

For a consistently democratic and internationalist left

A contribution to left renewal and transformation

Thursday 14 December 2023, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#), [GIDLEY Ben](#), [Left Renewal](#), [MANG Daniel](#), [RANDALL Daniel](#) (Date first published: 10 December 2023).

Contents

- [Where has the left gone wrong?](#)
- [How can we transform and \(...\)](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

We have been watching the civilian death toll in Gaza mount, in horror, day by day, for weeks on end now. We are appalled and outraged at the collective punishment meted out to Gazans by the IDF, increasing settler violence in the West Bank, and repression by the state and right wing mobs against Palestinian citizens of Israel. In the US, in Europe, in India and elsewhere, Palestine activism as a whole is demonised by many mainstream politicians and much of the media, and in some cases criminalised by the state. Much Western reporting on Israel/Palestine is soaked through with civilisational racism, often framing Israelis as modern, Western, civilised people whose suffering is somehow more real and important than that of Palestinians. Racist dehumanisation of Muslims and Arabs contributes to the suffering that is being experienced by Palestinians.

In this context, there is an understandable impulse to focus only on the immediate. It can feel like this is not the right time to talk about what's wrong with left Israel/Palestine activism, and the left more generally.

But we believe that in the face of crisis, self-reflection is more, not less, important. It is now, not later, that we need to critically reflect on whether the dominant perspectives in our movements, broadly defined, are the right ones for actually winning change.

Much that is said and believed on the left about imperialism and anti-imperialism, nationalism and internationalism, racism, Islamism, and many other topics, is, in our eyes, deeply flawed, and sometimes reactionary.

Too many [leftists](#) have [defended](#) or even [celebrated](#) the 7 October massacre by Hamas and Islamic Jihad in southern Israel. This, in our view, is an expression of these flawed analyses and reactionary trends.

We are longtime left activists and organisers. In this text, we want to engage with the prevailing moods on the left, and through it let others who feel as we do know that they are not alone. It is also an invitation to other leftists to join us in taking a stand against antisemitism, truncated antiracism, campism, nationalism, accommodation with Islamism and other left-right alliances. We write in the hope that a better internationalist left is possible.

The purpose of our critique is not to temper leftist support for Palestinian rights and freedom, but to

re-anchor that support in a consistently democratic, grassroots-internationalist, and thus truly universalist, project. We want a left that fights more effectively not only for Palestinian rights, but for democracy, equality, and freedom for all.

While many of the images that initially emerged from Gaza's borders on 7 October were of civilians breaking through fences, by mid-morning it was clear that Hamas and its allies had brutally murdered large numbers of unarmed civilians, kidnapping others. The victims were old and young, and included Holocaust survivors, migrant agricultural labourers and Bedouin Arabs. There is clear [evidence](#) of torture and extreme sexual violence. The scale and brutality of the attacks sent waves of fear and trauma not just through Israeli society but across the global Jewish diaspora, in a time when most Jews – Zionist and non-Zionist – have multiple connections with Israel. The 7 October massacre, and rocket attacks on Israeli civilians, are acts of callous cruelty that cause deep pain to Jews in Israel and the diaspora.

But apologism across much of the far left for Hamas violence against civilians reveals not only a lack of basic human compassion, but a mistaken assessment of Hamas as a political force. Hamas is not merely an abstract expression of “resistance” to Israel. It carries out its actions in pursuit of its own political aims — aims which are fundamentally reactionary. To elide these on the basis of an unqualified support for (any) “resistance” is to deny Palestinian agency, to reduce Palestinians to a merely reactive force, incapable of making political choices. To oppose Hamas is not a matter of “telling Palestinians how to resist”, but of siding with those Palestinians who also oppose Hamas and advocate actual resistance, on a different political basis.

Hamas' actions were followed by a massive Israeli state response – as Hamas knew would be the case, and indeed counted on. To reiterate: we are appalled by, and oppose, the Israeli state's attacks on civilian life and infrastructure in Gaza, the displacement of Palestinian populations, the dehumanising language and proposals for ethnic cleansing by Israeli politicians, settler plans for the colonisation of Gaza, and the violence of settlers and Israeli security forces against Palestinians in the West Bank. We support the struggle for Palestinian rights, and oppose Israeli state violence and occupation.

