



AMERICAN MUSLIMS FOR PALESTINE
EMPOWERMENT through
EDUCATION and **ACTION**



Creeping Normalcy

a.k.a Faith-Washing



Creeping Normalcy is the way a major negative change, which happens slowly in many unnoticed increments, is not perceived as objectionable.

In other words, engaging in ‘interfaith’ activities with Zionist organizations that insist Jews and Muslims will not discuss Palestine but focus solely on domestic issues is a way to normalize the occupation.

There is no religious tension between Jews and Muslims. If tension exists, it is political and stems directly from Israel’s occupation of Palestine.



“It can start as grabbing a cup of coffee with leaders representing other student groups and ultimately lead to joint programs. **Support for anti-Israel causes then becomes unthinkable.**”

~ David Bernstein, director, The David Project

Quote from “A Burning Campus, Rethinking Israel Advocacy at America’s Universities and Campuses,” The David Project

This discussion is not anti-Israel

It is about **human rights** and **international law**

Affording one person his rights, **does not diminish** another's rights



Faith-washing is an attempt to legitimize Israeli policies by engaging in interfaith cooperation that comes with an agenda, such as paid trips to Israel.

Rabia Chaudry, a national security fellow at the New America Foundation and the Truman National Security Project went with the Shalom Hartman Institute to Israel and wrote an article for TIME magazine titled, **“What a Muslim American learned from Zionists.”**

“The TIME article reduces the occupation to the displacement of ‘dialogue’ and ‘both sides’ (not sure if Chaudry means Palestinians and Israelis or Muslims and Jews) being unwilling to speak outside ‘their own bubbles.’”

~ Sana Saeed, in her response article, “An Interfaith Trojan Horse: Faithwashing Apartheid and Occupation”

The role of Zionist institutions

Many Zionist organizations were founded in the early 1900s for the sole purpose of raising funds to create the State of Israel.

They continue to provide economic, ideological and political support.

They squelch criticism of or perceived threats to Israel's legitimacy and defense of Palestinian rights

They have successfully conflated Judaism with Zionism

The role of Zionist institutions

Some of the Zionist organizations are:

The Jewish Federations of North America

The Jewish Community Relations Council

The American Jewish Committee

The Jewish National Fund

The Anti-Defamation League

The David Project

(Some of these are newer organizations, such as the David Project, founded in 2002.)

How do Zionist institutions operate?

They devote resources to silence work for Palestinian rights and justice

They are highly organized and fully funded

They are heavily involvement in lobbying

Currently, they are broadening their base of support by appropriating grassroots methods and social justice movements

This is the foundation for Creeping Normalcy and Faith-washing programs.

How do Zionist institutions operate?

In addition, Zionist organizations routinely attack Palestine solidarity activists and organizations by:

- Creating backlash – litigation & economic coercion
- Collaborating with US government “anti-terrorist” activity used to attack solidarity and dissent
- Disseminating and funding the Islamophobia network in the US

Israel has an image problem

In 2010, Israel had just come off Operation Cast Lead and the Mavi Marmara ambush, in which nine unarmed activists were gunned down.

The Israeli think-tank Reut Institute issued a report about Israel's image problem in 2010.

In addition to these major PR catastrophes, the Reut report also identified BDS and certain key areas of activism as being existential threats to Israel.

Israel created a new cabinet position called the **Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs**, charged with coming up with ways to confront and silence Palestine solidarity activism and criticism of Israeli policies.

Origins of Creeping Normalcy programs

To address its image problem, Israel began pouring in millions of dollars to propaganda and interfaith campaigns:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it is working through “front groups” so its propaganda can be forwarded without the “fingerprints of the government” being found on it.

~ Haaretz, 5/31/2010

“We’ve been working on creating an infrastructure of our friends and allies around the world, in the Jewish and Christian communities, which is not fully ready yet.

~ Yuri Edelstein, Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs minister, Jerusalem Post, 6/8/2010

<http://pulsemedia.org/2010/06/08/the-best-hasbara/>



Zionist organizations key to creeping normalcy

- Jewish Federations of America
- Jewish Council on Public Affairs
- Israel on Campus Coalition (partnership with Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel) and

Some of their key initiatives include

- The Israel Advocacy Initiative
- The Israel Action Network
- The David Project

Israel Advocacy Initiative has two main principles:

- Building continued US support for Israel in Congress
- They will build this support by fostering community-based advocacy

Israel Action Network ...

