

Report on the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna

👤 Israel Academia Monitor 📅 ב 26 🕒 כללי June 2025
26.06.25

Editorial Note

In late May, IAM reported (<https://israel-academia-monitor.com/2025/05/21/israeli-academics-to-participate-in-the-first-jewish-anti-zionist-congress-in-vienna/>) on the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in which Israeli academics were participating. Among them is Prof. Haim Bresheeth-Zabner, a film studies scholar formerly of Sapir College, who retired from the University of East London and now teaches at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Bresheeth was an activist (<https://icahd.org/2022/01/28/icahd-uk-interview-with-haim-bresheeth-founder-of-the-jewish-network-for-palestine/>) with Matzpen, an Israeli socialist revolutionary group opposing Zionism.

A day before the Congress, Bresheeth and his comrade Ronnie Barkan co-authored an article, "Joining forces: Time for Jews to unite in the struggle against Zionism, apartheid and genocide." They wrote that the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress was going to take place from June 13 to 15, with the "aim of amplifying Jewish voices against Zionism and assisting the global movement for justice and liberation in Palestine."

In a symbolic act, the meeting took place in Vienna, the hometown of Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism. According to Bresheeth et al., the Congress intended to "use the voice of anti-Zionist Jews, whose numbers have swelled worldwide in the last decade, especially since October 7, 2023, to assist a necessary and urgent change in Western attitudes towards the crimes of Zionism." They wrote, "We believe it is crucial to create an international political movement for ending Zionism and decolonizing Palestine. The genuine organization representing Palestinian civil society is the BDS/BNC movement, with which we are aligned, which we fully support, and which will be led by. The various progressive forces in Europe and elsewhere must unite behind it, and we hope the Congress will assist this process. We intend to enable opposition to Zionism, helping Palestine gain support across the globe; we see ourselves as an integral part of such a movement... this struggle is not just against Zionism in Palestine but against our own Western governments, elites, and deep states who aid and abet in Israeli crimes."

Bresheeth and Barkan postulate that "Palestine should become the litmus test of every 'democracy' in the West."

Bresheeth and Barkan even claimed that "The six million Jews who died in the Holocaust were not Zionists – most were anti-Zionist, either as Bundist Socialists, or Ultra-Orthodox religious Jews, who saw Zionism as anti-Jewish in the extreme. By exterminating the great Jewish communities of Europe, the Nazis killed off Anti-Zionism, leaving behind some 250,000 survivors, mostly incarcerated in European DP camps after WW2. Europe, the U.S., UK, Canada, and the rest of the

West were loath to take in any survivors, if they could help it. So instead of offering the broken people who survived the Nazis a home in their own lands, they just sent them to Palestine – out of sight, out of mind.”

Bresheeth and Barkan argued that “The Nakba in 1948 compounded the severe injustice of the UN depriving Palestinians of 55% of their land, in order to find a place for the victims of European fascism and Nazism – a conflict the Palestinians or other Arabs had no part in. This injustice, which the UN decided not to address apart from passing resolutions defied by Israel, had only deepened in 1967, with Israel taking control of the whole of Palestine, and starting to settle it illegally. Today, Palestinians do not control even 5% of their own country. Despite this, the UN has avoided any sanctions against Israel. All efforts to start sanctions were all vetoed by the West. This has been the situation since 1948, but it does not have to be that way.”

Bresheeth and Barkan asked, “how much more justified is it against Israeli crimes, including genocide, mass starvation, denial of medication, the mass destruction of housing, universities, schools, mosques, and basic services including water purification, sewage disposal, electricity production, roads and agricultural land – all bombed out of existence. There seems to be no war crime that Israel has not enacted in Gaza, with the full support, funding, and armament supplied by the West.”

Bresheeth and Barkan stated, “We need to build the struggle together with all progressive and socialist groups everywhere, bearing in mind that some are silent or reluctant to act openly due to political suppression in their society.” They regretted that “Some ‘left’ organizations in Europe even support Israel, like in Germany and Austria. But this is changing. The wide opposition to Zionism is emerging from across society, sometimes unexpectedly, as people realize that the state is using support for Palestine as the stick against freedom of speech and action. And this is where we come in.”

For Bresheeth et al., the purpose of the Congress is to bring “together global voices against the crimes of Zionist settler-colonialism, practiced and supported across the West, against the Palestinians and their supporters. The Congress is organized by Jews and Palestinians, but it is for everyone. One does not need to be Jewish to oppose Zionism.”

They expressed their hope for some of the following: “An event uniting Anti-Zionist Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, and all other groups – blacks, Arabs, Muslims, feminists, environmentalists, and more – against the terrifying crimes by Zionism against humanity, international Law, the environment, political justice, religious tenets – and against the Palestinians. This is also a crime against Jews, denying the history of common existence in Palestine for more than a thousand years, until the arrival of the Zionist colonists. A clarion call for all citizens, whatever their politics, religion, history – to unite against toxic Zionism, its lawlessness, brutality, supremacism, racism, and sheer cruelty.”

For Bresheeth and Barkan, “The Jewish Anti-Zionist voice demonstrates moral fibre, progressive history, legal vigor, morality of coexistence.” They ended by stating, “Our Congress aims to focus Jewish voices against Zionism, to connect to the liberation of Palestine, and to assist the global movement for justice and peace, for Palestinians and for those Israeli Jews who wish to be part of a democratic, equal polity, from the river to the sea.”

Some 500 people attended the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress. Israeli Prof. Ilan Pappé, formerly of the University of Haifa and later the University of Exeter, also participated.

