

ECWF FACT SHEET

When anti-Zionism is Antisemitism

Why is this issue important?

The inspirational principles and history underpinning Zionism have been turned into a 'trampled and disfigured' story by Israel's detractors. (Dr Einat Wilf)

It is imperative that the next generation believe both in Israel's right to exist and in the international legal right of its people to self-determination. Young people must learn to defend Israel in the context of today's political environment where historical facts are relativized and where anti-Zionism is considered distinct from Antisemitism.

What is Zionism or the Zionist Movement?

"Zionism is the nationalist movement of the Jewish people that espouses the re-establishment of, and support for, a Jewish State in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel. Modern Zionism emerged in the late 19th century in central and Eastern Europe as a national revival movement, both in reaction to newer waves of antisemitism and as a response to the Jewish Enlightenment. Soon after, most leaders of the Zionist movement associated its main goal with creating the desired state in Palestine, then an area controlled by the Ottoman Empire." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionism>

What is meant by the right of the Jewish people to self-determination?

"The right of the Jewish people to have a country in its own homeland is a universal right, which is reserved for every people –the right to stand on its own authority and to control its fate. As long as the world is divided into some 200 countries, on the basis of the principle of self-determination for peoples and nations, the Jewish people have a right to this.

The Palestinian Arabs also have a right to self-determination in part of the country between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. However, their right does not supersede the Jews' right, just as the Jews' right in the country does not supersede that of the Arabs. When the Arabs recognize that the Jewish people have an equal right to self-determination in part of its homeland in the Land of Israel, they will certainly understand that they have to give up their demand for return to all parts of the State of Israel. Then they will be able to establish their country in part of Palestine, and legislate the Palestinian right of return just as the Jews did, thanks to their vision, labor and determination."

The idea of Jews as active players in history —as masters of their fate —still grates on the consciousness of peoples and civilizations that were structured on the presumption that the Jews should have headed to the dustbin of history. For too many, the story that Jews could attain something for themselves by operating, as all peoples do, on multiple fronts —diplomatically, economically, militarily —is still so fanciful that to some, the story of Israel only makes sense if presented as a series of handouts by foreign powers with shady motivations. To the chagrin of those who want to put the Jews back "in their proper place," the State of Israel came into being 31 years after the Balfour Declaration, precisely because Zionist Jews were done entrusting their fate to others. Through their actions, from 1917 on, the Zionist Jews simply said to Britain, and the world: "Thank you very much Lord Balfour. We'll take it from here."

The Algemeiner, November 2, 2017

<http://www.wilf.org/English/2018/04/29/the-five-key-concepts-to-understanding-israel/>

When does legitimate criticism of Israel's policies or politics, often described as anti-Zionism, become antisemitism?

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) 2016** agreed on a **Working Definition of antisemitism** (not legally binding) which has been adopted by many organisations and institutions.

To guide IHRA in its work, they offer certain examples including:

“the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could include, but are not limited to:

- denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

Why has Zionism become a dirty word?

Israel is referred to as the 'Zionist entity' or 'Zionist regime' by Iran and many intellectuals throughout the Arab world, as well as by groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the PLO. The word Zionism is also used by Israel's detractors in the UN to falsely describe Israel's Zionist history as one of imperialism, colonialism and racism against the Palestinian people.

However, the word Zionism has also been manipulated by the *Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement*. BDS's description of Israel as an 'apartheid state' is the intellectual foundation of the movement to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel (BDS). (for additional information see the ECWF fact sheet on BDS)

The following content appears on the front page of the BDS website:

“Israel is occupying and **colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement**, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.”
and

“Israel maintains a regime of of **settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation** over the Palestinian people. This is only possible because of international support. Governments fail to hold Israel to account, while corporations and institutions across the world help Israel to oppress Palestinians.”

What is Apartheid?

Apartheid is classified by the U.N. as a crime against humanity. The word comes from the South African language Afrikaans, and was used there to describe that country's system of institutionalized privilege based on segregation and racial discrimination. But the crime is not limited to South Africa. In 1973, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Apartheid Convention*, which defines the term and its application beyond the South African experience:

The Apartheid Convention declares that apartheid is a crime against humanity and that *"inhuman acts resulting from the policies and practices of apartheid and similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination" are international crimes (art. 1). Article 2 defines the crime of apartheid – "which shall include similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination as practised in southern Africa" – as covering **"inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them ."***

Dugard, J: *International Convention on Suppressions and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid*, New York, 30 November 19. Retrieved from <http://untreaty.un.org/cod/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html>.

Does Israel practice apartheid?

UN jurist Richard Goldstone is a South African Jew.

To be sure, there is more de facto separation between Jewish and Arab populations than Israelis should accept. Much of it is chosen by the communities themselves. Some results from discrimination. But this is not apartheid. Apartheid consciously enshrines separation as an ideal. In Israel, equal rights are the law, the aspiration and the ideal; inequities are often successfully challenged in court.

Richard J. Goldstone, Op-ed: *"Israel and the Apartheid Slander."* New York Times, 31 October 2011..

The best source of information for explaining why Zionism is NOT racism can be found in a publication by the *Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre* called *The Apartheid Smear*:

<http://www.bicom.org.uk/analysis/18870/> It includes a chapter "Why Zionism is not racism" (pp 24-35) and Part 5 (pp 50-57) explains why the apartheid smear damages the peace process.

