

‘Rotten to the Core:’ How Israel Influenced British Policy on Hamas

Israel now controls British Foreign policy through a highly-infiltrated, ferociously active network of organizations, campaigners, and relationships

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[On 26 November](#), the British government officially banned Hamas “in its entirety” as an “Islamist terror group,” with both its members and “those who invite support” for the movement facing jail terms of up to 14 years.

The military wing of Hamas, the Al-Qassam Brigades, has been proscribed by London since 2001. As such, it’s only reasonable to ask why this move – [vehemently opposed](#) by Palestinian factions within the illegally occupied Gaza Strip and clearly concerned with erasing the very real distinction between separate wings of the wider movement, in the process delegitimizing it as a whole – has been taken at this particular point in time, or even at all.

Emails obtained by *The Cradle* reveal that an intensive pressure campaign waged by Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and the Zionist Federation, two highly significant Israeli lobby groups, had forced Whitehall’s hand. Missives dispatched to their respective members – the latter group totaling [over 50,000](#) – ecstatically hailed the Hamas prohibition with accompanying subject lines respectively proclaiming the words ‘VICTORY!’ and ‘Activism counts!’

In its accompanying message, the Federation noted that earlier in 2021, it had, in conjunction with “other pro-Israel organizations,” undertaken a “letter writing campaign calling on [London] to proscribe the political wing of Hamas ... in its entirety. YOUR [emphasis in original] participation in that campaign has paid off.”

The email by CUFI, which branded anti-Zionism a “hateful ideology,” thanked the “thousands” of supporters who contacted their local parliamentarians, thereby “joining calls for Hamas to be banned in its entirety,” confirming the existence of a concerted effort across ostensibly separate Zionist initiatives, and adding that, “*once again* [emphasis

added], it has been proven that speaking out is so important and effective.”

It’s unknown to what precisely this refers, although journalist Asa Winstanley has [previously caught](#) the organization inviting its backers to demand the British government prohibit [Israel Apartheid Week](#), an annual series of actions and events intended to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinians, from university campuses across the country.

Higher education institutions that refused to adopt the definition of anti-Semitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance were to be particularly targeted, despite the definition’s own architect [acknowledging](#) it to be inadequate and ripe for abuse.

The email by CUFI concluded with the words: “One way we bless Israel is by standing up against the evil forces that are intent on its destruction ... Britain has made a small step in demonstrating its support for Israel in its fight against terror. But we know that there is still much more the UK can do. With your help and support, CUFI can make an impact in the UK through *even more targeted and bigger campaigns* [emphasis added], ensuring that this nation remains faithful to Israel and the Jewish people.”

CUFI, Israel’s ‘crisis’ manager

CUFI was founded in 2006 by Texan pastor John Hagee, a Christian fundamentalist [who preaches](#) that Nazi leader Adolf Hitler – who [he brands](#) a “half-breed Jew” – purged Europe of its Jewish population in order to shepherd them to Palestine, and that the Holocaust was [actively willed](#) by God for this divine purpose.

Having grown rapidly, today CUFI is the largest pro-Israel organization in the US, a highly [competitive category](#) indeed, with its membership [reportedly exceeding](#) over eight million. [CUFI’s website](#) boasts that this vast network of foot soldiers “enables us to make a difference during crucial moments.”

Whenever Israel “faces a crisis,” its US-wide network of “dedicated activists” are enlisted to “immediately take action and rally support on Capitol Hill, in the pulpits across America, in every available media outlet, and on college campuses.”

Examples of its lobbying efforts include vast email campaigns targeting lawmakers in support of the relocation of Washington’s embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a move [slammed by rights groups](#) when it came to pass in 2018, and goading Congress to pass the [Taylor Force Act](#), which deprived the Palestinian Authority – an [illegitimate and brutal](#) Zionist entity in any event – of US financial aid. In the latter instance, over one million emails were purportedly fired off by CUFI activists.

The organization professes to be “carefully committed to putting every dollar of our funding towards the most effective and innovative initiatives,” and it’s clear that some of its budget [flows directly](#) from the Israeli government.

Records show that the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, [primarily charged](#) with battling the BDS movement overseas until its closure in June, provided CUFI with nearly \$1.3 million in February 2019 alone, bankrolling 10 week-long pilgrimages to Israel for 30 “influential Christian clerics from the US” per visit.

There, the clerics met with high-ranking Israeli officials. As the sums were spent abroad,

rather than stateside, CUFI was able to circumvent laws designed to thwart foreign interference in US politics, despite it being likely – and indeed desired – that these trips affected participant actions, activities, and statements once home.

It's uncertain if Israeli financing was in any way involved in the organization's expansion into the UK in 2015, although its [official launch event](#) in June that year had clear connections with the Israeli embassy in London.

