

ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

The injustice, hatred, unfairness and non-acceptance of Jews as a religious community, has led to a long suffering of Jews throughout the world; that began with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. Since their dispersal, the Jews lived in various countries and endured suffering, subjugation and a treatment as second-class citizens. Anti-Semitism resulted Theodore Herzl visualizing a Jewish homeland (as the answer to the centuries-old Jewish problem) and the formation of the World Zionist Organization in 1897. After lobbying with various powers of that time, in 1917 Jews were able to secure the support of the British through the Balfour Declaration that pledged the support for “a national home” for the Jews in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate upon Palestine speeded the Jewish immigration to Palestine. When the Declaration was issued the Jewish population in Palestine was less than five per cent. Gradually a large number of Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe and Russia, immigrated to Palestine especially following the raise of Hitler in Germany and Mandate Palestine became the destination for a large number of Jews who were fleeing the Nazi rule. Britain which stood for the Jewish cause, facilitated the creation of Israel as solution to the ‘Jewish problem’ as it was envisioned by the community, has failed in providing safe heavens to the believers of community (questioned for loyalty due to Israel, still

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being held responsible for all manner of disaster). It was in forefront, providing solution to the long suffering of the Jews but seemed struggling in the recent years in providing humiliation free environment to the Jewish community which is leading to a mass exodus and agony among the believers of the community. This paper is an attempt to highlight how United Kingdom(UK) has failed in eradicating anti-Semitism from home like in the cases of attacks in the recent years (2014-17).

1. Introduction

Historically Jews have been subjected to political, economic and social discrimination which deprived them of legal and civil rights. Jews found certain rights under the French revolution and enlightenment period but those rights were not sufficient (Mitchell 2012). Because it did not stop their persecution, wherever they went soon after the destruction of their second temple in 70 AD, endured pain, oppression, cruelty (Eisenberg and Scolnic 2006). But Britain through its policies such as Balfour Declaration and its presence itself in the West Asian region provided safe heaven to the Jewish community, it facilitated immigration process, many British soldiers and sailors died saving the life of Jewish women and children during the immigration process. In order to prevent Jewish resistance Britain, sent delegation to Palestine in 1939 and argued that none of their promises to Arabs would be fulfilled (Suwaidan 2006: 256).

On 11 November 1918 World War One came to end and League of Nations (LN) was established. Britain and France divided the whole Fertile Crescent under the mandate of the League of Nations (Lassner and Troen 2007: 13-15). Britain got Palestine and started facilitating the Jewish immigration to Palestine. When this declaration was issued Jewish population was around 5 percent which rose speedily. But after the raise of Hitler in Germany in 1932 and the Arab Revolt of 1936 Britain found it hard to manage its commitment to the Jewish community (Wilson 1987 & Norris 2013). Under the pressure from Arabs British appointed Peel Commission to find out the causes for distrust. Peel Commission came up with its findings and reports, which suggested the land of Palestine, should be partitioned among the Jews and the Arab, Jews accepted this plan but Arabs rejected it (Bottaro 2012: 31). But throughout this period Jewish

immigration to Palestine did not stop. But after the Second World War Britain became quite weak and found hard to manage its colonies abroad and dumped the question of Palestine on the newly created United Nations (UN) in February 1947 (Edwards 2008: 59). UN created United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) which appointed Majority and Minority committee, the voting took place on the UNSCOP's proposed plans and on 29 November 1947 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Majority Plan and passed the resolution 181 which called for the creation of two states Israel and Palestine (Moore 2014: 1493). Arabs rejected this plan and war took place over the decision of UN in May 1948 but Arabs faced a defeat from the newly created state of Israel and called it al-Naqba (Catastrophe) (Ahmed 2017). United Kingdom stood for the Jewish cause and facilitated the creation of Israel. Because it was UK which had control over the most powerful army in the Arab world 'the Arab Legion' (AL), which was trained, funded and even commanded by Britain (Wilson 1987). The commander of AL had strict orders from Britain to not to intervene in areas that were given to the Jews under the UN partition plan (Ibid). Since the ruler of Transjordan has its belief in 'Greater Syria Plan' after losing the holiest places to the Al-Saud in 1932, did not wish to lose the third holiest place in Islam (Jerusalem) to the Jews which they could only capture from the Jordan in 1967 (Kumar, 2017). But in the recent years especially following the Gaza conflict in 2014, we have seen a country that facilitated the Jewish cause and conspired for the plight of Jews; is struggling in providing a humiliation free environment to Jewish community. Jews are still being held responsible for all manner of disaster; they are being questioned due to Israel. It is to a level; a Jewish person living in United Kingdom does not want to be seen as Jewish because of the fear that seen in public as a Jewish could lead to an attack or assault (Channel 4 News 2016). Due to which they change their names on social networking very frequently, change their email addresses as well as their phone numbers.

