



# On 'Jew-Washing' And BDS

## How Jewish anti-Israel activists are gaining influence among Christian groups.

Tue, 07/24/2012  
Yitzak Santis and Gerald M. Steinberg

At the Pittsburgh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) earlier this month, a motion to adopt a boycott of three companies for doing business with Israel was hotly debated and narrowly defeated. At this Christian gathering, a group of "young Jewish activists" provided important "testimony" supporting the motion to isolate and demonize Israel.

These were the "Jew-washers" - very visible actors in many such political attacks on Israel, particularly in Christian frameworks. They are influential beyond their actual numbers, providing a convenient means for Christianizing such actions from the stains of double standards, demonization and sometimes anti-Semitism against the Jewish state of Israel, and even Judaism itself.

According to [one media report](http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/us/presbyterian-church-votes-steer-clear-of-controversies-643846/) (<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/us/presbyterian-church-votes-steer-clear-of-controversies-643846/>) from Pittsburgh, "These activists were mostly affiliated with Jewish Voice for Peace, a small but vocal left-wing advocacy coalition that many describe as a 'fringe' group... Commissioners said their personal testimony helped undercut prevailing rhetoric on the mainstream Jewish perspective."

In fact, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is far from the Jewish mainstream. It is a fringe of a fringe - a small anti-Zionist group, whose finances are unclear, but are almost always found at events where Jew-washing is used, particularly when boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns (BDS) are at stake. Their motivations, like their financing, are unclear and irrelevant - the fact that they provide a useful cover for non-Jews to justify gratuitous Israel-bashing is what counts.

A few days after the PCUSA vote, the Church of England met and voted to support a leading anti-Israel activist group, with the misleading name of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel. EAPPI, a World Council of Churches project, supports BDS and - in line with BDS tactics - consistently demonizes Israel using accusations of "apartheid" and "war crimes." EAPPI calls the security barrier - which has saved countless lives - "evil" while ignoring the wave of suicide terrorism that murdered and maimed thousands of Israeli civilians.

In this case, the Jew-washers included the marginal UK group Jews for Justice for Palestinians, which publicly supports EAPPI and the Church's action.

How does Jew-washing work? The EAPPI example is telling. Prior to the Church's vote, the BBC hosted a debate on July 8 between the motion's sponsor, John Dinnon, and a representative of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jonathan Arkush. Dinnon said, "Jonathan is just one individual as well as is the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Chief Rabbi. But then you have, there are many Jews who are contacting us and saying that they think [EAPPI] is a good organization. In fact it was founded by Jews and

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Christians in Geneva, about five Jews were involved in setting it up.”

It is in this manner that Jew-washers provide cover for Israel-bashers. Dinnon’s undefined “many Jews” and his “five Jews” that he claims helped establish EAPPI somehow outweigh the millions of Jews who would find EAPPI and its activities both immoral and dangerous. Jew-washers help Dinnon make the absurd claim that the Board of Deputies, with its 183 constituent member organizations, are but a few unrepresentative “individuals.”

In many cases, Jew-washing is also used to whitewash the blatant theological anti-Semitism that accompanies the church-based BDS attacks on Israel. One example is Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian group that is very influential in those mainline churches active in the BDS wars. Its theology includes supersessionism - a reading of the New Testament that considers the Church to have superseded the Jewish people in God’s promises - and decide - the charge that “the Jews” killed Jesus - that served as the basis for centuries of anti-Jewish persecution.

Giving Sabeel a thorough Jew-wash is JVP’s Rabbinical Council, which in its “Statement of Support for the [Sabeel Institute \(http://www.barriers-conference.org/Documents/Statements/JVP\\_letter.pdf\)](http://www.barriers-conference.org/Documents/Statements/JVP_letter.pdf)” acknowledges “the more radical incarnations (sic) of some of [Sabeel’s] theological images.”

Yet, Sabeel’s frequent denigration of Judaism as “tribal” and “primitive” and comparisons of Palestinians to Jesus on the cross put there by the Israeli government’s “crucifixion machine,” does not seem to affect JVP’s rabbis, who assert that it is “a mistake to dismiss Palestinian Christian theology wholesale.”

While the Presbyterians’ two-vote defeat of the BDS motion did not give credence to the fringe Jew-washers, many church delegates apparently did. As one participant noted, “The young Jewish voices were the voices that stuck with me.... I understood that they represented a minority. But sometimes small minorities tell us uncomfortable truths.”

Perhaps, but small minorities also tell gross untruths. There is nothing heroic or brave about Jews giving a “kosher hechsher” to movements and ideologies such as BDS that seek to undermine the right of the Jewish people to sovereign equality. Let us call this activity by its rightful name: Jew-washing, and give priority to countering strategically and consistently its deceitful methods and destructive intent.

*Yitzhak Santis is chief programs officer at NGO Monitor and Prof. Gerald M. Steinberg is president of NGO Monitor*

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Submitted by Hilel Salomon (not verified) on Tue, 08/14/2012 - 18:47.

I think that the churches should indeed go ahead with their boycotts, but our own Justice Department should look into the whole question of the financial holdings of those churches who use these holdings for political purposes. They are generally not taxed, make considerable profits at the expense of the general American taxpaying public and still want to play with those profits. There are too many church leaders who hide behind so-called criticism of Israel in order to make their anti-Semitism seem respectable. If they really care about Christians and Christianity, then they need look no further than the fate of the Copts in Egypt, and the impending fate of Arab Christians in Syria and the West Bank.

Submitted by [Lorna Salzman](http://www.lornasalzman.com) (<http://www.lornasalzman.com>) (not verified) on Tue, 08/14/2012 - 13:07.

Those who were outraged by the temerity of Santis and Steinberg in naming the names of "Jew-washers" are much the same as those who watch Hamas rockets land by the tens of thousands inside Israel quietly, and then get furious when Israel defends itself against them. It's called Hypocrisy and a Double Standard: you can vilify Israel but refuse to allow it the right to respond. Nothing can wash out the stained souls of self hating Jews.

Submitted by [james kost](#) (not verified) on Thu, 07/26/2012 - 21:57.

to be short and blount---a bigot by another name is still a bigot!

Submitted by [Anonymous](#) (not verified) on Thu, 07/26/2012 - 11:26.

The Presbyterians sympathetic to islam will find that befriending the muslims will lead to sharia and forced conversions to islam. Lots of luck former Presbyterians!!!

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