



# UJPO News



## INSIDE

- Remembering CCCJ..... 1
- National UJPO News... 2
- Honourable Mentshn. 3
- What's In Order ..... 4
- Culture ..... 4
- A Little Nosh..... 6
- USA ..... 7
- Middle East ..... 8

The United Jewish People's Order is a national, nonpartisan, socialist-oriented, secular organization, serving Canada's progressive Jews in individual organizations since 1926 and collectively as the UJPO since 1945.

**Volume #41, Issue #3**

Banner graphic by Avrom Yanovsky, 1911-1979

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## Remembering the Committee of Concerned Canadian Jews and their fight for Palestinian rights

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*By Paul Weinberg, May 17, 2021*

We are a group of Jews who have supported Jewish aspirations for a homeland. Therefore, it grieves and angers us that the Israeli regime will not accord the same rights to the Palestinian people. We abhor the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the wanton destruction of its civilian population. The Palestinian question will not be resolved by attempts to eliminate the Palestinian people or the Palestinian Liberation Organization. We would like to remind the Canadian Jewish community that recognizing the legitimacy of the Israeli state does not require blind support of its policies and aggressive actions.

An August 22, 1982 newspaper ad appeared in the *Toronto Star* containing about 100 names of Canadian Jews. The *Canadian Jewish News* refused to carry this appeal, so it was published in the *Star* instead.

Sometime in the summer of 1982, Jews in their 20s and 30s in Toronto, including myself, came out in droves to meetings of the new Committee of Concerned Canadian Jews (CCCJ). (Yes, our name was a bit awkward and wordy.)

“It brought people, the fence sitters. We were a strong movement. Meetings attended by 50 or more people,” recalls Richard Lee, a University of Toronto professor of anthropology.

One of our first acts was to negotiate among ourselves the appropriate wording for our ad. Among the signatories were writer and journalist Rick Salutin, academic and NDP organizer Gerald Caplan, and dissident Rabbi Reuben Slonim – the latter had been fired by his Toronto synagogue. What stood out about our ad was that it emphasized the plight of the Palestinian people and the efforts to neutralize or kill them instead of coming to terms with their historic claims and grievances.

Any open criticism of Israel was strictly taboo in the tightly knit postwar Canadian Jewish community, which included many refugees and Nazi death camp survivors. Many community members, including my parents, viewed the founding of a Jewish state in 1948 as a miracle and central to their identity and existence, and a place of refuge from anti-Semitism.

Fissures started to develop following the opportunistic invasion launched by Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon. Then came the horror of the mid-September massacre of more than 1,300 Palestinian and Lebanese men, women and children in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut. Members of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) stood by as their allied Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia men went about their rampage.

The tough words in our newspaper ad made us a target. One letter compared us to Jews who had collaborated with the Nazis. Ester Reiter, listed as CCCJ chair in the ad, had her own unsettling experience.

“My youngest son, who was 16, was home alone. He got a hate phone call threatening to hurt him. He was so scared and I was away for the weekend. He stayed away from the house at an all-night café for four nights. He was afraid to go home.”

*Continued on page 9*

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# NATIONAL UJPO NEWS

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## FROM WINNIPEG

By Harriet Zaidman

UJPO Winnipeg established a committee which, over the last year, has met to analyze our past work with the intent of establishing a path for future sustainability and growth. To that end, a Vision and Mission Statement was developed, discussed and will be used as a guide in our programming decisions. Following is a brief excerpt:

### Our vision

- A just world in which all people enjoy their human and civil rights to live in peace, security, and comfort in a sustainable environment, with equality of rights and freedoms, and with the ability to celebrate and sustain their own ways and cultures without any form of oppression including anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, exploitation, discrimination, imperialism, colonization, occupation, annexation, displacement, slavery, and genocide.

### Our mission

- To celebrate and sustain progressive Jewish secular culture for generations to come;
- To be a progressive voice in the Manitoba Jewish community and a Jewish voice in the Manitoba progressive community;
- To collaborate with all people and organizations who share our vision.

### Sad loss

The late Mark Golden was a longtime and well-loved member of UJPO Winnipeg. His death in 2020 grieved us greatly; Mark's stalwart positions on matters of principle earned the respect of many. His work on the board of *Outlook Magazine* contributed to its quality year after year.



*Magazine* contributed to its quality year after year.

Mark was also one of Canada's leading scholars in the study of Classical Antiquities. He taught at the University of Winnipeg for decades, inspiring students, engaging in groundbreaking research and writing several books in his field. Such is the admiration for his legacy that the Mark Golden Scholarship has been established, with the aim of fully supporting one student each year enrolled in an honours program or majoring in Classics.

UJPO Winnipeg recently voted to send a contribution to this worthy cause. Anyone interested in adding to the fund can find the Mark Golden Scholarship online, or contact Peter Miller (pj.miller@uwinnipeg.ca) at the University of Winnipeg.

