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As we convene in this beautiful venue, I reflect that I feel as if I have been involved in monitoring, researching and analysing antisemitism for so long that, when I started, the Dead Sea was still alive.

Over a period of time, I have observed many discussions of antisemitism which have been decontextualized and lacked grounding in any form of historical context. We live in a time where so many people think they are instant experts and where there appears to be no social, or even intellectual, benefit in conveying thoughts in nuanced or cautious tones. I would like to submit that another difficulty in interpreting antisemitism and looking for government action in response to it is that we are really speaking about antisemitisms in the plural, a number of overlapping, parallel and, dare I say, intersecting, ideologies and phenomena. Virtually every variety of antisemitism also contains a fair degree of subjectivity when it comes to analysis, as we can see very clearly when we witness from afar debate in the USA where we hear from some that an anti-antisemitic position is to oppose the proposition that Jews are a People while it is antisemitic to praise Jewish success or encourage aspirations towards Jewish self-respect.

Earlier this month, between discussing terrorism in Queensland and responses to antisemitism in South Australia, I was in Indonesia, for a very intensive programme of lecturing, dialoguing and meetings. Regardless of the subject matter, attitudes towards Jews were rarely far from the surface.

The most populous Muslim-majority country in the world, Indonesia hosts an extraordinary variety of Islamic intellectual and cultural institutions. You never seem to be far from a Mosque but it would be quite false to assume that interpretations of how a Muslim should lead his or her life were in any sense unitary. There is an Islam which is infused with many local traditions and also Sufism. The second largest group of Muslims have a far more Arabised yet nevertheless authentically South East Asian interpretation. Then there are outposts of Salafism and a variety of reactionary, theologically related, tendencies. There are committed Liberal Muslims and many different strands of scholarship. A crucial element of post-colonial Indonesian identity has been religious coexistence and tolerance, with Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism the recognised creeds, with adherence of other faiths in a form of limbo Ahmadiyah subject to persecution if they identify themselves as Muslim and Shiites given a rough time in many parts of the country.

Regardless of the form that Islam takes or the political identification of various Muslims, consideration of Jews is essentially inescapable. A starting point is the Koran in which Jews feature in a number of surahs. At nearly every presentation I

have given in three speaking tours of Islamic institutes of higher learning, I have been asked about how Jews understand specific Koranic references to my people. Attitudes towards Jews can be used as a means of identifying like-minded or antagonistic fellows and Jews and Judaism are studied as a means of understanding Islam more than as a means of relating to living, breathing Jews.

To give you an example of the sometimes contradictory positions, I will relate a story from one of my earlier visits to Jakarta, the Indonesian capital. I had been invited to speak at an international conference aimed at discussing peace building, hosted by a significant Islamic organisation which has tens of millions of followers. An Indonesian woman who had travelled outside the country and met Jewish people had mentioned to her grandfather, who worked for an important institution run by this Muslim group, that I was in Jakarta and he told her he wanted me to come and meet him. When I took off my Australian Akubra (bush hat) and revealed my kippah, he asked me if I would mind not having it on display, in case members of his board of directors happened to pass by, as he feared they would not take kindly to him speaking with a Jew. Sure enough, two of his board members popped by and asked me if I was Muslim. When I said I wasn't, one of them said "So you are a Christian", and before I could respond (not that I was going to), they engaged in a direct conversation with the other people in the room, eventually leaving without even acknowledging my existence.

Anecdotally, it seemed far more likely that my being Jewish would be the cause of hostility rather than welcome in at least some central institutions, and my positive experiences of Indonesia have undoubtedly been influenced by the fact that I was only speaking in institutions which had invited me in the first place. To give you another example, a friend of mine, a member of parliament representing an Islamic version of the Christian Democrats, invited me for coffee in a shopping mall, one of two in very close geographic proximity to each other. She told me the difference was that we were going to the mall where the fact that I could sit wearing a kippah together with a woman in a headscarf would not bother anybody, whereas at the second mall there was every chance that somebody would seek a confrontation if they became aware a Jewish person was present, let alone in the company of a Muslim woman.