Pro-Israel Liam Hoare provided another [report](https://k-larevue.com/en/anti-zionist-congress/) (<https://k-larevue.com/en/anti-zionist-congress/>) from the Congress. His report was published on June 18, 2025. He noticed that the slogan “Neither Herzl nor Hitler” was chanted in unison. Dalia Sarig, [formerly](https://infocenters.co.il/yadyaari/notebook_ext.asp?book=274316&lang=heb&site=yadyaari) (https://infocenters.co.il/yadyaari/notebook_ext.asp?book=274316&lang=heb&site=yadyaari) of

the German desk at the Givat Haviva Institute in Israel, said that the delegates gathered “in the very country where Herzl launched Zionism as a racist colonist ideology.” Austria’s “deliberate alliance with Zionism” is a “racist, nationalist and colonial ideology... brought about a genocide,” placing Austria “on the wrong side of history.” Hoare noted that many people were wearing keffiyeh, watermelon earrings, and hats with “Make Palestine Whole Again” and “Make Palestine Free Again.”

Hoare noted that the Congress “was a clear and deliberate attempt to seize the memory of the Holocaust and the legacy of anti-fascism to grant moral legitimacy to the anti-Zionist cause.”

Hoare noticed that the Congress’s political representation “came exclusively from the far-left. Among the Congress’s supporters were the last remaining Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Communist Party who sold copies of their newspaper, the Funke. Also participating were prominent members of the Gaza List, which ran for parliament in September 2024’s national elections, gaining a meagre 0.4 percent of the vote.” Among its leading candidates were Sarig, who lived in Israel before returning to Austria because of Israel’s “structural racism,” Hoare noted.

A week before the Congress, Sarig and her comrades staged a political action by temporarily renaming Theodor Herzl Square—Gaza Square. Sarig then said: “Theodor Herzl is honored annually in Vienna—and for what? For an ideology of colonialism and racist nationalism? As anti-Zionist Jews, we reject this ideology, which justifies colonial violence and expulsion.”

Hoare cited Bresheeth, who said, “This is the first day of Israel’s fast decline... They have attacked humanity. They have no longer just attacked in Gaza, but everywhere in the Middle East. No one anywhere in the Middle East is safe from Zionism. There is no safety anywhere as long as Zionism is with us... There is no place for Zionism in today’s world—anywhere.” Or that “the UN is a useless body and it was made useless by Zionism and the West.”

Hoare noted that Jewish Prof. Donny Gluckstein, a historian who teaches at Edinburgh College and is a lifelong Marxist (<https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/gluckstein/index.htm>), claimed in the Congress that “Herzl didn’t even mention a Jewish state in Palestine.” Gluckstein should be reminded that Herzl wrote two books, *Der Judenstaat* (*The State of the Jews*), published in 1896, arguing that the Jewish people should leave Europe for Palestine, their historic homeland. His second book, *Altneuland* (*The Old New Land*), published in 1902, is a utopian novel imagining a future Jewish society in Palestine. Gluckstein further erroneously argued that “antisemitism is a product of capitalism and that to erase capitalism would be to erase antisemitism.”

As part of the Congress, the group produced the Viennese Jewish Anti-Zionist Declaration (<https://x.com/JVoiceLabour/status/1901302952117125298>), stating: “We, the undersigned, as individuals from Jewish family backgrounds, descendants of displaced persons and/or Holocaust victims, Holocaust survivors, and resistance fighters against the Nazi regime, all with ties to Austria, oppose Zionism and the actions of the state of Israel in our commitment to universal human rights, equality, and a just peace in the Middle East. We declare that our values are not represented by the Vienna ‘Israelitische Kultusgemeinde’, which claims to speak for Jews in Austria and which unconditionally supports Israel. We oppose the marginalization or suppression of Palestinian and anti-Israel voices within Austrian politics, media, and state institutions and in particular, we call for dissenting Jewish voices to be heard...”

Non-Jewish anti-Zionist stalwarts like the musician Roger Waters and Rima Hassan, a member of the European Parliament, were on hand to offer support.

In choosing Vienna—the birthplace of Theodor Herzl—as their stage, the organizers of this so-called anti-Zionist congress aimed for symbolism but succeeded only in highlighting their profound detachment from geopolitical and moral reality. To denounce Zionism as a colonial project while

Israeli civilians were under fire from Iran and its proxies is not only historically illiterate—it borders on complicity. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whose own country gave rise to Hitler and Nazism, put it plainly: Israel has “done the dirty work for all of us” in confronting Iran’s escalating threats.

The Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress, as the organizers stated clearly, was not Jewish but predominantly Palestinian and pro-Palestinian. The Jewish elements were minimal and were recruited to deflect accusations of antisemitism.

Clearly, rejecting the Jews’ right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland is antisemitic.

REFERENCES:

<https://mondoweiss.net/2025/06/joining-forces-time-for-jews-to-unite-in-the-struggle-against-zionism-apartheid-and-genocide/> (<https://mondoweiss.net/2025/06/joining-forces-time-for-jews-to-unite-in-the-struggle-against-zionism-apartheid-and-genocide/>).

Joining forces: Time for Jews to unite in the struggle against Zionism, apartheid and genocide

The First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress will take place from June 13 to 15 in Vienna, Austria, with the aim of amplifying Jewish voices against Zionism and assisting the global movement for justice and liberation in Palestine.