But if our movements are to be effective in pursuing their emancipatory and democratic aims, there must be space for reflection on, and critique of, impulses within left politics that run contrary to those aims.

Acknowledging and centering on-going Palestinian suffering does not mean we cannot also seriously think about what might be wrong with many left reactions to 7 October, and with much of the left's perspectives more widely.

In the wake of the attacks, antisemitic incidents – including violent attacks as well as incidents of online and in-person harassment – have multiplied globally. Antisemitic discourse has spread virally on social media and on the streets. Anti-Muslim racism has also risen dramatically. The far right has used the conflict as an opportunity to reach new audiences, among both supporters and opponents of Israel. Growing polarisation and division have contributed to the dehumanisation of not just Israelis and Palestinians but Jews, Muslims and Arabs everywhere, and to the deepening of a culture of zero-sum competitive victimhood instead of solidarity.

We oppose attempts to dismiss, demonise or even criminalise all Palestine solidarity activism because of the presence of antisemitism within the movement, and on the left in general – nevertheless, a confrontation with antisemitism remains necessary.

This is not a matter of PR, or “optics.” The reason for confronting antisemitism when it appears on

the left is not that it makes the cause of Palestine solidarity “look bad”. It is that the presence of reactionary, conspiracy-theorist perspectives in our movements, even in coded forms or in a marginal way, risks toxifying our politics.

Where has the left gone wrong?

Why is it so difficult for so much of the left to take the basic humanity and traumatic suffering of civilians – including Israeli citizens – as a consistent starting point? Why have some been incapable of condemning a massacre without relativising it into meaninglessness or contextualising it into insignificance? Why does leftists’ solidarity with victims of oppression sometimes seem conditional on the geopolitical alignment of the state oppressing them? Why does much of the left struggle to identify and resist antisemitism within its ranks?

There is no single, simple answer to these questions, but we believe that starting to answer them is an essential step in the renewal of the left. We offer our analysis of what we see as some of the most important problems here.

Fetishisation of Israel/Palestine

Israel/Palestine has become the central morality drama for much of the contemporary left, in a way that South Africa was for many in a previous generation.

Some mainstream reportage and commentary uses an orientalist frame to narrate the whole region, portraying Arabs as barbaric and pre-modern, in contrast to Israel, which is usually portrayed as a modern liberal democracy.

At the same time, both mainstream and leftist media outlets pay vastly more attention to Palestine/Israel than to Syria, Kurdistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, the DRC, Sri Lanka, Myanmar or any number of other global flashpoints in which militarist states (or non-state actors) oppress national and ethnic minorities, or carry out massacres.

The point is not to establish a political or moral hierarchy of global oppressions, or to apportion attention and activity on the basis of which involves the most suffering. Rather, solidarity with the Palestinians should flow from a commitment to universal rights, which should also impel solidarity with all other struggles against oppression.

In fetishising Israel/Palestine, and romanticising and idealising Palestinian struggle, leftists mirror the mainstream’s dehumanisation of Palestinians. The effect of this leftist fetishisation of Israel/Palestine is to render both Palestinians and Israeli Jews transcendent avatars for political narratives, rather than flesh-and-blood humans, capable of a range of responses to their conditions and experiences.

Historical illiteracy

Despite the centrality of the Palestinian cause to the contemporary left, there is often a low level of understanding of the history of the region and of the conflict.

Much of the left has turned potentially useful concepts like “[settler-colonialism](#)” from tools of analysis into [substitutes for analysis](#). Applying these labels in a simplistic way allows activists to avoid a confrontation with complexity. The [historical internal diversity](#) of [Zionism](#), its [ambivalent](#) relationship with various imperialisms, and the different [stories](#) of [displacements](#) that drove Jewish

migration to Israel from various countries are often little understood.

