

Antisemitism in the Contemporary World

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Monitoring the borders of antisemitism: Israel and the Australian left since the second *intifada*

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It is a commonplace understanding for many Jews that since the commencement of the second *intifada*, incidents of antisemitism towards Israel and diaspora Jews have increased, both in Australia and world-wide. Concurrently, debate about what is legitimate criticism of Israel has also intensified, among the Jewish left, the left in general and the Jewish mainstream, in various media and other forums. As Jews from the left who have also been politically active for many years in support of justice for Palestinians, as well as being involved in the community, this debate has touched us deeply.

We would like to consider what antisemitism is, and is not, in relation to Israel and the left through analysis of a small sample of texts written since September 2000, from currents within the left in Australia. The organisations whose texts we analyse are: The Australian Greens, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and the Democratic Socialist Party (now part of the Socialist Alliance). We analyse how specific texts discuss the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and its resolution. These particular organisations were selected as they reflect views of the current mainstream and radical left in Australia. We feel impelled to state at the outset that we do not deny that antisemitism exists, on the left and elsewhere. We think however that the fact that there has been an undeniable shift in the allegiances of various parts of the left since 1967, from unequivocal support for Israel, to one more equivocal and critical, is not as such evidence of an increase in antisemitism. The intensification of criticism of Israel since 2000 when the second *intifada* commenced, can also be understood as responses to the escalation of violence against Palestinians.

Evidence for antisemitism has been broadly attributed to five causes (or themes) and these frame our analysis. In particular, we will elaborate on the final two, as they seem to us to be the most critical in the current debate in terms of distinguishing ‘between antisemitism and criticism of the Israeli political-military establishment’¹. The themes are that:

- *Zionism equals racism; Zionists are neo-Nazi*
- *'Zionist' or 'Israeli' is a pejorative code for 'Jew'*
- *The formation of Israel was a colonialist and imperialist venture*
- *Criticism of Israel often implicitly or explicitly signifies an anti-Zionist position entailing the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state*
- *The left (and others) employ a double standard by criticising Israel without at the same time criticising Arab states and condemning Palestinian violence.*

These bald statements of course have long, complex histories, discussion of which can only occur within their specific historical contexts which we cannot enter into here. Instead, we briefly examine the latter two statements in their current dimensions and explain what to us, are the difficulties in accepting their assumptions without question.

Criticism of Israel often implicitly or explicitly signifies an anti-Zionist position entailing the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state

We wish to challenge this statement for several reasons. Firstly, to say that the history of Arab rejection of the Israeli state we take as a separate issue. Certainly there is evidence that both Palestinians and Arab nations (as represented by the Arab League) now accept a solution to the conflict based on two independent states, Israel and Palestine². Yet among critics of the left's stance on Israel, a discourse continues which suggests the eternal and relentless nature of antisemitism, which today has taken a political guise focussed on Israel, rather than the religious or racial antisemitism, clearly part of the West's historical legacy. To take one example of how this discourse is articulated: In a *Symposium on Leftist Antisemitism* (posted online FreeRepublic.com) in 2003, one of the participants, David Rosen (professor of anthropology and law) states: 'Nowadays antisemitism's main expression is political. It is found in actions and ideologies that call for the destruction of the State of Israel or that assert that Zionism per se is racism.... The narrative of original sin has returned ... where the "sin" is the dispossession and treatment of the Palestinians'³. Rosen does not provide specific evidence of his statement. However, his introduction and conflation of the biblical concept of 'original sin' (not a concept within the mainstream of Judaism) with the political 'sin' of the maltreatment of the Palestinian people, is obfuscating. Rosen implies that accusing the Israeli state of crimes against Palestinians is a sin in itself (that is, the sin of antisemitism) and his use of scare quotes around the word sin, suggests that he thinks no sin has been committed.

