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Campaign Against Misrepresentation in Public Affairs, Information and the News

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Dear Jonathan

Thank you for your reply to our letter of 14 May. You suggested that we look at what you have said in your speeches and media appearances. We have watched and analysed your speech entitled “The Lessons of Bondi Beach: Terrorism, Hatred and the Law” delivered to Policy Exchange UK on 13th January of this year. Far from addressing our concerns, it only further highlighted the extent to which you are both misinformed and misleading others about the pro-Palestine movement.

We are, nonetheless, grateful to you for this opportunity to engage with your views, as progress towards greater mutual understanding can only be achieved through exchanges of this nature. It cannot be achieved through a “dialogue of the deaf” in which the views of the pro-Palestine movement are neither sought nor considered.

We do not take issue with the principles you invoke in this speech, but very much take issue with your presentation of the facts to which you apply them, and the conclusions that you reach on that basis. The speech routinely collapses all sorts of different things together in a manner that is rhetorically effective in so far as it supports your conclusions, but which significantly distorts reality and obscures the important questions that need to be raised and addressed.

We insist that you should be approaching your role of Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation as an impartial legal scholar, and not as a barrister trying to win a case. Clearly you are capable of this as your 2023 Report on Terrorism Legislation and Protests shows.

Our analysis is presented, below, under a series of headings; and begins by addressing your conflation of Zionists and Jews.

The Conflation at the Heart of Your Analysis

The conflation is most visible in a single sentence: “Hatred expressed to Zionists invites hostility to every Israeli and to Jews worldwide.” You state that “‘Zionist’ is a term that invites stigma and othering” and yet the term “Zionist” is used by Zionists themselves, both Jewish and non-Jewish, undermining the claim that the term, in and of itself, is a slur. The World Zionist Organisation and the Zionist Federation UK proudly describe themselves as “Zionist”, and describe their mission in terms of promoting Zionism. The website of the Zionist Federation UK states:

“Through our member organisations, we work to promote and defend Zionism in the United Kingdom and to deepen and expand the active relationship of the British Jewish Community to Zionism in a contemporary context.”

Your claim that hatred towards Zionism invites hostility to every Israeli and to Jews worldwide rests upon a double conflation. Firstly, you are conflating opposition to a political belief with

hostility towards the holders of that belief; and secondly you are conflating Zionists with all Israelis and Jews. And yet it is precisely these conflation that increase antisemitism and the risk to Jews. It is wildly unrealistic to expect Palestinians and supporters of Palestinian rights not to oppose Zionism as a political ideology given the decades-long brutal oppression and denial of basic human rights to which Palestinians have been subjected. The most effective and pragmatic way to prevent this from turning into a more generalised hostility towards Israelis and Jews is to draw out the very distinctions that your framing obscures.

You go on to say that you have “seen no caution expressed about this term by those who use it or fears that Jews are becoming in the jargon a suspect community.” This is largely because you lack deep familiarity with the Palestinian rights movement and its internal conflicts and debates (as we originally pointed out in our letter of June 25th, 2025). In fact, the Palestinian rights movement is concerned about the issue of antisemitism, and rejects the conflation of Zionism with all Jews. To be clear, the term “Zionist” can be, and sometimes is, used in an antisemitic way, when it is used as a slur or substitute for “Jews.” However, you yourself are contributing to the perpetuation of this problem, and not its resolution, when you insist upon conflating Israel and the IDF with all Jews.

The Precautionary Principle and the Meaning of Chants

You invoke the precautionary principle as a reason for why it is necessary to place restrictions on pro-Palestine protests, and express great concern about certain chants.

You mention, in particular, chants containing the words “From the River to the Sea”, “Globalise the Intifada”, and “Death to the IDF.” Your claim is that chants containing these words represents a call for targeting Jews for murder. However, you offer no evidence in support of this claim.

With respect to the chant with the most overtly violent overtones, “Death, death, to the IDF”, which appeared to be spontaneously composed by Bob Vylan during Glastonbury Festival 2025, Bob Vylan himself said:

“We are not for the death of Jews, Arabs or any other race or group of people. We are for the dismantling of a violent military machine.”

