



AUSTRALIA/ISRAEL & JEWISH AFFAIRS COUNCIL

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
Mr Mark Leibler AC

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Dr Colin Rubenstein

Australian Parliament
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Submission no. 357

Head Office
Level 1, 22 Albert Road
South Melbourne 3205 Australia
Telephone: 61.3. 9681 6660
Facsimile: 61.3. 9681 6650
Email: aijac@aijac.org.au

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Jane Hearn
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Dear Ms Hearn,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee's important inquiry into multiculturalism in Australia.

You will note that our submission covers the first three questions listed in the terms of reference being those focussed on aspects of Australian Multiculturalism.

We look forward to seeing the Committee's report, which we are hopeful will make a positive contribution to the ongoing success of Australian Multiculturalism.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Leibler, AC
National Chairman

Dr Colin Rubenstein, AM
Executive Director

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Director of International and Community Affairs

Sydney Office: Telephone: 61.2. 9360 5415 - Facsimile: 61.2. 9360 5416 - Email: aijac@iprimus.com.au

Submission from the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) welcomes the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's inquiry into multiculturalism in Australia. Our nation can proudly lay claim to having devised and evolved a uniquely bipartisan, viable set of policies and practices constituting Australian Multiculturalism, and we congratulate the Government in seeking to make our multicultural cohesion even more effective.

Australian Multiculturalism is a unique success story in constructively providing the framework for bringing the many diverse groups of people in our society together in the common cause of promoting cohesion and harmony.

On balance, over the past 50 years, Australia has integrated migrants from nearly 200 different nationalities, faiths and ethnicities, in the process creating a vibrant society through efforts to socialise new residents into the rights and as well the responsibilities of being a citizen, thereby minimising the ethnic and religious tensions that often characterise some overseas experiences.

We believe the emphatic focus on a shared communal commitment to core Australian values - including acceptance of the rule of law, tolerance, equality of opportunity, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, and racial and gender equality – has played a vital role in underpinning this overwhelmingly positive record.

It is worth referring to the 1999 report, *Australian multiculturalism for a new century: Towards inclusiveness* by the National Multicultural Advisory Council and the 1999 Commonwealth Government publication responding to that report, *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia*. These documents still contain valuable recommendations for the successful implementation of Australian Multiculturalism and should, in AIJAC's opinion, continue to be central in guiding policy making for Australian Multiculturalism.

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda

We quote from the Australian Government Ministry for Social Inclusion website:

The Australian Government's vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society... When people are lacking in certain resources, opportunities and/or capabilities so that they are unable to participate in learning, working or engaging activities and are unable to influence the decisions affecting them, they can experience social exclusion. The Social Inclusion Agenda addresses the need to make our society a more inclusive one as well as the need to overcome the processes leading to, and the consequences of, social exclusion.

The process, through the precepts of Australian Multiculturalism, of integrating migrants (and migrant communities) into Australian society, in order to avoid social exclusion, is an important one.

Australian Multiculturalism stresses both the rights and responsibilities of all Australians, regardless of where they were born, or to which ethnicity they belong. Unfortunately, many critics of multiculturalism (as well as many supporters who aren't sufficiently versed in the issue) tend to focus on migrant and minority rights, and leave under-addressed their responsibilities, a key precondition of Australian Multiculturalism since its inception in the 1970s.

Experience has shown that migrants to Australia have, with very few exceptions, had little difficulty in internalising the values and democratic political principles of Australian citizenship. The committed, loyal behaviour of the overwhelming majority of migrants to this country is the most persuasive demonstration of this proposition. Indeed, the bedrock on which the Australian multicultural compact rests is the need to accept both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to find the appropriate balance between them.

It should certainly continue to be part of immigration and citizenship policy to encourage an understanding of, and commitment to, these rights and responsibilities as a pre-requisite for citizenship.

If new migrants are not sufficiently educated about their responsibilities - including rule of law, gender and racial equality, due process, respect for others and an understanding of English – the risk that they will fall into the trap of social exclusion is heightened. Europe has large populations of socially excluded immigrants, most of them from Muslim majority states, an outcome we have tried to avoid in Australia. This is largely because European multiculturalism tends to stress migrant rights, but not their responsibilities. Australian Multiculturalism is the success it is because it emphasises both. It is important, particularly in light of the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda, to maintain an emphasis on both the rights and responsibilities of migrant and ethnic individuals and communities (together, of course, with all other Australians from all ethnic backgrounds).

Moreover, there is also a danger of the experience of social exclusion being transmitted to future generations. Furthermore, some organisations, such as Hezb ut-Tahrir, deliberately encourage adherents to seek social exclusion, so as not to be tainted by Australian society. For example, the Hezb ut-Tahrir Australia website attempts to dissuade Muslims from voting in Australian elections as democracy is, according to Hezb ut-Tahrir, against Islam.¹ This example demonstrates a community group deliberately seeking social exclusion, as opposed to social exclusion occurring passively, which is how most would understand the concept. Australian immigration and multiculturalism policies must address this issue of self imposed social exclusion in order to minimise the emergence of the predicament some countries in Europe now face in this regard.

