# How the JDA can and cannot advance Palestinian rights

On April 21, before the latest escalation in violence in Israel-Palestine, Professor Mark Muhannad Ayyash offered a creative reading of the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism (JDA) on this website. He cherry-picked several phrases of this document to infuse it with opprobrium, hidden marginalisation, or assumed irrationality of Palestinians or pro-Palestinian political speech.

When I read Professor Ayyash's argument, I found myself wishing that he had been, to use the oft-quoted line from the musical Hamilton, "in the room where it happened". My personal experience as one of the 20 people who debated and helped draft the JDA affirms that our explicit intent belies any effort to subtly lace our work with orientalist assumptions or demean Palestinian or other political perspectives.

At the same time, among the JDA's diverse proponents, even those who decry the challenging conditions and gross power inequities that Palestinians face, recognise that our document can't do much to help. This is because the JDA is meant to be useful specifically to foster clarity around the meaning of anti-Semitism in order to help combat ongoing challenges of that particular form of bigotry. When read as designed in its interconnected entirety, the JDA seeks in part to deter the weaponisation of the important struggle against anti-Jewish prejudice against open and robust speech related to Palestine-Israel.

Indeed, the intended audience of the JDA is Jewish and non-Jewish leaders, and others, concerned specifically about anti-Semitism. In creating the JDA, drafters were aware of the political fallout from the vagueness and limitations in the pre-eminent and influential prior effort to define anti-Semitism globally, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism. This fallout has allowed some organisations and activists affiliated with or supportive of Israeli policies under Netanyahu to urge other governments and groups to adopt the IHRA and deploy it specifically to limit or delegitimise political speech critical of Israeli state policies against Palestinians.

In providing a clear definition of anti-Semitism, and giving examples of a wide range of expressions related to Israeli politics and Zionism that are unlikely to fall into this definition, the JDA refocuses the global struggle against anti-Semitism where it belongs, as one of many insidious expressions of global prejudice against historically-oppressed groups. Like members of many groups, including Palestinians, who have found themselves victimised on the basis of their group status, Jews, who formed the bulk of JDA drafters, are within their rights in seeking to identify what might be particular in anti-Jewish prejudice, while also finding common cause with victims of other patterns of mass prejudice or attempted genocide. In short, the JDA's terrain is that of a group subject to ongoing patterns of prejudice and violence attempting to refine efforts to counter these patterns, in part by addressing slippage between anti-Semitism and other types of speech that some Jews or Israelis might not appreciate, but do not on their face fit into historical understandings of anti-Jewish prejudice.

Yet, the JDA has been critiqued both as devoting too much space to the Israeli-Palestinian problem, in its numerous examples, and not enough space to it, in avoiding a clear statement against Zionism or the anti-Palestinian politics of the current Israeli state. Each of these critiques misses the basic point. That is, the recent politicisation of the IHRA definition because of the specific ways it has been read to elide pro-Palestinian speech and anti-Semitism requires further clarification to disentangle Palestinian-Israeli politics from the basic purpose for a definition of anti-Semitism, namely, combatting anti-Semitism.

As to the first critique, the JDA drafters put effort into detailed guidelines suggesting many sorts of expression related to Israel might not be anti-Semitic precisely to leave the contested politics around Palestinian rights outside of the typical realm of contemporary anti-Semitism. The goal is to focus on clear manifestations of anti-Jewish prejudice, which, reflecting historical patterns, are often associated in their most dangerous forms with white or other right-wing nationalist groups, as the examples in Part A. The JDA's restraint in characterising the most likely sources of contemporary anti-Semitism has been a topic of criticism. But the drafters saw their role as explicating the expression of prejudice against Jews, rather than characterising or making political points about the source of such prejudice.

Regarding the critique of not saying something clearer about Palestinian rights, the JDA strives not to take a position on Israeli-Palestinian politics at all, and its drafters and signers share no common position. Rather, we believe in the importance of an open door for lively debate and disagreement on Israeli and Palestinian political issues and optimal future outcomes. If read closely, the JDA suggests in Point 12 that advocacy for a different political model or system than the current Israeli state, such as a single political entity governed and shared by current Israelis and Palestinians, should not be presumed to be anti-Semitism.

