

How Zionism's anti-Jewish logic led Israel to bomb Iranian synagogue



By Jared Sacks
Member of South
African Jews for a Free
Palestine

OPINION

Israel and its propaganda machine (officially called “Hasbara”, Hebrew for “explanation”) has long claimed that Jews across the world are under existential threat from terrorists and antisemites emanating from the Muslim world and their “far-left” allies. This narrative asserts that Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran hate Jews simply for being Jews; that they seek the destruction of all Jews; and that their opposition to the Israeli regime is driven by this anti-Jewish hatred. Hasbara further posits that Israel is the only guarantor of Jewish safety — and that without it, we are doomed to a repeat of the Nazi Holocaust.

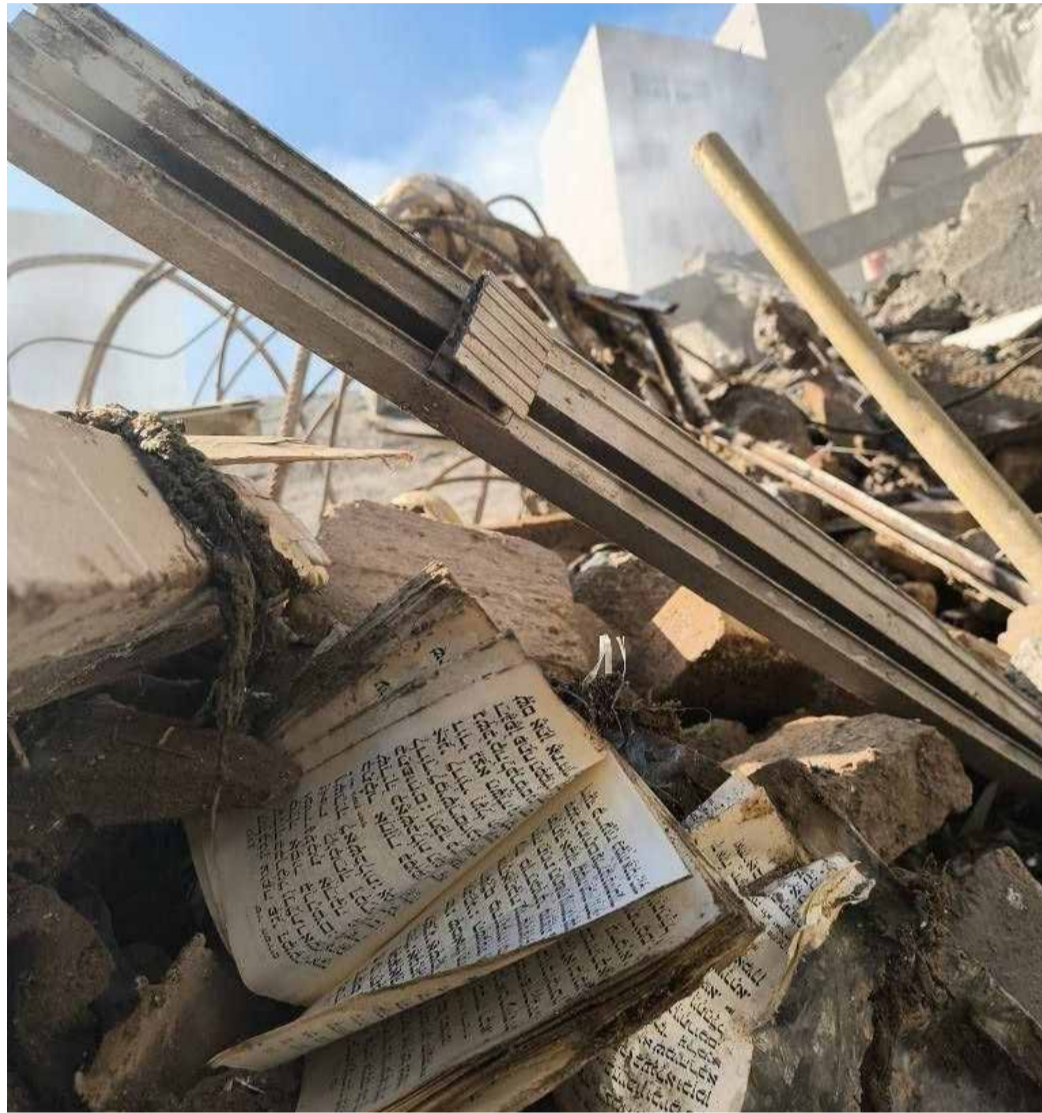
Yet, in the name of Jewish safety, Zionists have colonized Palestine, ethnically cleansed and destroyed its population, and constructed a regime of apartheid to manage ever-shrinking bantustans in the West Bank. In the name of Jewish safety, Israel has annexed Palestinian land and, as part of its Greater Israel project, sought further expansion into Syria and Lebanon. In the name of Jewish safety, Israel has jailed over 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners, turned Gaza into a concentration camp, and has recently adopted a law applying the death penalty only to Palestinians, while Jewish murderers and rapists are defended, even celebrated, by its parliamentarians instead of punished.

Finally, in the name of Jewish safety, Zionists have transformed the overwhelming majority of Jewish religious and cultural institutions into de facto embassies and propaganda arms of the Israel.

Because it presents an obvious threat to the Zionist colonial project, the long and extraordinary history of Jewish anti-Zionism has been suppressed, with its proponents sidelined or ostracized.