¹ From the Hezb ut-Tahrir website: "As for voting, it is to select one or more options from a list of possibilities and thus in origin is permissible [*mubah*]. This permissibility, however, is dependent on the selected options being permissible. If they are prohibited, the voting itself would carry the same ruling. Voting among friends, for example, on whether to have tea or coffee is permissible, whereas voting on who will lead a planned robbery is prohibited. The reality of the secular political system is that people vote for a person or party who will rule, invariably, by other than Islam – an act definitively prohibited. In turn, voting for such an outcome is itself prohibited." <http://www.hizb-australia.org/local-dawah/leaflets/3520-nsw-election-2011>, accessed March 22, 2011.

It is important to ensure that all officials and community representatives tasked with facilitating Australian Multiculturalism through memberships of various bodies or by chairing discussions are themselves fully committed to multiculturalism and, specifically, not tainted by racism.

At the same time, it is important not to allow political correctness to prevent the identification of genuine threats to Australian Multiculturalism and therefore to our society as a whole. For example, if a group engages in criminal behaviour in the name of their extreme interpretation of their religion, or in the name of their ethnicity, multiculturalism should not be advanced as a pretext for authorities refraining from revealing this motivation. Apart from the fact that failing to identify a problem only makes it harder to combat, this type of political correctness only undermines the credibility of multiculturalism, as it allows it to be portrayed by misguided critics as an impediment to law enforcement or in combating extremism threatening the fabric of our society. It also fails to conform to the principles of Australian Multiculturalism itself, as outlined above, as it emphasises the rights of those from the culture in question at the expense of their responsibilities to the broader society.

It is also important to record and respond to the promotion of hatred and contempt regardless of sources. It is an unfortunate reality that anti-Jewish, bigotry, prejudice and hatred in Australia has been reinforced, at times even inspired, by individuals who have come from, or are affiliated to, cultures where this is the norm. For example, in the three decades after the Second World War a number of organisations and media outlets from sub-groups within immigrant communities from Europe promoted overt antisemitism. Hungarian fascists with international reach were based in Western Australia. Supporters of the Nazi-aligned Croatia Ustashe were prominent on Australia's east coast. A Ukrainian group promoting holocaust denial to national and international audiences was based in Sydney. In recent times, this has dissipated to a considerable degree. However, overt and aggressive anti-Jewish hostility continues to be documented from these sources, and is manifest to an even greater degree from individuals and organisations from within Islamic communities in Australia. Appended to this report is a journal article on Jews and Muslims in Australia which includes sections on both positive elements and problems arising due to anti-Jewish activities and pronouncements. We also attach, for the Joint Standing Committee's information, the 2009 – 2010 *Report on Antisemitism in Australia* by Jeremy Jones.

2. The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East and the immediate Asia-Pacific Region

The ties that the Australian Jewish community has forged between this country and Israel can serve as a model for other migrant community groups. For example, the Australian Jewish community has been instrumental in creating links between Australian and Israeli economic and business groups, universities and academics, environmental protection organisations, the defence forces (and industry) as well as government-level relations.

The key to forging such strong and intimate ties has been the Jewish community's confident integration into Australian cultural and economic life and its robust communal and ethnic identity combined with a sense of responsibility to the broader society, including a strong commitment to the shared values essential to maintain Australia's harmonious record.

Commitment to Australia's shared core values provides a pathway to success for any and all migrant communities in Australia - and, indeed, to the continuing success of Australian Multiculturalism.

Australia should be promoting our successful record on multiculturalism within and beyond the Asia-Pacific Region. The Asia/Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogues, co-sponsored by the Australian Government since 2004, and the Asia/Pacific - European Youth Interfaith Forum held in 2007 have been excellent vehicles for Australia to expose other States to the cooperation and collaboration between different segments of multicultural Australia.

It is important to recognise that the extremist groups which promote anti-Australian hostility which operate in Asia invariably have ideologies which are conspiratorial, with anti-Jewish conspiracies often central in their mindset. By allowing those people in our region who do not otherwise have the opportunity to see Jews (or Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc - the principle is the same) as human beings, Australia directly and effectively helps confront extremism through such activities.

3. Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society

One of the best ways of encouraging immigrants to adopt our core values is for them to undertake an effective and equitable citizenship process. Anything that discourages this process is counterproductive to a successful pattern of integration into, and participation in, Australian life. This is why AIJAC has previously opposed overly onerous or exclusionary testing requirements for Australian citizenship.

