

The Nexus Document

Understanding Antisemitism at its Nexus with Israel and Zionism

This definition of antisemitism, and the examples that follow, derive from a [White Paper](#) drafted by the Nexus Task Force, which examines the issues at the nexus of antisemitism and Israel in American politics. The definition is designed as a guide for policymakers and community leaders as they grapple with the complexities at the intersection of Israel and antisemitism.

Antisemitism consists of anti-Jewish beliefs, attitudes, actions or systemic conditions. It includes negative beliefs and feelings about Jews, hostile behavior directed against Jews (because they are Jews), and conditions that discriminate against Jews and significantly impede their ability to participate as equals in political, religious, cultural, economic, or social life.

As an embodiment of collective Jewish organization and action, Israel is a magnet for and a target of antisemitic behavior. Thus, it is important for Jews and their allies to understand what is and what is not antisemitic in relation to Israel.

What is Antisemitic?

1. All claims of antisemitism made by Jews, like all claims of discrimination and oppression in general, should be given serious attention.
2. Whether speech or conduct about Zionism and Israel is antisemitic should be based on the standards for speech or conduct that apply to antisemitic behavior in general.
3. It is antisemitic to promote myths, stereotypes or attitudes about Zionism and/or Israel that derive from and/or reinforce antisemitic accusations and tropes. These include:
 - a. Characterizing Israel as being part of a sinister world conspiracy of Jewish control of the media, economy, government or other financial, cultural or societal institutions.
 - b. Indiscriminately blaming suffering and injustices around the world on a hidden Jewish conspiracy or of being the maligning hand of Israel or Zionism.
 - c. Holding individuals or institutions, because they are Jewish and *a priori* culpable of real or imagined wrongdoing committed by Israel.
 - d. Considering Jews to be *a priori* incapable of setting aside their loyalty to the Jewish people and/or Israel.
 - e. Denigrating or denying the Jewish identity of certain Jews because they are perceived as holding the “wrong” position (whether too critical or too favorable) on Israel.



4. It is antisemitic to use symbols and images that present all Jews as collectively guilty for the actions of the State of Israel.
5. It is antisemitic to attack and/or physically harm a Jew because of her/his relationship to Israel.
6. It is antisemitic to convey intense hostility toward Jews who are connected to Israel in a way that intentionally or irresponsibly (acting with disregard to potential violent consequences) provokes antisemitic violence.
7. It is antisemitic to treat Israel in a negative manner based on a claim that Jews alone should be denied the right to define themselves as a people and/or to exercise any form of self-determination.
8. It is antisemitic to advocate a political solution that denies Jews the right to define themselves as a people, thereby denying them — because they are Jews — the right to self-determination and/or to deny them the right to physical safety and full human, civil, and religious rights.
9. It is antisemitic to treat Israel differently solely because it is a Jewish state, using standards different than those applied to other countries.

What is Not Antisemitic?

1. As a general rule, criticism of Zionism and Israel, opposition to Israel's policies, or nonviolent political action directed at the State of Israel and/or its policies should not, as such, be deemed antisemitic.
2. Using accusations of antisemitism as a tool to suppress criticism of Israel is dangerous on many levels. It distracts attention from *bona fide* antisemitism, infringes on the principle of freedom of expression, and militates against constructive dialogue and debate among people with differing opinions.
3. Even contentious, strident, or harsh criticism of Israel for its policies and actions, including those that led to the creation of Israel, is not *per se* illegitimate or antisemitic.
4. Opposition to Zionism and/or Israel does not necessarily reflect specific anti-Jewish animus nor purposefully lead to antisemitic behaviors and conditions. (For example, someone might oppose the principle of nationalism or ethnonationalist ideology. Similarly, someone's personal or national experience may have been adversely affected by the creation of the State of Israel. These motivations or attitudes toward Israel and/or Zionism do not necessarily constitute antisemitic behavior.)
5. Paying disproportionate attention to Israel and treating Israel differently than other countries is not *prima facie* proof of antisemitism. (There are numerous reasons for devoting special attention to Israel and treating Israel differently, e.g., some people care about Israel more; others may pay more attention because Israel has a special relationship with the United States and receives \$4 billion in American aid).

The Nexus Task Force is affiliated with the [Center for the Study of Hate](#) at Bard College. The White Paper was published in December 2020. The Nexus Document was published in February 2021 and updated in June 2024.