By Haim Bresheeth-Žabner (<https://mondoweiss.net/author/haim-bresheeth/>) and Ronnie Barkan (<https://mondoweiss.net/author/ronnie-barkan/>). June 12, 2025



Protestors carry a banner reading, “Jewish Bloc for Palestine” at the front of a march. (Photo courtesy of Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress)

Anti-Zionism is as old as political Zionism. Both movements were born in the same year, 1896. One was a small movement, started by a Viennese journalist, Theodor Herzl, while the other was a mass movement of Jewish workers in Eastern Europe and Russia – the Socialist Labour Bund. While the Bund became a large movement in several East European countries – in Poland, for example, it was the second largest party in the Sejm, the Polish Parliament – Zionism represented less than 1% of the Jewish population in Europe. During the great period of Jewish emigration out of Eastern Europe starting in 1881, millions of Jews immigrated to North and South America, Britain, South Africa, and Australia. During the same period, a few thousand Zionist Jews immigrated to Palestine.

If not for Hitler, Zionism would have remained a small and insignificant Jewish colony in Palestine in all probability. The six million Jews who died in the Holocaust were not Zionists – most were anti-Zionist, either as Bundist Socialists, or Ultra-Orthodox religious Jews, who saw Zionism as anti-Jewish in the extreme. By exterminating the great Jewish communities of Europe, the Nazis killed off Anti-Zionism, leaving behind some 250,000 survivors, mostly incarcerated in European DP camps after WW2. Europe, the U.S., UK, Canada, and the rest of the West were loath to take in any survivors, if they could help it. So instead of offering the broken people who survived the Nazis a home in their own lands, they just sent them to Palestine – out of sight, out of mind. This is one of the main reasons that these states voted in 1947 for dividing Palestine – the larger part – 55% – for Zionism, with the rest – 44% – ‘given’ to the indigenous population, the Palestinians, who made up the great majority – more than two thirds – of the population. This kind of justice has been applied to Palestine by the West ever since.

The Nakba in 1948 compounded the severe injustice of the UN depriving Palestinians of 55% of their land, in order to find a place for the victims of European fascism and Nazism – a conflict the Palestinians or other Arabs had no part in. This injustice, which the UN decided not to address apart from passing resolutions defied by Israel, had only deepened in 1967, with Israel taking control of the whole of Palestine, and starting to settle it illegally. Today, Palestinians do not control even 5% of their own country.

Despite this, the UN has avoided any sanctions against Israel. All efforts to start sanctions were all vetoed by the West. This has been the situation since 1948, but it does not have to be that way.

While the West, led by the U.S., automatically vetoes all Security Council Resolutions against Israel, it cannot veto UNGA resolutions, which constitute international law. In 1974, the UNGA voted to suspend South Africa for the crime of Apartheid. It was passed by a large majority—91 for, 22 against. Most of the West, led by the US, UK, and France, voted *against*. South Africa was only readmitted in 1994, under President Mandela.

There is no reason why this cannot happen again. If this is the right action against the crime of apartheid, how much more justified is it against Israeli crimes, including genocide, mass starvation, denial of medication, the mass destruction of housing, universities, schools, mosques, and basic services including water purification, sewage disposal, electricity production, roads and agricultural land – all bombed out of existence. There seems to be no war crime that Israel has not enacted in Gaza, with the full support, funding, and armament supplied by the West.

The First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress (<https://www.juedisch-antizionistisch.at/en>) is to take place from June 13 to 15 in Vienna, the hometown of Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism. It intends to use the voice of anti-Zionist Jews, whose numbers have swelled worldwide in the last decade, especially since October 7, 2023, to assist a necessary and urgent change in Western attitudes towards the crimes of Zionism.

We believe it is crucial to create an international political movement for ending Zionism and decolonising Palestine. The genuine organisation representing Palestinian civil society is the BDS/BNC movement, with which we are aligned, which we fully support, and which will be led by. The various progressive forces in Europe and elsewhere must unite behind it, and we hope the Congress will assist this process. We intend to enable opposition to Zionism, helping Palestine gain support across the globe; we see ourselves as an integral part of such a movement.

With Jews living mainly in the West, making up part of its delinquent elites, this struggle is not just against Zionism in Palestine but against our own Western governments, elites, and deep states who aid and abet in Israeli crimes. Palestine should become the litmus test of every 'democracy' in the West. We need to build the struggle together with all progressive and socialist groups everywhere, bearing in mind that some are silent or reluctant to act openly due to political suppression in their society. Some 'left' organisations in Europe even support Israel, like in Germany and Austria.

But this is changing. The wide opposition to Zionism is emerging from across society, sometimes unexpectedly, as people realise that the state is using support for Palestine as the stick against freedom of speech and action. And this is where we come in.

The Congress brings together global voices against the crimes of Zionist settler-colonialism, practiced and supported across the West, against the Palestinians and their supporters. The Congress is organised by Jews and Palestinians, but it is for everyone. One does not need to be Jewish to oppose Zionism. We hope for some of the following:

- An event uniting Anti-Zionist Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, and all other groups – blacks, Arabs, Muslims, feminists, environmentalists, and more – against the terrifying crimes by Zionism against humanity, international Law, the environment, political justice, religious tenets – and against the Palestinians. This is also a crime against Jews, denying the history of common existence in Palestine for more than a thousand years, until the arrival of the Zionist colonists.
- A clarion call for all citizens, whatever their politics, religion, history – to unite against toxic Zionism, its lawlessness, brutality, supremacism, racism, and sheer cruelty.
- The Jewish Anti-Zionist voice demonstrates moral fibre, progressive history, legal vigour, morality of coexistence – in joining the struggle against Zionism, fighting on the Palestinian side to liberate not only Palestine – but also liberate Judaism from Zionism.

