbors of Israel, are inexcusable!

The call for a "democratic secular state of Palestine" once was the gold standard for a leftist analysis of the conflict. The call originally came from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) which claims to fight for a secular state of Palestine where Jews and Palestinians have equal rights. This call has been tarnished by the brutality of some of the attacks by the PFLP and especially by their support for the brutal Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. My mind is seared by the brutality of Assad's police. For me there is no excuse or convenience that justifies support for Assad. While a democratic secular state would be a step forward for many in the area, I don't find a compelling reason to line up behind a state that would inevitably be involved in some sort of cruelty.

A lot of the criticism of Israel and Hamas revolves around the concept of humanitarian law and the laws of war. Many people do not realize that the laws of war also permit attacks on civilian areas IF there is a "legitimate" military objective and some sort of proportionality. As a person who values life I do not give myself license to shoot into a crowd of innocent people to try to kill an enemy EVEN if they are shooting at me. That's what I see Israel doing.

I don't have a short-term solution for the problem in Gaza other than to say that the IDF needs to stop killing people. My lack of support for various institutions is often taken by opponents to be some sort of deadly attack on these institutions. States, police, military, prisons, corrupt governments, and right-wing militias will continue to exist whether I give them moral approval or not. I choose not to.

In closing, I want to raise a glass for those who refuse to commit brutality in the name of a state or an ideology.

*\*Crews are small groups of activists who do political work together and are often linked with others who are organized the same way.*

# Settlers?

FRANCIS NEUMAN

Many in the contemporary U.S. Left view the Israel-Palestine conflict exclusively as one between a colonial and indigenous people. There are many points on which this framework fits, including the expulsion of Palestinians from Israel in 1948 and the illegal occupation and ongoing settlement of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, this framework also has limits which undermine its usefulness and, equally important, often lead leftists to adopt positions which dovetail with antisemitism. That can allow antisemites to operate openly in left movements which can then encourage antisemitic acts, drive away allies, and derail organizing as groups perform damage control.

It's become popular to describe Israel with terms like "settler-colonialism" and "apartheid." These references to the European colonial nations of the late 19th and 20th century like South Africa and French-occupied Algeria imply that the conflict is not one between two groups with equal grievances (if not equal power) but between a foreign, exploitative power and an embattled indigenous group. This framework is certainly how much of the Arab world sees the issue and it does capture some of the conflict's history and dynamic. But thinking of Israel simply as a European outpost can mislead as much as it can reveal. This can be seen when compared to French and Belgian colonial efforts in Algeria and the Congo.

Before the founding of Israel, Jews lived in Palestine for centuries before a distinct wave of Jewish migration began at the end of the 19th century. This came in a variety of circumstances and with two main motivations: those arriving looking to create a national homeland for themselves (Zionists), those simply fleeing antisemitic violence, or both. Zionists, like other nationalist movements of that time, held a range of views on their future state and its non-Jewish citizens. Israel was built on this national vision, one separate and distinct from that of the European countries most Jews migrated from. Jewish nationalists sought to establish their own power, not to expand that of European countries.

But Jewish migration to Palestine wasn't always just a nationalist choice. Many Jews escaping violence often had no other places to go. European Jews fleeing violence had limited options for migration. After World War Two survivors of the Holocaust faced similar restrictions. Many arrived in Palestine after initial attempts to return to their homes in eastern Europe were met with violence and murder.

The picture of French and Belgian settlement looks quite different. Colonists moved to Algeria and the Congo, not as part of a nation-building effort, but as a nation-expanding one. Very few belonged to groups subject to the discrimination and violence that eastern European Jews were. Their self-conception as *pie'd noirs* or separatist Katangans came after the fact, largely in response to anti-colonial movements. Their governments encouraged colonial migration, while Jews often faced barriers from Palestine's British mandate government.

Unlike the French or Belgians, pre-1948 Palestinian Jews did not have state power at all, let alone power comparable to France or Belgium. Assuming that they did is false and reinforces an antisemitic view that Jews have long had global, state-like power. Ironically, this same stereotype motivated Britain's support for Zionism in 1917.

What Israel has had is a largely European and U.S. Jewish diaspora with a variety of connections and views on it. Viewing this diaspora, regardless of its politics or actual relation to Israel, as comparable to a nation state's colony opens the door to attacks on expressions of Jewish community or Jewish communal grief. And this is true regardless of its connection to the Israeli government or the current war.

