

Debunking Robert F. Kennedy Jr's Pro-Israel Talking Points

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US Democratic Party Presidential candidate, Robert F. Kennedy Jr recently sat down with celebrity rabbi Shmuley Boteach at an event in New York to perform a pre-prepared set of pro-Israel talking points. This came after the politician stated that Covid-19 [didn't effect Jewish and Asian people](#) as much as White and Black Americans, drawing complaints of anti-Semitism from aspiring statesman.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr's support of Israel, showcased in a recent event in New York, has been broadly interpreted to have been set up in order to run damage control over claims of anti-Semitism against the Democratic Party contender. RFK's pandering to Israel tipped over into conflation between Jewish people and the Israeli regime, with the Presidential hopeful going on to deny that Palestinians lived under [a racist Apartheid regime](#). Kennedy [shared that](#),

"a major piece of my campaign will be explaining to Americans why that is wrong and making the case for Israel."

RFK, despite pegging himself as the anti-establishment figure running within the Democratic party, takes an even more extreme pro-Zionist view than the sitting US President, Joe

Biden, as he slammed his own party's acknowledgment that Israel occupy's Palestinian territory. In terms of his pro-Israel stance, there is little that seems to separate Kennedy and former US President Donald Trump, with RFK demonstrating a much more robust understanding of Israeli history and pro-Israel talking points.

Debunking RFK's Pro-Israel Talking Points

During the course of the dialogue between Rabbi Shumely Boteach and RFK, the Presidential candidate made a large number of factually incorrect statements and spread provably false accusations about Iran, the Palestinians, the Arab world, and the [Israeli government itself](#). To address each point in extensive detail would be too lengthy, however, the following claims are in need of rebuttal.

Claim 1: Israel is the only nation in the Middle East with freedom of expression

False: To begin with, Israel was [ranked 97](#) in the world for press freedom, by Reporters Without Borders, **in 2023**. On the leading NGO's website, it is stated that *"Palestinian journalists are systematically subjected to violence as a result of their coverage of events in the West Bank, and Israeli reporters are barred from entering the Gaza Strip."* [The 2022 assassination](#) of Palestinian-American journalist [Shireen Abu Akleh](#) by Israeli security forces remains unpunished, despite strong pressure from the international community and the Israeli authorities' admission, as well as video evidence, witness testimony, and forensic evidence all finding that this was a targeted killing by the IDF. The climate of impunity has only increased violence against Palestinian journalists in Israel, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza." Reporters Without Borders also understates the number of Palestinian journalists currently held under Israeli detention and has not factored in the countless shootings carried out by the Israeli military, against Palestinians journalists, so far this year. The

Committee to Protect Journalists has also protested that Israel's murder of [20 renowned Palestinians journalists over 22 years](#), without anyone being held accountable, endangers reporters further.

While the Middle East may have a very low standard for protection of journalists, no other nation has a two tier system of racial segregation, with separate sets of laws to target a specific ethnicity. The Israeli police have even [barred the display of Palestinian flags in public](#), attacking and injuring those who have displayed it. The Israeli Knesset is currently in the process of advancing a bill that will make it a criminal offense to display the flag of Palestine. The current Israeli border authorities also frequently detain, interrogate, and deport people for the very reason that they are interpreted to hold anti-Israel beliefs, whether or not they do, based largely on their ethnicity. In the US, this is called racial profiling and is considered by most as racist and unacceptable, yet those same people often turn a blind eye in the case of Israel.

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Claim 2: Israel is the only place in the Middle East where women have rights

False: Bobby Kennedy claimed that Israel is the only place in

the Middle East where women have rights, he then went on to say that women in Iran “are being jailed for wearing habibs, uh, for not wearing habibs”. To begin with, the word he is trying to say is [hijab](#), which is the term for an Islamic headscarf. The mere fact that he repeatedly said the word habib, which means “darling” in Arabic, demonstrates his lack of knowledge on the subject. However, getting past that semantic point, the Israeli system is again a two-tiered one, where Palestinian women are afforded no rights at all in the occupied territories. One cannot claim that because Jewish Israeli women have a set of rights that in many ways replicate those that are afforded to women across the collective West, that Israel in its totality is a State that performs well on women’s rights.

Furthermore, there are decency laws in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Morality police (that are small units) that will sometimes appear in public spaces to either tell women to put on their headscarfs, and in the worse cases arrest women for not doing as such, and there is a small possibility of arrest for not wearing one. It is important to note that the harassment faced by women inside Iran for this is indeed a real thing and there are cases of abuse for not wearing the hijab. Yet to say this type of dynamic does not exist in the West is simply not true. One obvious example of such a dynamic is the recent vaccination craze, wherein people are still being pressured to adhere to a government required action, and demonized and attacked if they do not. What is often ignored in this discussion about hijabs is that many women in Iran choose to wear these, both for religious adherence as well as an act of rebellion against the previous illegal US occupation, while other do because they feel they must for varying reasons. The Western media has clearly exploited the situation in order to demonize their enemy, which has brought with it much exaggeration.

