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Jews decry UK newspaper for appearing to justify attack on bakery founded by Israelis

Gail's, a chain now owned by Bain Capital, was the target of pro-Palestinian protests and vandalism.

By [Andrew Silow-Carroll](#) March 16, 2026



Red paint was splattered on the entrance to a north London branch of Gail's, a popular bakery chain founded by Israelis. (Via X)

A Guardian column that seemed to rationalize the targeting of a popular Israeli-founded bakery has ignited controversy in the British Jewish community.

The March 14 piece in the British daily, by sports and culture writer Jonathan Liew, came days after the newly opened north London branch of [Gail's was repeatedly vandalized](#), with its windows smashed and red paint and pro-Palestinian slogans daubed on its doors.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews denounced the vandalism, saying that “targeting a business on the basis of alleged or perceived Israeli and or Jewish connections reflects a very worrying trend.”

Liew, meanwhile, [described the bakery chain's expansion into diverse neighborhoods as a form of "aggression,"](#) implying that its presence near a Palestinian-owned cafe was inherently provocative.

Critics, including British Jewish media, communal leaders and online commentators, accused Liew of rationalizing an attack on a business they say is being targeted solely because of its founders' Israeli heritage. Gail's was founded in the 1990s as a wholesale bakery by Israeli baker Gail Mejia, who with an Israeli partner opened a storefront bakery in 2005. In 2021, the company, today with close to 200 stores, was acquired by the American investment firm Bain Capital.

"We are a British business with no specific connections to any country or government outside the UK," [a spokesperson for Gail's told the Jewish News](#). "Our focus right now is on working with the authorities and making sure our people feel safe and supported."

Although the Guardian piece acknowledges Bain's ownership, it also notes allegations that the investment firm "invests heavily in military technology, including Israeli security companies." As a result, wrote Liew, "its very presence 20 metres [65 feet] away from a small independent Palestinian cafe feels quietly symbolic, an act of heavy-handed high-street aggression." High Street is the British equivalent of "Main Street."

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators had protested the opening of the branch in the days before the vandalism.

[A spokesperson for the Israeli embassy in the U.K. told The Daily Mail](#) that Liew's article was "an astonishing exercise in bigotry disguised as moral commentary."

"Beneath its surface lies a familiar and ugly trope: the repackaging of antisemitic prejudice in fashionable political language," said Alex Grandler.

The debate, playing out in fiery messages on social media, has highlighted broader concerns about Jewish-owned businesses in Britain being cast as proxies in disputes over the Middle East. In 2025, the Community Security Trust, Britain's main antisemitism watchdog, [recorded 20 incidents involving vandalism at Jewish businesses and organizations](#).

"In the Guardian's hall-of-mirrors morality, smashing up a shop because it was founded by Jews is just a touching little political tantrum," [Jewish News editor Richard Ferrer wrote in a column](#).

In the Guardian piece, Liew seemed to sympathize with the Palestinian-owned cafe in the neighborhood, Cafe Metro, for having been the frequent victim of "pro-Israel activists" who

“regularly descend on it to slap stickers on its windows reading ‘Stop killing people’ and ‘One of these days you’ll thank us.’” At the same time, he referred to the window-smashing at Gail’s among the “small acts of petty symbolism” that grow out of Palestinian frustration with their failure to exert influence on the Israel-Palestine debate.

Hadley Freeman, a former columnist for the Jewish Chronicle who now writes a column for The Times, called out Liew for applying an apparent double standard.

“So let me get this straight,” [she wrote on X](#). “1. Petty activism against a Palestinian-owned cafe is bad (agreed!) 2. But *violent* activism against a cafe that people associate (wrongly!) with Israel is justified and understandable.

“Update your rule book accordingly!” she added.

CAMERA UK, a media watchdog group that monitors coverage of Israel, said it had contacted the Guardian, asking if Liew’s column met its “editorial standards.”

“We know the answer, but are nonetheless hoping to see how they justify Liew’s latest defense of antisemitism,” [CAMERA said in a statement](#).

A Guardian spokesperson did share a terse reply with The Daily Mail. “Complaints about Guardian journalism are considered by the internally independent readers’ editor under the Guardian’s editorial code and guidance,” the spokesperson said.

The controversy even reached across the Atlantic. “Good grief — Gail’s is just a bakery!” [Patricia Heaton, the actress and conservative political activist, wrote on X](#). Heaton said she “had no idea it had any connection to Israel or the Jewish people. But now I want to support it even more.”

Public defenses of the article have been limited, though some pro-Palestinian activists online argued that Liew was only describing the motivations of the protesters rather than endorsing vandalism.

Liew hasn’t responded to the criticism of his column, although he pinned the article to the top of his Bluesky social media account, with the message “the war at home.”