Both Mandela and Archbishop Tutu reminded us “none of us are free, until Palestine is free!”. A Jewish partner of Mandela, the leader of the armed struggle in South Africa, Ronnie Kasrils, stated in support of the Congress:

“The question then of bringing together Jewish anti-Zionists from all over the world in such a congress is of historic importance. And it’s a project, of course, it’s a work in progress. The organisers aren’t claiming that they represent the final view and crystallisation of what this is about.

But it’s a step towards the creation of now a political movement of anti-Zionist Jews involved with Palestinian people directly, as was the case with a few whites who were directly involved in the struggle to free South Africa.”

We stand together, because our message is one of peaceful, equal and just coexistence in Palestine – an upgraded version of the Muslim-led Convivencia (life together) in Palestine, North Africa, Al Andalus, the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, Arabia, Iran, India and few other territories in Southern Europe – where the three religions were existing in accord rather than conflict. This model for resolving conflicts, in a world where conflict has become the standard mode of action, is what we support; the conflict is now not just between nations, religions, states, blocs, and empires, but with nature, the living environment, and its delicate balance supporting life on this planet. Coexistence is the future, if we are to have a future.

Our Congress aims to focus Jewish voices against Zionism, to connect to the liberation of Palestine, and to assist the global movement for justice and peace, for Palestinians and for those Israeli Jews who wish to be part of a democratic, equal polity, from the river to the sea.

=====

<https://theworld.org/stories/2025/06/19/in-the-city-of-its-birth-jews-reject-zionism>
(<https://theworld.org/stories/2025/06/19/in-the-city-of-its-birth-jews-reject-zionism>).

Around 500 people attended the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna, Austria, in early June 2025. Rebecca Collard / The World.

In the city of its birth, Jews reject Zionism

Among Jewish people around the world, there's a growing movement that's challenging the pairing of Zionism with Judaism. In Vienna, Austria, where the idea of modern political Zionism was born, Jewish organizers held a first-of-its-kind congress to challenge the idea.

June 19, 2025

Over a weekend in mid-June, about 500 people gathered in Vienna, Austria, for what organizers dubbed the city's first Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress (<https://www.juedisch-antizionistisch.at/en>). Israelis, Jews, allies, activists and academics from around the world gathered under banners in German and English that read: "Stop Zionism," "Judaism is not Zionism" and "Never Again for Anyone."

They came to reject Zionism in the very city of its birth.



Inside the Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress held in Vienna, Austria.Rebecca Collard /The World

In 1896, Theodor Herzl (<https://herzlinstitute.org/en/theodor-herzl/>), a Jewish journalist, writer and Vienna resident, published "Der Judenstaat" (<https://israelforever.org/programs/myherzl/der-judenstaat-the-jewish-state/>), or "The Jewish State," arguing that Jews could only be truly safe in a country of their own.

On the side of a small stone stairway in Vienna's first district, a plaque memorializes Herzl as the man who had "the bold idea for the foundation of the state of Israel." Herzl wasn't the first to advocate for an independent Jewish state, but he is largely seen as the father of secular, national Zionism.

From the bottom of the steps, one can see across the Danube River to Leopoldstadt, once a marshy island, which later became a densely populated Jewish neighborhood — in part because of antisemitic persecution and expulsions of Jews from the center of Vienna. Leopoldstadt was also

where Herzl's family first settled upon arrival from Budapest, Hungary, in 1878.



The Theodor Herzl stairway in Vienna's first district. Rebecca Collard / The World

Herzl held his First Zionist Congress (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/first-zionist-congress-and-basel-program-1897>) in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897 — not in Vienna or Munich as he had first planned. Dr. Yavov Rabkin, a history professor at the Université de Montréal in Canada, said that Herzl's idea was met by three types of Jewish opposition.

“One, religious, [against] the idea that you can gather Jews in the Holy Land before the arrival of the Messiah,” Rabkin said. “Two, the Jews who were integrating into European societies, and they didn’t want to hear that they don’t belong there because Zionism had pretty much the same message as

antisemitism. And finally, there were people who considered Zionism to be a distraction from class struggle.”



Holocaust survivor and speaker at the Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress Stephen Kapos outside the conference. Rebecca Collard / The World

Within several decades, however, that opposition was eroded among many European Jews who had survived the Holocaust during World War II. For American Jews, that moment came after the 1967 Six-Day war (<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/june-10/six-day-war-ends>), which resulted in Israel's capture of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Old City of Jerusalem from Palestine, the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Rabkin added that Jewish people no longer feared being seen as having split loyalties — an accusation that had often been levied against them.

“So, you can be a Zionist and all the while remaining a good American,” he explained. “It wasn’t always like that, because between the two wars, there was real concern about dual loyalty. [Afterward], this concern disappeared.”

But Rabkin said younger Jews today, especially in the United States, are rejecting Zionism for other reasons: “Most young people are averse to the idea of apartheid, of ethnic nationalism, of supremacy of all kinds. And Israel encapsulates all three.”

Dalia Sarig, one of the organizers of the Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress this month, said her family had fled to Palestine before the creation of Israel, and then returned to Austria after the Holocaust. She said she grew up on the idea of Zionism and even moved to Israel when she was 18 years old.

“I think Zionism delivered something that a lot of people bought into. It was, you know, ‘How can I be Jewish when I’m not religious?’” Sarig said. “So, it’s this that Zionism used to gather Jews around the world and to collect them into this national ideology.”