In addition to this, the point that RFK is making was

concocted to stereotype Middle Eastern men as being backwards and oppressive towards women. While in various Middle Eastern nations, there are a number of laws that restrict female freedom of movement, dress and expression, by no means are all Middle Eastern nations the same. For instance, in Turkey or even Lebanon, anyone who goes on holiday there will see with their own eyes how women are free to dress, work, and behave in a similar manner to their Western female counterparts. In the region, societal pressures and cultural norms will create certain restrictions for women in different contexts, which is made apparent when you visit different parts of Middle Eastern countries. If you are to travel to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for instance, you will see that women who live in the city of Amman are going to be treated completely different than if you were to travel to a more isolated village community. Similarly, Jewish Israeli women who live in Tel Aviv are treated starkly different to Jewish Israeli women who are living in Ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods located in Jerusalem; where women are often isolated to remaining indoors and even kept from attaining literacy in some instances.

Claim 3: Iran is castrating gays, while Israel has pride parades with 150,000 present

False: There are no known cases of Iran ever castrating gay people, nor would this be permitted under its legal system. Claims have been made that due to a law passed in 1987 in Iran, permitting sex-change treatments, Iranian parents have forced their gay children to undergo hormone therapy and even surgery's in order to make their sexuality legal. The research on how extensive this problem is/was, is minimal to say the least, yet due to a statement from former Iranian President, where he stated that "in Iran, we don't have this phenomenon [of gay people]" there have been concerns raised over the above mentioned claim.

When it comes then to Israel's pride parades, you will be welcome to join such events, *so long as you are not*

Palestinian of course, then your attempt to travel from the West Bank or Gaza would be stopped by armed soldiers with guns and potentially land you in a military prison. Israel has long used 'pink washing' to try and justify its crimes against the Palestinian people, by claiming that because it welcomes the LGBTQ+ pride parades, this somehow undoes its ongoing racial tier system. Ministers in the current Israeli government are also threatening to abolish the yearly pride parades and may soon succeed at this.

Claim 4: The Israeli military only killed terrorists in Jenin, it refrains from killing civilians

False: Israel killed 12 Palestinians during its [recent invasion of Jenin](#), 8 of which were members of armed groups, the rest were verifiably civilians. RFK claims that not a single civilian was killed, which is a lie, he also made up the claim that all the 12 killed were involved in bomb making and planning attacks on Jewish civilians. So not only did he call 4 civilians terrorist, but justified their murders through more lies. He also spread the racist Israeli claim that "virtually everyone" living in Jenin supports terrorism and claimed that Israel went in surgically. He then went on to entertaining the idea that insulting idea that the Israeli army is more restrained than it has to be and is "putting its own soldiers in harms way".

During that invasion, journalists, medical workers, children, women, and the elderly were all injured by Israeli fire. Airstrikes and military vehicles also targeted the critical infrastructure of the Jenin refugee camp. Not only this, but [the UN rapporteur on Palestinian rights accused the Israeli army of committing possible war crimes](#). As for the claims about the conduct of Israeli forces in general, there has been no accountability for the murder of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army. There are only a handful of cases where Israeli soldiers have been held accountable for their abuses of Palestinian human rights in

the past 15 years, one of them was for murdering a Palestinian on video and the soldier became a hero in Israeli society, donations totaling in the [hundreds of thousands poured in to support the soldier](#). That same soldier went on to [live a life of luxury](#), being regarded as an Israeli hero and only served a small stint in prison, far from a life-sentence. The Israeli army's conduct is without question one of the worst on the planet, the ICC has a pending investigation into its warcrimes, countless UN and human rights reports document hundreds of thousands of violations of international law – to list the crimes committed would take a lifetime.

Claim 5: The Palestinian Authority pays people to kill Jews, Hamas has an official policy of genocide against Jews

False: The [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA) [fully coordinates with the Israeli army](#), it has saved countless illegal Israeli settlers and soldiers, it arrests, tortures, harasses, and has even killed Palestinians in order to protect Israelis. The PA does not pay Palestinians to kill Jews, however, it does give financial support to Palestinian family's in the West Bank if they are killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers, in addition to this it will give an allowance to families of political prisoners held illegally in Israeli military prisons. Even Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has been recently calling for strengthening the PA; the PA's President Mahmoud Abbas has repeatedly condemned Palestinian armed attacks on Israelis and rejects the idea that Palestinians should use arms to resist and protect themselves – despite their legal right to do so as an occupied territory, which is outlined by the Geneva Conventions and supported by the UN.

