

Is Anti-Zionism Antisemitism?

When discussions of antisemitism turn to Israel and Palestine, the conversation often derails. On the one hand, criticisms of Israel sometimes reflect antisemitic stereotypes. On the other hand, some accuse Jews and allies of using claims of antisemitism as a “shield” against criticism of Israel.

Three Important Considerations ...

1.

Zionism is the movement for Jewish national self-determination. “Anti-Zionism,” then, is not “criticism of Israel.” It is opposition to the existence of the state of Israel.

2.

The common assertion that “anti-Zionism is not antisemitism” assumes that preconceptions, assumptions and biases about Jewish *people* have absolutely no impact on our ideas of the Jewish *state*. This is plainly implausible.

3.

When allegations of racism (in this case, antisemitism) are raised, the appropriate response is self-reflection, not blanket denials. Worse, accusing Jews of exploiting their experience with discrimination for political advantage is wrong.

Start with These Two Steps ...

We could sidestep this unwinnable argument over whether “anti-Zionism is antisemitism” by adopting two remarkably simple approaches.

1. **Be pro-Palestinian.**

The more constructive contributions self-declared Palestinian allies make to the well-being of Palestinians, the more difficult it will be for others to accuse them of antisemitism. To be genuinely pro-Palestinian, we need to encourage compromise and coexistence – the only things that will lead to a negotiated settlement and therefore to peace and Palestinian self-determination – not violence, terrorism, intolerance and demonization of Israelis and Jews.

2. **Be pro-Israel.**

Yes, that's actually a prerequisite, even for the most diehard Palestinian activist. Compromise, in which both sides lose some and both sides win some, is the only way this ends peacefully. We cannot be pro-Palestinian *and* anti-Israel. We cannot be pro-Israel *and* anti-Palestinian. We can only be pro-Palestinian *and* pro-Israel.

The Three Ds

Natan Sharansky developed a three-part test for determining when anti-Zionism is antisemitic:

DEMONIZATION

Israel and its leaders are depicted as completely evil. Israel's actions are blown out of all sensible proportion. Israelis are equated with Nazis. Israel is seen as the sole cause for the situation in the Middle East.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

Criticism of Israel is applied selectively and unfairly. Israel is singled out when clearly immoral behaviour of other countries is ignored.

DELEGITIMIZATION

Israel's right to exist is denied alone among all peoples of the world.