

OPINION

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Anti-Zionism Isn't Anti-Semitism? Someone Didn't Get the Memo.

May 24, 2021



By **Bret Stephens**

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In recent years it has become an article of faith on the progressive left that anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism and that it's slander to assume that someone who hates Israel also hates Jews.

Not everyone got the memo.

Not the people who, waving Palestinian flags and chanting “Death to Jews,” according to a witness, [assaulted Jewish diners](#) at a Los Angeles sushi restaurant. Not the people who [threw fireworks in New York's diamond district](#). Not the people who [brutally beat up a man wearing a yarmulke](#) in Times Square. Not the people who drove through London slurring Jews and yelling, “[Rape their daughters](#).” Not the people who gathered outside a [synagogue in Germany](#) shouting slurs. Not the people who, at [a protest in Brussels](#), chanted, “Jews, remember Khaybar. The army of Muhammad is returning.”

Also not getting the memo are the people who have tweeted the hashtag #HitlerWasRight (including someone who now [works for the BBC](#)), along with the hashtag #Covid1948, a suggestion that [Israel is a virus](#) that needs the cure of Hamas's rockets as a “vaccine.” Apparently, these hashtags count as legitimate political speech at Twitter, a company whose objections to bigotry are otherwise so strong that it once banned a Canadian feminist for the sin of tweeting remarks about transgender women like “[men aren't women](#).”

In this storm of hate, political leaders such as Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles, President Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain have issued appropriate

statements of condemnation. On CNN, [correspondent Bianna Golodryga](#) called out the anti-Semitism of Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, when he cited "deep pockets" and "control [of] media" in terms of Israel's influence on public opinion. Good for her.

But if there's been a massive online campaign of progressive allyship with Jews, I've missed it. If corporate executives have sent out workplace memos expressing concern for the safety of Jewish employees, I've missed it. If academic associations have issued public letters denouncing the use of anti-Semitic tropes by pro-Palestinian activists, I've missed them.

It's a curious silence. In the land of inclusiveness, Jews are denied inclusion.

One response to the attacks that I *have* [seen](#) coming from the left is that attacks on Jews are wrong because an American or British or German Jew should not be held responsible for the actions of the state of Israel. That's true, and fine as far as it goes.

But it doesn't go far enough. Would the assaults in Los Angeles and New York have been more justifiable if the victims had been Israeli citizens — even, say, Israeli diplomats? Is hatred of an entire country and threats or violence to its people acceptable as long as the hate is untainted by some older prejudice?

It is especially despicable when Israel is singled out in ways that apply to no other country. To take just one example, when was the last time you heard of a campus demonstration or a call for boycotts and divestment in response to Turkey's 47-year occupation of northern Cyprus [or its routine bombardment](#), using American-made jets, of Kurdish militants in Iraq?

But, again, this doesn't go far enough. The accusations made against Israel — stealing Palestinian land (despite the fact that [Israel vacated the territory](#) from which it was subsequently attacked) and wanton violence against Palestinian civilians, particularly children (despite the fact that Israel [regularly warned its targets](#) to vacate buildings before targeting them) — can't help but make me think of ancient libels about Jewish greed and bloodlust.

Also echoing ancient libels is the idea that 11 days of fighting between Israel and Hamas somehow constitute a unique global horror, even as the world barely takes notice of the Taliban's murder this month of [85 people at a school in Kabul](#). The anti-Semitic worldview is always Judeocentric, in the sense that it is obsessed with Jewish behavior as the supreme factor in domestic and international political life. The left has lately been awfully Judeocentric.

This ought to be whistling loudly in the ears of progressives who claim to be horrified by every form of prejudice. Instead, they have indulged an anti-Israel movement that keeps descending into the crudest forms of anti-Semitism. They remind me of a certain kind of Trump voter who would occasionally voice disgust at his most outrageous behavior, only to come back into alignment with him a few days later. After a while, it becomes clear that the outrage is cheap, if it isn't simply fake.

Progressives will have to come to their own reckoning about what to do about the burgeoning anti-Semitism in their midst. As for Jews, they should take the events of the last few days less as an outrage than as an omen.

Bret L. Stephens has been an Opinion columnist with The Times since April 2017. He won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary at The Wall Street Journal in 2013 and was previously editor in chief of The Jerusalem Post.