Was created to ...strengthen and expand support for the democratic Jewish State of Israel by:

Building strong relationships with people of faith, human rights advocates, political and civic leaders, and friends and neighbors in our communities

(Taken from their websites)

Israel Advocacy Initiative

- Mobilizing communities to **intensify their interfaith and inter-group dialogue**.
- Promoting **community-campus partnerships** with federations and Community Resource Councils, and working with administration, faculty and student groups and addressing anti-Israel rhetoric.
- Addressing local communities' needs including an extensive field survey that will provide a valuable snapshot of local efforts and specific community needs.



Israel Action Network

In October 2010, the Jewish Federations of North America - an umbrella for 157 major pro-Israel organizations – and the Jewish Council on Public Affairs launched a \$6 million initiative called the **“Israel Action Network”** to fight ‘delegitimization’ – a strategy that will undoubtedly include “name and shame.”

Israel Action Network

The IAN was created to ...strengthen and expand support for the democratic Jewish State of Israel by:

Building strong relationships with people of faith, human rights advocates, political and civic leaders, and friends and neighbors in our communities

The Israel Action Network continues to expand its Community Impact Partnership (CIP) program.... to increase communities' capacity to proactively counter delegitimization, while developing potential non-Jewish allies. In MetroWest in particular, **the focus was placed on African-American, Latino, Mainline Protestant, and academic communities.**

<http://www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=267>

Israel Action Network

IAN has made concerted efforts to break into the Progressive community:

“With renewed funding, IAN would continue building relations with many constituencies ranging from the academy and the socially responsible investment community to LGBTQ groups and Christian moderates.”

<http://www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=267413>

Israel Action Network

The goal is to “Develop a cadre of Israel advocates who will represent the Jewish community in civil society. Participants learn how to engage target groups such as mainline churches, college campuses, labor unions, racial and ethnic groups, as well as other constituency-based organizations, media and influential.”

www.israelactionnetwork.org

Israel Action Network

The Federation recently voted to extend funding to IAN for three more years.



Israel Action Network

Vice President and General Counsel of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs Ethan Felson shared **his experiences building relationships with Presbyterians and responding to divestment initiatives in the church** (See Case Example).

Case Study: Ecumenical Interreligious Working Group of the Chicago Presbytery

Before Presbyterian Church(USA) divestment vote in 2014, the Ecumenical Interreligious Working Group contacted several Arab, Muslim and Palestine solidarity groups with a “working paper,” positing a new solution for Middle East peace.

The paper forwarded the Israeli narrative and was considered highly inaccurate and event offensive to Arabs and Muslims.

Turns out the paper was created with input from the Jewish Federation, which had been working to stop Presbyterian divestment. The paper was offered as an alternative to IPMN’s divestment resolution last summer.

The David Project

Formed in 2002 to start countering pro-Palestinian work on college campuses and to foster Israel advocacy among students.

Produced and distributed “Columbia Unbecoming,” a film demonizing Columbia professors Joseph Massad and others. An independent university committee found no basis for the allegations of the film.

Tried to stop the Roxbury Mosque by the Islamic Society of Boston

Confrontational leadership has been replaced by more the more ‘mainstream’ David Bernstein, who wants to make “coalitions with Indian and Latino student groups, as well as business schools, environmental groups and even other, more liberal, Israel-related organizations.”

(Source: Leah Burrows, The Jewish Advocate”



Paradigm shift

Recent strategic papers and articles by The David Project and Jewish news sources writing about the cooperation between the Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Council on Public Affairs show a strategic shift in countering pro-Palestinian activism.

No longer will they attack, protest or otherwise act to bring publicity to the issues. Instead, they are conducting outreach and taking the approach to foster an atmosphere of peace, where Israelis and Palestinians can live in harmony.

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means...

