

**PERCEPTIONS OF BANGLADESHIS LIVING IN AUSTRALIA OF JEWS, ISRAEL
AND THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

**PAPER PRESENTED TO THE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE
CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

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by David Bitel*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Jews in the Indian Subcontinent

Jews have played a role in the history of the Indian Sub-Continent for hundreds of years. Distinct Jewish communities settled in various parts of India at different historic periods. Particularly well known were the Cochin Jews, the Bene Israel, of the Malabar Coast in southwest India, who maintained their religion whilst living a highly assimilated Indian lifestyle. During the period of the British Raj significant numbers of largely Iraqi Jews (called Baghdadis) settled in major urban centres of India, particularly the then capital Calcutta and Bombay. Other Anglo Jews also settled in India as part of the British Colonial experience. Central European Jews first made contact with India also during the period of the Raj, some settling in Madras in the early 18th century and others arriving in the 19th century.

In the 1930s numbers of Jews fleeing the persecution of Nazi Germany settled in India and at a similar time hundreds of Jews also fled Persia, Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics to India. Most of these regarded their stay in India as temporary, a footstep to reach Palestine. Many assimilated with the “Baghdadi” communities centred in Calcutta and Bombay. One source indicates that the numbers of Central European Jews who were granted sanctuary in India in the 1930s and 1940s would certainly exceed 2,000 people. (Shalva Weil – "From Persecution to Freedom: Central European Jewish Refugees and their Jewish Host Communities in India", article in "Jewish Exile in India 1933-1945" edited A Bhatti and J Voigt, 1999, Manohar).

* Managing Partner, Parish Patience Immigration Lawyers <http://www.ppilaw.com.au/>; Member, Social Justice Committee, New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies; President, Refugee Council of Australia; Secretary-General, International Commission of Jurists (Australian Section).

In the far eastern part of India in the States of Manipur and Mizoram, on the Burmese border, a significant conversion took place in the 20th century of tens of thousands of people who identify themselves as Bnei Menasheh.

Small numbers of Jews also lived in other parts of the country. For example there was a small community in Shillong, in Assam State, north of Bangladesh.

1.2 Bengal

What is interesting however in this brief summary is the complete absence of Jews from the Eastern part of Bengal, the part which became first East Pakistan and then Bangladesh.

There are close to 300 million Bengali speakers, approximately half of whom live in West Bengal, and the other half in Bangladesh. Although Calcutta was the capital of and the largest city in Anglo India with a sizeable largely Iraqi Jewish community of traders, there appears to have been almost no movement east of these Jews into what has become Bangladesh.

1.3 A Brief History of Bangladesh

There is an extraordinary symmetry in the history of the creation of the States of Bangladesh and Israel.

"A Legacy of Blood" is the title of one important history of Bangladesh published by Anthony Mascarenhas in 1986. As he notes "Bengalis are nothing without their culture and the language is its greatest manifestation. The support of the Bengali Muslims for the Pakistan cause have been fundamental to its success."

The partition of India in August 1947 led to the creation of the State of Pakistan. East Pakistan, the region which is now the country of Bangladesh, comprised over 50% of the population and was made up almost completely of Bengalis. The *raison d'être* of the country was religion and at the time of the creation of the State millions of Hindu Bengalis left voluntarily or in response to force to resettle in India with a significant movement of Muslims

in the other direction into Bangladesh. This was perhaps the largest refugee movement in modern history.

Bengalis, although the majority in the new State of Pakistan, found themselves an oppressed people. In February 1948 Jinnah, the so-called Father of the Nation, declared that Urdu, the language of the West, would be the national language of unified Pakistan. This provoked a never ending series of protests and resistance movements in the East where Bengalis felt their cherished culture and way of life threatened. The Language Movement is commemorated with pride annually. Cultural oppression was followed by economic, military and political oppression of the people in the East with Bengalis heavily under-represented in all aspects of government. Under military dictator Ayub Khan an authoritarian and centralised system gave even more power to the West Pakistanis. Under a Constitution he enacted in June 1962 effectively Bengalis found themselves subjected to a new colonial master, which had replaced the British. His successor, Yahya Khan in 1969, set in train events which while purporting to lead to political democratisation effectively lead to the extraordinarily bloody War of Liberation in 1971 during which millions of Bangladeshis found themselves killed, tortured and raped by the cruel Pakistan Army and its allies, and the Declaration of Independence on 16 December 1971 with the unconditional surrender of the Pakistan Army with the support of the Indian Army.