Contrary to Professor Ayyash's concern that the JDA is merely Orientalism or Zionist supremacy dressed up as liberalism, this point will likely be seen as very contentious and challenging in many Israeli and diasporic Jewish communities, and contradicts IHRA examples. This, and other examples in the document, are directed towards people seeking elucidation and policy promotion to mitigate anti-Semitism, in part by not presuming that political speech, even impolite political speech, whatever its source, is anti-Jewish, unless such speech traffics in racist portrayals of Jews as Jews. The key principle of the document is that the JDA guidelines can help assess the overall context of a statement. Such context might well include the positionality and specific experiences of Palestinians with respect to Israeli state power, along with others, including some Jews, who bear witness to those experiences. Of course, the points around Israel and Palestine in the JDA might be read, as Professor Ayyash does, in ways quite distinct from its goals and context by people of varying positionality, particularly positionality not directly centred around the internal politics of Jewish and other political efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

In the end, the JDA is not, and cannot be, a document that addresses Palestinian, or any, political issues directly, or improves Palestinian rights. The JDA's only point of intersection with Palestinian politics is its refusal to characterise any statement strongly critical of Israeli politics or practices as inherently or necessarily carrying with it the taint of anti-Semitism. And this refusal is backed by the weight of a diverse, multinational, representative group of respected scholars of Judaism, anti-Semitism and the Middle East.

Because of this, while the JDA is unlikely to affect Palestinian-Israeli politics, it is part of an increased opening for political positions critical of Israel and/or supportive of Palestinians among Jews and the general public in the US. This important trend has accelerated in light of the recent Israel-Gaza conflict. The JDA's goal taking on the global threat of anti-Jewish prejudice, in a way that can be useful, without being an overly broad instrument to chill political speech about Israel, is ambitious. Based on similar concerns around Orientalism that Professor Ayash implies, for the JDA to aspire further to take a stand on Palestine, in my judgement, would be inappropriate. Yet it may help clear the way for others to do so.

## Saudi's Fashion Commission, Vogue Arabia partner to promote local fashion designers

The Saudi 100 Brands program covers a wide range of topics including branding, conceptualization, sales performance strategy, public relations and marketing, client identification, innovation and technology and key leadership skills.

Targeting Saudi fashion designers and brands seeking to take their businesses to the next level, participants in the program will learn from an international team of experts with experience from leading fashion houses including LVMH, Kering, Valentino Fashion Group, Chanel, Bulgari and Swarovski; as well as educational experience from Central St Martins, Royal College of Art, Yale and Parsons.

Burak Cakmak, CEO of the Fashion Commission, said: "Saudi Arabia is on a growth path across all sectors, including fashion, and there are great opportunities for local entrepreneurs to build new businesses across all parts of the fashion value chain."

A robust fashion sector benefits from local creatives, design studios, marketing and communication agencies, manufacturers and retailers. And through programs like Saudi 100 Brands, we look forward to seeing Saudi designers take their rightful place on the global stage."

The program in partnership with Vogue Arabia - will also offer consumer-directed activities aimed at encouraging sales in the local market, the first of which will be held in Riyadh in December 2021, with e-sales outlets and a wholesale campaign to stimulate international sales both set to launch in early 2022.

Vogue Arabia will not only provide media amplification, but also insights to help fashion brands approach editorial and use social media to best effect, SPA reported.

Regional retailers will also participate in virtual conferences, provide professional training and will also offer dedicated in-store space for exclusive Ramadan pop-up initiatives in March 2022 including sales operations.

Through the acquisition of some of the Saudi 100 Brands products, retailers will play a key role in supporting wholesale resort campaign sales across major fashion cities.

Editor-in-Chief of Vogue Arabia Manuel Arnaut said: "Vogue Arabia has a long history of nurturing emerging regional brands and partnering with the Saudi 100 Brands program is a natural continuation of our support."

"We are excited to work closely with the Saudi Fashion Commission, sharing insights that will contribute to the development of the brands taking part in this journey, and using our platforms to support their growth not only locally but also on a global scale."

The Saudi 100 Brands program will support the business development of 100 Saudi designers and luxury brands in the fashion world, helping to deliver Saudi products with international competitive business advantage – in line with the Fashion Commission's efforts to develop the fashion sector in the Kingdom – as well as promote and empower practitioners, creatives and investors in the field.

# We need to treat climate change as the emergency that it is

Veteran journalist Bill Moyers has told us the story of how Edward R Murrow, the pre-eminent US broadcast journalist of his time, insisted on covering what became Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. Murrow's bosses at CBS News had other priorities; they wanted reporters to cover dance competitions in Hamburg, Paris and London instead, explaining that Americans needed some happy news. Murrow wouldn't do it. "It'll probably get us fired," he told his colleagues, but he sent his correspondents to the German-Polish border; they arrived just in time to witness Hitler's tanks and troops roar into Poland. Suddenly, Europe was at war. And Americans heard about it because journalists at one of the nation's most influential news outlets defied convention and did their jobs.