While Zionism is a nationalist ideology, a careless focus on its religious imagery and language can lead to attacks on Judaism itself. But Judaism doesn't inevitably lead to state violence, just as Islam doesn't.

In the past the U.S. Left has managed to acknowledge that difference. At the height of the fight between ISIS and the YPG in Rojava, leftists avoided Islamophobic descriptions of ISIS. After the attacks of September 11, left-wing protests declared, "Islam is not the enemy, war is not the answer." Clear opposition to hatred based on religion and ethnicity was central to the Left's response then. That approach is just as important now.



# October 7th Reaction

RALPH LEONARD

In the history of Palestinian nationalist armed militancy against Israel, nothing compares to the so-called Al-Aqsa Flood, the rather profane name given to the joint Hamas-Palestinian Islamic Jihad operation that occurred on October 7, 2023, whether in the quantity and quality of violence and cruelty inflicted. Around 1,200 Israelis, most of them civilians, were slaughtered with a vast range of methods in the armory of fiendish brutality, from mowing down young ravers with assault rifles and grenades, raping women in their homes, and credible reports of the torture of families—by torture I mean slicing off fingers, an eye gouged out—in front of each other before burning them alive. As I've written previously, this was less Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* and more Pasolini's *Salò: 120 Days of Sodom*.

Since then, the Israeli government has sponsored screenings of *Bearing Witness* for journalists, the political classes of various Western countries, and other select audiences. This 45-minute compilation of uncensored footage was filmed on GoPro cameras by Hamas irregulars themselves, some of whom were likely drug-fueled; it captured only some of the worst brutalities inflicted on Israeli civilians.

In some sense, these screenings are “propaganda spectacles.” The Israeli government is of course trying to get back the international goodwill it initially received after October 7 but squandered due to its obscene bombardment of Gaza in retribution. The Israeli government, following the cliché of never letting a crisis go to waste, is obviously making propaganda of the real atrocities of October 7th to rationalize inflicting a catastrophe on Gaza; they're not “merely” mowing the lawn (to invoke that demonic euphemism) as they have in previous years; they're uprooting it. And yet, propaganda doesn't always involve falsehood; it can involve things that are factually true.

Indeed, a considerable chunk of the Left, especially the so-called “decolonial” crowd, has had a range of disgraceful responses to October 7. The conspiratorial minded latched onto any factoid to dampen the magnitude of the massacre, even going as far as

rubbishing documented and verified atrocities against Israeli civilians. Others rationalised it with bogus analogies to slave revolts. And others even brazenly celebrated it as an act of “decolonization” because in their mind Israeli “settlers” for once were humbled and paid a price for the siege on Gaza, which Jabotinsky’s Iron Wall insulated them from.

I realise that any critique of Hamas can provoke eye rolls among leftists. It seems indecent now, especially as thousands of Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israeli bombs in the name of “eradicating Hamas.” It’s also as if to censure Hamas too harshly is to somehow denigrate the dispossessed and give ammunition to Israeli propaganda. But Hamas are not the wretched of the earth; they are a political outfit with their own agenda, representing one wing of the Palestinian national bourgeoisie, no less craven, opportunistic and gangsterish than the gangsters of Fatah in Ramallah. And because they are a political outfit, they are subject to the same ruthless criticism that comes with being a political agent.

The issue is not whether Israel’s subjugation, dispossession, and humiliation of the Palestinians, or the blockade on Gaza specifically, is atrocious and ought to be opposed. Of course, it should be. The question is *how* it is to be opposed and to what *end*. In this sense, the objection towards Hamas isn’t simply “moralistic,” but also political. They are a petit-bourgeois religious nationalist outfit whose political goal if it came to fruition would erect just another ethnocentric, bonapartist, capitalist dictatorship. Their use of terrorism as a method of social change and political pressure reflects a forgoing of mass self-organisation and solidarity.

Leftists so often make a fetish out of “resistance” without realising the implicit conservatism of such a mantra. It assumes that what you’re “resisting” is ultimately so permanent that you can only hit back against it, which in turn produces more repression and violence. There is no transformational, internationalist, revolutionary approach. Indeed, the struggle for proletarian socialism gives way for tailing behind petit-bourgeois nationalist chauvinism.

