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Real Life: 'Shift' among Jews as they question support of Israel amid Palestine conflict - author

Newstalk ZB
By Matt Burrows

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Sydney author Antony Loewenstein. Photo / Getty Images

An investigative journalist says a "really strong generational divide" is forming within Jewish communities about whether to support Israel amid its occupation of Palestine.

Antony Loewenstein, a non-religious Jew who recently toured New Zealand to promote his new book *The Palestine Laboratory*, says attitudes are changing towards the occupation among Jewish communities - including here in Aotearoa.

The Australian-German writer made the claim while being interviewed on Newstalk ZB's *Real Life* with John Cowan, broadcast on Sunday night.

Anthony Loewenstein - Journalist & Author - Real Life With John Cowan
Real Life With John Cowan

There is a shift. I know that it is happening here [in New Zealand] slowly. With New Zealand Jews, Australian Jews and particularly American Jews, there's a 'Jewish insurgency' within the community," Loewenstein told Cowan.

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"It's a really strong, mostly generational divide between young and older Jews. Younger Jews are building their own organisations, challenging their elders and saying, 'You have lied to us for decades that we have to apparently as Jews support Israel, right or wrong, despite the fact it's occupying Palestinians'.

"Just a few years ago there was a poll that one quarter of American Jews said Israel was an apartheid state - that's Jews saying that. Now obviously, many Jews still support Israel, I'm not denying that. But there is a shift."

Loewenstein says for 75 years, support for Israel has been central to many Jews' identity. However, he believes this is changing as Jews recognise their faith is not synonymous with Zionism, which he defines as "belief in the right of Jews to a state or entity that protects them and gives them rights".

The author says the shift in perception of Israel has partly been influenced by the statements of ministers within the Israeli government, who he claims have advocated for something not dissimilar to ethnic cleansing.

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"That's a bit of a PR problem and a moral problem."



Australian author Antony Loewenstein talks about his book *My Israel Question* during the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival. Photo / NZH

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in 1967. Palestine has sought to reclaim those territories and become an independent state in the decades since, but Loewenstein says Israel has used technology to maintain control of the 5 million Palestinians living there.

The Palestine Laboratory goes on to argue that Israel has for decades used these territories to develop and test weaponry and surveillance technology before selling it to states across the globe.

"Palestinians have guinea pigs, and there's massive amounts of evidence [of that]. That's essentially how these weapons are tested, and then they're sold as battle-tested - that's an appeal to many nations."

Loewenstein says he's had "challenges" going in and out of Israel ever since he asked a provocative question of a top Israeli politician, and claims Israel increasingly does not let in people who are critics of the government.

However, he says these issues pale in comparison to those faced by Palestinians.

"I can go to Israel tomorrow - any Jew can - and if you can 'prove' that you are Jewish, you can be a citizen within two or three months. A Palestinian does not have that same right. And that to me is just by definition amoral, but also racist," Loewenstein said.

"I think a lot of people in the 21st century still feel uncomfortable talking about non-Jews saying that Jews can be racist. Any peoples can be racist - and if there is a decades-long occupation against Palestinians, it is based on an ideology of Jewish supremacy."

Real Life is a weekly interview show where John Cowan speaks with prominent guests about their life, upbringing, and the way they see the world. Tune in Sundays from 7:30pm on Newstalk ZB.

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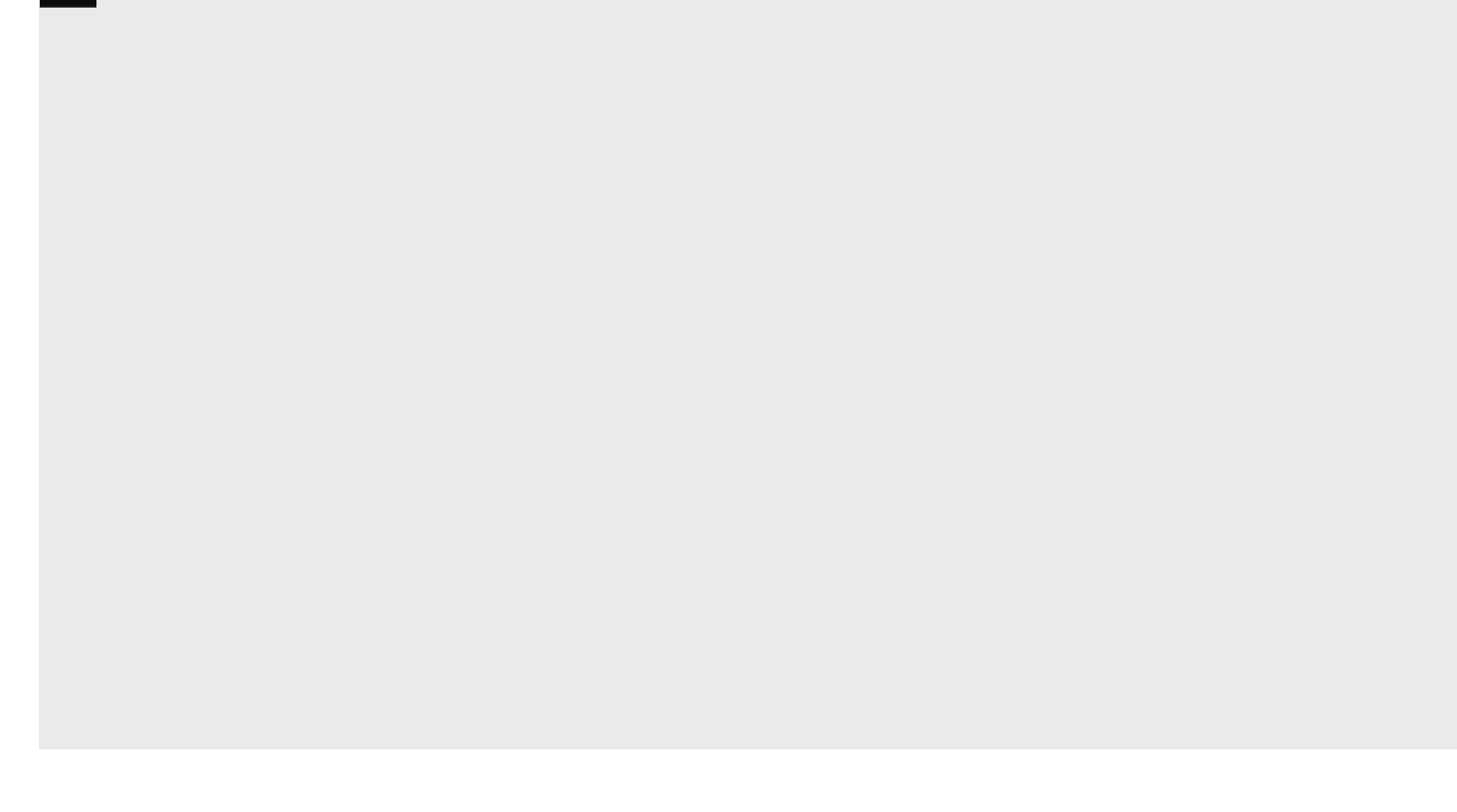
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