

Is Anti-Zionism Anti-Semitism?

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 510 TRANSCRIPT

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host David Feldman and the rest of the gang. Hello, David.

David Feldman: Hello.

Steve Skrovan: And we also have the man of the hour, *Ralph Nader*. Hello, *Ralph*.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. Well, the program is going to have what's called information that is not widely circulated that you all need to know as citizens.

Steve Skrovan: On today's program, we're going to have a bit of a roundtable discussion on the evolving conflict in Palestine. We'll welcome Allan Brownfeld, who is the editor of *Issues*, the publication of the American Council for Judaism.

The American Council for Judaism is an 80-year-old organization that has opposed Zionism since its inception. We'll ask Mr. Brownfeld to shed some light on the rich tradition of anti-Zionism within the Jewish community. We'll also talk about the problematic racial history of Zionism and why the current political climate in America gets it wrong by conflating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

Joining Mr. Brownfeld and Ralph in this discussion will be our resident constitutional scholar, Bruce Fein. Last week, the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology testified on combating anti-Semitism on college campuses at a public hearing before the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Here's a clip from that hearing featuring New York Representative Elise Stefanik challenging Harvard president Claudine Gay.

Elise Stefanik: Can you not say here that it is against the code of conduct at Harvard?

Claudine Gay: We embrace a commitment to free expression, even of views that are objectionable, offensive, hateful. It's when that speech crosses into conduct that violates our policies against bullying, harassment, and intimidation –

Elise Stefanik: Does that speech not cross that barrier? Does that speech not call for the genocide of Jews and the elimination of Israel?

Claudine Gay: When that speech –

Elise Stefanik: You testified that you understand that as the definition of intifada. Is that speech according to the code of conduct or not?

Claudine Gay: We embrace a commitment to free expression and give a wide berth to free expression, even of views that are objectionable, outrageous, and offensive.

Elise Stefanik: You and I both know that's not the case. You were aware that Harvard ranked dead last when it came to free speech. Are you not aware of that report?

Steve Skrovan: After that, there was a lot of pressure for these presidents to resign or be fired. One of them did resign, Elizabeth Magill from the University of Pennsylvania, whereupon Bruce and Ralph wrote an open letter to President Gay and President Sally Kornbluth of MIT, urging them to stay put. We'll weave all of that into our conversation with Allan Brownfeld.

And as always, we'll also check in with our steadfast corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, is anti-Zionism the same as Anti-Semitism, or are we in the midst of a moral panic? David?

David Feldman: Allan Brownfeld is the Editor of *Issues*, the publication of the American Council for Judaism, an 80-year-old organization that has opposed Zionism since its inception, and a syndicated columnist who has worked as associate editor of *The Lincoln Review* and a contributing editor to such publications as *Human Events*, *The St. Croix Review*, and *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. Mr. Brownfeld has served as a staff aide to a US Vice President, Members of Congress, and the US Senate Internal Subcommittee.

Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Allan Brownfeld.

Allan Brownfeld: Thank you very much. Nice to be with you.

David Feldman: Bruce Fein is a Constitutional scholar and international law expert. Mr. Fein was Associate Deputy Attorney General under Ronald Reagan and is the author of *Constitutional Peril: The Life and Death Struggle for our Constitution and Democracy*, and *American Empire: Before the Fall*.

Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Bruce Fein.

Bruce Fein: Thank you for inviting me.

Ralph Nader: Yes, welcome, everybody, Allan and Bruce, I want to bring our listeners up to date on the scene now in Gaza.

As the news reports are showing, things are getting worse there. The body count still is given by the press at 18,000 and 50,000 injuries, but that is a huge undercount. Nobody for two months and a week can take 25,000 bombs and missiles and tank artillery in addition, on all kinds of institutions in Gaza—schools, hospitals, clinics, places of worship, marketplaces, water mains, you name it, apartments, homes—and just endure 18,000, so we will get a much bigger body count.

And almost everybody of the 2.3 million Gazans now has probably incurred some form of permanent health damage, if not injury. The air is full of heavy metals, reminding us of what it was like after 9/11. In Lower Manhattan, when the workers went to clean up the debris, they came down with permanent lung damage, for example.

