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**Israel Apartheid Week 2018**

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Over the past 14 years Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) has been observed in various countries across the globe, among them the United States, Britain, Canada, and South Africa. The "week" is typically implemented on and off university campuses during specific days between mid-February and mid-April. As opposed to criticism against particular, concrete policies of the Israeli government, IAW encompasses harsh anti-Israel activity, traditionally in the form of alleging linkages and similarities between Israel and apartheid South Africa – with the aim of delegitimizing and isolating Israel internationally.

"Israel Apartheid Week" is of threefold concern. First, events held under its banner can, and often do, evolve into anti-Semitic displays and slurs, reportedly resulting in a sense of insecurity among Jewish communities, particularly Jewish students at university campuses. Second, polls and research show that on campuses, the immediate affiliation with Israel thrust upon Jewish students – expected to advocate or condone Israel regardless of the fact that they may prefer not to take a stand – leads to anger and anxiety, which in certain cases is assumed to encourage alienation from Israel. Third, IAW, which is only a part of a larger ongoing campaign to mar Israel's image, actively strives to delegitimize Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people.

Similar to previous years, 2018 activities under the IAW banner varied: from vandalism and graffiti, (e.g. "Zionism is racism"; "One settler, one bullet"; "Whites only/Israelis only"); through visual and dramatic displays of mock walls and checkpoints; to hosting lectures and commencing votes on resolutions to divest from and boycott Israel. Although all activities conducted under the IAW banner strive toward the same goal of isolating and boycotting Israel, there is a substantial range in the activities implemented in each of the four countries examined.

- a. Coordination: in South Africa, IAW activities are simultaneously implemented during the same timeframe, while elsewhere activities are held throughout the two-month period.
- b. Venue: in the United States, IAW energies are primarily channeled to activities in and around campuses, targeting younger age groups; in other states, energies

are also (and sometimes primarily) channeled to off-campus activities, targeting diverse constituents through poetry readings, marches, and church meetings.

- c. Context: in each of the four countries, some events highlighted traditional, recurring, and overarching issues such as checkpoints, the "wall," "Israeli colonialism," or "apartheid"; whereas other events emphasized current developments focusing on the imprisonment of young Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi and Israel's planned deportation of African migrants and asylum seekers. (Recent IAW events were held primarily before the clashes between the IDF and Palestinian demonstrators on Israel's border with the Gaza Strip.)

Despite the obvious challenges in measuring and quantifying the IAW phenomenon, in-depth interviews with pro-Israel activists in the four countries indicate that in comparison to previous years, the 2018 IAW was somewhat smaller in scope, and calmer in the level of energies it generated among both protagonists and antagonists. The toning down of events can be attributed to multiple factors, including the possibility that after 14 years the repetitive campaign fails to generate the same excitement and enthusiasm that developing issues do; and the fact that IAW inherently competes with pressing domestic issues. Another possible explanation is an apparent desire of IAW campaigners to attract more neutral constituencies, leading to the softening and reframing of the usual negative campaign to "Israel Divest Week," "Palestine Awareness Week," or "Gaza Week." Two problematic developments in 2018 are the recurring reference by anti-IAW activists to the growing number of Jews among those propagating IAW, and the fact that the campaign arrived in India for the first time, where activists reportedly toured several cities.

It appears that pro-Israel activists were rarely surprised by the content or scope of this year's IAW events, and that diverse groups succeeded in pooling their efforts, demonstrating their ability to cooperate on activities and engaging in multiple strategies in countering the smear campaign. For example, whereas in South Africa, the pro-Israel camp boosted positive action in the period before IAW to strategically set the tone for the upcoming negative campaign and avoid adding fuel to the flames during IAW itself, in the United States activities were often designed to generate a pro-Israel narrative in real time in light of anti-Israel rhetoric unfolding. Activities opposing IAW were generally positively-branded, emphasizing dialogue as opposed to divides, and highlighting multiple aspects of Israel and Israeli society.

Interviews with pro-Israel activists in the four countries reveal that 2018 response efforts incorporated best practices and lessons learned from previous years, including: upfront requests to university authorities to reinforce campus security during IAW and to designate separate areas for pro and anti-Israel action; and in general, fewer reactions to

negative events while proactively engaging in pro-Israel action. Activists clearly displayed an orientation for measuring and quantifying successes, recording such factors as publication of media items referring to the campaign; the extent of social media trolling; number of activities implemented, participants in attendance; BDS resolutions tabled and passed, and the number of universities wherein the IAW campaign was staged, among others.

Yet while the scope and traction of 2018 IAW events apparently declined and were met with more sophisticated and effective pushback efforts, it would be unwise to dismiss the IAW phenomenon as insignificant. In addition to the repercussions of the cumulative effect of efforts to delegitimize Israel in general, and to the concerns resulting from efforts designed to equate Israel with apartheid during IAW in particular, the growing number of Jewish students who support and even instigate passionate campaigning against Israel is troubling. This trend, which appears to be most prominent in the United States, highlights the destructive way that the larger, systematic campaign to delegitimize Israel feeds into schisms between the Israeli and Jewish Diaspora components.

Since the negative campaign targeting Israel is primarily propagated by civil society activists, counter efforts are best led and strategized by local, pro-Israel, civil society activists in the different countries. These are best positioned to understand and respond to each country's complexities and nuances - sometimes incomprehensible to outside players. While the Israeli government's controversial policies vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict certainly fuel some of the events, the established practice of IAW, similar to the BDS campaign, should not be mistaken for a pro-peace, pro-two-state, or pro-dialogue endeavor. Thus, both the State of Israel and Israel supporters should be minded toward engaging in a long term effort; strive to develop quantifying and measurement indices capable of obliterating the "noise" generated by IAW and assessing the impact of both the negative and counter campaigns; monitor new trends in the phenomenon; and enable free and secure flow of knowledge between all relevant players. Findings also emphasize the state's important role in working systematically and strategically to bridge between the Jewish communities in Israel and in the Diaspora.