We would disagree with such an implication. However, our fundamental concern with the 'anti-zionism is antisemitism' mantra is that it forecloses on those Jews and others on the left who genuinely seek solutions to the problem before us between Israelis and Palestinians – solutions which may involve changes to the structure and nature of the Israeli state. Judith Butler (renowned Jewish feminist philosopher) puts it like this:

One can, for instance, be in favour of Israel's right to exist, but still ask, what is the most legitimate and democratic form that such an existence ought to take? If one questions the present form, is one therefore anti-Israel? If one holds out for a truly democratic Israel/Palestine, is one therefore anti-Israel? ... If one is against a present-day version of Zionism, and offers reasons, reasons that would eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, including all forms of antisemitism, then surely one is involved in a critique of Israel that does not immediately qualify as antisemitic?⁴

Agreeing with Butler's stance that one can and must engage with a variety of critiques of Israel without qualifying as an antisemite; we need to include an additional reason, which is related to demographic projections for Jews and Palestinians. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, by the year 2010 there will be equal numbers of Jews and Arabs, after which the Arab population will increase more rapidly than the Jewish⁵ population (these figures include the occupied territories). Even within the 1967 borders, Palestinians will within a decade, constitute 25 percent of the population. If these projections are accurate, it will not be long before a Jewish state with a majority of Jews will be unviable. According to a minority of Jews and/or leftists, the solution to this situation is the creation of a democratic, federated, binational state. We do not regard it as antisemitism to have discussions about such a possible, although now deeply unpopular on both sides, resolution.

The left (and others) employ a double standard by criticising Israel without at the same time criticising Arab states and condemning Palestinian violence.

One of the more commonly argued reasons for current accusations of leftist antisemitism is that those on the left seem only to criticise Israel's human rights record. Those making such accusations assert that the political left disregard the human rights records of other countries, particularly other Middle Eastern regimes with worse records than Israel. Therefore, those making these accusations conclude that the singling out of Israel must be due to antisemitism on the left. There are a number of problems with such assertions of antisemitism, the three most significant of which are:

1. Israel claims to be a liberal democratic country.
2. Israel receives a significant amount of "foreign aid" from the United States.
3. The assumption that in regards to Israel, "activists" must present both sides of the issue.

The difficulty with the first assertion is that other liberal democratic countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, or the United States, are expected to maintain a higher standard of human rights than non-democratic, less liberal countries. This higher standard is expected due to the nature of their political systems and the values they profess to uphold. This is not to say that these nations have not committed human rights abuses against their own citizens, or against those of other nations. As Belanger says:

In the Middle East, only Israel claims to be a democracy. Therefore, Israel must be held to the same standards expected of other democratic countries. While her neighbours have undeniably committed significant human rights abuses, they are not democracies that proclaim themselves as "bastions of freedom, democracy, and justice"⁶.

Expecting Israel to live up to the standards of other liberal democratic countries, but not expecting the same from the surrounding NON-democratic countries, is not a double standard. The fact that Israel is a liberal democracy is not, however, the only reason for singling it out. The United States also singles out Israel from the other countries in the region as part of its foreign policy. It does so by contributing more foreign aid to Israel than to any other country in the region, and indeed the world. This aid comes in the form of money as well as arms and trade deals. Without this support the Israeli economy could not support its military presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It is not surprising then, that activists, particularly those from the United States, focus on what they perceive as the use of their tax money to support a military occupation that subjugates the rights of an entire ethnic group. Youmans argues:

What bewilders me is that so many critics attack the singling out of Israel, but are actively supportive of the singling out of Israel as a special ally and worthy recipient of disproportionately high levels of arms, aid and trade. This is a contradiction because clearly one's biggest ally and model "light among nations" should be held to an extent of scrutiny commensurate with the favouritism bestowed upon it⁷.

Finally, those making claims of antisemitism assert that when the left presents only the Palestinian perspective of the issues to non-Jews, while failing to include the Israeli perspective, it does so deliberately in order to encourage in non-Jews a negative impression of Israel, and by extension Jews in general. Those making antisemitism claims appear to make the assumption that the political left has an obligation to present both perspectives in order to prove they are not antisemites. Conversely, those presenting the case for Israel, do not spend equal time discussing the misfortunes of the Palestinians, or the violence and hardship it has perpetrated on them. It is our view that many (but not all) on the left who appear to unfairly favour the Palestinian side, do so *not* out of Jew-hatred, but because they view the conflict as being a grossly uneven one, where many more cards are stacked in Israel's house. Let us not forget that in any political struggle, there is partiality. Sometimes, it is true, at the expense of seeing any of the 'faults' of the side that one supports.

