**[Amnesty International: Anti-Semitic or Simply Misguided?](http://www.algemeiner.com/2015/04/28/amnesty-international-anti-semitic-or-simply-misguided/" \o "Permanent Link to Amnesty International: Anti-Semitic or Simply Misguided?)**

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In the roster of organizations whose well-meaning objectives have been distorted by bias and prejudicial resolutions, Amnesty International (AI) stands high. For those concerned with human rights, AI is now part of the problem, not part of the solution. It has lost the treasure of a spotless reputation. The stated objective of AI is to work to protect human rights worldwide, and to mobilize the grassroots power of millions of people to effect change. Yet its members recently refused to approve a text that called on the UK government to monitor anti-Semitism closely and periodically review the security situation of Britain’s Jewish population.

A majority of members at AI’s annual general meeting in London on April 19, thought otherwise. By a vote of 468 to 461, they rejected a resolution to campaign against anti-Semitism, and to tackle the rise in anti-Semitic attacks in Britain, whether physical or verbal, online, or in person.

The difference between this action in London and recent political activities in Paris is telling. The French government has proposed 40 items of legislation aimed at combating expressions and manifestations of anti-Semitism. To this end, it would encourage, among other things, countering the spread of anti-Semitism by training teachers and sports clubs and by setting up social media sites to oppose intolerance. The French government is also proposing that advocacy and action of racial and religious hatred should be regarded as criminal offenses.

To her credit, Marine Le Pen, chair of the National Front (FN), like other French politicians, has been conscious of the increase of anti-Semitism and of attacks on Jews in France. Whether she acted to protect the political interests of her party or for more sincere reasons, on April 12,  she disowned the statements made by her 86-year-old father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who founded the party in 1972. In an interview on April 7, in the extreme right-wing anti-Semitic publication Rivarol, the elder Le Pen had repeated his minimization of the Holocaust and his defense of Marshal Petain, the head of the collaborationist Vichy regime during World War II. For him, the Nazi gas chambers were a “mere detail” in the history of the war.

Contrast this to the UK. The vote against the resolution at the AI meeting in London was disgraceful and indeed dishonorable for three reasons. First, the resolution had explained the increasing problem. In February 2015, the report of the British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism found that there was a 221-percent increase in hate crimes directed at Jews during the 2014 Gaza conflict when compared with same period in 2013.

Secondly, it was only resolution defeated during the whole conference, and it related only to British Jews, not to the State of Israel. Thirdly, it displayed that for AI, the concern about anti-Semitism was less significant than other human rights issues. One might even conclude that the 468 members voting against condemning anti-Semitism might not disapprove of it or, even more, might believe that Jews have no human rights.

AI officials defended the vote in specious fashion. According to a statement, AIUK condemned all forms of hate crime and discrimination, but “unfortunately we could not campaign on everything.” The officials argued that AIUK could not pass a resolution calling for a campaign with a single focus. This belied the reality that resolutions passed at the 2015 conference were on a number of specific issues: abortion, Guatemala, Colombian activists, torture in the UK, and asylum detention in the UK. At its conference the year before, resolutions included subjects of sex work, garment workers in Asian countries, Guantánamo, Guatemala, and Sri Lanka.

The AIUK explanation for the silence on anti-Semitism because of the “single focus” issue seems even less plausible in the context of its past activity. Its report in July 2009 on Operation Cast Lead charged Israel with war crimes. In 2012, AI published an 85-page report critical of the State of Israel. It also, in April 2012, published a 123-page report on discrimination against Muslims in Europe (“Choice and Prejudice Discrimination against Muslims in Europe”).

That report expressed concern about the disintegration of human values and opposed discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. More pointedly, it dealt with some of the consequences of the discrimination Muslims in Europe faced in several areas of life because of their religion, ethnic origin, or gender. It held that discrimination against Muslims was fueled by stereotyped and negative views.

And an earlier “single focus” concern was a 2010 resolution on discrimination and violence towards the Sinti and Roma communities in a number of European countries.

Can one expect impartiality on Middle Eastern and Jewish issues from AI? In 2014, it issued a report that accused Israel of war crimes for its attacks on civilian buildings and residential homes during the Gaza-Israel conflict. Yet it did, in a sense, compensate for this by another report in March 2015 revealing that Palestinian organizations had committed war crimes during the 2014 conflict in Gaza by killing both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

Nevertheless, it has long been apparent that AI is critical of Israel in a totally disproportionate fashion compared with its criticism of other countries. AI has had officials and staff members who may or may not be overtly anti-Semitic but who are strongly unsympathetic toward the State of Israel and can be considered pro-Palestinian. The former executive director of AIFinland, Frank Johansson, was prone to refer to Israel as “nikkimaa” (scum state). He confessed he could not think of any other country that could be described in this way. A former staff member, Deborah Hyams, in 2008 signed a statement that Israel was a state founded on terrorism and massacres.

Probably the staff member currently most critical of Israel is Kristyan Benedict, of Indian and Trinidadian descent and a convert to Islam who has defended the implementation of sharia law in the U.K. He is described as the campaign manager for crisis work with special focus on Syria. As such, he has not commented on the 220,000 killed and the 9 million displaced in the brutal war in Syria, but he has been critical of Israel’s “occupation of the Golan Heights,” which, he declares, violates international law.

Benedict has described Gaza as an outdoor prison – not because of Hamas terrorist control of the area, but because of Israel. On a number of occasions he has equated Israel with apartheid South Africa and compared Israel with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. He also knew, as many of us did not, that Israel is included in the list of dictatorial regimes, such as Burma, North Korea, Iran, and Sudan, that abuse basic universal rights.

It is pitiful that AI should have descended so low in its partiality in Middle Eastern affairs and in its lack of genuine concern for human rights – at least for the human rights of Jews.