

"Let's Burn the Jew" is not Anti-Semitic?

by [Christine Williams](#)

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The judge's ruling that it was not anti-Semitic for the fifteen-year-old to declare, "Let's burn the Jew" as he set fire to his classmate's hair is a disturbing case that reveals the talons of anti-Semitism in both the courtroom and the school system, and represents an open tolerance for again hating "the Jew."

Anti-semitism sank to a new low in Canada after a Winnipeg judge [ruled](#) that grabbing a Jewish classmate, flicking a lighter to her hair and saying, "Let's burn the Jew," was not anti-Semitic. The incident took place between two fifteen-year-old classmates, where the defendant pleaded guilty to assault with a weapon. The lawyer for the defendant implied that it was [the girl's fault](#) that her hair caught fire -- because she pulled away. Then Manitoba Provincial Court Judge Robert Finlayson agreed with the defense that the action was one of teen impulsiveness.

The victim not only stated that the incident "changed her world upside down," but that she needed therapy to deal with her fears and felt that she was blamed by some people in the school for making too much out of the incident.

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center in Canada expressed horror at Finlayson's ruling. In a [press release](#), CEO Avi Benlolo stated that he could not imagine "the same decision would have been rendered had the perpetrator targeted any other minority group in a similar way."

One need only imagine the far-reaching outcry had the word "Jew" been substituted for "gay", "black" or "Muslim," and rightly so; yet "let's burn the Jew" was dismissed as virtually child's play. Benlolo also noted a broader implication: "To ignore the racial overtones -- the perpetrator's direct reference to the Holocaust and the burning of six million Jews in the concentration camps -- is almost incomprehensible." The court's ruling conjures up the lest-we-forget-idiom in memory of the Holocaust era, where tolerance for the intolerable, bystander "blindness," media bias, propaganda and unreasonable targeting of the Jews were endemic.

A B'nai Brith [statement](#) points out: "The finding is disappointing in the sense that it muddies the waters of hate crime legislation while giving a most unfortunate license to those that hate and bully -- particularly in the school system." Now B'nai Brith Canada is calling on the Attorney General to review its guidelines in imposing enhanced sentences in hate-motivated crime cases.

This case is not an isolated occurrence when it comes to collective attitudes about anti-Semitism past and present. [Historically](#), many members of the German public were bystanders and did nothing to condemn the Nazi racial policies against the Jews, fellow patriotic citizens who made sweeping contributions to the cultural, economic and social building of Germany. Just prior to the Holocaust, as Jews faced mounting persecution and humiliation, Nazis began introducing anti-Jewish decrees which lead to the elimination of the rights of Jewish citizens. Public indifference went beyond the borders of Germany and Europe. Today we hear little about the ["Holocaust in American Life"](#). American historian Peter Novick points out: "the culpable, sometimes willed obliviousness of American gentiles to the murder of European Jews; the indifference to their brethren's fate by a timid and self-absorbed American Jewry." An additional horror seems to be the same "willed obliviousness" to the slaughter of Christians in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria and the Sudan.

In describing the post Holocaust decades, Novick explains that by the 1970s and beyond, the Holocaust had become a "shocking, massive, and distinctive thing," but it had been unseen by many -- even Jews-- while the Holocaust was actually being carried out. He argues that the Holocaust was largely a retrospective construction, something that would not have been recognizable to most people at the time. He points to a lack of interest precipitated by human preconceptions. For example, he states: people are "interested in the televangelist caught with the bimbo, the gangster who is devout in his religious observance: vice where we expect virtue, virtue where we expect vice; that which shatters our preconceptions."

Today, we ignore a creeping anti-Semitism that singles out Jews unfairly, and targets the state of Israel. In addressing the [New Anti-Semitism](#), Victor Davis Hanson, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, discusses how Israel is being singled out by the international community, with over 75% of recent UN resolutions targeting Israel for human rights violations, far more than for more deserving countries such as Sudan, Congo, or Rwanda in which millions have been killed in genocides. In answer to the question "why is the international community so anti-Israel?", Hanson points to a "new sort of fashionable and socially acceptable anti-Semitism" that looms large.

This blame-the-Jew, blame-Israel trend is a disturbing one, all too reminiscent of the era [when Nazis](#) used propaganda campaigns to promote a lethal hatred of Jews, who were portrayed as sub-human, and interested primarily in their own economic gain. Hitler used the Jews as a scapegoat, blaming them for Germany's economic and social problems. A major tool of the Nazis' propaganda machine was the popular weekly Nazi newspaper, [Der Stürmer](#). At the bottom of the front page of every issue was written in bold letters: "The Jews are our misfortune!" *Der Stürmer* also regularly featured vicious caricatures of Jews.

Currently, there is a strong and consistent bias against Israel that keeps growing; it fuels anti-Semitism, especially in mainstream media outlets, where Israel is portrayed as a racist and murderous state. The BBC, [according to the journalist Tom Gross](#), "breaking its own charter to be balanced, is already repeating lies on its website that Sharon caused the Second Intifada." BBC Radio News "eulogized Sharon by giving the

floor as the sole speaker to a Palestinian man who claimed Sharon should not have been allowed to die of natural causes."

It is under-reported that Israel has taken extraordinary measures to avoid harming Palestinian noncombatants, even when Hamas not only does just the reverse, but aims to increase casualties among its own people to be able to blame Israel for those as well. One [Gaza eyewitness](#) told reporters that Hamas "wanted the [Israelis] to shoot at the [the civilians'] houses so they could accuse them of more war crimes." In highlighting media bias, the Committee for Accuracy for Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) conducted a [six-month study](#) of the *New York Times* and detailed how the newspaper indicted Israel, and even omitted context, in order to promote the Palestinian narrative. [Honest Reporting](#) is another media watchdog group that "monitors the news for bias, inaccuracy, or other breach of journalistic standards in coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict."

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has repeatedly made [anti-Semitic remarks](#), yet his premises and sentiments seem to have seeped into a level of acceptance by the mainstream. As Nasrallah refers to the State of Israel as a "cancerous entity" of "ultimate evil" whose "annihilation ... is a definite matter;" and says, "if we searched the entire world for a person more cowardly, despicable, weak and feeble in psyche, mind, ideology and religion, we would not find anyone like *the Jew*. Notice, I do not say the Israeli."

Nasrallah continues: "If they (Jews) all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide," and [discusses Hezbollah's goals](#) in an interview on Egyptian television:

"[T]his is an illegal state; it is a cancerous entity and the root of all the crises and wars and cannot be a factor in bringing about a true and just peace in this region. Therefore, we cannot acknowledge the existence of a state called Israel, not even far in the future, as some people have tried to suggest. Time does not cancel the legitimacy of the Palestinian claim."

As indictments of Israel and the [fabrication of Palestinian history](#) continue, this new anti-Semitism intensifies, and the propaganda mill creates a further warping. This new anti-Semitism now can be found as well in a growing trend among evangelical Christians, once overwhelmingly sympathetic to Israel. Peter Wehner, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and who has worked in the administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush, explains this pro-Palestinian trend in his article, "[Israel and Evangelical Christians](#)". He calls it a "movement," and states that it rests in part on the uninformed and unexamined view that Israel's founding was illegitimate and immoral, and that Israel has become an enemy of justice and peace. In this line of thinking, no matter how erroneous, it follows that "authentic Christianity therefore requires one to embrace the pro-Palestinian narrative on the basis of their faith."

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