Biden keeps saying that he wants Israel to abide by international law and to minimize civilian casualties, but what he does is contradictory to what he says. He has refused to support a ceasefire, which is a way of saying to the Israeli military, keep destroying civilian life and what's left of the infrastructure. So what we have here is a president who speaks with a forked tongue. He says that Israel should do the right thing, minimize casualties. He's not using any of his power whatsoever to get humanitarian aid in and stop the killing.

In the meantime, we've learned that Pope Francis has had a telephone call with the president of Israel, Mr. Herzog, and he warned Israel about using terror in the war on Hamas. According to the *Washington Post*. He said one terrorism doesn't justify another terrorism. He's also worried about Christian institutions in Jerusalem, West Bank, Bethlehem. This is where I want to bring Allan Brownfeld in, because there's been very little attention as to the Israeli discrimination and harassment of Christian institutions in the area.

Apparently, the *Washington Post* said that Pope Francis is in regular touch with the Christian church in Gaza, which has been damaged along with the Indonesian church. So, Allan, if I may call you that, based on your scholarship, what's going on in terms of Christian institutions in that area under Israeli occupation?

Allan Brownfeld: Well, Christian institutions are under increasing attack and the Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, tried to determine whether the claims of increased violence and hate crimes directed against Christians were true.

So in June, they sent one of its journalists dressed as a priest into downtown Jerusalem. Within five minutes, this journalist, named Yossi Eli, was derided and spat at, including by a child and a soldier. A bit later, a man mocked him in Hebrew, saying, "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned." Churches are being desecrated.

But it's important also to remember that Israel does not have religious freedom. A former president of Israel said that Jews have less religious freedom in Israel than in any country in the Western world. Israel is a theocracy. It's ironic that American Jews support strict separation of church and state in the United States, yet Jewish organizations support a theocracy in Israel.

Reform rabbis have no right to perform weddings, funerals. Their conversions are not recognized. Israel has an Orthodox chief rabbi supported by Israel's taxpayers, and there is no religious freedom for non-Orthodox Jews.

Ralph Nader: Well, why isn't the Christian church speaking up more on this? There's a Greek Orthodox church in Gaza that was damaged by Israeli bombs produced in the United States, by

the way, with the full support of Joe Biden and the Congress. Why isn't there more attention to this? The harassment in Bethlehem has been well-known for years.

Allan Brownfeld: A number of Christian leaders in Israel have spoken out, but their words are ignored.

Ralph Nader: Actually, you're quite right. There haven't been many reports in the US press on this, which is rather astonishing. We're talking over the years, listener, not just recently. Do you think the pope is trying to do the right thing here beyond words? What do you think the Vatican's doing here?

Allan Brownfeld: Well, I think the pope is trying to do the right thing, but everybody is afraid of this label, anti-Semite, if they criticize Israel. Israel has succeeded. In fact, it's a tactic used by the Israeli government. A former education minister said it very clearly. When someone in Europe attacks us in any way, we bring up the Holocaust. In America, if anyone attacks us, we call them anti-Semitic. That silences criticism.

And now we have the Anti-Defamation League publicly stating anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism. And now we have the House of Representatives voting anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism. Nothing is more ahistorical because there has been a strong anti-Zionist movement among Jews from the very beginning of Zionism.

In fact, Zionism was a minority view among Jews until the Holocaust. It was only after the Holocaust that many Jews who had previously been anti-Zionist came to the view that the displaced people needed a place to go and supported the creation of Israel as a Jewish state, which I think history is showing was a terrible mistake and was in violation of Jewish values.

Zionism had a slogan, "A land without people, for a people without land". But the land was fully occupied, and the Zionists then proceeded to do their best to remove as many Palestinians as they could.

Ralph Nader: Well, Judaism seems to be removed from the political discussion here about Israel, which is what you want to talk about in a few minutes.

I just want to remind our listeners that in February 2015, 400 rabbis and cantors, some of them very prominent, from Israel, the USA, Canada, Britain, and other countries, signed a letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu demanding that he stop the practice of home demolitions. "Every year, the report continues, "hundreds of Palestinian homes are demolished due to discriminatory administrative plans created and implemented by the Israeli military without significant Palestinian influence. Palestinians are very rarely allowed to build, even on their own land." ~~end quote.~~

I think what generated this was the demolition of 400 or 500 homes all at once by the Netanyahu regime, creating hundreds of homeless Palestinian families. But in their explanation, these rabbis and cantors not only said that it's violating international law, but also Jewish tradition. They connected it with Jewish principles.