Analysis

We turn now to analysis of several different kinds of Australian texts which discuss the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Firstly, to the Australian Greens, the political party which represents a small but growing proportion of the left-leaning public, including many who have become disaffected from the Australian Labor Party. We examine its policy statement entitled 'Israel-Palestine' (see Appendix 1), (which consists of Principles, Goals and Short Term Targets), in tandem with a speech made by Greens Senator Kerry Nettle; both texts were produced in October 2003, just before Dr Hannan Ashrawi came to Australia to accept the Sydney Peace Prize. We assume that any policy statement from a political party is a well-researched, long-considered and debated, document. It was passed at the national conference of the Australian Greens, held in October 2003. As Nettle states in her speech, this policy is based on one of the four principles of the world wide Greens party, that is, 'a commitment to peace and non-violent resolution to conflict'.⁸

The principles upon which this policy is based, recognise at the outset ‘the legitimate rights and aspirations’ of both Palestinian and Israeli people ‘to live in peace and security in their own independent, sovereign state’ (1.1 and 1.2). They then go on to acknowledge ‘the ongoing injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people and aim to rectify that injustice in a way that will allow both Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace’ (1.3). It seems to us that these principles are very careful to acknowledge both Israeli and Palestinian rights to live in peace, security and independence while at the same time acknowledging that the conflict is not between two equal peoples; that over 3 million Palestinians have lived under Israeli military occupation since 1967 which they state unequivocally, has to end (2.2). Nettle asserts (perhaps pre-emptively) that by assuming this position:

We will attract the scorn of those who react to any criticism of the actions of the State of Israel with accusations of antisemitism. But we will not be cowed by such outrageous and unwarranted accusations any more than we resile from our condemnation of those who target civilians with suicide bombers. The need for courageous calls for peace in Palestine and Israel is too important to let the aggressive lobbying of loud but not necessarily representative voices silence it.

Nettle is only too aware of the accusations of antisemitism, particularly directed at leftist criticisms of Israel. She (and the Greens policy) is careful NOT to make statements or comparisons of zionism with racism; nor to make references to Jews, indeed the words ‘Jew’ and ‘Jewish’ are not mentioned in either document, although in the above quotation she does refer to ‘aggressive lobbying’ by which one assumes she means such organisations as ZFA or AIJAC (the latter of which is not formally representative of a larger group of people or community).

The policy also does not refer explicitly to the contested nature of Israel’s establishment in 1948 and the as yet, unresolved issue of Palestinian refugees from 1948 and 1967. The policy is future-oriented (as are our concerns), although in any conflict situation, consideration of how a just future might emerge, must entail recognition of and compensations for past injustices where they have occurred. Hence one of the goals of the policy states:

A just and practical negotiated settlement of the claims of the Palestinian refugees that provides compensation for those who are unable to return to their country of origin, Israel or Palestine (2.3).

Is this an antisemitic statement inferring an end to the Jewish state? How ‘just, practical and negotiated’ might translate in *real politik* is not for the Greens to spell out. It seems that once again though, they have veered on the side of caution in this statement. It is not a call for all Palestinians to return to 1948 Israel. However it recognises that the claims of Palestinian refugees will not disappear; they must be dealt with, not only by Israel but by the ‘international community’; that is in particular those nations who have had historically and have currently an involvement in this Middle East conflict including the United Nations.

The Australian Greens Policy is not even-handed. Nor in our view should it be. It does condemn Palestinian suicide bombers and violence generally against civilians, whoever has inflicted it. At the same time it recognises and does not excuse responsibilities the Israeli state incurs in its role as an occupier of another people.

Nettle's speech, more polemic in tone than the policy statement, refers to the state of Israel as 'one of the most powerful military machines in the world [which] wages war on an occupied people, who are stateless and many penniless and brutalised'. Nettle, in our view, identifies one version of the double standard, to which we have previously referred. Her speech does not condemn Arab states for their lack of human rights. In the context of a speech to support Dr Ashrawi's receipt of the Sydney Peace Prize, she addresses the Australian Government and its close relationship with the US administration, 'to add to our condemnation of suicide bombers, a strident and determined criticism of the Israeli leadership for their aggressive actions in the Palestinian territories and the region at large'. In the world of politics, it is necessary to identify and specify with whom the significant loci of power lie, without this signifying a condemnation of an entire people.

The policy and Nettle's speech focus is basically on finding a just and peaceful solution to the conflict between these two peoples; something we all would wish for. The speech too, is supportive of Dr Ashrawi's suitability as a recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize. Another parliamentary intervention which attempted to do this, a year earlier, was the motion put forward by House of Representatives backbencher and ALP Member for Fowler, Julia Irwin, on 11 November 2002. (We note the irony that the motion was debated on Armistice or Remembrance Day. So much bitter dispute around the conflict surrounds the issue of historical memory). The motion stated that this House:

(1) notes the continued occupation by the State of Israel of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in contravention of United Nations Resolution 242 passed on 22 November 1967;

(2) Supports the right of Israel to exist within secure borders;

(3) Calls on the United Nations to insert a peacekeeping force into the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza and the unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces;

(4) calls for the recognition of the State of Palestine based on the pre 1967 borders of the West Bank and Gaza; and

(5) Calls on the international community to encourage and support the resolution of outstanding differences between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine based on the Oslo and Camp David Agreements⁹.