## Education Modernization Act

UJPO Winnipeg has registered to speak at hearings about the Education Modernization Act, Bill 64 in Manitoba later this fall. A committee has been struck to examine the proposed changes, only a few of which include the elimination of school boards and creation of a provincial education authority with centralized power in the hands of the government, increases in standardized testing and publication of results without support for students' economic and social inequalities, and mechanisms for parental influence in decisions suited to the expertise of trained administrators and educators, including staff hiring and performance evaluations.

Opposition to the bill has been growing in both cities and rural areas since its introduction; nearly 500 individuals and groups will make their views known through these hearings. ♦

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## FROM TORONTO

By Rachel Epstein, July 2021

Here's what's been going on in Toronto since April:

Morris Winchevsky School (MWS): Mazel tov to our five 2020-21 MWS grads: Aaron Bergman, Mika Breznitz, Sadie Kopyto Primack, Keegan Munk-Phillips, and Miles Sommers! We held a beautiful zoom ceremony on Saturday, July 19 that included candle lighting, tributes to the grads from family members, presentations from each of the students, and words to send them on their way from shule staff, including their teacher Lainie Basman, Education Director Lia Tarachansky and Executive Director, Rachel Epstein. We are so proud of all of them!

The MWS is scheduled to open in-person in September, beginning with a Sukkot party in Dufferin Grove Park on September 19. All of our wonderful teachers are returning next year, which bodes well for a great year! Registration officially opens on Monday, July 12 with the launch of our online registration system.

And – we are changing the name of the B'nai Mitzvah program to something more gender neutral: it will now be called the B'Mitzvah Program.

See: <https://www.winchevskycentre.org/morris-winchevsky-school>

Adult B'Mitzvah (ABM): The ABM program is also adopting the B'Mitzvah name and will be known as the Adult B'Mitzvah Program. We are delighted that Sharoni

Sibony will be facilitating the program again. The 2021-22 year will run on Tuesdays, beginning October 12.

Registration opens July 12.

See: <https://www.winchevskycentre.org/adult-b-nai-mitzvah>

**Camp Naivelt:** The Camp Naivelt season is in full swing, with an action-packed season of programming in the works. Music Camp took place the week of July 5, and each subsequent weekend is chock full of Covid-safe activities. The pool opened on July 1.

See: <https://www.winchevskycentre.org/camp-programming>

Camp Naivelt's Hill 1 was recently used as a filming location for the Jack Reacher TV series and for a much smaller budget ad. We seem to be on the radar for TV and film productions, which is wonderful as it potentially brings in much-needed income to the Camp.

### Israel-Palestine Discussions

Many UJPO-Toronto members participated in the Israel-Palestine 3-minute Panel & Discussion in April organized by UJPO Canada and are looking forward to the upcoming three-part discussions series that begins on July 22. We encourage all UJPO members to participate.

### Rosh Hashonah / Yom Kippur

The High Holidays come early this year. Our Rosh Hashonah program will take place on Tuesday, September 7 at 10:30 am, and erev Yom Kippur takes place on Wednesday, September 15 at 7 pm. Both will be held online. We look forward to welcoming some of last year's shule grad families as readers for both events. And of course Robin Hermolin will blow the shoifer!

We are asking people to assist us with planning by taking a minute to answer the Winchevsky One-Question Survey. Go to: <https://forms.gle/LaVJiTmfBTMsBart5>

### Student Program Assistant

We are in the process of hiring a young person to work with us through the fall on a "Canada Summer Jobs" position. They will assist with planning some intergenerational community-building events, developing the Winchevsky Art Mart, and exploring possibilities for an ongoing Youth Program.

Please join us for Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. Let's bring in the new year knowing we are part of a community and that we are in solidarity with each other's hopes, fears and struggles. Have a good summer everyone. Stay safe. ♦

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## FROM HAMILTON

By Paul Weinberg

Our Hamilton group met via Zoom on May 30 to discuss the book *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos* by Judy Batalion.

The Montreal-born writer writes about the untold story of how small networks of young Jewish women resisted the German Nazi occupation of Poland during the Second World War. Some survived; many were captured and murdered in the effort to smuggle and bribe during the transport of communications and weapons past hostile German soldiers and, for the most part, hostile or indifferent Polish civilians. The high point is the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising which ultimately resulted in the surviving participants fleeing through the sewage system to the outside.

What makes the book important is that it challenges the myth that all Jews went like sheep to their slaughter during the Holocaust, a myth which underlies the ideology of the new State of Israel, the home for the new supposedly robust Jew. The women who did survive ended up living on a kibbutz in Israel but it was not entirely a satisfactory denouement for them, even though they were ardent Zionists. We found it a gripping read. ♦

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## HONOURABLE MENTSHN

### Ester Reiter

By Joe Roberts, *Jewish Currents*,  
"Shabbat Reading List",  
July 30, 2021:



In a fateful twist, last week was also when I finally began reading *A Future Without Hate or Need: The Promise of the Jewish Left in Canada* by Ester Reiter, which has been recommended to me more times than I can count. Reading through the first several chapters, I was struck not only by the depth of Reiter's research but also by the incredibly rich tradition of Jewish leftism in Canada, far richer than I had ever imagined. It's a history that has been intentionally overlooked and downplayed by Canadian Jewish institutions in an effort to present a unified voice on Israel.

