

Netanyahu's Racist Incitement, Dehumanizing "Non-Israelis", Palestinians Designated as "Wild Beasts"

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Global Research, February 18, 2016

[Alternet](#) 15 February 2016

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

The second week of February 2016 was a banner week for racism in Israel, with shockingly racist rhetoric from Prime Minister Netanyahu, genocidal references from his backbenchers and fulsome attacks on Palestinian leaders from his entire government. These attacks appear not only to lack legitimate basis, they reveal the government's own hypocritical alliances with convicted terrorists.

1. Netanyahu's racist incitement.

On February 9, Netanyahu dehumanized non-Israeli Middle Eastern peoples, calling them "[wild beasts](#)." He made the comments in the context of a visit to Israel's eastern border, where the government is spending billions of dollars to build high-tech barriers that will ultimately envelop the entire country.

"At the end, in the State of Israel, as I see it, there will be a fence that spans it all," said Netanyahu. "I'll be told, 'this is what you want, to protect the villa?' The answer is yes. Will we surround all of the State of Israel with fences and barriers? The answer is yes. In the area that we live in, we must defend ourselves against the wild beasts."

As analyst Nima Shirazi observes, Netanyahu and other Israeli government officials have a long history of comparing non-Israeli peoples to animals, and this "[zoomorphic bigotry](#)" has been used throughout history to justify the killing of rival groups.

The following day, Netanyahu said Palestinian culture was a "[culture of death](#)." He made the comments in order to dismiss the claim that violent attacks by Palestinians against Israelis are the nearly inevitable result of the Israeli military occupying Palestinian people for a half-century.

"Terror is not a result of occupation," said Netanyahu. "The terror stems from a culture of death. Its goal is not to free a state, it is to destroy a state."

Does Netanyahu really believe Arab people are genetically and culturally inferior to Jewish people? Or does he employ his racist rhetoric because he knows it will win him more support from racist Israelis? Perhaps both of these options are simultaneously true.

Two weeks ago, Israel Incitement Watch revealed that Netanyahu's election day anti-Arab incitement was not a spontaneous slip, but a [coldly calculated strategy](#) planned well in advance. This week provided additional confirmation in Netanyahu's own words that his racist provocations are premeditated.

At week's end, Israeli senior journalist Nahum Barnea revealed that behind closed doors, Netanyahu openly boasts about instrumentalizing [anti-Arab racism](#) in Israeli society in order to improve his electoral prospects. Barnea reports that some months ago, Netanyahu told his finance minister and Kulanu party leader Moshe Kahlon, "You'll never get the Mizrahi [Jewish Arab] vote. Only I know how to get it. I know who they hate: they hate the [non-Jewish] Arabs. And I know how to bring the goods."

2. Palestine doesn't exist because Arabs can't pronounce P?

While Netanyahu sets the tone of the racist discourse, he is far from the only member of his government to promote arguments that frame Palestinians as non-people unworthy of life.

On February 10, a ruling Likud party lawmaker told the Knesset plenum that Palestinians could not be a [distinct people](#), because the language that they speak, Arabic, does not even have a letter that makes the sound P, the first letter of the word Palestine in English.

"I want to go back to history, what is our place here, about Jerusalem, about Palestine, when like we said, Arabic doesn't even have P, so this loan-word also merits scrutiny," said Member of Knesset Anat Berko, a 25-year veteran of the Israel Defense Forces and a college professor.

Without the letter P, the Hebrew and English words for Palestine cannot be pronounced. However, the Arabic words for Palestine and Palestinian have no letter P. In Arabic, the word for "Palestine" is "Filisteen" and the word for "Palestinian" is "Filisteenee."

By Berko's standards, Israel cannot be a Jewish state because the Hebrew language does not have letters that make the sounds J and W. According to Berko's logic, Orthodox Jews do not worship the god Yahweh of the Old Testament, since they cannot pronounce the name of the Tetragrammaton.

3. New Knesset proposal declares Arabs the real occupiers.

On that same day Berko insinuated that Palestinians are not a people, another ruling Likud Party lawmaker sought to undercut Palestinian political claims by claiming that the Jewish people's right to the land supersedes theirs. Horrifically, he did so basing this right on the supposition that the Jewish people had long ago eradicated the native inhabitants of the land. Despite this, the government voted in favor of his proposal.

[Miki Zohar wrote](#) on his Facebook profile page:

"3500 years ago, on the 10th day of [the Hebrew month of] Nisan, the Jewish people immigrated to Israel under the leadership of Joshua son of Nun, that was our first immigration to the country as the chosen people. The law that I initiated, 'Immigration Day' which passed its first reading, determined that Immigration Day will be celebrated every year on this date, for all the [Jewish] immigrants to the Land of Israel from other countries. In response to those at home and abroad who contend that Israel is supposedly an 'occupying' state, we remind them of one thing: We were here before everyone..."