Today, all of humanity is under attack, this time from an overheated planet – and too many newsrooms are still more inclined to cover today's equivalent of dance competitions. The record heat waves and storms of 2020 confirmed what scientists have long predicted: climate change is under way and threatens unparalleled catastrophe. And because carbon dioxide traps heat in the atmosphere for centuries, temperature rise and its effects are only getting started. As one scientist said as wildfires turned San Francisco's skies orange last September, "We're going to look back in 10 years, certainly 20 … and say, 'Wow, 2020 was a crazy year, but I miss it.'"

A handful of major newspapers are paying attention. But most news coverage, especially on television, continues to underplay the climate story, regarding it as too complicated, or disheartening, or controversial. Last month, we asked the world's press to commit to treating climate change as the emergency that scientists say it is; their response was dispiriting.

We created Covering Climate Now in April 2019 to help break the media's climate silence. Moyers talked about Murrow's determination to cover the news that matters at our inaugural conference. Since then, Covering Climate Now has grown into a consortium of hundreds of news outlets reaching a combined audience of roughly two billion people, and the climate coverage of the media as a whole has noticeably improved.

But that coverage is still not going nearly far enough.

To convey to audiences that civilisation is literally under attack, news outlets should give more space to climate change stories. They should run more stories about the issue – especially about how climate change is increasingly affecting weather, economics, politics and other spheres of life – and they should run those stories at the top, not the bottom, of their homepages or broadcasts. News reports should also speak much more plainly, presenting climate change as an imminent, deadly threat.

This message is muted at best today, and the result is predictable. In the United States, only 26 percent of the public is "alarmed" about climate change, according to opinion polls analysed by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication (a member of the CCNow consortium). One reason why? Less than a quarter of the public hear about climate change in the media at least once a month.

Good journalism leads the conversation, and there is certainly plenty of climate news worth covering these days. In a pair of stunning developments last week, a court in The Netherlands ordered the Royal Dutch Shell oil company to reduce its own and its customers' greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent by 2030 in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Meanwhile, shareholders of ExxonMobil and Chevron rebelled against management's refusal to take strong climate action. A week earlier, the International Energy Agency declared that all new fossil fuel development must stop to prevent irreversible climate destruction. The climate emergency is upending politics, economics and virtually every other subject journalists cover, and newsrooms need to catch up.

They can start with the Climate Emergency Statement that CCNow issued in April as part of our Earth Day coverage. Co-signed by eight of our partners – Columbia Journalism Review, The Nation, The Guardian, Scientific American, Noticias Telemundo, La Repubblica, The Asahi Shimbun and Al Jazeera English – the statement's first sentence says, "It is time for journalism to recognise that the climate emergency is here." Emphasising that this was "a statement of science, not politics," the statement links to articles from peer-reviewed journals affirming this fact.

The statement notes that the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated how well news outlets can cover emergencies when they commit to it, and it invites journalists everywhere to apply that same urgency to the climate story.

More than 30 news organisations have now signed the statement, but some major outlets told us privately they won't sign. The phrase "climate emergency" sounds like activism, they said; claiming that endorsing it might make them look biased. Instead, they added, they would let their climate coverage speak for itself.

But that's the problem: their coverage does speak for itself, and it is simply not reflecting the facts of the story. It is a fact that thousands of the world's scientists, including many of the most eminent climate experts, say humanity faces a climate emergency. Most major news outlets still present climate change as no more important than a dozen other public issues, when the fact is that if the world doesn't get it under control, fast, climate change will overwhelm every other issue. Another fact: the climate emergency comes with a time limit – wait too long to halt temperature rise and it becomes too late; CO2's long atmospheric life makes further temperature rise inevitable, perhaps irreversible.

We're not obsessed with whether a news outlet does or doesn't use the term "climate emergency"; what matters is whether the outlet's overall coverage treats climate change like an emergency. For example, does the outlet give the climate story the same 24/7 coverage it has devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic or, before that, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or other landmark events? Has it reoriented its newsroom and reassigned reporters to cover the climate story? Do its journalists present the story with a sense of urgency?

At a summit in Glasgow this November, world leaders are supposed to adopt much stronger measures to address the climate emergency. Between now and then, journalists have a responsibility to make sure the public understands what's at stake and, crucially, that humanity already has the technologies and solutions to decarbonise our economies; what's needed is the political will to implement them. Journalists also have a responsibility to hold those in power accountable to ensure they are doing what's needed to keep our planet liveable. That starts with telling the truth: about the climate emergency, its solutions, and how little time remains before it's too late.

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