As most people concerned with the conflict in Israel/Palestine would be aware, this motion caused considerable and acrimonious debate, before, during and after it was actually debated in parliament¹⁰, within the ALP and also within the Jewish communities in Sydney and Melbourne. We focus here on the motion itself and whether it meets the antisemitic label implied by some of its opponents. Firstly, none of the four speakers against the motion actually accused her in the parliament of antisemitism, although comments such as those by Anthony Smith (member for Casey) imply it: 'Thanks to [Simon Crean] we now have an anti-Israel unity ticket of left-wing extremism and Labor Right expediency, where the balance and strength of

Hawke Labor on the question of Israel has been completely replaced by the weakness and policy immorality of Crean Labor’.

Secondly, one of the fiercest objections to the motion was based on its apparent one-sidedness (this is the double standard issue); that is, it condemns Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip but does not condemn terrorists, that is, the Palestinian suicide bombers. This goes to the core of the problem many Jews have with those left-wing critics of Israel, summed up by Mendes when he wrote: ‘many representatives of the centrist Australian Labor Party ... hold little sympathy for Israel’¹¹. If they had, the motion would have included a condemnation of the suicide bombers. We agree that there are contexts in which this condemnation is necessary. Perhaps this is one such. However, one could also argue conversely that point (2) supports Israel’s right to exist securely, before also demanding that an equivalent right be accorded to Palestinians (point 4). From a left perspective, as Mendes argues further in this article, after the 1967 Six Day War, ‘it discovered the Palestinians, and the romance with the PLO began. Israel is stereotyped as a powerful oppressor state and a tool of western imperialism involved in suppressing the national rights of the Palestinians’. Mendes’ tone is sarcastic as it parodies the left’s own jargon. However, we would argue that since 1967 (and indeed 1948) Palestinians have been oppressed by Israel, and to state this, is not antisemitic or somehow disingenuously romantic. Poor leadership on the Palestinian side and violence against Jewish civilians does not alter this.

Thirdly, three of the four speakers against the motion – Michael Danby (Melbourne Ports), Anthony Smith and Julie Bishop (Curtin) were highly critical of Irwin’s first point concerning UN Resolution 242. Bishop described this ‘distortion’ of the resolution as being ‘malevolent’, since in her words, the resolution ‘does not call for Israel to immediately and unconditionally return to its pre-1967 borders’. This is indeed the case. The contentious clause states that Israeli armed forces should withdraw ‘from territories occupied in the recent conflict’. It does not name the territories yet it is no secret which territories were occupied in the ‘recent conflict’ (that is the June 1967 Six Day War). It does not seem to us that Irwin’s point one is a distortion of the UN resolution. Smith regards Irwin’s insertion of point 1 as falsely ‘portraying UN resolution 242 with respect to the post-1967 borders as a one-way street when it is nothing of the sort’. Of course, negotiation has to happen for a just peace to occur. Who would deny that? Smith goes on to say ‘As a bit of insurance – a bit of cowardly cover-it disingenuously states its support for Israel’s continued existence while at the same time turning a blind eye to all the forces that threaten that very existence’, that is the ‘extremists who say that the only map of the Middle East they want is one without Israel on it’. Focussing only on the Palestinian ‘extremists’ as the reason for condemning any moderate statements attempting to advance the cause of peace, is a common silencing ploy. Surely, it is a more effective strategy to work with and encourage those on both sides who are prepared to do the hard work necessary for a just solution.

The second group of Australian texts we examine is from the radical newspaper *Green Left Weekly* (GLW) – currently the newspaper of the Socialist Alliance (SA). The SA is an Australian political party that groups together approximately eight socialist organisations and a core group of individual (or unaligned) members all with a socialist ideology. The GLW until May 2004 was the paper of the Democratic

Socialist Party (DSP), but was adopted as the SA paper during their 2004 national conference. We examine fifteen articles published since the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000. The authors made a selection of articles that included a small number from each calendar year and a variety of authors. The huge volume of articles that appear in the GLW over this timeframe illustrates that this conflict is one of considerable importance to the radical left.