The process of Israeli Jewish national formation included settler colonisation that saw large numbers of existing inhabitants displaced, including via war crimes and expulsions. It was also a process of a desperate flight by people who had themselves been victims of racist violence and attempted extermination. The Palestinians are, in Edward Said's phrase, "the victims of the victims and the refugees of the refugees." Israeli Jews are far from unique in having consolidated themselves as a nation, and founded a state, on a basis that included violent dispossession of a territory's existing inhabitants.

The point of confronting this history in full, with all its complexity and tension, is not to minimise the injustices suffered by Palestinians in the process of Israel's foundation, or since. But failing to confront history in full serves neither understanding nor efforts to develop and support struggles for equality.

Greater historical literacy, as well as a more engaged reckoning with practicalities of the one-state, two-state and other possible "solutions" to the conflict, would enable a renewed solidarity movement.

Syncretic politics

One of the key trends in contemporary politics, in the wake of the breakdown of mass labour movements, is the rise of syncretic forms of politics, drawing on disparate political traditions – what is sometimes called red/brown politics, diagonalism or confusionism. Parts of the left have entered dangerous alliances with forces from the far right. From [far-right speakers at anti-war rallies](#) and [former leftists joining Covid lockdown protests](#), from [anti-imperialist vloggers hosting paleoconservative guests](#) to [anarchist folk singers promoting Holocaust deniers](#), the recent period has seen some alarming political collaborations. These movements sometimes arise or grow from the far right attempting to market itself to the left. Because antisemitism often binds disparate elements within syncretic formations, these trends can be politically toxic when they manifest in Palestine solidarity activism .

Campism

Across the world, we see struggles for democratic change and to win greater rights and equality. But these are increasingly met by claims that those principles represent the hegemony of a "western liberal elite" and its "unipolar world order", rather than universal human aspirations and entitlements.

Authoritarian and oppressive regimes claim that efforts to hold them accountable to these principles are just attempts to protect the West's unipolar hegemony. These regimes present themselves as leaders of an emerging "multipolar" world where multiple authoritarian regimes will each be free to define "democracy" in their own antidemocratic image.

Likewise, just as racist, patriarchal and authoritarian movements in the West present themselves as voices of the authentic, rooted people against ["globalist" elites](#), in former Western colonies they present themselves as the ["decolonial" majority](#) against the hegemony of the "westernised elites".

The left often fails to even acknowledge this dynamic. Worse, sections of it amplify its (false) premise: that tyrannical, authoritarian, and reactionary forces and regimes represent a progressive resistance to "Western imperialism". Their concern for the survival and strength of such "multipolar" regimes comes at the cost of uninhibited, meaningful, and consistent solidarity for resistance to these regimes.

Western imperialism faces challenges from [reactionary alternatives](#): Russian imperialism, Chinese imperialism, and Iranian regional-imperialism, often deploying proxy paramilitary forces such as Hezbollah and, to some extent, Hamas, and playing a counter-revolutionary role in the context of the wave of liberation struggles that rose in 2011. The petro-monarchies of the Arabian peninsula are increasingly global powers; other regional imperial or sub-imperial powers, such as an expansionist and interventionist Turkey, are also increasingly vigorous, and certainly no mere client states of the US.

Faced with this moment, a radical left that has, for years, preached the view that anything that harms the hegemonic imperialism (that of the US) and its allies must necessarily be progressive (a perspective known as “campism” – siding with a geopolitical “camp” rather than pursuing a genuinely internationalist project) is highly likely to collapse into apologism for those reactionary alternatives. This [campist “anti-imperialism”](#) is blind to the fact that in supporting the “axis of resistance” it is not opposing imperialism but siding with a rival imperial pole in a “[multipolar](#)” world.

In a previous historical period (reaching its peak in the Cold War), the oppositional pole to the US in the campist left’s imagination was the USSR (often serving not as a guiding light, but merely as a placeholder for the possibility of any kind of alternative). But after the 1973 OPEC oil embargo and 1979 Iranian revolution, and especially after the fall of the Soviet bloc, this role was increasingly taken up by various configurations of the “axis of resistance” including the Islamic Republic of Iran and before long Hamas.

