

Alison Weir



INTRODUCTION

Alison Weir has established herself as a prominent voice in the anti-Israel movement. She frames the Jewish State as a violent aggressor in the region and charges that the United States, through its aid, is the driving force behind this aggression. Weir claims that not only does Israel brutalize the Palestinians, but through its intimidation tactics, it corrupts the American political system and prevents criticism of its conduct from being voiced by the mainstream media. As a result, she contends, Americans are kept in the dark about how their taxes fund Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians.

In her discussions of Israel's influence, Weir employs anti-Semitic imagery and portrays Israel and its agents as ruthless forces that control American policy through brutal intimidation and deception. Weir views herself and her organization, If Americans Knew, as part of a growing movement to promote U.S. interests by educating Americans about the vast conspiracy to keep the truth about Israeli practices hidden from them.

In June 2010, Weir was named the next president of the [Council for the National Interest \(CNI\)](#), replacing its longtime leader Eugene Bird. Weir did not give up her post at IAK and but will instead split her time working for both organizations, according to CNI's announcement of the appointment.

BACKGROUND

[Alison Weir](#) publicizes her views of Israeli brutality and what she has described as Israel's control of "the American media's coverage of stories from [the] region" through articles and lectures she gives at various events around the country.

Weir, formerly the editor of *Marin Scope*, a local newspaper in Sausalito, California, has said her interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict developed following a trip to the Palestinian territories in early 2001. By the end of that year, Weir published an essay in *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid*, a compilation of 20 essays by many established voices in the anti-Israel movement, which examines the causes, rise and potential consequences of the second Intifada.

In her essay, “Gaza: A Report from the Front,” Weir discussed “America’s role in [Palestinian] suffering” and accused the Israeli military of trying to prevent the media from reporting on Palestinian suffering. Weir charged that the U.S. press is biased because “the reporters in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv get their numbers and ‘facts’ from military spokesmen. Information from Israeli sources is printed; information from Palestinian sources isn’t.”



Weir also generalized in her essay that Israelis are biased and unreliable sources of information on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “We think we know what they’re talking about,” she wrote, “because they sound so reasonable and confident and knowledgeable. They say just enough about what is wrong about Israel, about the ‘two sides,’ to seem neutral. This is BS.”

Weir attempted to return to the Palestinian territories as part of a delegation of Bay Area activists in 2002. The group was detained at Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport and eventually sent back to the U.S. Weir later claimed that Israeli security officials held a file falsely accusing her group of working with the PLO.

That year, Weir increasingly addressed audiences around the country and praise of her lectures began circulating on various listserves run by anti-Israel groups. In August 2002, for example, she was commended by one organizer for drawing capacity crowds and “galvanizing” audiences.

Weir’s lectures included criticism of American aid to Israel, arguing that the U.S. enables Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians at the expense of American security and prosperity. During an appearance at the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine (CPAP) in August 2002, Weir argued that the U.S. is “steadily insulted, endangered, and damaged” by its “special” relationship with Israel, according to the CPAP report released afterwards.

During a debate at University of California at Berkeley in October 2003, Weir portrayed Israel as a country that exists on stolen land, stating, “a little over fifty years ago 3/4 of an entire population was expelled from its land to make way for an ethnically discriminatory state. And this process is still going on. Palestinians are being continuously and violently dispossessed because of one original sin: inhabiting land that others wanted—exclusively.”

Weir’s hostility toward Israel became especially apparent in an open letter she published in the *CounterPunch*, a radical left-wing publication, following the debate. In the letter, addressed “Dear Israel and your frenzied defenders,” Weir claims that Israel “ethnically cleansed the once-multicultural land” and

imposed its “uni-cultural nation, ridding yourself of hundreds of thousands of human beings who did not fit your national vision of purity.” Describing Israeli influence in the U.S., Weir wrote, “In this country...you’ve killed careers. You’ve killed businesses. You’ve killed hope. You’ve weeded out sprigs of integrity from our Congress, journalists of principle from our press.”

In a July 7, 2005, interview with *Ventura County Reporter*, Weir described Palestinian territories as open-air prisons, and urged the U.S. to pressure Israeli leaders into land negotiations by cutting off support to Israel: “If we withdrew that massive amount of money, it would be clear to the Israeli public, and they would make it clear to their government, that there won’t be this blank check coming from the American public to do whatever they want.”

When asked about suicide bombings, Weir said, “There are basically two ways to end suicide bombings. One way is to give the Palestinian population F-16s to deliver their bombs, but I don’t think that’s an improvement because it causes more loss of life to civilians, including children. The other way is to stop funding the Israelis. Their military forces are killing far more civilians than Palestinians are killing. Most people would think it’s the opposite of that.”