The new country found itself completely devastated and in the words of Henry Kissinger, “the basket case of the world”. One of the first countries to recognise the new State was in fact Israel. Initially conceived as a secular Muslim nation founded on the principles of nationalism and democratic socialism, successive governments have however increasingly Islamised the State, with Islam declared the State religion in the 1980s.

The current government elected in October 2001 is a coalition. The majority party is the Bangladesh Nationalist Party under the prime ministership of Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of former military dictator Ziaur Rahman and founder of the Party. It includes two Islamic parties, Jamaat Islami and the Islami Okiyya Jote as minority parties. Commentators have noted the increasing power of the Muslim parties in recent years. A very recent disturbing commentary to this effect appeared in the “New York Times” on 23 January 2005, entitled “The Next Islamist Revolution?”

1.4 Religion in Bangladesh

The country has a total area of approximately 53,000 square miles (not much larger than Tasmania) and has a population of approximately 140 million, of whom Sunni Muslims constitute now 88% of the population. Approximately 10% are Hindu and the remainder are Christian (mostly Catholic) and Buddhist. There are small populations of Shi'a Muslims and Ahmadi Muslims who have been subjected increasingly to the same level of intolerance as adherents of this faith experience in Pakistan within the last 12 months.

As noted in the current USA State Department Report on International Religious Freedom 2004, "Religion is an important part of community identity for citizens including those who do not participate actively in religious prayers or services. A national survey in late 2003 confirmed that religion is the first choice by citizens for self identification, and atheism is extremely rare."

Hindus have been subjected to periodic pogroms throughout Bangladesh history, most recently in October 2001 after the election of the current government, and whilst officially there is no acceptance of the persecution of religious minorities, with official statements promoting inter-faith harmony, in practice members of religious communities are easily identified by name, frequently dress and lifestyle and are disadvantaged in practice in such areas as access to jobs in government, the military and political office. Legislation known as the Vested Property Act exists which permitted the expropriation of enemy (in practice Hindu) land by the government. Whilst Parliament under the previous Awami League government passed a Vested Property Return Act in April 2001, there was no question of compensating the Hindus who had lost their land and who had fled to India, and the new law has not in fact been implemented by the present government.

A large proportion of the population especially in non urban regions, is educated in Madrashes, Islamic schools, significantly funded from Saudi Arabia. Whilst some attempt has been made to secularise the curriculum of these schools, this has had little success. The reality about what is taught is of real concern to those concerned with interfaith harmony. It

is a little known fact that the second largest annual World Muslim pilgrimage outside Saudi Arabia occurs in Bangladesh.

1.5 Bangladesh and Israel

Internationally the government pursues a close association with the Muslim world and maintains close political and economic relations with the Arab States. The Bangladesh passport is valid to travel to all countries in the world, except Israel. Bangladesh does not have any diplomatic relations with the State of Israel and it is not permitted for Bangladeshis to travel to that country. Indeed Mr Salah Choudhury, a Bangladesh journalist and editor of the magazine *Blitz* has been imprisoned for a violation of Bangladesh immigration laws since his arrest on 3 November 2003 because he was about to board a plane to address a human rights symposium in Israel. He has been labelled a traitor and anti-Islam and has been threatened by police agents with charges of treason and anti-religious activities. His fault appears to have been a desire to promote understanding between Islam and Israel.

Some years ago Muslim imams from Israel were almost prevented from attending a world Muslim religious conference in Bangladesh until international Muslim pressure forced the Bangladesh government to let them in.

Conspiracy theories abound in Bangladesh. Notwithstanding its significant role in facilitating the creation of the State of Bangladesh, given its all-surrounding geographic neighbour, the political relationship of Bangladesh with India is also characterised by a sense of paranoid fear within Bangladesh of its all powerful neighbour. In this context the friendship between India and Israel is significant and media commentators in Bangladesh often suggest the involvement of Mossad with the Indian State in subversive activities in Bangladesh.

1.6 A Personal Story

This is an opportune time for me to now recount a personal story.

Before I do so perhaps I should explain my own historic involvement in Bangladesh. As a specialist immigration lawyer I found myself in the mid 1980s representing some Bangladeshis in Sydney.

