Pro-Zionist film smears Roger Waters as an “antisemite”

Kevin Reed
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A new film by the London-based Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) was released on YouTube last Wednesday slandering the internationally acclaimed rock musician and political activist Roger Waters as an antisemite.

The 37-minute film, entitled *The Dark Side of Roger Waters*—which the CAA is falsely promoting as a “documentary”—is a foul and scurrilous hit piece against the 80-year-old founder of the English rock band Pink Floyd.

The film is a reactionary response to the growing awareness of masses of people around the world—an awareness that Roger Waters has encouraged with his music and live performances—that the Israeli government is engaged in the racist and violent suppression of Palestinian rights in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

The CAA, which was founded in 2014 by UK supporters of the state of Israel, is an outfit specializing in campaigns against anyone who criticizes the politics of Zionism. This campaign has now become all the more necessary with a majority of people within Israel opposed to the corrupt regime of the hated gangster, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The CAA is coming to the aid of the Tel Aviv government to smear Roger Waters as an antisemite for telling the truth about the policies of the Israeli government and entirely distort the meaning of the term. Antisemitism has been used by the ruling classes historically during periods of crisis to organize pogroms against Jews and carry out mass murder such as that which occurred during the Holocaust.

On Friday, Roger Waters posted a statement on his website denouncing the smear campaign against him.

In his post, Waters states, “Earlier this month the Campaign Against Antisemitism contacted me about a film they have made. They gave me seven days to respond to multiple questions about matters dating back to 2002 and 2010. Initially I took the view that their attacks on my character did not deserve a response. However, now that the attacks are in circulation, I want to put my response on record.”

Clearly, the modus operandi of CAA was such that the filmmakers had no intention of providing Waters the opportunity to explain his political views to the public. Far from it, the fix was already in and the production of the slanderous film about Waters was moving forward regardless of his response.

In his statement, Waters explains, “All my life I have used the platform my career has given me to support causes I believe in. I passionately believe in Universal Human Rights. I have always worked to make the world a better, more just and more equitable place for all my brothers and sisters, all over the world, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion or nationality, from indigenous peoples threatened by the US oil industry to Iranian women protesting for their rights.”

Waters then makes clear that his defense of Palestinian rights—which extends over several decades—is part of his stance on universal human rights, “That is why I am active in the non-violent protest movement against the Israeli government’s illegal occupation of Palestine and its egregious treatment of Palestinians.”

The CAA film is based on the propaganda campaign mounted by the Israeli government, its supporting organizations around the world and, above all, its primary political, financial and military benefactor, US imperialism.

The central falsification of this campaign is the identification of all denunciations of the apartheid policies of the Zionist regime with antisemitism. As he has done consistently, Waters takes this question on directly, stating, “Those who wish to conflate that position with antisemitism do a great disservice to us all.”

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As Waters states, “The film totally distorts and misrepresents my views about the Israeli state and its political ideology, Zionism. It relies on a definition of antisemitism that sees criticizing Israel as inherently antisemitic and assumes that Zionism is an essential element in Jewish identity. These opinions, clearly shared by the presenter and the two interviewees, are widely contested by many, including many Jewish people.”

The CAA film is, in part, a response to the fact that Roger Waters’ public advocacy of Palestinian rights has found widespread support among his longtime fans as well as a growing number of young people who are responding to the political appeals in his live concert performances.

Meanwhile, his public statements of opposition to the US-NATO-provoked war against Russia in Ukraine have also won support among audiences in the US and Europe. It is no accident that the new campaign against Waters is being mounted just as his “This is Not A Drill” tour is scheduled to begin in South America, where it will find further enthusiastic support.

The CAA video, which features the British journalist and investigative reporter John Ware, is also a response by pro-Zionist forces to the failure of the campaign earlier this year to cancel Waters’ concert performances in Germany based on similar assertions of antisemitism. Ware cut his teeth in this type of yellow journalism, when he appeared in a similar lying report for the BBC accusing Jeremy Corbyn of antisemitism.

In the course of the attack piece, Ware and his CAA backers make the absurd comparison of Roger Waters to Donald Trump and charge him with being a sympathizer of Nazism. This lie is based on the false presentation of Waters’ live shows, which feature direct references to World War II and the Holocaust and warn of the danger of fascism in the present, as promoting “antisemitic tropes.”

As Waters explains about the film, “What it says about my latest tour, ‘This Is Not A Drill,’ repeats a series of falsehoods that have already been debunked, many times, not just by me, but in the German courts, after attempts were made to have my show banned there.”

Meanwhile, Waters explains that the quotes provided in the film supposedly proving his antisemitism are taken completely out of context, “The offensive words I referenced in quotes in an email 13 years ago, were my brainstorming ideas on how to make the evils and horrors of fascism and extremism apparent and shocking to a generation that may not fully appreciate the ever-present threat.”

Waters points to the history of the CAA, “People need to know about the CAA, the organization that made this film. Following complaints to the Charity Commission the CAA is facing scrutiny. Its core purpose is waging partisan political campaigns against critics of the state of Israel. So I knew their questions were not asked in good faith.”

The CAA’s purported documentary is based exclusively on anecdotal accounts provided by two artists, Canadian music producer Bob Ezrin and saxophonist Norbert Statchel, who are both Jewish and had previously worked with Roger Waters. In the case of Ezrin, who played a significant role in the production of the highly successful 1980 Pink Floyd album and movie *The Wall*, the producer proves himself incapable of drawing any distinction between Waters’ opposition to Zionism and accusations of antisemitism.

Responding to the comments of Ezrin and Statchel, Waters states, “I’ve worked closely for many years with many Jewish people, musicians and others. If I have upset the two individuals who appear in the film I’m sorry for that. But I can say with certainty that I am not, and have never been, an antisemite—as anyone who really knows me will testify. I know the Jewish people to be a diverse, interesting, and complicated bunch, just like the rest of humanity. Many are allies in the fight for equality and justice, in Israel, Palestine and around the world.”

We are not obliged to grant Ezrin and Statchel, who are playing a direct role in the public vilification of Waters, any exemption from scrutiny. That these artists are willingly participating in a campaign to falsely label Waters an antisemite on behalf of the Israeli and US governments is nothing short of despicable.

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