Reading Reiter, I became hopeful that the answers for the future of Canadian Jewry may lie in our past – that we need not feel lost amid the difficult political terrain of the present. As I dig into the rest of the book, I'll be taking it not only as a history but also as a roadmap. ♦

(See also Carl Rosenberg's profile, "Scholar talks at Peretz," *Jewish Independent* (Vancouver), Nov. 25, 2016.)

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## WHAT'S IN ORDER

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### Mazl Tov to:

Sol Blaser on the occasion of his 90th Birthday  
Lyn Center on the occasion of her 75th Birthday

### Heartfelt Condolences to:

Lyn Lubitz, on the passing of her dear friend, Kim.  
Saskia Laufer on the passing of her grandfather, Murray Laufer  
Nicole Bennett and Jacob Bakan on the passing of Nicole's brother, Jacques Bennett  
Paula David and family on the passing of Paula's sister, Sheila Joan Mudrick  
Sharoni Sibony on the passing of her Aunt Maddy

### Get Well to:

Sadie Epstein-Fine and Mari Drexler. ♦

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## CULTURE

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### They Were Children

#### By Hannah Renglich

*Hi dear people,*

Jewishness is tripping me up right now, sitting with all this swirl of emotion connected to the Kamloops grave, and I'm struggling to articulate it all. I wrote this poem in a flash this morning, and I send it with caution – if you're overwhelmed, please don't read below the signature line. If you have capacity, I'd love to hear your feelings and your thoughts.

I'm also seeking linkages – who is working on Jewish/Indigenous solidarity right now?

Much love to you and yours,  
*Hannah*  
*hannahrenglich@gmail.com*

i want to write a poem  
and words fail me  
something about mass graves  
and parallels  
no coincidence  
children's booties  
in piles  
and on steps  
we were all children  
once  
residential school dungeons  
and concentration camp gas chambers

collective trauma  
numbered tattoos  
numbers replacing names  
graves laid out in the architecture plans  
braids cut  
and heads shaved  
nakedness  
genocide by design  
not by accident  
dehumanization  
the knowledge people carried  
that the public is waking up to  
born into grief  
life dedicated to healing  
the grotesque  
the monstrous  
the vile  
the flaccid shock of the uninformed  
the desire to jump to action  
and extract stories  
need time  
to grieve  
to honour  
the importance of space  
ceremony  
ritual  
community  
fire  
candles  
land  
water  
feasts  
  
i want to hug my loved ones  
to attend a sacred fire  
but i quarantine, unvaccinated,  
(global pandemic rages on)  
and send inadequate messages  
across Turtle Island  
with strawberry emojis  
and too many red hearts  
  
i want to talk about memory  
while the state government  
fights to destroy records  
tries to remove an appendage  
re-member  
the wound is wide open  
and covering it over  
ignoring it  
moving on  
is not an option  
never forget

a gaping wound  
cannot be healed  
while suffocated  
you cannot rush  
healing  
you cannot rush  
a scar  
you are recognizing that  
you are not separate  
from the story  
the wound is not  
on the body of another  
it's gaping  
it's ours  
we are the worst of us  
we are the best of us  
hasn't anyone  
been listening?  
are we listening now? ♦

*Submitted by Ruth Levkoe*

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## **“Minor Detail” – A Remarkable Novel**

**By Adania Shibli**

*Translated by Elizabeth Jacquette, New Directions Books  
A finalist for the U.S. 2020 National Book Awards*

*Reviewed by Paul Weinberg*

This remarkable novel begins in the summer of 1949 at the tail end of what historian Benny Morris has called the first Arab-Israeli war. A platoon of soldiers representing the new State of Israel set up their camp in the Negev desert in the vicinity of the new border with Egypt. Their assignment is to clear the area on the Israeli side of native Palestinian Arabs. Incoming Jewish exiles will help make this barren land bloom the commander (unnamed) exhorts his men.

Upon embarking on this assignment, the man faces immediate challenges. The heat is unbearable, forcing him to spend his time continuously washing himself. His tent is over-run by spiders which he crushes quickly upon discovery but not before one of them – or another unknown creature – bites his leg, leaving him with a lingering burning sensation.

Most dramatically, the platoon takes into custody a teenage girl after an encampment is attacked and her fellow Bedouin Arabs and their camels are killed. The sole survivor is held in one of the tents. The commander is not clear at first what to do next. She is not interrogated and nobody in the platoon, it appears, speaks Arabic. The war is technically over with the armistice but that does not mean hostilities have ended.

