The religious dimension of October 7

Statement on the occasion of a discussion on Islamist antisemitism organized by the London Center for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at King's College London on November 3, 2025

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What does it mean when Hamas defines its war against Israel as a religious war? What does the fact that the October 7 massacre was accompanied by repeated cries of “Allahu Akbar” (Allah is the greatest) tell us?

The Koran does not provide a clear answer to this question. A minority of experts emphasize the pro-Jewish verses of the Koran and the fact that the Jewish religion laid the foundations for Islam. “Without Judaism, there would be no Islam” is the title of a book by German Muslim Islamic scholar Mouhanad Khorchide, for example.

The majority of experts, on the other hand, emphasize the anti-Judaism of Islam. Jews were perceived to stand below the Muslims and had to accept their lower rank as dhimmis. On the one hand, this status meant permanent discrimination and humiliation for Jews in Islamic societies. But at the same time, it also granted Jews a certain degree of protection as long as they submitted to this discriminatory role. The European myth of Jews as the secret rulers of the world played no role in this anti-Judaism.

This changed from the mid-19th century onwards, and particularly during the last 100 years with the emergence of Islamism and the close cooperation between Islamism and National Socialism. Now, for the first time, an antisemitic interpretation of Islam developed. The followers of this interpretation referred

and continue to refer in particular to a hadith – that is, a traditional saying of the prophet Muhammad, who is supposed to have said: “The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. Then stones and trees will say: Oh Muslims, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”

“Come and kill him” – this brings us to Islamist antisemitism. Its followers do not want to degrade Jews to dhimmis, they want to kill them. They do not simply want to defeat the Jewish state of Israel, they want to wipe it out. Islamist leaders such as Hassan Nasrallah, the former leader of the Shiite Hezbollah, are convinced that Allah has allowed Israel to exist for one reason only: so that Muslims can kill the Jews in one place instead of having to track them down and persecute them all over the world. Other prominent Islamist leaders such as Sayyid Qutb and Yusuf al-Qaradawi have described the Holocaust as a punishment decreed by Allah, which Muslims should take as an example and repeat. Fathi Hammad, a Hamas leader, gave his followers the following order: “We must attack every Jew on planet Earth and slaughter and kill them. ... We will lacerate them and tear them into pieces, Allah willing.”

This call was heeded on October 7 in southern Israel. For Yahya Sinwar, the planner and leader of the massacre, the religious motive was central. He believed in the promises of paradise in the Koran. He believed that the murder of Jews was a prerequisite for the salvation of the world and the resurrection of Muslims. The murderers of October 7 were convinced that they were fulfilling a religious mission. For them, the Islamist crime was a kind of religious service; hence their enthusiastic mood and their constant cries of “Allahu Akbar.”

This departure from the dhimmi concept and the turn to the murder of Jews did not follow any precept from the Koran. It has much more to do with the symbiosis that had linked the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood and the Mufti of

Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, with the German National Socialists since the 1930s. The Nazis regarded the Jews as “enemies of humanity,” as “the incarnation of evil.” With their genocidal antisemitism and their anti-Jewish interpretation of the Koran, they provided the radical wing of the Palestinian national movement with a new orientation and embedded Nazi-style conspiracy theories in Islamist thought and propaganda. This led to the adoption of genocidal ambitions previously unknown in the Muslim world. What's more, the Jew-haters from Cairo and Berlin gradually succeeded in elevating their cause to a binding matter of faith for devout Muslims.

There are three key documents that outline the program of Islamist anti-Semitism:

The first document is the pamphlet “Islam and Judaism,” which was published in Cairo in 1937 and a year later in Berlin. It was the first time that the Hadith of the Tree and the Stone, i.e., the call to kill the Jews, was quoted and disseminated on a massive scale. „Islam and Judaism“ imagines global Judaism as a closed collective with unchangeable characteristics. Its hostility toward Islam is said to be “ancient and rooted in Jewish souls since the arrival of Muhammad.” “The verses from the Koran and Hadith prove to you,” it continues, “that the Jews have been the bitterest enemies of Islam and are still trying to destroy it.” Here, the Islamists projected their own intention to destroy the Jews onto the Jews with the fictitious claim that the Jews wanted to destroy Islam.

Such paranoid projection also characterizes the second key text of Islamist antisemitism, published 13 years later: Sayyid Qutb's 1950 pamphlet “Our Struggle with the Jews.” “The bitter war that the Jews have waged against Islam,” he also writes, “is a war that has not been interrupted for a single moment in nearly 14 centuries.” Qutb turned the locally limited events of

Medina into a global and bitterly fought war that can only end with the destruction of one side or the other. He describes the Holocaust as a well-deserved punishment for the Jews, desired by Allah, which must now be followed by “the worst kind of punishment.”

The third key document of Islamist antisemitism is the 1988 Hamas Charter. This charter is a religious manifesto that combines the worst images of Jews from Islam and Christianity: it presents the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” alongside the Hadith of the tree and the stone. At the same time, it focuses on self-sacrifice and suicide bombing according to the motto “You love life, we love death”: “Death for the cause of God is our most sublime wish,” the charter states. In this way, both components of Islamist antisemitism are radicalized: European anti-Semitism is recharged by the fanatical moment of radical Islam, while the old anti-Judaism of the Koran – supplemented by the world conspiracy theory – receives a new and eliminatory quality.

Each of these three key documents is a declaration of war on the spread of liberal ideas in the Islamic world, which are personified in the figure of the Jew. Islamists want to stop the advance of modernity in Islamic societies at any cost.

Let me conclude by quoting from Dr. Daniel Allington's report about Islamist Antisemitism: “The democratic world must come to terms with the existence of powerful military, political, and religious factions for which the Holocaust is unfinished business.” Unfortunately, this is true. Of all religious factions, the Islamist one is the most dangerous. It must be analyzed scientifically and combated politically to a far greater extent than has been the case to date.

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