Conspiracy theory

Our complex and “multipolar” world, the seemingly opaque nature of mechanisms of power and oppression, as well as processes of social fragmentation, lead people to look for answers and explanations beyond “the mainstream”. The platform economies which monetise mis- and dis-information and ease the sharing of myths and lies provide easy access to conspiracy theories that appear to offer such answers and explanations.

Today’s fragmented, rapid, digital forms of knowledge sharing and acquisition encourage a simultaneous cynicism in the face of “mainstream” authorities and credulity towards “alternative” sources, a simultaneous joy at “unmasking” hidden truths and despair at the omnipotent reach of the hegemon, and a search for [connections between disparate phenomena](#) that lacks the analytical tools to understand their significance. And conspiracy theories almost always lead to antisemitism, which typically functions as a kind of meta conspiracy theory.

Antisemitism is also often fused with anti-Muslim bigotry in the contemporary far-right conspiracist imaginary, via “Great Replacement” theories which allege a plot engineered by “globalist financiers”, most prominently George Soros, to sponsor mainly-Muslim immigration to “white” majority countries, in order to “replace” “white” populations.

Antisemitism as pseudo-emancipation

Like other conspiracy theories, antisemitism offers false and facile answers and explanations in a confusing world. Unlike many other racisms, antisemitism has often appeared to “punch up”: it can ascribe to its object almost infinite power, wealth and cunning. Because of its pseudo-emancipatory character, antisemitism has often appeared radical. But it is a pseudo-radicalism: by identifying Jews as the hidden elite force controlling our societies, it [serves to make the real ruling classes invisible](#), protecting ruling class power structures, diverting anger at injustice toward Jews instead.

As Moishe Postone [argued](#), it often acts as a “fetishised form of anti-capitalism”: “The mysterious power of capital, which is intangible, global, and which churns up nations and areas and people’s lives, is attributed to the Jews. The abstract domination of capitalism is personified as the Jews.” This pseudo-emancipatory antisemitism has a [long history](#), from some of the founding texts of key strains of modern socialism, [to the congresses of the Second International](#), to [trade unions and labour parties at the time of mass Eastern European migration](#), to [New Age forms of fascism in the green movement](#). It was present, and contested, [within the parties of the Russian Revolution](#), and was expressed in both [Nazi](#) and [post-war Stalinist ideology](#), and by their heirs today, with “[cosmopolitan](#)”, “globalist” financiers seen as a vampire squid exploiting the productive, rooted, native workers. But it is also increasingly often yoked to an “anti-imperialist” vision, in which it is seen as sucking the life-blood from the wretched of the earth in the Global South.

Accommodation with Islamism

While parts of the left (especially in Europe and the Americas, but also in other regions of the world) have a long history of anti-Muslim racism (which returned to the forefront during the Syrian war, as sections of the left used the language of the war on terror to demonise the revolution), in the period after the Second Intifada and 9/11, the campist worldview described above has led many on the left to see Islamism as a progressive, even revolutionary, force relative to hegemonic western imperialism.

This is, unfortunately, a global phenomenon. Most leftists in South West Asia and North Africa (SWANA), though, confronted more directly with Islamism’s reactionary politics than leftists in other parts of the world, have no such illusions; quite the contrary. Leftists from outside SWANA should listen to them.

Islamism encompasses a number of different strands. Hamas is not ISIS, ISIS is not the Taliban, the Taliban is not Erdoğan’s regime in Turkey. Hamas itself also encompasses different currents. Understanding these distinctions is important. But it should not blind the left to the material reality that, at the level of social power, Islamist movements and regimes have, in common with other forms of politicised fundamentalist religion, brutalised religious, ethnic and sexual minorities, women, political dissidents and progressive movements.

Anti-Jewish racism is a persistent element of Islamist ideology, clearly on display in Sayyid Qutb’s foundational work “Our Struggle Against the Jews” (1950), and in Hamas’ 1988 Covenant (which quotes the notorious anti-Jewish forgery, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion). Islamism’s stances on Israel, Zionism, and Jews are not purely “political”, explicable solely in terms of the confrontation between Palestinians and Zionism/Israel, but form part of a wider antisemitic worldview.

