

CONCLUDING REMARKS OF THE AYBIR REPORT “THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE ANTISEMITISM ACCUSATION AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN THE WEST”

Full report in Turkish available at <https://aybir.org/yayinlar/rapor/antisemitizm-suclamasinin-aracsalligi-ve-batidaki-akademik-ozgurluge-etkisi/>

The October 7 Operation carried out by Hamas against Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories should be considered together with the fact that all of Palestine has been turned into an open-air prison and Gaza into a concentration camp for a long time, long before October 7, 2023. Not just the people who support Palestine in its just cause but everyone who can step outside of their political/ideological engagement should be able to see clearly what is happening in Palestine in general and in Gaza specifically in all its nakedness. Indeed, UN Secretary General António Guterres stated that October 7 did not take place in a vacuum; it reacted to the 56-year suffocating occupation that the Palestinian people have been subjected to. The argument that Gaza, where Hamas receives the strongest support due to the operation it carried out on that date, should be considered a legitimate target has been rejected by the world public opinion. The fact that Western states have ignored and even encouraged the atrocities that the apartheid Israeli regime has been carrying out for 75 years has opened up an area for Israel, which violates all the rules and principles of international law and the law of war, to test a new level of violation every time.

Governments’ handling of Israeli oppression has not been accepted by the people in almost all countries from the East to the West. The demonstrations that attract a good size crowd in all countries and that continue despite all the pressures in almost every part of the world are a concrete indicator of this. While there is no obstacle to the media and all other institutions and organizations that have an attitude and statements in support of Israel, some form of pressure, heavy in some cases is being exercised against protests and statements in favor of Palestine. It is expected that universities, which are institutions where thoughts can be expressed freely, will remain outside this general oppressive attitude. However, while universities in some countries spontaneously suppress academics and students with anti-Semitism clamor, universities that try to stay out of this hysteria, even partially, have become the targets of the media, lobbies, politicians, relevant public institutions and organizations, and interest groups.

It must be admitted that the accusations of “anti-Semitism” and “support for terrorism” have become serious instruments of pressure on the development and expression of free thought regarding the Israeli issue. These justifications have already been in circulation in the West for a long time and lead to the self-censorship of free thought. The fear of losing one’s job or losing reputation by being targeted is a natural obstacle, narrowing the scope of freedom of thought. Despite this oppressive climate, academics and students who are able to act aggressively in expressing their views are being pressured and threatened by the administrations at various levels; universities and administrators who value freedom of expression and do not follow oppressive policies are being surrounded to change their attitudes. The mechanism championed by billionaire Bill Ackman in recent months is a mechanism that is in line with the ideology of Zionism and based on supporting Israel under all circumstances. Antisemitism is used as a tool/lever in this mechanism, which includes accepting pro-Israel/Zionist definitions as truth, using the expanded scope of antisemitism, which is a hate crime, as a basis, and activating lobbying with the support of finance, politics, bureaucracy and the media. The “Ackman-type oppression mechanism” is functional in suppressing freedom of expression in the university field, as in every field.

This report, which examines the attitude of Western countries towards freedom of expression in academia through examples of the UK, US, France and Germany, comes up with the following main findings:

- Powerful Jewish lobbies use antisemitism, which is among the “hate crimes”, as an instrument to prevent the expression of anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist views. The irony of the matter is that despite the fact that Arabs and Jews come from the same ethnic roots and are Semitic peoples, the concept of antisemitism is coded only as anti-Jewish and any attitude or action that may develop against Jews’ or Israel’s actions is immediately excluded from the boundaries of freedom of expression.
- One of the two main factors that facilitate the instrumentalization of antisemitism is the Holocaust, which has left a deep mark on Western memory, and the other is the capital and media power managed or directed by Jews.
- The media, which codes antisemitism as the most important hate crime and the Holocaust as the greatest of suffering, legitimizes all that apartheid Israel has done and its crimes against humanity through this coding.
- The Jews, who have mobilized the tutelage they have established over politics thanks to their media and capital power to protect and safeguard Israel, see the weapons and logistic support of Western countries in their pocket, so to speak, but they are not content with this.
- Universities are seen as places that must be kept under control to prevent public opinion from forming in an undesirable direction. Anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian statements made by students and academics at universities are immediately excluded from the scope of “freedom of thought and expression” with the accusation of anti-Semitism. The following methods and methods are used to do this:
 - Pressure has been exerted on university administrations and sometimes directly on their administrators by claiming that they have not taken effective measures “against hate crimes and anti-Semitism.”
 - Lobbies such as the ADL and Brandeis play an active role in documenting and reporting the crime of anti-Semitism. They try to prevent and silence anti-Israel protests and statements in an organized manner with anti-Semitism and terrorism support clamor, but they bring individual stories of Jewish students in many cases with no supporting poofs and reactions to the forefront.
 - As can be seen in the sources included in the report, the language used in reporting anti-Israel protests and reactions to these protests is mostly in a way that supports the claims of Jewish lobbies.
 - Jewish individuals and Jewish organizations that donate to universities have been mobilized. Universities have been forced to prevent anti-Israel protests by threatening to cut off their financial support or by cutting them off directly.
 - To prevent activities and protests of student groups in support for Palestine, student unions organizing the events are banned; in some cases, these groups are closed down.
 - Academics have been directly threatened with being fired or students with not being hired after graduation.

