



AMERICAN MUSLIMS FOR PALESTINE
EMPOWERMENT through
EDUCATION and **ACTION**

Creeping Normalcy

Engaging Muslim communities
while forwarding the Zionist agenda for Israel

Facing increased global criticism for its many human rights abuses, especially Operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and January 2009, in which Israeli Occupation Forces killed more than 1,400 Palestinians in Gaza; and the May 2010 attack on the Freedom Flotilla that killed nine unarmed activists, Israel and its many Zionist supporters in the United States have gone into overdrive to try to reclaim supremacy in its longstanding public relations battle. Though many Zionist organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), American Israel Public Action Committee (AIPAC), Jewish Federation of America (JNF) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) have since their inception worked to win the hearts and minds of the public, there is a frantic, renewed effort to shore up support for Israel as that country sees its credibility suffering throughout the world.

We at American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) are concerned about the intense efforts these Jewish groups are exerting on Muslim organization seeking “interfaith cooperation” on a number of social justice issues. While AMP takes no issue with interfaith dialogue as a means to engage in dawah, we are alarmed at the use of illegitimate interfaith cooperation as a way to divert attention from Israel’s flagrant violations of international law and the Palestinians’ deprivation of human rights.

Muslims, by the very nature of our faith, are tied to Palestine. Allah swt made the connection for us in Surah 17:1: ‘Glorified is He, who took His slave [Muhammad] for a journey by night from Al Masjid Al Haram to Al Masjid Al Aqsa, whose surroundings we have blessed, in order that we might show him our Ayat. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.’ Linguistically, Al Quds [(Jerusalem)] and Al Ard Al Muqaddas [the Holy Land] share the same root word with Al-Quddus [Holy, All-Pure], one of the 99 names with which Allah swt has named Himself.

We must be ever vigilant to the ‘creeping normalcy’ tactics employed by Zionist organizations under the guise of peace and cooperation. The following brief report, which by no means is exhaustive in its research, nevertheless focuses on the AJC. We must begin to ask the question: “Why must we as Muslims focus merely on local social justice issues with our Jewish neighbors under the guise of interfaith cooperation when the very organizations to which these so-called partners such as the AJC belong have as their stated mission the goal of supporting Israel, whose call for a Jewish state is racist and undemocratic; which has more than 50 laws in Israel that discriminate against non-Jews and which employs apartheid policies in its occupation of the Palestinians?”

10101 S. Roberts Road · Suite 101 · Palos Hills, IL 60465

708.598.4267 OFFICE
708.598.4121 FAX

info@ampalastine.org
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AMP humbly asks you to keep this question in mind as you go through the following pages that look at the AJC as well as its Chicago chapter, and at both its regional director and associate director of interreligious and intergroup relations.

American Jewish Committee

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was established in 1906 by a small group of American Jews in response to the persecution of Jews in Czarist Russia, according to the organization's website (www.ajc.org). The purpose was to “work towards a world in which all peoples were accorded respect and dignity.”

Today, AJC considers itself an international think tank and advocacy organization. Among its key areas of focus are:

- Combating anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry
- Supporting Israel's quest for peace and security

AJC is headquartered in New York. It also has an office of government and international affairs office in Washington DC, as well as numerous independent affiliates domestically and internationally. In 2008, the AJC spent at least \$1 million on lobbying efforts in the United States and about \$4.6 million for advocacy on behalf of Israel in Europe, Russia and the Middle East, according to its 2008 IRS 990 tax form. In addition, AJC's “Office of Government Affairs engages U.S. officials and a variety of political and public-policy institutions, as well as representatives of foreign governments, civil society, the media and other sector, to advance Middle East peace and security ...” the tax form states. For all its talk of promoting ‘respect and dignity’ for all people, public documents – including many of its own press releases – reveal an organization that is anti-Islam and promotes negative stereotypes and even dangerous misinformation about some leading Muslims organizations.

Most troubling in its position toward Arabs and Muslims is a “Letter from the Home Front,” dated Aug. 19, 2001, in which AJC Executive Director David Harris issued dire warnings to the American Jewish community about the demographic growth in the American Muslim and Arab communities and their increasing involvement in the political system available to all citizens. Harris also focused on his concern regarding political involvement by Muslims and the potential impact of that involvement on U.S. foreign policy toward Israel.

[Link

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ijlTI2PHKoG&b=838459&ct=1089731>]

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“Let’s not kid ourselves. The U.S.-Israel relationship is not on automatic pilot. There is no amendment to the Constitution that guarantees American support for Israel. ... In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in Arab and Muslim political activity in the United States. With their numbers growing ... and their self-confidence developing, they have surged onto the political battlefield. ... They recognize the formidable strength of the pro-Israeli advocacy movement in this country, but they believe it is assailable.”

The letter goes on to categorize Muslim organizations into good, i.e., ‘moderate’ and bad, i.e., ‘radical,’ and laments the fact that ‘extremist’ organizations such as the American Muslim Council and CAIR have partnerships within the Department of Justice and the White House.