In order to critically analyse these articles each theme is examined separately below.

1. Zionism equals racism; Zionists are neo-Nazis

The GLW articles examined generally avoid the temptation to explicitly call Zionism a racist ideology. There is nevertheless some evidence that the language used in one article makes this connection. This example comes from a press release from the Washington DC based group *Palestine Right to Return Coalition*.

Racism is an integral part of most Israeli organisations that uphold Zionism.

In the name of a Zionist-defined “peace,” these groups support the racist and oppressive Israeli occupying power in denying Palestinians their rightful ownership of the land from which they were expelled¹².

The perceived link between racism and Zionism has come about due to the precarious situation that the majority of Palestinian communities find themselves in as a result of the continuing military occupation. It is difficult to make an accusation of anti-Semitism against those who have seen the practical impact that Zionism has had on only one part of the community. In this case the authors accept the assertion that Zionism is a racist ideology stems not from a deep seated hatred of all Jews, but rather from those suffering from oppression.

The articles reviewed provide no further examples of any equation of Zionism as racism. The other concern in this criticism is the comparison of Zionism with Nazism. Once again there is little evidence that the GLW’s regular contributors subscribe to this theory, however, some of the language used in several articles conjure up images of Nazi Germany. Examples of this are the descriptions of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) military actions that have resulted in loss of numerous Palestinian lives:

More than 250 Palestinians have been killed and 10 000 injured, the vast majority civilians – around a third under the age of 18 – since September 28 in this Gestapo-style terror campaign¹³.

and

Immediately after World War II, the Geneva Conventions were adopted to bar repetition of Nazi crimes, including transfer of population to occupied territories or actions that harm civilians¹⁴.

Chomsky notes that that the Geneva Conventions were adopted in order to prevent the repetition of Nazi crimes at the same time as the State of Israel was ‘transferring’ Palestinian civilians out of the newly formed State of Israel. There were within the texts examined isolated examples (provided above) where the use of language has

conjured up images of Nazi Germany, which is cause for concern. The small number of examples in the sample, and the lack of overt comparisons of Zionists and Neo – Nazis lead the authors to conclude that this is not a theme that the GLW deliberately supports or encourages

b) 'Zionist' or 'Israeli' is a pejorative code for 'Jew'

In the articles examined, there was no evidence at all that the words 'Zionists' or 'Israeli' were used as a pejorative code for 'Jew'.

c) The formation of Israel was a colonialist and imperialist venture

It is hardly surprising to find evidence of this in a radical weekly newspaper of an organisation with a socialist ideology. There were many examples that claim that the State of Israel was (and still is) a colonial/imperialist venture. For example, one of the articles described Israeli settlements as 'Jewish colonies'¹⁵. All of the articles examined that provide evidence of this theme make the assumption that the state of Israel is another example of US imperialism or British-type colonialism. None of these articles provided an historical context for these claims. Without an historical context, it is difficult to conclude whether the statements are antisemitic or simply anti-colonial or anti-imperialist. An analysis of the historical context of Palestine during the British Mandate period, and Israel's close relationship with the United States will bear on the conclusion. Unfortunately this paper is not able to provide such a detailed analysis. Instead, some examples are provided (in context where possible) of such statements found within the text.

The events of the last 20 days in Palestine are without doubt the most significant since the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993. They have brought to the fore the tensions inherent in any solution to the Palestinian question that does not tackle the fundamental problems in the Middle East: the role of imperialism and its client state of Israel¹⁶.

It was this movement [the solidarity movement from Arabs in neighbouring countries] in itself an expression of the latent anger of the Arab masses against imperialist influence and the collusion of their own governments with Israel and the US, which forced the US to take an active role in attempting to diffuse the situation¹⁷.

The Palestine National Authority (PNA) described the newly formed Israeli government as "a government of occupation, colonisation and fundamentalism that seeks to topple the peace process"¹⁸.

Even if the US, Israel and the PA succeed in crushing the present Intifada, the implementation of the road map will simply lay the seeds for a third Intifada – and the inevitable resumption of Israel's 55-year-long colonial war against the Palestinian Nation¹⁹.

It would be a mistake to assume that the use of the words 'imperialist' or 'colonial' are in themselves indications of antisemitism. Analogously, use of the word 'comrade' will have different meanings depending on whether it is in the context of returned service men, trade union officials or those from communist regimes. Just as the use of the word comrade does not automatically mean a communist sympathiser, nor should the use of the language of the radical left (i.e. 'imperialist' or 'colonial') imply or infer an underlying hatred of Jews.

d) Criticism of Israel often implicitly or explicitly signifies an anti-Zionist position entailing the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state.