Weir reiterated the notion that terrorist attacks carried out against Israel are provoked by the merciless actions of the Israeli military in a February 1, 2006, *Counterpunch* article. Discussing the U.S. practice of hiring security consultants from Israel, Weir wrote, “The fact is, Israeli governmental security and policy ‘experts’ have long promulgated policies of such ruthlessness and cruelty that a tiny but lethal number of their victims finally began to fight back.”

Weir’s message has been embraced by many known anti-Israel groups, including the [Council for National Interest \(CNI\) Foundation](#), [Wheels of Justice](#), [Al-Awda](#) and the [US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation](#). Weir appears in *Occupation 101*, a documentary film released in 2006, narrating a distinctly anti-Israel view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In 2008, Weir joined a chorus of conspiracy theorists in claiming that Riad Hamad, the head of the Palestine Children’s Welfare Fund who drowned to death in April 2008 in Austin, Texas, had been “targeted for elimination by Israeli agents.” She further alleged that the FBI searched his home following pressure by the “Zionist zealots.”

EXPRESSIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Alison Weir’s criticism of Israel has, at times, crossed the line into distortions customarily found in

the literature of anti-Semites.

In response to a controversial article advancing theories about alleged Israeli organ harvesting, published in August 2009 in a Swedish daily newspaper, Weir penned multiple articles in which she highlighted a series of organ harvesting accusations that have been made against Israel, dating back to Israel's first heart transplant in 1968.

In the articles, Weir asserted that Israeli organ traffickers “coerce people into giving up their organs,” that the Israeli government has enabled a “transplant tourism” industry that exploits poor and needy individuals overseas, and that Israeli authorities have “targeted” Palestinians for autopsies and organ harvesting performed without permission. She asserted that Israel and supporters of Israel responded to the 2009 organ harvesting allegations by attempting to “suppress all debate and crush those whose questions and conclusions they find threatening,” and noted that “it is difficult to conclude that [Israel] has nothing to hide.” In addition, Weir cited a theory introduced in 2008 in which Nancy Scheper-Hughes, founder of an organ transplant watchdog organization called Organ Watch, alleged that Israelis traffic organs as a means of “revenge, restitution—reparation for the Holocaust.”

Weir's articles, titled “The New ‘Blood Libel’? Israeli Organ Harvesting” and “Israeli Organ Trafficking and Theft: From Moldova to Palestine,” appeared respectively in *CounterPunch*, a radical anti-Zionist newsletter, in August, and in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, an anti-Israel publication that frequently serves as an apologist for Muslim American groups advocating anti-Semitism and support for terrorism, in October.

In an April 4, 2008, opinion piece she wrote in *The Greenwich Citizen* entitled, “What Our Taxes to Israel are Funding,” Weir hand-picked quotations from Jewish religious texts and from a writer who has been debunked widely by scholars. Weir used the quotations erroneously to define and defame Judaism, which she described as “such a ruthless and supremacist faith.”

The opinion piece, which followed two speaking engagements at the Greenwich Public Library in Connecticut in February, presented a misleading and false picture of Judaism and the contemporary state of Israel. “If Americans are going to continue showering Israel with millions of dollars per day, I think we are obligated to investigate to what degree our money is being used to further the kind of supremacist, racist violence that most of us oppose,” Weir wrote.

In an open letter to the ADL published in her blog in February 2009, Weir objected to ADL's

description of her opinion piece in *The Greenwich Citizen*, denying that she hand-picked quotations from Jewish texts and used them erroneously to define and defame Judaism. Weir pointed out that she excerpted the passages from Jewish texts from materials by Israel Shahak, “a renowned scholar of Judaism.” However, Weir mischaracterizes Shahak as a “scholar of Judaism.” As far back as 1966, the Chief Rabbi of Ireland, Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, subjected Shahak’s writings on Judaism to a withering critique, and we are not aware of any mainstream Judaic studies scholar who has accepted any of Shahak’s conclusions. Shahak was celebrated in his life as a chemist and as an anti-Zionist activist, not as a scholar of Judaism.

In response to a February 2008 *New York Times* article about her Greenwich appearances, which among other things highlighted a video she showed likening Israel to Nazi Germany, Weir attributed what she viewed as a pro-Israel slant of the article’s author, Peter Applebome, to his Jewish upbringing.

Weir has previously described Israeli power in language traditionally used by anti-Semites. In her 2003 letter to Israel and Israel’s “frenzied defenders,” published in *CounterPunch*, Weir claimed that Israel imposed its “uni-cultural nation, ridding yourself of hundreds of thousands of human beings who did not fit your national vision of purity.” Weir added, “In this country...you’ve killed careers. You’ve killed businesses. You’ve killed hope. You’ve weeded out sprigs of integrity from our Congress, journalists of principle from our press.”

