

OPINION

# Exploiting the Holocaust to attack Israel is immoral



Gerald Steinberg

While anti-Semitism, in both the traditional religious forms and the modern version of anti-Israel hatred, is very different from Holocaust denial, the two forms of extreme and obsessive hatred are increasingly appearing together. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and his acolytes, as well as the leaders of Hamas and other Islamist and Palestinian groups, often refer to the goal of wiping Israel off the map while also rejecting "the myths of the deaths of the six million" and the Nazi concentration camps as a Zionist plot.

During the recent Gaza war, which was accompanied by particularly virulent ideological and political attacks on Israel and another flood of false allegations of war crimes, the most intense haters also invoked a form of Holocaust denial. In

many examples, Palestinians and their allies compared the defensive actions of the IDF with Nazi practices, including the abuse of terms such as "collective punishment," Palestinian "genocide," and references to Gaza as a "concentration camp."

Deborah Lipstadt, a professor of modern Jewish history who triumphed in a historic lawsuit against notorious Holocaust denier David Irving, referred to this practice as a "soft-core" form of denigrating the Shoah.

On Aug. 23, the *New York Times* published an advertisement titled "Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of Nazi genocide unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza." It condemned Israel for "colonialism, racism, and genocide," and compared "right-wing Israelis" to Nazis. The 327 signatories ended with a "full economic, cultural, and academic boycott of Israel."

This letter also launched a brutal attack on Elie Wiesel. For anti-Israeli campaigners, Wiesel is the enemy incarnate, as reflected in another advertisement in the *New York Times* and elsewhere in which Wiesel criticized the brutality of Hamas,

particularly in exploiting the death of children. The counterattack expressed "disgust" and "outrage" over Wiesel's "abuse of our history" and "manipulation [of] the legacy of the Nazi genocide" to justify the unjustifiable: "the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people."

This expensive ad was paid for by a shadowy group called the International Jewish Solidarity Network. When the same ad was published in the U.K. *Guardian*, they were listed as the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network. Behind these facades, the actual sponsor is a California-based group known as the Left Tilt Fund, which is clearly linked to the Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions movement and the wider demonization of Israel. This mysterious fund also sponsors other anti-Israel hit-groups such as Jewish Voices for Peace and Electronic Intifada. Their objective, like that of Hamas and Iran, is to eliminate the existence of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People.

The exploitation of a small number of anti-Israel fanatics associated, often very loosely, with the Shoah, is central to this overall strategy. As Prof. Alvin Rosenfeld

has written, "Most Holocaust survivors, like most Jews, are Zionists and are strongly devoted to the welfare of the State of Israel. The IJSN/IJAN group is exceptional in its fierce opposition to Israel and is hardly representative. That fact, however, did not keep the *BBC* from quickly publishing a story with the title 'Holocaust survivors condemn Israel.' The impression conveyed is seriously misleading."

Ignoring such blatant exploitation, these ads were embraced by some of the most notorious anti-Israel activists, including Kenneth Roth, the obsessively anti-Israel head of Human Rights Watch, and Andrew Stroehlein, HRW's European media director. They and almost 5,000 others endorsed the slogan that "Holocaust survivors slam Israel on Gaza" through Twitter and in other forms.

To defeat this immoral political warfare, it's necessary to name and shame the perpetrators of both hard and soft-core Holocaust denial and denigration. Exploiting the Holocaust as a weapon to attack Israel and the right of the Jewish People to a nation-state like all others is particularly evil. ■

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