We know that the crisis ignited by October 7 is not going to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. It won’t make the conditions of Palestinians better, only worse. We know from the experience of the Lebanese civil war and the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran that

what Hamas is offering will not lead to progress and emancipation. In simple terms, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are not now, and will never be, the vehicle for Palestinian liberation. Indeed, they are its gravediggers.

# How Colonial Is That?

ANNA ZAWADZKA

Israel was not created by the Jewish lobby in the United States. It emerged first from the resilience of Jews from Eastern Europe who fled from the antisemitic violence of Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians, then from the Holocaust, and finally from living amidst the graves of their loved ones. And they are supposed to be colonizers like Hernán Cortés, or the influential Jews who rule the world?

The Western Left proclaims that Israel is colonialism. And I live in Eastern Europe, and I listen to the local Left, who, in a caricatured act of self-colonization, repeat Western mantras. The Polish Left wants to be like the West. It believes that Truth, Good, and Beauty come from there. What matters more to it than the local context is the old Wild East complex, well preserved by the Cold War. For instance, the assertion that Jews are white, a diagnosis perhaps fitting for the USA, does not align with the reality in Poland, where “recognizing a Jew” seems almost like a national sport and yielded particularly devastating consequences during the Holocaust. To ensure that no one gets out of practice at this sport, until recently brochures titled “*Poznaj Żyda*” (“Get to Know the Jew”) were readily available at every kiosk.

Here is a bit of context.

We had combative anti-Zionism here long before it became fashionable. It was so intense that people painted swastikas on Jews’ doors, left shit on their doormats, made harassing phone calls in the middle of the night with jokes about Jews, threatened their children, sent anonymous letters to their mailboxes, hindered their professional promotions, stripped them of their livelihoods, expelled them from college, the army, the Communist Party, and even forced them out of the country.

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, the Polish government compelled representatives of Jewish organisations – influential figures within the Jewish community – to publicly denounce Israel. Those who refused to comply faced job loss. Simultaneously, student

protests against media and theatre censorship were gaining momentum. Seizing the opportunity, in 1968, the Polish government merged these two elements. They asserted that the protests were orchestrated by Jews, as true Poles would not turn against their homeland's government. According to this narrative, those disloyal to Poland were aligned with Israel due to their deep-seated Zionism, which clashed with Communist ideals. Consequently, a nationalist purge unravelled under the guise of internationalism. The remaining events unfolded naturally: the government knew that, when it comes to antisemitism, Polish society is very reliable. The state offered the persecuted a single option: a "travel document" in exchange for renouncing Polish citizenship. Not even a passport. As Jews decided to leave, Poles took possession of their belongings and apartments, echoing a ghostly reminder of the widespread looting from two decades prior.

These Jews who endured such harrowing experiences were not Zionists; in fact, many were fervent anti-Zionists. Before the war, a number of them actively opposed Zionism and were members of the Communist Party of Poland, or of the Bund. They did not leave Poland because they wanted to build a new system; that was what they fought for here. They never considered Israel their home. Many of them did not identify with Jewishness. They usually framed it in terms of memories and the solemn obligation to remember the victims of Shoah.

None of this spared them from accusations of Zionism and from subsequent exile. Remarkably, some maintained their anti-Zionist principles even in exile. Israel, ironically, became a place of refuge for some of these individuals.

Unlike the American Left, I live in a country where only 15,000 people identify as Jews. However, most Poles still believe that there are millions of Jews in Poland. I live in a country where, whenever something politically significant occurs, inhabitants have historically organised spontaneous pogroms against Jews, and, more often than not, the perpetrators were not prosecuted. 1905, 1918, 1920, 1936, 1939-1945, and then 1946-1948 mark periods when such pogroms occurred. The history of these events is only slowly coming to light. What Hamas did on the kibbutzim in October 2023 bore a striking resemblance in structure to these historical pogroms. I find it hard to believe that the perpetrators are unaware of the script they are following.

For the majority of Poland's 15,000 Jews, Israel is not a source of pride; nor is it the primary subject of their national identification. However, it will never be just another country for them. Israel serves as their security card, a reassurance that in case of a resurgence of antisemitic violence in Poland, they have a place of refuge. Finally, for them, it is a place where their families and friends reside – people who had to leave Poland because of antisemitism. They did not want to do it, but the Polish state forced them to.