The soldiers sense the shadowy presence of danger in the desert. And they take out all their fears on their captive. The Bedouin is stripped of her garments and washed down with a water hose. She is sexually assaulted by a succession of soldiers before she is murdered and buried. *The Guardian* reports that this portion of the book is based on a real war crime in the 1948-49 war. Declassified documents reveal the commander upon questioning claimed that returning the girl to her village would have meant “a waste” of petrol.

Part two of the book, which takes place 25 years later, features a Palestinian woman (also unnamed), holding down a day-to-day office job in Ramallah in the West Bank. All the manifestations of the Israeli military occupation are present and normalized as she carries on with her mundane life.

One day the bubble bursts as she spots a newspaper article providing the scant outlines of the rape and murder of the Bedouin teenager. While at the time it might have seemed to be a “minor detail” of war, she becomes obsessed with finding out more about the story. And so she sets out in a car to cross the Green Line into Israel proper and ultimately enters the Negev. An Israeli Jewish community now sits where the platoon had set up its position a little over two decades ago. A friendly resident helps her with directions.

On the highway she examines a map of the roads and villages of Palestine before Israel declared its statehood in 1948. Some of those villages no longer exist and she is now an intruder in the Jewish state, trembling at times in pursuing her journey.

I am providing the bare details here, but there is much more to the novel. Adania Shibli provides an absorbing picture of the parallel mental and physical worlds of two nameless and self-absorbed characters, separated by time, space and nationality.

The larger context of this story is that “Minor Detail” begins at the tail end of the Nakba or catastrophe (as it is referred to by Palestinians) – central to the campaign by David Ben Gurion, the new Israeli prime minister and former Jewish community leader in Palestine to forcibly remove many indigenous Palestinians from their homes and send them into exile. They are in turn replaced with the survivors of the Holocaust languishing in refugee camps, as well as other Jewish migrants leaving tense political situations in neighbouring Arab speaking countries following the founding of Israel.

Some archival information has been released by the Israeli government about the 1948-49 war. Israeli historians such as Benny Morris, Simha Flapan, Ilan Pappé and Adam Raz have managed to find sufficient information from these



records to provide us with a greater understanding about what took place during this time. (The State of Israel has never compensated Palestinian refugees or acknowledged any right on their part to return to their homeland.)

Shibli takes it to another level, effectively using the literary fictional tools at her disposal to gain access to the emotional lines below the surface of a war crime directed at a woman civilian. This is a topic which is only now being taken more seriously by human rights investigators around the world. The author has chosen to leave her characters nameless to universalize their experiences in a colonized setting.

The book is remarkably fresh because Bedouins today face uncertain futures as their unrecognized communities in the Negev are continuously uprooted and destroyed by Israeli authorities. And protesters in the long-standing campaign to prevent the evictions of Palestinian citizens of Israel living in the communities of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in East Jerusalem are now drawing a connection to the Nakba.

Palestinian characters are few and far between in the fiction of high-profile Israeli-Jewish writers, many of whom I love and enjoy. There are parallels here in Canada regarding the scant numbers of Indigenous characters in Canadian fiction until recently. Just as Indigenous people are producing a plethora of literary and nonfiction work in Canada, so too are Palestinians, with the Jerusalem-born and Berlin-residing Shibli leading the pack. ♦

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## A LITTLE NOSH

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### Tomato Crostata with Honey-Thyme Glaze

By Harriet Zaidman

This appetizer burst with the flavours of tomatoes and herbs fresh from the garden. Make it in easy steps over the course of several hours. For best results, the dough should be chilled thoroughly and the tomatoes should sit for a few hours, sprinkled with salt to allow for the release the maximum amount of liquid.

Cornmeal and cheese make the crust flavourful and textured. The honey glaze perks up the tomatoes and the thyme adds richness. You'll be pleased with what comes out of the oven. It's also suitable as a light vegetarian meal.

**Yield:** Serves 6 to 8 as a side or an appetizer or 4 as a main course



### Ingredients:

For the crust:

125 grams or 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling out dough  
75 grams or 1/2 cup fine cornmeal  
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt  
10 tablespoons (2/3 cup plus 2 teaspoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes  
24 grams or 1/2 cup grated extra sharp Cheddar or Gruyere cheese

For the filling:

1 1/2 pounds or 680 grams tomatoes, sliced 1/4-inch thick or halved if cherry or grape tomatoes  
1 teaspoon kosher sea salt, plus a pinch  
2 tablespoon cider vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey  
1/2 bunch fresh thyme sprigs, plus 2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme leaves  
2 tablespoon olive oil  
3 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled  
65 grams or 1 cup extra-sharp Cheddar or Gruyere cheese grated  
Black pepper to taste  
1 large egg  
Coarse or flaky sea salt

### Method:

Begin by making the crust. Either mix with your fingers or use a food processor to briefly pulse together flour, cornmeal and salt.

