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# Israel and the Pinkwashing of Genocide

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As critics of genocide and Zionism, we are often told that settlement of Palestine offers a liberal utopia of pro-gay progressivism. Israel, the supposed sanctuary of Judaism, is in short the only alleged place for women and the LGBTQI+ community to be safe from Islam in the Middle East. These claims erupt most clearly in moments of crisis when there is more blood than even liberals believe can be justified, and are part of the argument that Arabs and Muslims do not have a right to life. We need to be clear that these claims are not just illusory, but that the Zionist agenda undermines the fight for queer rights in both occupied Palestine and Australia.

Some objections to Zionist pinkwashing are well known, as queer activists around the globe have mobilised against it for decades. Despite using images of gay IDF soldiers deployed in Gaza proposing to one another, Israel does not have marriage equality and does have backwards laws that allow Rabbinical courts to govern over civilian marriage. Bizarrely, the Israeli state only recognises gay marriage abroad, which is used as a smokescreen by Zionists who exaggerate the criminalisation of

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homosexuality in Palestine. Israel does however actively ban the marriage of Jews and Palestinians, thanks to a racist law passed with bi-partisan support. There is only one doctor authorised to do gender affirming care in the entire country. The Israeli government's attempt at pinkwashing through Pride parades has been a miserable failure, with counter-protests and stabbings in Jerusalem Pride 2005, the World Pride the international umbrella Pride organisation march in 2006 was cancelled after [anti-queer riots. This year's Pride also a miserable failure, as threats from far-right Zionists meant the annual march was almost cancelled and only got the go-ahead with serious security escort. Despite several decades of improvement for the rights of the Jewish queer community, these gains are poised to be rolled back under the far-right Netanyahu regime. Even the opposition has labelled the current government's approach to queer and womens rights as a 'slide towards theocracy.'

The Zionist regime's commitment to gender segregation is also well known. The reality of being in a religious ethnostate means that segregation not only exists but is increasingly encouraged. Women often do not have equal access to the same spaces as men, from sitting in the back of the bus to separate hours in public parks. Reproductive rights and child support fall under the aforementioned Rabbanical law and are not guaranteed, and access to abortion is still restricted. In an astounding mix of racism and sexism Israel also has a track record of giving black Ethiopian Jews contraception without consent, in a contended attempted forced sterilisation. The reality of Israeli religious marriage laws also mean women require approval from both their husbands and a Rabbi for divorce. These are the subpar standards of 'equality' for women and LGBTIQ+ people in Israel, stark in contrast to the views of most of the Jewish working class across the world.

Zionists here argue for similar perspectives. The queer community in Australia is familiar with the spectre of 'religious freedom' argued by the Christian right, who claim bosses are

oppressed if their ability to fire gay teachers or expel trans children from schools is constrained. The most passionate of these Christian right campaigners, such as those aligned with the obsessively anti-Palestinian Christian Lives Matters, have used physical violence in the form of bashing queer activists in Belmore, Sydney. Much like the Christian extremists, the Zionist lobby are arguing to retain their own right to homophobia and transphobia in the Religious Discrimination Bill, and are lobbying to further extend the bill to address the 'antisemitism' of the Palestine movement. A response to the Zionist-Christian offensive will require a united movement as we approach the next iteration of the Bill in July.

The narrative of 'progressive' and 'liberal' nature of the Zionist regime relies on a contrast with the 'conservative' Arab regimes in the Middle East, despite the fact that these regimes collaborate with Israel to the point of joint military training. Israeli backing is important for the regimes in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco, and places the Jordanian Monarchy in a difficult position. The support of these regimes helps keep Palestinian necks under the heel of Zionism and imperialism.

Despite the rhetoric that Israel is a 'liberal island' in the Middle East, the reality is that the Zionist regime has deep issues with sexism, homophobia and racist discrimination which it reinforces abroad. All this is compounded by the apartheid treatment of Palestinians. It is completely hypocritical when the Zionist regime uses progressive, liberal causes as justification for the bombing of supposedly 'reactionary' Palestinian and Lebanese communities. There is no amount of 'progress' that justifies genocide and colonisation.

It is clear that liberal 'queer' Zionist talking points are simply shallow propaganda that should be not only dismissed but shattered in order to build a struggle that can beat back colonialism, imperialism and queer oppression. The fight against the pinkwashing of Zionism by the queer movement is not only

a just one in exposing Israeli genocide, but a critical pillar in the fight against so-called 'religious freedom' that is happening in Australia.