

Yale chaplain forced out by Zionist attacks

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After a two-week campaign, the Yale University Episcopal chaplain was forced to resign over a letter to the *New York Times* in which he explained that actions such as the recent Israeli war on Gaza were breeding anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere.

The Rev. Bruce Shipman, in a three-sentence letter that was published in the *Times* on August 26, responded to an Op-Ed article by scholar Deborah Lipstadt discussing European anti-Semitism. Shipman's letter read, in its entirety, as follows:

"Deborah E. Lipstadt makes far too little of the relationship between Israel's policies in the West Bank and Gaza and growing anti-Semitism in Europe and beyond.

"The trend to which she alludes parallels the carnage in Gaza over the last five years, not to mention the perpetually stalled peace talks and the continuing occupation of the West Bank.

"As hope for a two-state solution fades and Palestinian casualties continue to mount, the best antidote to anti-Semitism would be for Israel's patrons abroad to press the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for final-status resolution to the Palestinian question."

The letter's appearance was followed by a flood of denunciations and threats. Shipman received hate mail, while Yale was inundated with complaints. Others weighed in, including a *Washington Post* columnist and George Mason University professor by the name of David Bernstein, who wrote that Shipman, if no anti-Semite himself, was "excusing" anti-Semitism and "holding Jews responsible" for it.

Shipman explained to the *Hartford Courant* that within a week of the letter's publication a special meeting of the Board of Governors of the Episcopal Church of Yale had taken place. "The executive committee made it clear that I should resign or be fired," he said.

The Episcopal Church at Yale tried lamely to claim that the issues involved were not ones of free speech but of procedure. Shipman had, by not discussing the matter with his colleagues beforehand, violated the "spirit of collaboration and collegiality" that all of the chaplains at the school had promised to uphold.

Shipman told the *Yale Daily News* that politics was at the heart of the matter. "This story cannot be simply dismissed as the inner problems of the Episcopal Church at Yale," he said. "It was not. It was this letter that set off the firestorm."

As the full text of the letter shows, Shipman is no anti-Semite, as some charged. Nor is he even an opponent of Israel. He is a supporter of the "two-state solution," and suggests that the ultra-right wing government of Netanyahu can be prevailed upon to see reason.

Shipman merely stated the undeniable fact that the crimes of the Israeli government provide direct ammunition for all those who seek to revive anti-Semitism today. His reference to the "patrons" of Israel is clearly a reference to the US government and the support for Netanyahu in the halls of Congress in Washington D.C.

As to the issue of anti-Semitism in Europe, examples of it have been magnified and seized on in order to tar those masses of workers, students and youth who have come out to protest the vicious attacks on the Palestinians in Gaza. The aim is to silence all opposition to the very regime that is encouraging anti-Semitism through its murderous repression of the Palestinians and the lie that it and it alone represents the Jewish people.

As has happened increasingly in recent years, supporters of Israel's actions are increasingly driven into a frenzy at anything that calls attention to the distance between official Zionist policy and the feelings of growing numbers of Jews in the US and elsewhere. Their actions are an expression of fear and weakness.

They are acutely aware of the growing international isolation of Israel, and the increasing recognition of Israel and the US as ruled by war criminals and as the spearheads of global reaction. The call for Shipman's head, as in other such cases, is aimed above all at blacklisting all critics of Zionism as anti-Semites in order to stop discussion of these issues.

The chaplain insisted that free speech is the key question raised by his removal. He said he would not be silenced. "I think the truth must be brought out and it must be discussed on campus by people of goodwill without labeling anti-Semitic anyone who raises these questions. Surely this debate should take place on the campuses of the leading universities across the country. If not there, where?"

The forced resignation of Chapman is one of a number of similar incidents on American universities. Earlier this month, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees voted not to reinstate Professor Steven Salaita, who had his tenure revoked after posting comments critical of Israel on Twitter.



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