There had been a trickle of migration of people from Bangladesh to Australia which began in the 1970s. By the early 1980s there were perhaps 200 migrants in Australia from Bangladesh, nearly all professionals. In the mid 1980s they were joined by some students pursuing tertiary studies here. By 1991 there were about 2,000 people from Bangladesh living in Australia. This number had grown to 9,077 according to the 2001 Census and my estimate is that as a consequence of recent immigration policies particularly relating to students this number will have now grown to about 13,000. The majority of Bangladeshis living in Australia live in Sydney with a smaller significant population in Melbourne, Canberra and other regional capitals.

In June 1990 I first visited Bangladesh as the guest of one of my former clients. On that visit I saw that although the vast majority of the population of Bangladesh lived in abject poverty, there was a significant middle class. Remember even 10% of the population of 140 million gives a figure comparable to the middle class in Australia. Many of these people were well educated in English to a level comparable to the Australian education system and pursuing professions which would make them eminently suited to migration.

Like other Third World countries, the Bangladesh Government actively encourages the emigration of its citizens realising that the repatriation of foreign earnings from its citizens abroad plays a significant role in the economic development of the nation. Like, for example, the Philippines, Bangladesh is now heavily reliant on such funds from its citizens living permanently overseas and also its citizens working in other countries, mostly the Middle East, as guest workers, for its economic survival.

Between 1990 and 2004 I have travelled to Bangladesh over 30 times, spending several weeks on each trip in that land. Without pomposity, I think I understand the people of Bangladesh. I have made lasting and sincere friendships. I have never sought to hide the fact I am Jewish and in early visits sought to locate the existence of a local Jewish population, without any success. No-one I met in that country or have met in Australia has been able to identify any Jews living in Bangladesh, other than expats there on work assignment. There was one exception, a Mr Cohen, who was the newsreader in the 1960s on East Pakistan television. This week I have discovered in fact that Mr Cohen's brother lives in Sydney. I have yet to meet him and share experiences.

I have always enjoyed the closest relationships with Bangladeshis, both here and in that country, within all walks of society, from Prime Ministers down. I have truly valued and been enriched by this warmth and friendship. With the exception of the inevitable health problem which occurred from time to time, my visits to Bangladesh to give advice to many thousands interested in pursuing emigration to Australia have been largely uneventful.

I have always considered myself to be a great friend of that country and with some justification have claimed that a substantial portion of Bangladeshi migrants who have come to Australia since 1990 have come either directly or indirectly with my assistance and advice. The financial benefit that has flowed to that country from this migration is of course significant.

However, during my last visit to Bangladesh in May 2004 I found myself being heavily monitored by Special Branch Police from the moment of my arrival at Dhaka airport, and throughout the period of my stay. Although questioned for about an hour after 7 days, I was unable to find out the cause for this overbearing and in fact quite frightening surveillance. Attempts to ascertain the basis for this since returning to Australia have however led to the unconfirmed suggestion that the reason for this monitoring was an apparent perception that I was in Bangladesh attempting to foster the interests of Israel, organising a Mossad spy ring there.

2. **THIS STUDY**

2.1 The Holocaust

As the world commemorates the liberation of the concentration camp in Auschwitz, it seems to me appropriate that one area that needs to be looked at is the knowledge base of people about the past. We Jews know our history, but do others? As the Holocaust survivors disappear, the horrors of the Holocaust become a matter of State record only. To many, the horrors are so unreal, that the perpetrators of myths and historical revisionists have the opportunity to peddle their lies.

At this point I make another personal comment. My partner comes from the Philippines and in discussion with many Filipinos I have also noted an ignorance of the Holocaust. This was particularly brought home to me one evening when we were watching at home a program on SBS television about the 2nd World War. My partner's niece, a 26 year old provincial university educated Filipina who had just come to Australia and was watching the program, turned to me ashen faced at the end and said "I did not know anything about that". I asked her "Have you heard of Hitler?" to which she responded "No". "Have you heard of Stalin?" "No"; "Have you heard of Churchill?" "No". She is now very embarrassed when I remind her of this discussion.

Given this context and the close friendship that I have had with Bangladeshis in Australia, I conceived that a study of the perceptions and knowledge of Bangladeshis about Jews, the Holocaust and Israel would be of some interest and perhaps be a forerunner of further similar studies which could help foster inter-faith support and understanding.

