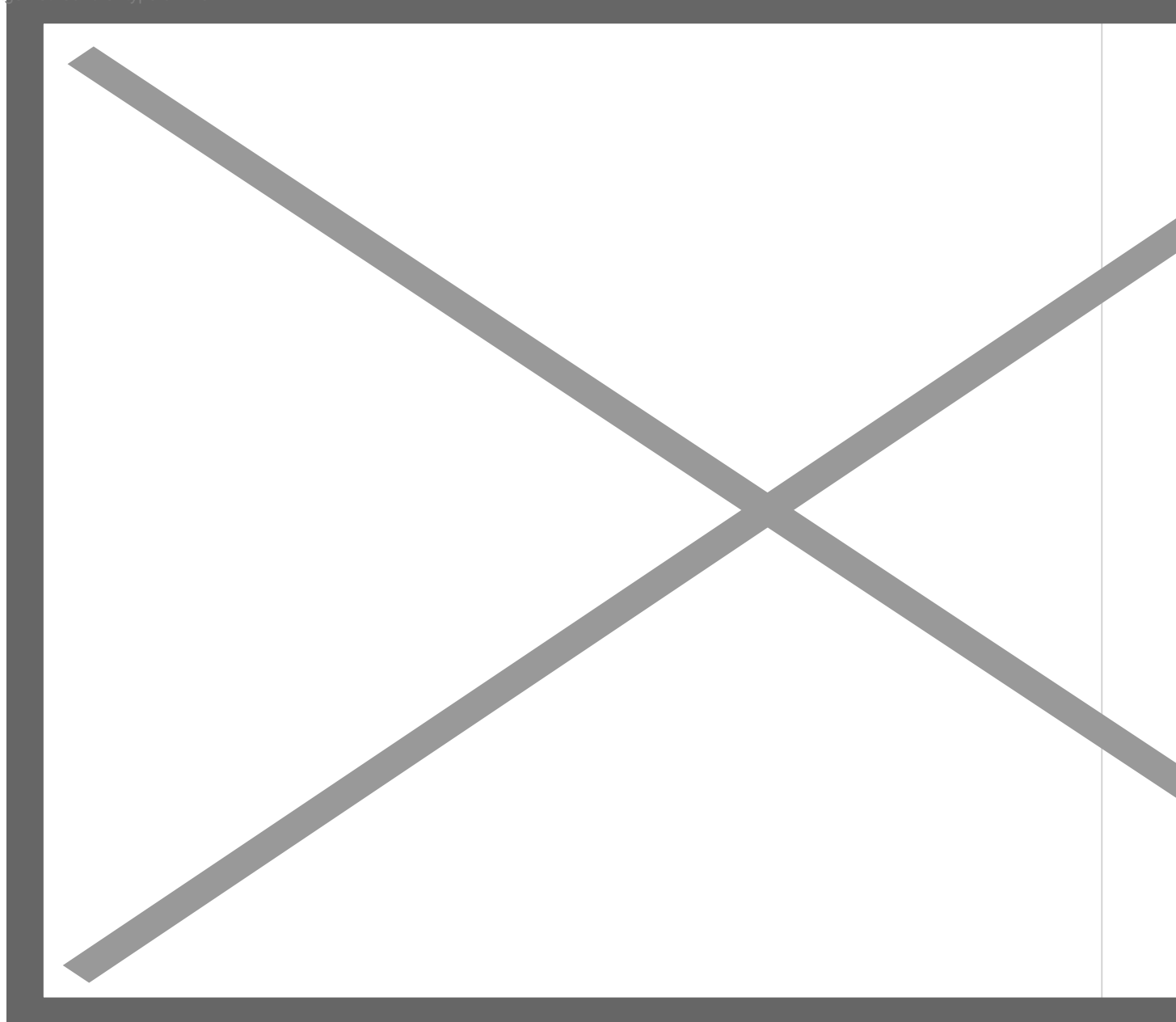


*On New England Patriots Owner
Robert Kraft's Stop Jewish Hate
Super Bowl Ad*

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Billionaire Robert Kraft supports Israeli genocide and Donald Trump.