Can you make that connection in a more detailed manner, Allan? Because a lot of the appeal of what Netanyahu is doing is surrounded by protective scripture that goes back to the Amaleks and all that that you talk about. And it's important, as the American Council for Judaism has pointed out, to show that Judaic principles are being violated here, just like Christian principles are being violated by Biden. It's not that we should inject all this religious scripture, but the point is it's important to clarify so they're not used in aggressive, violent ways and justifications for what's going on. Can you throw some light on that?

Allan Brownfeld: Yes. I remember when I was in college, I took a course called The Bible As Literature. And one of the lectures was, if the Jews are the chosen people, what exactly were they chosen for? The idea of the chosen people has been seriously distorted.

Reform Jews believe that Jews were chosen for special responsibilities, not for special privileges. Jews were chosen to live everywhere in the world and spread the Word of God and transmit the moral and ethical code that God had presented to the Jews. But Zionism adopted the idea that Jews were basically chosen to live in this particular geographic area in the Middle East.

In the Book of Leviticus, we have God telling the Jews to enter the Promised Land and kill every man, woman and child living there. Now, what kind of religion is that? Didn't God also create the people in Canaan? So I think we have in Judaism an evolution. When we get to the prophets, we become universal and look at morals and ethics applied to men and women of every race and religion and ethnicity, but the Bible is a very complicated book.

Ralph Nader: Arno Mayer, the historian at Princeton, wrote a book on the history of Zionism in Israel a few years ago, and he mentioned that in the Torah, the well-known phrase "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth", did not say 100 eyes for eyes or 100 teeth for tooth because they wanted to restrict and restrain the cycle of escalating vengeance. Is that the way you interpret "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth"? Because right now we're heading for hundreds of eyes for an eye and hundreds of teeth for a tooth.

In terms of the casualties, there's no end to it, which is why more and more experts on genocide are calling this Israeli government genocide in this little, tiny enclave of Gaza, which is about geographically the size of Philadelphia. How do you interpret that?

Allan Brownfeld: As we have seen, the idea that a Jewish life is worth more than a non-Jewish life is, unfortunately, the religious view of the ultra-right-wing in Israel, which is part of the settlement movement in the West Bank.

People have total contempt for non-Jews. In fact, Meir Kahane, the hero of many of the settlers, wanted in Israel to have legislation making it illegal for Jews to marry non-Jews, just like the Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany. The separation of Jews and non-Jews in Jewish literature is a very dangerous thing. The prophets moved beyond that.

Reform Judaism emerges from this universal, prophetic religion that the prophets advocated. But what is in Israel today in the government of Netanyahu is this ultra-right-winged view of religion,

that Jews are the chosen people, and everyone else really doesn't matter. It's a horrible, irreligious view.

Ralph Nader: Listeners, that's why I think it's good in any criticism of the Netanyahu regime rather than Israel. There's a lot of opposition to Netanyahu in Israel, any more than Trump represents Americans. And we're seeing here, as Allan has pointed out, the most extreme, right-wing, militaristic, jingoistic government in the history of Israel headed by Netanyahu. And he's let just a military run riot in Gaza. It's out of control, starting to be out of control in the West Bank and the refugee camps as well.

One of these groups you write in your article, the Chabad Hasidism, and you mentioned Baruch Goldstein. Do you want to tell us about that?

Allan Brownfeld: Baruch Goldstein was a follower of Meir Kahane. He was an American who emigrated to Israel. He killed 29 Muslims at prayer in a mosque in Hebron. And he has become a hero to the ultra-right-wing in Israel. In fact, a member of the Netanyahu cabinet, Ben-Gvir, had a portrait of Baruch Goldstein on his wall. He was a hero.

So we're dealing with a most extreme religious idea. In fact, what I had written was that the Catholic Church, for example, and various Protestant churches have removed from their literature anti-Semitic statements that they now regret had appeared in their Bible and in their other religious writings. It's time for Judaism to remove from its religious writings all these contemptuous attitudes toward non-Jews, which is a completely irreligious idea. If you start out with the idea that God created men and women of every race and every ethnic group, how can you then have contempt for God's creation and call yourself a religion?

Ralph Nader: You go into great detail historically here. What is the article you'd like our listeners to read if they want to go further on this point you make?

Allan Brownfeld: The title of the article which I wrote is called "The time has come to confront Jewish intolerance as well as anti-Semitism." And that appears in my publication, *Issues*. It appears in the fall 2023 issue, and that can all be found on the website of the American Council for Judaism, which is acjna.org. Or just put the name American Council for Judaism into Google and all these articles will come up.