2.2 The project is developed

I developed a survey with the assistance of Professor Sol Encel (whose help I acknowledge and thank) which I then circulated to a range of recent clients and current friends within the Bangladesh community. Attached is the survey and covering letter. This was sent by me by email to 50 people and by post to a further 97 people with a reply paid envelope enclosed. In addition copies of the survey were left at my office and were distributed to approximately 20 people whom I have met there. The period of distribution was in January 2005.

I have to be honest and say that given the problem that had occurred with me in Bangladesh in May 2004 I initially had second thoughts about conducting this survey after obtaining the go-ahead from the organisers of this Conference in October because I was concerned about the adverse consequences which could flow, after I had been advised of the possible reason for the personal surveillance in early December. However, having given the commitment to make this presentation and having initiated the questionnaire and advised several people of my plans, I decided after Christmas to pursue with the project.

Originally it had been my intention to circulate the questionnaire to a large section of the Bangladesh community around Australia by forwarding it to each of the various Bangladesh

communal organisations in NSW and Victoria (there are about 20) with a request that they encourage their members to respond. However, for future security reasons, I decided not to pursue this approach and have therefore limited the distribution to persons more directly known to me. The distribution list comprised largely persons with whom I have had dealings over the last twelve months. This group does nevertheless contain in my view a representative sample of Bangladeshis living in Australia based on current immigration status here (ie permanent residents and temporary residents), religion (the community in Australia mirrors in religious composition the community in Bangladesh) and socio economic standing in Australia.

Perhaps the respondents are skewed towards men, although this is a factor of Bangladesh society where the male domination is all-pervasive (and notwithstanding the extraordinary coincidence that both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition of Bangladesh are females and that Bangladesh was indeed the first nation in the world to have this concurrence in 1991).

To my knowledge this is the first survey of its kind ever undertaken and it is my hope that the results which I now publish will provide informative data which will assist in the development of policies designed to advance communal harmony in Australia and foster a better society for us all to live in.

I should conclude by stating that I am not a professional sociologist and that any faults in the methodology are my own.

To date I have had 34 responses comprising 4 from those to whom an email had been sent, 12 from those to whom the questionnaire had been posted and 18 from those who completed the questionnaire in my office. The results of the survey are the compilation of these 34 replies.

3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

3.1 Jews

The first set of questions was designed to elicit information about what Bangladeshis knew about Jews and Judaism. The first two questions asked the respondent to explain how they would define a Jew and Judaism. 6 respondents provided no answer or indicated they did not know how to define a Jew and 17 provided no response to the second question. Those who did answer largely provided responses which indicated they had a knowledge of details of the faith, an outcome which I found somewhat surprising given the ignorance which was apparent from responses to other questions in the questionnaire. Some of the answers to these questions were “a religion like any other religion in the world”, “an ancient religion”, “followers of a peaceful religion in the world”, “God’s blessed nation”, “followers of the Prophet Moses” (5 said this), “a religion unfairly victimised by the Nazis”, “a religious faith that continues from first man and women via the great Prophet Abraham”, and “a belief of some people which should be respected by other religions and people”. One respondent commented that “Jews are very practical, methodical, shrewd and business minded and in business they are successful. They pray to one God who has no partner as per teachings of the Prophet Moses (I wonder why they are so opposed to Islam having the same ideology!)” One noted “A Jew is any person whose mother was a Jew.”

When asked if they knew any Jews 6 said “No” and 28 said “Yes”. 21 were unable to identify how many Jews there were in Sydney, Australia and the world, with those nominating figures ranging from as follows:

In Sydney from	10,000 (3)	to	1,000,000 (1)
In Australia from	40,000 (1)	to	1,000,000 (1)
In the world from	2,000,000 (1)	60	60,000,000 (1)

The actual numbers provided are listed in an annexure.

When asked to name five well known Jewish people in Australia 21 respondents indicated they knew none, and other persons nominated were:

- myself (a surprising few given that I had identified myself as a Jew in the covering letter) (8)
- Rupert Murdoch (2)
- Marcus Einfeld (1)
- Philip Ruddock (1)
- Joseph Gutnick (1)
- Justice Michael Kirby (1)
- NSW Governor Marie Bashir (1) (of Lebanese Christian background)

- Four persons personally known to the respondents, whom I assume are in fact Jewish.

