

# Good News From France: “Hate Speech” Charges Dropped Against Georges Bensoussan

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Professor Georges Bensoussan of the University of Strasbourg is a celebrated French historian of the Holocaust. He is currently the lead editor at the Shoah Memorial in Paris, and author of, among many books, *Europe, Une Passion Génocidaire* (*Europe: A Genocidal Passion*), a work he defined as “an intellectual archeology of the Shoah” and an attempt to rehabilitate “a historical approach wrongly accused of being essentialist.” As a Jew born in Morocco, he also researches and writes, with the authority of direct knowledge, on the subject of Jews in Arab lands. And he writes, too, about North African Muslims in France. In 2002 he produced, under the alias of Emmanuel Brenner, a collective work on the state of French schools with Muslim students. This book was *Les Territoires Perdus de la République* (*The Republic’s Lost Territories*). *Les Territoires* was the first account directly

written by teachers and high-school directors set in the French *cités*, reporting on the antisemitism, sexism, and racism that plagued these places and emanated, for the most part, from Muslims whose cultural roots were in North African countries. The book was both an immediate hit and a scandal, and Bensoussan soon ended up labeled by the left as a “new reactionary” and a “French neocon” for daring to discuss what everyone in France, but especially teachers and school administrators, knew was true about the effect of Muslim students on French schools, and especially on discipline. He also received support from many on the anti-Islam left, including not only the philosophers Élisabeth Badinter, Pascal Bruckner, and Alain Finkielkraut, but also, and importantly, from several Arabs, including the Algerian writer Boualem Sansal, who had witnessed the Algerian civil war of the 1990s, and the Algerian journalist Mohamed Sifaoui, who has risked his life both in Algeria and in France denouncing Islamist threats. The “anti-racists” of the LICRA (the League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism) also supported Bensoussan’s attempt to tell the truth about French schools. In 2004, the French government commissioned two successive reports on anti-Jewish violence in the Muslim-populated suburbs (*banlieues*), both essentially confirming what was in Bensoussan’s book, but these reports were both shelved because their conclusions were so disturbing.

In October of 2015, Professor Bensoussan was invited to be a guest on *Répliques*, a radio program hosted by Alain Finkielkraut, the philosopher and member of the French Academy, to discuss a new documentary, *Profs en Territoires Perdus de la République?* to be broadcast that very night. Among Professor Bensoussan’s remarks on the program was his reference to the Algerian-born French sociologist Smain Laacher, a non-Jew, who had in an interview for a documentary declared that in Arab families, “antisemitism is in the air one breathes.” Bensoussan paraphrased Laacher as saying that in Arab families, “antisemitism is imbibed with their mother’s

milk." The words were different, but the meaning was exactly the same. Nonetheless, Laacher took offense at Bensoussan's paraphrase, which he claimed implied that antisemitism among Arabs was "biological," in the blood, and he further objected to being called an "Algerian sociologist" when, he said correctly, he was "French." Here is how Laacher described what he had actually said in his documentary, that Bensoussan had paraphrased somewhat differently: "This anti-Semitism is already planted into the domestic space. It quasi-naturally rolls off the tongue, planted into the tongue. From parents to children, when they want to reprimand them, it is enough to call them *Jews*. OK, every Arab family knows that. Not to see that this anti-Semitism is first domestic is a monumental hypocrisy."

Not a monumental difference, but the hint he detected of a "biological" antisemitism in Bensoussan's version disturbed Laacher. Eventually he and Bensoussan, with their lawyers, came to an agreement in mid-2016, basically to patch things up and quarrel in public no longer. Things seemed to have ended there, but then the Muslim group CCIF, the *Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France*, independently of Laacher, decided to accuse Bensoussan of "hate speech" for his remark about Muslim antisemitism "being imbibed with their mother's milk." The group managed to obtain the support of the human-rights group LICRA (though some of its members, including Finkielkraut, promptly resigned in protest). And French judges took seriously the absurd charge of a "hate crime."

The trial finally began in December 2016. The witnesses for the prosecution included Muslims who admitted that in Arab families, when children misbehaved, they were called "Jew" – a ready term of opprobrium – by their parents, but the same witnesses insisted there was nothing "antisemitic" about this. Many French academics had been scathing in their criticism of what they saw – rightly – as the trumped-up persecution of Professor Bensoussan. The political farce came to an end on

March 7, when the Court absolved Bensoussan of the charge of “hate speech”:

*The 17th Criminal Tribunal of Paris acquitted Bensoussan on Tuesday, saying in their ruling that the plaintiffs failed to substantiate the hate speech charges and concluded that Bensoussan merely “misspoke” in quoting without intention to incite hatred.*

That this gigantic effort was made to punish, and thereby shut down, the free speech of someone who had dared to write truthfully about the effect of Muslim schoolchildren on French schools, and about the No-Go areas (“the lost territories of the Republic”) in France, and about the rampant antisemitism in Arab families, is scandalous. Bensoussan, after all, was made to endure months of anxiety, before the trial, and during it, all for the putative “hate crime” of slightly misparaphrasing what Laacher had said, without however doing any violence to Laacher’s meaning.