Whilst they have their own perspectives and agendas, Islamist movements should also be understood in the context of competition among regional powers in a world of competing imperialisms: Islamists often resist hegemonic imperialism in the name of, or in alliance with, rival regional imperialisms – such as that of Iran. At the same time, US imperialism, and regional powers allied to it, such as Israel, have also sometimes tolerated or boosted Islamist movements as a way of undermining other forces.

A view of liberation struggles over gender and sexuality as of secondary political importance to other issues, for example the struggle [against “the main enemy”](#) of “US imperialism”, also goes some way towards explaining the willingness of many leftists to whitewash, mute their criticism of, or even propose alliances with movements that, like all religious [fundamentalist](#) movements, are obsessed with patriarchal, homophobic and transphobic regulation of gender and sexuality.

The abandonment of class analysis

The only possible agency for an authentically democratic, anti-capitalist politics is conscious struggle by the exploited and oppressed for self-emancipation. Class politics have been set back by decades of neoliberal victories and labour movement defeats. But the abandonment of a focus on the agency of working-class and other democratic struggles from below has a longer history. The last century is tragically full of instances of leftists substituting the agency of the exploited and oppressed for that of Stalinist states and various other authoritarian forces.

Many self-defined leftists have gone so far as to support, sometimes more “critically”, sometimes less, state and non-state forces that do not even claim the rhetoric and symbolism of socialism: Putin’s Russia, Assad’s Syria, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Islamist paramilitary forces such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

We believe that the rise of syncretic politics, campism and conspiracy theory, as well as the deepening purchase of pseudo-emancipatory antisemitism, can partly be explained as symptoms of this left abandonment of class, and of an analysis of the dynamics of global capitalism.

Much left politics of recent decades has been predicated not so much on a struggle against capitalism-as-social-relation, but on a rejection of “American hegemony”, “globalisation”, “finance” — or sometimes, “Zionism”, seen as the vanguard of all these forces. This has led many people who think of themselves as leftists to sympathise with reactionary alternatives to current political and economic arrangements.

At the same time, truncated forms of anti-capitalism, that focus on the supposed moral evils of “financial” or “unproductive” capital – rather than on the objective antagonism between capital and labour – encourage personalised critiques of “globalist elites” and “Rothschild bankers”, rather than a movement towards the abolition of capitalism itself, through collective organisation and struggle from below.

Truncated anti-racism

Contemporary global anti-racism has been shaped by a twentieth century context dominated by struggles against anti-Black racism, in the US and elsewhere, and against Western imperialism and colonialism. Its understanding of race is often a simplistic and binary one, ill suited to understanding the complex intersecting lines of racialisation of the 21st century.

The dominant perspectives of much “decolonial” thinking offer a Manichean vision that divides the world into categories of “oppressors” and “oppressed”, into which entire nations and ethnicities are fitted.

This vision leaves the left ill-equipped to understand how different racisms map on to each other – why Hindu supremacists in India enthusiastically back Israeli nationalism, for example, or why the Han-supremacist Chinese state presents itself as an advocate of Palestinian rights while perpetrating a colonial occupation and mass repression in the name of a “People’s War on Terror” against Muslims in Xinjiang/East Turkestan.

And it leaves the left ill-equipped to understand racism when it does not come colour-coded, as with the racism of Western Europeans against “[white but not quite](#)” Eastern Europeans, or Russian racism against Ukrainians, or anti-Armenian racism.

Antisemitism in particular does not fit neatly into the worldview of this truncated anti-racism, which sees Jews as “white” and therefore cannot understand them as targets of racism. This perspective

erases Jews who do not present as “white”, and misses the contingency and social construction of whiteness itself. The integration of some Jews into whiteness is real, but it is also uneven, and in many cases quite recent.

This truncated anti-racism mirrors the truncated anti-capitalism that has scarred the left.

In short, the renewal of the left as a movement for international solidarity requires consistent anti-racism, consistent feminism, a renewal of class politics, a renewal of an analysis of global capitalism, and the rejection of the campist vision that divides the world into neat binaries of good and evil.

-

How can we transform and renew the left?