Add butter and cheese and pulse until mixture forms chickpea-size [3 to 4 one-second pulses].

Add ice water 1 tablespoon at a time, up to 6 tablespoons, pulsing occasionally until mixture is just moist enough to hold together.

Form the dough into a ball, wrap with wax paper or plastic and flatten into a disk. Refrigerate at least 2 hours.

Meanwhile, line a rimmed baking sheet with a double layer of paper towels. Spread out the tomato slices in a single layer. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt and let sit for at least 1 hour and up to 3 hours. It's much better to let them sit the full amount of time.

In a skillet over medium heat, combine the vinegar, honey and thyme sprigs and bring to a simmer. Let simmer 2 minutes, then transfer to a bowl.

Wipe out the skillet, then add the olive oil and garlic. Cook the garlic for 2 to 3 minutes, or until it's golden and caramelized. Remove the garlic and chop finely. Keep the garlic oil.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly flour a work surface and a rolling pin. Gently roll out the dough to a 1/4-inch thickness, dusting it with flour if the dough is sticking. Transfer the dough to a baking sheet and return it to the fridge for another 20 minutes.

Heat the oven to 425 degrees. Pat the tomatoes dry with paper towels. Reserve the thyme sprigs and brush the tomatoes with the honey mixture.

Leaving a 3-inch border, distribute the cheese, garlic and half the chopped thyme leaves on centre of the crust. Sprinkle on black pepper to taste, then layer the tomatoes in an overlapping pattern, maintaining the border.

Drizzle the garlic oil over the tomatoes. Sprinkle them with the chopped thyme leaves and lay the reserved whole thyme sprigs on top. Gently fold the crust up around tomatoes, make a 2-inch border.

In a small bowl, whisk the egg and 1 teaspoon water. Using a pastry brush, brush the egg wash over crust and sprinkle the top of crostata with flaky or coarse salt.

Bake for about 35 minutes, until the pastry is deeply golden brown. Serve warm or at room temperature. ♦

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## USA

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### Israel 'Is an Apartheid State', a Quarter of U.S. Jews Say in New Poll

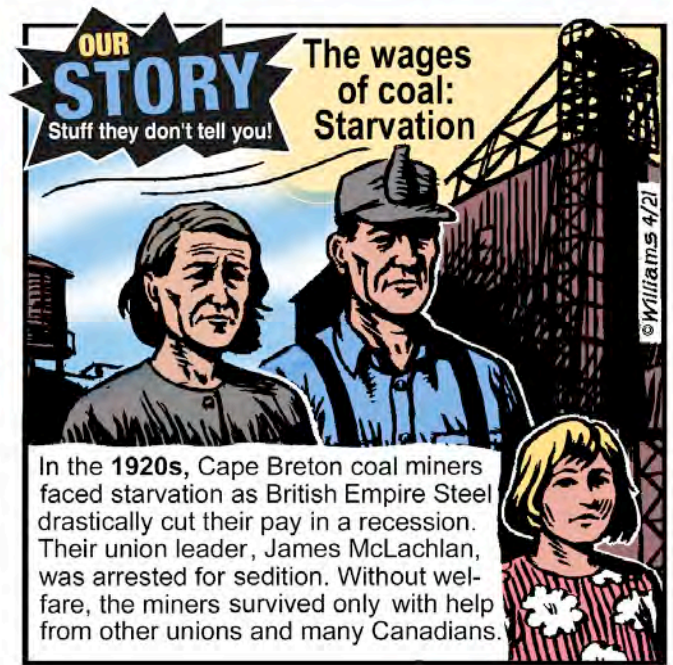
By Ron Kampeas, July 13, 2021

JTA – A survey of US Jewish voters taken after the Israel-Gaza conflict finds that a sizable minority believes some of the harshest criticisms of Israel, including that it is committing genocide and apartheid.

Among respondents to the survey commissioned by the Jewish Electorate Institute, a group led by prominent Jewish Democrats, 34 percent agreed that “Israel’s treatment of Palestinians is similar to racism in the United States,” 25% agreed that “Israel is an apartheid state” and 22% agreed that “Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians.”

Among younger voters included in the survey released Tuesday, agreement with those statements was higher, though still in the minority. The poll found that 9% of voters agreed with the statement “Israel doesn’t have a right to exist.” But among voters under 40, that proportion was 20%. A third of younger voters agreed that Israel is committing genocide, a position that even human rights lawyers who are critical of Israel say is extreme; more than a third agreed that Israel is an apartheid state.

The findings are striking as mainstream pro-Israel organizations struggle to make the case that Israel is central



Cartoon by John Williams

to Jewish identity and that criticism of it often veers into antisemitism. They suggest that many American Jews agree with statements by some of Israel’s harshest critics on the left made during the Gaza-Israel conflict in May, including in some cases by a handful of Democratic members of Congress who were then criticized by their colleagues.

