

Introduction

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Israelophobia and the West: The Hijacking of Civil Discourse on Israel and How to Rescue It, is the result of urgent and extensive consultations at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs during 2019. Our concern centered around the spike in violent anti-Semitic attacks against Jews in Europe and the United States and the simultaneous and intensifying defamation, delegitimization, and demonization of Israel – the Jewish collective. Israelophobia in Iran, the Arab states, and other Muslim-majority countries requires a separate, exhaustive study.

This volume evaluates the intensifying anti-Semitism against diaspora Jewry in Western countries and the converging rhetorical assaults on “sovereign” Jews in Israel – condemning them and their nation-state as “Nazi, apartheid, racist, genocidal, war criminal, illegal, illegitimate, colonialist, and anachronistic.” This invective has been characterized and justified as legitimate political criticism of Israel in mainstream Western discourse. It has become standard practice among faculty and “pro-Palestinian” student organizations on American university campuses, the United Nations, associated international bodies such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, as well as European institutions and parliaments. For the first time, anti-Semitic tropes cloaked as political critique of Israel have even been voiced by several members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

At the same time, there have been recent efforts to counter these delegitimizing trends. Western governments and parliaments have condemned and even outlawed the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement as anti-Semitic.¹ Broadly accepted principles and definitions of anti-Semitism have helped shape the debate over what constitutes anti-Semitic rhetoric versus what can be defined as legitimate critical discourse. The “3D” Test,² the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Anti-Semitism, and the U.S. State Department classifications of anti-Semitism have established internationally-accepted moral base lines.³

Natan Sharansky, a former Israeli minister and previous Chairman of the Jewish Agency, is the author of the 3D Test and a contributor to this book. He has pointed out that rhetoric against Israel that *delegitimizes* and *demonizes* the Jewish State, while judging it by prejudicial standards *different* from any other nation-state, constitutes anti-Semitism. Sharansky’s 3D Test has been bolstered by other global authorities on the study of anti-Semitism, such as Professors Robert Wistrich,⁴ Jerold Auerbach,⁵ and Alvin Rosenfeld.⁶ They have also identified assaults on Zionism and Israel as the new face of anti-Semitism.

However, global expert assessments and internationally accepted definitions of anti-Semitism have done little to depreciate the use of anti-Semitic rhetoric against Jews and the Jewish state by Islamist, Palestinian, right-wing extremist, leftist radical, Black nationalist,⁷ progressive, and anti-Zionist groups in the United States.⁸

The opposite is true. Anti-Semitic events against Jews and Israel reached record highs in the United States in 2019.⁹ The challenge

has been compounded by free speech protections guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. Protected speech in the United States has inspired deep confidence among these groups that any racist, anti-Semitic, even "eliminationist" speech against the Jewish state constitutes legitimate expression.¹⁰

ISRAELOPHOBIA

The ever widening gap between legally protected hate speech and reasonable civil discourse on Israel is the reason this book was written. Entitled *Israelophobia and the West*, this compendium stands as a conceptual counterpart to *Islamophobia*, or hatred of Islam, which has gained broad acceptance as a term of reference in Western human rights discourse. JCPA fellow Fiamma Nirenstein, a leading European scholar on anti-Semitism, has used the term "Israelophobia" for nearly two decades, characterizing Europe's hostility towards Israel, which it insists is mere political criticism.¹¹

Israelophobia's conceptual overlap between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism still begs a normative moral question: what is legitimate discourse and what constitutes anti-Semitic rhetoric against Israel that must be isolated and condemned in normative dialogue, whether in the diplomatic sphere or in the public square? For example, it is unanimously agreed in Western discourse that morally repugnant, racist slurs including "n***er," "spics," "chinks," "kikes," or "towel heads," while legally protected speech, have and should be universally condemned.

But what of hate speech when it comes to the Jewish collective? What constitutes morally repugnant, racist *Israelophobia*, and what, in contrast, defines civil, critical, and respectful discourse

on Israel? How can fair-minded people rescue political discussion and deliberation about Jews and the Jewish State from the contamination of delegitimization and demonization of Israel and the Jewish people?

The stakes in this dialogue have skyrocketed in recent years. Deadly anti-Semitic atrocities against Jewish communities in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, Poway, California, Halle, Germany, and Monsey, New York, during the writing of this compendium have underscored the importance of establishing guidelines for respectable discussion and debate.

The urgency of these issues and their central role in Israel, the Jewish diaspora, and in the general discourse have brought together former senior government leaders, respected diplomats, security officials, leading academics and thought leaders, and community and human rights leaders from Israel, Europe, South Africa, and the United States. The articles in this book represent the fruits of our discussions, deliberations, and critical assessments. *Israelophobia* explores motifs including:

- * The evolution of anti-Zionism into a modern incarnation of anti-Semitism.
- * The ideological roots of Israelophobia in Palestinian, pan-Arab, and Islamic discourse, as well as its influence on the Western discourse on Israel.
- * The masquerading of Israelophobia as legitimate political discourse, from Congress to university campuses by using political buzzwords that distort legal and political terminology.
- * The political ideologies of postmodernism and intersectionality and their effects on the discourse on Israel in academia and on university campuses in the West.

