

Why Do Norwegian Leaders Love Hamas?



by Bruce Bawer

In the wake of the Hamas atrocities of October 7, the positive news has been this: throughout the Western world, heads of government, whatever their previous positions on Islam and the situation in the Middle East, have taken strong pro-Israel stances. Joe Biden called Hamas's actions "pure, unadulterated evil." British PM Rishi Sunak said: "The United Kingdom stands with Israel against this terrorism – today, tomorrow, and always." French President Emmanuel Macron issued an "unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism." The Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower, the Brandenburg Gate, the Sydney Opera House, and Number 10 Downing Street, along with many other landmarks around the world, were alight in the colors of the Israeli flag.

And then there's Norway.

Let me say that I love Norway, where I've lived for almost a quarter century. But its political, cultural, academic, and media elite are another question. All too many members of that elite proudly hold aloft the image of Norway as the ultimate "peace nation." It awards the Nobel Peace Prizes, of course. More than any other people on earth, Norwegians revere the UN, which they actually take seriously as a noble guarantor of peace. Norway is also the birthplace of the academic [discipline](#) known as Peace Studies, whose founder, Johan Galtung, despised Western capitalism and liberal democracy and admired Stalin, Mao, and Castro. For Galtung's successors, the greatest threat to peace isn't tyrants or terrorists, especially non-Western ones; it's armed democratic resistance to them.

Indeed, Peace Studies reflexively defends groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Hamas for even the worst atrocities, because they're considered acts of desperation that are justified by their purported "cause" – the liberation of oppressed peoples from Western imperialism. Meanwhile, Peace Studies preaches that the Western response to such actions should take the form of dialogue, concessions, appeasement, submission – the result of which is always (presto!) peace. By contrast, if countries like the U.S. and Israel respond to events like 9/11 or the Hamas attack of October 7 with force, then – well – *they're* the real terrorists and hence the real enemies of peace.

It's no surprise, then, that while the U.S. and EU consider Hamas a terrorist organization, the government of Norway – whose elites have been schooled, to at least some extent, in the kind of thinking that made Peace Studies possible – has long been a holdout on that front. Even after October 7, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre refused to change his stance. And he kept refusing right up until the afternoon of October 11, when he finally buckled.

But even when he agreed to admit that Hamas was a terrorist

group, he couldn't leave it at that. First, he insisted on distinguishing between Hamas and the people of Gaza – the people, that is, who voted for Hamas to rule them. Second, he asserted that there's a difference between Hamas and the governing authorities in Gaza – which is like saying that there's a difference between America's President and its Commander-in-Chief. Third, he affirmed that Norway will continue to send money to Gaza – while offering ridiculous assurances that it wouldn't get into the hands of Hamas. Fourth, early on October 13, he [confirmed](#) in one breath Israel's right to defend itself and, in the next, condemned Israel's actions in Gaza. Fifth, on that evening, he announced that while other Western countries were freezing their aid to Gaza, Norway would in fact be *increasing* its Gaza aid by \$7 million.

Støre's position is at once vile and inane. But it's not surprising. Like almost all leading Norwegian politicians, he's spent his life as a member of a tiny urban elite who are bred to be world-class virtue signalers. This means sending massive amounts of "humanitarian aid" to certain African countries knowing that most of it will end up in the pockets of warlords. It means funding news media that routinely smear America – even though these Norwegian elites rely on American military protection, lap up American pop culture, send their kids to American colleges, and happily vacation in New York and Disney World. And it means, above all, being supremely self-righteous about the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

Many people criticize the left for playing moral-equivalence games between Israel and the Palestinians. You need never worry about such things when dealing with Norwegian elites: in their view, the Palestinians are, always and ever, morally superior to the Israelis. A few quick examples from the relatively recent past. In 2002, several members of the Nobel Peace Prize committee [said](#) that they regretted giving the 1994 Peace Prize to Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres – but not

to PLO terrorist Yasir Arafat. In 2006, the internationally bestselling novelist Jostein Gaarder, author of *Sophie's World* (1991), contended in a stunningly malevolent op-ed, "God's Chosen People," that Jews are "child murderers" who believe God has given them a "license to kill." Did he say anything of the kind about Palestinian terrorists? Of course not. For his repugnant lies, he was applauded roundly by the Oslo cultural elite. And let's not forget Norway's most famous editorial cartoonist, Finn Graff, who made his name by routinely equating today's Israelis with yesterday's Nazis.

