

Netanyahu embraces Brazil's Bolsonaro during Israel visit

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6 April 2019

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed with open arms yet another fascistic leader, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, to Israel.

Under Netanyahu, Israel has become a pole of attraction for right-wing ideologues, ultra-nationalists and neo-fascists the world over. US President Donald Trump included Israel on his first overseas tour. Others who have made the pilgrimage include:

* Interior Minister, leader of the anti-immigrant Lega party and supporter of Italian fascist Mussolini, Matteo Salvini, whom Netanyahu welcomed as a "great friend of Israel."

* Philippines' strongman Rodrigo Duterte, who publicly praised Hitler and vowed to emulate him by exterminating three million "criminals."

* India's Narendra Modi, the leader of the Hindu nationalist BJP.

* Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who praised Hungary's dictator Admiral Miklos Horthy, who collaborated with the Nazis in the extermination of more than half a million of Hungary's Jews, as "an exceptional statesman."

* Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who heads a coalition with the Freedom Party, founded by two former Nazi SS officers.

* Steve Bannon, Trump's former advisor and former executive chairman of *Breitbart News*, who describes himself as a Christian Zionist, and who attended the opening ceremony of the US embassy in Jerusalem in 2018.

An avid supporter of Trump's foreign policy stance against China, Russia and Cuba, Bolsonaro has threatened to use the military against Venezuela. A former military officer, he has lavished praise on Brazil's military dictatorship that jailed, tortured and murdered tens of thousands of workers and students between 1964 and 1985. Bolsonaro once said that Brazil could only be changed by a civil war that completed "the job that the military regime didn't do, killing 30,000 people."

This would-be butcher began his four-day visit to Israel on Sunday, just days before Israel's elections on April 9. It was

payback for Netanyahu's visit to Brazil for his presidential inauguration last December, which was largely shunned by leading foreign dignitaries—with the exception of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Hungary's Orban.

Bolsonaro's sons, Eduardo and Carlos, had visited Israel in 2016, when they were photographed wearing Israeli army and Mossad shirts. Eduardo is a member of the Brazilian Parliament and a Latin American representative of the political consortium set up by Bannon, known as the Movement, which promotes extreme right-wing political parties internationally.

Netanyahu greeted Bolsonaro effusively saying, "My friend, the president, we're making history together." Brazil has opened a trade mission in Jerusalem and is seeking increased cooperation on security and technology, including the purchase of advanced drones equipped with facial-recognition technology for police use against political opponents.

Netanyahu accompanied Bolsonaro to the Western Wall in the Old City in East Jerusalem. As the first official visit by a head of state to the wall together with an Israeli leader, it gave tacit recognition to Israeli sovereignty over territory illegally annexed after the 1967 war.

By far the most disgusting aspect of Bolsonaro's trip was his visit to Israel's Yad Vashem International Holocaust Memorial and Museum, after which he declared, in a filthy effort to slander socialists as anti-Semites, that the Nazis were leftists.

"There is no doubt" that Nazism was a leftist movement, he maintained, as the full name of the Nazi Party was the National Socialist Party of Germany, which includes the word "socialist."

Such base calumny and slanders are part and parcel of Bolsonaro and his ilk's mission to rid the world of socialism and any opposition by the working class to capitalism—the political core of all fascist movements.

Bolsonaro's remarks were barely reported, with the media recycling a Reuters account of his interview with the pro-forma statement that "It is widely accepted that Nazism was

a far-right movement.” Yad Vashem’s website says that a range of factors, including Germany’s defeat in World War I, “created fertile soil for the growth of radical right-wing groups in Germany, spawning entities such as the Nazi Party.”

His historical revisionism elicited no opposition from the Israeli press, including its so-called liberal papers, or the international Jewish press.

When Netanyahu visited Brazil for Bolsonaro's inauguration, the Brazilian cartoonist Aroeira drew a picture of Netanyahu and Bolsonaro in an embrace with their arms held out in the shape of a swastika that was published in *O Dia* newspaper and circulated on social media. The Rio Jewish Federation’s response was to file a lawsuit against the cartoonist for what it said was an anti-Semitic drawing.

There is no doubt that these fascist forces are visiting Israel in pursuit of its military hardware, repressive security surveillance technology and intelligence software that have been tried and tested on the Palestinians. They are also seeking to whitewash their fascist and anti-Semitic past by obtaining Israel’s stamp of approval for the resurgence of military dictatorships and fascism. At the same time, these Christian fundamentalists, anti-Semites and xenophobes are no less anxious than their political antecedents for their own Jewish citizens to leave for Israel.

Netanyahu is more than ready to provide the necessary kosher stamp of approval. He has refused to accept that the far right in Europe is anti-Semitic, leading a global effort to redefine anti-Semitism as anti-Zionism and equate it with any opposition to Israel’s brutal subjugation of the Palestinians. European anti-Semitism, he declared, is the “new anti-Semitism that comes from the extreme left and also the radical Islamic pockets in Europe.” He added, “The idea that Israel doesn’t have a right to exist is the ultimate anti-Semitism today.”

The alliance between Netanyahu and the European and international far right is ultimately one between political fellow travelers. Netanyahu embodies the emergence of a fascist tendency within Israel. He heads a coalition made up of openly racist and fascist parties that last year introduced the so-called “Nation-State Law,” enshrining Jewish supremacy as the legal foundation of the state, emulating apartheid South Africa. More recently, Netanyahu formed an electoral alliance with the fascist and anti-Arab terrorist Jewish Power party to bolster his support in the forthcoming elections.

His garrison state is based on the brutal oppression of an entire people, the Palestinians. Israeli forces have slaughtered at least 266 Palestinians—including children, journalists and paramedics—and injured some 30,000 during the year-long March of Return protests in Gaza in pursuit of

Palestinians’ right of return to their homes and villages. This follows its crippling 11-year-long blockade of the tiny Gaza Strip enclave and three murderous wars on Gaza that killed nearly 4,000 Palestinians and destroyed much of its basic infrastructure and tens of thousands of homes.

It is to silence any criticism of these crimes that Netanyahu has provided millions of dollars to the campaign by Zionist groups and pro-Israeli political figures to further efforts to criminalise the left.

This campaign has seen an endless stream of vituperation and slanders rained down on Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain’s Labour Party, and his supporters. The false charge has been leveled that that he has transformed Labour—which British Jews have traditionally voted for and where two people of Jewish origin contested for the leadership in 2010—into an anti-Semitic party.

More recently, Israel has turned its sights on US Democratic Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, branding her as an anti-Semite because of her support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that calls for an end to academic and business ties with the state of Israel.

The focus on the supposed growth of “left-wing anti-Semitism” serves to cover up the actual cultivation and growth of far right and neo-fascist forces by capitalist governments, including the Trump administration, the Macron government in France, and the grand coalition government in Germany, as well as the far right character of the Netanyahu government itself. The alliance of Israel’s political elite with such forces demonstrates that Zionism is a no less a bitter enemy of Jewish workers and youth, be they in the diaspora or in Israel, than it is of the Palestinians.



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