These sources show both sides of the argument:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/response-to-common-inaccuracy-israel-is-an-apartheid-state>

<https://www.ijvcanada.org/talking-about-apartheid-ijv-factsheet/>
(Canadian Jewish group that supports BDS)

How have the Palestinians and Arab nations manipulated the inspirational ideas underpinning the Zionist movement so that Zionism is now seen as as a racist or colonialist, imperialist endeavour?

Excerpt from an article by Dr Einat Wilf and Adi Schwartz,(Haaretz December 2, 2016)

"Anyone wanting to understand why the conflict between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian Arabs has been going on for over 100 years must first consider the following:

Throughout the 20th century, and especially beginning in mid-century, during the decline of empires, liberation of nations and birth of countries, forced population exchanges were an accepted means of drawing the new borders, and were even considered an essential stage in ensuring peace. Tens of millions of people were removed from their homes, sometimes with great cruelty, and forced to go into exile dozens and thousands of kilometers away, without getting another opportunity to go back and see what they had considered their homeland for hundreds of years. That was the case in the huge transfer between India and Pakistan in 1947, during which no fewer than 15 million people became refugees. That was the case in post-World War II Europe: Over 12 million Germans were expelled from Eastern Europe and over a million Poles left Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese people fled from China after the Communists came to power in 1949, and over a million fled from North Vietnam to South Vietnam in the early 1950s. None of these situations gave rise to a “refugee problem” that hasn’t been solved to this day. None of the millions who became refugees in the 1940s are seriously asking to return to their previous homes, and certainly they don’t receive international recognition and institutional support for such a demand. Slowly but surely, sometimes with the gnashing of teeth, the refugees were rehabilitated in the countries where they found refuge and began their lives again. The unique nature of the Palestinian refugee problem and the reason for its continuation to this day are therefore unrelated to the circumstances of its creation: Even if Arabs were expelled during the war, that expulsion wasn’t exceptional in the global context –not in its scope, and certainly not in its cruelty. The Palestinians refuse to see their departure from the land as something that happens during wars. They see it as part of a conspiracy by a population group that had no rights to the land, which forced itself on a country that didn’t belong to it. The departure of the Arabs from the country during the war, whether through expulsion or flight, has become a symbol of the injustice which, according to them, characterizes the entire Zionist project. On the contrary, the Palestinian Arabs did not leave a single Jew in the territory remaining in their hands at the end of the war in 1949. That was also the fate of many Jews who had lived in Arab countries for hundreds and thousands of years: Many of them were expelled or had to leave due to the hostile attitude of the local population and the Arab governments, and found refuge in Israel. The problem of the Palestinian refugees, its centrality in Palestinian awareness and the fact that it is so acute can be understood only in their context within the Palestinian narrative. According to the Palestinians, this was not one of the usual, if regrettable, side-effects of wars, along with the dead and wounded; that’s why it’s different and cannot be compared to the death and expulsion of Jews in that very same war. The expulsion and flight of the Palestinians is seen as part of a foreign imperialist plot, of which Zionism was the representative and in the first place was meant to expel a native people from its land. The deliberate Arab decision to continue to be refugees and not to be rehabilitated during all the decades that have passed since the end of the war was and remains a clear political statement, which means non-recognition of the outcome of the war that centered around the right of the Jewish people to self-definition, at least in part of its homeland. The Palestinian refugee problem, and particularly its continuation, is not a result of the events of the war itself, but of an Arab and Palestinian decision to convey a clear message: The war they began 69 years ago this week in response to the United Nations Partition Plan, a war whose objective was to prevent the Jewish people from realizing its right of self-definition in its homeland –that war isn’t over yet.”

In summary, when arguing with your friends about why Israel is not racist or an apartheid State, tell them that:

- Israel is a multi-ethnic democracy. Every citizen is guaranteed equal rights under the law.
- Universities and hospitals in Israel are integrated and the judiciary counters discrimination.
- Israel’s Arab citizens hold collective rights as a national minority. Arabic is an official language and there is a thriving Arabic mass media, literature and theatre scene.
- The Israeli government combats discrimination and is pursuing policies to close the economic gaps between majority and minority, open up the civil service, equalise welfare, introduce

Arabic into Jewish schools, and improve access to higher education.

- That Zionism is not a form of racism.
- In 1948 the Jews accepted the UN partition plan but a pan-Arab invasion of the infant Jewish state caused a war. The Palestinian refugee problem was *born of this war, not by design*, and certainly not by 'ethnic cleansing.'
- Being a 'Jewish state' does not make Israel an apartheid state. Israel is not a theocracy (rule by clerics) or a state exclusively for Jews, but a democracy, governed by the rule of law as drafted by an elected parliament called the Knesset. All faiths vote and all enjoy freedom of worship. The Declaration of Independence explicitly provides for the protection of minorities.
- The Palestinian Authority is not a 'Bantustan' (a partially self-governing area set aside during the period of apartheid for a particular indigenous African people) and the security barrier is not an 'Apartheid Wall'.

Taken and adapted from introductory summary in <http://www.bicom.org.uk/analysis/18870/>