Zohar's new bill holds that the Jewish people's historical rights to Israel are based on the biblical figure of Joshua leading ancient Israelites into the land. According to the Bible text, Joshua and the Israelites began their conquest of Canaan by genociding the residents of the

city of Jericho [Joshua 6:21]: “And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city both man and woman, both young and old, and ox, and she, and ass, with the edge of the sword.”

The Torah text goes on to describe how Israelite forces similarly genocide five other cities: Ai, Levona, Lahish, Eglon and Hebron.

As analyst [Yossi Gurvitz notes](#), modern archaeologists believe Joshua’s conquest of the land is nothing more than a myth, and the mass murders the Bible has him committing are entirely fictional. Regardless of whether these atrocities actually occurred or not, however, the government of Israel voted this week to predicate its physical presence upon them.

4. One man’s terrorist is an Israeli politician’s friend.

As in previous weeks, the Israeli government continued its attacks on Palestinian political representatives whose opinions it can’t countenance.

In recent months, Israeli authorities have delayed the burial of Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces after attacking Israelis with knives, holding onto their bodies until their families agree to bury their kin according to Israel’s conditions. This week, Palestinian Members of Knesset met with these families to hear their concerns and mediate between them and the Israeli government. When the meeting was reported in the press, the government responded with outrage and suspended the three lawmakers; Joint List-Balad faction leader Jamal Zehalka was suspended for two months, and his faction-mates Haneen Zoabi and Basel Ghattas were suspended for four months each.

The suspensions of Zahalka, Zoabi and Ghattas were justified based on the assertion that the three had encouraged terrorism by meeting with the families of the attackers and reading the opening passage of the Koran in memory of their dead children.

If meeting with the families of alleged terrorists is a cause for a Knesset suspension, it would stand to reason that Israel’s Justice Minister should also be excused from her duties. In December, Ayelet Shaked met with the mother of [Elisha Odess](#), whom Israel arrested in the wake of the Duma murders. In that ghastly incident, Israelis are suspected of torching to death a Palestinian father, mother and one-year-old baby in their West Bank home.

Furthermore, for years both Shaked and Education Minister Natali Bennett have publicly availed themselves of the political advice of a [convicted terrorist](#). Jewish Home Party advisor Nathan Nathanson served just two years of a three-year sentence as part of a Jewish terrorist group that attempted to assassinate three Palestinian mayors in 1980. Nablus Mayor Bassam Shakaa lost [both his legs](#) in the attacks.

Israeli leaders’ dalliances with Jewish terrorists are not a new phenomenon. This week, Ha’aretz [published a chart](#) showing that Jewish terrorists convicted of attacking Palestinians have often been given light sentences. The accompanying article quoted Israeli author Ami Pedahzur claiming that “the fact that many members of the Jewish Underground had their jail sentences commuted was mainly thanks to their closeness to the political establishment at the time.”

After the three Palestinian MKs were suspended from the Knesset, the government moved quickly to formulate a new bill that would enable their permanent expulsion. The proposed bill would give a three-quarters super-majority of the Knesset the right to oust any legislators, though they be elected representatives.

As members of the governing coalition, Bennett's Jewish Home Party expressed support for the bill in principle, but registered opposition to some of its specific wording. The party hoped to remove "[incitement to racism](#)" from the transgressions outlined in the bill that could merit removing a Member of Knesset.

If Jewish Home Party leaders object to the inclusion of "incitement to racism" as grounds for expulsion from the Knesset, it might be because their own lawmakers are among the Members of Knesset most often in violation of this clause. Minister of Justice Shaked is especially known for her July 2014 call to [commit genocide](#) against Palestinian mothers of those she called "little snakes."

Much of the Israeli media joined the government in disparaging MKs Zehalka, Zoabi and Ghattas as terrorist sympathizers. Only a few journalists, among them Ha'aretz's Chicky Arad, took the time to find out that the three legislators had met with the families of the attackers for ostensibly humanitarian reasons, to hasten the burial of their children's bodies.

5. The Genocide convention.

At the end of [Arad's report](#), he notes the absurd hypocrisy in the Israeli government accusing Palestinian MKs of sympathizing with terrorists. Arad recalls a shocking October 2014 conference he attended in which Deputy Minister Eli Ben Dahan and soon-to-be-Minister Miri Regev shared a stage with Temple Mount Institute head Rabbi Yisrael Ariel.

Ben [Dahan and Regev](#) are known as some of the most racist representatives of the Israeli government. Dahan [has said](#) Palestinians "are beasts, they are not human," while Regev called African asylum seekers "a cancer in the body" of Israel.

But the man they shared a stage with, Rabbi Meir Kahane's former deputy Yisrael Ariel, embodies another level of fanaticism altogether.

In September 2015, Ariel called upon Jews to march on the rest of the Middle East and to exterminate all men who refuse to [abandon Christianity and Islam](#). To this day, Ariel draws a salary from the Israeli government, with Bennett's Education Ministry paying his organization, the Temple Institute, to lecture [Israeli high school students](#), religious and secular.

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The original source of this article is [Alternet](#)

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