

CAMBRIDGE QUAKERS CANCEL MEETING AFTER JEWISH PRESSURE

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“Israel’s supporters try to suppress free speech – again” U.K. publisher says.

After a complaint by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Cambridge Quakers have withdrawn permission for a speaker critical of Israel and Zionism to use their meeting room. A talk by the author of a book called *State of Terror*, published by Skyscraper Publications, is due to take place in Cambridge this Thursday (May 11th) and will now be at a different venue. The publisher, Karl Sabbagh, said: “This is the second time in a month that a talk by the author, Thomas Suárez, has been targeted by supporters of Israel. A talk he gave in Portsmouth faced a similar cancellation and had to find another meeting place. I suppose it is a kind of ‘badge of honour’ that Israel’s supporters want to suppress Suárez’s research into

terror by Jewish groups in Palestine in the 1940s. He has uncovered documents, some of them previously classified, in the National Archives, which show the extent to which those Jews who wanted to turn the Arab state of Palestine into a wholly Jewish state were prepared to kill British, Arab and even Jewish citizens of Palestine who disagreed with them.”

“Counterproductive”

Suárez and other anti-Zionist speakers have spoken recently in the House of Lords where similar complaints by supporters of Israel were comprehensively dismissed by the House Privileges Committee, who found no evidence of anti-Semitism. But this has not stopped Jewish organisations continuing to try to stop pro-Palestinian speakers by saying that their criticisms of Israel and Zionism are anti-Semitic. “In a way, these attempts to suppress free speech are counterproductive for Israel’s supporters,” Sabbagh says. “They just draw wider attention to speakers critical of Israel, and usually another venue is found.”

Background information

After a previous meeting in the House of Lords at which critics of Israel spoke, similar complaints of anti-Semitism were made, some by peers, and Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, Commissioner for Standards rejected those complaints, saying: The definition [of] antisemitism states that it can ... be expressed by the use of “sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.” I heard and read no such stereotyping at this event. When talking about the views and actions of Jews, official speakers and audience members acknowledged that Jews in Israel, in Britain and around the world have a variety of political opinions, including differing opinions about Israel and its policies. There were no suggestions that Jews have particular characteristics that distinguish them from others. Speakers also referenced support for Zionism by non-Jews, which indicates that Zionism is recognised as a political or religious cause, not a Jewish trait.”

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