

Listening to different communities in BANES /anti-Zionism is not anti-semitism

Statement from Jane Samson

When Bath Campaigns Network started to campaign on Gaza 10 months ago we understood that the most urgent thing to do was reach out to people in the community most affected.

We immediately contacted the mosque, the Islamic Society at Bath University and Bath Friends of Palestine.

We soon met with Palestinians, as well as residents from the wider Islamic community.

We asked "What do we need to know and understand? What do you need us to do?"

Through compassion, empathy and friendship, our community grew to include people of all faiths and none, including Jewish brothers and sisters.

We shared an understanding that Palestine is an illegally occupied territory whose people have suffered oppression and apartheid for 75 years.

Exposing the truth about Israel's war crimes is likely to incur accusations of anti-Semitism in an attempt to quash dissent.

To be clear: Israel is a Zionist state and Zionism is not Judaism.

Zionism is a system of supremacist apartheid.

Zionism can no more claim to be an expression of the Jewish faith than the Ku Klux Klan, with its burning crosses, can claim to represent Christianity.

To conflate or confuse Zionism with Judaism is an insult that sadly fuels the abhorrent and terrifying possibilities for real anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Left unchallenged, the end game of apartheid is genocide.

It is the horror story that echoes Nazi Germany and the holocaust.

This time we cannot say we didn't know because it's being live streamed and it's happening with the full support of western governments.

This is the context in which it is hardly surprising that racism is rearing its ugly head closer to home.

This is the critical moment that requires us to be courageous and outspoken for humanity.

If you are a bystander - your silence is violence.

We all have a responsibility to take positive action to uphold human rights at home and abroad.

If we don't speak up then we give licence to exclusion and bullying.

We call upon our council to:

- Improve the inclusivity and compassion of our community.
- Tackle prejudice and racism in our streets and in our institutions.
- Look out for those members of our community who are traumatised and who now may be subject to exclusion and racist abuse.
- Protect establishments from Zionist threats that have been shutting down any events that dare to offer a voice to Palestine.
- Ensure the right to free speech and peaceful protest is upheld as a cornerstone of democracy.
- Actively promote and celebrate the strength and richness of our city's diversity and multiculturalism.
 - Establish a dedicated team that meets regularly with community members for open and honest dialogue where they can express their needs, concerns, and aspirations.
 - Stand up for humanity against racism, Islamophobia and anti-semitism.

"If a state is engaged in war crimes, crimes against humanity (which include apartheid), and/or genocide, international criminal law (eg the Rome statute) creates an obligation not just in states but in all entities and individuals to do everything in their power to stop that crime from being committed. Failure to do so would be complicity, and in many cases aiding and abetting of such a crime. We are all, therefore, legally obliged to do everything in our power to stop Israel's violations of international criminal law." Hazem Jamjoum

"Since the Court ruling on 19 July," the International Court of Justice warned "Israel has intensified attacks on the civilian population in Gaza and their natural resources,".

"Israel must stop acting as if uniquely above the law." OHRC July 2024