And while today in France, the Muslim groups such as CCIF (*Collectif contre l’Islamophobie en France*) are furious, all those who defend freedom of speech can breathe a sigh of relief, happy that for now the forces of darkness and obscurantism have not prevailed. There will, however, soon be another such grotesque charge of a “hate crime” against Muslims or Islam brought in France, or Germany, or Belgium, or elsewhere where freedom of speech, in the Muslim view, needs to be curtailed – which is to say, everywhere – and where the offended Muslims will attempt, just as they did in the Bensoussan case, to shut down any criticism of Muslims or of Islam.

Meanwhile, one would like to ask members of the French press, in the interests of collective sanity, to simply reprint a florilegium of Qur’anic quotes that help explain why antisemitism is “in the air one breathes in Muslim families”

(Laacher) or, if you prefer Bensoussan's version, "imbibed by young Muslims with their mother's milk." And if a Muslim group were to bring suit if such passages were published, that suit would only draw attention to the very passages that Muslim group would prefer non-Muslims remain unaware of, or at least not pay much attention to, as they are spread out throughout the Qur'an. But the authenticity of these passages cannot be denied. They needed only to be brought together in one place, which is exactly what Robert Spencer has done. Nor could Muslims claim, with such a mountain of textual evidence, that antisemitism is not deeply embedded in Islam, nor could they pretend that all these Qur'anic verses, and the commentaries upon them, have been "misinterpreted" or, in a variant and just as absurd claim," cannot possibly be understood by non-Muslims.

Here's that florilegium of antisemitic verses, [compiled by Robert Spencer](#):

*The Qur'an depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the wellbeing of the Muslims. They are the strongest of all people in enmity toward the Muslims (5:82); as fabricating things and falsely ascribing them to Allah (2:79; 3:75, 3:181); claiming that Allah's power is limited (5:64); loving to listen to lies (5:41); disobeying Allah and never observing his commands (5:13); disputing and quarreling (2:247); hiding the truth and misleading people (3:78); staging rebellion against the prophets and rejecting their guidance (2:55); being hypocritical (2:14, 2:44); giving preference to their own interests over the teachings of Muhammad (2:87); wishing evil for people and trying to mislead them (2:109); feeling pain when others are happy or fortunate (3:120); being arrogant about their being Allah's beloved people (5:18); devouring people's wealth by subterfuge (4:161); slandering the true religion and being cursed by Allah (4:46); killing the prophets (2:61); being merciless and heartless (2:74); never keeping their promises*

or fulfilling their words (2:100); being unrestrained in committing sins (5:79); being cowardly (59:13-14); being miserly (4:53); being transformed into apes and pigs for breaking the Sabbath (2:63-65; 5:59-60; 7:166); and more.

The classic Qur'anic commentators do not mitigate the Qur'an's words against Jews, but only add fuel to the fire. Ibn Kathir explained Qur'an 2:61 ("They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah") this way: "This Ayah [verse] indicates that the Children of Israel were plagued with humiliation, and that this will continue, meaning that it will never cease. They will continue to suffer humiliation at the hands of all who interact with them, along with the disgrace that they feel inwardly." Another Middle Ages commentator of lingering influence, Abdallah ibn Umar al-Baidawi, explains the same verse this way: "The Jews are mostly humiliated and wretched either of their own accord, or out of coercion of the fear of having their jizya [punitive tax] doubled."

Ibn Kathir notes Islamic traditions that predict that at the end of the world, "the Jews will support the Dajjal (False Messiah), and the Muslims, along with 'Isa [Jesus], son of Mary, will kill the Jews." The idea in Islam that the end times will be marked by Muslims killing Jews comes from the prophet Muhammad himself, who said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say. 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'" This is, not unexpectedly, a favorite motif among contemporary jihadists.

Not just contemporary jihadists, but modern-day mainstream Islamic authorities take these passages seriously. The former Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, who was the most respected cleric in the world among Sunni Muslims, called Jews "the enemies of Allah, descendants of apes and pigs." The late Saudi sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Sudayyis, imam of the principal mosque in the holiest city in Islam, Mecca,

*said in a sermon that Jews are “the scum of the human race, the rats of the world, the violators of pacts and agreements, the murderers of the prophets, and the offspring of apes and pigs.”*

*Another Saudi sheikh, Ba’d bin Abdallah al-Ajameh al-Ghamidi, made the connection explicit: “The current behavior of the brothers of apes and pigs, their treachery, violation of agreements, and defiling of holy places ... is connected with the deeds of their forefathers during the early period of Islam—which proves the great similarity between all the Jews living today and the Jews who lived at the dawn of Islam.*

Perhaps Professor Georges Bensoussan, in issuing a public statement about his private calvary, would like to append the antisemitic verses from the Qur’an, and their endorsement both by well-known Qur’anic commentators and by present-day clerics, all of these posted above for handy reference. For Muslims, such passages will be ho-hum, though they will of course be furious that such verses may now receive too much attention from the Kuffar. For many of the Kuffar, however, this evidence should provide a salutary shock. And clearly, if Europe is to save itself, shock therapy will be necessary.

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