

Guide to Identifying Antisemitism in Debates about Israel

Mistaking political disagreements about Israel for antisemitism is counterproductive; it diverts the debate away from substance to whether something is or is not antisemitic. This hinders policy discussions about Israel and distracts from addressing real instances of antisemitism and bigotry.

Making your case on its merits is the most effective way to refute unfair criticism of Israel.

Be on the lookout for antisemitism. Here are some examples:

- When criticism of Israel or Zionism **uses an antisemitic trope** that has historically been directed at Jews — it's antisemitic.
- When Israel is used as a **surrogate term for Jews** — it's antisemitic.
- When criticism **depicts Israel as having hidden power or control** — it's antisemitic.
- When Israel is **criticized because of its Jewish character** — it's antisemitic.
- When Jews are **held collectively responsible** for Israel's policies or actions — it's antisemitic.
- When criticism **insinuates that Jews are more loyal to Israel** than to the country in which they live/are citizens — it's antisemitic.
- When, based on their Jewish identity, Jews are **denied the same individual or national rights as others** — including the rights to self-determination and/or to physical safety and full human, civil, and religious rights — it's antisemitic.
- **Any behavior that targets and harms someone because they are Jewish, whether through words or actions, is antisemitic.**

But don't confuse criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

- **Criticism or disagreement with Israeli government policies is not antisemitic.**
- Harsh characterizations of Israel that may be unfair are not necessarily antisemitic.
- Even Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin once warned that maintaining an occupation would lead to apartheid. He certainly wasn't an antisemite.
- **Non-violent actions that press for changes in Israeli policies are not generally antisemitic.**
- For example, boycotting goods made in the West Bank and/or Israel is not antisemitic unless it specifically singles out Israel because of its Jewish character.
- **Anti-Zionism can be antisemitic if it employs an antisemitic trope, targets and harms Jews, or specifically denies the Jewish right to self-determination.**
- **But opposition to Zionism in and of itself is not necessarily antisemitic.**
- **Devoting special attention to Israel is not generally antisemitic.** Israel attracts special attention for many reasons: e.g., because it is at the crossroads of the three major Western religions or because the U.S. is Israel's closest ally and provides \$3.8 billion annually in aid to Israel.
- Advocating for equal rights and justice for all peoples is not antisemitic.