Finally, Harris tells American Jews they need to be alert to three issues:

1. He fosters fear by claiming the growth of Arabs and Muslim populations in the United States is a ‘physical threat’ to Jews.
2. Harris warns this demographic shift in the Arab and Muslim communities poses a “long-term political threat.”
3. He exhorts Jews to continue to distinguish between ‘moderate’ and ‘extremist’ Muslims. “We must persist in distinguishing between the two factions that are fighting for the soul of Islam. ... Even at the risk of stating the obvious, all of us have a profound stake in the outcome of this internal struggle.”

Peter King Hearings

An article published on Feb. 22, 2011, on the AJC website carried this title: “Why the King Hearings on Terrorism are Necessary.”

Yehudit Barsky, AJC’s director of the division on Middle East and international terrorism, writes, “Congressional hearings on homegrown terrorism, focusing on how al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations seek to radicalize Muslims in the U.S. are a welcome development.”

CAIR

The AJC, in numerous press releases and links to articles by renowned Islamophobes such as Steven Emerson, has maligned the Council of American Islamic Relations, spreading libelous misinformation about the civil rights organization. For instance:
Feb. 9, 2011 – CAIR Halts Use of Police Terrorism Training Video

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“The Council on American-Islamic Relations' protest that the documentary "The Third Jihad" smears Muslims reveals more about CAIR's desire to hide its record than any concern for the civil rights of Muslim Americans. Unfortunately, however, that was enough for the New York Police Department to cave in to CAIR's demands and stop using the film in training programs for police officers. Now, New York's finest will have to look harder for evidence that the group claiming to look out for civil rights is actually working to stymie law enforcement efforts to stop terrorism.”

Aug. 18, 2010 - CAIR, MAS Included in Panel on Ground Zero Mosque

“The debate over the proposed ground zero mosque is divided in part among those who believe Imam Faisal Rauf is a stealth radical and those who believe he is a genuine voice of moderation. So it was a little curious Tuesday morning to see representatives of major Islamist organizations with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood call a Washington news conference to defend the mosque project.”

Aug. 21, 2007 – AJC Condemns CAIR Attack on ADL

“The American Jewish Committee today condemned the Council on American-Islamic Relations [sic] attack on the Anti-Defamation League, a sister organization that has rightly raised concerns about CAIR's link to radical organizations. ... In truth, CAIR is engaged in a course of conduct harmful to the great bulk of the American Muslim community. ...”

July 11, 2001 – Three Jewish Organizations Refuse to File Brief with Extremist Muslim

Group in Employment Discrimination Case

“The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League today announced their withdrawal from an amicus brief being prepared for filing with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of a Muslim woman, Zeinab Ali ... when it became clear that the brief was also to be signed by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), an extremist Muslim group that condones terrorism and supports groups who are officially designated as terrorist organizations by the U.S. government.”

Irvine 11

New York Times letter to the editor, Feb. 10, 2011 – Muslims and Free Speech

“Whatever the wisdom of filing criminal charges against students who thwarted a speech by Michael B. Oren, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, at the University of California, Irvine, it is disheartening that the students' supporters continue to maintain, even after the university disciplined them, that their actions constituted an exercise of free speech. ... If other universities share the misapprehension of what freedom of speech entails, they should consider the example of the University of California, which in this case has distinguished between permissible and protected expression of disagreement and unprotected and intolerable disruption.”

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Moral Courage Award

In May 2006, the AJC bestowed its Moral Courage Award on Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born Dutch feminist activist who has made a career out of Islam-bashing. Ali also is a fellow at the ultra conservative and Zionist American Enterprise Institute.

Censorship and intimidation

March 13, 2011 – AJC Urges UN General Assembly President to Not Screen ‘Miral’
The AJC tried to use its connections with the UN and the fact the organization had gifted in the 1940s a sculpture to a former UN secretary general, which is now on display, as leverage to get the general assembly’s current president, Ambassador Joseph Diess, to refuse to screen the movie “Miral.” The AJC contends the movie “portrays Israel in a highly negative light,” despite producer Harvey Weinstein’s statement to the contrary. “As a Jewish American, I can categorically state that I would not be releasing a film that was flagrantly biased towards Israel or Judaism,” Weinstein to the Hollywood Reporter.

AJC’s Executive Director David Harris wrote in the letter to the UN. ... ‘AJC has had a long and productive association with the UN that dates back to the world body’s founding in San Francisco in 1945. Indeed, historians have credited our organization with a key role in achieving the human-rights provision in the Charter. Moreover, the Barbara Hepworth sculpture in front of the Secretariat building was a gift from our president, Jacob Blaustein, to then Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold as a tangible gesture of support. Today, we enjoy consultative status at the UN. It is in this spirit of the deeply-rooted connection to the UN that we voice the earnest hope, even at this late date, that you will reconsider your decision about the film. Otherwise, you will only reinforce the already widespread view that Israeli simply cannot expect fair treatment at the UN.’

One would wonder whether having ‘consultative status’ at the UN, wouldn’t seem to indicate the AJC – and by extension Israel – do get fair treatment.