We offer this analysis as a step towards left renewal on the basis of genuinely internationalist and consistently democratic politics. It's not always easy to tackle reactionary ideas within our own ranks. But when we do, our movements gain, every time, from the deeper understandings that emerge. What might it look like for the left to start doing this?

Consistent solidarity

Our starting point as internationalists should be advocacy of universal entitlement to democratic rights. Insisting on solidarity with civilians under attack on both sides is not a glib form of moral equivalence or whataboutery, but an ethical first principle. Real consistent solidarity does not mean seeing everyone as the same and ignoring structural differences between victims, but recognises and respects differentiation.

The left should care about all civilian deaths, whether caused by the Jewish state or by Arab states, by states in the Western camp or states that oppose that camp, or by non-state actors.

Ends are substantially conditioned and prefigured by means; a politics pursued by means of indiscriminate slaughter of civilians cannot serve emancipatory ends.

Particularly problematic are political currents which centre Palestinian suffering in Gaza but have been silent – or even enthusiastic – as Syrians (including Syrian Palestinians) have been slaughtered by the Assad government and its allies (often justified by exactly the same war-on-terror rhetoric that Israel sometimes uses to excuse targeting civilians) or while Uyghurs and other mainly-Muslim ethnic minorities face mass incarceration, total surveillance and cultural erasure in China.

Centering the voices and experiences of working-class, progressive, peace-building forces on both sides.

Radical democratic change is impossible without an agency which consciously and actively fights for it. An international left that focuses its energies on cheerleading reactionary forces does nothing to help the development of that agency; in fact, it inhibits it.

In Israel/Palestine, as in any international struggle, a genuinely internationalist, consistently democratic left should focus its activity around listening to, engaging with, and building practical support for forces on the ground organising to advance democratic politics. This means amplifying the voices of grassroots actors – feminists, queer activists, trade unionists, environmental activists –

in both Israeli and Palestinian society who oppose perpetual state violence and racist division.

Criticising states does not mean opposing their people's entitlement to basic rights

National groups as a whole often benefit from their states' policies of colonialism and oppression of other peoples. But those benefits are not uniform, nor do they mean all members of a given people are equally complicit in, or have equal power over, the policies of their state.

Solidarity with the Palestinians should not mean root-and-branch hostility to the Israeli Jews as a people, or opposing their entitlement to rights. Leftist politics should aim to level up and equalise democratic rights, not to strip them from some in order to "redistribute" them to others.

Jews everywhere – who are often tied in multiple ways to people and places in Israel – feel under attack when Israelis in general are targeted. Supporting Palestinian rights requires careful identification of the Israeli state – and its ideological apparatuses – as the perpetrators of injustice, and not the Israeli people as a whole, seen as a homogeneous, politically-undifferentiated bloc.

Understanding Israel in the world

Antisemitism traditionally attributes absolute power to Jews. When this attribution is applied to Israel, it remains antisemitic. Israel exists in a complex, liquid, "multipolar" world; it is a powerful state, but its power is limited within the global system. It is certainly not the driver of world imperialism it is sometimes portrayed as in leftist narratives.

Many of the things for which it is just and necessary to criticise Israel are things it has in common with many other states around the world, including some of the countries where we ourselves live. Refusing to demonise Israel or see it as entirely exceptional does not mean reconciling with its policies, but rather situating those policies within trends of which they are one expression, rather than the quintessence. Even brutality of the scale Israel is now inflicting on the people of Gaza has a recent direct precedent, in the Assad regime's war on the Syrian people.

Currents on the left which criticise Israeli settler-colonialism whilst acting as apologists for [Russian colonialism in Ukraine](#) are applying double standards. We also urge comrades to reflect on whether they and their organisations use the same types of language and emotional registers about, for example, Turkey's oppression of the Kurds, or Sri Lanka's oppression of the Tamils, as they do about Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. If the answer is no, consider the political impact and implications of this exceptionalisation.

A critical approach to nationalism

Nations are social constructs, which function in part to mask exploitations and oppressions *within* the nation, such as class, gender, race, and others, in the name of a unitary "national interest." Our long term goal is a free association of all human beings, that is, a world without nations, in which ethnic identifications have become secondary. However, transcending nationhood is hard to conceive of in a world in which people are oppressed, occupied, and sometimes massacred on the basis of their national background.