To this end, AIJAC recommends the Australian Government refer to and examine the experience in Israel, which has been confronted with the considerable challenge of absorbing millions of immigrants from many cultures and nationalities, and is widely described as having managed it extremely successfully. It seems likely that at least some Israeli policy models for absorbing new immigrants could be successfully adapted to the Australian situation. For example, Israel devotes considerable resources to language training, on the assumption that being able to communicate competently beyond a restricted circle is extremely important for integration. The initial investment in terms of provision of free language classes and a period during which living expenses are provided has reaped enormous "profits" in terms of the rapid upgrade of the contribution immigrants are then able to make to the country.

Mark Leibler AC, National Chairman

Dr Colin Rubenstein AM, Executive Director

Jeremy Jones AM, Director of international and Community Affairs

Appendix

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Muslim-Jewish Relations in Australia: Challenges and Threats

Interview with Jeremy Jones

- There are 350,000-400,000 Muslims in Australia, drawn from many countries with the largest sources of immigration being [Lebanon](#), [Turkey](#), Afghanistan, Bosnia, Pakistan, and Indonesia, while just over one-third are Australian-born. There are an estimated 120,000 Jews in Australia.
- The integration of Muslims and Jews into the wider Australian population has to be seen in the context of modern Australia's history as a country of immigration with an ethos of multiculturalism.
- There is a network of interfaith activity in Australia that includes dialogue and collaborative projects between Jewish and Muslim Australians. In some of these there is involvement by Christian groups and, in a smaller number, by Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Baha'i groups. In recent years, Australian governments have given support to projects that promote better understanding of Jews and Judaism among Muslims in Australia and the wider Asia/Pacific region.
- There are many documented examples of anti-Jewish propaganda circulated by and among members of various Muslim communities in Australia. There have also been a small number of antisemitic incidents of which the victims believed they were perpetrated by Muslims. There is little firm evidence of this being a widespread phenomenon. Considerable tensions between the communities arose as a result of Israel's Operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and January 2009.

The Religious Mosaic

"There are 350,000-400,000 Muslims in Australia, with one-third of the number born in Australia while the largest sources of immigration are Lebanon, Turkey, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Pakistan, and Indonesia, supplemented in recent years by migrants from Africa and the Arab Middle East." [1]

Jeremy Jones, director of international and community affairs of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, is a former president of the Executive Council of

Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the elected-representative organization of the Australian Jewish community. He is a founding, and continuing, co-chair of the Australia National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews and represents the ECAJ on the Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations.

He asserts that "understanding the Jewish-Muslim relationship in Australia requires appreciating some essential features of Australia's history as a country of immigration and the significance of the culturally diverse community that has developed.

"No single religious denomination is formally established in Australia. Although the major Christian denominations, Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, had a sometimes uneasy relationship for much of the first two centuries of European settlement, there was a cultural understanding that Australian identity was not related to a particular creed or communion. There has been a Jewish presence from the founding day of the Colony of New South Wales, the first European political entity in Australia. A number of other non-Christian faiths, including Islam and Buddhism, were present in the colonies that in 1901 joined to become the Commonwealth of Australia.

"The contemporary religious landscape includes Catholics and Anglicans as the largest denominations, followed by Orthodox Christians and the Uniting Church of Australia. A number of other Christian denominations, as well as communities of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, and Baha'is, also are large enough to have developed a network of institutions to serve their religious needs.

"While there is no established religion, there also is not a strict church-state separation. However, there is a general principle that the state does not provide services to followers of one faith and then refuse to provide the same or similar services, if appropriate and practical, to adherents of other faiths. The impressive Jewish day school movement in Australia has benefited from a degree of government support, as have Muslim and Christian schools.

"Jews have remained at roughly one-half percent of the Australian population since the early days of European settlement in the late eighteenth century. Jews were the only significant non-Christian minority for most of Australia's first two centuries after colonization. The Jewish community developed institutions to serve its needs, in a far more conducive environment than in most other countries. The success of Jewish Australians in maintaining a distinct identity while being unambiguously Australian is often used as evidence that multiculturalism can be achieved successfully."[2]

Jones notes that "Muslims have also been in Australia for most of the modern period, but large-scale Muslim immigration only commenced in the last quarter of the twentieth century after the end of the White Australia Policy. Asian immigration has included Indonesian, Malaysian, and Indian subcontinental Muslims, Fijian Muslims, mass immigration from Lebanon and other Arab countries, and more recent immigration from African Muslim sources such as Somalia."[3]

Common Interests

Jones enumerates some areas of Jewish-Muslim cooperation, beginning in the 1970s when various Australian state and territory governments began to consider introducing antidiscrimination legislation. The consultation processes brought Jewish and Muslim community representatives together at government-hosted discussions and as part of interest-group coalitions from civil society. Among the common concerns were the provision of equal access to government services, recourse for victims of discrimination, and protection from harassment.[4]

"Another area that brought Muslim and Jewish communities together was the labeling of food products, which assisted kosher, halal, and vegetarian consumers (as well as those with allergies). With the common advocacy in an area where there was little to divide the communities, some good personal relationships developed particularly between communal professionals.