AJC in Chicago

Interreligious and Intergroup Relations

Journalist Emily Soloff has been AJC’s regional director of Intergroup and Interreligious Relations since 2006. But her role goes beyond building relationships with members of other faith traditions.

In fact, an a Chicago Jewish News article posted on the AJC website dated June 6, 2006, Soloff’s responsibilities were listed as “monitoring church-state matters, developing a course on Jews and the government and facilitating dialogue on the contentious divestment issue.”

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The growing boycott, sanction and divestment movement (BDS), which is modeled on the South African anti-Apartheid movement, has come under increasing criticism and counter actions by Israel and its Zionist supporters in the United States.

Working against Presbyterian call for BDS

Soloff participated in an effort brought forth by the AJC's New York chapter to try to influence the Presbyterian Church's call for divestment from Israel.

Under the title, "Interfaith dialogue: A Focus on Israel Through AJC NY and Auburn Seminary Collaboration, participants, including Soloff, worked to create a strategy for "opposing adoption by the National Presbyterian Church at its July 2010 General Assembly of a biased pro-Palestinian report issued by its Middle East Study Committee." The article on AJC's website stated the AJC-Auburn effort yielded results and the Presbyterian Church amended its BDS call.

"Despite intense pressure, the Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly rejected the calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel,' said Emily Soloff. ... "A measured and just approach to this complex conflict cannot allow exclusive blame to be placed on once side...."

Writing in support of Israel's actions against the Freedom Flotilla

In a column called "The Seeker" in the Chicago Tribune, Soloff defends Israel's brutal and inhumane siege on Gaza, as well as Israeli commandos violent actions against the Freedom Flotilla on May 31, 2010, in which nine unarmed humanitarian civilians were killed, many of them at point-blank range execution style, according to a United Nations report.

"There is nothing inherently religious about a defensive naval blockade, but Judaism does recognize and permit self-defense,' Soloff writes. After the murders, Soloff writes that Palestinians supporters 'gloat while protesting in front of Israeli embassies and consulates. 'On Tuesday, the American Muslims for Palestine held a press conference on the steps in front of the Israeli Consulate during a rally protesting the attack."

By focusing on AMP's role in the press conference and rally, Soloff chose to ignore the fact that action was called by a coalition of social justice and anti-war groups, most notably the Midwest chapter of the Free Gaza Movement.

"Religious vision is overtaken by ideological exploitation, manipulation replaces healing, rage replaces revelation."

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Putting Israel first

Dan Elbaum has been the AJC regional director in Chicago since 2009. Before assuming that post, he worked at the Anti-Defamation League which, though it purports to fight for civil rights for everyone, actually spends the majority of its time and resources stifling free speech related to questioning Israeli policies and advocating for the “Jewish” state in Washington DC and abroad.

Elbaum has made a number of comments that call into question his real mission as AJC regional director. Is he working for Israel or to forward civil rights for people locally?

Local support for Israel

In a Chicago Tribune article dated Feb. 23, 2011, regarding the election of Rahm Emanuel as the first Jewish mayor of Chicago, Elbaum said some “minimal events with tinges of anti-Semitism did creep into the campaign,” according to the article.

Though the Jewish community had some concerns when Emanuel served President Barack Obama in the White House during “times of tension between the U.S. and Israel,” Elbaum said that was never a campaign issue.

“Even for those in the community who might have disagreed with the administration, the overwhelming majority of Jews in this area don’t question his support for the State of Israel.”

Putting Israel first and foremost

A sermon Elbaum gave on July 10, 2010, at the Lake Shore Drive Synagogue told congregants the best way to gain support for Israel was to exploit the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Comparing Israel today to some ancient tribes mention in the Old Testament, Elbaum said, “The state of Israel, in its 62nd year of existence, still has neighbors that do not recognize its right to exist. These neighbors, like the Midianites, are unable to defeat it in open battle and have resorted to other means to bring about Israel’s destruction. These include terrorism and the deligitimization campaign including calls for divestment, boycott, and sanctions.

“...Israel has to take steps to defend itself and her people. When this is done innocent lives may be lost. ... I answer the critics of Israel in a variety of ways. One way that I have learned that does not work is to deny the suffering of the Palestinians or to belittle their level of suffering. ... As advocates for Israel, we only harm Israel when we act as if these things never happen.

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“Violence and death, even when necessary, make us less ritually clean than we once were. They might be inevitable, they might be necessary, but our humanity requires acknowledging that fact.

Elbaum goes on to talk about American Jews’ responsibility to Israel.

“Although most of us will not act as shock troops for the Israeli army, we do carry a special responsibility.”

He tells American Jews that he defers to the “democratically elected government of the state of Israel,” that all American Jewish organizations have been successful in making “Israel a bipartisan issue,” and that their own advocacy must be instilled in their children, to teach them that the “future of the Jewish people” and, by extension, Israel come first. “Moses is reminding them [the Gadites and Reubenites] to put their children and thus the future of the Jewish people first. This is equally true of our advocacy.

International advocacy against Iran

On at least two occasions, Elbaum wrote letters to the consuls general of France and Germany, commending them for their country’s stance against Iran and to advocate for sanctions against the country.

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