She said what she saw and learned while living in Israel made her give up on that ideology and once again moved back to Austria. She points to conversations she had with a Palestinian teacher while at the University of Haifa.

“He told me his story of expulsion. How his family was expelled from their Palestinian village,” she said. “I started to think how he would be feeling as a Palestinian living in this Jewish state. ... I understood how racist this was.”



Speakers at the Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna, Austria. Rebecca Collard/The World

The organizers of the June event kept the exact location secret until just days before the event. Previous Palestinian solidarity events in Vienna have been met with pushback from pro-Israel groups and the official Jewish community. (In Austria and Germany, there are Jewish organizations that are considered official representatives for the community.)

The divide between that official community and those attending the congress is reflective of the growing divide among Jewish communities globally over support for Israel, not just over the occupation of Palestinians or the war in Gaza, but over the very idea of a Jewish state.



Police arrive at the Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna, Austria, at the request of the congress organizers. Rebecca Collard / The World

The expected opposition from the official Jewish community didn't materialize, but a Volkswagen hatchback with German plates flying Israeli flags and flags of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party did. One of the two occupants of the car said she was Jewish, and only gave her first name, Sophia.

"For me, anti-Zionism is equal to antisemitism," she said, despite the organizers of the congress being Jewish. "We have seen from historical experience, anti-Zionism is always connected with killing Jews."



An Israeli activist challenges counter-demonstrators at the Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna who arrived with Israeli flags and the flags of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party. Rebecca Collard / The World

Participants at the conference reject that notion, and say a Jewish state hasn't kept Jews safe and has cost the lives and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

And in the very city where Herzl made his case for the Jewish state, they are coming together now to reject it

=====

<https://k-larevue.com/en/anti-zionist-congress/> (<https://k-larevue.com/en/anti-zionist-congress/>).

The beginning of the end of Israel? A report from Vienna at the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress

- [ger sur twitter – Nouvelle fenêtre](https://twitter.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fk-larevue.com%2Fen%2Fanti-zionist-congress/) (<https://twitter.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fk-larevue.com%2Fen%2Fanti-zionist-congress/>).

congress%2F&via=k_revue&text=The+beginning+of+the+end+of+Israel%3F+A+report+from+Vienna+at+the+First+Jewish+Anti-Zionist+Congress).

- artager par email (https://k-larevue.com/en/anti-zionist-congress/?utm_campaign=K.LaRevue%2023221EN%20-%20new%20format&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Mailjet#share-form).

-
-
-

Liam Hoare (<https://k-larevue.com/en/author/liam-hoare/>), 18 June 2025

From June 13 to 15, the first anti-Zionist Jewish congress was held in Vienna, aiming to give voice to fierce opponents of the Zionist abomination. From the Austrian capital, and in the name of the memory of the Shoah, the slogan “Neither Herzl nor Hitler” was chanted in unison, as if the two were ultimately one and the same. Is this moral “clarity” sufficient to illuminate the political path

ahead? Our correspondent Liam Hoare's report suggests not: all is not clear among the anti-Zionist Jews, who were joined for the occasion by their allies Roger Waters and Rima Hassan.



First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress, Vienna, June 2025. © Liam Hoare

VIENNA – Dalia Sarig was barely audible as she took the stage to open what was billed as the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress. Technical issues plagued the opening day of the event on June 13, and her microphone screeched and hissed and faded in and out as she made her opening remarks. Delegates, she said, were gathered “in the very country where Herzl launched Zionism as a racist colonist ideology.” Austria and its political elites remain in a “deliberate alliance with Zionism”—a “racist, nationalist and colonial ideology” which has “brought about a genocide”—and that places Austria “on the wrong side of history.”

Sarig was addressing an audience likely in the low hundreds that almost filled the hall, a space typically used for weddings and Turkish community and cultural gatherings. Must-have fashion accessories included the black-and-white keffiyeh typically draped over the shoulders, watermelon earrings, and faux-MAGA hats in green with slogans like ‘Make Palestine Whole Again’ and ‘Make Palestine Free Again.’ The stage was flanked by two large olive trees, and the tables in front of the speakers’ black leather chairs were decorated with white roses in memory of the anti-Nazi resistance group and yellow daffodils, the symbol of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Domestic and international Jewish anti-Zionists made up a chunk of the congress' delegation. These included some of the 36 Viennese anti-Zionist Jews—out of a Jewish community of around 10-12,000 people—who put their signatures to the Viennese Jewish Anti-Zionist Declaration published in December 2024 prior to the congress. The paper ends with the clarion call: "Judaism does not equal Zionism!"

Present too—either in person or via Zoom—were folk heroes of the international anti-Zionist movement: musician Roger Waters, who instead of giving a speech read the lyrics to a terrible new song he had been working on; Francesca Albanese, United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories; and Rima Hassan, Member of the European Parliament for the far-left La France Insoumise and participant in June's Gaza Freedom Flotilla with Swedish climate campaigner turned anti-Israel activist Greta Thunberg.

The First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna was a clear and deliberate attempt to seize the memory of the Holocaust and the legacy of anti-fascism to grant moral legitimacy to the anti-Zionist cause. The manipulation of history and memory would become this event's leitmotif.

From what appeared to be streetside at a Parisian café, Hassan recounted her experience of being, as she framed it, "kidnapped" and detained by the "Israel Occupation Forces." As she spoke, she cradled in her hands a flower bulb, something evidently of tremendous meaning to her for it brought her to tears to speak of it. It was plucked, she explained, from the soil of historic Palestine prior to her deportation, a gesture one of her captors allowed her to undertake. Her story would be among the first, but far from the last, displays of alarming cognitive dissonance.

