

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM,  
ISLAMOPHOBIA AND  
IDEOLOGY  
(ON PALESTINE/ISRAEL)**

**Date: Friday, December 8th**  
**Time: 17:00-19:00**  
**Place: Aula (Room C)**  
**Address: Mekelweg 5, Delft**

The guest speakers will offer additional insights on academic freedom and the environment which is created by universities. The dangers of Islamophobia and why we should resist this. Lastly about ideology, scientific research and its moral.



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Please confirm your participation by registering for the event.

Talk by Joost Kircz ([www.kra.nl](http://www.kra.nl)) at the Teach- in @ Delft University of Technology. Netherlands.

Good afternoon,

Disclaimer: This talk is about the societal responsibility of the academic in ALL fields. As for generations, the Kircz family is Anti-Zionist, I will deal with the Israeli right of a safe life next to the Palestinians at the end of this presentation. So, stay cool please.

I'm a lifelong socialist, and certainly not a pacifist; an activist by destiny, and a physicist and digital media researcher by profession. And yes, I consider myself to "tot jood gemaakt"—or in English, from the notion of *enslaved*— I feel myself *enjewed*. My paternal and maternal family were not very religious and learned the hard way to be what other people called a Jew.

I will not dwell in detail here on the totally obscure notion of a single, monolithic Jewish people. Many serious academic works debunk this idea. See for instance the works of the Israeli Shlomo Sand and Ilan Pappé and many other Jewish scientists about this typical non-scientific viewpoint. This does not mean that a more or less closed social group, mostly due to external pressure, cannot form a coherent societal entity. Here, I refer to the notion of People Class originally analysed by the Belgian Marxist Abraham Leon. With people class we mean a more or less socially isolated group who, often due to restrictions imposed on them by hegemonic forces, specialised into certain occupations. Think about the ban on land ownership and the like, which forced the people of the Jewish faith into barter, trade, and banking professions. A same development we saw e.g. in colonial Indonesia, where the ethnic Chinese minority became the social layer of shopkeepers and traders.

Organised Zionism is the 19<sup>th</sup> century dream that people of the Jewish faith, but certainly not speaking the same language and having the same local culture apart from the religious traditions, would form a nation. Consequentially, a heresy according to the most-orthodox Jews, a national home for Jews was created before the Messiah arrived. Interestingly, this is an idea that is heavily supported by the right wing American Evangelicals.

A couple of days ago, I checked the law of return, which entitles me to get an Israeli passport. This is contrary to the tens of thousands who were pushed out during the establishing of this Apartheid state. You are considered a Jew if your mother is a Jew. A softer rule, which is close to the Nuremberg Laws, is that if your grandparents are Jewish. Interestingly, Section 2(b) the “Law of return” allows the state to refuse my century old line of heritage if they consider me to be a threat to the security of the State of Israel.

I will not challenge this.

From a scientific standpoint, the empirical proof of my Jewishness is the simple role of the ancestral mother who gave birth to a daughter, a clear experimental proof by look and feel, which became a long tradition to come at a stop with me: a man.

Many academics are still bending over backwards to find a watertight, almost mathematical proof, to define what makes a human a Jew.

This is typically an ideological driven research project, like the equation of the Big Bang with God, which was a hot issue in the Roman Catholic Church. In both cases there is still no progress made, nor in DNA studies, nor to be expected in the coming AI-revolution.

In a technical university we teach the beauty of science and technology in fostering the well-being of humankind. The only obstacle, often not mentioned, is that as long as human creativity is entering a new meadow where the grass seems greener than the familiar one, it is considered progress. The crucial question is to what extent the choice of new grass is based on illusions, fantasies, religious thinking, or pure Power & Money.

Going to a broader vista, we, as natural scientists and technologists, indeed want to make the world more inhabitable for ourselves and since a short period in our own evolution, also for our eco-structure. Contrary to the Old Testament; nature is master of humanity and not the other way around. So it took about 2 millennia or less of modern bible-based history to understand that plundering nature is not the best option for survival of our species. The ecological crises are examples of this “oversight”.

Science and technology, driven purely by curiosity, is often named *blue sky research*. But obviously, curiosity is heavily influenced by actual social factors. Most often research is (human) need or market driven. Need driven is if we need clean water and soil or higher dikes, to mention a typical Dutch example. Market driven is if a company or state institution is ready to invest money into a project to ultimately reach a monetary profit or a military advance for profit via geopolitical advantage.

Take aviation, a local focal point here in Delft. Indeed in all cultures humans envy birds, adore them, worship them and try to fly. In Holland we have the ever subsidised loss making pride The Blue Swan KLM. Dialecticians would say: look how beautiful, the immense pollution by tax-free Kerosene creates novel research in Electric flying, as well as the beautiful chemistry of soil cleaning, as well as fantastic research in the MIT *Silent Aircraft Initiative!*

But there is a caveat called metabolism: Human (internal) shit is foodstuff for all kinds of bacteria as well as fertiliser for agricultural fields. The waste by human external activity does not have immediate organisms to compost and re-use. Here in Delft, in response to the enfolding disaster, happily I see a master programme on *Environmental Engineering*.

This remind me on the saying of a famous old 19c Flemish Roman Catholic poet and priest Guido Gezelle who famously said: *Denkt aler gij doende zijt / en doende, denk dan nog. ///* Think before ye are doing /and doing, think.

This wise crack should be the motto of every engineering project!