"Australia's multireligious reality has led to social and formal acceptance that Australians have different practices and requirements. This has provided opportunities for Jews and Muslims to jointly advocate for services, including subsidies for education at denominational schools and understanding for ritual requirements such as male circumcision, as well as opportunities to contribute to public debate as legitimate Australian religious voices.

"In policy debates on Australia's immigration policy, in raising environmental awareness, and on a range of other issues, Jewish and Muslim leaders have been party to joint statements, generally with Christian leaders but in some cases with a broader range of religions represented.

"In the Australian context, another area where Jewish and Muslim community organizations were able to work together effectively was Aboriginal Reconciliation. The federal government's Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation established a working group of faith communities who were seen as 'stake holders' because of their moral influence. The initial meeting of the working group only included Christians and one Jewish representative, but in subsequent meetings there was also Muslim, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh participation. The Jewish community representative who was elected to chair the group for most of its existence was nominated for the position by the representative of the Australian Federation of Islamic Communities (AFIC).

"Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing through the 1990s, Jewish and Muslim Australians met to discuss cooperation on issues such as responses to the wars in former Yugoslavia and the (short-term) rise in far-Right racist activity.[5]

"Indeed, it has been common during the past two decades for Jewish adult education programs to include presentations by Muslim speakers, on a variety of subjects. Jewish Free University in Sydney made a breakthrough in this area by hosting the editor of the *Australian Muslim Times* to address a large gathering at Sydney's Hakoah Club in 1991, while the Limmud Oz programs in Sydney and Melbourne have featured presentations by Muslim speakers and included Muslim leaders on multifaith panels."

Interfaith Dialogue

Jones emphasizes that "there is a large range of, and great diversity among, Muslims and Muslim organizations in Australia. Mosques draw specific ethnonational congregations in many instances, but there are others that serve residents of geographic locations in Australia. There are general and Shia coordinating councils, youth groups, women's groups, welfare agencies, sports associations, and educational institutions, some of which mirror the organizations in earlier years of Jewish settlement while others are parallel to contemporary groups. There are ethnonational organizations of immigrants from particular Muslim-majority countries, radio programs on Islamic themes in a number of languages, and advocacy organizations that are based on a single group of immigrants but serve broad community interests.

"This situation creates challenges and opportunities for the Jewish community, which, while also diverse, has established umbrella organizations that deal with broad community issues, including interfaith and interethnic engagement. There are interactions between individual synagogues and segments of the Islamic population; relationships between the Jewish public affairs organizations and the leaderships of Muslim groups from countries such as Turkey, Albania, Bangladesh, and Somalia; and formal relations between the national and state bodies that have broad and near-complete coverage of communal situations, with Muslim umbrella groups having less complete representation.

"Australian Jews and Muslims are very active in interfaith activities, which take place on the national, regional, and local levels, supplemented by joint involvement in international interfaith activities."

ANDCMJ

"The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews (ANDCMJ), which provides both a forum for regular, frank dialogue and leadership by example, was established jointly by the major umbrella organizations of the Jewish community (the Executive Council of Australian Jewry), the churches (the National Council of Churches in Australia), and Muslim organizations (AFIC).[6] It brings together representative delegations selected by and from national leadership bodies three to four times each year.

"The ANDCMJ has facilitated mutual understanding between the three communities, which has helped in resolving bilateral issues that have arisen from time to time. It has produced joint statements on matters of public policy, including the importance of not allowing tensions in the Middle East to be used as a justification or rationalization for violence in Australia. The ANDCMJ has made public interventions-for example, protesting the scheduling of public events on days that might disenfranchise a segment of the population and also calling on bookshops servicing the Muslim community to withdraw antisemitic and pro-terrorist literature.

"The ANDCMJ has also been involved in projects providing opportunities for Jewish representatives to participate in Muslim-organized and Muslim-focused functions and for Muslim representations to address Jewish community functions. It organized under its auspices the Journey of Promise, a weeklong residential program for ten each of Jews, Christians, and Muslims aged ten to twenty-five, which has in turn been responsible for dialogue and interfaith activities at universities and schools.

"Using varied approaches, the ANDCMJ has dealt with matters such as 'The Stranger in Your Midst,' 'Just Wars,' 'Martyrdom,' and beliefs in what happens to believers and nonbelievers after death. It also included an intense and enlightening sequence that discussed 'Jihad, Zionism, and the Trinity.'"

Other Bodies

"One other national body that includes Jews and Muslims in cooperation at the peak-organization level is the Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations (APRO- originally the Australian Partnership of Ethnic and Religious Organizations). It provides a forum for the ANDCMJ constituents but also for Baha'i, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist groups to meet and engage the other communities in matters of specific concern to any of the constituent groups. In addition to serving as a regular and useful forum for discussion, APRO has now hosted two impressive annual seminars, in 2007 bringing senior religious figures together for the inaugural meeting of Australian Religious Leaders and in 2008 discussing 'Religion and the Media.'