Despite all kinds of pressure and threats, it is seen that an undercurrent of opposition to Israel and the politics and established order that unconditionally support Israel is growing stronger in Western public opinion. The “to-do list” for continuing this trend is as follows:

- The role of social and digital media, which give incomparably more space to different voices than conventional media, is clear. Again, it is certain that media such as Al Jazeera, Anadolu Agency and TRT World, which provide a platform for different voices and report news not seen in Western media organizations, also contribute to the formation of relevant public opinion. It is important to use and strengthen these main channels more effectively.
- Many organizations, especially the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, can take initiatives to accelerate the institutionalization process of the State of Palestine, which was declared in 1988. The aim should be to end the occupation in order for Palestine to be elevated from observer status to state status in the UN and to regain its territorial integrity, and initiatives that can take concrete steps should be developed.
- Israel can be subject to an academic boycott until it withdraws from the occupied Palestinian territories. At this point, many research institutes and centers, especially academic institutions in Turkey, can bring up the option of isolating Israel academically.
- Initiatives should be taken to ensure that academics who became unemployed due to Israeli attacks, especially at the Islamic University of Gaza, conduct research and work in countries such as Turkey, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia.
- Providing financial and research support to academics who were fired for expressing anti-Israeli ideas and academics in conflict zones, and their temporary or permanent employment in universities and research centers will give at least some of them the courage to act freely.
- It is known that Gulf capital provides considerable funds to Western universities. Ways should be found to use these funds effectively in a way that prevents Jewish capital from pressuring universities. In addition, with the effective use of these funds and the institutional support and ownership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Palestinian universities and research centers can be established in different parts of the world and the way can be paved for academic freedom of thought.
- In order for the academic world to have a Palestinian agenda independent of the current cycle of Israeli oppression to Gaza, an initiative called the Palestine Academic Initiative, which can operate globally and has a comprehensive vision, should be implemented. The fact that a world that does not solve the Israeli issue cannot achieve peace and tranquility should be supported by academic knowledge production. The only antidote to the pro-Israel lobbies developing concepts and imposing their preconceptions as universal truths is to produce new concepts and knowledge.
- Mechanisms should be developed against mechanisms that restrict or prevent academic freedom and freedom of expression. It is important to report administrative measures that restrict the rights of individuals.
- NGOs and universities should take an active position all over the world; they should develop social and academic collaborations. The formal and informal interaction provided by these collaborations will help to realize joint projects and establish issue-based solidarity in difficult times.

While concluding this study, which examines the instrumentalization of anti-Semitism's reactions to the Israeli occupation and/or support for Palestine at the expense of restricting academic freedom, it is necessary to point out that the increasing trend of protests against Israeli aggression should also be evaluated. Undoubtedly, such an evaluation is the subject of other and more in-depth research. It would not be right to think that citizens, the business world and intellectuals in Western countries are not aware of the deterministic power of Jewish capital and lobbies that has reached the point of domination for some time. Along with the discomfort felt by this awareness, conscientious people who see the cost of this deterministic power on human rights violations, national security, and peace and

tranquility in the entire world, especially in the Middle East, feel the need to raise their voices. Although the Ackman-type suppression mechanism seems effective and functional for now despite this awareness, it is perceived that the lobbies' efforts to maintain the status quo are under serious threat. The subcontractors of the Zionist ideology have reached the limits of their recklessness to set the world on fire if necessary for the goals of Zionism.