So let me tell you what else colonialism is. Colonialism, in essence, is also the belief that the American Jewish experience – though often vaguely defined and overly monolithically portrayed – represents Jewishness worldwide. It is the misconception that the current situation of Jews in the USA fully encapsulates the broader reality for Jews globally. It is the mindset assuming that, everywhere, the history of racism and the mechanisms of racialization mirror those in the United States. It is the assertion that all Jews are either in the United States or Israel and that everything related to Israel revolves around the line between Washington and Jerusalem. It is the perspective that dismisses the existence of Jews elsewhere and, even if acknowledged, diminishes the significance of their lives, history, and safety.

# Anti-Imperialism Is Unable To Grasp the Israel-Hamas Conflict

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

The attack in October on Israeli citizens by Hamas and Israel's response to the attack have once again revealed that a large part of the Left fails to grasp the relation of the nation-state, nationalism and so-called "national liberation" to capital, and simultaneously that antisemitism remains alive as "the socialism of fools." The failure takes two forms. We see outright support for Hamas as "objectively anti-imperialist" and as an "authentic" Palestinian political force. But we also see a denial to Jewish peoples of the same rights as any other oppressed people.

Hamas launched the attack on October 7, 2023 fully well knowing that this was not a winnable military campaign. Who thinks that Hamas plans to defeat Israel *militarily*? Not Hamas. Hamas may be a murderously antisemitic, anti-gay, anti-woman, anti-socialist, anti-democratic political organization, but they have not shown themselves to be that stupid. Instead, based on the timing, on the clearly provocative and cruel atrocities, and on the absence of any chance of military success, Hamas likely acted because it fears Israel's significant efforts to normalize diplomatic and political relations with the Arab states. Hamas's attack was a performance designed to bait the Likud regime into a response of collective punishment, which is a war crime in international law, ending for the foreseeable future any possible normalization, keeping Palestine as a wedge issue in the Middle East, and keeping Hamas at the political table. By this measure, Hamas won, *at the expense of the majority of Palestinians*.

Why did Netanyahu's government take the bait and launch a counter-campaign that would obviously involve war crimes from the perspective of international law and diplomacy, destroy normalization with the Arab regimes, and heap opprobrium on Israel?

It should be clear, as it is to many Israeli citizens, that Likud and its far right allied parties have a reactionary agenda designed to use liberal democracy to destroy liberal democracy, just as Netanyahu's allies, Trump and Putin, do. Therefore, despite the diplomatic inconveniences, October 7 presented an opportunity to justify using the military to both reinforce a policy of apartheid and a policy of collective punishment of Gaza, killing an estimated 14,000+ Palestinians, while trying to silence the increasingly militant internal Israeli opposition to the regime.

If this did not involve Israel, the politics would be clear to leftists. Hamas stands against everything the Left stands for, pursues its agenda by violence against Israelis and Palestinians, worries first and foremost about its position of power at the table, and promotes international antisemitism. Netanyahu's Likud sees this as an opportunity to pursue the most radical parts of its ultra-conservative agenda and has already killed many times more Palestinians, over half of them women and children, than on October 7. If this did not involve Israel, we would start by condemning Hamas as an enemy of the oppressed and exploited in Gaza and everywhere. Then we would condemn the Likud regime for using Hamas's pogrom as an excuse for collective punishment of Gazans, calls for ethnic cleansing by its right-wing partners, and as another means to destroy Israeli liberal democracy. Both sides (Hamas and Likud, *not* Palestinians and Israelis) represent moments of the long rightward shift globally that marks the secular crisis of capital.

But it does involve Israel, so many "anti-imperialists" defend Hamas and argue that the Jews, despite being nearly extinguished as a people in Europe through the Holocaust, are the one oppressed group with no right to a nation-state. Not that "national liberation" solves problems constituted by capital, as the last 70 years have shown, but the issue is the *antisemitic hypocrisy* of the anti-imperialists, not the effectiveness of a nation-state solution. Leftists cheering Hamas support a fascist, antisemitic organization that any and all of them would condemn in their own countries.

