European Jewish Association slanders left and urges dialogue with far-right

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This year's European Jewish Association special conference underscored the deeply reactionary character of the global efforts by Zionist groups and their allies to redefine opposition to Israel's repression of the Palestinians as anti-Semitism. It is the spearhead of a broader campaign to equate socialism with "Jew hatred" and to apologise for and make an alliance with far-right forces.

Central place at the two-day event in Brussels, November 6-7, was given to a session slandering UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters as an "existential threat" to Jews, accompanied by a call to reach out to Europe's far-right parties as potential allies of Israel in the struggle against Islam.

Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the founder and chair of the EJA, said that while efforts should be made to outlaw explicitly anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi parties, once a far-Right or populist party joined a coalition government in Europe efforts should be made to open communications and engage with them. Another participant, Riccardo Pacifici, former President of the Jewish Community in Rome, justified this, saying, "What's happening in Europe is a new history. It's impossible to classify European parties as Left or Right. Everything has changed."

Such statements are in line with the alliance Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's government is seeking to build with xenophobic and far-right populist parties throughout Europe that defend Israel based on anti-Muslim prejudice and shared support for imperialist intervention in the Middle East.

A front for the Israeli government

The two-day event was targeted at European and UK Parliament legislators, with many of the delegates invited by Israel's Foreign and Jerusalem Affairs Ministries, which co-sponsored the conference. Jerusalem Minister Ze'ev Elkin was in attendance. The EJA has extensive connections Netanyahu's government and an annual budget of €10 million. It has close links with the Chabad movement, an orthodox Jewish Hassidic organisation which maintains that, under Jewish law, any territorial concession to the Palestinians on Israel's part would endanger the lives of all Jews in Greater Israel and is therefore forbidden.

Also involved in promoting the EJA event was the European Israel Public Affairs, a pro-Israel lobby group led by Alex Benjamin, a former advisor to David Trimble, the former leader of the UK's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Other organisers included the UK's Campaign against anti-Semitism (CAA), which functions as a pro-Israel lobby organisation but has been afforded charitable status, and the US-based Simon Wiesenthal Center. The CAA has played a key role in orchestrating the scurrilous campaign to unseat Corbyn as Labour leader, with bogus accusations that he has fostered the growth of anti-Semitism in the party. It was the CAA that organised the demonstration last August outside Labour's headquarters and launched a petition titled, "Jeremy Corbyn is an antisemite and must go."

Last year, 250 academics, many of them Jewish, wrote to the *Guardian*, protesting the CAA's attempts to disrupt Israeli Apartheid Week events by urging its supporters to "record, film, photograph and get witness evidence," telling them it would "help you to take it up with the university, students' union or even the police" and citing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism as the basis for urging prosecutions. The signatories denounced the CAA's "outrageous interferences with free expression" and "attacks on academic freedom": "It is with disbelief that we witness explicit political interference in university affairs in the interests of Israel under the thin disguise of concern about antisemitism."

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has played a key role in promoting the adoption of the IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism and victimising US academics that evince any support for the Palestinians.

EJA declares anti-Zionism and BDS movement is anti-Semitism

The conference approved Margolin's five "red lines," which he said, "serve as a wake-up call to politicians that the very future of Jewish Europe is on the line here." These included the demand that all political parties and their leaders sign up to the full IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, pledge to exclude from government parties or politicians that espouse anti-Semitism—as defined by the IHRA—and pass a binding resolution rejecting Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) activities against Israel as anti-Semitic.

The aim of the "red lines" is to outlaw left-wing parties and the expression of socialist and anti-imperialist views. The IHRA definition describing criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism lists as one of eleven "examples" describing the establishment of Israel as a "racist endeavour" due to the mass expulsion of the region's existing Palestinian citizens. Such a description is given further legitimacy by Israel's recent passage of the "nation-state" law making it explicit that Israel is a nation-state for the Jews alone. The law declares, "The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people." It demotes Arabic as an official language, while sanctioning the construction of yet more Jews-only communities and proclaiming, "Jewish settlement" on Palestinian land "a national value."

The EJA takes this one step further by denouncing the Palestinian-led BDS movement as "the new and latest incarnation of anti-Semitism." Its attempt to outlaw BDS throughout Europe follows heavy pressure by the Netanyahu government on its allies to

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criminalise the movement, quash free speech and counter support for the Palestinians and opposition to Israel's inhuman and illegal policies on university campuses. Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs was reportedly setting up a "dirty tricks" unit, with a budget of $100 million, to establish, hire or tempt not-for-profit groups not associated with Israel to spread "negative information about BDS supporters" and had awarded government contracts worth at least $1 million to law firms in the US and Europe to oppose the movement.