The survey of American Jewish political sentiment was wide-ranging, finding wide approval for President Joe Biden and deep concern about Republican efforts in Georgia and Florida to tighten access to the ballot booth. When it came to measuring criticism of Israel, the poll first asked respondents whether they thought each of the four critical statements was antisemitic; those who said a statement was not antisemitic were then asked if they agreed with it.

Of the four statements, only in one case, did a majority – 67% - agree that it was antisemitic to say, “Israel doesn’t have a right to exist.” For the other three questions, more respondents disagreed that the statement was antisemitic than agreed.

The survey of 800 voters, conducted by GBAO Strategies from June 28 to July 1 online and via texts, has an overall margin of error of 3.5 percentage points; the replies of those under 40 have a margin of error of 6 percentage points. (The margin of error for the Orthodox subgroup was 11.6 percentage points.)

While the proportion of respondents agreeing with critical statements about Israel was higher than many pro-Israel advocates have characterized, at least one finding is in line with that of another recent survey. Asked if they felt emotionally attached to Israel, 62% of respondents to the

Jewish Electorate Institute survey said they did and 38% said they did not, numbers that matched those in the Pew study of 4,700 American Jews released in May.

The new survey presents the latest challenge as the new Israeli government endeavors to repair ties with a US Jewish community that to a degree became alienated from Israel during the 12 years Benjamin Netanyahu was prime minister. Surveys have found that Israeli and American Jews know little about one another.

One statement in the survey, echoing a claim by former President Donald Trump, that “Jews who vote Democratic are disloyal to Israel” was also put forward to respondents to assess whether it is antisemitic; mainstream Jewish organizations have suggested that it is. However, while a vast majority of respondents, 77%, disagreed with the statement, only 26% said they believed it is antisemitic.

Asked about the two-state solution, 61% of survey respondents said it was their preferred outcome. But 19% said they preferred annexation of the West Bank that would deny Palestinians the right to vote in national elections, while 20% said they preferred “establishing one state that is neither Jewish nor Palestinian” and encompassing Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Gaza is currently controlled by the Hamas terror group.

The Democratic lawmakers who lashed out at Israel during the conflict, including Representatives Cori Bush, Ilhan Omar, and Rashida Tlaib, have also raised the prospect of cutting aid to Israel. While a substantial majority of survey respondents, 71%, said it was “important” to provide financial assistance to Israel, a smaller majority, 58%, said it would be appropriate to restrict aid to Israel so it could not spend US money on settlements. A majority, 62%, support Biden’s reversal of Trump’s policy of cutting off aid to the Palestinians.

The survey showed continued support among Jewish voters for Biden and for Democrats, commensurate with an American Jewish Committee poll taken just before the Gaza conflict. In the latest poll, Biden earned 80% job approval, and 74% approval on how he is “handling relations with Israel.” He got 62% approval ratings for how he handled the recent Israel-Gaza conflict.

Among the Orthodox, who largely voted Republican in the 2020 presidential election, Biden had 31% approval overall, but notably a higher number – 44% - for how he handles Israel relations. He earned 37% approval among the Orthodox for how he handled the recent conflict

Asked whether they would prefer a Democrat to a Republican in a vote for Congress in next year’s midterm elections, 68% favored a generic Democrat and 21% favored a Republican.

Democratic leaders Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer got 54% and 52% favorability ratings respectively and while Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell each got 10%.

On the domestic front, respondents placed high the issues of climate change, voting rights, jobs, and the economy, and the coronavirus pandemic. Strikingly, 83% of respondents said they were concerned about Republican efforts in Georgia and Florida to tighten access to the ballot booth, which Democrats say are aimed at inhibiting minority voters. Some 76% of respondents backed federal legislation backed by Democrats that would block the state efforts to restrict voting rights, and 62% supported eliminating the Senate filibuster to allow the Democratic majority to pass the legislation.

Concern about antisemitism in the United States was high, at 90%, and more voters, 61%, believed the threat came from the right than they did from the left, 22%. Voters who felt said the threat was equal from both sides came in at 12%. Among the Orthodox, 69% said the threat came from the left, 10% from the right, and 18% from both sides. ♦

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-finds-a-quarter-of-us-jews-think-israel-is-apartheid-state/>

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### I’m a former Jewish Federation CEO – and I oppose Israel’s actions against Palestinians

*By Joe Roberts, May 25, 2021*



*Separation wall between Israel and the West Bank near Jerusalem. Photo by Mazur Travel/Shutterstock.*

The last ten years of my career were spent running Jewish communities as an executive in the Jewish Federation movement across North America – it was a career quite literally bookended by conflict in Israel-Palestine. As the most recent round of violence exploded, Jewish communal



organizations sprang into action, issuing statements blaming Palestinians for their own suffering and lack of sovereignty, ahistorically casting Israel as a wholly innocent victim.

