



Opinion- Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism

Stanley Heller

Jan. 3, 2020 | Updated: Jan. 3, 2020 1:12 p.m.

In defending President Trump's Executive Order that will in effect crack down on criticism of Israel by college students or professors, Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, declared in a New York Times op-ed that "Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism." He could not be more wrong.

Zionism is a political movement just like the temperance movement or the pro-choice movement. It's a group of ideas with a goal. It calls for a country run strictly for the benefit of Jews. One can oppose that idea without being a racist hater of Jews. Indeed, Zionism has only had a mass following among Jews since the last years of the 1800s. It wasn't until the Holocaust that it had any real following among Orthodox Jews.

Famous Jewish anti-Zionists included New York Times publisher Adolph Simon Ochs, violinist Yehudi Menuhin, Reform rabbi Elmer Berger, Auschwitz survivor Hago Meyer, and the anti-Nazi intelligence agent Leopold Trepper. Prominent today are Israeli lawyer Lea Tzemel, the American writer Ben Ehrenreich and Daniel Boyarin, Professor of Talmudic Culture at UC Berkeley. Groups of anti-Zionists included the tens of thousands in Europe in the pre-WWII Bund movement, the Israeli Jews in the Matzpen movement, the American Council for Judaism. Anti-Zionist Jewish groups today include 20,000 Ultra-Orthodox Satmar Jews, the Neturei Karta and the U.S. group Jewish Voice for Peace with its half-million Facebook followers .

There are many valid reasons to oppose Zionism. Among them are Israel's savage mistreatment of Palestinians, its regard of Jews outside Israel as inferiors and Zionist leaders' long treacherous history of deals with anti-Semites, ultra-rightists and in some cases killers of Jews.

Necessary work against real anti-Semitism is being politically exploited and undermined by the the Kushners, Trumps, and Boris Johnsons of the world and from right-wing forces within Israel. They hobnob with "illiberals" who glorify and cover up the record of nationalists who collaborated with German Nazis during World War II. They defend the modern-day authoritarians saying, "They can't be anti-Semitic because they're pro-Israel."

It is grotesque that Jared Kushner has the gall to pontificate about anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. He serves in the administration of Donald Trump, which has opened the floodgates of hate, whose "Great" America has seen the worst massacre of Jews in American history, and who often uses anti-Jewish slurs.

It is grotesque that this false equivocation is made and given serious consideration at a time when we should be focusing instead on what the Israeli government is doing, tearing down Palestinian homes, dividing Palestinian land with wall after wall, locking Palestinians up without charges or trials, excusing virtually all police or army killings of Palestinians, and launching a massacre in Gaza every few years.

Middle East Crisis Committee