

Antisemitism on the Hill

By Bruce Bawer

On March 5, the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill was the setting for a Senate Judiciary Committee [hearing](#) that was truly fascinating. The subject: antisemitism, in particular the displays of vicious Jew-hatred that have taken place on college campuses since the Hamas atrocities of October 7, 2023.



It's a subject that the Democrats have tried to avoid for years because it sorely divides their ranks. After all, several congressional Democrats – notably members of the so-called “Squad” – are openly antagonistic toward Jews and deeply hostile to Israel. In 2019, a House resolution condemning antisemitism – introduced in the wake of remarks by the appalling Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), one of the members of the Squad – was watered down by Democrats into a general condemnation of all hatred and intolerance.

Well, it's a new day. Hence this two-and-a-half-hour hearing,

which was made possible by the fact that the Republicans won a senatorial majority in the November elections. Of the five witnesses, three were selected by the Republicans: Adela Cojab of the National Jewish Advocacy Center; Alyza D. Lewin, president of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law; and Asra Q. Nomani of the Pearl Project. All had powerful, disturbing things to say about the rise in student antisemitism since October 7.

Cojab, for instance, recalled a college class in Middle Eastern Studies in which she'd asked the professor whether bin Laden should be considered a terrorist. "Everybody laughed," she said – because, you see, her classmates had all been taught that the terrorist label is vulgar and simplistic. Indeed, Cojab explained, they'd been taught a lot of things – among them, that "the political is personal"; that the world is divided into the "global north and global south," the former of which is always wrong and the latter always right; and that it's permissible to commit acts of violence "if your ideology is correct."

Then there were the two witnesses selected by the Democrats. What to expect from them? How could Democrat witnesses possibly address the fast-growing plague of antisemitism without acknowledging its intimate association with Islam and leftism?

Easy. One of the witnesses was Kevin Rachlin of the Nexus Project, founded in 2019. And what would the Nexus Project be? Its [purported](#) *raison d'être* is to combat antisemitism, but its real aim is to advocate for the narrowest possible definition of antisemitism – whereby "criticism of Zionism and Israel" or "nonviolent political action" against Israel, however "contentious, strident, or harsh," doesn't count as antisemitic, even if Israel is being treated "differently" or disproportionate[ly]." Branding such criticism as antisemitism, according to Nexus, "militates against constructive dialogue and debate among people with differing

opinions.”

As Seth Mandel [noted](#) last year in *Commentary*, Nexus was founded specifically to take on the considerably broader definition of antisemitism that was formulated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and that is accepted by a long list of major Western governments. It’s also worth mentioning that Nexus has [given](#) money to the Alliance for Justice, which in turn has funded the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel – a rather curious activity for an organization that professes to oppose antisemitism.

In his testimony, Rachlin was unwilling to admit that most of the antisemitism in America today is found on the far left and in Muslim communities. Instead he linked it to the Trump administration and the Heritage Foundation, which he called “divisive” for “pitting Jews against other vulnerable groups.” (You see, to be honest about Muslim antisemitism is to pit Jews against Muslims.) The Trumpist right, maintained Rachlin, is guilty of “authoritarianism,” of “attacks on pluralism”; better, he argued, to “protect Jews without targeting other communities.” This, of course, is reflective of the same kind of mentality that led America, a quarter century ago, to declare a “war on terrorism” while being politely vague about the identity of the terrorists in question.

Who is Kevin Rachlin? The most salient fact about him is that he came to Nexus from J Street, the Soros-funded inside-the-Beltway organization that has been [described](#) by Ayelet Shaked, Israel’s former Minister of Justice, as “Israel’s loudest critic.” In the years before the October 7 atrocities, J Street repeatedly excoriated Israel for taking military action to defend its people after terrorist attacks by Hamas, saying that such responses only further the “cycle of violence.”

J Street even defended Hamas, preposterously, as a force for “law and order” and a valuable provider of services to the

people of Gaza. In 2013, J Street [claimed](#) that “supporting a Palestinian state is the only way to ensure Israel’s survival as a democracy and a national home for the Jewish people.” In the wake of October 7, J Street has persisted in its quixotic support for a two-state solution.

The other Democrat witness at the March 5 committee hearing was Meirav Solomon, who identified herself as a student at Tufts University – but who also turns out to belong to J Street U, “the student organizing arm of J Street.” Like Rachlin, she was quick to blame American antisemitism on President Trump, Republicans, and the Heritage Foundation, echoing Rachlin’s charge that Trump is “divisive,” asserting that Trump “has highlighted and platformed neo-Nazis and white supremacists,” and even parroting the lame calumny that his “closest advisors” have “raised their arms in fascist salutes.”

Several of the Democratic senators, when given their chance to offer their own commentaries and to ask questions, served up much of the same bilge – bringing up the January 6 “insurrection” for the thousandth time and equating Elon Musk’s support of the Alternative for Germany Party with Jew-hatred. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) went after the Trump White House for defunding the Office of Civil Rights and DEI, both of which, he suggested, have been instrumental in fighting antisemitism.

Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) spent much of her time praising her state’s Muslims, telling an anecdote about an Islamic Center that supported a Jewish Center in its time of trouble – her point being that Muslims and Jews are natural allies and white supremacists their most potent enemies. When Klobuchar asked Rachlin a question, he replied that there has been more antisemitism on X (formerly Twitter) since Elon Musk bought it. Mazie Hirono (D-HI), for her part, brought up COVID-era attacks on Asians, her goal being to equate antisemitism with pretty much every other imaginable vice, and mocked the Trump

administration's "anti-DEI fervor" – a topic on which Rachlin agreed with her, lamenting this "strange obsession" because (that mantra again) it "creates division."

There were other Democrats who had their say – Adam Schiff (D-CA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) – but it was all basically more of the same. In any event, their shrill assertions were efficiently shot down, one after the other, by the Republican senators and their witnesses. Mike Lee (R-UT) pointed out that the Office of Civil Rights, far from ever having done anything to curb antisemitism, has given money to Hamas. Both John Kennedy (R-LA) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) were terrific.

And Eric Schmitt (R-MO) was a standout. Where antisemitism is concerned, he said, "the Democrats have a real problem on their hands," because a growing wing of their party is unashamedly antisemitic and pro-Hamas; it was the power of this wing that kept Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, a Jew, from being chosen by Kamala Harris as her running mate. Dismissing Democrats' enthusiasm for DEI, he pointed out that it's "rooted in cultural Marxism" and divides humanity into "the oppressor and the oppressed," a calculus on which "Jews lose out."

Ashley Moody (R-FL) explained admirably that college campuses in the Sunshine State were spared antisemitic disruptions after October 7 because as Attorney General she didn't hesitate to order arrests. Katie Britt (R-AL) was also impressive, reading off a list of colleges – Yale, Cornell, Columbia – at which professors had celebrated Hamas's atrocities with blood-curdling glee. And Josh Hawley (R-MO), grilling Rachlin about the statement by the "DEI chair at MIT" that Israel is "a genocidal apartheid state," established that Rachlin and his organization aren't prepared to repudiate that reprehensible accusation.

But perhaps my own favorite participant was Adela Cojab, who

toward the end of the hearing pronounced unequivocally that Trump is the “greatest ally” Israel and the Jews have ever had in the White House and who, when asked if it’s possible to care about Israel *and* the Palestinians at the same time, replied with simple eloquence. She prays every night, she said, not only for Israel but also for the Palestinians – for whom her prayer is that God, at long last, will give them leaders who care about them. It was a stirring conclusion to an illuminating event.

First published in [Front Page Magazine](#)