Many of you have seen the film *Oppenheimer*, in which this problem is well illustrated. When in the 1950s, the US project Atoms for Peace was started with the hope was that the Uranium cycle would bring heaven on earth (and not the earth to heaven, as with the bomb). Nowadays, Nuclear Physics as a research field is almost dead. In Delft you have a *Section Reactor Physics and Nuclear Material*. May I suggest that most of this is again cleaning up after the party? May I suggest that IF we want to tap nuclear energy we first have to investigate its ramifications? Why Uranium, because we started with it and presto we got Plutonium and military mutual deterrence? Do you realise that we have no idea about the chemistry of highly radioactive materials and hence spend millions in geological searches for stable rock cavities? What comes first?

But interesting and also frightening, some fantastic inventions come innocently to the fore. Think about WW1, which apart from the fall of the Ottoman Empire gave the UK

the rule of Palestine and the policy to create a semi-colonial situation in which local Arabic elites could rule. The invention to use the Zionist fake dream of a Jewish state could be helpful in a proven divide and rule policy. An ancillary factor was the fear for mass population movements of poor and miserable refugees seeking a proper integration in West-European society. Don't forget that the railways to the concentrations camps were never bombed. Palestine as a dumping place for Jews fitted in the existing anti-Semitic west-European culture. The invention of Zionism as a romantic escape to anti-Semitism became a brutal imperialist reality.

Another, even more disgusting example comes from WW1. Train wagon loads with lice infested, but otherwise reusable, uniforms, blankets, cloth, etc. came from the battle fields and needed to be cleaned. Indeed a Need and a market in one go. High level research came with the suggestion using hydrocyanic acid. This has no smell and it decomposes in water, in other words ideal stuff, but extremely dangerous to use. So, the chemists made a methyl ester, still a gas. It was called Zyklon A to disinfect cloth. More tweaking resulted in the solid Zyklon B, which was much easier to handle and could safely be stored in tins. It sublimates and becomes active, above a temperature of minimal 25.7 degrees centigrade.

In short: continuing killing people with (CO) carbon monoxide gas is cumbersome (but standard used for killing poultry with flu): press many people in a room, the temperature rises and you add safe cold Zyklon B and the human bodies kills themselves. My family proved it.

So much for the innocence of applied research. Indeed, the good invention to re-use tons of unnecessary military cloth, gave way for easy mass murder. No complot, no dedicated research, just off the shelves.

But what about the innocence of military research on purpose. Take the devastating soil pollution of uranium enforced munition, a proper result of dedicated academic material science studies. Or the enormous amount of high tech land mines in many countries

Indeed science is neutral in the sense that you can kill your brother with a bone. But do we scientists have to leave that to market forces and mad suicidal people? The standard argument is always: the enemy is doing it first. So in the Netherlands we once had a department of war and now one of defence. In academic terms you can say that proportionality between hostile actions and overreaction is often gone. More damage is created by revenge, as we now see in Gaza.

The moral task of students and researches in technical fields is to discuss among ourselves what the potential next steps might be of a research project. "The enemy" is the worst argument for our own survival. Hate is the most versatile research pusher.

Our society is on the pinnacle of technological progress. But realise, a person with a good axe, or better a welding flame, wbangho cuts some main data transport lines kills

within days thousands of people. No energy, no telecommunication, worse no social-media.

Religious books from the three main Middle Eastern religions and as well many eastern ones are full of revenge, war and killing into the 7<sup>th</sup> generation.

This has to stop in Gaza, in Sudan, in Yemen and the Ukraine (among others!). The hatred for generations combined by the poisoning of the soil and air might heralds the decline of the whole human species. A secular democratic state is needed now, and science & technology can play a role.

I promised to come back to Israel. Zionist or not, people are living there and have to live in peace together and healthy. A healthy future of the region will never be reached, if people dig themselves in the tunnels of sectarianism, or believe ideologies that deny non-human nature

The conscious force of people who try to do their best in hammering out international rules and laws and are able to maintain them is a first step. The best solution for Palestine is one secular state.

An immediate truce and the retreat of all troops from Gaza and full citizenship for all Palestinians in Israel on the west bank, the refugee Camps and Gaza is a goal. This will not happen in the foreseeable future.

Hence the call for implementation of the many UN resolutions, and the immediate rebuilding of Gaza. Think about the total destruction of Warsaw in the WW2, the city is a bit higher now, because the city is built on the rubble of the totally destroyed city by barbaric war mongers.

We have to understand that goals and methods are intertwined. Killing people (any age and gender!) will induce revenge killing. And this is not Newton's third law, where action equals reaction. In war&peace studies this is named is proportionality of response. However, in the present human culture, action and reaction amplify each other to self-destructing levels. In physics terms you can call these non-linear effects. As researchers and engineers we have from the beginning of every project consider safety belts, and full brakes. Politics is too expensive for humanity to leave it to market forces and maniacs. The questions to answer are not only "battle cries" (funny term) for peace, but how do we control research? How do we organise discussions on possible disastrous applications of applied sciences? Here is a major task for the universities and other educational institutions to integrate such discussions in the curriculum and all subsequent steps in academic life.

It is also the task of scientists and engineers to let all people in Palestine live in peace and develop the deserts around them into safe gardens.

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**Some reading suggestions on Zionism**

Completely superfluously note: analysing Zionism is not a defence for any (implicit) terrorist ideology and practice, based on e.g.: Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam. I simply know more of Jewish Zionism, and simply don't understand Christian (mostly US based) Zionism.

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