As for Hamas, in its original charter that was released in 1988 it used language such as it intended to push the Jews into the sea. In 2017, Hamas made its latest update to its charter, in which it rejects anti-semitism and all forms of racism and explicitly states its opposition to Zionism and

Israel. Upon the founding of Hamas, in 1987, it had no armed wing and next to no power. It then dramatically changed over time and became the governing force in the Gaza Strip, where it ran in a democratic election. The Hamas organization also stated in 2017 its openness to a two-state solution. Hamas does not advocate the genocide of the Jewish people and has never carried out an attack against non-Israeli Jewish targets. Hamas explicitly seeks the liberation of Palestine through violent means (again, that which is their legal right as an occupied territory) but the idea that it seeks the genocide of the Jews is explicitly a lie.

Claim 6: All the Arab country's had plans to exterminate the Jews in 1948 and sided with Hitler

False: The idea that is conjured up by pro-Israel propagandists, that attempts to depict the Arab World as being on the side of Hitler and of seeking to cause a Holocaust, is completely ahistorical. To begin with, there was no master plan to exterminate all the Jews in Palestine. The Arab nations that sent soldiers to fight against the newly declared Israel, did so after a third of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians had already occurred. Countries like Syria, Jordan and Lebanon all witnessed a massive surge of refugees into their lands and scrambled to put together what forces they had to fight on the side of the Palestinians. These nations were not capable of carrying out such an extermination campaign, nor is there any historical evidence to suggest that all the Arab nations came together to work on a genocidal plan.

Before Israel was created in 1948, a third of Baghdad's residents were Jewish. In the following years war, propaganda and foreign conspiracy would push them to leave.

*Watch our interview with Israeli historian Avi Shlaim on The Big Picture podcast: <https://t.co/qgIZKmWK5S>
pic.twitter.com/QEWKDwGN0y*

– Middle East Eye (@MiddleEastEye) [August 3, 2023](#)

The idea that the Arab world sided with Hitler's Germany is also ridiculous. Jordan and Egypt for instance were very much on the side of the British, as were others like Saudi Arabia during the war. In the case of Syria for example, the nation only won independence from the French in 1945 – the year that WW2 ended – meaning that it quite literally could not have sided with Hitler, as he was dead. There were a handful of high-ranking Arab personalities who had collaborated with the fascists in Germany and Italy, yet, they did so out of a need for support in their liberation struggles against Britain and France; this context is key, as some leaders within communities under foreign rule were simply seeking to ally with the enemy of their enemy. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, for example, who received his position as a Palestinian leader with British authorization originally, did collaborate with the fascists, but had been driven out of Palestine and was in competition with others who sought to lead the Palestinian struggle. The Grand Mufti is now wrongfully blamed for coming up with the idea for the Holocaust by the likes of Benjamin Netanyahu, yet his influence was minuscule and he suffered to even receive meetings with Nazi officials for a period of his stay in Hitler's Germany. All of this, however, is getting into unnecessary detail, because the point made by RFK is not rooted in history and is an invention of Zionist propaganda, not a debate on individual leading Arab personalities who had met with or received funds from fascists.

RFK Jr. also disputes the idea that Israel is an Apartheid regime. Israel's top human rights organization, [B'Tselem](#), in addition to the world's two leading human rights groups, [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#), all say that Tel Aviv operates an Apartheid regime. Calling Israel an Apartheid regime is not hyperbole, it is not just students and

professors on university campuses saying this, it is the mainstream human rights groups who have released lengthy documents – hundreds of pages long – not only documenting why Israel constitutes an Apartheid regime, but also rooting their argument in international legal standards. To second that, leading anti-Apartheid activists and freedom fighters – against South African Apartheid – such as the later Archbishop Desmond Tutu, not only compared Israel's oppression of the Palestinians to Apartheid South Africa, **but stated that the situation in Palestine-Israel is worse than what they suffered.**

Robert F. Kennedy Jr's pro-Israel views are more extreme than any other Democratic Party candidate and are rooted in historical distortions, sweeping generalizations, anti-Arab racism, lies about the Palestinians, in addition to conflation of Jews and the government of Israel. Such views expressed by Mr Kennedy are an indication that he will be a pro-war President if elected and will continue to unconditionally back Israel – even when it kills and injures Americans – with billions of US tax dollars.

<https://twitter.com/TorahJudaism/status/1687354790479597568>

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