Like Hassan, the congress' political representation came exclusively from the far-left. Among the congress' supporters were the last remaining Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Communist Party selling copies of their newspaper, the *Funke*. Also embedded in the organizational structure were prominent members of the Gaza List, which ran for parliament in September 2024's national elections, gaining a meagre 0.4 percent of the vote. Among its leading candidates were Sarig—who frames herself as someone who lived in Israel for "many years" before returning to Austria because of Israel's "structural racism"—and Astrid Wagner, perhaps most famous for having acted as the child rapist Josef Fritzl's lawyer.

At either ends of the hall were two large banners displaying the congress' principal slogans: 'Stop Zionism' and 'Never Again for Anyone.' The latter, a reclamation of the German and Austrian anti-fascist commandment 'never again,' was a prelude of things to come. The First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna was a clear and deliberate attempt to seize the memory of the Holocaust and the legacy of anti-fascism to grant moral legitimacy to the anti-Zionist cause. The manipulation of history and memory would become this event's leitmotif.

Vienna, the city of Lueger, Herzl and Hitler

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, Vienna was home to three people of enormous significance to the destiny of European Jewry. Vienna was the city of Karl Lueger (<https://k-larevue.com/en/disgraced-whither-viennas-monument-to-karl-lueger/>), mayor of the Austrian capital during the *fin de siècle* period. Even if he himself was not an antisemite, through antisemitic rabble-rousing, anti-Jewish agitation, and a party platform steeped in nationalism and xenophobia as well as Germanic and Catholic supremacism, Lueger rode a wave of anti-Jewish hatred among the Viennese lower-middle class to reach Vienna's highest office.

Vienna was the city of Theodor Herzl. Despite the fact that Herzl would later claim that “what made me a Zionist was the Dreyfus trial,” one of his biographers, Derek Penslar, notes that little of his journalistic correspondence from Paris “dealt directly with antisemitism.” More important “were the Viennese municipal elections in April and May 1895,” out of which Lueger’s party emerged with a two-thirds majority on the city council. Shlomo Avineri concurs in his biography of Herzl: “If the country that had treated the Jews best during the nineteenth century was about to disintegrate and pose serious challenges to the well-being of his Jewish population, a radical solution had to be found.”



The Lueger Monument, 2021, vandalized with the word “Shame” © Liam Hoare

Vienna was the city of Adolf Hitler, who relocated there in 1907 as part of a failed attempt to get into Vienna’s Academy of Fine Arts that left him homeless and destitute. Lueger was still mayor of Vienna at that time, and Hitler later wrote in *Mein Kampf* that he was “one of the most immense German mayors of all time.” Although Lueger and his party were not Nazis, for the Catholics and German nationalists constituted separate political camps divided by the question of Austrian nationhood, Hitler “absorbed pan-Germanism, the concept of the Aryan master race, antisemitism, and anti-Slavism,” in Lueger’s Vienna, Avineri concludes.

By staging their first Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress in Vienna, the organizers undertook a conscious attempt to insert themselves into this historical framework, albeit via an inversion and a perversion of historical and political events. “The antisemitic mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, once declared: ‘I decide who is a Jew,’” reads the Viennese Jewish Anti-Zionist Declaration. “Those who aligned with his policies were exempt from being labeled as ‘Jews’ by Lueger, while dissenting voices opposing his policies were, by his definition, the voices ‘of the Jews’”:

Even today, our anti-colonial Jewish voices in Austria are silenced and delegitimized according to this principle –albeit reversed as ‘We decide who is not Jewish.’ Those who align with Israel are allowed to be considered ‘Jewish’ and to speak as Jews, while those who do not are expected to remain silent as ‘non-Jews.’ We recognize this as a form of antisemitism and as complicity in spreading antisemitism, as it conflates Jewish identity inseparably with the genocide of Palestinians and fuels hatred against Jews.

Karl Lueger is not dead. He is, in fact, alive and well in the hearts and minds not only of the Austrian political establishment but also, by extension, the Austrian Jewish one too, who are all antisemites. His contemporary victims are Austria's anti-Zionist Jews whose rights and freedoms are being suppressed: "We, the undersigned, unequivocally demand the right to freely express our democratic and anti-colonial views," a funny demand to issue prior to an organized anti-Zionist congress and after running an explicitly anti-Zionist party in national elections.

As Dalia Sarig noted in her opening remarks, the Viennese Jewish Anti-Zionist Declaration was issued in Herzl's city. A week prior to the congress, Sarig and her comrades staged a political action temporarily renaming Theodor Herzl Square—a rather innocuous piece of concrete beside Vienna's Marriott hotel—Gaza Square. Sarig said (https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20250604_OTS0038/gaza-platz-statt-theodor-herzl-platz): "Theodor Herzl is honored annually in Vienna—and for what? For an ideology of colonialism and racist nationalism? As anti-Zionist Jews, we reject this ideology, which justifies colonial violence and expulsion."



Dalia

Sarig

So too in her address to congress did Sarig reference the Mauthausen Oath (<https://www.mkoe.at/en/memorial-and-commemoration-work/mauthausen-oath>), a commitment sworn by survivors of the concentration camp on May 16, 1945, which read in part:

True to these ideals, we make a solemn oath to continue to fight, firm and united, against imperialism and against the instigation of hatred between peoples. ... We want to erect the most beautiful monument that one could dedicate to the soldiers who have fallen for the cause of freedom of the international community on a secure basis: A world of free men.