2. Anti-Semitism

The term 'Anti-Semitism' was coined by German journalist Wilhelm Marr in 1873; he was as secular as secular men of the modern world (TADL, 2013: 2-3). "The Dreyfus Trial" in 1894 showed how deep-rooted anti-Semitism was in France. Dreyfus was accused of treason in French army for selling secrets to the Germans although evidence proved him innocent but people outside the prison kept shouting slogans such as "death to the Jews", French officers and staff

tried to blame the community. In every society; there are people who get criticized but in their cases the criticism remains of a person his or her community is never held responsible for the act but in the case of Jews no matter who does the act the whole community is held responsible. For example; Harvey Weinstein's sexual predatory behavior was linked to his Jewish origin (Philips, 2018).

Jews have been held responsible for many things and there are many accusations against them. Most atrocious is; still held responsible for the killing of Jesus Christ despite the fact that Romans ordered and carried out the crucifixion. 'Blood libel' (Jews kidnapped and killed Christian children for Jewish rituals) another accusation against them. This accusation was devised first by Thomas of Monmouth in 1150 to justify the mysterious death of Christian children's, Jews are mostly hated because of their professions; for being "money lending community", for "charging high interest and for being greedy and money-hungry" (ADL, 2013). Many rulers used Jewish money and capital for building armies and cathedrals and when it did not suit the ruler, were expelled like from England (1290), France (1394), and Spain (1492) (Ibid).

The severe dislike, bias, unfair treatment and non-acceptance of Jews as a religious community has led to a long suffering of Jews that began with the destruction of second temple in 70 AD. After the destruction, Jews went to various countries and endured pain, agony, torture, misery, hardship, difficulty, suffering, adversity, subjugation. Wherever they went the one phenomenon which always followed the Jews was persecution, no matter where they were it was always behind them and whichever country they lived in; never became citizen of that country. But anti-Semitism resulted in Theodore Herzl, who visualized "Jewish Homeland" as the answer to century's old Jewish problem and the formation of World Zionist Organization in 1897 (Rhett 2008: 29-31).

After lobbying with various powers of that time the Jews were able to get support of British in the form of Balfour Declaration that Pledged the British support for the establishment of a "national home for Jews in Palestine" and when this declaration was issued Jewish population in Palestine was less than five percent and Britain was not in possession of Palestinian land which they grabbed on December 1917 (Shlaim 2000 & Avineri 2017 & Shlaim 1987). Progressively, a

large number of Jews especially from Eastern Europe and Russia started immigrating to Palestine and mandate Palestine became the final destination for large number of Jews who were fleeing the Nazi rule (Shlaim 2009 & Stewart 2009). Therefore, Britain through its policies such as Balfour Declaration and its presence itself in the West Asian region provided safe heaven to the Jewish community, facilitated immigration process, many British soldiers and sailors died saving the life of Jewish women and children during the immigration process. British praised Haganah (The Defence) for saving the lives of numbers of British soldiers (Levenberg 1993: 86). In order to control the situation Britain did repress the Jews to handle the Palestinian issue but drastically failed, its severe loss of power and wealth during the Second World War made it weak and prevented it to remain great power (Ravndal 2010).