"The World Conference of Religions for Peace has units in Melbourne and Sydney, but does not have the formal relationship with its member bodies that the ANDCMJ and AFIC enjoy. In Sydney, the Women's Interfaith Network plays an important role in building relationships and strengthening joint action of religious groups in the community. The Together for Humanity project involves Jewish, Muslim, and Christian educators conducting joint sessions at schools, designed to challenge stereotypes and promote tolerance among a younger demographic than covered by other groups. The Jewish-Christian-Muslim Association in Melbourne has hosted a series of residential experience programs since 2004, which have helped broaden and deepen the interfaith connections."

There is another aspect to the relationship, Jones notes. "Outside the umbrella of multifaith activities, there is also dynamic, direct Jewish-Muslim interaction. It is common for Jewish day schools to host events with Muslim schools. Jewish and Muslim university students are involved in joint initiatives to assist disadvantaged Australians.

"Adult education programs serving the Jewish and Muslim communities, respectively, feature Muslims and Jews able to give authentic representation of a range of community viewpoints.

"In addition, Muslim groups from within Australia and also from countries in the region where there is no substantial Jewish population regularly visit Jewish museums and synagogues, where they meet with Jewish educators as well as religious and lay

leaders. In turn, Jewish groups have been invited to visit mosques and other Islamic institutions.

"The followers of the Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen, the Australian Intercultural Society (in Melbourne), and the Affinity Intercultural Society (Sydney) have hosted joint programs with Jewish organizations. These groups have coordinated annual 'Abrahamic Conferences' on topics of contemporary concern, hosted interfaith Iftar (fast-breaking during Ramadan) dinners, and invited adherents of other faiths to Eid celebrations."

Government Support

Jones observes: "The Australian government has given moral and financial support to interfaith dialogue activities, with renewed intensity since September 11, 2001. A number of programs have been instituted and funded that arise from a concern about religious extremism among Muslims in Australia. Some focus specifically on Islamic engagement with police agencies; some deal with perceived unique needs in assisting integration; and some are research projects on discrimination and harassment of Muslims. In addition, a number of community initiatives that promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation, including several referred to above, and others such as the Adelaide-based Children of Abraham Jewish-Muslim adult education program, have been funded or subsidized by federal or state governments.

"Senior parliamentarians have also attended and participated in interfaith activities. The minister for citizenship and multicultural affairs, for example, launched the ANDCMJ, and the attorney-general spoke at the inaugural Religious Leaders' Forum hosted by APRO.

"Promoting models of dialogue and harmony as a means of confronting and challenging religious extremism is also part of Australia's foreign policy. The Asia/Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogues (APRID), in which fifteen governments nominate and send delegations of religious representatives to discuss a broad range of policy matters that are conducive to the involvement of civil society representatives, originated in discussions between the Australian and Indonesian governments on their mutual concern over the development of Islamism in the region. There are now four government cohosts, Indonesia, Australia, the Philippines, and New Zealand, and dialogues have been convened in predominantly Muslim (Indonesia), Christian (the Philippines and New Zealand), and Buddhist (Cambodia) states.

"In late 2007, the Australian government, with the European Union, brought youth delegations from most of the APRID participant states and the EU to the inaugural Youth Interfaith Forum in Perth, Western Australia. An impressive network of interfaith activists developed at, and since, this forum."

Challenges and Threats[7]

"The Muslim population in Australia is very diverse ethnically, socially, culturally, religiously, and politically. It is important to consider some general concerns regarding attitudes toward Jews, as well as a number of examples of specific concerns," Jones remarks.

"Muslims in Australia overwhelmingly originate in countries where there are negligible numbers of Jews. Much of what is known, or believed, about Jews comes from the cultures, which have varying degrees of connection to Islam per se, in the places of their origin and social development.

"Muslims from Somalia and Bangladesh, for example, relate stories of the cultural mythology of Jews as the cause of any and all social ills, with little or no reference to religious texts. Muslims from Turkey and the Arab Middle East will talk of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as if it is unquestionably true, although this leads to a range of attitudes toward Jews from fear and contempt to respect. Muslims from the Arab Middle East and the more religiously educated Muslims from Asia have often been exposed to teaching that depicts Jews as historic and existential enemies of Muslims, who have distorted divine revelations and will be fighting Muslims at the End of Days.

"There is little to suggest that the broad Muslim community is particularly interested in Jews. The record of coexistence would suggest that the Australian ethos of multiculturalism, as well as a generally relaxed social and political environment, is a powerful preventative against widespread intolerance. This is not to understate the problems of active promotion of antisemitism by individuals and groups within the Australian Muslim community.