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www.hasbarafellowships.org



Hiding vilification behind a veneer of “civility”

Bernstein offers advice on how to be as insincere as possible in order to undermine Palestine solidarity work, especially on college campuses:

- Start every critique with supportive words for peace or free discourse or both.
- Don't accuse anti-Israel forces of anti-Semitism unless they openly vilify Jews; accuse them of being anti-peace for opposing Israel's right to exist.
- On campuses and other places where anti-Israel groups act in a disruptive manner, write and promulgate civility petitions calling on all parties to engage in a respectful discussion. If the anti-Israel groups sign it, then they constrain their future actions; if they don't, they can be accused of being uncivil.
- Avoid indictments against all Muslims or Islam; preface any criticism of a Muslim radical group with an acknowledgement of peaceful Muslims.

No one should be fooled by the mask of civility - Bernstein makes clear that the goal is to “delegitimize” and marginalize, not to actually engage in “civil” debate.

Electronic Intifada, Ali Abunimah's blog

Co-opting Muslims

These tactics are rampant in the Muslim community. Major organizations have been co-opted

Newest tactic is to engage Muslim leadership in conversations that frame Israel's attack on Gaza as a war between 'moderate' Muslims and 'extremist' Muslims.

Excerpts from "A New Paradigm For Muslim-Jewish Dialogue," by Marc Shneier, president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding. (The Jewish Week, 8/19/2014)

"First, this is not a war between Israel and Arabs. This is not a war between Muslims and Jews. Rather, it is a war between moderation and extremism; modernity and medievalism; civilization and barbarism.

"At the same time, Muslims in the West who have lately been indulging in harsh anti-Israel rhetoric over events in Gaza are operating on outdated perceptions that Muslims in the Middle East have already largely discarded."

Co-opting Muslims

“In ISIS territory and Hezbollah-controlled southern Lebanon, women are stripped of their rights, freedom of speech is non-existent and moderate and secular Muslims are also at risk. **In the thuggish world of Hamas, the people of Gaza are used as pawns and collateral damage. Their suffering and death is used to make Israel look bad.**”

~ “A New Paradigm For Muslim-Jewish Dialogue,” Mark Schneier, The Jewish Week, 8/19/2014

Co-opting Muslims

“ I plan to initiate a dialogue next month with Muslim friends and suggest that moderate Muslims everywhere take a clear stand against the jihadists. **Without a doubt, it is high time for the Muslims marching and even rioting in the streets of Paris and London to take a sober lesson from the playbook of their fellow Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan.** Tides are changing in the Mideast, and the future lies with the forces of moderation, not extremism.”

~ Marc Shneier in “A New Paradigm For Muslim-Jewish Dialogue,”
The Jewish Week, 8/19/2014



Co-opting Muslims

This one column then relegated Muslims who advocate for Palestinian rights and against war as so-called 'radicals.'

Muslims who remain quiet on the issue are accepted as 'moderate' and 'good' Muslims.

This is the effect of Creeping Normalcy.

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Muslim Leadership Institute

- Perfect example of Faith-washing
- The Zionist organization, Shalom Hartman Institute, takes young Muslims on an all-expenses paid trip to Israel to learn about Judaism.
- Founded by Muslim chaplain Imam Abdullah Antelpi, who'd long been involved with Shalom Hartman.
- MLI is financed in part by the Berrie Foundation, which also finances the Islamophobia network in the U.S.
- The trip violates the Palestinian-led call for boycott, divestment and sanctions

Muslim Leadership Initiative

- Participants in the MLI trips must agree to come back to the United States and engage in speaking tours and writing op-eds and articles.
- This is how we got Rabia Chaudry's piece in Time magazine, "What a Muslim American learned from Zionists."

Muslim Leadership Initiative

The take-away for Chaudry from her time with MLI and Shalom Hartman?

She said that **after meeting Palestinians, she understands why Israelis are afraid to lift the occupation.**

Conclusion

- Palestinians are still in a national liberation movement.
- Before dialogue can take place, Israel must abide by international law and lift the occupation, allow refugees their individual rights to return home and lift the siege on Gaza.
- There are several Jewish groups working on Palestinian rights as well as other social justice programs.
- Interfaith work must be centered on human rights and international law as a way to work together positively and constructively.

Conclusion

For more information on how to navigate approaches for interfaith work by Zionist organizations, read AMP's booklet, **“Creeping Normalcy, a.k.a. Faithwashing: How Israel co-opts advocacy for Palestinian rights in the United States through ‘interfaith cooperation.’”**

Get more information, booklets and more at AMP's Creeping Normalcy project at www.ampalastine.org/ and click on Projects.