Ralph Nader: Clearly, this intolerance has been imported into the United States for years. And now we're seeing it where people lose their jobs, they don't get invited to join law firms if they're law students, they are discriminated against, they're not promoted, their resignation is demanded if they have anything on their website that supports the Palestinians in Gaza or criticizes the Netanyahu regime.

But nobody's losing their jobs or not getting tenure or being forced to resign if they support the Israeli government's massacre in Gaza. So there's a tremendous double standard here, and it reaches such an extreme that one can accuse the supporters of this kind of censorship, occluding what's going on in Palestine now as a reverse anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism against the Arabs, what

Jim Zogby of the American Arab Institute has written about and spoken at an Israeli university years ago. He called it the Other Anti-Semitism.

An example of that was the Harvard Board of Overseers. Bruce Fein, why don't you come in on this? And what did they just decide when they said they were going to keep Claudine Gay as president of Harvard University after the House hearing situation?

Bruce Fein: It speaks volumes. You read their resolution in the second paragraph, which begins with, "So many people have suffered tremendous damage and pain because of Hamas's brutal terrorist attack. And the University's initial statement should have been an immediate, direct, and unequivocal condemnation." Not a single word about all the death and suffering in Gaza.

I'm not trying to justify and do not anything that Hamas did, but what speaks volumes about this statement is that it pretends that the only thing that has happened is October 7th. Suddenly the world stopped. Nothing happened afterwards. It ignores completely what's ongoing in Gaza, which I think speaks volumes about the bias and the prejudice there, namely what Allan was saying or what you suggested, Ralph, that Israeli lives are worth more than Palestinian lives. That's basically what it comes down to.

Ralph Nader: You're referring to the Harvard Board of Overseers, which decided just recently to keep Claudine Gay as president, but they didn't mention what was going on over there as if it was indifferent to them.

And I think that's what you're referring to. And that's the same position that Representative Stefanik from New York at the widely viewed House hearing the other day on December 5th, when she went after the three university presidents, including Claudine Gay, the president of Harvard, and she used hypothetical statements, which I want you to comment on. But the amazing thing is, while she was berating these people for legalistic answers to her questions, she was sitting on a record of full-throated support for weaponry, diplomatic cover, and unconditional support of the Israeli invasion and destruction of Gaza, a real genocide. Can you talk about that? And there's a letter to that effect that's just been sent to Representative Stefanik from constituents back in her district in upstate New York, demanding a resignation.

Bruce Fein: Yeah. Let me add a little bit of background here. So this is a hearing in which Representative Stefanik postulates a hypothetical that has nowhere occurred in the United States whatsoever, namely a student on a campus calling for the genocide of Jews. There's no evidence that that has ever happened.

She postulates only that hypothetical. She doesn't postulate a hypothetical more plausible, like hey, do you have a policy in general that any student who calls for a genocide of anyone is going to get reprimanded? That's not the question. The only genocide she cares about, and it's a hypothetical one, is against Jews. Meanwhile, we have an ongoing genocide in Gaza. According to the clearest language of the Genocide Convention, in which she's voting, the weapons that makes the United States aiding and abetting the crime of genocide makes us culpable.

The other thing that's forgotten as well is the Genocide Convention also requires signatories like the United States to seek to prevent genocide as well as punish. We're doing the opposite. Joe Biden, the president, is calling for rule of law, rule-based international order. The United States is obligated to try to prevent the genocide in Gaza, and instead we're pouring flames, fire into the genocide that's already ongoing.

There's another example of the incredible hypocrisy out there that we see, and the same with regard to the Congress of the United States passing H. Res. 888-Reaffirming the State of Israel's right to exist, basically saying that to criticize the Israeli government is a form of anti-Semitism.

Ralph Nader: Just to elaborate what Allan Brownfeld said, because I think it's good to get this precise, because it explains the assault on civil liberties in this country on this issue of Israel-Palestine. In 2002, the former minister of education in Israel, Shulamit Aloni, was asked by Amy Goodman the following question. "Often when there is dissent expressed in the United States against policies of the Israeli government, people here are called anti-Semitic. What is your response to that as an Israeli Jew?". He responded, "It's a trick. We always use it. When from Europe somebody criticizes Israel, we bring up the Holocaust. When in the United States, people are criticized of Israel, then they are anti-Semitic."