Leftists should take a stand against people being oppressed because of their nationality. But we must also acknowledge that all nationalisms — including those of currently-oppressed groups — are at least potentially exclusionary and oppressive. Supporting a given people's right to defend or win self-determination does not mean vicariously adopting their nationalism. An internationalist left should not uncritically wave any national flag, or uncritically support any national state or movement.

The left should support the right to self-determination as part of a programme for democratic equality. This means supporting the right of all peoples to self-determination on an equal basis, and opposing any programme that aims for the domination of one people over another.

Hamas's aim of replacing Jewish-nationalist domination with Islamic-nationalist domination — a theocratic state in which the Jewish "usurpers" are driven out — is reactionary. The fact they are highly unlikely to achieve this aim does not make it any more supportable from the point of view of democratic, internationalist politics.

Unconditional anti-racism

The reason to support victims of racism is not merely compassionate concern for people's wounded feelings – although concern is preferable to the callous unconcern sometimes on display on the left. It is also because the ideas that impel bigotry poison efforts to advance democratic struggles.

This means refusing to make our solidarity against racism politically conditional.

Just as it is wrong to demand that Palestinians (or other Arabs or Muslims) condemn Hamas before they have the right to support against racism, so too is demanding that Israelis or diaspora Jews demonstrate their ideological purity – are "good" Jews – before bigotry against them will be taken seriously.

Solidarity against racism does not require endorsement of the dominant politics of the victimised person or group. But it does require that opposition to racism and other bigotries be unconditional, even when members of the targeted group may have reactionary views.

The left can and must unconditionally oppose anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim bigotry without endorsing Hamas; it can and must unconditionally oppose antisemitism without endorsing Israeli chauvinism.

Not platforming false friends.

A particular feature of the current crisis and its global aftershocks is far right activists (including hardcore fascists and literal Nazis) cynically using Palestine solidarity to push antisemitism. Small numbers of far-right activists are [joining](#) anti-Israel marches. Huge numbers of pro-Palestinian social media users are amplifying [far-right dis-influencers](#) who have inserted themselves into the discourse, often backed by Russian and Iranian state influence networks. In the weeks after 7 October, accounts such as Jackson Hinkle (an advocate of "MAGA Communism") and Anastasia Loupis (a right-wing anti-vaccination activist) accumulated millions of followers among users hostile to Israel with their viral posts (many containing fake stories) about the conflict.

On the other hand, the far right is not homogenous, and far-right Islamophobic activists, many of whom are themselves revealed as antisemitic with just a little scratching, are cynically using Jewish fear and wider public outrage at Hamas terrorism to promote anti-Muslim hostility and to launder their racist reputations. We need to expose and marginalise these bad actors. [We need to draw clear lines.](#) We should not allow Jewish and Palestinian suffering to be instrumentalised by political entrepreneurs. Any groups that provide an active platform for Nazi, fascist, and related speakers should be treated in a similar fashion to those sympathetic to White separatism.

Conclusion

We have written this text as a critique of a common sense that has come to predominate across much of the left. It is a critique *from* the left, and *for* the left.

As left activists and organisers, we do not see the trends we describe as inevitable outgrowths of foundational left-wing principles. We see them as resulting from the distortion and abandonment of foundational left-wing principles.

We welcome additional co-signatories, including from those who wish to endorse some parts of the text but not others, and critical responses. Given the context, we especially welcome responses, including critical ones, from Palestinian and Israeli leftists. We hope the text can contribute to a wider debate about how to transform and renew the left.

We see that effort of renewal and transformation as a necessary task for anyone who does not wish to foreclose the possibility for systemic change. We welcome engagement from anyone committed to such change, and who understands that, to be an effective instrument for achieving it, the left must change itself.

10 December 2023

Ben Gidley, Daniel Mang, Daniel Randall

[Signatories](#)

[Contact](#)

P.S.

- Left Renewal:
<https://leftrenewal.net>