"Invoking this oath in support of radical anti-Zionism distorts its historical meaning," researcher Stephanie Courouble-Share warned (<https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/382043/at-a-congress-in-vienna-jewish-anti-zionism-flirts-with-holocaust-distortion-and-antisemitism/>) prior to the congress. "By mobilizing the Mauthausen Oath against Israel, the organizers suggest that the Jewish state represents the very system of oppression the survivors vowed to resist. This comparison,

lacking historical accuracy, is a rhetorical maneuver that distorts Holocaust memory for political purposes, erasing the specificity of Nazism and the genocide of European Jews.” This, though, precisely the point—not only of this citation but, far too often, this congress.

Israel is weak but the game is strong

The First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress was undermined by a series of internal contradictions and characterized by a detachment from historical and political reality. In the early hours of June 13, Israel launched a series of quite extraordinary targeted strikes against Iran’s military and nuclear infrastructure. Its long-term ramifications remain unclear, but in the short-term, in contradistinction to the deadly failings of October 7, 2023, it demonstrated the inherent strength of Israel’s military and intelligence apparatus.

The [Jewish Anti-Zionist] congress could never quite make up its mind whether Zionism was so weak that it was on the verge of total collapse or so strong that it is responsible for all the world’s ills.

Whether congressional delegates knew or could comprehend this is unclear. “This is the first day of Israel’s fast decline,” thundered Haim Bresheeth, professional research associate at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, one of the many old comrades from the international anti-Zionist movement to make it Vienna. “They have attacked humanity. They have no longer just attacked in Gaza, but everywhere in the Middle East. No one anywhere in the Middle East is safe from Zionism. There is no safety anywhere as long as Zionism is with us.”

Bresheeth—who gave a largely irrelevant speech to congress about the history of Andalusia—was rather prone to aphoristic proclamations that appeared to come from nowhere and had about as much substance as a Kinder Egg. “There is no place for Zionism in today’s world—anywhere,” for example, or “the UN is a useless body and it was made useless by Zionism and the West.” At one point, he asked delegates: “Which side are Jews on?”: with the European West, responsible for colonialism, or the East, which, it goes without saying, has never perpetrated an act of war or colonialism in its life.

Much like Bresheeth himself, congress could never quite make up its mind whether Zionism was so weak that it was on the verge of total collapse—not just a decline but a *fast* decline, no less—or so strong that it is responsible for all the world’s ills, its reach stretching from the bomb-damaged nuclear facilities of Iran to the congress halls of Vienna where anti-Zionists’ free speech was being

stifled. “Everybody in this room is convinced that this is the beginning of the end of Zionism,” the Egyptian journalist and influencer Rahma Zein said in remarks that somehow were not intended as a



joke. Haim Bresheeth

Anti-fascism and identity politics

This congress, Israeli anti-Zionist activist Ronnie Barkan said in his opening address, “is not about discussing Judaism or identity politics”—a rather astonishing statement for an event that frames itself as being both Jewish and anti-Zionist. If Barkan’s words are genuine, then Palestinian author and academic Ghada Karmi, who spoke explicitly both about Jewish identity and her perception about the role of Jews both in the Zionist and anti-Zionist movements, didn’t get the memo.

“Anti-Zionist Jews are still a small minority in Israel and in the world outside,” she observed. “The majority of Jews actively or passively support Israel. You have to ask yourself how would Israel have become so powerful in the U.S. and Europe if it were not for these Jewish accomplices.” It is her belief, therefore, that “the fight against Zionism is an intra-Jewish affair in which the Palestinians should play no part. It is for Jews to turn away from Zionism.”

Zionism, Karmi said, “has caused dissimulation among Jewish communities in Diaspora,” before going on to argue that “we need a transition from tribalism to universalism” among Jews in Diaspora who have tended towards a view that “they belong to a tribe.” Rather giving the game away, she appealed: “It is the task of anti-Zionist Jews who have seen the light to do this work and only they can do it. It doesn’t have the same credibility as Jews who have turned away from Zionism or were never for it in the first place.”

Barkan's perception of his own congress was incredible. "We are following in their footsteps," he said of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. An attempt to claim the legacy of Jewish anti-fascism is nothing if not a form of identity politics. In an op-ed (<https://mondoweiss.net/2025/06/joining-forces-time-for-jews-to-unite-in-the-struggle-against-zionism-apartheid-and-genocide/>) published on the anti-Zionist portal *Mondoweiss* prior to the event, Barkan wrote that "the Jewish anti-Zionist voice demonstrates moral fiber, progressive history, legal vigor, morality of coexistence—in joining the struggle against Zionism, fighting on the Palestinian side to liberate not only Palestine—but also liberate Judaism from Zionism."

The Viennese Jewish Anti-Zionist Declaration is also bound up in identity politics and intracommunal struggle: "We do not feel represented by the [Jewish Community of Vienna], which claims to represent Jews in Austria and unconditionally supports every action of Israel," argue its three-dozen signatories. The declaration is, too, an attempt to situate anti-Zionism in the legacy of Jewish anti-fascism:

We, the undersigned, are individuals with Jewish family backgrounds, descendants of displaced persons and/or Holocaust victims, Holocaust survivors, and resistance fighters against the Nazi regime with ties to Austria. We are committed to universal human rights, equality, and a just peace.