3. United Kingdom and Question of Jews

United Kingdom stood for the Jewish cause and facilitated the creation of Israel. But in the recent years especially following the Gaza conflict in 2014, a country that worked for the establishment of Jewish state through the 'Balfour Declaration' and did everything possible for the plight of Jews; seemed struggling in providing a humiliation free environment to Jewish community. Jews are still being held responsible for all manner of disaster; they are being questioned due to Israel. It is to a level, where a Jewish person living in UK does not want to be seen as Jewish because of the fear that seen in public as a Jewish could lead to an attack or assault (Channel 4 News, 2016). Consequently, they change their names on social networking very frequently; they change their email addresses very frequently as well as their phone numbers. UK helped in the emergence of the state of Israel through its policies to provide a solution to the suffering of Jews, as it was envisioned by the community itself. It was largely to fulfilled its promise that was given in 1917 in the form of Balfour Declaration. The country which once upon a time facilitated the creation of state of Israel as solution to the Jewish problem, failing in fulfilling the aspirations of the community (Jews) which is leading to a mass exodus and agony among the believers of the community, which is in a way facilitating anti-Semitism to flourish in a state. UK facilitated creation of Israel and provided necessary means but failed to eradicate it properly from home like in the case of attacks 2014, 2015-17. They are largely considered as racial group whose believes are inferior and do not go with society. Jews are usually subjected to injustice and shame.

The Jewish community has faced Anti-Semitism since their dispersal from Palestine after the destruction of their Second Temple in 70AD (Council of Europe 2010: 218). Since their dispersal one phenomena which always followed the Jews is persecution no matter where they lived, were always persecuted for the sake of being Jewish. But in the recent years, there has been an increase in the anti-Semitic attacks throughout the Europe, in which Great Britain is not exception. According to the Anti-Defamation League's report, "Anti-Semitism still persists today and incidents of Second World War only inhibited its expression" (TADL, 2013: 4).

The expressions of anti-Semitism are more indirect (Klaff, 2010). Historically, Jews have been attacked for the sack of being Jewish, but in the recent year opposition to Israel and its policies is becoming a reason for the attacks on Jews, as well as their school, synagogue, institutions, organizations. This was very much visible in Britain (i24 English News, 2019). The conflict in Gaza has given rise to more than 1168 episodes of anti-Semitic attacks against the Jewish community in the Great Britain in the year 2014 (Berg, 2015). Which is actually the double of what it was during the year 2013 the number of attacks were somewhere around 535, the perpetrators attacked whoever they could find as Jewish person, wearing any Jewish symbol like Kippah and also attacked Jewish schools, cemeteries and synagogues. Most believe that Jewish people are not loyal to the country that they reside and they have insignificant amount of power of economic and political power (TADL, 2013).

There is higher Anti-Semitism in United Kingdom than we care to accept, and the second world has already highlighted it, but it is certain that it is on the rise today if one assumes in terms of years rather than decades. It does at present lead to open mistreatment, torture and expulsion. And it also has the impression of making people insensitive and unsympathetic to the sufferings of Jews in other countries. Anti-Semitism is on rise throughout the Europe. The oppression in Germany have caused much dissimulation of anti-Semitic perception and thus overshadowed the whole picture (TOF, 2017).

"Britain has an anti-Semitism problem" (Daisley, 2017). It appeared as thing of the past but not any longer, Jews in Britain are increasingly becoming target for anti-Semitic attacks, the early part of 2016 alone saw an eleven percent of increase in anti-Semitic attacks (Somper, 2016).

According to David Delew the chief executive of Community Security Trust (CST) “Anti-Semitism is having an increasing impact on the lives of British Jews and the hatred and anger that lies behind it is spreading” (BBC, 2017). In three years of time from the year 2014 to 2017, there has been increase of 45 percent in anti-Jewish hate assaults (Wooding, 2017). Due to which a third of Jews from Britain has thought of leaving the state for avoiding the rise in hate crime (Ibid).