In characterizing Israel as such a powerful oppressor, Weir has also drawn upon Holocaust imagery and compares Israel to Nazi Germany. At a July 13, 2005, lecture at Newbury Park Library in Thousand Oaks, California, for example, Weir said that the U.S. media doesn’t tell about “the Holocaust going on now [in Palestine],” and that proposing a Palestinian state that would be divided into four non-contiguous population clusters is “ghettoization” that she likened to the creation of “concentration camps.”

In September 2006, Weir appeared via phone on [Hesham Tillawi](#)’s weekly cable television show, *Current Issues*, which is a sounding board for Holocaust deniers, white supremacists and conspiracy theorists seeking to broadcast their hatred and anti-Semitism into American homes. During the interview, she called the U.S. an “accomplice” in Israel’s mistreatment of Palestinians and called the American media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “Israeli-centric” and “enormously distorted,” especially in its reporting of injuries and deaths. She also accused the Israeli government of trying to transfer all Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to other countries, calling this “ethnic cleansing,” and agreed with Tillawi’s charge that Palestinian suicide bombings against Israel do not justify Israel’s continued

aggression in the Palestinian territories.

Another outlet for Weir’s message is the *The Final Call*, the [Nation of Islam's \(NOI\)](#) publication. In a December 2007 interview with anti-Semite [Ashahed Muhammad](#) (pictured), Weir discussed the struggle of Palestinians living under Israeli control. “The Palestinians are being treated with far more barbarity than people know...The fact that is that everyone in Palestine is basically a prisoner.” She further criticized the American media for “covering up” what she believes is the truth about the U.S.’ bankrolling of Israel: “the source of Israel’s power is the American public through our tax money and our elected representatives.”



IF AMERICANS KNEW

[Alison Weir](#) runs If Americans Knew (IAK), an organization she founded following a trip to the Palestinian territories in 2001. Established to monitor the U.S. media for what Weir has described as “highly disturbing patterns of bias” in Israel’s favor, IAK produces and disseminates propaganda intended to de-legitimize U.S. support for Israel. The group’s Web site provides a Portland, Oregon, mailing address. While Paul Findley and Andrew Killgore – both from [Council for National Interest \(CNI\)](#) – are listed as “new” board members, IAK appears to function primarily as Weir’s personal propaganda machine.

IAK frequently lends support to individuals that it deems are being unfairly attacked by the pro-Israel establishment in the U.S. When former White House correspondent Helen Thomas delivered a speech rife with anti-Semitic remarks at a gathering of Arab Americans in Detroit in December 2010, IAK wrote a letter to its supporters defending Thomas and arguing that it is “important” to stand by her.

The organization also published a handout defending Thomas’s statements the previous June when she had remarked that Jews should “get the hell out of Palestine” and go back to “Germany, Poland, America, and everywhere else.” IAK countered that Thomas’ remark was reasonable because Jews in Israel are “settlers” who came from elsewhere and that because the “Nazi holocaust ended well over half a century ago” it is not inappropriate to insist that Jews return to areas in Europe where they were formerly persecuted and killed en masse.

IAK not only disregarded the blatant anti-Semitic nature of Thomas' comments but also seemed to consider the whole affair, including Thomas's decision to resign after her comments were made public, a manipulation by the pro-Israel lobby in an attempt to cast out anyone who does not support Israel. The final statement of IAK's handout is, "It is likely that Israel partisans are breathing a sigh of relief...One more obstacle to the Zionist juggernaut has just been removed."

In addition to IAK's defense of abhorrent statements made by others, it also propagates its own anti-Israel theories, including the notion that the U.S.' relationship with Israel is detrimental to American interests. In a statement available on its Web site, IAK charges that U.S. support for Israel is "increasingly imperiling American lives and is driven by "special interest lobbying and high-powered neoconservatives in the U.S. government. This support "interferes with American relations with the oil-producing nations, with whom we previously had friendly ties...with Muslim consumers...and removes much-needed money from domestic American requirements—tax revenues that could be addressed to domestic needs are instead sent abroad to prop up a system of discrimination."

The group seeks to educate the American public "on issues of major significance that are unreported, under-reported, or misreported" in the American media, in the hopes of mobilizing people to demand an end to U.S. support for Israel. "It is our belief that when Americans know the facts on a subject," the IAK's mission statement reads, "they will, in the final analysis, act in accordance with morality, justice, and the best interests of their nation, and of the world."

In a September 2003 poster display at the "UN International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People," IAK sought to portray Israel as committing terrorism and harming Palestinian children as a matter of policy (pictured on right).