"It is difficult to find many examples of Muslim organizations or prominent individual Muslims in Australia who do not have views of Israel as either illegitimate or most often in the wrong in the Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Arab conflict. For the most part, though, such opinions do not form an important part of the policy platforms, let alone of programs. But there have been some notable, worrisome exceptions to this general rule, with antisemitism an important element when this occurs.

"It is worth noting that some extreme examples of antisemitism in Arabic newspapers published in Australia, including Holocaust denial and blood libel, have been in publications run by and predominantly serving Christian Arabic speakers.

"The most significant example of public antisemitism from an Australian Muslim was a speech given in Sydney in 1988 by Sheikh Taj el-Din al-Hilaly, at the time serving as the imam of Australia's largest mosque, which had a predominantly Lebanese congregation. In a talk on the nature of Jews, the sheikh, who was not an Australian citizen, invoked a number of vicious antisemitic slurs.

"Despite a public outcry and a later-overturned deportation order, al-Hilaly was subsequently appointed Grand Mufti of Australia. He has never recanted his 1988 speech and later added a litany of statements attacking not only Jews but other problems, as he saw them, of Western society. Al-Hilaly has since that time voiced theological support for terrorists, particularly those who used themselves as human

bombs to murder Israeli children, stated that Israel was as bad or worse than Nazi Germany, and during a Sydney rally marched alongside a person blaming Jews for killing Jesus.

"Sheikh Hilaly's long-time personal assistant, Keysar Trad, once linked his website to that of the notorious Swedish antisemite Ahmed Rami. Another prominent Islamic figure, Melbourne's Sheikh Omran, publishes the newsletter *Mecca News*, which includes defamatory attacks on Judaism, primarily through misrepresenting the Talmud.

"Overtly antisemitic and other extremist literature and videos are available at bookshops serving Muslim communities, and anti-Jewish myths have been promoted by a number of imams and religious teachers. Among books sold are some that urged Muslims to 'strike back' against 'the barbaric onslaught from their enemies-the Jews, Christians, atheists, secularists and others' and instructed 'O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends to each other. And the one among you that turns to them is one of them,' along with the *Protocols*. Significantly, the peak body of Muslims in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, and a number of other prominent Muslim leaders and organizations have unambiguously and unreservedly condemned the sale and circulation of the offensive literature.

"A report titled "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth: A Sydney teacher's perspective,"[8] published by the Anti-Defamation Commission of B'nai Brith Australia in May 2008, documented a series of claims of harassment of Jewish teachers by Muslim students in classrooms, in subject areas where Jews, Judaism, or Israel are mentioned. Muslim students deny facts that reflect well on Jews or Israel and, in social life, antisemitism is a source of amusement. Muslim students interviewed for the study expressed beliefs in a variety of antisemitic conspiracy theories, and the author claimed that most students forget their national background when confronted with Israel and revert to a pan-Islamic identity in solidarity with the Palestinians.

"In 2005, a senior journalist noted a disturbing phenomenon: 'In Sydney and Melbourne, hundreds of young men are attending meetings to watch videos of atavistic hate speeches by rabid mullahs in the Middle East.'[9]

"A transcript of a sermon broadcast at a Muslim club in Sydney, given by prominent Palestinian sheikh Ibrahim Mudeiris, included comments such as:

the Jews are a virus resembling AIDS, from which the entire world suffers. . . . You will find that the Jews were behind all the evil strife in this world. The Jews are behind the suffering of the nations. . . . Ask Britain what it did to the Jews in the early sixth century [*sic*]. What did they do to the Jews? They expelled them, tortured them and prevented them from entering Britain for more than 300 years. All this was because of what the Jews did in Britain. Ask France what it did to the Jews.... Ask Portugal.... Ask Tsarist Russia.... But don't ask Germany what it did to the Jews.... Yes, perhaps some of them were killed and

some burned, but they are inflating this in order to win over the media and gain the world's sympathy.

"From the late 1990s to 2005, a small group calling itself the Islamic Youth Movement published a glossy magazine called *Nida'ul Islam*. Some issues remain available on the internet. Typical of material that has been published in the magazine and remains online is a series of comments about 'the Jews,' identified as both political and religious enemies of 'Islamic Revival.' The website includes many articles that make disparaging comments on 'the Children of Israel,' 'Jewish rabbis,' 'Zionism,' and even 'Arafat's Jewish agents.' Among features attributed to Jews are that they are 'extremely arrogant' toward Allah, have 'become tyrants,' they 'will not fail to do their best to corrupt,' advocate 'the disparagement of Islam,' and have succeeded in their 'infiltration into Hollywood, the Media and Congress.'