The inclusion of Murdoch, Ruddock and Kirby is a surprise but perhaps reflects a belief of the respondents that Jews are those with power.

The request to nominate Jews in the world lead to 16 providing no response. Of those who did respond the majority nominated prominent Israeli politicians as follows:

- Sharon (10)
- Rabin (7)
- Golder Meir (5)
- Netan Yahu (2)
- Barak (4)
- Shimon Peres (3)
- Moishur Dayan (1)
- Begin (2)
- David Ben Gurion (1)

Other Jews identified were:

- Albert Einstein (4)
- Henry Kissinger (3)
- Senator Lieberman (1)
- Steven Spielberg (2)
- King David (1)
- Moses (1)
- Dominique Lapiere (an authoress) (1) (I do not know her faith)

The question asking if Jews have made a positive contribution to society in any of the following fields resulted in the following responses:

- “Don’t know”, “no answer” (6)
- “Yes indeed” – without identification of any particular field (1)
- Arts (4)
- Politics (11)
- Sport (4)
- Commerce and business (21)
- Law (15)
- Medicine and science (9)
- Education (7)

In my next question I sought to elicit a range of responses to how Jews were perceived.

Informants were asked to tick 1, 2 or 3 of the descriptives. Many informants ticked more than 3 and some ticked “less”. The compilation of responses therefore does not match in numbers

with the numbers of respondents. Nevertheless it provides an interesting overview of how we Jews are seen by others. Only one person failed to provide a response and one person noted: “All these bear too much value judgment and are to some extent prejudiced. I will say they are simply like other human beings”. The descriptors drew the following responses:

- Artistic (3)
- Avaricious (0)
- Charitable, benevolent (3)
- Ethical (4)
- Ethical in business (5)
- Hard working (17)
- Helpful (11)
- Honest (9)
- Intelligent (19)
- Keep to themselves (4)
- Rich (16)
- Selfish (1)
- Support human rights (7)
- Support social justice (4)

3.2 The Holocaust

My next series of questions sought to elicit information about the knowledge of the Holocaust. The responses provided something of a surprise.

Amongst Bangladeshis questioned 26 responded that they had heard of Hitler or the Nazi regime, whilst 7 said “No” and one gave no answer. To the question “Do you know what Hitler’s policies were towards Jews and if so briefly describe” 16 said “Yes”, 12 said “No”, 5 gave no answer and 1 responded “not much”. Of the 16 who said “Yes” 15 provided some usually accurate description of these policies.

To the question “Have you heard of the Holocaust and if so describe” the answer was particularly surprising, given the questionnaire was circulated at a time when there was public and media discussion about the liberation of Auschwitz. Only 17 responded “Yes”. 16 responded “No” and one provided no answer. Of those who answered “Yes” 7 gave an accurately descriptive comment.

To the question “Do you believe there should be an annual commemoration of the Holocaust” 12 said “Yes”, 10 said “No”, 4 said “Don’t know” and 8 gave no answer. One person added incisively “There is no harm in commemoration of the Holocaust if it provides relief to the sufferers. For others it should be a reminder not to repeat the same in any kind or form”. This lack of support for a commemoration from people who in fact were aware of the horror was particularly surprising, if not also contradictory.

3.3 Israel

My questions on Israel highlighted the greatest level of ignorance, perhaps unsurprising given the education system in Bangladesh but on the other hand surprising given the fact that most of the respondents have been in Australia for some time. The lack of knowledge is to my mind particularly stark given the parallel nature of the history of Bangladesh and Israel, and the fact the Middle East conflict occupies so much media time and indeed World attention, and has done so for a considerable period of time.

22 respondents advised that they were familiar with the history of Israel, 11 note they were not and one did not answer. 15 indicated that they knew when the State of Israel came into existence, 17 indicated they did not know and 2 gave no answer. Of those who then recorded the dates when Israel came into existence 5 noted correctly 1948, one noted “late 1940s”, one noted 1945 and another “after World War II” and two responded 1967.

14 answered that they knew how the State of Israel was established, 17 replied “No” to this question and 3 gave no answer or did not know.