There was little written in the articles examined about the different positions within the radical Left for a just resolution to the conflict. This may be due to the differing ideological backgrounds of the eight aligned organisations (and the majority of unaligned members) to the SA. Each of these organisations has slightly differing policies about the best resolution to the conflict, ranging from the Workers Liberty's policy of a 2-state solution to the bi-national state proposed by a number of the unaligned members. There is no evidence that the GLW supports the elimination of the state of Israel. However there is discussion of the demographic changes that are inevitable in the region in the foreseeable future.

Their [The Israeli Peace Movement] paramount concern for "maintaining the demographic balance" and "Jewish supremacy" [amounts to support for] apartheid and contradicts international law and moral imperatives, including countless United Nations resolutions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁰.

The peace camps may adopt a local and international campaign for equal Palestinian citizenship and political rights in a binational political framework²¹.

If you compare the growth of both populations, you can see that in 10 or 15 years, the Israelis are going to lose their majority. [They realise that] however you juggle; however you play with all this power, at the end of the day [the Israeli government is going to represent] a minority²².

The argument that any vision for the future of the region that does not accept a Jewish State in Israel (precisely as it is now constituted) is antisemitic, we believe is flawed. There are clearly camps within the left that have recognised the demographic realities in Israel/Palestine²³. To argue that their vision for the future is antisemitic because they call for a democratic state is limited. There are clearly many on the left who genuinely believe that any just solution may indeed require changes to the structures of the current Israeli state.

e) The left (and others) employ a double standard by criticising Israel without at the same time criticising Arab states and condemning Palestinian violence.

Within the pages of GLW there is ample evidence of double standards. Double standards that the left is often criticised for are clear in the articles examined. There is rarely criticism of Palestinian violence nor were there proportionally similar numbers of articles detailing the human rights abuses in other Middle Eastern regimes (with the exception of articles before, during and after the US led war in Iraq).

The two most common double standards that are examined in GLW are the double standard in the mainstream reporting of the conflict and the double standard of the amount of military, financial and ideological support received by Israel and Palestine. Throughout the texts examined, there are numerous articles critical of the mainstream media reporting of the conflict, particularly of the language and reporting of civilian deaths.

While the Western press and Israeli and US leaders shed tears over the injuries suffered by settlers' children in one terrible but isolated incident, there has been absolute silence at the Israeli military's systematic murder of scores of Palestinian children²⁴.

'There's no question of our support for Israel's security. There's no question of our support for Israel's right to defend itself' said US State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher on July 25. '[But] when we see things we don't think are advisable we point that out'.

By contrast with the mild rebuke which Israel's Gaza city massacre received from the White House, on August 1 President Bush told reporters he was 'furious that innocent life was lost' a day after a Hamas bombing at a Jerusalem university cafeteria killed seven people, including five Americans²⁵.

The accusation that the left employs double standards when criticising Israel's human rights abuses should be understood in the context described earlier in this paper. Israel's position as the only country in the region that claims to be a liberal democracy lends itself to higher expectations. The examples provided below show that the double standards argument as presented in the GLW is not that of the failure to criticise Arab violence, but rather the double standard when it comes to support for Israel from the United States.

a recent poll showed just 3% of Palestinians in the occupied territories consider the US neutral²⁶.

Israel, which has one of the largest and most modern armies in the world, receives more military aid from the US than any other country in the world²⁷.

The conqueror is a major armed power, acting with massive military, economic and diplomatic support from the United States, the world's only superpower²⁸.

The evidence suggests that if the assumption that 'criticism of Israel without at the same time criticising Arab states and condemning Palestinian violence' is accepted as antisemitic, then the GLW is guilty as charged. What it attempts to do, albeit often unobtrusively, is provide evidence of what it considers the other double standard which operates in this conflict.

