

Britain's Chief Rabbi Gives His Blessing to War Crimes in Gaza

In referring to Israeli soldiers as 'our heroes', Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis not only has Palestinian blood on his hands but potentially Jewish blood too

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*Britain's chief rabbi, **Ephraim Mirvis**, spoke at a public event at a synagogue last Sunday to extol the "outstanding" performance of the Israeli military in Gaza. He did so days before South Africa argues its case before the International Court of Justice in The Hague - starting today - that Israel is [committing genocide](#) in the enclave.*

Whether Israel is eventually found to be perpetrating genocide may prove more a political decision than a legal verdict, given the pressures on the 15 judges from their respective national leaderships.

But it is indisputable that Israel has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. It is known to have killed more than 23,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, and seriously wounded tens of thousands more. It has driven from their homes the overwhelming majority of the enclave's population of 2.3 million - that is, Israel has ethnically cleansed them.

Israel has repeatedly bombed the "safe zones" to which it has ordered civilians to flee, as well as critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, mosques, churches and bakeries. It has imposed a "complete siege" that is denying food, aid and medicine, leading to mass starvation and the spread of lethal disease.

Video footage has shown Israeli soldiers in Gaza [gleefully smashing up shops](#); [stripping](#) Palestinian men and boys [to their underwear](#); and [shooting civilians](#), including women, in the street as they carrying white flags. Soldiers even [executed](#) three of Israel's hostages trying to escape captivity and surrender with an SOS sign.

Yet Britain's chief rabbi, the face of Judaism in the UK, has raised his voice to call all of this "the most outstanding possible thing". He has gone further: he has described the troops committing these crimes "our heroic soldiers" and revealed that his own son, Danny, is assisting with the attack on Gaza in the Israeli military. He has said he is "immensely proud" of him.



[Click here to watch the video](#)

Mirvis could have chosen a form of weaselly words of the kind Israel's apologists more typically deploy. He could have argued that the Israeli military was carrying out its task in Gaza as best as it could in near-impossible circumstances. That the Palestinians killed in Gaza were unfortunate collateral damage as the Israeli military sought to eradicate Hamas.

But he didn't. He called the undoubted war crimes being carried out over the past three months "the most outstanding thing".

There are several points to note about his remarks:

1. For any public figure, Jewish or otherwise, to call atrocities committed by the foreign power of Israel "outstanding" reflects a worldview that utterly dehumanises Palestinians and is ready to incite war crimes against them. Even were the Hague court not to rule that genocide is taking place, Mirvis has clearly incited to crimes against humanity.
2. As the effective head of British Judaism, Mirvis is giving religious sanction to the carrying out of war crimes. Many of the soldiers in Gaza - a significant proportion of them religious - will now have reason to believe that the crimes they and their army have been committing over the past three months are blessed, that their mission is divinely ordained. In short, Mirvis has implied that killing Palestinians is God's work.
3. In referring to "our heroic soldiers", Mirvis has conflated the Jewish people with Israel. Those soldiers are not British soldiers. They are not Jewish soldiers. They are *Israeli* soldiers.

Were you or I to do this – to suggest Jews are behind the atrocities being committed in Gaza, not a foreign national army – we would rightly be called antisemites. And for good reason. Because when you confuse the identifiers “Jewish” and “Israeli”, you tar all Jews everywhere, including in the UK, with the crimes being committed by Israel against Palestinians. You make all Jews responsible for atrocities. And you thereby make them the target of antisemitic hate crimes by those who fall for this malicious conflation. So in other words, Mirvis now has not only Palestinian blood on his hands but potentially Jewish blood too. His words may inspire attacks on Jews.

4. There is something deeply ugly – maybe sinister would be a better word – that Mirvis’ religious incitement to crimes against humanity (and very likely genocide) is viewed as entirely unremarkable by our establishment media and politicians. And yet a slogan calling for equality between Palestinians and Israelis is systematically misrepresented by these same actors to suggest it is somehow genocidal. “From the river to the sea, Palestinians will be free” is a [demand to end Israel’s unified system of apartheid](#) across both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, a system that assigns Israeli Jews and Palestinians entirely different rights. Reversing that can be viewed as genocidal only if you imagine that Israelis will fight to the death to stop Palestinians gaining equal rights. It reveals far more about the mindset of those who believe the slogan is genocidal than any evil intent of those chanting what is a call for liberation. That mindset is on full display in the atrocities Israel is committing in Gaza, cheered on by Jewish leaders like Mirvis.

5. Britain has a Prevent strategy whose official aim is “to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism”. In practice, the strategy is the British state’s attempt to stigmatise the Muslim community as a pool of potential terrorism recruits, surveill their community organisations, and weaken legal protections against arrest and conviction. The stated concern is that Muslims are being “radicalised” by extremist imams in their mosques – rather than by the extreme events they see, such as genocide unfolding in Gaza.

Mirvis has shown beyond doubt that extremist preachers are to be found not just in mosques but in synagogues too. If the government is really using Prevent to end support for terrorism, it needs to apply the strategy even-handedly. Killing and seriously wounding some 100,000 Palestinians – roughly one in every 20th person in Gaza – and making almost of all the population homeless, destitute and starving surely ranks as state-organised terrorism, whether or not the court eventually rules it amounts to genocide.

The context is that for many years Mirvis chose to study and live in Israel’s illegal West Bank settlements, where Jewish extremists regularly terrorise Palestinian communities to drive them off their land. He raised at least one of his children to choose to serve in an army terrorising and ethnically cleansing Palestinians in Gaza. Mirvis considers the soldiers committing war crimes to be “our heroes”.

In 2017 Mirvis [endorsed](#) the fanatical Jewish settlers – Israel’s equivalent of white supremacists – on their annual march through the occupied Old City of Jerusalem. Every year on that march, most of the participants are recorded waving masses of Israeli flags at Palestinians who live there and chanting “Death to the Arabs”. One Israeli newspaper columnist [describes](#) the Jerusalem Day march as a “religious carnival of hatred”. But Mirvis celebrates it.

A further point. Despite the fact that, judged by any reasonable standard, Mirvis is an

extremist and holds views that should be repellent to any decent person, he is held in high esteem by the British establishment, including its media.

One can understand why. In late 2019, days before the UK general election, Mirvis publicly [accused](#) the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, of being unfit for high office because he supposedly indulged and promoted antisemitism in the Labour party. The British establishment had spent years [cultivating this evidence-free smear](#).

Mirvis argued that “the very soul of our nation is at stake” in Britain’s election. He thereby effectively called on British Jews and the British public to vote for the government.

It was an unprecedented act of electoral interference that was reported reverentially by the British media. Both the fact that Mirvis sought to influence the vote with a deception and that the establishment media colluded with him in doing so should have been shocking, even at the time. But Mirvis’ latest remarks provide additional context. Because it is Rabbi Mirvis – not the antisemites – who is quite happy to flaunt his dual loyalty. Those soldiers are apparently “ours”.

So the question is this: which nation was Mirvis actually referring to when he warned shortly before the 2019 election that “the very soul of our nation is at stake”? The British nation whose religious Jews he supposedly represents, or the Israeli nation that is currently ethnically cleansing and murdering Palestinian men, women and children?

Mirvis, it seems, just gave us his answer.

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