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The Anti-Zionist Congress: A New Era for Jewish-Palestinian Solidarity

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The First Jewish Anti-Zionist Conference in Vienna. (Photo: via website)

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By **Ramzy Baroud** X

It's becoming clear that Zionism is finally being undone, primarily by Gaza and the sumud of the Palestinians, but also by international solidarity, a large part of which has always been, and now increasingly is, expressed by anti-Zionist Jews.

Future historians, remember this place and date: Vienna, June 13-15, 2025. This was when hundreds of anti-Zionist Jews, joined by Palestinians and other allies, **gathered** for the first 'Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress.'

This gathering stands in stark contrast to the First Zionist Congress, **held** 128 years prior, from August 29-31, 1897, near Vienna in Switzerland. Chaired by Theodor Herzl, that congress founded the modern Zionist movement with the stated **aim**: "Zionism seeks to establish a home in Palestine for the Jewish people, secured under public law." This objective was unambiguous.

Zionist institution-building rapidly followed, beginning with the Zionist Organization (ZO), later **renamed** the World Zionist Organization. This was **succeeded** by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) during the Fifth Congress in Basel in 1901.

The conflation of Zionism with Jewish identity began in earnest then, culminating in today's historical absurdity where, in many Western official and media circles, anti-Zionism is equated with antisemitism.

From the perspective of the initial Zionist conveners, Zionism, despite resistance from many European Jewish communities, appeared successful. Among its many steps toward conquering Palestine and ethnically cleansing Palestinians, Zionists secured the support of Western powers, notably Britain, which formalized its backing through the **Balfour Declaration**. This November 2, 1917, letter from British Foreign Secretary Lord Rothschild to the Zionist Federation declared: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

The aftermath is a profoundly painful and bloody history. These efforts led to the Nakba, the 'Catastrophe,' where the Palestinian homeland was largely erased to make way for Zionists who insisted they acted and spoke on behalf of global Jewry.

Jewish communities did not gather in Israel in later years and decades to fulfill some biblical prophecy. The founders of Zionism were almost entirely **atheists** who exploited God and religious texts to manipulate Jews into immigrating to Israel. The profound irony here is that while atheist Jews purported to represent God's will on earth, the actual religious Jewish communities – both Orthodox and Reform rabbis – rejected Zionism from its inception. This rejection even necessitated moving the First Zionist Congress from Munich, Germany, to Switzerland.

Acceptance of Zionism was gradual. It first required the successful, critical feat of displacing an entire nation from its historical homeland, defending the newly acquired territories, and securing Western and international support.

Following the **Naksa**, the 'Setback,' of June 1967, when Israel, with the unconditional support of the U.S. and other Western governments, conquered much more Arab territory, Zionism finally succeeded in imposing itself as a reality on Jewish discourse. Anti-Zionist Jews became a shrinking minority, and the equation between Zionism and Judaism became the norm.

Now, as Israel clearly struggles to maintain the success of its old Zionist project, primarily due to the Resistance of the native Palestinians, massive global shifts are underway. Estimates suggest that over 500,000 Israeli Jews have **left** the country since the October 7, 2023, war. This reverse migration is increasing and will certainly surge following the Israel-instigated war against Iran.

The **Gaza genocide** and the historical steadfastness (sumud) of the Palestinian people have exposed every Zionist falsehood. Gaza has achieved more in less than two years than all collective efforts in the last 128 years. This shatters any illusion that the liberation of an oppressed nation can be imported from the outside.

As the world turns against Zionism, empowered anti-Zionist Jewish communities are now playing a crucial role in further exposing Zionism and mobilizing global support for Palestinians.



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As the world turns against Zionism, empowered anti-Zionist Jewish communities are now playing a crucial role in further exposing Zionism and mobilizing global support for Palestinians.

The Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress Declaration unequivocally states: “As Anti-Zionist Jews, we stand together with all Palestinians—in Palestine and in exile—against Zionism and its crimes, including genocide, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and occupation. We affirm the right of people under occupation to resist by any means, as is recognized by several UN provisions.”

The declaration leaves no doubt about the anti-Zionist congress’s position, having unified the efforts of numerous existing and well-established anti-Zionist Jewish groups.

What makes this event historic, beyond the enormous effort and the intention to expand and branch out to all such groups worldwide, is its moral clarity.

For many years, being an anti-Zionist Jew was largely confined to identity: morally driven Jews declaring that Israel does not represent all Jews and that not all Jews are Zionists. While such statements were not wrong or unhelpful, historically, many such groups operated with a degree of separation from the larger global efforts supporting Palestinian liberation.

The Israeli genocide in Gaza has significantly altered this, as we’ve witnessed many Jewish communities, groups, and individuals worldwide standing on the front lines of Palestinian solidarity. The role of young Jews, particularly in North American and European universities, has proven to be a game-changer.

The declaration’s language reflects this fundamental shift: “We condemn without qualification all Israeli war crimes committed since October 7, 2023, including ethnic cleansing, militarised apartheid, urbicide, scholaticide, medicide, mass starvation as an instrument of forced expulsion of more than two million Gazans, and an extant genocide of hundreds of thousands—the worst war crime of our time.”

The declaration condemned “western powers” for their “active and enthusiastic support” of Israeli war crimes. It named the US, the European Union, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand for serving as defenders and enablers of Israel’s crimes against humanity. These are the very entities that supported Zionism from its beginning.

The Jewish Anti-Zionist Congress did not mince words, did not navigate language to avoid offense, and did not hesitate to show its firm stand with Palestinians, their struggle, their resistance, and their liberation.

The final passage of the declaration is critical and deserves to be fully stated:

“Finally, we call upon and embrace all Israeli Jews who reconsider their allegiance with the apartheid genocidal regime. We invite you to join the movement for the decolonization of Palestine. After eight decades of systemic denial of Palestinian rights and freedoms, it is time to respect Jewish historical legacy and the principles of Judaism itself, it is time to build once again that place that historically respected our shared lives and freedoms in Palestine.”

It seems Zionism has come full circle. As Palestinians and their regional allies disprove Zionist theories on the superiority of violence, on ‘iron walls,’ and other myths, a growing movement of anti-Zionist Jews is now challenging the very essence of Zionism and its relationship with Jewish communities.

The amount of pain, loss, and suffering over the last 128 years is incalculable. But it’s becoming clear that Zionism is finally being undone, primarily by Gaza and the sumud of the Palestinians, but also by international solidarity, a large part of which has always been, and now increasingly is, expressed by anti-Zionist Jews—not as a separate community, but as an integral part of humanity’s push against colonialism, imperialism, and injustice.



– Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the Editor of *The Palestine Chronicle*. He is the author of six books. His latest book, co-edited with Ilan Pappé, is “*Our Vision for Liberation: Engaged Palestinian Leaders and Intellectuals Speak out*”. Dr. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net



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2 COMMENTS

Wesley Parish says:

Next is to get some Christian Philosopher-Theologians to take on Christian Zionism and take it to pieces.

REPLY

kronikdenny says:

I've said for years, Zionism is a mental illness. We need a "Nuremberg" and all the ZioNazis should be tried for their crimes, of which they are all 100% guilty. They could have stopped and opted for peace at any time, but they opted for murdering innocent civilians: non-combatants, mostly women and children. They should be found guilty and put to death. ANY other group of people would. Being "Jewish" doesn't mean you're exempt from prosecution. None of them are innocent. And those people who were complicit from any foreign powers, including those in my US government should be found guilty by association: tried, and put in prison for life.

REPLY