

# ANTISEMITISM THAT FINDS COMMON CAUSE WITH THE EXTREME LEFT



## ARAB AND MUSLIM ANTISEMITISM SINCE THE HOLOCAUST

Contemporary antisemitism in the Muslim world is expressed most virulently among “Islamists.” Islamism, or political Islam, is an ideology that treats Islam not just as a religion but as a political movement. One of its extreme and fundamentalist expressions is found in terrorist organizations like Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS. Islamist antisemitism is an especially dangerous strain of antisemitism because it calls openly and vocally for the genocide of all Jews.

It is important to distinguish the difference between Islamism and Islamists from Islam and the majority of Muslims, who do not ascribe to this type of dangerous antisemitism.

Islamist ideology emerged with the Muslim Brotherhood, established in Egypt in 1928, to address what it saw as the crisis of modern Islam in its adoption of Western culture. The Muslim Brotherhood called for a return to sacred Muslim texts, read selectively, as a path toward addressing this crisis. It called for the restoration of Islamic civilization to the former power and glory it had experienced in the seventh and eighth centuries when, primarily through conquest, Islam had spread throughout vast territories. The Muslim Brotherhood saw the Jews as part of the Western threat against Islam – the source of capitalism, communism, nationalism, and everything that stood in their way. They regarded Zionism as a spearhead of Western imperialism and colonialism– a cultural and political attack on the Muslim world. They adopted *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as an important source for explaining evil intentions of Jews, and embraced

other European antisemitic themes. Jews were seen as the root of all evil. This is the basis of Islamist genocidal antisemitism.

Scholars trace a direct connection between the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihadist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hezbollah, and Hamas. All of these radical organizations believe that the Jews (not distinguished from Zionists) are Islam’s most bitter enemy and must therefore be annihilated. They describe the Jews as enemies of God and humanity. They are fervently anti-Zionist, as well as anti-American.

A significant figure in spreading this ideology was Hajj Amin al-Husseini, a Palestinian-Arab nationalist who was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (the chief religious leader of Muslims) during the time that the Land of Israel was under British jurisdiction and known as Mandatory Palestine. He was an extreme antisemite who collaborated with the Nazis, including meeting Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1941 and organizing Muslim fighters in the former Yugoslavia during World War II as auxiliary troops for the Nazi SS.

Al-Husseini was an influential figure in Palestinian nationalism who disseminated pro-Axis and anti-Jewish propaganda during the war. His message was that there was a worldwide Jewish conspiracy, and that the Jews intended to enslave Arabs, to take their land, and to corrupt and undermine their Muslim faith and moral fabric. He labeled the Jews as the enemy of Islam and called for the destruction of Jewish communities in Mandatory Palestine.

Al-Husseini was caught by the Allies but escaped to Cairo, Egypt, where he continued to oppose



"Arabs! Rise as one and fight for your sacred rights. Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion. This serves your honor, God is with you." - Al-Husseini in a radio broadcast from Berlin, Germany, March 1, 1944

Al-Husseini meeting with Adolf Hitler for the first time in Berlin, Germany, November 28, 1941, German Federal Archives.

the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Once Israel was established in 1948, he worked for the remainder of his life to advocate and agitate against the State of Israel. In his post-war memoirs, he justified the Nazi policies against the Jews as a legitimate act of self-defense against Jewish conspiracies.

The genocidal antisemitism promoted by Al-Husseini and radical Islamist groups like Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS stems from a fundamentalist reinterpretation of Islamic texts that extremists have used to advocate for a violent jihad, or "holy war" against Jews. This ideology, which some scholars believe was intensified by WWII-era Arabic-language Nazi propaganda, is evident in the still-binding Hamas Charter of 1988 which echoes *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: the Charter blames the Jews for wars and revolutions, for controlling

imperialistic countries, for corruption, for taking control of world media, and for doing all these things with money they have amassed. The Charter explicitly calls for the "obliteration" of Israel, declaring that it will continue to exist until Muslims destroy it themselves.

These extremist views have found a receptive audience within American far left organizations who seek to boycott and delegitimize the State of Israel, and target Zionists, Jews in general, and other supporters of Israel, deeming them to be oppressors. Far right antisemites have also found common cause with many of these ideas. Recently, these ideas have become more and more mainstream around the world and are indicative of the significant merging of Islamist, far right and far left antisemitism.