However, justifying the Likud regime's actions, as if antisemitism means that the Israeli state is magically outside the laws of capital, and does not behave just like any other capitalist nation-state, is to become apologists for Likud and the ethnic cleansing policies of their



Knesset allies, policies that mirror those of their allies like Trump, Putin, et al, in the growing fascist international, who support Netanyahu with one hand and their own native antisemites with the other.

To defend the oppressed and exploited in Palestine *and* Israel, we must refuse defending Hamas or Likud or anyone who would tell us that murdering children, raping women, blowing up hospitals, murdering homosexuals, stealing people's land and all the rest of the atrocities will lead to a more free and dignified humanity.

# **No Hope Left? On Antisemitism in Left-Wing Discourses After October 7, 2023**

SIMONE L. WIESENGRUND

The days after October 7, 2023, were full of spiraling social media posts. The devastating information about young ravers killed and raped on a festival ground, about elderly people as well as toddlers being taken hostage, about whole Kibbutzim being burned to the ground – in short about the most excruciating massacre since the foundation of the state of Israel kept flooding my newsfeed. But it was not only the information about the attack, carried out by a terrorist, Islamist organization, that was appearing in media outlets or social media news feeds. Pastel-colored pictures on Instagram celebrating the beginning of a freedom fight started circulating. Posts mocking “postcolonial” academics for thinking “decolonization” would only happen discursively. Stories “contextualizing” rape, murder, and abduction as “appropriate responses to occupation.” This was not right-wing extremists or authoritarian Islamists who shared this kind of information. It was friends from school that never had been much into politics before, classmates I had attended seminars in political theory with, comrades I had discussed social inequality or racist structures with. I am not naïve – I know that the so-called “Arab-Israeli Conflict” has been one of the most controversial topics on the left for many years. I had many discussions on that topic, called out antisemitism in leftist contexts, and was in awe of the Manichaean blindness of “tankies”. Yet the blatant wave of unfiltered antisemitic hate that swept through academic and leftist circles after October 7 surpassed everything I could have imagined (and that is including the debates we had in the “Western” left two years ago on why Russia is the bad guy in the war on Ukraine).

The lack of basic solidarity of feminists with Israeli victims of rape, of human right activists with Israeli hostages, the sheer extent of antisemitism produced by leftist activists – all of this is only poorly camouflaged by terms like “anti-Zionism” or “criticism of Israel”. It made me call into question once more what it means to be “on the Left” and whether I still want to be a part of this group. And it is not just me who is asking this question. It is also Israeli leftist activists, who have been protesting the right-wing Netanyahu-government for the last months. It is Jews living in the diaspora, many of them not even Israeli citizens, that do not feel safe anymore. They do not feel safe in a Berlin synagogue anymore because Molotov cocktails are being thrown at it. They do not feel safe anymore in their university activist group because their comrades are cheering on antisemitic terrorist organizations. They do not feel safe on the streets of Paris anymore because their homes and schools are being marked with Stars of David. They do not feel safe anymore in Warsaw because signs carried at protests show the Star of David being chucked in the trash.

And why should Israeli leftists, should Jews around the world, should Kurdish, Alevite, or Secular Arab victims of Islamism around the world still believe in a global Left if it does not recognize the threat that they are facing? I suppose I am an optimist after all because I still desperately want to believe that the leftist movement does stand a chance. However, it needs to realize something.

The leftist movement needs to realize that global power structures have shifted, and that the patterns from the Cold War do not fit anymore. Yes, the USA were the “bad guys” in many international conflicts. However, that does not mean that their opponents are automatically without fault. The Western Left went through all that two years ago, discovering why Russia is neither socialist nor “anti-imperialist” (and that the Soviet Union wasn’t, either). We must endure the cognitive dissonance of the fact that, while decolonization and the breaking up of the continuities of Western imperialism are necessary for global equality, not all actors claiming to be anti-colonial or anti-imperialist are progressive actors fighting for a society of solidarity. While criticism of post-colonial power-structures and the structural inequalities and discrimination that capitalist societies produce is still as necessary as ever, it needs to be recognized

that at the same time, we must defend our imperfectly democratic, aspiring-to-be-universalistic values. We must defend them against an unholy alliance of right-wing extremists in the “Western” world, authoritarian and expansionist states like Putin’s Russia, and theocratic Islamists. They all share the goal of destroying the “decadent”, “amoral” “Western world.” They target societies that (at least aspire to) provide universal rights and equality – albeit in the framework of neoliberal capitalism. This means recognizing that Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, or the Iranian theocracy supporting them are in no way “anti-colonial” actors that are fighting for global equality. These are terrorist organizations that want to destroy every chance of building equal and free societies based on solidarity.