During the time I spent at Federations in Boston, Los Angeles, Columbus, and London, Ontario, 3,590 Palestinians lost their lives at the hands of Israel's security forces. I feel a level of complicity in each of their deaths. It is a sin I must bear. While I never personally picked up a weapon or wore the uniform of the Israel Defence Forces, a portion of every dollar I raised for Jewish Federations helped to create the material conditions that brutalize and subjugate Palestinians.

In Judaism, the concept of sin is not a state of permanence. In fact, when translated, the Hebrew word for sin literally means "to go astray." That means that in the eyes of the almighty, we have the opportunity to find our path back to righteousness through *t'shuvah*, or repentance. To truly be repentant, we must first confess our transgressions, show true regret, and finally vow never to repeat our misdeeds.

For me, the path to repentance means that the words written here will likely alienate me from a community of friends and colleagues built over the course of a decade. That is a price I am willing to pay.

I am not alone in my position. In an EKOS poll of Canadian Jews, 37 percent say that they have a negative opinion of the Israeli government. That's hardly the monolithic support for Israel that Jewish communal organizations claim to represent and it certainly doesn't make one in four of us "anti-Israel" or "self-hating." To the contrary, it makes us more concerned with Israel living up to its purported values than succumbing to nationalist violence to achieve its goals.

For my peers, younger Jews who have only ever known Israel as an occupier and military power, the split is even more pronounced. In the 2018 Survey of Jews in Canada, nearly half of Canadian Jews under 30 report being criticized for expressing concern about the policies of Israel. It's not surprising. Jewish communal organizations work hard to stifle dissent, shaming those who would question the morality of Israel and driving out anyone with a differing viewpoint.

For organizations like the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) and Jewish Federations, there is only one acceptable view: blanket support of Israel's policies that have led to the dehumanization of Palestinians. Far from democratic or representative of Canadian Jews, the boards of directors of Federations and communal organizations are mostly packed with obtuse and reactionary voices in Jewish communities and those with the most money to put behind

their words. Rather than being the mainstream of Jewish communal life, those voices are the extreme.

Jewish communal and advocacy organizations know full well they often represent only the most hardline voices in our communities but would rather support the morally bankrupt leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, pedaling an ideology that ends in the bombing of civilians in Gaza or the theft of Palestinian land in the West Bank, than to be truly representative of the opinions of Canadian Jews. The 54-year occupation, tacitly supported by CIJA, Jewish Federations, and other communal institutions, has led to what Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem, Israel's largest human rights organization, call apartheid and is directly responsible for this moment of devastation.

In our tradition, we seek *t'shuvah* not only for ourselves, but also for the entirety of the Jewish people. It's time. It's time to admit the sins done against the Palestinian people and begin the long path of repentance. It's time to listen to the voices demanding an end to violence and occupation that has been ever present throughout the entirety of our lives. It's time to end this and vow: never again. ♦

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<https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/im-a-former-jewish-federation-ceo-and-oppose-israels-actions-against-palestinians>

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*Continued from page 1*

Our second high-profile action was to picket the Israeli consulate on Bloor Street. This upset former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis, who hurled some rhetorical thunderbolts in our direction from the perch of his private radio commentary. Some of this may have been due to the historic ties between the NDP and the Labour Zionists who founded the State of Israel.

Author and historian Erna Paris covered what she called a "trauma" among Jews in Canada over Lebanon, in her April 1983 *Quest Magazine* article, "Aftermath: Canada's Jews and the Summer of Lebanon – The Debate is Painful but It Could Bring Canada's Jewish Community Closer Together."

Paris wrote that in addition to the CCCJ, the other significant dissenting voices in our community with regard to Israel were Rabbi Slonim, Friends of Pioneering Israel (a small socialist Zionist organization) and surprise – Irwin Cotler. Forty years later, the now retired McGill University

law professor is Mr. IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) in Ottawa. (More on that later.)

In 1982, Cotler was more dovish to a certain degree, based on what Paris describes as his “convictions.” In adoring sentences, Paris explained that Cotler was willing to risk censure from his community and his own wife by echoing international calls for an independent inquiry on the part of the Israeli government of Menachem Begin into the Sabra-Shatila massacre: “Cotler is a man passionately concerned with questions of human rights – including Palestinian rights.”

What influence this Canadian had in the eventual decision by the Begin government to hold an independent inquiry is not clear. Suffice it to say that a 1983 report came out and there were resignations inside the Israeli government and military. However, Ariel Sharon’s political career did recover, and Israelis had to wait until 2012 for new documents to reveal the full extent of the sinister collaboration between the Israeli military in Lebanon and the Phalangist killers in the move to uproot the Palestinian refugee camps. (More information can be found in the very readable *The Hundred Years War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917-2017*, by Rashid Khalidi.)

Erna Paris had little time for the CCCJ, calling us a “dupe for anti-Israel propaganda,” which was complete nonsense. In reality, the CCCJ favoured a two-state solution but had not taken a position on Zionism. Our intent was to build bridges between the left and the Jewish community.