This is the former minister of education, Shulamit Aloni. And it's very rarely phrased publicly this way, but there is fear and dread in American universities and colleges now to speak out at all about anything relating to the US government's unconditional support, violating federal statutes, as Bruce can point out, of military aid, weapons of mass destruction being shipped as we speak to supply the torrential use of these weapons, bombs, 155 millimeter missiles, and tank artillery shells on the innocent civilians of Gaza.

This is quite serious. There's almost no precedent in American history, even McCarthyism didn't have that power of suppression in this country. He was just one senator. He was not a policeman. He created a lot of havoc, I remember those days, but nothing like this. And there was nothing at the time going on. The communists were not bombing the US. This is a very serious matter which the American Civil Liberties Union should take up. The Center for Constitutional Rights has already sued in California, and the Biden Administration. They're stepping up. But the ACLU itself, represents a beleaguered faculty member now and then, but it's really not using its resources to highlight this because of the fear that some of their donors will pull back on their contributions.

The longtime voice of dissent on this has been the American Council for Judaism. And I want to give Allan Brownfeld an opportunity to explain the history of the Council, what it's doing now, how people can get their newsletter, and why it is so important, not just because they confront the secretary of state of Israel with Judaic principles, but they also are fighting for the freedom to speak out themselves without enduring all kinds of censorship in the 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, all virtually unreported by the mainstream media.

Allan, do you want to elaborate that as only you can?

Allan Brownfeld: Thank you. The American Council for Judaism was started in 1942, and the reason it was started was that Reform Judaism, which had always opposed Zionism, was slowly

moving in the direction of supporting Zionism. Though the American Council was established to maintain this older idea, Zionism held that Jews really were a nationality, whereas Reform Judaism always argued that Judaism was a religion of universal values, and that Jews were citizens of the United States, of England, of France, of Italy, and religion and nationality were separate and distinct. The council argues that American Jews are American by nationality and Jews by religion, just as other Americans are Protestant, Catholic, or Muslim.

Zionism holds that Israel is the homeland of all Jews, and the Jews living outside of Israel are in exile. How many American Jews think they are in exile? In my opinion, the council's philosophy represents the view of a silent majority of American Jews, and that silent majority is becoming increasingly vocal in recent days.

What got me involved in this as a very young person was, when after I had my bar mitzvah and I looked at the synagogue and wondered why is this Israeli flag in the synagogue? We're Americans. That attitude took hold, and in the days before the Internet, when I was in high school, I found the American Council for Judaism, that there was a Jewish view that rejected the idea that Israel was somehow the homeland of all Jews.

The council has kept alive this idea of Judaism as a religion of universal values. In our view, what has happened in recent years can be compared to idolatry. Just as in the Bible, when we have people worshipping the golden calf, we have Jews now worshipping not the universal God, but the State of Israel has become the focus of attention, has become almost the object of worship.

And I think that this will change as Israel's behavior continues as it is now and as Jewish Americans slowly come to realize that the values they hold dear—religious freedom, separation of church and state—are exactly the opposite values that the State of Israel promotes.

I want to mention one story that I think is interesting. In 1948, the president of the American Council for Judaism was Lessing Rosenwald. Lessing Rosenwald's father was Julius Rosenwald, who was the founder of Sears, Roebuck. And Julius Rosenwald, after the Civil War, worked with Booker T. Washington to build schools for black children all over the American south.

Lessing Rosenwald met with President Truman at the White House in 1948, before Israel was declared as a state. And he told President Truman that the council for Judaism opposed creating a Jewish state in Palestine, because he opposed states based on religion anywhere. He urged President Truman to permit more of the displaced people from Europe after World War II, to come to the United States. And he called for increased Jewish immigration in Palestine, but not the creation of a Jewish state. And President Truman said, "I agree with you 100%." He said, "I'm a Southern Baptist. I believe in religious freedom, in complete separation of church and state. I don't believe in theocracies."

But Harry Truman, in 1948, was engaged in a tough presidential race against Governor Thomas Dewey of New York. And in order to ensure his reelection, he accepted large contributions from various Zionist supporters of the Jewish state, and he changed his mind.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Allan Brownfeld, author of many books on these subjects.

