

JSIL: Another Obscene Israel Analogy

For several decades now, Israel's enemies have actively and willfully defamed the Jewish state by comparing its actions to the atrocities committed by the worst villains in recent history.

We all know about the ludicrous and insulting parallel drawn between Israel and the former apartheid regime in South Africa. It was precisely that parallel that underpinned the notorious U.N. General Assembly resolution of 1975, which has since been rescinded, equating Zionism with racism.

And we know, too, of the obscene comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany. Among those who have endorsed this ghastly canard, which takes the Nazi Holocaust as its starting point in order to trivialize the mass murder of 6 million Jews, is the newly elected Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who opined at the height of the Gaza war over the summer that Israel was "worse" than Hitler.

But now there's a new analogy—and it's one that attacks Israel by using a contemporary reference. Appropriately for our digital age, it takes the form of a Twitter hashtag: #JSIL.

If it's not immediately clear what that means, JSIL is a spin-off of ISIL, referring to the "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant," the barbaric jihadist terrorist organization (now simply known as Islamic State) with whom we are now at war. JSIL, meanwhile, stands for "Jewish State in the Levant." (The Levant is that region of nations just east of the Mediterranean Sea.)

Yes, you read that correctly. There are people out there who are seriously equating a gang of rapists, decapitators, torturers, slave traders and genocidal killers with a

democratic state that takes the trouble, whenever it is dragged into an armed conflict, of informing civilians on the other side when and where it will be launching an attack so they can get themselves to safety.

Who, exactly, are these people making the analogy? Well, it's the usual crowd, and we can take some—but not much—comfort in that. Credit for the #JSIL hashtag resides with the pro-Hamas activist Max Blumenthal. The son of Bill and Hillary Clinton's veteran confidante Sidney Blumenthal, young Max rivals the worst anti-Semitic propagandists of the Soviet Union.

Over the last few years, Blumenthal's anti-Israel screeds have become progressively more outlandish. But not content with grossly misrepresenting the Nazi Holocaust, he now insults the thousands of Yazidi, Christian and Kurdish victims of Islamic State violence by asserting that Israel inhabits the same moral universe as these murderers.

Blumenthal made the Israel-Islamic State comparison during a session of the "Russell Tribunal on Palestine," an unaccountable kangaroo court dedicated to smearing Israel with the crime of genocide. Fittingly, Blumenthal was flanked by rock musician Roger Waters and film director Ken Loach as he did so.

Quite like the musical output of his band, Pink Floyd, Waters' political interventions on Israel have gotten more boring and predictable as he gets older. Much the same can be said of Loach, who has continually insisted that Israel is the cause of the anti-Semitic violence plaguing Jews in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere.

Why, though, should we worry about the usual suspects finding a new theme to play with? After all, they've made the apartheid and Nazi comparisons, and yet Israel continues to thrive. Leading politicians around the world have joined the chorus of condemnation of anti-Semitism, and Hamas has only a

bruised Palestinian population to show for its efforts to eliminate Israel. Similarly, one might say that however offensive and downright stupid the Islamic State comparison is, it won't change a thing when it comes to policy.

Regrettably, I don't think we have the luxury of complacency on this one. Just this week, *Deutsche Welle*, the taxpayer-funded German broadcaster, published an article on its website that cast American Jews volunteering for the IDF in the same light as Muslims from Europe and elsewhere joining the Islamic State terrorist army.

Leave aside the fact that such an equation is being made by Germans—who really should, by now, know better. What is more significant for our purposes is the potential impact that this equation can have on the formulation of policy. If we, rightly, seek to criminalize those among our Muslim citizens who join the Islamic State onslaughts, we open ourselves up to the contention that foreign Jews fighting with the IDF should be treated in the same manner.

Certainly, Blumenthal and his anti-Semitic cohorts will argue that such individuals are war criminals—and what the *Deutsche Welle* piece demonstrates is how easily this clumsy, morally illiterate argument can penetrate the mainstream.

Inadvertently, the same article offers a solution to this dilemma in its conclusion, which states, "But when former Israeli Americans return to the U.S. after their military service, they will be treated much differently than those who wish to return, tired of fighting with extremist groups. The former will be welcomed and commended and accepted by family and friends, while the latter will likely be arrested, imprisoned and interrogated with little chance of returning to an American way of life."

That is how it should be. American Jews fighting with the IDF are fighting with an ally of the U.S. and Western democracy.

Those who join Islamic State, on the other hand, are fighting for the destruction of everything we stand for. We need to ensure that the law in Europe and the U.S. continues to recognize this vital distinction.

Ben Cohen is the Shillman Analyst for and a contributor to the Wall Street Journal, Commentary, Haaretz and other publications. His book, *Some Of My Best Friends: A Journey Through Twenty-First Century Antisemitism* (Edition Critic, 2014), is now available through Amazon.