

Responding to Allegations Regarding Israel



Allegation: “Israel is a Settler Colonialist Enterprise”

Ascribing the term settler colonialism to Jewish self-determination is inaccurate. Linking Israel to historical actions that the international community has renounced serves to negate Israel’s legitimacy.

- Jews, like Palestinians, are native and indigenous to the land. The Land of Israel is integral to the Jewish religion and culture. The Europeans who settled in colonies in the Middle East and North Africa were not indigenous or native to the land in any way.
- From the time of the exile the religion, language, culture, holidays, rituals, liturgy, and history of the Jews are permeated with a yearning for a return to the Land of Israel. No colonialists came to a homeland and revived the ancient tongue they had spoken there.
- There is no “motherland” to which the Jewish population in the land of Israel may otherwise return. Instead, most Jews who immigrate to Israel use the word “return” to describe the act of making their home in the Jewish state.
- Until the State of Israel was established in 1948, Jews immigrated to the Land of Israel of their own volition, not directed nor overseen by any state or military power like colonialists.

Allegation: Israel Commits Acts of Genocide

Israel is sometimes accused of committing acts of “genocide” against the Palestinians. Genocide is a legal term, and in no way do Israeli policies and actions meet this legal threshold.

- The sensationalist use of the term genocide is not only inaccurate and misleading, but it serves to demonize the State of Israel and to diminish recognized acts of genocide.
- While one may oppose and even condemn particular Israeli policies or actions with regard to Palestinians or Israel’s Arab citizens, the fact remains that in no way has Israel engaged in any action with the intent to exterminate, in whole or in part, the Palestinian people.
- It is deeply concerning that Israel is often the only country in the world accused by activist groups of contemporaneously engaging in genocide.
- Claiming as some do, that there are many “types” of genocide, and Israel is, for example, committing “cultural” genocide, is equally problematic.

Allegation: If You Fight for Racial Justice in the U.S., You Must Join the Campaign Against Israel

Some activists have presented the fight for Palestinians rights as the same as the fight for racial justice in the United States. The root of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of competing national narratives and claims to territory by two indigenous peoples, not the American experience of systemic racial inequality.

- One can be an advocate for both Jewish & Palestinian civil rights, self-determination & statehood
- This is not to diminish the realities of Palestinian hardships or calling out racism in Israel.
- We also can’t downplay the threats posed to Israelis from terrorists based in Gaza and beyond.
- Israel has a strong record on socially progressive issues.
- Conflating these two very different situations is counterproductive in calling for solutions.

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Allegation: Israel is an Apartheid State

Apartheid usually refers to the guiding policy of racial segregation in pre-1990s South Africa. The accusation of apartheid fundamentally distorts what Israel is.

- Apartheid was a racist, repressive system, by which South Africa's white minority enforced its domination over 90 percent of the country's population.
- The use of this inaccurate and highly charged label is also counterproductive to resolving issues related to injustices within Israeli society or the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Israeli laws and democratic institutions, including the independent courts and robust free press are assigned to uphold and speak out for equal treatment of all citizens, Jewish or Arab.
- Representing over 20% of Israel's population, Israeli Arab citizens serve as judges, ambassadors, legislators, journalists, professors, artists and play prominent roles in all aspects of Israeli society.
- While Israel's policies and practices can certainly be criticized, it is not factually accurate to say they are akin to a permanent and institutionalized system motivated and designed by racism.
- Justice Richard Goldstone – a former senior South African jurist and critic of Israeli policies: "those who conflate the situations in Israel and the West Bank and liken both to the old South Africa do a disservice to all who hope for justice and peace."

Allegation: Israel is Committing Ethnic Cleansing

While there is no precise definition of ethnic cleansing under international law, the charge suggests that Israel is systematically working to rid its territory of Palestinians, including Israeli Arab citizens.

- Arab Israeli citizens enjoy full rights of citizenship, with safeguards for their equal treatment.
- While Israel must do better in dealing with issues of institutionalized bias, discrimination, inequity and racism, its policies and actions in no way constitutes ethnic cleansing.
- There is no significant Israeli ideology, movement, policy, or plan to exterminate or expel the Palestinian population from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- Policies towards the Palestinians are based on security concerns and the need to defend its population in the face of terrorist threats.

Allegation: Israel's Actions Can be Compared to the Nazis

The murder of six million Jews and millions of others carried out by the Nazis and their collaborators was the largest recorded genocide in modern history. Absolutely no comparison can be made between the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews.

- There is not now, nor has there been, a significant Israeli ideology, movement, policy, or plan to exterminate the Palestinian population.
- By comparing Israel to Nazis, some seek to label Israel as a singularly, uniquely evil state on earth, playing upon old antisemitic stereotypes that treat Jews as demonic and uniquely evil.
- It is a charge that is purposefully directed at Jews in an effort to associate the victims of Nazi crimes with the Nazi perpetrators and serves to diminish the significance and uniqueness of the Holocaust.