Dismantling the IDF as an organisation is a very far cry from the parallel that you claim this has with Abu Hamza calling for violence against Jews. It could be argued that Vylan’s claim about the intended meaning of this chant is not clear from the wording of the chant itself. However, it is impossible to have a serious and balanced discussion about the meaning or significance of these chants within an atmosphere in which critics are insisting upon imposing the worst possible interpretation upon them with the utmost sense of certainty.

With respect to “Globalise the Intifada”, Jewish Voice for Liberation has released the following statement:

“Saying “Globalise the Intifada” is a call to make the movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people global. It is neither antisemitic nor violent. It is a strong and legitimate response to the genocide being experienced by Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and the continued indifference of Western governments who allow Israel complete impunity.

There is nothing intrinsically violent about “intifada”. The term means “shaking off” in Arabic and came to prominence during an almost entirely non-violent protest movement from 1987 to 1993, known as the First Intifada, when Palestinians rebelled against decades of Israeli occupation and injustice.

It is not an incitement to commit acts of violence against Jewish people and there is no justification for calls to ban its use or arrest people chanting it or carrying placards bearing it.”

Personally we (the CAMPAIGN committee) would not choose to use chants such as "Globalise the intifada" or "death to the IDF" as they are likely to conjure up in many peoples' minds unintended images of Islamic militancy/jihadism; and obscure the fact that the core demands of the pro-Palestine movement are rooted in international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. We acknowledge and accept that those chants are unwise, but not that they represent a call for the killing of Jews for being Jewish as implied by your statement, nor that they reflect in any way upon the protests as a whole.

“From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free!” is a call for Palestinians to enjoy basic human rights across the whole of historic Palestine. Currently, Palestinians living only relatively short distances away from each other in Gaza, Israel, the West Bank, and in refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon, including members of the same extended family, are denied the right to meet each other by Israel. This represents a profound denial of the basic human rights that we take for granted. The chant centres Palestinian rights and does not seek to cater to Zionist sensibilities, but this doesn't make it a call for the murder of Jews, and there are Jewish Israelis who share this political vision of a free country in which Palestinians enjoy freedom and equality.

The Distinction Between Individuals and Groups

In your speech you speak about the danger of conflating individuals and groups, and yet this is precisely what you yourself are doing with respect to both Jews, which you conflate with Israel and the IDF, and pro-Palestine protesters, whom you defame on the basis of highly unrepresentative examples which are themselves misrepresented. You also speak about the risk of creating “suspect communities” and yet this is precisely what you yourself are doing with respect to pro-Palestine protesters who, the listener is led to believe, are the thin edge of the wedge of Islamic State style Islamist extremism! This is not a rhetorical point, and, although they have not been reported upon by the media, there have been a number of unprovoked violent attacks on pro-Palestine demonstrators including a stabbing incident and a demonstrator being punched to the ground and left with severe concussion.

The principles you invoke are valid and applicable, but it is the government, and right-wing and centrist politicians and media commentators, as well as other commentators like yourself, who are violating these principles, not the pro-Palestine protesters.

At the beginning of Part 4 you collapse together pro-Palestine protesters (whom you describe as “anti-Israel protesters”) with people removing pictures of Israeli hostages and people who vandalise 7th October memorials. Again, you are the one who is creating a “suspect community” through this type of conflation.

Furthermore, your apparent suggestion that hostility towards Israelis, where it exists, is a unique and unprecedented instance of hostility towards people on the basis of nationality is very far from the truth. Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (typically known as “Tommy Robinson”) and his supporters have repeatedly demonised Pakistani Muslims far more vociferously and with far greater persistence than any prominent supporter of Palestinian rights has criticised Israelis. Any effort to single out hostility towards Israelis for unique legal attention while ignoring far more egregious and sustained examples of hostility towards other nationalities will be widely perceived as biased and will undermine the legitimacy of whatever measures are recommended or adopted.

The Evidence That “Moved the Dial”

You describe several specific pieces of evidence which you say caused you to change your mind about whether the protests were worth protecting. However, each of these pieces of evidence is either factually incorrect, grossly unrepresentative of the protests as a whole, or depends upon the very conflation which we have already identified above.