My interactions with Indonesian scholars and religious leaders have been overwhelmingly respectful and constructive. This is in part due to a respect for religion. A person who just happens to be Jewish but was not able to engage in a theological discussion which reflected respect and understanding for Islam may have been treated quite differently.

Muslims who want to be friends with, cooperate or simply tolerate Jews have an abundance of Islamic source material to bolster their position, just as anti-semites have their own authentic textual arsenal. I should mention that I also encountered individuals who quite openly expressed the view that Jewish people were innately successful, clever and wealthy (although I did my best to dispel such a stereotype). These people thought of themselves as admirers if not lovers of Jews, but this was because of, not despite, stereotypes which could be used to rationalise antisemitism.

One of the most important figures in recent Indonesian politics and religious life was President Abdurahman Wahid, also known as Gus Dur. A friend of Shimon Peres and of Rabbi David Rosen, he was an outstanding proponent of gentle Islam and constructive and warm Jewish/Muslim relations. By contrast, the only Malaysian figure of similar stature in his own country is Dr Mahathir Muhamad, who has made a series of snarky, small minded, disgusting comments concerning Jews over an extended period. In Malaysia, Jews figure much more prominently in public debate, with mainstream newspapers hosting discussions of Jews, Judaism and Middle East politics which would be comical in their small mindedness and ignorance if not for the fact that Malaysia still influences some influence in South East Asia, in the remnants of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

As an Australian, I like most sports, including football(s), but I do not like being a political football. In the Malaysian context Jews are political footballs and the team which is the most antisemitic feels it will have the support of the crowd.

Mentioning the Non-Aligned Movement, it is perhaps worth reflecting that it is now 18 years (for Jews a lifetime), since the Durban World Conference Against Racism, hosted by the United Nations. The influence of the OIC inside the NAM meant that there was no possibility that antisemitism would be properly considered or that Jews, let alone Israel, would be treated as authentic participants in efforts to combat the scourge of racism. I recall sitting through the obscenity of theocratic, racially discriminatory and minority-persecuting governments riding their moral high horses to trample over so many genuine efforts at developing strategies to help victims of bigotry and prejudice. It is perhaps significant that the Stockholm Forums of the early 2000s did not have Malaysian delegates to block efforts at international cooperation to combat the global evil.

To return to Australia, something I seem to do after travels a dozen or so times a year, a report has been tabled this month which publicises the state of play regarding antisemitism for the twelve month period ending on 30 September 2019. Before addressing this report, I should mention that a major conservative think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs, released a serious study on left-wing antisemitism in Australia, a subject which has not been openly debated nearly to the extent it deserves. There has also been a recent release of the first analysis of incidents of anti-Islamic activity in Australia, in which it was revealed that more than 200 incidents had been recorded in each of the years being studied and that nearly all of these appeared to be crimes of opportunity as against thought out or pre-planned attacks.

The reporting period for physical incidents of antisemitism in Australia is 1 October – 30 September. In the 12 months ending 30 September 2019, 368 incidents were logged by the central data base maintained by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, consisting of 225 attacks and 143 threats. Despite what you may have read, including in the Israeli media this week, in terms of overall totals, this figure is below the average of 384 reports over the period from 1989 – 2018, although marginally up on the year ending 2018. Within this total there were marked variations within different categories and it is notable that considerable media coverage

misrepresented the increase in 30% year on year increase in reported incidents of verbal abuse, harassment and intimidation, as if this constituted an overall increase in number of reports or in the intensity of activity.

Tht said, the total number of 225 attacks (which includes physical violence and vandalism, direct personal abuse and graffiti) was well above the average over the previous 30 years of 130 incidents, but was below the total recorded in the year ending 2012 and similar to the number of reports in 2007. The total number of threats (which consisted of emails, telephone calls, letters, leaflets, posters and stickers) of 143 was well below the average of 254.