I'd like your view on this. When the pope made his deep concern clear to the president of Israel, Mr. Herzog, on the phone, whose contents began to leak out in recent days, the director of global social action for the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, American Rabbi Abraham Cooper, who has met with Pope Francis three times, made this point, and I'd like you to comment on it.

"To show empathy for Palestinians who lost loved ones in Gaza is a decent thing to do. But what the pope was approaching, and I hope he didn't get there, was to give a moral equivalency to the medieval butchery of the Hamas attack and the acts of a democratic country."

Allan Brownfeld: The first thing I would say is that it's not accurate to call Israel a democratic country. It's a democratic country for Jews, but it has occupied the West Bank in violation of international law for more than 50 years. And Palestinians living on the West Bank are not part of a democracy. They do not vote for the government under which they live.

In fact, Israel's system has been referred to by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, as apartheid. And I know a little about apartheid because for a number of years, my articles appeared regularly in South Africa, in Afrikaans, in *Die Burger*, in Cape Town, and *Beeld* in Johannesburg. And I was a regular visitor to South Africa. I remember my Afrikaner friend saying, "We know this system is wrong. The question is, how can we change it?" and "If we don't change it, our children will leave. They'll go to America, to Australia, to Canada." He said, "We are Western Christian people who believe in freedom, and we are mistreating our black population."

And then South Africa changed. President de Klerk gave up apartheid together with Nelson Mandela, and they won the Nobel Peace Prize for doing so. If Israel had a man like President de Klerk to recognize how Palestinians had been treated so badly and tried to correct it, that would be a wonderful thing.

But Noam Chomsky has said that apartheid in Israel is worse than apartheid in South Africa, because in South Africa, the government needed its black population to constitute the labor force of the country, whereas in Israel, the government only wants to remove the Palestinians. Prime Minister Netanyahu has talked about annexing the West Bank, and members of his cabinet have talked about expelling indigenous Palestinian residents.

So, the South African example is something that Israel should follow. It should recognize that its current treatment of Palestinians is immoral, in violation of Jewish morals and ethics, and it should adopt a genuine democracy.

Ralph Nader: What about Rabbi Cooper's other point when he expressed that "There is no moral equivalency to the medieval butchery of the Hamas attack and the acts of a democratic country." I assume he means the invasion of Gaza after October 7th, which is on the way to producing 100 times more deaths, injuries, disease, and destruction than occurred on October 7th, when the Israeli defense system was asleep, could have easily prevented the entry into their country, but didn't.

And they also knew a year ago the explicit plans of Hamas that they got through their espionage system. And they brushed it off, saying Hamas didn't have the brains to execute such a complex maneuver. What do you think of this constant moral equivalency issue?

Allan Brownfeld: One of the things I think is that while what Hamas did was a terrible act of terrorism, Zionism was built on terrorism. When Zionists blew up the King David Hotel, when Zionists assassinated Lord Moyne and Count Bernadotte in Deir Yassin, innocent Palestinians were lined up in the city square and killed for no reason. But the Zionist reason was clear, to terrorize the Palestinian population so that they would leave.

And 750,000 Palestinians, half of the Palestinian population in 1948, fled after these massacres that Zionist terrorism had inflicted upon them. So Zionist terrorism has a long, long history. Consider the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In fact, the man that assassinated Yitzhak Rabin is a hero to the current right-wing members of the Netanyahu cabinet.

Ralph Nader: Yitzhak Rabin was the prime minister of Israel, listeners should know, at the time.

Allan Brownfeld: Terrorism against civilians is a terrible thing, no matter who does it. But Zionists have a long history of doing it, and most Jewish Americans, especially younger people, are not aware of this negative history at all.

Ralph Nader: By the way, the widow of Yitzhak Rabin, after she lost her husband, made the exact same point about the terroristic origins of Israel in the 1940s.

Before we go to some questions, Allan, how would you respond to anyone today in the United States criticizing the Israeli regime and what they're doing in Gaza, or just criticizing for a variety of things how they're treating Palestinian Arabs in Israel, and they're accused of anti-Semitism? You're critical of the Israeli government and the Netanyahu regime, so you would be accused of anti-Semitism in the wild expansion and dilution of the meaning of that word. How would you respond?

Allan Brownfeld: That's right. Saying that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism is to ignore the fact that the majority of Jews historically opposed Zionism. When Theodor Herzl in 1897, was planning the first Zionist Congress, he wanted to have it in Germany. All the rabbis in Germany said, "We reject your philosophy. We don't want your meeting in Germany." That's why the first Zionist Congress took place in Switzerland.