To recognize the ambiguity in global power structures; to be able to endure the dialectics of criticizing the inequalities produced by the Western capitalist system while simultaneously fighting to maintain the achievements of liberal democracy; to recognize the intricacies of antisemitic ideology in the modern world; and to be able to show empathy and human decency towards Israelis and Jews – these are my conditions for a leftist movement that is worthy of the name and that I would gladly be a part of. A universalistic, progressive, undogmatic movement that fights for the emancipation from all repressive ideologies.

# Critiquing Campism

GA MATIASZ (AKA "LEFTY" HOOLIGAN)

I'm on the left of the Left. A libertarian socialist. I have been for fifty-five years now, ever since 1968 and the anti-Vietnam War movement. But since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 24, 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza on October 27, 2023 I've been leery of U.S. mass anti-war protests organized by crude Leninists, terror apologists and left antisemites like the Tweedledum-Tweedledee vanguardists of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and / WWP (Workers World Party), which are joined-at-the-hip by their *faux* ANSWER "Coalition."

This hard Stalinist/anti-imperialist/anti-revisionist/campist/tankie Left divides the world into imperialist nations versus anti-imperialist nations. It's assumed that those countries in the imperialist "camp" are reactionary whereas those countries in the anti-imperialist "camp" are progressive. This basic campism insists that the United States is the center of global imperialism and therefore the primary enemy, with Israel an imperialist appendage. The anti-imperialist forces arrayed against the United States are considered "on the right side of history" and are, if not socialist, at least leaning Left. So campism implies that those who oppose imperialism, even reactionary Islamist Hamas, are progressive.

I'm pro-Jewish, anti-Israeli state, pro-Palestinian, and anti-Hamas armed party. But I'm convinced there can never be a simple, easy solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict. The Israeli government has committed war crimes: the indiscriminate use of white phosphorous, collective punishment of Palestinians, massacres of unarmed Arab civilian protesters, the relentless assault on Arab hospitals and communities. Hamas has also committed war crimes: suicide bombings, indiscriminate rocket fire, using Palestinian civilians and hospitals as human shields, the massacre of 1,200 Israelis on October 7. And there's been populist pogroms on both sides, grassroots war crimes like the murders of West Bank Palestinians by the Israeli

Settler Movement and the looting of Israeli communities and bases by Gazans after October 7.

According to the anti-imperialist camp, however, Hamas can do no wrong and Israel can do no right. Hamas is engaged in a “decades long fight for national liberation,” a legitimate “struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.” Israel is “settler-colonial, Zionist apartheid” and “fascist-type oppression,” the “genocide being carried out by the Zionist terror state.” Resistance against “the Zionist entity-by any means necessary” is “a morally and legally legitimate response to occupation” by “Palestinian freedom fighters” who “are not terrorists!” Indeed, “when a people have been subject to decades of apartheid and unimaginable violence, their resistance” (by massacring civilians) “must not be condemned, but understood as a desperate act of self-defense.”

The campist anti-imperialist “unwavering solidarity” and “unequivocally expressed support” for the Palestinian people and “their attack against Israel” becomes pure Manichaeian “good vs evil.”\* I prefer the straightforward approach of Gilles Dauvé who argued: “I am against imperialism, be it French, British, US or Chinese. I am not an ‘anti-imperialist,’ since that is a political position supporting national liberation movements opposed to imperialist powers.”

Much has been made of former Greek minister Yanis Varoufakis’s refusal to condemn Hamas’s October 7 massacre when he said, “Back in South Africa in the era of apartheid, what was the problem? Was it that some members of the Black resistance, including the ANC but not only the ANC, took up arms against the South African regime and sometimes killed innocent people? Was that the problem of apartheid? No. The problem was apartheid.” What this skirts is the history of the original apartheid system. That the ANC *actually* signed onto the Geneva Protocols in 1980, that the ANC was party to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that *clearly* found the ANC in violation of the Geneva Protocols, and that *ultimately* the ANC accepted those judgments. What we need is to hold Israel and Hamas, as well as Britain, the United States, and Europe accountable for the over 75 years of heinous war crimes in Israel and Palestine, not make excuses for them.