Rabbi Alex Chapper who himself been a victim of various anti-Semitic assaults have argued that whenever there is “tension in Middle East involving Israel, there is an increase in anti-Semitic incidents” (BBC, 2017). The question comes to our mind that why these attacks are happening and what is leading to the rise of these attacks and how the state is failing in curbing these attacks that have made them to double in a span of one year of time. If we look at the structure of United Kingdom as a state, we find that first of all there is no written constitution. Therefore, we don’t really know who has what rights but the state prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion. But at the same time establishes Church of England as a state church. And if we look at the demography of Britain, we find that Jewish population is less than one percent and are largely scattered around London, Manchester and the urban areas; which are hundred and thirty-nine in the state and if we look at the education system of Britain we find that there are either catholic schools or protestant schools and children of those who do not belong to this religion and not interested in attending the morning prayers; which are predominantly Christian in character, parents of these have to officially take permission from the school premises for their children for not attending the morning prayers (USDS, 2014; 2015; 2016). The state also supports the Christian character to be reflected in every day curriculum of schools and the leaders of the state have also reiterated on various platforms like David Cameroon did it in a speech at Oxford on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible in 2011 by saying that Britain is a “Christian country” (The Guardian, 2011).

When we analyse the impact of all these things when it comes to the religious minorities of the state, we find that when one religion is given preference over the others it creates an unfavorable environment for the other religious minorities to co-exist in a state. For example, in 2016, twenty-six senior bishops of the Anglican Church were elected to the house of the lords and they

enjoy a very good say in the upper house of the state (USDS, 2016). So, the question is not that they were elected, but the question is why only the senior priests of Anglican church what about senior priests of other religions. According to the census in 2011, UK has 59.3% Christians, 4.8% Muslims, 0.8% Sikhs, 1.5% Hindus, 0.4% Buddhist, 0.4% Jews and around 25% are identified with no religion(Office for National Statistics, 2012).

4. Role of Political Parties in the United Kingdom in combatting Anti-Semitism

The role of political parties has been very crucial in fighting anti-Semitism. Parties such as Labour Party (LP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Conservative Party's (CP) leaders are directly or indirectly involved in anti-Semitic hate speeches that has hurt the sentiments of Jewish community residing in UK. Most of the parties in the UK instead of fighting anti-Semitism have been directly involved in anti-Semitic speeches and activities. This is in a way facilitating anti-Semitism to grow in a state, at various instances many leaders of LP as well as LDP leaders have been involved direct or indirect hate speeches and anti-Semitic activities. Either through social networking like Facebook (FB) posts or twitter many have come with harsh statements against the Jewish community. From the Labour party, Jackie Walker, Jeremy Corbyn, Naz Shah, Ken Livingstone, Gerald Kaufman, and Luke Cresswell and from Liberal Democratic party MP Matthew Gordon Banks, Jenny Tonge has been involved in anti-Semitic speeches and activities.

Jeremy Corbyn, who was elected to head LP in the year 2015, he in 2009 said that Hamas (Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-'Islāmiyyah) (Islamic Resistance Movement) and Hezbollah (Party of Allah) are his “friends” (Simcox, 2018). The two-terrorist organisation that has called for the annihilation of the only Jewish state (Israel) that exist in the world and they have given threatening against the Jews. His step of calling them his friend has been criticised by many especially the Jewish Community within UK. The result of this was many joined Labour party due to his support to these kinds of policies, which led to rise of anti-Semitism in the state. He set up a trend for anti-Semitic speeches which was followed by many within the Labour party such as former mayor of London Ken Livingstone who had many a times reiterated that “Adolf Hitler was Zionist” and “Adolf Hitler supported Zionism” (TJP, 2017). Moreover, while making these allegations he referred to Haavara agreement which was signed by Nazi government before the third Reich began its mass extermination which facilitated the relocation of some Jews to

Palestine in 1933 (Elgot, 2017). It was Livingston reading of the document which made him believe that Hitler was supportive of a Jewish homeland (Ibid).

Naz Shah another member of LP who tried to provide a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on Facebook (FB). Before becoming a MP from Labour party, wrote a post on FB during the Gaza conflict in 2014 whereby she suggested a “solution for Israeli-Palestine conflict” through a proposal according to which “relocate Israel into United States” and wrote “problem solve” (Milligan, 2016). Following this move Membership of Naz Shah (Member of Parliament) was temporarily suspended from party for making comments on FB page (USDS, 2016).