But more than that, the declaration ties to distinguish anti-Zionist Jews from the Zionist Jewish majority and cast that majority as racist, colonialist, and ethno-nationalist by implication. "Around the globe, Jews like us condemn Israel's actions against Palestinians, the genocide Israel is committing in Gaza, the ethnic cleansing, and the colonial seizure of the West Bank. We unequivocally declare"—in case you had missed the point—"This does not happen in our name!"



Vienna, June 14, 2025, Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress

Historical unreality, moral unclarity

Ronnie Barkan notes that, in the year *The Jewish State* was published, “a mass movement of Jewish workers in Eastern Europe and Russia, the Socialist Labor Bund” was born. (The General Jewish Labor Bund was actually founded one year later.) “While the Bund became a large movement in several East European countries, Zionism represented less than 1 percent of the Jewish population in Europe.” And then two extraordinary sentences:

If not for Hitler, Zionism would have remained a small and insignificant Jewish colony in Palestine in all probability. The six million Jews who died in the Holocaust were not Zionists: most were anti-Zionist, either as Bundist socialists or ultra-Orthodox religious Jews who saw Zionism as anti-Jewish in the extreme.

Setting aside the implication that only the good Jews died in the Holocaust, never has the small word ‘if’ been responsible for so many heavy lifting. Indeed, if not for the rise of Nazism, perhaps European Jewish history, and therefore Israeli history, would have been different. But that is neither the history we have nor the reality in which we live. Israel is an established state, and two peoples with two distinct national identities claim ownership, either in whole or in part, of the same strip of land. The anti-Zionist movement claims to have the power of facing unpleasant facts while displaying none of it, choosing instead to comfort itself in an alternate reality.

Historical flights of fancy were a problem at the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress. Donny Gluckstein, who teaches at Edinburgh College (rather troublingly for his students), claimed that Herzl didn’t even mention a Jewish state in Palestine, which suggests he either has not read or could not read *The Jewish State*, in which Herzl wrote of Palestine as Jews’ “ever-memorable historic home.” Gluckstein further argued that antisemitism is a product of capitalism and that to erase capitalism would be to erase antisemitism, which would be news to the Jews of postwar Poland and the Soviet Union.

The anti-Zionist movement claims to have the power of facing unpleasant facts while displaying none of it, choosing instead to comfort itself in an alternate reality.

Comfort food was one of congress’ catering options. Rahma Zein said—again, apparently in all sincerity—that “anybody who’s here today is proving that they’re human.” What kind of humanity is it, however, what kind of morality, that regards Zionism as a conspiracy and the dominant force in the world, responsible for all its problems. Ghada Karmi described Zionism in insidious terms as “a foreign political force was snaking its way into our homeland with malign intent.” No question about it, she said: “Zionism is evil, and if you are against evil, you must be against Zionism.”

What kind of morality, too, that blurs the line or inverts the relationship between victim and perpetrator. “Israel has to stop using the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis to justify their crimes against the Palestinians,” said the local Palestinian activist Samy Ayad. “Like de-Nazification in 1945, there has to be a de-Zionization of every single institution, every single group” in a future Palestinian one-state, Haim Bresheeth said, who also remarked: “After 1945, there was a problem: How do you live with Germans in Europe? Just as difficult a question as we are discussing in Palestine. How do you live with *génocideurs* in your midst?” before he was cut off in something resembling his prime.

“Wide opposition to Zionism is emerging from across society,” Ronnie Barkan wrote, but if the post-October 7 protest movement against Israel is a sign of that, the narrow, far-left audience at the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress scarcely indicated a burgeoning future. The situation today in Gaza is indeed intolerable: for the remaining Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity as well as the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced *en masse*, their homes and environs destroyed. Yet October 7 itself was hardly acknowledged at the congress, and in the sessions I attended, there was not one critique of Hamas, its ideology, or its actions which provoked Israel’s counter-operation.

Moreover, if the conversation is to be, as Palestinian journalist Ramzy Baroud framed it, that “the solutions should be focused on a one-state solution, a state called Palestine, and nothing else,” then the suffering of the Palestinian people is doomed to continue. It was to her credit that Karmi was prepared to acknowledge that there were two communities in Palestine who, fundamentally, do not want to live together—who would prefer a divorce over an arranged marriage. “What do you do?” she asked, a question to which the First Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress had no answer.

=====

<https://x.com/JVoiceLabour/status/1901302952117125298>

(<https://x.com/JVoiceLabour/status/1901302952117125298>) Viennese Jewish Anti-Zionist Declaration We, the undersigned, as individuals from Jewish family backgrounds, descendants of displaced persons and/or Holocaust victims, Holocaust survivors, and resistance fighters against the Nazi regime, all with ties to Austria, oppose Zionism and the actions of the state of Israel in our commitment to universal human rights, equality, and a just peace in the Middle East. We declare that our values are not represented by the Vienna “Israelitische Kultusgemeinde”, which claims to speak for Jews in Austria and which unconditionally supports Israel. We oppose the marginalization or suppression of Palestinian and anti-Israel voices within Austrian politics, media, and state institutions and in particular, we call for dissenting Jewish voices to be heard... <https://juedisch-antizionistisch.at/en> (<https://t.co/KIzUUgVbvM>)

6:02 PM · Mar 16, 2025 (<https://x.com/JVoiceLabour/status/1901302952117125298>)



Published by Israel Academia Monitor

IAM objectives: To collect information about Israel which relates to, inter alia, activities, publications and presentations of Israeli academics. To monitor their academic activities and publications. Activities for academic freedom and scientific resonance of institutions of higher learning and to prevent abuse of the academic platform for foreign interests. Activities for academic ethics. [View all posts by Israel Academia Monitor](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)