Campist anti-imperialism discredits the Left as a whole. The machinations of the PSL, WWP, and ANSWER are particularly destructive, with their retro-Marcyism, support for dictators like Putin and Assad, disdain for workers struggles, sabotage of other socialists, sectarianism against alternative movements, and strong-arm tactics to silence radicals of different views. Throughout the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars they've sought to control the anti-war movement specifically and the Left generally as vanguardist fiefdoms. *Oakland Socialist's* John Reimann insists the present anti-war movement should be democratically organized and all points of view be represented. DSA members Jason Schulman and Dan La Botz contend there is only one camp, "*our camp*," "our commitment to democracy, to the workers' movement in all countries, and to the struggle for international socialism." I heartily concur.

\*This pastiche of quotes is taken from statements by DSA (Democratic Socialists of America), National Lawyers Guild, Black Lives Matter Phoenix, Party of Socialism and Liberation, and the Workers World Party.

# **A Response to the New Wave of Antisemitism**

MOISHE EINSTEIN

I am opposed to all hierarchies, including but not limited to all states and all nationalisms. By extension, I am opposed to the military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, to all authoritarian forms of violence, and to all targeting of civilians. To actually resolve the Israel/Palestine crisis, real movements towards an egalitarian federation of self-managed communities are needed. But until something like this emerges, steps need to be taken against authoritarian excesses.

The dominant politics of Palestine activism in the United States is distinct from my politics. There is the longstanding issue of anti-war coalitions being controlled by an alphabet soup of sectarian Leninist groups and their friends. The main tendencies in Palestine activism today advocate for nationalism and statecraft as a solution to a particular crisis of nationalism and statecraft!

Unfortunately, there is a lot of antisemitism among Palestine activists. This can take many forms such as: double standards related to Jews and/or Jewish collectivities, inflations of the powers and wrongdoings of Jews and/or Jewish collectivities, double standards in regards to national-self determination, double standards in regards to which states and which authoritarian forces people oppose and support, essentialist notions of Jews, conspiratorial antisemitism, blaming Jews and Israelis for the state of Israel, conflating all Zionists (people who believe Israel should exist in some sense) with the worst real and perceived acts of the state of Israel, supporting antisemitic organizations including Hamas and Hezbollah, and double standards towards dealing with antisemitism.

Anti-hierarchical critiques of Israel, both as a nation-state and of its particular policies, can be done without antisemitism. And so while not all anti-zionism is antisemitic, based on the above criteria a lot of it is. Many well-meaning people are ignorant about the topic and cannot detect the difference between legitimate critiques of



Israel/Israeli policy and antisemitic ones, something especially true in situations where the two are interspersed. As Peter Staudenmaier points out, antisemitism does not have to be a conscious intent; it can take the form of a worldview that explains social problems as such. Antisemitism has been compounded by a fetishization of violence and identity, as well as an ethical relativism that leads to selective support for authoritarian organizations and authoritarian violence. Unsurprisingly, these same traits are also employed by those who support Israel's war crimes.

Social movements should *at the very least* draw red lines at support for Hamas and the October 7 massacre. Unfortunately, many leading organizations in U.S. Palestine activism claimed both as liberatory. This includes (but is not limited to) Party for Socialism and Liberation, Workers World Party, ANSWER coalition, Students for Justice in Palestine, Palestinian Youth Movement, PalAction US, Within Our Lifetime, Decolonize This Place, Samidoun Network, American Muslims for Palestine, US Palestinian Community Network, and Al Awda. These organizations often work together and have led some of the biggest actions.

The movement does not *just* have an antisemitism problem; leading organizations support an antisemitic, theocratic, nationalist government slaughtering Jews en masse as liberation! And this issue goes beyond the United States. For example, one statement co-signed by many organizations throughout the world, Progressive International's "The Gaza Resolution," supports an "inalienable right to resist...by all available means"—a clever way of claiming the October 7 massacre was *inalienably* justified. If such organizations wanted to make amends, they could denounce Hamas and October 7 and actively change course by *meaningfully* adopting a non-antisemitic approach to opposing the oppression of Palestinians.

