

State and non-state extremism: crisis, hate crimes and the far right

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Extremism has adopted sometimes a religious and sometimes a secular form, it has been espoused by states and by non-state actors, but both are equally intolerant of difference. Right-wing extremism refers to political thought that tends to be radically conservative, ultra-nationalist and authoritarian. The right-wing authoritarian drive is based on repressive social conservatism that legitimises dangerous paths against democracy, individual rights and social justice (Gokay, 2017). Right-wing shifts often result from volatile and chaotic international conditions, within which classes and social forces are subordinated to states: state security, state power and state interests.

The recent series of events in Gaza -abductions, murders, bombings and attacks against civilians in their thousands (Reuters reported that in the space of two months 17,177 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza) – demonstrate right-wing extremism’s true colours: from the Israeli state’s terrorising of innocent Palestinian civilians to the far-right attacks on equally innocent Jewish populations by neo-Nazi groups.

In the UK, recent far-right extremism took the form of antisemitism. Within a month of the October 7 attacks in Israel (during which Jewish, Palestinian and other nationality/ethnicity/religion civilian were killed), Community Security Trust (CST), a charity that protects British Jews from antisemitism, had documented 1,019 antisemitic incidents across the UK, an increase in anti-Jewish hate acts of 537% this year compared to the same period last year.

‘These are all instances of anti-Jewish racism, wherein offenders are targeting Jewish people, communities and institutions for their Jewishness. In many cases, these hateful comments, threats to life and physical attacks are laced with the rhetoric and iconography of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel politics’ (CST, 2023). The 1,019 antisemitic incidents recorded fall into the following categories:

- Physical assaults
- Damage & desecration to Jewish property
- Direct threats
- Abusive behaviour, including verbal abuse, graffiti, hate mail and online abuse
- Mass-produced antisemitic literature

CST has recorded antisemitic incidents in Greater London, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Hertfordshire, the Midlands, Thames Valley, Nottinghamshire, Merseyside and Scotland. Many of the reported antisemitic incidents were related to universities and to schools across the UK and include incidents where Jewish schoolchildren were abused on their way to and from school. The Guardian also reported a 1,350% increase in hate crimes against Jewish people, based on figures provided by the Metropolitan police.

Ade Adelekan, the deputy assistant commissioner, described the rise as ‘significant’ and said [Islamophobic offences in London were also up](#) over the same period.

According to the Union of Jewish Students, some young people had stopped wearing items that may identify them as being Jewish.

Far-right extremist groups have taken the opportunity to share hate-filled messages and images such as this one:



Figure 5 - Neo-Nazi Telegram channel expressing solidarity with the attacks on Israel and encouraging users to change their profile pictures to a combined Nazi and Palestinian flag (Telegram; October 11th, 2023)

Source: Koblenz-Stenzler, Klempner & Chavez, 2023

Content published by far-right 'accelerationists' shows how these extremist groups have seized this opportunity to radicalise, recruit and inspire violence against Jewish people. A November 6 post to a prominent accelerationist Telegram described parallels between Hamas and accelerationists, claiming that both are engaged in a struggle for their existence and survival against Jewish people, while calling upon accelerationists to support their own "war" against Jewish people through violence. To understand how accelerationists are using the conflict to support their own cause, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) analysed 18 Telegram channels associated with neo-Nazi accelerationism and the 'Terrorgram' network. Analysing posts from October 7 – 24, analysts coded content posted to the channels. ISD found that neo-Nazi accelerationists have been using the conflict to radicalise and recruit adherents, spread hatred for, and encourage violence against, Jewish

people, and express support for the tactics Hamas has used. The channels also express support for Muslims and Jews 'killing each other' (Kennealy and Manzi, 2023).

Meanwhile, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) announced that November was 'Islamophobia Awareness Month'. In a press release on November 1, the MCB marked the start of IAM against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in Palestine and an exceptionally hostile political environment for British Muslim communities. Since the 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks in the US, Muslims have been vulnerable to religiously motivated hate crime offences. In the year ending March 2021, 45% of all recorded religious hate crime offences in England & Wales were targeted against Muslims, and in the year ending March 2019, 47% of all recorded religious hate crime offences in England & Wales were targeted against Muslims. Over the course of the last two months, there has been a surge of hate crime not only against Jewish people, but also against Muslims, with a 140% increase in Islamophobic offences in London alone. In fact, there have been Islamophobic attacks across the UK, including the attempted arson on an Oxford Mosque, in which the perpetrator threw a petrol can at the Mosque that had 'IDF' scrawled over it, and alcohol being poured over Muslim worshippers praying at a protest. In the US a 6-year-old child, Palestinian-American Wadea Al-Fayoume, was murdered. MCB Secretary-General, Zara Mohammed, talked of a troubling surge in Islamophobic rhetoric and attacks, encouraged and fuelled not only by media commentators peddling deeply Islamophobic narratives and misinformation, but also -and more importantly- by the UK's political leadership, that has 'stoked division' and created a 'culture war in an attempt to pit communities against one another' (Muslim Council of Britain, 2023).

A culture war teeming with xenophobia has been acutely felt in the UK since the run up to the 2016 referendum, which unleashed a tide of racism and bigotry, as well as right wing extremism. To Islamophobia and antisemitism, we can add xenophobia and anti-Europeanness as intolerances (at best) and open hatred (at worst) of right-wing extremism, as practised by groups and by states. Intolerances and hatred towards difference: cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic, racial. In the UK, it has sometimes taken the form of Empire-nostalgic racism; in the Middle East, we see state extremism in its extreme, yet fully supported (morally, politically and materially) by our government.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz has produced a memorial site for each of the approximately 1,200 Israelis (civilians and soldiers) and foreign workers killed by Hamas on October 7. For Gaza, where victims are far more numerous, photos and other humanising details of those killed are much scarcer, but Iraq Body Count has managed to produce details of 17 Palestinian victims killed in immediate retaliation by the Israel Defence Forces in Gaza on October 7 (out of a reported 232), for whom they found both names and a commemorative photograph. Ahmad Abdunaser Adnan Rabi was 12 years old.



Killed in Gaza October 7, 2023.

Source: Iraq Body Count (2023)

Even just looking at those 17 faces (only a fraction of those killed overall in Gaza) makes it harder to ignore the consequences of unchecked extremism. It makes it harder to pretend that it is only far right extremist groups that are dangerous, racist, exclusionist and lethal. It makes it harder to pretend that terrorism is not practised, supported or sponsored by states -even states that are close to our hearts. When we look away from such injustice, we fail to protect life, dignity, human rights and our purported democratic values.

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