

Conspiracy-Mongering Prof Blames the 'Israel Lobby' for His Troubles



Nader Hashemi

by Andrew E. Harrod

Former University of Denver Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) director [Nader Hashemi](#) discussed the “Israel lobby’s campaigns to [purge critical scholars](#) from U.S. universities” in a [May 10 webinar](#). Although he tried to exculpate himself from outrage over his past inflammatory rhetoric concerning Israel, he instead deepened suspicions about his antisemitic sentiments.

Long known for [Israel-hatred](#), Hashemi examined “The Israel

Lobby and U.S. Academia” with Mouin Rabbani, the coeditor of the Arab Studies Institute’s (ASI) online magazine *Jadiliyya* and moderator of its Connections webinar series. This lobby’s campaign targets “pro-Palestinian voices,” the former analyst with the [Qatar-funded](#), anti-Israel International Crisis Group noted. ASI’s viciously anti-Israel stance shines clear in ASI [board members](#), who include Rutgers University law professor [Noura Erakat](#). Her late uncle, Saeb Erekat, was secretary general of the PLO, while her cousin Ahmad Erekat, was killed after he rammed Israeli guards with his car.

The webinar focused on the fallout from [Hashemi’s](#) baseless speculation in an [August 20, 2022, podcast](#) that Israel was behind the attempted assassination of writer Salman Rushdie eight days earlier. In the podcast, after considering the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a possible culprit, Hashemi proffered another possibility “which I think actually think is much more likely.” “This young kid Hadi Matar was in communication with someone online who claimed to be an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps supporter” but was a “Mossad operative” who “lured” Matar into his attack, Hashemi said. Grievously wounded in the attack, Rushdie has been subject to an Islamic Republic of Iran death sentence since the 1989 appearance of his novel *The Satanic Verses*, which Muslims worldwide condemned as blasphemous.

In the webinar, Hashemi repeated his theory that “Israel might be a beneficiary” from the Rushdie assassination attempt. International outrage over an attack on Rushdie could have fueled a backlash against the Islamic Republic and thereby scuttled American-led negotiations for an agreement over Iran’s nuclear weapons program, long opposed by Israel. Since the controversy erupted, Hashemi has [elaborated](#) upon his views at *Jadiliyya*, noting Israel’s well-documented record of using secret services to kill those who work to destroy the Jewish state.

By contrast, the only Israeli “false flag” operation Hashemi

has cited is the infamous 1954 [Lavon Affair](#), in which an Israeli military intelligence unit (not the Mossad) enlisted Egyptian Jews to firebomb Western institutions in Egypt in attacks carefully planned to avoid human casualties. Made to appear as coming from disaffected Egyptians such as Muslim Brotherhood members, these attacks would present Egypt as politically instable to its foreign supporters. An Israeli traitor betrayed the Jewish operatives to the Egyptians after a few arsons, and the failed operation had enormous political fallout in Israel, making the Israelis unlikely to repeat this disastrous Machiavellian experiment.

The complex realities of democracies, including Israel's ongoing fight for its survival, elude Hashemi, who is unapologetic in his anti-Israel conspiracy mongering. In response to charges that he had promoted traditional antisemitic beliefs about shadowy Jews manipulating public affairs, in the webinar he pontificated about how the "pro-Israel lobby went to work" against him. He therefore endured an "orchestrated, I think premediated campaign to slander me" and "portray me as an extremist" during a "media frenzy." His "university, to its great shame, actually caved" and had to "throw me under the bus" with a [public statement](#) disassociating the University of Denver from his views and reassuring Jewish community members of its stance against antisemitism.

Hashemi rejected CNN's Jake Tapper tweeted charge during the scandal that Hashemi is a "[pro-Iranian regime academic](#)" as "simply ludicrous." Nonetheless, he is a [known supporter](#) of the National Iranian American Council, which activist [Lawdan Bazargan](#) has called "Tehran's Western propaganda machine." Without citing any evidence, Rabbani interjected that Tapper is "one of Israel's favorite journalists."

As Hashemi noted, his Mossad musings were not the only time he shocked Jews and others at the University of Denver, for in 2021 his CMES cosponsored an [online conference](#) on "Israel-

apartheid.” His “due diligence” on the [conference speakers](#) found them all “to be decent people,” like [Norman Finkelstein](#), Hashemi’s “[old friend](#),” whose extremist views on Israel and Holocaust denial resulted in his 2007 tenure rejection at DePaul University, as Rabbani ruefully noted. Yet Hashemi recounted that [Fritz Meyer](#), Hashemi’s dean at the university’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies ([named](#) after a Jewish refugee convert to Christianity), told him of a “major protest” and “crisis” at the university. *Pace* Hashemi, groups like the ADL condemned his rogues’ gallery of Israel-haters at the conference, such that the University of Denver emphasized in a statement that “we did not endorse this conference,” he recalled. Subsequently, a new university policy demanded the dean’s approval for event sponsorship.

Such events exemplify for Hashemi “unprincipled and cowardly university administrators” being “prone to prostrate themselves” before donors and “bogus charges of antisemitism.” He repeatedly referenced the subordination of academia to a “Likud Lobby” led by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a charge that borrows from classic antisemitic beliefs of Jewish control over major global institutions. Rabbani suggested that Hashemi *et al.* ideologically faced “something akin to a commissar.” “Every word that I speak now, every word that I write,” and, as prompted by Rabbani, “every breath you take, is being monitored by these effectively pro-Netanyahu hate groups, who hate Palestinians fundamentally,” Hashemi concurred.

All such opposition left Hashemi unshaken in the certitude of his convictions, for “it’s impossible to defend Israel’s human rights record towards the Palestinians anymore in a public domain.” He even presumed to explain Israel to Jews, saying “there is no way that anyone who is raised in an American Jewish household with Jewish ethics” can “support what Netanyahu is doing to the Palestinians.” Rabbani meanwhile noted the seventy-fifth anniversary in 2023 not of modern

Israel's existence, but of the "[Nakba](#)" or catastrophe that Israel supposedly represents.

Hashemi's experience destroyed his confidence in the University of Denver, such that he announced his acceptance of a new academic position at like-minded [Georgetown University](#), where his radicalism fits perfectly. Although the University of Denver has exhibited some commendable sanity, Hashemi deserves continued scrutiny at Georgetown. As Middle East studies has degenerated into such abysmal anti-Western/Israel polemics, only mounting public pressure offers any hope for academic reform.

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