A founding history of campaigns

The Zionist Federation, an umbrella for the wider movement in the UK, was founded in 1899, to campaign for a permanent Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Chaim Weizmann, who later became Israel's first President, was appointed its chief in October 1917. A mere month later, British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour issued his infamous, eponymous declaration, [widely considered](#) to be the Zionist state's foundational document. Weizmann was [heavily involved](#) in its drafting.

Following the creation of Israel in 1948, Zionist Federation activities evolved to aggressive advocacy and practical support [for 'Aliyah'](#) – the immigration and absorption of Jewish diaspora to Tel Aviv – lobbying, and cultural diplomacy.

Then, as now, its funding sources were markedly opaque. Today, it also manages [dedicated operations](#) attempting to counteract the BDS movement, identify and groom future Zionist leaders on British campuses, and “runs regular campaigns on a number of issues affecting Israel ... mobilizing thousands to get behind the State, and support Israel's right to freedom.”

Tantalizingly, the Zionist Federation cites “proscribing Hezbollah” as an example of one such campaign. The largest political force in Lebanon, [in February 2019](#) its political wing was banned without warning by then-Home Secretary Sajid Javid. Parts of the movement were criminalized by London in 2001 – the same year the Al-Qassam Brigades were outlawed – and its military arm prohibited since 2008.

Friends in high places

[The diaries](#) of former British foreign office minister Alan Duncan, encapsulated in his book, *In the Thick of It: The Private Diaries of a Minister*, and published in April, suggest that the Zionist initiative was not the only one involved in swaying Whitehall policy towards Hezbollah.

Contemporaneous entries assert that the Home Office was “just sucking up” to Conservative Friends of Israel (CFI), a highly influential parliamentary cluster affiliated with the ruling Conservative party, and which [has been dubbed](#) “by far Britain's most powerful pro-Israel lobbying group.”

Duncan wrote that its members were “gloating ... about having deployed their [House of Commons] troops in Israel's cause,” lamenting that “we are too willing to let others pull our strings.”

[On the CFI website](#), a prominent banner lists a quote from former prime minister Theresa May, stating: “Britain would not be Britain without its Jews. Likewise, the Conservative party

would not be the Conservative party without CFI. You play a vital role, for which we are hugely grateful.”

However, Duncan reveals CFI has all too often played a ‘vital role’ in undermining and besmirching those few Conservative parliamentarians possessed of pro-Palestinian sympathies, such as himself, despite the CFI having [around 80 percent](#) of the Conservative party’s elected representatives as its members.

Indeed, Duncan alleges, “they just want to belittle and subjugate the Palestinians ... whereas they pretend to believe in two parallel states, it’s quite clear they don’t, so [they] set out to destroy all genuine advocates for Palestine.”

Two years earlier, the minister had been informed by Al Jazeera that it had [secretly recorded](#) an Israeli embassy representative in meetings with CFI members speaking of the need to “destroy” him, so that he never became foreign secretary.

In response, Duncan telephoned Mark Regev, then-Israeli ambassador to Britain, who alleged that the embassy official in question, Shai Masot, was a junior “local hire” with no formal diplomatic status.

“It’s all total bollocks,” Duncan was recorded as saying, “what on earth is the point of Regev stating something that is so blatantly untrue, and about which we both hold the facts?”

[In reality](#), Masot was an Israeli Defense Forces veteran who had served as the embassy’s senior political officer since November 2014, acting as chief point of contact between the Israeli embassy and the Foreign Office.

Over the course of the covertly taped conversations, it was revealed that MP Crispin Blunt – a longtime critic of Israel who [consistently condemned](#) its illegal settlement expansion, and as recently as 24 November this year [referred in parliament](#) to the Palestinians as “an occupied people” who “have a right to resist” – was on Masot’s “hit list.”

‘Pro-Israel infiltration into very centre of our public life’

The disclosures of Al Jazeera went some way to explaining why six months earlier, Duncan had been primed to become ‘Minister for the Middle East’ within the Foreign Office, only for it to be denied to him after prolonged back-and-forth discussions.

On the evening of the very day Duncan accepted that post, he met with then-Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, who told him that “a massive problem has arisen,” as CFI was “going ballistic” over the proposal, eventually leading Downing Street to rule that Duncan simply couldn’t assume the role.

Duncan remarked in his diary that the conduct of CFI representatives responsible would “in any other country ... be seen as entrenched espionage that should prompt an inquiry into their conduct.”

“Our own national interest is being taken for a sucker ... This is improper. It’s wrong ... but the whole system buys into it without realizing how wrong it is,” Duncan said.

“It reeks, it stinks, it festers, it molds – all rotten to the core,” Duncan wrote.

“The rules of propriety, and all the morality and principle that goes with it, are discarded and rewritten to accommodate this exceptional pro-Israel infiltration into the very centre of our public life,” Duncan went on to write. “...The CFI and the Israelis think they control the Foreign Office. And they do!”

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