You cite the alleged appearance of red triangles at pro-Palestine marches as something which led you to believe that “this was not always protest or not protest worth protecting.” The red triangle is not a common feature of pro-Palestine marches, and the fact that it may be possible to find a handful of instances of individuals displaying a red triangle in marches of tens or hundreds of thousands of people is not a reasonable basis upon which to decide to suspend the rights of everyone else attending them, regardless of its intended meaning.

You stated: “The symbol used in Hamas propaganda to show physical targeting of Israelis in the combat zone.” This is a somewhat misleading statement. The symbol was used in Hamas videos to show the targeting of IDF soldiers in Gaza, not Israeli citizens. It may well be unwise for any protesters to invoke or express support for any type of violence; but there is a meaningful and important difference between expressions of support for attacks on IDF soldiers in Gaza and expressions of support for attacks on Israeli citizens within Israel, just as there is a meaningful distinction between expressions of support for attacks on Russian soldiers in Ukraine and expressions of support for attacks on Russian civilians within Russia. And, again, the number of people displaying red triangles is tiny and statistically insignificant, and not a valid basis for making any judgement at all about the protests as a whole.

Individual protesters do not have the right to police other protesters and are not responsible for their actions. You are asserting for yourself the right to define what constitutes “hatred” based upon a conflation of Israel with Israelis, and of both Israel and Israelis with Jews, and then insisting upon impossible-to-achieve standards of messaging control in marches of sometimes hundreds of thousands of people in which everyone gets to bring their own signs and anyone with a megaphone can start a chant. This is both unrealistic and unreasonable.

The claim that marches were “steered deliberately near places of Jewish life” is completely false, and is strongly denied by the march organisers. Regrettably these false claims have been given greater credibility by two interviews that Sir Mark Rowley did on 1st May 2026, in response to which the march organisers have sent the Met Police a formal legal letter of complaint. CAMPAIN has submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Met Police asking them to release the evidence upon which these claims are based.

It was inappropriate for Sir Mark Rowley to make public statements about private conversations between the Met Police and march organisers and represented a clear breach of police impartiality. As Former Scotland Yard superintendent, Nusrit Mehtab, speaking to Declassified UK has pointed out, the public is poorly served by people in public office blurring the lines between their public responsibilities and political positioning.

The Heaton Park Synagogue Attack

We strongly reject the idea that a small demonstration in support of Palestinian rights held after the Heaton Park synagogue attack normalizes terrorist deaths in the UK. As far as we are concerned, the call for such demonstrations to be suspended in the aftermath of the Heaton Park synagogue attack was, itself, a cynical and irresponsible weaponisation and exploitation of Jewish grief and shock for the purposes of attacking the pro-Palestine movement. The reason that demonstration and other subsequent demonstrations went ahead

was because the Heaton Park synagogue attack changed nothing about the conditions of life for Palestinians and the continual denial of their basic human rights.

This, in no way, implies a lack of sympathy or solidarity with victims of the Heaton Park synagogue attack, or the wider Jewish community. Many prominent supporters of Palestinian rights explicitly expressed their sympathy and support for both the direct victims and the Jewish community on social media. What it does imply is a complete rejection of the irresponsible and politically motivated conflation of Jews in Britain with the actions of Israel; and the idea that compassionate concern for Palestinians and for British Jews is a zero-sum game. The rejection of this politically manufactured outrage and weaponisation of Jewish grief not only defends the pro-Palestine movement, but also protects Jews from antisemitism based upon the conflation of all Jews with the actions of Israel and the IDF.

The Maccabi Tel Aviv Claim

You claim that alleged preparation by certain members of the local community in the West Midlands to attack fans of Maccabi Tel Aviv can only be accounted for by their hatred of Israelis. This completely ignores the long and well-documented history of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism among Maccabi Tel Aviv fans, including chants of “Death to Arabs” and “Ole ole, the IDF, we will fuck the Arabs”, and documented acts of violence and vandalism, including during their fixture in Amsterdam in November 2024. Preparing to attack anyone is wrong, but anyone ignoring such overtly provocative behaviour on the part of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans is not offering a serious analysis of the situation. It is political framing dressed up as analysis, and yet another example of the way in which security discussions have been subverted and undermined for political reasons.