The next question I consider to be particularly important. I asked the respondents to indicate if they thought Israel’s current government policies are aimed at achieving peace or conflict. 10 people responded that they considered Israel sought peace, 12 responded “conflict”, one responded “both”, another noted “Israel’s politics should be re-furnished”, another indicated “Israel’s politics were confusing and diplomatic” and 8 gave no reply or did not know the answer. Another responded that “Israel’s policies sought conflict and continuation of conflict”.

To the next question “Do you believe that Israel has the right to exist?” 25 said “Yes”, one said “No” (interestingly one of the Christian respondents), 7 gave no answer or did not know and one person commented “Theoretically Israel’s right is not as strong as any other country such as Timor, Bangladesh (these countries are created after Israel) where people from inside revolted against the oppressed. Israel is created disregarding the rights of the incumbents and imposed upon bringing Jews from all parts of the world. In reality the right is now accepted.”.

To the contentious question “Do you believe that Palestinian refugees should have the right to return to Israel to live permanently?” 22 responded “Yes”, 5 responded “No”, 6 gave no answer or said they did not know, one responded “It depends” and one who responded “Yes” also said “Any person proven to be the inhabitants of the land must have the rights to live there”.

To the final question whether respondents considered a two State solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians was appropriate, 25 responded “Yes”, one responded “No”, 6 gave no answer or said they did not know and one responded “One State solution was the best and I think best for Israel as they are good in trade and finance and could have by now the dominant party. Unfortunately, for short term gain and arrogance they have lost that opportunity and a two State solution is now a default solution.” One other respondent refused to answer the question noting that he needed to have more information before he could respond.

3.4 The Respondents

Finally, the statistics in relation to the respondents were as follows:

16 of the respondents were Australian permanent residents and 18 were not. One respondent came to Australia in 1977, 2 respondents came to Australia in the 1980s, 9 came in the 1990s and 20 have come since the year 2000.

26 respondents identified as Muslim, 4 as Christian, one as a Hindu and 3 indicated they had no religion. As a group, the respondents were well educated with 3 holding PHDs, 11

Masters degrees, 12 Bachelors degrees, 3 a Post-secondary diploma. 4 had only completed their Higher Secondary Certificate and one his Secondary School Certificate, the equivalent of year 10 in Australia. In addition 16 had completed Australian qualifications, 17 had not completed Australian qualifications and one gave no answer to this question. The vast majority of respondents lived in New South Wales, with 29 living in that State. 2 were from Victoria, 2 from the ACT and one from Queensland.

With regard to age, 15 were within the age brackets 20 to 29, 10 were aged between 30 to 39, 8 were aged between 40 to 49 and one was aged over 50. 31 of the respondents were male and 3 were female.

Finally, with regard to employment in Australia, nearly all respondents were in some form of employment, with only 2 indicating they were not employed and 2 providing no response, although 6 indicated they were full time students. In terms of occupations 9 were professionals, 2 were cooks, one identified as a businessman and the others were in clerical, service or general hospitality positions.

4. **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

My prime conclusion from the survey was the surprisingly high level of knowledge about the basics of the Jewish religion of most respondents, perhaps not surprising though given the religious make-up of the respondents and the fact that Islam sees itself as an extension of the Jewish religion. However, there was significant ignorance in relation to the other questions relating to Jews and in particular a surprising lack of knowledge about prominent Jews both within Australia and internationally. The perception of Jews as indicated in the response to question 1(h) was overwhelmingly positive.

There seemed a surprisingly little knowledge of the details of the Holocaust, perhaps even more surprising given the fact that the survey was conducted at a time of general media reference to the Holocaust. There was also a significant lack of knowledge about the history

of the conflict in the Middle East and the fact that so many respondents saw Israel's current government as pursuing a policy of conflict is a matter of serious concern.

I was somewhat surprised by the response to the question in relation to the right of Palestinians to return. Placed in its historical context, I would have thought that if Muslim Bangladeshis were asked whether they believed Hindus who had fled Bangladesh at the time of partition had the right to return to Bangladesh and reclaim property, the overwhelming response would have been "No". This inherently inconsistent response is a matter of interest.

Finally, the overwhelming support for a two-State solution to the conflict represents a pragmatic approach which clearly is consistent with mainstream thought amongst all those concerned with achieving a long-term solution to the Middle East conflict.

I conclude by expressing my gratitude to all those who have given of their time to participate in this Survey and trust that the findings contained in this report will be of interest to all concerned with achieving the object of communal harmony which was the genesis of the project.