* The values, principles, and frameworks underpinning legitimate political critique of Israel.

The distinguished writers in this volume have addressed these themes from historical and contemporary points of view. Natan Sharansky has posited that the West has come full circle as both right- and left-wing anti-Semitism operate in parallel.

Professor Alan Dershowitz, argues that political “criticism” of Israel in most cases constitutes anti-Semitism in disguise, as such criticism nearly always singles out Israel among the nations in an unbalanced and biased way.

Brigadier General Yossi Kuperwasser, former head of IDF Intelligence Assessment, draws the connection between classic anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism and points out their threat to Israel’s national security.

Professor Asa Kasher, author of the Israel Defense Forces Code of Conduct, provides a theoretical framework to assist the reader in distinguishing between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism.

South African attorneys Luba Mayekiso and Olga Meshoe Washington, both international human rights intellectuals, expose the Israel apartheid slander and refute the false, yet mainstream analogy between former South African apartheid and democratic Israel.

Ambassador Alan Baker similarly reveals commonly accepted “buzzwords” and distortions of legal terms that have been weaponized in the global defamation campaign against Israel.

Professor Elhanan Yakira, among Israel’s most distinguished political philosophers, urges readers to avoid referring to “anti-Israelism” as anti-Semitism, due to the latter’s widely accepted historical connotations and nuances.

Former Italian parliamentarian and journalist Dr. Fiamma Nirenstein exposes the current anti-Semitism as deeply rooted in international diplomatic discourse.

Professor Shmuel Trigano assesses the intersection between postmodernism and the new anti-Semitism as expressed in anti-Zionism.

Relatedly, Professor William Kolbrener offers a critique to the postmodern denunciation of Zionism and the Jewish State.

Malcom Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, draws a straight line between violent rhetoric demonizing Jews and Israel and violent anti-Semitic attacks against Jews on the streets and campuses of American cities.

Dr. Daniel Gordis, a scholar of Israel-American affairs, exposes the misunderstandings common in American Jewish liberal circles regarding the ethos and ethics of the Israeli body politic that often result in bias and Israelophobia.

Joshua Washington, an acolyte of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, reveals the challenges that the African American community faces today, in which anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism collide with the warnings that King issued about these phenomena, more than half a century ago.

Prominent Israeli Arab Journalist, Khaled Abu Toameh, compares and contrasts the extremist anti-Israel discourse mobilized by Palestinian academics and activists in Western universities with the practical, cooperative discourse that characterizes the local relationships between Jews and Arabs in Israel and in the West Bank.

Leading Palestinian affairs expert, Pinhas Inbari, reveals the ideological root of Israelophobia in the strategy, rhetoric, and philosophy of the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah.

Messeret Woldemichael Kasbian, an Ethiopian Israeli intellectual and community leader, assesses racism as a universal problem. She differentiates between constructive criticism of Israel as opposed to the defamation of Israel.

Finally, Dan Diker, editor of this volume, together with Alan Baker, former legal advisor to Israel's Foreign Ministry, outline principles that can rescue civil debate and restore a path to a more reasonable and respectful discourse on Israel.

We hope that this book can serve as a practical and helpful guide to a more constructive dialogue on Israel for government officials, diplomats, Middle East experts, journalists, commentators, academics, and community leaders, in the universal hope that people of goodwill, moral, ethical, and intellectual integrity will reset the standard of discussion and deliberation regarding Israel as it seeks a secure, durable, and peaceful relationship with Palestinian and Arab neighbors on all borders and throughout the Middle East.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.dw.com/en/german-parliament-condemns-anti-semitic-bds-movement/a-48779516>
- 2 <https://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-sharansky-f04.htm>
- 3 <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2010/122352.htm>
- 4 https://sicsa.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/sicsa/files/wistrich_antisemitism.pdf
- 5 Jerold S. Auerbach. “Palestinian Identity Theft and the Delegitimization of Israel,” in *From Antisemitism to Anti-Zionism: the Past and Present of a Lethal Ideology*. Eunice G. Pollack, ed. (Brighton, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2017).
- 6 Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism: the Dynamics of Delegitimization*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019).
- 7 <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Black-nationalist-antisemitism-on-campus-requires-Jews-to-be-white-553160>
- 8 Bari Weiss, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*. (Crown Books, 2019), Introduction.
- 9 <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/anti-semitic-incidents-remained-at-near-historic-levels-in-2018-assaults>
- 10 JStreet Founder Jeremy Ben Ami stated that the best remedy against anti-Semitic speech is “more speech,” <https://www.timesofisrael.com/toi-debate-are-trump-bibi-securing-or-ruining-the-us-israel-relationship/>
- 11 <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israelophobia/>