Nida'ul Islam editorials directly attacked Jews and also 'the Crusader-Zionist powers,' the Jewish religion, and any Jewish involvement in public affairs. A feature, 'Israel: Beginning of the End' asserts that

Jews are Jews, worshippers of the golden calf who desired a god like the gods of the pagans, breakers of the covenant of Allah at every opportunity...devourers of ill-got gain and usury...concealers of the truth...who were cursed on the lips of David and Jesus son of Mary, those who were transformed into apes and pigs...the impudent, hard-hearted persons....

The article asked: 'As for the Jews who reject everything but racism and deception, what are they looking for?'

"*Salam*, the magazine of the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth, has included articles on the 'false delusions' of the Jews who allegedly used all 'efforts to obstruct the message of Islam,' as well as on 'the inevitability of the Islamic Solution.' The latter article concluded: 'the Quran said "never will the Jews nor the Christians be pleased with you till you follow their religion."' Overt antisemitism has been published on the federation's email list, including David Duke's 'Open Letter to the President of the United States,' and antisemitic new-age conspiracy theorist William Cooper's interpretation of the 9/11 attacks, which compiled a number of the myths, including anti-Israeli propaganda, circulating at the time and presented them as fact. A president of the federation, Seyed Sherifdeen, was quoted as saying he was 'deeply saddened by the genocide and collective punishment that is taking place against humanity in Palestine.'"

Online

"Online, there is a proliferation of anti-Jewish material emanating from Australian Muslims. The web-based Mission Islam, for example, promotes the *Protocols* and various Muslim-authored works hostile to Jews. It also includes a section, 'The Truth about the Talmud,' which contains a list of subheadings such as 'Sick and Insane

Teachings of the Talmud,' 'Genocide Advocated by the Talmud,' and 'Moses Maimonides: Advocate of Extermination.'

"The forums of the website Islamic Sydney provide evidence of the proliferation of antisemitic myths within the Australian Muslim community. It has had relatively balanced discussions of matters of interest to the Jewish community but also included threads such as 'Why Are Jews Powerful' and 'It's the Jews Stupid.' It claims that 'those that deny the reach and omnipresence of Jewish influence in America today are either ignorant, delusional and/or complicit' and refers to Jews as 'devils.'

"Similarly, depictions of Judaism as existentially opposed to non-Jews in general, or to Islam in particular, continue to be published on the discussion forums of the AussieMuslims.com, the Islamic Association of Australia, Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah's Islamic Information and Support Centre of Australia, MuslimMediaWatch, and Mecca News.

Extremist Links

"Over a number of years, there has been a cross-pollination of ideology and material between some sections of the Australian Muslim community and the far-Right political organizations. Reflecting perceptions that Jews or Israel are a common, serious enemy, racist groups such as the Australian League of Rights have hosted speakers such as Keysar Trad of the Islamic Friendship Association.

"In 2007, the Sydney Forum, arguably the most significant annual gathering of the Australian far Right, featured as a speaker the anti-Israeli, left-wing political activist Rihab Charida (now the representative of [Iran's Press TV](#) in Australia), who spoke on Middle East politics in the company of a number of anti-multicultural extreme rightists. Another link between the far Right and Australian Muslims was evident when the website Gold Coast Muslims posted antisemitic material circulated by David Duke, which included the claim that 'Talmudic prophecies' were behind the establishment of Israel, in the midst of general disinformation about Israel.

"Anti-Israeli rallies in Australia, particularly in recent years, featured antisemitic banners and chants together with printed placards comparing Israel to Nazi Germany produced by far-Left groups."

Israel, Gaza, and Jewish-Muslim Relations

"When Israel responded to months of rocket and mortar bombardment from [Hamas](#)-ruled Gaza, the mainstream Jewish community in Australia vigorously argued Israel's case in the media and public forums. Australian Muslim groups and leaders, with few exceptions, claimed Israel was acting out of base motives, callously targeting civilians, or even embarking on a genocidal program.

"Australia has a tradition of passionate public debate and it is not unusual for Jewish and Muslim dialogue partners to take opposing public positions on matters relating to Israel. In this instance, though, the debate included some particularly disturbing features.

"In public pro-Hamas and anti-Israeli rallies, there were reports of demonstrators chanting 'Bomb the Jews' in English and English-language banners asserting that Jews deserved the Shoah. Numerous placards, banners, and speeches at Muslim-run or Muslim-supported events also proclaimed that Israel was committing crimes comparable to, or even exceeding, those of Nazi Germany. Arabic-speakers recounted hearing these and similar extremist views in that language.

"While in some instances responsible Muslims cautioned against using antisemitic language and offensive imagery in the course of criticizing Israel, intemperate, inaccurate, and offensive material was included in statements produced by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. Obviously, the Jewish leadership cannot have a comfortable relationship with a group that, for example, emailed a series of photo images that implied Israel was completely analogous to Nazi Germany. At present, the Jewish community is awaiting a response to a call to AFIC to withdraw the offensive material.