Earlier this year, the Netanyahu government announced a ban on members of organisations supporting BDS from entering the country. Last month, Israel's Supreme Court overturned the government's attempt to deport US student Lara Alqasem, who is of Palestinian decent, after she landed at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport, accusing her of supporting the BDS movement and detaining her for two weeks.

Attack on the left

The special session on Britain was titled, "Securing a future for British Jewry against the threat of political and criminal anti-Semitism." Led by Gideon Falter, the CAA's chairperson, the panel included Conservative TMP Matthew Offord and David Maddox, political editor of the *Sunday Express* , sister paper of the *Daily Express*. The newspaper's historic record on anti-Semitism was to support Adolf Hitler and appeasement—including running a headline in March 1933 opposing the anti-Nazi boycott, "Judea Declares War on Germany." More recently, under the ownership of porn Baron Richard Desmond, its political alliance with the UK Independence Party and the right-wing of the Tory party saw it launch a petition against EU migration under the demand, "Britain is full and fed up."

Speaking after last year's takeover of the titles by Trinity Mirror, newly appointed editor of the *Daily Express* Gary Jones said that previous coverage had contributed to an "Islamophobic sentiment" in the media and things would now change. The "change" at both newspapers involves leading the charge in slandering Corbyn as an anti-Semite.

Speaking ahead of the conference, Falter denounced Corbyn as an anti-Semite and claimed that many Jews were considering leaving the UK should he become prime minister, "And that's a question they shouldn't be having to ask at all."

The ultimate target of the anti-Semitism slander campaign mounted by the Blairite wing of the Labour Party, the Tories, Zionist groups and the mainstream media is not Corbyn, who has caved into every one of his opponents' demands, but his support-based among leftward-moving workers and youth.

Daniel Pipes, the Islamophobic and pro-Zionist founder and president of the Middle East Forum, which has backed anti-Islamic provocateur Tommy Robinson, published an article on the eve of the EJA conference. In it, he chided Margolin for not sufficiently recognising that Europe's far-right parties were not a threat to Jews, but "reflect a healthy response by Europeans to protect their way of life from open immigration and Islamization."

They are not far-right, or even nationalist, he added, but "patriotic": "Better to call them 'civilizationist,' focusing on their cultural priority, because they feel intense frustration at watching their way of life disappear. They cherish Europe's and the West's traditional culture and want to defend it from assault by immigrants aided by the left."

The Alternative for Germany, France's National Front (Now National Rally), Italy's League, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands and the Austrian Freedom Party head an extensive list of those who, "At the height of the migrant tsunami in 2015," opposed "uncontrolled migration," "especially that of Muslims and Africans." A slight problem with anti-Semitism must not be allowed to "delegitimise" these parties, which "generally distance themselves from obsessions with Jews as they mature" and whose "leaders seek good relations with Israel."

Pipes insists that the civilizationists' "difficulties with Jews … pale in comparison with the left's rampant anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism … Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain's Labour Party, symbolizes this trend."

While Corbyn and the "left" must be ferociously opposed, the growth of civilisationist parties should be welcomed because as they "gain in support and power they open the eyes of the other parties to the challenges related to immigration and Islam." Britain, he complains, "has no such party, so these issues are not addressed.

"The 6Ps [police, politicians, press, priests, professors, and prosecutors] should accept civilizationists as legitimate, work with them, encourage them to slough off extremist elements, help them gain practical experience, and guide them to prepare for governance." They are, he insists, "not dangerous; their advent to power will not return Europe to the 'low dishonest decade' of the 1930s."

A policy of appeasing the far-right poses enormous dangers not just for European Jews, Muslims and migrants, who will all fall victim to such forces, but to workers and youth across the continent as well as in Israel itself. Blinded by their visceral hatred of socialism and bound to the "civilisationists" by a shared ethno-cultural nationalism, the Zionists are helping pave the way for the re-emergence of fascism in Europe.

Across Europe and internationally, in the face of growing social tensions, the ruling elites are relying on authoritarian forms of rule and fascistic forces. The global nature of this process makes clear that this is not a coincidence, but the fundamental tendency of the capitalist system. The only social force that can counter this development and stop the extreme right is the international working class. The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and young people to join its ranks and take up the fight against capitalism, fascism and war.

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