DAVID BITEL

ANNEXURE**Questionnaire on Jews, the Holocaust, and Israel**

Dear friend,

In early February 2005 a conference will be held at Monash University in Melbourne about Anti-Semitism. As you may know I am Jewish, and given my long and close connection and friendship with many people from Bangladesh, in what I believe will be a world first, I have proposed to present a paper at this conference on the attitudes of people from Bangladesh to Jews, the Holocaust and Israel.

I ask you therefore to help me by taking a few minutes of your time to answer honestly the following short questionnaire. Your answers will be kept totally confidential, and you do not have to disclose your name if you do not wish to.

Your answers will be analysed and presented in a paper which will be posted on my office website.

The research will help us all know what we think of each other as people, and how we relate with each other. It is not intended to be used for any controversial purpose, and is designed solely to advance communal harmony in Australia, in the interests of multiculturalism, and to foster a better society for us all to live in.

I thank you for your time and urge you to complete the questionnaire and return it to me by post, email or fax. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Please return your responses by 25th Jan 2005. My contact details are as follows:

David L Bitel
Managing Partner
Parish Patience Immigration Lawyers
Registered Migration Agent No. 9255523
Accredited Specialist Immigration Law
Level 1, State Street Centre
338 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000
telephone: +61 2 9286 8700
fax: +61 2 9283 3323
email: dbitel@ppilaw.com.au
web: www.ppilaw.com.au

Questionnaire on Jews, the Holocaust, and Israel

1. Jews

a. How would you define a Jew ? Answer briefly in your own words. (2 lines)

b. How would you define Judaism ? Answer briefly in your own words. (2 lines)

c. Do you know any Jews ?
Yes No

d. How many Jews do you think there are in :

Sydney
Australia
The world

e. Can you name five well-known Jewish people from Australia ? (Whether living or dead, or well-known in sport, culture, politics, arts, science etc)

f. Can you name five well-known Jewish people from other countries ?

g. Do you think Jews have made a positive contribution to Australian society in any of the following fields (tick the relevant ones)

Arts
Politics
Sport
Commerce and business
The law
Medicine and science
Education

h. In your opinion, which of the following words best describes Jews ? (Tick one, two, or three)

Artistic
Avaricious
Charitable/benevolent
Ethical
Ethical in business
Hard working
Helpful

Honest
 Intelligent
 Keep to themselves
 Rich
 Selfish
 Supporters of human rights
 Supporters of social justice

2. Holocaust.

- a. Have you heard of Adolf Hitler or the Nazi regime ?
 Yes No

If you answered No, proceed to Question 1c.

- b. Do you know what Hitler's policies were towards Jews ?
 Yes No

If you answered Yes, describe them briefly in your own words. (2 lines)

- c. Have you heard of the Holocaust ?
 Yes No

If you answered Yes, describe it briefly in your own words. (2 lines)

- d. Do you agree that there should be an annual commemoration of the Holocaust ?
 Yes No

3. Israel.

- a. Are you familiar with the history of Israel ?
 Yes No

If you answered No, proceed to Question 2d.

- b. Do you know when the state of Israel came into existence ?
 Yes No

If you answered Yes, name the year when it happened.

- c. Do you know how the state of Israel was established ?
 Yes No

- d. Do you think Israel's current government policies are aimed at achieving peace or conflict ? (Tick your choice)
 Peace Conflict

e. Do you believe that Israel has a right to exist ?

Yes No

f. If your answer to Question 2e was No, what do you think should happen to the people who live there now ? Answer briefly in your own words. (2 lines)

g. Do you believe that the Palestinian refugees should have the right to return to Israel to live permanently ?

Yes No

h. Do you think there should be a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians ?

Yes No

4. Information About You

a. Are you an Australian permanent resident?

Yes No

b. When did you come to Australia

Year: _____

c. What is your religion (tick one:

Muslim

Christian

Buddhist

Hindu

Other religion: _____

No religion

d. What is the highest level of education you have?

SSC

HSC

Diploma

Bachelor

Masters Degree

PhD

e. Do you have any Australian educational qualifications?

Yes No

f. In which State do you live? _____

g. What is your age bracket?

20 to 29
30 to 39
40 to 49
over 50

h. Are you male or female?

i. What is your present employment?

j. OPTIONAL – what is your name? _____