The current wave of Palestine activism is also in part a red/brown alliance. Support for Hamas and October 7 is support for an anti-Jewish massacre by an antisemitic theocratic government! It is beyond the pale. This is not a mere balance sheet of lives lost. This is about whether we have a movement opposed to authoritarianism or a movement that selectively supports authoritarianism. People should not have to join events and coalitions held together by pro-authoritarian and antisemitic organizations to take actions

against injustices and war crimes committed against the Palestinians by the state of Israel. Another Left is possible!

Hamas is a theocratic dictatorship that primarily oppresses Palestinians. Civilians in Gaza are dominated by the occupation and Hamas rule. When Palestine activists support Hamas and the October 7 massacre as liberation, they are not just being antisemitic; they are being anti-Palestinian by claiming that authoritarian politics are either good for Palestinians or an authentic mode of their political life. The October 7 massacre was not liberation. It was a mass slaughter of Jewish civilians leading to an even greater slaughter of Palestinian civilians. There is no liberation emanating from such spirals of reactionary violence.

# Physician, Heal Thyself: Jewish Inclusivity on the Left?

ANONYMOUS

I don't know how to explain to you that you need to care about other people. I don't know how this moral failure is not self-evident to you. I don't know how to explain that a Left that is morally bankrupt has nothing to offer, and is fundamentally incapable of liberation.

I don't think there is any combination of words that will unlock empathy, clear out hypocrisy, or otherwise convince you that we, the Jews, the detested among you, are as deserving as you or anyone else of regard, care, and solidarity. We have tried for hundreds of years. We've talked, and written, and marched. We've fought in your wars, supported your causes, and died serving your dreams.

It's just never enough.

The various movements for social equality that rose in the collapse of the empires of the 19th and 20th centuries gave hope, for a while, that the Jew would be seen as equal to any other human. This, however, was a lie. I know it to be little more than lip service, because of what I saw not on October 7, but the day after, on October 8.

Since the day after Hamas' brutality towards civilians—families, children—we have seen an outpouring of support on the Left towards the Palestinians. This is right and proper. Palestinians deserve to be free and to live their lives in dignity as they choose, just as anyone else.

But we have also seen rank dismissal of Jewish pain and mourning, mass buy-in to antisemitic conspiracy, and denial to the Jews the rights offered to all other peoples. Is this equality? Is this post-nationalist? By what metric is one nationalism considered worth supporting over another? How is supporting Hamas, an explicitly genocidal, theocratic, fascist organization.... leftist? Surely we can

support the rights of all peoples regardless of the villainous nature of their respective governments?

It seems we in fact cannot do this at all. A great sea of digital ink pours out to justify the worst that humanity has to offer society, because they claim to represent the subaltern. Why are we choosing to take actors known for their perfidy at their word?

Trying to make it make sense was a losing effort. There is no political theory that justifies this kind of behavior. I quickly realized that the underlying factor here wasn't theory. Or, rather, the underlying theory is that whatever bad thing was happening, it was on the Jews. Crude, but effective.

I speak, of course, not only of reactions to October 7, but of the antisemitism that shapes them. This has included violence towards Jews around the world: not only in Tel Aviv, but in Paris, Toronto, New York, and London. No matter that the violence in the Diaspora isn't suffered by Israelis at all. They're all Zionists anyway, so they deserve it, right? The idea that all people are entitled to the same rights regardless of the politics they hold—this truism does not seem to apply to the Jews, whatever their actual politics are.

The Jew is once again relegated to an object on which society can project its sins, its shame, and its anger, and punish us for it. So much for the radical, post-national Left.

I believe, deep in my bones, that there will never be a threshold at which the world turns around and truly believes “ah, we see the Jew is a person like you or me, deserving of the same rights.”

I want to believe in these ideals we profess to share because they are beautiful and promise a world oriented towards justice and mercy. But I no longer believe in solidarity, and I longer believe in you. You have chosen the most ancient and most comfortable of social fallacies, the socialism of fools over the rights of man, and the howls of the world praising you for it does not put you in the company of the righteous and the just.

One day, history will find your moral failure here as distasteful as you find the howling of early church patriarchs against long dead religious doctrines. Your jeers mean nothing to me. I've seen what makes you cheer.







