

Thoughts from the man in the photo: Fighting the good fight

By **Aaron London** | 12/04/14 10:15pm



My name is Aaron London, and I am the student featured in the original photo from the Students for Justice in Palestine's "die-in" rally three weeks ago, in which an SJP activist is seen giving the middle finger to my face.

I have watched for the past three weeks how every writer on behalf of SJP has manipulated the word "Zionist" or "Zionism"— a word used no less than 13 times in their articles — to negatively categorize anyone Jewish and pro-Israel or anyone who argues a point of view different from their own. Zionism is not a curse word. It is the belief in a homeland for the Jewish people. As a student at Rutgers for the past four years, I have witnessed how members of SJP have functioned not only on our campus but across the nation to condemn Israel and paint it as the fundamental problem in the Middle East while never once discussing the harmful actions of the ruling government in Gaza: Hamas. In the language of many SJP members I have seen and heard from, the message is clear: Zionism is essentially equivalent to terrorism. It's ironic that SJP will accuse "Zionists" of disseminating lies and propaganda, while their entire rhetoric refuses to acknowledge the whole picture.

But why should we be surprised? SJP employed the technique that hate groups employ when confronted by those who disagree with them — demonization of "the other." I belong to a Jewish fraternity, therefore since my fraternity is Jewish, we must all clearly be Zionists, therefore we are a Zionist "entity" or a "counterpart" — not individuals.

How could it be that for a group that cares so deeply about Palestinian rights, not a word was spoken about when Egypt bulldozed close to 1,000 Palestinian homes in Gaza to create a kilometer-wide buffer zone to combat the terror-tunnel smuggling of Hamas? Thousands of Palestinians are now homeless due to Egypt, but there have been no demonstrations, no eviction notice propaganda stunts like we saw last year when Israel was accused of doing the same thing. Palestinians are suffering human rights abuses, and the lips on the SJP machine remain closed.

One and a half million Palestinian Arabs are under the rule of Hamas, which some countries label as a terrorist organization. Hamas hasn't held elections since the mid-2000s, catapulting the Palestinians further into dictatorship. Palestinians are suffering, but when it comes to standing up against Hamas, SJP is silent.

And where was SJP when two Palestinians entered a synagogue in Jerusalem and butchered the Jewish prayer-goers with axes, a meat cleaver and a pistol, killing five (three of them American rabbis) and wounding almost twice that number and when Hamas and tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza celebrated the attack by passing out sweets and praising and memorializing the acts of these two Palestinian terrorists? Needless to say, they were silent and will no doubt either blame Israel for the attack or accuse those who report these facts as also spreading "propaganda," never addressing the culture of hate and murder that Hamas and the Palestinian Authority sow in their people.

I am a Zionist. And I'm d--- proud to be one. But just because my fraternity is Jewish doesn't make it Zionist, and doesn't make it "the enemy," and shame on the SJP for trying to sow a culture of hate on our campus whereby anyone who supports the state of Israel should be viewed as evil.

The picture from the "die-in" was in fact a perfect, unbiased account of what really went down. It displays SJP for what it truly is — a national campus hate group devoted to the destruction of Israel and all who support her.

In the face of such vile hatred and lies, when SJP students were chanting, "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free," a chant that calls for the utter destruction of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, the land that has historically been the home for the Jewish people. The single best response I could come up with on the spot was to celebrate Israel's existence as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East and the world — much more so than the likes of any Palestinian leadership. I mourn the loss of life, and yes, celebrating life when others who profess a wish to destroy you pretend to be corpses looks bad on camera, but probably not much worse than using dead children who were tragically killed while Israel was defending itself as cheap propaganda to sell half-truths and an ideology of hate.

When SJP and its supporters can talk any narrative other than the destruction of Israel, perhaps then we'll see a long and lasting peace. Until then, I won't hold my breath.

Aaron London is a School of Arts and Sciences senior majoring in English.

Editor's note: A previous version of the article did not include the last four paragraphs, as they were mistakenly taken out during the editing process. The headline has been changed, as the previous headline did not consider the conclusion of the author's argument.

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I have personally been in contact with the editor in chief on this issue and my understanding is that Sabah played a minor role in the mistakes that occurred with the publication of this article. I am willing to give her the benefit of the doubt.
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