In the most serious category, which involves violence committed against individuals and property vandalism (not including graffiti), the 16 reports were received well below the average of 25 during the previous 30 years. It can be contrasted with the years 2001 and 2008 when more than 3 times that number of reports were received and 1991, 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2010, which had totals double or more than the 2019 figure.

Harassment and verbal abuse and intimidation was the single largest category of incidents, which has been the case in a majority of reporting periods. The total of 114 incidents was well above the average of 65 incidents but was below the number of reports received in 2015 and each of the years between 2007 and 2012.

Telephone threats were received at the precise average of the previous 30 years while postal mail has become almost non-existent as a means of transmission of threats. Graffiti was logged at the highest ever total of 95 (compared to the average of 40). This is particularly significant as one daubing of graffiti can often be viewed by a large number of individuals, magnifying its negative impact. Reports of miscellaneous incidents such as stickers, leaflets and posters is the category which has the most dramatic variations from year to year. The 27 reports logged in 2019 compared to the 137 in the previous year but also to the two incidents from 2015.

The most difficult category in terms of accurate recording, reporting and analysis is email. The first reports in this category were received in 1995 and grew each year dramatically until 2003 and then peaked again in 2008, 2009 and 2013. This is complicated due to the way online technology has been incorporated in the lives of both anti-semites and their targets. Despite genuine attempts at consistency in reporting and analysis, there are difficulties often in identifying whether a number of individual emails have been sent or someone has sent to many recipients, for example. However, given that the experiences of many victims of antisemitic abuse and threats have received these through email the category must nevertheless be maintained. The 82 reports received in the year in review were compared to an average of 147 over the previous 25 years.

In summary, the year in review in Australia saw a statistically and insignificant year-on-year rise in reports of antisemitic violence and harassment directed against Jewish Australians, which for the fifth successive year was below the long term average (2015 was the year of the smallest number of reports since 1992 and the

third lowest on record).The total number of incidents was well below the figures for 2002, 2009 and 2013.

It was interesting to note that, based on reported incidents, there is close to five times the likelihood of a Jew than a Muslim being subjected to direct, as against communal, harassment.

I do not believe that incidents of antisemitism are the most important focus. What really matters is the way politicians and others in positions of moral or other authority react when they become aware of antisemitism.

Without going into too many fine details I will observe that, across the political spectrum the release of the report seemed to provide everybody with a soapbox, with unanimous abhorrence at both the attacks on Muslims and on Jews.

Left-wing politicians quickly condemned the antisemitism which had been observed in Australia, placing it firmly in the context of racism of the right. Right wing politicians saw Corbyn-like forces at work in the Australian left and could easily, justifiably, accuse many within the anti-Israel quarters of providing rationalisation, inspiration and platforms for antisemitism. Within the leadership of other religious minorities was condemnation of antisemitism because it deserves to be condemned, argumentation that the triumph of secularism inspires attacks on religious minorities and, unusually, little “victim blaming”. There was an even wider variety of types of condemnation from Christian quarters, with a fair bit of blame accrued by them to historic Christian antagonism towards Jews. This is in part due to the existence, as I mentioned earlier, of “antisemitisms” and it is welcome that each type of antisemitism has resulted in condemnation. It is important that the antisemitism which is in the camp of dislike of the unlike, simple bigotry, is condemned by progressives, especially give the way some left-wing groups seem to feel anti-Jewish bigotry is acceptable. It is important that antisemitism in the anti-Israel movement is condemned and that esoteric antisemitic rhetoric within specific religious circles is condemned, even if they are not all condemned by everyone, all the time.