“Just Protest About Israel’s Actions in Gaza”

Your statement “Just protest about Israel’s actions in Gaza and don’t incite hatred against Israelis or Jews” is revealing. Again, this specific statement is based upon an inaccurate and irresponsible conflation of the state of Israel with Israelis and Jews. Many people have expressed the viewpoint that it is acceptable to protest Israel’s actions but not to call for an end to Israel itself, which may be what you are alluding to. However, the concept of Israel as a state which privileges the rights of Jews over non-Jews is the direct cause of everything that has happened to Palestinians in Gaza, as well as to Palestinians in the West Bank, in Israel itself (living as second class citizens), and to Palestinians living in refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. You are effectively saying that the pro-Palestine movement should be allowed to protest specific instances of Palestinian suffering and oppression, but should not be allowed to challenge its root cause.

Anti-Zionism, and opposition to Israel itself, is considered by many, to be the only logically tenable position. This is increasingly the case, as Israel itself has successfully scuppered any realistic prospect of a Palestinian state. People hold anti-Zionist views because they oppose both what Israel represents ideologically and what it does, and recognise the relationship between the two. This does not imply hatred for all Israelis as human beings, far less hatred of all Jews, just as opposition to the white supremacist apartheid regime did not imply hatred towards all white people in South Africa. Jews would be able to live as free and equal citizens in a post-Zionist Israel or free Palestine, just as white people are able to live in post-apartheid South Africa.

The Invisible Humanity of Palestinians

At no point in your speech do you show the slightest empathy with Palestinian supporters who are desperately trying to get the UK government to use its leverage on the international stage

to help deliver freedom to the Palestinians, or for British Palestinians with family in Gaza or the West Bank experiencing horrendous and ongoing suffering and hardship. Their suffering appears to be invisible to you. Once the humanity of Palestinians is denied then any and all expressions of empathy towards them become suspect. This may not be your precise position, but it is certainly the position of many who have called for the suspension of protests, even as the suffering of Palestinians themselves continues unabated.

We believe that Britain has a special duty of care to the Palestinian people on account of its complicity in a settler-colonial project that has, since the time of Theodore Herzl, sought to clear Palestine of its native inhabitants to make way for the ingathering of Jews from around the world. During the late 1940s the new state of Israel managed to rid itself of most of its Palestinian inhabitants, turning them into refugees, but it did not stop there. The writings of Chaim Weitzman and David Ben Gurion show that the Zionist movement always wanted the whole of historic Palestine, including the West Bank and Gaza, and believed that this justified driving out its native inhabitants. In recent years it has resorted to means we can only describe as “bestial”, including starvation, targeting of health workers, journalists (far more journalists have been killed in Gaza than in both world wars combined), summary executions of civilians and even rape with dogs.

These things can happen when a state, like Israel, is gripped by fanaticism and believes it can act with impunity. It is the British Government, along with those of the USA and some other Western countries – aided by a compliant mainstream media – that have granted that impunity.

Conclusion

Public order and hate crime are serious and legitimate concerns which require a serious response. However, any changes to legislation or policing need to be based upon a fair and impartial analysis of the current situation, which is seriously obstructed by the politically motivated misrepresentation of the pro-Palestine protests which your speech both reflects and has helped to reinforce. As Anthony Lerman (a renowned expert on antisemitism, and signatory of our last letter to you) has explained, the conflation of Israel with Jews, and of criticism of Israel or anti-Zionism with antisemitism, is a political project which subordinates the safety of Jews to the greater goal (from the perspective of its proponents) of defending Israel. You may sincerely believe that your priority is the safety of British Jews, but your persistent conflation of Israel, the IDF, and Jews serves the goals of that political project and reflects the same prioritisation.

You would do well to engage with the perspective of Anthony Lerman, and other experts on antisemitism who share his general perspective, as you cannot credibly make policy recommendations about antisemitism with any degree of impartiality for as long as you are listening to only one side of the argument.

We will be grateful to receive a considered response to these points.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Coulter, Secretary, on behalf of the CAMPAIGN committee

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