The overwhelming majority of Jews, both Orthodox and Reform, rejected Zionism. It was a minority movement until the Nazis. Until the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe, Zionism had very little support among Jews in any free country. But after the Nazis and the Holocaust, Jewish opinion changed. In my opinion, it's now changing back.

But American Jews never adopted the Zionist philosophy because American Jews never thought they were in exile. When the first Reform synagogue was built in 1841 in Charleston, South Carolina, the rabbi, a man named Gustav Poznanski, at the opening ceremony said, "This city is

our Jerusalem. This country is our Palestine. This temple is our house of God." The idea that American Jews were in exile was never an idea that anyone held.

Ralph Nader: Why would President Joe Biden just recently say words to this effect? "Without the State of Israel, no Jew anywhere in the world would be safe."

Allan Brownfeld: Now, that was the most absurd statement. Of course, President Biden has frequently said, "I am a Zionist," but I think that when he uses the term, "I am a Zionist," he doesn't understand what Zionism really involves and what its philosophy really is.

Zionism believes that Israel is the homeland of all Jews and that all Jews should move there. That's why Zionist organizations are involved in promoting groups like Birthright Israel to send young Jewish Americans on trips to Israel in the hope that they will eventually emigrate there. I think that if President Biden understood all the complexities of Zionism, especially since he has Jewish members of his own family, I'm sure he doesn't think they are in exile in America. So I attribute that to a misunderstanding of what Zionism really is and what it really involves.

Ralph Nader: Well, there's a lot that Joe Biden doesn't understand. Before we go to Steve and the questions, how can people connect with the American Council for Judaism?

Allan Brownfeld: Just go to our website where all that information is available. The website is acjna.org, or listeners can put the name American Council for Judaism into Google and our website will jump up. Many of our past issues are on the website and can be read there. Everything can be found on our website—mailing address, phone number

Ralph Nader: Bruce, before we go to the questions, any other points you can make?

Bruce Fein: Politicians in general, and that's surely true of Mr. Biden, always have ulterior motives. Joe Biden doesn't care about understanding Zionism. He's told, "Hey, if you say this, you're more likely to get votes and money in 2024." You don't understand the intellectual universe of politicians is very cramped. It's power and how I can get votes. He didn't spend any time sitting and reading about the history. He probably doesn't even know who Theodor Herzl is. He doesn't know any of this stuff. He doesn't care about it.

He cares about only the balloting on November of 2024. And that's one of the, what I call the decay of our political class. So when you try to appeal to reason, again, you're reading Shakespeare to cows. It's just not going to work.

Ralph Nader: Steve?

Steve Skrovan: I wanted to get back to the Elise Stefanik and the hearings of the university presidents.

I guess this question is for Bruce and Ralph. Ralph, you mentioned that they gave very legalistic answers to Elise Stefanik's hypothetical about genocide against Jews. Let me ask you first, Bruce. How would you have answered that if you were in that hearing?

Bruce Fein: By being diplomatic and saying, one, Ms. Congresswoman, we believe that genocide against any group is horrendous and terrible, just as an abstract matter. But the fact is, no, we haven't encountered a single student on any of our campuses that has ever said or called for genocide of Jews. So this is really a hypothetical.

On the other hand, we witness every day an ongoing genocide that you are supporting by voting weapons to Israel in order to support a siege that openly and notoriously says no food, no water, no medicine, no shelter, and no power, which is a formula for physical destruction of a group, in whole or in part.

And that is truly genocide, so the way to answer it is to put her on the defensive. You're talking about a hypothetical genocide, and we haven't even witnessed anyone. And I would say, we have a good enough job, and we vet our students. We don't admit people who go around calling for genocide. That's why this is a hypothetical, right? But we do vet for people who actually are involved in genocide itself. That's the way I would respond.

Ralph Nader: Representative Stefanik is an election denier like Trump, a Trump toady and coddles white supremacist theories. And look at all the approbation she's gotten by people who hate her politics but will forgive her for anything because she represented the Netanyahu view at that hearing, which was behind her questioning. Quite remarkable, given her record.

