

## Why we invited Ilan Pappé and why it is important

We invited Professor Ilan Pappé of Exeter University to speak in Cleveland. We did so because thus far the debate over Israel in the region's college communities has been too one-sided—dominated by former Israeli generals, Washington think tank lobbyists, and others regurgitating Israeli state perspectives. We asked the City Club to host Pappé for similar reasons. We hope the visit will show that the driving force behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is neither religious (i.e., Islam vs. Judaism) nor ethnic (Jews vs. Arabs), but political.

A recent statement from the Cleveland Jewish Federation (CJF) asserted that Pappé was an antisemite trucking in hate speech. An opinion piece in the *Cleveland Jewish News* cherry-picked details around a supposedly salacious event in Pappé's academic career and then implied that he is an antisemite. These are false charges meant to distract from Pappé's ideas, and, indeed, ideas that are critical of Israeli state policies.

The CJF has a history of equating criticism of Israel with antisemitism in order to discredit the ideas of people with whom they disagree. This is foolish, anti-intellectual, and immoral and these people should know better. Of course there are others in the Jewish community of Cleveland who do know better.

We challenge the name callers to show up at Professor Pappé's lectures and to debate him using logic and evidence.

The CJF accuses Professor Pappé of being a poor historian who manipulates the evidence. No scholar is above criticism and without flaws. But let us be clear that Professor Pappé is a legitimate and prolific scholar. He was a senior lecturer at the University of Haifa from 1984 to 2007 and the author of numerous academic books and journal articles. The CJF cites a piece in which Professor Pappé explains his position on the status of Jerusalem. To call this hate speech is absurd and there is no evidence his position or public role has incited anyone. His reputation is being tarnished today mainly because of his support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement, the global nonviolent campaign to force Israel to obey international law. We reject the view that political advocacy discredits one's arguments and evidence. In our view, Pappé is a brave scholar who has evidence to support his position that the state of Israel and its political leadership are responsible for the expulsion of the Palestinians, turning them into the oldest and one of the largest refugee populations in modern history.

### Signatories

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