

# The Politics Of Anti-Semitism

By Gilad Atzmon

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In an article published by the Guardian's 'Comment Is Free,' David Hirsh, an ultra-Zionist academic, accused me of being "anti-Semitic" and an "anti-Jewish racist". Yet, even though the piece looks like it is fully researched, Hirsh fails to present one single argument that can support his accusations. On the occasions that he attempts to do so, when he seems to be getting close to substantiating his accusations, it is only because he takes my words completely out of context, crudely diverts their meaning and in doing so, deliberately misleads his readers. This is something you might expect from a politician but not from an academic.

In his comment, Hirsh extensively quotes from an old paper of mine in which I explore the politics of anti-Semitism. In this paper I argue that anti-Semitism is an archaic notion that exists only to fuel Zionism.

Here are my exact words:

"In the devastating reality created by the Jewish state, anti-Semitism has been replaced by political reaction. I am not suggesting that Jewish interests are not being mutilated and vandalized. I am not saying that synagogues aren't being attacked, that Jewish graves are not brutally smashed up. I am saying that these acts, that are in no way legitimate, should be seen as political responses rather than racially motivated acts or 'irrational' hate crimes."

The argument is rather simple. Zionism is fuelled by the vivid image of anti-Jewish feelings. Indeed, in a world without anti-Semitism, there would be no need for a Jewish national shelter, i.e. Israel. In other words, we are facing here a vicious circle in which Israel is the first to benefit from the growth of anti-Semitism. Thus, it is not very surprising that Hirsh, being a Zionist ideologist, would seek to present any form of anti-Zionism as a manifestation of anti-Semitism. However the question is whether he succeeds in this premise of his.

Hirsh claims that I push a "classic anti-Semitic Jewish conspiracy libel" and he provides a quote to prove his point:

"American Jewry makes any debate on whether the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are an authentic document or rather a forgery irrelevant. American Jews (in fact Zionists) do control the world."

In fact, the quote makes it absolutely clear that I am referring to 'Zionists' rather than to 'American Jews'. In other words, it contains no anti-Semitic

or anti-Jewish sentiment.

In my original text I presented a substantial list of American Jewish politicians who somehow found their way into different leading positions in the (1st) Bush administration. I then clearly state that "Since America currently enjoys the status of the world's only super power and since all the Jews listed above declare themselves as devoted Zionists, we must begin to take the accusation that Zionists are trying to control the world very seriously." Again, it is clear from the context that this refers solely to Zionists rather than to American Jews or to Jews in general. Only then do I move on and argue that "American Jewry makes any debate on whether the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are an authentic document or rather a forgery irrelevant. American Jews (in fact Zionists) do control the world."

I should mention that the bracketed words "in fact Zionists" did not appear in my text at the time of publication. They were subsequently added as soon as I realised that some seemed to have mistakenly misinterpreted the text as a form of anti-Semitism. The bracketed specification was immediately added in order to remove any doubt regarding my initial intent.

I would like to believe that being a Zionist ideologist as well an academic, Hirsh must be aware of the work of the prominent American academics John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt who have exposed the vast influence of the Israeli Lobby in America. In fact, the views expressed by myself in the piece quoted by Hirsh are no different from those of Mearsheimer and Walt. This perspective is now becoming an integral part of the Anglo-American academic and political discourse. I assume that Hirsh is not too happy about that, but I am not able to help him here.

Hirsh also argues that I have repeated the blood libel and deicide accusation that "the Jews were responsible for the killing of Jesus."

Strangely, in my original text I somehow managed to anticipate Hirsh's concerns. Here are my words. "Zionists are not happy at all with the recycling of some old 'Anti-Semitic slogans and images'. They are especially annoyed when they are blamed for the death of Jesus. I would suggest that perhaps we should face it once and for all: the Jews were responsible for the killing of Jesus who, by the way, was himself a Palestinian Jew."

There is no doubt that the role of Jews in Christ's death has become a major Western historical and religious narrative. Yet, I continue to argue that this is an irrelevant historical fact. Instead, I present a crucial question which Hirsh has managed to deliberately dismiss:

"How is it that people living today feel accountable or chased for a crime committed by their great ancestors almost 2,000 years ago?"

My answer to this question is as follows:

"I assume that those Jews who get angry when blamed for killing Jesus are those who identify themselves with Jesus' killers. Those who would commit this murderous act today. Those Jews are called Zionists and they are

already advancing into their sixth decade of inhuman crimes against the Palestinian people and the Arab world."

Once again I make it very clear that it is the Zionist rather than the Jew on whom I focus my criticism. Indeed, as long as Hirsh and his kind manage to maintain that the deicide blood libel is alive and well, the Jewish people may be doomed forever to view favourably the idea of a Jewish national shelter.

Again, it is clear beyond doubt that my concern is solely with the Zionist crime rather than with the Jews. And I do not doubt that Hirsh is well aware of this. It is also possible that Hirsh, yet again accusing a Hebrew speaking Palestinian (myself), himself feels closely related to Jesus' killers. But this is something I can never know for sure.

Hirsh has his belly full. He complains that I am "critical of those who compare the current Israeli regime with Nazi Germany, on the basis that Israel is a more radical evil."

For once he is right. I am now against the comparison between the two evils. But this is neither anti-Semitic nor anti-Jewish and neither is it a form of Holocaust denial.

Last summer, at the peak of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, I did indeed suggest that Hugo Chàvez, the Venezuelan President, should avoid comparing between the two evils. Here is what I wrote:

"Looking at the carnage and the devastation in Lebanon doesn't leave any room for doubt. The current Israeli brutality is nothing but evilness for the sake of evilness. Retribution that knows no mercy."

I wrote these lines before it was revealed that the Israeli military had, in the final 48 hours of the war, dispersed thousand of cluster bombs all over southern Lebanon.

Anyway, my argument is rather simple: "Unlike Nazism that belongs to the past, Zionism's wickedness is a crime which is still unfolding and worsening."

However, if Hirsh is interested in comparing the two evils, I will admit that I will be the last to stop him from doing so.

May I conclude by saying that five years ago I added on my homepage an open invitation to my readers to come up and confront me if they find any idea or thought that "may contain a trace of racism" in my writings. In that eventuality, I promised to "either clarify my position or amend my text." Five years have passed and I have not once been so approached. I maintain and reconfirm that there is not a single trace of racism or anti-Semitism in my writing. Hirsh and his ilk prefer to take my words out of context. This is probably why their smear campaigns always fall apart. Hirsh admits that my "writing regularly appears in Counterpunch, Middle East Online, Dissident Voice and many more." My writings indeed appear around the

world in radical left magazines that fight any form of racism. I am pretty certain that quite unlike the Guardian, Counterpunch or Dissident Voice would not touch David Hirsh with a bargepole. Unlike the Guardian they know that Zionism is racism and Zionist ideologists are by definition racist to the bone.

Unfortunately, Hirsh needs anti-Semitism. The reason is simple: while Zionism, being an oppressive and expansionist ideology, is impossible to defend, anti-Semitism is a racial crime and therefore easy to attack. Yet, there is no anti-Semitism in the Palestinian solidarity movement. Anti-Semitism exists solely in the Zionists' minds.

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