Conclusion

The borders between antisemitism – in remark or deed – and justifiable criticism of Israel – are permeable, just as the borders between Israel and the Arab states are. We cannot build a wall of words around us and be safe, any more than the 'security wall' currently being constructed around Israel, will in the end, guarantee complete safety for Israelis. Our act of monitoring these permeable discursive borders brings us to several tentative conclusions. With a leftist perspective, we are more inclined to give statements from the left 'the benefit of the doubt' than automatically assume antisemitic intent. Which is not to say that there are not sometimes unambiguous examples of Jew-hatred in this debate. We have made it clear that we do not think that *not* presenting an even-handed approach to this conflict, is evidence of antisemitism. We have demonstrated, if briefly, that the issue of the 'double-standard' verges on hypocrisy, particularly by those promoting Israeli righteousness. Of course, in any discussion on antisemitism, its context and potential audiences, are significant. The texts from the Australian Greens and Julia Irwin's parliamentary motion, have a

general audience. They are carefully framed, and should be lauded for the moderation in their language. The articles in the Green Left Weekly are, as one would expect, less moderate and more ideologically-driven. Their audience is far more restricted, and their political positions mean that there are moments of discomfort for the Jewish reader when critique is used to further antisemitic aims. We conclude with the words of Judith Butler, again:

To remain silent for fear of a possible antisemitic appropriation is to keep the very equation of Zionism and Jewishness in tact, when it is precisely the separation between the two that guarantees the conditions for critical thinking on this issue. To remain silent for fear of an antisemitic appropriation that one deems to be certain is to give up on the possibility of combating antisemitism by other means²⁹.

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Appendix

Policy of The Australian Greens on Israel–Palestine

1. Principles

The Australian Greens:

- 1.1 support the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in peace and security in their own independent, sovereign state
- 1.2 support the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Israeli people to live in peace and security in their own independent, sovereign state
- 1.3 recognise the ongoing injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people and aim to rectify that injustice in a way that will allow both Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace
- 1.4 oppose Israel's ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories and the expropriation of Palestinian land and resources for its settlements
- 1.5 support negotiations to achieve the democratic aspirations of both peoples within an environment of mutual respect and equality
- 1.6 demand the protection of human rights in the Palestinian territories and Israel
- 1.7 reject violence and its promotion, particularly against civilians, whether perpetrated by a state, an organisation or individuals
- 1.8 oppose all forms of racism, religious or cultural intolerance and discrimination
- 1.9 call on all parties to comply with United Nations (UN) resolutions, international law, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Geneva Convention*.

2. Goals

The Australian Greens will work for:

- 2.1 the removal of Israeli settlers and Israeli security and military forces from the Palestinian territories
- 2.2 the termination of the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the establishment of a secure and viable state of Palestine alongside Israel, based on 4 June 1967 boundaries with both states sharing Jerusalem as their capital
- 2.3 a just and practical negotiated settlement of the claims of the Palestinian refugees that provides compensation for those who are unable to return to their country of origin, Israel or Palestine
- 2.4 the right of each state to independently manage its own affairs, including foreign relations and economic development, without the dominance of one state over the other
- 2.5 the equitable allocation of shared resources, including water

2.6 the promotion of a culture of dialogue, harmony, peace and reconciliation between the peoples of Palestine and Israel, both in the Middle East and in Australia, fostered through educational, cultural and other institutions

2.7 full equality before the laws of each jurisdiction, for every citizen of that jurisdiction, irrespective of ethnic origin, religion or belief, race or gender.