This was also before a weakened Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in a post-Lebanon war stage negotiated a bad deal with Israel in the 1993 Oslo Accords, which turned the newly established Palestinian Authority into the security subcontractor for the ongoing Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

To paraphrase a dated romance novel, the left is a many-splintered thing. And so, the desire to stake out a clear position on Israel within the CCCJ led to the unavoidable fracture.

Some members of the organization thought that left-leaning people either did not understand anti-Semitism or were anti-Semitic themselves for their opposition to the Jewish state and the right of Israel to exist. (Erna Paris alluded to the latter in her discussion of the far left’s support of the 1975 UN “Zionism is racism” resolution.)

The late York University professor Howard Buchbinder took a different tack within the CCCJ. Originally an American, he had moved to Israel in his youth, served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and met

his first wife in Israel. Both became thoroughly disillusioned with the direction of the state, and viewed the emphasis on anti-Semitism on the left as a distraction from the larger issues in the Middle East.

Richard Lee caused a kerfuffle within the CCCJ when he wrote an academic paper comparing the treatment of the Black and Brown population in South Africa under apartheid to the system of segregation and discrimination directed against Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories.

He was hopeful that the latter would not last because of “the deep tradition of humanism and ethics” inside Israel. In contrast, for Lee the South African apartheid system under a fascist regime was a harder nut to crack. It turned out that apartheid would end 12 years later in South Africa, while matters continued to go from bad to worse for the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Ester Reiter says that today in 2021 she has no difficulty agreeing with the apartheid description applied to Israel, but didn’t feel this way in 1982 when that position was considered extreme within the CCCJ.

Reiter also notes that the CCCJ fumbled the ball by inviting Palestinian scholar Sami Hadawi, the author of *Bitter Harvest: A Modern History of Palestine*, to address an assembled audience of aging Jewish leftists and Holocaust survivors at the Winchevsky Centre in Toronto. A young woman rose to challenge the reference to “the so-called six million” (the number of Jews murdered in the Holocaust) among the speaker’s writings on the literature table. This set off an uproar that effectively ended the evening.

Richard Lee was not at this dreadful meeting, and says he personally knew a better candidate from the local Palestinian community who would have been less inflammatory and more intelligent for such an event.

Flash forward to 2021 and things look a lot chillier than they did 40 years ago in Israel and elsewhere. White nationalism is on the rise in the U.S., Canada and Europe, and along with this has returned what is referred to as the old anti-Semitism, with its age-old offensive stereotypes and tropes about Jews.

But this is not the priority for Irwin Cotler, a former minister of justice and highly regarded human rights icon who has advised both Nelson Mandela and Soviet dissidents.

Cotler is the Canadian government special envoy on anti-Semitism, appointed to promote the adoption by governments and institutions of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. It was established to target “the new anti-Semitism” – primarily criticism of Israel, ranging from

benign political commentary to the tougher words used by so-called “anti-Israel” folks, such as settler colonialism, racism, Jewish supremacy and pogroms, to characterize apartheid in Israel and the occupied territories.

Today we also have Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV), which has developed a public profile for Palestinian rights. It is hard to compare or contrast it with the CCCJ, since the latter was an organization of its time. One similarity is that IJV has to grapple with and discourage potential activist allies from using political signage and rhetoric containing anti-Semitic words, says sociologist and active IJV member Sheryl Nestel.

But what about the offensive language directed against Palestinians, as witnessed in Jerusalem with Jewish settlers marching with the slogan “Death to the Arabs”?

Nestel says she has heard of an effort to define anti-Palestinian racism, much as has been done with anti-Semitism. But she is not sure that is a good idea, while affirming the need to combat such racism. “I think there has to be a recognition or realization of anti-Palestinian racism having a specific form, but I wouldn't want to codify it,” she adds.

This phenomenon was not discussed in 1982 within the CCCJ. We came together appalled by the events in Lebanon, but quickly became absorbed in the travails of the Canadian Jewish community. I don't think we discussed the Nakba either.

In writing about the CCCJ, I wanted to demonstrate how the issues of Israel-Palestine have evolved among activists, especially among progressive Jews of my baby-boom generation. ♦

*Paul Weinberg is an author, independent journalist, and longtime contributor to rabble. He is also a member of UJPO and Independent Jewish Voices Canada. This article first appeared in the IJV blog on rabble.ca, May 17, 2021.*

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## UNITED JEWISH PEOPLE'S ORDER

The United Jewish People's Order develops and perpetuates a progressive secular approach to social and cultural matters, our Jewish heritage, the Yiddish language and holiday and festival celebrations; we sponsor secular Jewish education, musical and cultural groups, concerts, lectures, public forums, and take part in social action and related community activities.

Opinions expressed in signed articles are the authors' and not necessarily those of UJPO.

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