A variety of practical responses figured in the public discourse, including proper application of existing laws and improvement of legislation believed to be inefficient or insufficient. One prominent theme was that increased Holocaust education in all Australian schools would play a large part in changing hearts and minds of nascent bigots. In fact, while we have been meeting here, the Australian Senate adopted a resolution which noted and condemned antisemitism in Australia, repudiated all acts of antisemitism and called for increased Holocaust education. I support as many people as possible learning about the Shoah. It needs to be studied as an historic phenomenon, with an understanding of the history of antisemitism and the history of Europe. It needs to be studied to help understand racism and bigotry. It needs to be studied to help us comprehend human evil and also human goodness, resilience and also brutality. It needs to be studied so we can understand contemporary society, 20th and 21st century politics, and so much more. But based on my observations over a number of years, I am quite sceptical about the utility of Holocaust education as a means of combatting antisemitism.

Firstly, not all Holocaust education is the same, certainly not in terms of quality. I have encountered Holocaust education which managed to completely sanitise antisemitism which was not of the specific Nazi variety or which did not even talk about antisemitism but spoke broadly of racism. I have also encountered Holocaust education which either completely removed it from the context of the Second World War or promoted the idea that our concerns with antisemitism began and ended parallel with the rise and defeat of Nazism. Perhaps the most disturbing so-called Holocaust education I ever encountered was in a session at a Holocaust education conference here in Israel, where a visiting school teacher from a Western European country which had been occupied by the Nazis gave a pleasant, if lightweight, presentation on the need for empathy with past, current and potential victims of racism and inadvertently left his little video running longer than he had intended. We saw how, in his classrooms, he had used the Holocaust as a segue into obscene distortions of history and contemporary events to position contemporary Israel as a mirror of the Third Reich. In that environment, he was quickly and appropriately chastised and hopefully educated, but anecdotally there is evidence that this type of "Holocaust education" can be found in a number of educational institutions.

Which brings me to other key challenges we have when considering the most effective means of dealing with antisemitism. Too often, antisemitism is not merely a political football but where one stands on Jews is part of a broader issue of identity. The way Jews are thought about enters into debate within sections of the extra-parliamentary left as well as more broadly in social democratic thinking. Where being anti-Israel is seen as being the highest form of moral purity, it becomes difficult to consider the reality of antisemitism as a factor of history and in contemporary society. If you are taught that all religion is the enemy of the Truth a form of cognitive dissonance arises when you try to defend Jews who you identify with obscurantism. Similar types of issues arise within churches, and it is no surprise that nearly all of the anti-antisemitism we have seen has come from church leaders originally swimming against the tide of their own denominations.

On the far-right, in the Australian context, there has been a belief that Jews manipulate "inferior" Indigenous people and other non-Europeans, as Jews seek to replace European civilisation with a mish mash of racial and cultural identities. At the same time, man in this sub-culture see Muslims as easy targets and obvious bogey men and feel that they have more credibility if they support the people they see most hated by the Islamists. Within Islam there are many complexities relating to Jews and Judaism. There is a sharing, with strands of Christianity, the view that if they are right then Jews must be wrong. There is a view that an essential part of Islamic identity is defence of the Ummah and Jews are often depicted as enemies of the Ummah. Sometimes it is not a ridiculous idea to suggest that if Jews did not exist we need to be invented just so as we can allow people to stake their positions by their attitudes towards us.

Sometimes it appears we need to be strong so as to deter bullies but if we are not weak we are not considered worthy of sympathy or in need of defence of our basic rights. It seems we must be part of the mainstream because we want an inclusive society, but far enough outside the mainstream that our specific concerns can be

acknowledged and understood. We need a society which is as open and vibrant as a liberal democracy can be, because restrictions on free speech have so often resulted in repression of minorities. However, we also know that racists speech has a real world impact and that is why so many of us are proactive in supporting legislation which addresses attempts by antisemites to restrict our ability to exercise our basic human rights. We want not just awareness of antisemitic incidents but acknowledgement of the reality of them and understanding of the context in which they take place.

From this short laundry list it might sound as if we want a great deal. But in reality all we are really asking for is that antisemitism be acknowledged, recognised, be understood to be a problem for society as a whole and not merely for its targets, and never be treated as simply an acceptable fact of life.