

STATEMENT BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS FOR A FREE PALESTINE (SAJFP) ON CRICKET SOUTH AFRICA'S (CSA) DECISION TO RELIEVE DAVID TEEGER OF HIS CAPTAINCY OF THE SA UNDER 19 CRICKET TEAM



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CSA's decision to relieve David Teeger, a young Jewish South African, of the captaincy of the national Under 19 cricket team, has [drawn fire from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies](#) (SAJBD) and the [South African Zionist Federation](#) (SAZF) and culminated in a protest 'against antisemitism' outside the CSA office on the 18th of January. The CSA's decision follows Teeger's public comments in support of Israel and its military and subsequent demands from various civil society organisations for his removal on moral and ideological grounds.

The SAJBD statement attacks CSA for "an outrageous act of antisemitism". It claims that "this is not the first time that Jews have been excluded from sporting bodies in our history. It is shameful that CSA is embarking on a path that is dangerously reminiscent of Nazi Germany, when Jews were actively discriminated against, including among sporting clubs." Supporting an army which is committing genocide is and should be an untenable position for anyone representing South Africa to hold. We therefore support the removal of Teeger as captain. Taking a stance against public support of the IDF is not anti-Semitic. We are, however, disappointed in the CSA for citing safety issues as the reason for the decision which paints Palestinian supporters in a violent light and shies away from the moral question at hand.

As right-wing Zionist apologists for all Israeli actions – including the ongoing genocidal assault on the people of Gaza – the SAJBD and SAZF continue their practice of conflating criticism of apartheid Israel with anti-Semitism. They shore this up with constant invocation of the Nazi genocide of Jews as justification for Israeli atrocities. These corruptions reached a climax with Israel's recent accusation of blood libel (a classic anti-Semitic charge) against our government for bringing the charge of genocide against Israel.

Fed by this relentless and crude Zionist propaganda, Teeger dedicated his award as a "South African Jewish achiever" "to the state of Israel and every single soldier fighting so that we can live and thrive in the diaspora" and is clearly a believer of its distortions.

However, some have argued that given Teeger's age, this is only evidence of youthful naivety and upbringing and does not mean that he is a self-conscious and enthusiastic Jewish nationalist who supports Israel's decades long campaign of expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine. And that in terms of being in the 'diaspora' and looking to Israel to confirm the security and civil rights of Jewish South Africans, he is merely unaware of the rights conferred on him by being a citizen of a constitutional democracy that has never displayed any bias against Jews as Jews – though displaying opposition to those who advocate a Zionist apartheid society in Palestine.

While Judaism and Zionism cannot be conflated, there is a strong Zionist community in South Africa, which many of us as members of SAJFP grew up in. This bloc teaches its youth

that all actions by the state of Israel are justified in order to keep Jewish people safe – not only in Israel but globally – and that any call for sovereignty by Palestinian people is in reality a call for the death of Jewish people.

The supposition that Jewish South Africans are protected by the actions of Israel and its brutal army is laughable. Because of Zionist actions, there is no country in the world where Jews (even as the ruling ethnic group) live under greater physical threat than in Israel, due to justifiable Palestinian resistance to dispossession and actual physical genocide of Palestinians.

Whatever the case, as a young adult, it is Teeger's responsibility to think through the consequences of making such a dedication. By ignoring Israel's long history of ethnic cleansing and its old alliance with apartheid South Africa, and by playing to a tribally inculcated sense of loyalty to the Zionist majority within the South African Jewish community, he has brought himself into disrepute. Moreover, and more importantly, by being the captain of a national South African team, he has contradicted the support being given by our country to another vitally important global anti-apartheid struggle.

That CSA initially mishandled this situation is beyond doubt. Initially handing a lawyer the responsibility to decide on an appropriate course of action (as it did) was a fatal error in that a decision around Teeger's comments was not just a legal question, but a moral and political one. Can we seriously have national leaders – in any sector – who display public support for murderous apartheid societies? Moreover, considering that our government has taken the lead in defending Palestinian rights by hauling Israel before the International Court of Justice, Teeger's public expression of support must be condemned in the strongest terms.

As for the security consideration ultimately given for stripping him of the captaincy, there has never been any threat to his person or to any CSA official. The right to peaceful protest is enshrined in our constitution and the Palestinian solidarity movement is entitled to exercise this right. If there is information which suggests otherwise, then CSA should disclose such information otherwise it seems like a pathetic attempt to placate Zionists by retaining Teeger in the team while still trying to respect South Africa's position on Israeli state criminality.

In this spirit, SAJFP also extends an invitation to this talented young athlete to engage with us and bring his Jewish identity into the ambit of our and other decolonizing societies founded on, and still committed to, freedom and justice for all human beings.

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