

American Zionist Leader: J Street Indignation Over David Friedman Is Hypocritical

J Street and like-minded groups are denouncing Donald Trump's ambassador-designate to Israel, David Friedman, over a comment Friedman once made comparing Jewish advocates of the Palestinian cause to Jews who collaborated with the Nazis.

I'm not particularly comfortable with Holocaust analogies. But I'm also not particularly comfortable with hypocrisy. In a fundraising email this week, J Street denounced Friedman's "horrifically offensive rhetoric." Yet just days ago, the same J Street publicly endorsed a candidate for the chairmanship of the Democratic Party who compared President George W. Bush to Adolf Hitler.

U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), who is seeking to head the Democratic National Committee, made his Hitler remark in 2007, so J Street can't dismiss it as something he said when he was in college. And Ellison's remark was videotaped, so nobody can claim it was edited or taken out of context.

In fact, not only did Ellison make a Hitler comparison, but he even strongly implied Bush was to blame for the 9/11 attacks. Here's how Ellison phrased it: "Remember 9/11. Right? You had never have [sic] all this discrimination against religious minorities but for 9/11. You had it, but you didn't have it to the degree that we have it now. 9/11 is this juggernaut event in American history, and it allows—it's almost like, you know, the Reichstag fire kind of reminds me of that."

The Reichstag fire, of course, was the burning of the German parliament in 1933, which the Nazis carried out in order to blame their enemies. Someone in Ellison's audience called out, "But who benefited from 9/11?" Ellison replied, "Well, I mean,

you know, you and I both know.” To which the audience member responded, “Yeah, Bush.” Ellison then added, “But the thing is that, you know, after the Reichstag was burned, they blamed the Communists for it, and it put the leader of that country in a position where he could basically have authority to do whatever he wanted.”

Comparing Bush to Hitler, suggesting that Bush carried out the 9/11 attacks in order to blame Muslims—I would consider that it to be “horrifically offensive rhetoric,” as J Street said about Ambassador-designate Friedman. Yet for some reason J Street is perfectly comfortable with Ellison’s horrifically offensive rhetoric.

Ellison is not the only friend of J Street who likes to use Nazi analogies. George Soros compared the Bush administration to the Nazis in his 2006 book, *The Age of Fallibility*. He wrote, “The Bush administration and the Nazi and Communist regimes all engaged in the politics of fear ... Indeed, the Bush administration has been able to improve on the techniques used by the Nazi and Communist propaganda machines by drawing on the innovations of the advertising and marketing industries.”

Why doesn’t J Street consider Soros’ statement horrifically offensive? Do his large donations to J Street affect its judgment?

After Israel’s ruling coalition initiated legislation requiring NGOs to be more transparent, Aaron N. Rice, who identifies himself as a member of the “J Street National Leadership Circle and Executive Committee,” sent a tweet Dec. 28, 2015, in which he offered this comment: “What person in the ’30s dissolved a democracy & assumed dictatorial powers through democratic means?”

I checked J Street’s website and could not find any statement condemning Rice’s horrifically offensive comparison of Israel’s prime minister to Adolf Hitler. Why the silence?

So pardon me if I'm not impressed by J Street's indignation about David Friedman. When it consistently speaks out against Holocaust analogies—including those made by its executive committee member, Aaron Rice; its donor, George Soros; and its endorsee, Keith Ellison—then J Street might be taken a little more seriously. But I'm not going to hold my breath. {eoa}

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