

What Is... Anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic, Anti-Zionist?

What is anti-Semitism?

Anti-Semitism is a form of prejudice or discrimination directed toward Jews as individuals or as a group. Anti-Semitism is based on age-old stereotypes and myths that target Jews as a people, their religious practices and beliefs, or the Jewish State of Israel.

Words or actions related to Israel are anti-Semitic when they blame all Jews for the actions of the state, single out Israel in denying the country's right to exist as a Jewish state and an equal member of the global community, use anti-Jewish stereotypes or conspiracy theories (such as accusations of Jewish world domination), or traditional anti-Semitic imagery or comparisons to Nazis.

What is anti-Zionism?

Anti-Zionism is a prejudice against the Jewish movement for self-determination and the right of the Jewish people to a homeland in the State of Israel. It may be motivated by or result in anti-Semitism, or it may create a climate in which anti-Semitism becomes more acceptable.

Anti-Zionism can include threats to destroy the State of Israel (or otherwise eliminate its Jewish character), unfounded and inaccurate characterizations of Israel's power in the world, and language or actions that hold Israel to a different standard than other countries.

What is anti-Israel bias?

Anti-Israel bias is extreme and/or illegitimate criticism of Israel. It can take various forms, including false accusations directed against Israel, often with the aim of delegitimizing the country. Anti-Israel bias does not include legitimate criticism of the Israeli government, its policies, or its politicians.

Is criticism of Israel always anti-Semitic?

No. Anti-Israel activity crosses the line to anti-Semitism when:

- All Jews are held responsible for the actions of Israel.
- Israel is denied the right to exist as a Jewish state and equal member of the global community.
- Traditional anti-Semitic symbols, images or theories are used.

Israel is a country like any other, with some policies that are good and others that are not so good. Israel's press is often critical of its own government's policies and politicians. So are many Israeli citizens.

We don't have to agree with criticism of Israeli policy. But we can't say it is beyond the bounds of reasonable discourse, and it surely isn't anti-Semitism.

But sometimes criticism or condemnation of Israel is transparently a cover for anti-Semitism, such as when it uses traditional anti-Semitic imagery or stereotypes, blames all Jews for the actions of Israel, or denies or questions Israel's right to exist.

There is also a gray area between legitimate criticism and transparent anti-Semitism, where anti-Israeli expression and campaigns help create an environment that makes anti-Semitism more acceptable and more probable.

Think carefully about what you have seen or heard so you can figure out how to respond.

Is the BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) campaign against Israel anti-Semitic?

ADL believes that the founding goals of the BDS movement and many of the strategies used by BDS campaigns are anti-Semitic. While there are people who support BDS but are not anti-Semitic, the campaign is founded on a rejection of Israel's very existence as a Jewish state. It denies the Jewish people the right to self-determination – a right universally afforded to other groups. In ADL's view, this differs from legitimate criticism of Israel and is anti-Semitic.