Finally, in 2011, Alan Dershowitz, who'd given talks about Israel around the world, was [denied](#) a platform by each of the three major Norwegian universities because of his pro-Israel stance, which had recently hosted speakers presenting anti-Israel bile. "Only once before have I been prevented from lecturing at universities in a country," wrote Dershowitz. "The other country was Apartheid South Africa." Dershowitz noted that Norway's then Foreign Minister – none other than Støre – piously defended dialogue with Hamas; I might add that Anniken Huitfeldt, who was Foreign Minister until October 16, has long called for an all-out boycott of Israel, was quick, after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, to enter into naive, groveling dialogue with the Taliban about (of all things) women's rights.

Then came October 7. While governments around the world hoisted Israeli flags, the mayor of Stavanger, Norway's third largest city, refused to do so, even though she'd happily flown the rainbow flag earlier this year. Meanwhile Huitfeldt [urged](#) the international community to maintain support for the Palestinians. On October 10, the prime-time program *Debatten*, aired on state TV, took on the events in Israel. The host, Fredrik Solvang, stated that "the background for the attack" was "Israel's oppressive occupation"; he attributed the attack to "desperation"; and he quipped, "Violence breeds violence." A Muslim guest agreed: Gazans

“haven’t been heard.”

Another guest, Line Khateeb of Norway’s Palestine Committee, called Hamas’s invasion “a response to a 16-year blockade.” Asked about Hamas’s acts of terror, Khateeb cautioned that the word *terror* “doesn’t help.” Asked about Hamas’s charter, which contains reprehensible language about Jews and Israel, she told the host to “take up the charter with Hamas”; *her* concern, she said, was with “Palestinian rights” and Israeli “apartheid.” Yes, there were three pro-Israeli Jews on the show, including Conrad Myrland of the organization MIFF (With Israel for Peace). They corrected, among much else, the other participants’ grotesque calumnies about Israel’s “occupation” and “blockade” and pointed out that Hamas teaches Palestinian children to kill Jews and uses them as human shields. In response to these cold, hard facts, they got dismissive smirks.

That was Tuesday. On Wednesday, the evening news show *Dagsnytt 18* focused entirely on ginning up sympathy for Gazan civilians. To top it all off, the Norwegian media spent much of the week celebrating Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian doctor who’s famous for traveling to Gaza, often with his colleague Erik Fosse, to provide medical help to patients injured in Israeli attacks – and to use his high media profile back home to paint Israel as the heavy. A member of the Red (Communist) Party and Palestine Committee – and a former member of the now-defunct Worker’s Communist Party, a fanatically pro-Mao group – Gilbert famously responded to 9/11 by defending Al-Qaeda’s “moral right to attack the USA.” He’s been praised by Støre and honored by the King of Norway.

On October 9, he and Fosse published an [op-ed](#) in *Aftenposten* defending Hamas’s attack as an understandable response to Israel’s “increasingly brutal and overt colonization policy,” which, they charged, involves “harassing” and “killing” Palestinian civilians. The op-ed, which repeated the bogus words “occupation” and “occupied”

several times, was pure propaganda, blaming every Gazan problem on Israel rather than on Hamas. Replying to this mendacious screed at the MIFF [website](#), Myrland exposed its colossal falsehoods. For example, was Israel stopping medical equipment at the Gaza border? No, it was *inspecting* it, because Hamas routinely hides military materiel in packages of medical equipment. Had Israel killed “more than 200 Palestinians” on the West Bank since January? Yes – terrorists.

Three cheers to Myrland. Yet how many Norwegians read MIFF’s website? How many elite Norwegians really care to hear the truth about the Middle East? On October 13 [came](#) the [news](#) that Gilbert and Fosse were on their way to Gaza, which Gilbert described as “the world’s largest cemetery,” “hell on earth,” and “an enormous children’s prison.” In response, hundreds of commenters on social media praised him to the skies: “Respect and love. What a man!” “What a social conscience!” “What a magnificent human being you are!” “You know what this is about, the civilians of Gaza!” “All good wishes to you and to the Palestinian people!” Never have I seen so many heart emojis.

This is how to win love from a certain sordid segment of the Norwegian population, which is as viciously anti-Semitic as it is privileged and protected. At a moment when Jews are undergoing their worst days since the Holocaust, the first instinct of these Norwegians is to kick them in the teeth, mock their pain, and lie shamelessly about them and their enemies.

The only hint of consolation here, and it’s cold comfort indeed, is to know that this state of affairs will – eventually – change. In time, the steady growth of Norway’s own Islamic population, which already has a deleterious day-to-day impact on the lives of many ordinary Norwegians, will affect the quality of life of even the country’s most affluent and sheltered elites. At last they’ll know what it’s been like

to be an Israeli Jew all these years. Perhaps – heaven forfend – they’ll even find out what it was like to be an Israeli Jew in the days after October 7, and will repent profoundly of the callousness and cruelty they displayed during this terrible time. By then, alas, it’ll be too late for their change of heart to make any difference to anyone.

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