From: <http://www.greens.org.au/ploneprint/israelpalestine.pdf>

Endnotes

- ¹ Rosenblatt, L 1993, 'Questioning Mendes', *The Australian Jewish Democratic Society Newsletter (Special edition)*, vol. 4, no. 5, pp. 8 - 9.
- ² See *The Beirut Declaration of the League of Arab States*, March 2002, cited in *Palestine - Israel 101. The two state solution*, 2004, The American Task Force on Palestine, Washington DC. See also the recent *Open letter to Palestinian public opinion. What we want from the elected president*, 2004, 29 December 2004., a letter signed by hundreds of prominent Palestinians, from the top echelons of the political, cultural, academic and security leadership. Government ministers and mayors from the West Bank, parliamentarians and officers from the Gaza Strip and professors from East Jerusalem, along with the national poet Mahmoud Darwish Its first demand from the newly elected President affirms 'the creation of the independent Palestinian state within the borders of 4th June 1967 with East Jerusalem its capital alongside the state of Israel'.
- ³ Glazov, J 19 September 2003, *Leftist antisemitism - why is hatred of Jews the new call of the left*, FrontPageMagazine.com, accessed on 19 November 2003, <<http://209.157.64.200/focus/f-news/985508/posts>>.
- ⁴ Butler, J 2003, 'The Jewish question: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and antisemitism', in T. Kushner & A. Solomon, (eds), *Wrestling with Zion. Progressive Jewish-American responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, Grove Press, New York. p. 263
- ⁵ From a Table found in *Palestine - Israel 101. The two state solution*.
- ⁶ Belanger, L 2003, 'Words hurt, but tanks kill', in A. Cockburn & J. St Clair, (eds), *The politics of anti-semitism*, CounterPunch, California. p 50.
- ⁷ Youmans, W 2003, 'The divestment campaign', in A. Cockburn & J. St Clair, (eds), *The politics of anti-semitism*, CounterPunch, California. p. 70.
- ⁸ *The Australian Greens' policy on Israel-Palestine*, 2003. and Nettle, K 29 October 2003, *Matter of public importance. The ongoing tragedy surrounding Palestine and Israel and the Sydney Peace Prize*, Australian Senate, Canberra. Found at www.kerrynettle.org.au. All further references in this section relate to these two documents.
- ⁹ *Motion on Middle East: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 11 November 2002, <<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/dailys/dr111102.pdf>>.
- ¹⁰ The following is a selection of articles from Jewish and non-Jewish media first supporting Irwin's motion and then opposing it:
Ramsey, A 26 October 2002, 'ALP fights to find a sense of middle ground', *The Sydney Morning Herald*.; Ramsey, A 9 November 2002, 'Danby gets the credit for the rush of support', *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Bard, A 29 November 2002, 'Activists slammed for "denigrating" MP Danby', *The Australian Jewish News*, p. 9. Freedman, B 15 November 2002, 'Tempers flare in debate on Israel', *The Australian Jewish News*, pp. 1, 4. 'Media release: Parliamentary motion on Arab-Israel conflict "ignorant" and "unhelpful"', 11 November 2002, *Australia-Israel and Jewish Affairs Council*. Dissent about the motion was also extremely heated within the Jewish community itself, see for example Bard 'Activists slammed for "denigrating" MP Danby'.
- ¹¹ Mendes, P 21 March 2003, 'Why the left is anti-Israel', *The Australian Jewish News*, p. 16.
- ¹² *Palestine: 'No return, no justice no peace'*, 2001, Green Left Weekly, Accessed on 12/1/05, <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2001/434/434p18b.htm>>.
- ¹³ Dixon, N 2000, *Palestine: UN Force Needed to end Israel's Terror Campaign*, Green Left Weekly, accessed on 6/1/05, <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2000/430/430p15.htm>>.
- ¹⁴ Chomsky, N June 26 2002, *Palestine: How Israel Creates Suicide Bombers*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed 12/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2002/497/497p17.htm>>.
- ¹⁵ Charida, R September 22 2004, *Palestine: Going to Nablus*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed 12/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2004/599/599p16.htm>>.
- ¹⁶ Nimer, A 2000, *Israel Out of Palestine Now!*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed on 12/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2000/425/435p16.htm>>.
- ¹⁷ *Nimer Israel Out of Palestine Now!*
- ¹⁸ Abunimah, A, Brown, M & Parry, N March 19 2003, *Palestine: Sharon Embraces Ethnic Cleansers*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed 12/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2003/530/530p17.htm>>.
- ¹⁹ Nimer, A May 14 2003, *Palestine: Why the 'Road Map' Will Not Bring Peace*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed 12/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2003/537/537p24.htm>>.
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- ²¹ Yiftachel, O 2001, *Palestine: Sharon's Victory Boosts Apartheid*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed on 6/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2001/437/437p17.htm>>.

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- ²² Everett, N September 1 2004, *Palestine: Pappé: 'Israel Must Be Treated as South Africa Was'*, Green Left Weekly, Accessed 12/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2004/596/596p16.htm>>.
- ²³ Everett *Palestine: Pappé: 'Israel Must Be Treated as South Africa Was'*.
- ²⁴ Dixon *Palestine: UN Force Needed to end Israel's Terror Campaign*.
- ²⁵ Pearce, R August 7, 2002, *Palestine: Israeli Military Targets Civilians*, Green Left Weekly, 6/1/05 <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2002/503/503p15.htm>>.
- ²⁶ Dixon *Palestine: UN Force Needed to end Israel's Terror Campaign*.
- ²⁷ Nimer *Israel Out of Palestine Now!*
- ²⁸ Chomsky *Palestine: How Israel Creates Suicide Bombers*.
- ²⁹ Butler 'The Jewish question: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and antisemitism', in (eds). p 263.