Judea Pearl's Edited Transcript of a Keynote Speech at the AEN Convening
Jewish Federation, Los Angeles | November 16, 2026

Friends and colleagues,

I am grateful to AEN for creating this opportunity to speak directly with colleagues across campus divides, and to tell you about my recent book, *Coexistence, and Other Fighting Words*, a copy of which can be found on your seat.

I will begin with a brief description of the book—why I wrote it and why I think everyone concerned with the future of the Jewish people should read it—and then we will move to a panel discussion where Reeafa will ask me how to weaponize it in your specific campus environment.

The book contains 45 selected essays of mine written over the past 25 years, starting with the murder of my son Daniel in Karachi, Pakistan, in 2002, and ending with October 7 of 2023 and the chaotic world order that perplexes our generation today.

The questions addressed in this book are as relevant to our lives today as they were when they were written—in fact, they are constantly on our minds. We argue about them at the dinner table, we bounce them around on social media, and we see their consequences on campus. They include, for example: antisemitism, anti-Zionism, Jewish identity, the birth of Israel, terrorism, East-West relations, campus unrest, Palestinian statehood, October 7, the future of Gaza, and the future of the Jewish people.

So, *what's new?* you might ask. We know of dozens of books dealing with these issues, and hundreds of articles and organizations offering opinions and solutions to those questions. What is unique about this book?

What is unique here is a deliberate break from perplexity. We are often told that these issues are impossibly complex—formidable, nuanced, entangled, and ultimately beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals. This book breaks away from that paralysis. It argues that these issues can be simplified, unified, explained, and understood coherently if we only examine them historically, beginning with a phenomenon I call **Zionophobia**, which I define as the obsessive ideological and theological rejection of Jewish self-rule anywhere in the Middle East.

The depth, intensity, and scope of Zionophobia is a giant elephant in the living room that Western minds refuse to acknowledge—yet it accounts for many seemingly unrelated puzzles. For example:

- Why the conflict has persisted for more than a century with no resolution in sight—not even a glimpse of progress;
- Why antisemitism has intensified precisely during moments of Israeli vulnerability;
- Why university task forces on antisemitism have been totally useless over the past three decades;
- What "being Jewish" actually is, and whether it makes sense to be "proud" of it;
- What "indigenous" means, and why Israelis accept that they and the Palestinians are equally indigenous to *Eretz Yisrael*, while the Palestinians insist on sole indigenous status;

- Why most Israelis feel that Palestinian statehood is existentially dangerous on the one hand, yet unavoidable in the long run;
- Why anti-Zionism is a racist, genocidal ideology; and
- Why Holocaust education has failed so spectacularly at preventing the return of antisemitism.

Finally, for those of you who prefer stories to analysis, the book also tells a personal story:

- What it was like growing up in *Eretz Yisrael* before 1948—in Bnei Brak, of all places;
- What it felt like taking high-school classes from leading scientists of the time;
- What I learned from the tragedy of my son's murder, from a journey I took to Doha in 2005, and from many conversations I have had with Muslim communities and Jewish leaders; and finally,
- Why, despite all of this, I remain optimistic about the future of the Jewish people and eager—yes, joyfully eager—to share with you the miraculous story of Israel.

However, I know that we academics are busy, and no matter how forcefully I try to persuade you to read the book—or at least a chapter or two of it—time constraints will prevent you from doing so. So I will permit you to skip reading it altogether if you only promise me that you will read the two appendices: first, the **Timeline of Key Moments in the History of the Jewish People**, and second, the **Glossary of Key Terms**.

The Timeline covers our history from Abraham to Herzl to October 7, while the Glossary offers unambiguous definitions of difficult concepts such as *colonialism*, *Zionism*, and *Nakba*. The Timeline defines who we are, while the Glossary defines how we communicate.

Enjoy.