IAK further attempts to discredit Israel by promoting the widely debunked [USS Liberty](#) conspiracy theory, which alleges that Israeli forces intentionally attacked an American vessel during the Six Day War in 1967, as well as the 2003 death of Rachel Corrie, an American college student and [International Solidarity Movement](#) volunteer crushed by an Israeli army bulldozer while trying to block the demolition of a Palestinian home in Gaza.

A message on the IAK Web site cites both the USS Liberty and Corrie incidents as evidence of Israel's "brutality." Addressing Corrie's death, the message reads: "If the world – in particular, if Americans – allow this incident to go virtually unnoticed, then our lack of outcry will give a green light to an Israeli regime known for its brutality: If Israel can get away with using an American financed, American-built bulldozer to kill a young American woman, then it will feel it can get away with anything." The letter concludes, "It is time for Americans to turn the light bright red...No longer will we look the other way. No more may you use American money to kill children, American money to kill Americans, American money to crush young women to death, American money to kill peace."

IAK compiles statistical information on what it claims is a pro-Israel bias among major U.S. print and TV media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has targeted several network news stations and newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and alleges that the *Associated Press* bureau in Israel unfairly controls the information coming out of its bureau in the occupied territories. The group's findings are available on its Web site and are distributed at lectures, rallies and conferences across the U.S.



IAK also produces documentaries that support its positions on Israel, which are widely available at anti-Israel events and for purchase on the group's Web site. One IAK documentary, titled "The Easiest Targets: the Israeli Policy of Strip Searching Women and Children," dismisses Israel security measures as cruel and perverted. The documentary alleges that unbeknownst to the American public, border guards and airport security officials perform illegal strip searches on women and children, whom they harass and humiliate.



The IAK Web site has a trailer for its documentary featuring interviews with individuals Weir describes as having "very strong, very patriotic credentials, experts in the Middle East [who] are all telling us that the policies in Israel are disastrous." Several of those interviewed are involved with [Council for National Interest \(CNI\)](#), including Paul Findley, former U.S. Congressman and CNI founding chairman; and Eugene Bird, U.S. Foreign Service Officer and CNI president.

GROUPS AND AFFILIATIONS

[Alison Weir](#) is associated with several anti-Israel organizations, including:

- [Council for National Interest \(CNI\)](#): Weir is on the board of directors of CNI Foundation, an arm of CNI, an anti-Israel organization that disseminates demonizing propaganda about Israel to academics, politicians and other audiences. CNI was founded by Paul Findley, former U.S. Congressman, who is also a board member of If Americans Knew (IAK).
- [Wheels of Justice \(WOJ\)](#): Weir has been a featured speaker on the Wheels of Justice Bus Tour, which has presented a biased, distinctly anti-Israel view of the Middle East during hundreds of visits to high schools, churches, libraries and college and university campuses. During a stop in San Antonio in March 2004, Weir said, “I cannot overemphasize how important this is for me to tell Americans what is happening in Palestine... Anybody would be horrified if they saw it firsthand.”
- [Al-Awda](#): Weir has spoken at several events organized by Al-Awda, a grassroots organization that opposes Israel’s right to exist. Weir spoke at Al-Awda’s 2004 West Coast Regional Palestine Right to Return Conference in San Diego, and its first and second international conventions, held in 2003 in Toronto and 2004 in New York.
- [Friends of Sabeel North America \(FOSNA\)](#): Weir has spoken at several events sponsored by the U.S. affiliate of Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian organization that is a driving force behind the campaign by mainline Protestant churches to divest from Israel. For example, she appeared at a Sabeel conference titled “Peace in the Holy Land: Justice for Israelis and Palestinians,” held in April 2008 in Columbia, South Carolina.
- [US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation](#): Weir has participated in two conferences hosted by the US Campaign, a coalition of anti-Israel groups that promotes divestment from Israeli companies, organizes anti-Israel events and lobbies the U.S. Congress to end American support for Israel as long as it occupies the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. During the July 2005 conference in Atlanta, Weir spoke in support of a proposal titled “Exposing the Associated Press,” and at the July 2003 event in Washington, DC, Weir co-facilitated an education workshop.
- [New Jersey Solidarity](#): Weir has spoken at multiple events organized by New Jersey Solidarity, a New Brunswick-based group that promotes divestment from Israel.

- American Muslims for Palestine (AMP): Weir was among the speakers at the inaugural convention of American Muslims for Palestine in November 2006. She also took part in the 2007 convention. AMP was founded by several individuals associated with the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), which has been described by the U.S. government as part of “Hamas” propaganda apparatus.”