

## **Is anti-Zionism anti-Semitic?**

Coverage of the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon and the backlash over Mel Gibson's recent "outburst" highlight a serious problem in the way the mainstream media uses language to frame debates. In this case, the press is unwilling to differentiate between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. You may be thinking "who cares, aren't they the same thing?" which is exactly the point of this article. It is true that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are often closely linked, however they are not mutually exclusive. While anti-Semites are generally anti-Zionist, anti-Zionists can be from any race, religion, or political stripe. Conversely, there can be anti-Semites who are pro-Zionists (e.g. someone could support the state of Israel because they don't want Jews in their own country). So, why are these non-equivalent terms used interchangeably? This is nothing less than a blatant attempt to control the form and direction of all discussion concerning Israel.

Part of the problem lies with true anti-Semites who camouflage their rhetoric as anti-Zionism. But the larger share of responsibility lies with Zionists themselves.

According to the Anti-Defamation League's website:

While anti-Zionism is not always anti-Semitic, often it is. When one country is singled out for criticism and reproach when other countries are engaged in similar or more problematic acts and are not criticized, it is reflective of a double standard and prejudicial attitudes. The line is crossed when it passes from criticism of the actions or policies of the government (which is legitimate) to questioning the very existence of the Jewish state (which is a form of bigotry and anti-Semitism.)

This chilling declaration effectively ends all discussion about the injustices committed by Zionists in the creation of the state of Israel and suppresses much of the reasonable criticism levied against them. While the legitimacy of Israel's existence may be settled in the minds of Israelis and their American Zionist supporters, clearly it is still

an issue for the Palestinian Arabs driven from their lands into an apartheid-like Jewish-controlled system. Taking this point off the discussion table by slandering those who raise it is a logical fallacy (ad hominem).

Unfortunately many reference books line up in support of this Zionist ad hominem attack. Webster's Third International Dictionary defines anti-Semitism as "hostility toward Jews as a religious or racial minority group often accompanied by social, economic, and political discrimination – compare to racism," The second definition further defines anti-Semitism as "opposition to Zionism; sympathy with the opponents of the state of Israel." It's interesting to note that this second definition was added in the 1961 edition of the dictionary amid much controversy and is still the source of considerable protest and debate. In fact, it has prompted such a hue and cry that most dictionaries choose to omit it.

Whether the ADL's justification in calling someone a bigot simply because he questions Israel's legitimacy is based on the second definition in Webster's Third Edition, or whether the dictionary took its cue from the ADL is irrelevant. It's simply a matter of the chicken or the egg; both sources say the same thing, so it must be true; anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are the same. Case closed. But wait; what about the Jews who openly oppose Israel? Are they just self-loathing, anti-Semites, or is there somehow a double standard at work here? Is this akin to African-Americans using the "N" word? In a word... no. So what exactly is the difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism?

To answer that question, it may be helpful to first understand exactly what "Zionism" is. Then we can undertake a discussion of what "anti-Zionism" is. Webster's

Third International defines Zionism as “a theory, plan, or movement for setting up a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine.” This definition isn’t exactly correct, but it serves as a starting point.

The modern Zionist movement began in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century amid virulent and violent anti-Semitism. Pogroms in Russia and growing nationalist movements in western and southern Europe caused many Jews to consider forming their own country. Finally, in 1894 the Dreyfus Affair in France galvanized Jews throughout Europe. By 1897 numerous organizations existed with the sole goal of establishing a Jewish state. At the time, the nature and form that state would take was still a matter of heated debate among Zionists. Nevertheless, they met in Basel, Switzerland at the First Zionist Congress to set goals and establish an organizational structure for their movement.

There were numerous competing concepts of what a Jewish nation should and would look like, and even where it could or should exist. Zionist groups covered the entire political spectrum; there were leftists, moderates, and conservatives. They represented a wide range of religiousness, from atheist, humanist, reformist, to orthodox. In the U.S. and Britain, Zionist organizations were even started by Christians. In spite of this broad range of support, Zionism was still a minority belief among Jews. It wasn’t until the Holocaust that a majority of Jews began to see the need for a Jewish state.

For the most part, Zionism was a secular movement dominated by two competing groups. Just as the American political landscape polarized into Democrats and Republicans, so did the Zionist movement polarize. The two main Zionist factions were the Labor Zionists represented by David Ben-Gurion which tended toward socialism, and

the Revisionist Zionists represented by Menachem Begin who tended toward nationalism. Although these factions were fundamentally ideologically different, their strategies for a Jewish state dovetailed together and made Israel possible.

Labor Zionists believed that by increasing the Jewish population in Palestine through immigration they would eventually outnumber the Muslim and Christian Arabs living there. They generally worked within the political systems of Britain and the U.S. by pressuring leaders for support of their goals, but they also encouraged and supported illegal immigration into Palestine. Labor Zionists were also willing to form a government under the authority of Britain (i.e. become part of the Commonwealth).

Revisionist Zionists however were much more pragmatic in their quest to establish an independent Jewish state. Revisionist Zionist militias like the Irgun and Stern Gang, used a systematic method of terror to weaken British resolve. They bombed hotels where British officers lived, assassinated British diplomats, and captured and executed British soldiers, in many cases the same soldiers who fought to liberate concentration camps from the Nazis. The Irgun during World War II even offered to help the Nazis defeat the British in return for allowing European Jews to immigrate to Palestine.

Eventually through persistent political pressure from Zionist groups in the U.S. and Britain, and steady terror attacks against the British military, Britain allowed its Mandate over Palestine to expire. In the subsequent free-for-all, Zionist forces managed to defeat a numerically superior force of Palestinian Arabs and their Syrian, Egyptian, and Jordanian allies.

After establishing the state of Israel, the Zionist factions splintered, formed, split, and reformed into numerous political parties, with Revisionists eventually forming the core of the current “conservative” Likud party and Laborists becoming the current “liberal” Israeli Labor Party.

Today, Zionism’s main goal is to compel or convince every nation in the world to recognize the legitimate existence of Israel as a Jewish state. Co-opting language by equating anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism creates an all-or-nothing proposition for opponents. To even state that 700,000 Palestinians were wrongfully removed from their homes to make room for 200,000 Jewish refugees from Europe becomes an act of anti-Semitism regardless of whether it is true or not.

In spite of this, anti-Zionism draws a wide range of support, not the least of which is from Jews themselves. Jewish Anti-Zionists oppose Israel for religious reasons and for moral humanist reasons. Many Orthodox Jews believe that Israel is a blasphemy and that only the Messiah can establish a Jewish state. While the Jewish Committee on the Middle East believed that the Israeli system of a minority group of Jews ruling over a permanent underclass of non-Jews is against the democratic principals of self-determination and equality. There are also anti-Zionists who feel that it is unfair that Palestinians were forced to give up their lives, their homes, and their livelihood to compensate crimes against European Jews for which they played no part.

To successfully tar as bigots people with legitimate claims against how Israel was created, enlarged, and maintained is the greatest coup of the Zionist movement and a lesson in the dangers of political correctness. There can be no hope for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East while Zionists and their cheerleaders in the press

linguistically bully their opponents into silence. If you believe in justice, then know your facts, stand up, and speak out. In the marketplace of ideas there is no monopoly on truth.