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## ANTISEMITISM FROM THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

The roots of Soviet antisemitism go all the way back to the period of the Russian Empire, exemplified by bloody pogroms in the late 1800s and the creation of the antisemitic forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1903. This book purported to be the recorded minutes of secret meetings of Jewish leaders who were supposedly conspiring to dominate the world. Antisemitism continued and expanded after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1918, when the *Protocols* spread outside Russia and became central texts in Nazi racial ideology, fascist antisemitism, and among people who believed in various conspiracy theories, like the innovative American auto manufacturer Henry Ford. Beginning in the 1920s, Joseph Stalin used antisemitism as a tool for consolidating his power. Jewish cultural, educational, and religious institutions were shuttered, the Hebrew language was criminalized, and Jews were expelled from government positions and faced discrimination in education, housing, and employment. Antisemitism lay at the heart of show trials of supposed conspirators and opponents to his

regime. In addition, once it became clear that Israel would not fall into the Soviet orbit, antisemitic and anti-Israel propaganda was created by the Soviets and aggressively spread by them throughout the world.

In the wake of the Six-Day War of 1967 between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the Soviets intensified a propaganda and disinformation campaign that demonized Israel and Zionism. On the far left, false connections were created between Zionism and Nazism, fascism, racism, genocide, settler-colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and apartheid. The ideas from this campaign resulted in the “Zionism is a Form of Racism” resolution adopted by the United Nations in 1975 with Soviet support. During the 1960s through the 1980s, the Soviet Union and its communist bloc allies systematically printed, translated, and distributed hundreds of thousands of copies of the *Protocols* around the globe. Even today, it continues to be the most widely distributed antisemitic publication in the world.



Vladimir Sichov, “Zionism is the Weapon of Imperialism!” May Day parade, Moscow, USSR, 1972, photo courtesy Vladimir Sichov.

Because of the taboo on Nazi-style antisemitism after the Holocaust, the Soviets claimed that their ideology was not antisemitic, but anti-Zionist. The *Protocols* were manipulated so that the idea of a global Jewish conspiracy became a global Zionist conspiracy. Jewish power became Zionist power. The Jew was no longer the devil; instead, the Zionist was a Nazi. The Soviet media spread disinformation equating Zionism with Nazism and Israeli soldiers with Nazis.

In the post-Holocaust world, the Nazis became the icon of evil. The link between Zionism and Nazism painted all Jews as evil so that any resistance, including violence, was justified and warranted against them. This perspective, along with false accusations of settler-colonialism, apartheid, and genocide, have continued in today's anti-Zionist left.



'The familiar wares,' V. Fomichev, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, Aug. 11, 1967, *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973* by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976.

*In this cartoon, the Nazi skeleton of the past is giving his plans for a "New World Order" in the form of weapons and a diagram of Auschwitz to the Jew, who holds a weapon that says "Blitzkrieg" under a sign that says "Lebensraum", equating the violence of the Six-Day War of 1967 to the Nazi military strategy of attack in the quest for living space.*

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## ANTISEMITISM FROM LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Jews largely supported and actively participated in the Civil Rights movement within the United States. Jews, including prominent rabbis and many students, were staunch allies in the fight for civil rights given the history of Jewish persecution and the commitment to equality, justice, and dignity of all people in Jewish ethics. Yet, there were some extreme voices within the Civil Rights movement in the United States of the 1960s and the global anti-Apartheid movement against South Africa starting in the 1960s through the early 1990s. These voices often included imagery and rhetoric based on antisemitic myths of Jewish power and control. One prominent idea was to manipulate the connection between the United States and Israel as allies in order to compare Israeli policies to Nazi Germany, a form of antisemitism that is known as Holocaust Inversion.

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), made up mostly of black college students, participated in major civil rights activities that protested segregation, and led a voter registration campaign in the South. In 1967, with changes in leadership, it became more militant and anti-white, expelling its white members (a sizable number of whom had been Jewish). Also in 1967, shortly after the Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the SNCC published an article suggesting that the Zionists' primary motive in establishing a Jewish state in Palestine was their lust for wealth, a classic antisemitic trope. Vicious antisemitic illustrations also accompanied the article, associating Jews with murder, money, and racism.

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The Palestine Problem, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), June-July 1967.

*This image presents a Jewish hand holding the noose against Palestinians and the Black community, with the liberation movement as the knife that could free both.*

Within progressive circles, American Jews are more and more commonly perceived as privileged white elites: a class of powerful oppressors against people of color and other victims of oppression. Such racial stereotyping utterly mischaracterizes the Jewish people. Painting all Jews as white oppressors ignores some basic facts of history: Jews have been targets of prejudice and discrimination in the United States, whether or not they are considered white. Additionally, this erases Jews of color who experience both antisemitism and racism.