By Dave Zirin / THE NATION *** January 31, 2024

New England Patriots' 81-year-old owner Robert Kraft writes seven-digit checks to the right-wing Israeli lobbying machine AIPAC, but his personal, political, and financial ties to Israel run deeper than the occasional donation. The multi-billionaire married his late wife Myra in Israel in 1963 when Kraft, then 22, was older than the nation itself. Together they set up numerous business, athletic, and charitable ties to Israel, a record of which is proudly proclaimed on the Kraft company website. In particular, The Kraft Group boasts of its "Touchdown in Israel" program, where NFL players are given free, highly organized

vacations to see “the holy land” and come back to spread the word about “the only democracy in the Middle East.” (Not every NFL player has chosen to take part). Kraft also attends fundraisers for the Israel Defense Forces, currently—and in open view of the world—committing war crimes in Gaza.

Now, as Israel wages war against the civilians of Gaza -- more than 25,000 Palestinian have been killed with at least 10,000 of them children -- Kraft is again flexing his financial and political muscles in order to defend the indefensible. His Foundation to Combat Antisemitism (FCAS) will be spending an estimated \$7 million to buy a Super Bowl ad titled “Stop Jewish Hate” that will be seen by well over 100 million people. Under Kraft’s direction, the ad’s goal is to create a propaganda campaign to counter the reports and images from Gaza that young people are consuming on social media. As Kraft said on CNN in December, “Fifty percent of what’s being spread is lies and not accurate, and young people unfortunately are believing.”

The content of the Super Bowl ad is not yet known, but FCAS has afforded Kraft the opportunity to make the rounds on cable news saying things like, “It’s horrible to me that a group like Hamas can be respected and people in the United States of America can be carrying flags or supporting them.”

This is Kraft enacting the mission of FCAS: fostering disinformation. He is far from subtle: A Palestinian flag becomes a “Hamas flag,” and people like the hundreds of thousands who took to the streets of Washington, D.C. last month to call for a cease-fire and end the violence are expressions of the “rise in anti-Semitism.” Without a sense of irony or the horrors happening on the ground in Gaza, Kraft says he is giving \$100 million of his own money to FCAS, because “hate leads to violence.”

Let’s be clear: What Kraft is doing politically and what he will be using the Super Bowl as a platform to do is dangerous. He appears to think any criticisms of Israel are inherently anti-Semitic. For Kraft, it is Jews like myself, rabbis, and Holocaust survivors calling for a cease-fire and a Free Palestine that are part of the problem. Kraft seems to think that opposition to Israel, the IDF, and the AIPAC agenda is anti-Semitism.

There is a red sea of distance, as I have written, between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. No matter the Orwellian resolutions that a compliant US Congress passes, these are different political currents. Anti-Semitism is the pernicious hatred of a beautiful religion and culture that has been with us for over 5,000 years. Anti-Zionism is opposing a once negligible 125-year-old colonial project in the Middle East. Zionism was a minor strain in Jewish life until the Holocaust. In a state of trauma and immiseration, Zionism rose triumphant after World War II with a new state built on the backs and land of the Palestinian people: a new outpost of what McCarthyite columnist Bari Weiss—with shameless racism—calls “the West,” albeit located in the Middle East. For Kraft (and Weiss), building a highly militarized, nuclear state built on stolen land is the only true hedge against another Holocaust.

Cementing the idea that to be anti-Zionist means you are anti-Semitic has also been the lifelong project of Israel’s corrupt Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He attempts to shame anyone on the left who dares criticize Israel as crypto anti-Semites. Even the Rabbis calling for a Free Palestine are not free from this slander. Opposition to Israel’s practices through boycott, divestment, and sanctions is now illegal in some states.

Right-wing Christian Nationalists, with their belief in a Jewish state existing alongside their conviction that Jews are going to hell, are welcome in Netanyahu’s Israel and Kraft’s coalition. Left-wing anti-Zionist Jews are not. The greatest foghorn of this evangelical right-wing “love Israel, hate Jews” perspective is of course Donald Trump. Kraft, while speaking of being troubled by events like the Charlottesville Nazi march and the right-wing massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue, counts Donald Trump as a close friend and even donated \$1 million to his presidential inauguration.

No one who provides cover for the most powerful, public anti-Semite in the history of US politics should ever be taken seriously on how we can best fight anti-Semitism. No one who funds AIPAC and the IDF

and opposes a cease-fire amid the carnage should be allowed a commercial platform at the Super Bowl. But given that the big game is always an orgy of militarism, blind patriotism, and big budget commercials that lie through their teeth, perhaps that ad could not be more appropriate. We can do better than Kraft's perspective on how to fight anti-Semitism. Morally, we don't have a choice.

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