You've had a lot of experience on Capitol Hill, on the staff, on advising them. Do you think Congress, the vast majority that follow the AIPAC policy line, which is support the Israeli government, right or wrong, unconditionally...do you think there's going to be any change in that overwhelming majority that has that view in the Senate and House

Allan Brownfeld: We have not had an opportunity in this conversation to discuss AIPAC. I have just written an article calling for AIPAC to be registered as a foreign agent of Israel. This has been published by a group called Americans for Middle East Understanding. AIPAC is the reason Congress provides Israel with all this money.

Israel has received more money since its creation than any other country in the world. Israel has received more than \$260 billion. This is all documented in a report by the Congressional Research Service. AIPAC spends millions of dollars to defeat members of Congress who criticize Israel. They did that to Congressman Paul Findley of Illinois, Senator Charles Percy of Illinois, and a number of others. They will go after every member of Congress that is criticizing Israel today with as much money as they have. They put millions into the last presidential election.

They defeated Congressman Andy Levin, a Jewish congressman from Michigan who had proposed that the Congress support a two-state resolution. AIPAC completely distorts American foreign policy. Members of Congress vote for all this money for Israel simply to be able to get money from AIPAC for their campaigns.

AIPAC has now two political action committees that are contributing millions of dollars each year, and there is every reason for them to be registered as a foreign agent of Israel. This is something

the American Council for Judaism worked with Senator Fulbright worked to accomplish years ago when he was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, but it has not happened.

Ralph Nader: Tell our listeners what AIPAC stands for.

Allan Brownfeld: American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Ralph Nader: And it has an eight-story building on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. And what do they do there, Bruce?

Bruce Fein: I'd call it more like a Taj Mahal than a building. You walk in and there on the left is Sheldon Adelson, who's given hundreds of millions of dollars there. He looks like Chairman Mao on the wall. But they got basically eight floors of people doing nothing 24 hours a day, looking at the news angle, who they have to get into, the news producers writing letters to the editor, op-eds, who's going to talk to this member of Congress or that one. It's really quite an efficient machine there.

Ralph Nader: So efficient, Allan and Bruce, that since 1948 there hasn't been a single congressional hearing in the House or in the Senate inviting Israeli and Palestinian peace advocates to testify, even though many of the Israeli peace advocates were retired military intelligence veterans, mayor of Haifa, ministers of justice. AIPAC has kept out leading Israelis over 75 years from having a voice before a congressional committee.

Bruce Fein: You were pointing out that recently when Congress held the hearing to listen to those who had been taken hostage on the Jewish side, there were no Palestinians who had been detained arbitrarily without any charges on the Palestinian side. So it's an example of, again, freezing out any voice on the Palestinian side.

Ralph Nader: Unfortunately, we're out of time. We've been speaking with Allan Brownfeld and Bruce Fein, with questions from Steve, David, and Hannah, which will be on the podcast. And if there's any final thing you think you'd like to say, Allan, that we haven't discussed, please do before we close,

Allan Brownfeld: Well, I would like to say that I think that the vast majority of Jewish Americans share the views of the American Council for Judaism. They do not believe they are in exile. They do not believe Israel is their homeland, and they believe Judaism is a religion of universal values, not a nationality. So I'm confident that we will move away from the Zionist domination of Jewish life in the future, at least I hope we will.

Ralph Nader: On that note, hopefully. Thank you very much, Allan.

Allan Brownfeld: Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Allan Brownfeld and Bruce Fein. We will link to their work at ralphnaderradiohour.com.

Now let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute* for Friday, December 15, 2023. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana denied payment for proton therapy for Robert Salim's throat cancer. Salim was a celebrated Louisiana trial lawyer, and he was ready to fight the insurance company. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana said it would not pay for proton therapy. The insurance company said the costly proton procedure was appropriate only after doctors had previously tried other methods for irradiating the head and neck. "This treatment is not medically necessary for you," the insurance company said.

Salim decided to do what few people can afford to do. He paid MD Anderson \$95,000 for his proton therapy and readied for a battle with the insurance company. As always, Skeeter Salim was determined to win. And after a long legal battle, he did.

For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan, along with David Feldman and Hannah and Ralph. That's our show. I want to thank our guests again, Allan Brownfeld and Bruce Fein.

For those of you listening on the radio, we're going to cut out now. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for a bonus material we call "The Wrap Up", featuring Francesco DeSantis and "In Case You Haven't Heard." A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Substack site soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

Steve Skrovan: Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up", was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our social media manager is Steven Wendt.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. There are a few copies of the latest issue of *Capitol Hill Citizen* left if you want to obtain them at capitolhillcitizen.com.