"In Melbourne and Sydney, respectively, the Australian Intercultural Society and the Affinity Intercultural Society, two groups that promote the agenda of Fethullah Gulen, distributed letters falsely implying Jewish Australians had callous disregard for Palestinian suffering and asserting that other Jewish communities were universally condemnatory of Israel's policies. The misrepresentations, which led to a questioning of the goodwill of Jewish interlocutors, generated tension between groups that had successfully collaborated for a number of years. The strength of the relationship allowed for the distribution of a subsequent corrective email by the Affinity group." [10]

Jones observes: "The broader issue, of the acceptance by a diverse range of Muslim Australians of the Nazi-Israel analogy, poses a challenge to those committed to interreligious tolerance, let alone dialogue or understanding. However, from mid-February there were signs that the impetus for dialogue was more significant than that for division, with positive and constructive dialogue taking place at a major international Asia/Pacific interfaith conference, 'Many Faiths-One Humanity,' in Brisbane, a productive retreat for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim young adults outside Melbourne, [11] and the convening of a meeting of the ANDCMJ, including senior ECAJ and AFIC participants, taking place in April."

Conclusion

"The visibly positive, sometimes warm, public relationship between Jewish and Muslim Australians both within Australia and on international delegations has helped counter negative stereotypes of both groups, and without doubt facilitated the growth of dialogue in the Asia/Pacific region. Furthermore, Muslims and other visitors hosted by the Australian government are routinely hosted by joint Jewish-Muslim-and at

times Christian-groups, who talk affirmatively about the mutual benefits that have come from cooperation. International visitors hosted by Australian Muslim groups are also regularly exposed to Jewish life, in a positive way, while visiting Australian cities.

"However, Jewish-Muslim relations in Australia face challenges from Muslim groups and individuals that seek to influence the direction of all or parts of the Australian Muslim community. Sometimes this takes the form of financial support for initiatives, including mosques, schools, and university centers. It is difficult to ascertain the degree of expected compliance with the views of the benefactor. Speakers on the international circuit, such as Tariq Ramadan, also potentially affect the direction of the Australian Islamic community through visits. Antisemitic materials sold at bookshops serving the Muslim community are written and published overseas, and often stand in stark contrast to Australian-produced material.

"To a remarkable extent, the relationship between Australian Jews and Muslims has developed positively over the past decade. Maintaining the momentum will require leadership and determination, but there are good grounds for optimism given the network of relations and shared fruitful experiences in contemporary multicultural Australia."

Interview by Manfred Gerstenfeld

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Notes

[1] The 2006 Australian census, in which religion is an optional question, recorded 340,000 Muslim respondents.

[2] See J. Jones, "The Jewish Community of Australia and Its Challenges," *Changing Jewish Communities*, 13 October 2006, www.jcpa.org/cjc/cjc-jones-06.htm.

[3] A good short history can be found in A. H. Johns and A. Saeed, "Muslims in Australia: The Building of a Community," in Y. Y. Haddad and J. I. Smith, eds., *Muslim Minorities in the West-Visible and Invisible* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002).

[4] Susan Bures reflected on this and foresaw developments that came to pass a decade later in "A Test for Multiculturalism," *Without Prejudice*, 3 June 1991.

[5] Records of joint actions and statements can be found in the annual reports of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

[6] The ANDCMJ formally commenced activities in April 2002. See www.ncca.org.au/archives/media_releases/2002?p=2313.

[7] As noted, the interviewee compiles annual reports on antisemitism in Australia, which include documentation of anti-Jewish material emanating from Muslim sources.

[8] P. Mendes, "*Antisemitism among Muslim Youth: A Sydney Teacher's Perspective*," ADC Special Report No. 37, May 2008, www.antidef.org.au/secure/downloadfile.asp?fileid=1002000.

[9] P. Sheehan, "It's a War on Perverts, Not Terrorists," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 August 2005, www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/its-a-war-on-perverts-not-terrorists/2005/08/05/1123125902963.html.

[10] Melbourne's Australian Intercultural Society did not send a corrective letter to recipients of a 23 January 2009 letter condemning Jewish Australians for allegedly disregarding humanitarian concerns relating to Gaza, but did apologize for any misrepresentations to the Jewish Community Council of Victoria.

[11] The positive view was shared by participants in a Jewish-Muslim-Christian residential program that took place in Melbourne in February after the end of the Gaza fighting. "Future Proofing Interfaith," *Australian Jewish News*, 13 March 2009.

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Jeremy Jones, director of international and community affairs of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, is a former president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the elected-representative organization of the Australian Jewish community. He is a founding, and continuing, co-chair of the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews and represents the ECAJ on the Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations. Jones represented the NGO Working Group against Racism in the Australian government's delegation to the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, and has compiled and written authoritative annual reports on antisemitism in Australia for almost twenty years. He has been awarded the Australia Human Rights Medal and made a member of the Order of Australia in recognition of his roles in combating racism, interfaith dialogue, and community leadership.