Although, she later apologised for not knowing she had made anti-Semitic comments. Jackie Walker a member of LP as well as the vice chairmen of the campaign group Momentum, made controversial remarks related to holocaust that also hurt the sentiments of Jewish community. She questioned “why Holocaust Day not more wide ranging to include other genocide” (The Guardian, 2016). In her remarks she criticised counter terrorism security force at Jewish schools and argued that Jews were the “chief financiers” of slave trade in Africa (Ibid). Smeeth a member of LP walked out of an event where by Labour party presented its report into an allegation of anti-Semitism. But the event was used to vile conspiracy theories regarding the Jews that they are ‘colluding with media houses’ and later asked for Corbyn’s resignation (Dearden, 2016).

Shami Chakrabarty was appointed in 2016 to investigate accusation against the LP and presented findings suggests that there is “toxic atmosphere in the Labour party” and its behaviour making it very hard for the Jewish community to feel welcome (Somper, 2016). Most of the people in Great Britain believe that ‘Labour party harbours anti-Semites in its ranks’ and many are of the view that Crown prosecutors are partly to blame for failure in levelling charges against the perpetrators for spreading hatred (Wooding, 2017). The Chakrabarty report argued that member of Labour party “should resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israel-Palestine” (The Guardian, 2016).

Due to hefty-persistence of anti-Semitism a Jewish family from Manchester did not felt safe in the country and believed that they don’t have any choice but to leave. The reason behind their decision was they saw neighbour son getting beaten up for wearing skull cap (kippah). Most

promising to them was the rise in anti-Semitic attacks between the years 2013-2014. One of the family members (Honey Gould) argued that: “There is so much anti-Semitism in Britain and its coming from all sides. Our local Jewish schools look like prison camps. They’re surrounded by wire fences. There are guards on patrol, some with dogs. On Saturdays, you see police walking the street with members of the Community Security Trust (CST). I don’t want to sit at home panicking when my husband goes to the synagogue. I just want to live in peace” (Epstein, 2015). According to a report published by CST, 924 attacks took place against the Jewish community in the year 2015. The conflict in Gaza brought reaction against the Jewish community in the UK and there were 1179 episodes of attacks took place against the Jews in UK in 2014. In 2015, 685 episodes against the Jewish community were of abusive nature, in other 65 episodes damage was done to Jewish property and in 76 episodes threats were given to the Jews. In most episodes; visible Jewish people were abused while going to business, walking on streets, attacked in public places (CST 2016). According to a religious freedom report three orthodox Jews were attacked by three men in London in January 2016, there were no injuries; they pelted them with small gas canisters and yelling “Hitler is on the way to you, heil Hitler, heil Hitler!” (USDS, 2016).

In the first six of months of 2017, The Community Security Trust recorded an all-time high of 767 incidents. This is the highest in UK and it is an indication of rising anger and hatred against the Jewish community (Dearden, 2017). Targeted hate campaign such as neo-Nazi posts, verbal abuse and use of social media were most common form of incident recorded, targeting, women, men, children and whoever they could identify as Jewish, due to their appearance, clothing, symbol, or school uniform. In March 2017 a swastika was scrawled at the wall in University of Birmingham with a phrase “die or dirty Jews resign” (Ibid). The CST noted 81 Anti-Semitic assaults, 21 at schools, 16 perpetrated against Jewish public figures, 35 at synagogue, and 4 at Jewish cemeteries (Ibid). Most of the attacks occurred in Manchester and London (home to largest Jewish community in UK).

5. Conclusion

UK has taken various steps to fight anti-Semitism. It has supported Community Security Trust as an independent body that takes care of anti-Jewish crimes and prepares reports. The state has also commissioned various committees to find out the causes for the rise of anti-Semitism and

has provided financial support for the protection of Jewish schools, cemeteries and synagogues. But these steps are not sufficient there is a need for awareness that needs to be created among people. Anti-Semitism in UK is largely a political opposition to Israel which is getting transformed into religious hatred. Jew and Israel are two different things, it's not the same. Jews should be seen as nationals, hatred makes them feel aloof, makes them feel not part of a nation where they live for years and makes them feel like an outsider. In a globalized world all countries have mixed populations at their disposal and we all have political disagreement and opposition with one another that opposition does not have to transform into religious hatred; the focus should be on humanism.

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