Diverse Jewish cultures — from the Qırmızı Qəsəbə (Red Village) of Azerbaijan, to the melahs and haras of North Africa, to the shtetls of Eastern Europe — have been supplanted by an increasingly homogenized and diminished Israeli colonial culture modelled on German “high culture”. Rich creolized languages such as Ladino, Krymchak, Kayliñña, Judeo-Arabic, Yevanic, Gruzinic, and Yiddish are now endangered or extinguished, eroded in part by the imposition of German-accented Hebrew in 1948 Palestine. Under this compulsion to conform, traditional cultural practices such as the shtetl badchan (wedding jester), Sephardic amulet-making, Yiddish theater, and Mekonenot mourning have also been eroded or erased.

Ethno-nationalism targets not only its external enemies. In attempting to manufacture a non-existent ethnos, it also seeks the dissolution of its pre-



ceived internal enemies. In this case, Zionism works to eliminate Jewish diversity in all its forms, especially that which directly challenges the Zionist project.

This is why anti-Zionist Jews (like me) are dismissed as “self-hating” and constantly have our Jewishness invalidated. The goal is to either force conformity through intimidat-

tion and fear, or to blackball us from Jewish institutions, events, and communities that Zionists want to ideologically “purify”. This is also why many Zionists dismiss the Lemba of Limpopo — who see Africa as their homeland — as insufficiently Jewish. And this is why Israel and the United States show little hesitation indiscriminately bombing Iran, even when this risks

The photo shows the destruction of the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran, Iran, from an Israeli bombing, on April 7, 2026.

WANA

harming or killing the Kalimi Jews who have lived there for millennia.

The Kalimi community of Iran — now numbering around 15,000 — are Iranian Jews who refused to join the Zionist project of colonizing Palestine. Despite sustained efforts by Israel to encourage their emigration (their numbers once exceeded 100,000), this remaining community has insisted that Iran — not Israel — is their home.

This presents a profoundly uncomfortable contradiction for Zionism. On the one hand, it insists that Iranian Jews are oppressed by what it describes as “the most antisemitic regime on the planet.” On the other, it is confronted by a community that has forsaken Zionism and, by refusing to leave Iran, directly undermines narratives of Iranian antisemitism.

It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Israel bombed the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran on April 7, in the middle of the Jewish holiday of Passover. According to reports, confirmed by Israel, the entire building was reduced to rubble, with footage of the aftermath showing Jewish community leaders salvaging prayer scrolls from the debris while calling for unity against Israel. Iranian Jewish leaders, including former MP Siamak Moreh-Sedegh and the current MP and Tehran Jewish Association leader Homayoun Sameyah Najafabadi, have publicly condemned Zionism and called for resistance to Israel and the Unit-



A rare, sacred Torah with Persian translation is found damaged at the site of an Israeli air strike on the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran, Iran, on April 7, 2026.

X

ed States.

This is not to claim that Israel deliberately targeted the synagogue; Zionism's internal opposition to diversity is probably not that crass. It is, however, to recognize a broader logic of Zionism.

The use of the Hannibal Directive, including on October 7, 2023, and the prolonged and fanatical refusal to agree to a cease-fire and prisoner exchange, point to a pattern in which Jewish captives' lives are subordinate to political objectives. Reports indicate that the Israeli army killed an unknown number of its own soldiers and civilians on October 7 and that many of the captives were killed in the months that followed by Israeli air strikes, suffocation from bombings, and sniper fire. That is to say, Israel has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to treat Jewish life as disposable (and at times politically useful) in service of its ideological project.

At a minimum, this logic renders Kalimi Jews acceptable collateral damage in Israel's pursuit of regional dominance. In fact, the Israeli army has referred to the bombing of the synagogue as exactly that: “collateral damage”. As the “wrong” kind of Jews, their destruction is treated as scarcely worthy of concern.

If antisemitism is understood, not as opposition to Zionism or its manifestation in Israeli apartheid, but as the systemic racial discrimination and hatred of Jews for being Jewish and the consequent devaluation of Jewish life, then how should we understand Israel's bombing of the Rafi-Nia synagogue?

If we recognize the long and important history of Jewish political, ethnic, and cultural diversity, if we accept that Jewishness is inherently heterogeneous, then any attack on that diversity must be understood as anti-Jewish.

Situated within the broader Zionist project that seeks to erase such diversity in the name of ethnonationalism, the bombing of Rafi-Nia begins to resemble a form of internal Jew-hatred which positions “elite” Zionist Jews against other Jews. In particular, against the traditional, non-Westernized, diaspora Jew. Whether Israel set out to bomb the synagogue or not, it operates within a political logic that ranks Jewish lives, rendering such outcomes predictable, even tolerable. Zionism does not necessarily explicitly seek to harm Jews. Rather, it manufactures a hierarchy among Jews in which those who refuse to conform must either be assimilated or be expendable. Is the Rafi-Nia bombing, in some perverse way, not then a general expression of Zionist antisemitism against other Jews?

We must oppose Zionism first and foremost because of what it does to the Palestinians. But this is another reason to oppose it: because the very future of humanity, including Judaism itself, is at stake.

The article first appeared on *Mondoweiss*.



On the one hand, Zionism insists that Iranian Jews are oppressed by what it describes as “the most antisemitic regime on the planet.” On the other, it is confronted by a community that has forsaken Zionism and, by refusing to leave Iran, directly undermines narratives of Iranian antisemitism. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Israel bombed the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran on April 7, in the middle of the Jewish holiday of Passover.