

## Allegation: Israel Commits Acts of Genocide

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In the heightened rhetoric of the present day, 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. Rather, the sensationalist use of the term genocide in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only inaccurate and misleading, but it serves to demonize the State of Israel and to diminish recognized acts of genocide.

The term genocide was first introduced by Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1944, with the construct of “genos” meaning race or tribe and “cide” meaning killing. Lemkin coined the term in response to the Holocaust, but also in reference to earlier events, including the Armenian Genocide. The United Nations General Assembly recognized genocide as a crime under international law in 1946 and it was codified in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. The [definition of genocide under this convention](#) is:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

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.

Indeed, accusing Israel of genocide has the collateral effect diminishing real acts of genocide – such as those that occurred in the Holocaust, against Armenians, and in Rwanda.

Furthermore, it is deeply concerning that Israel is often the only country in the world accused by activist groups of contemporaneously engaging in genocide. Not only is this false as a matter of both law and fact, but it also applies a singularly demonizing double standard to Israel.

Finally, claiming as some do, that there are many “types” of genocide, and Israel is, for example, committing “cultural” genocide, is equally problematic. Regardless of how the term is applied, it is clearly heard and impacts a large audience who hear it as the legal term intended to convey the most awful of human crimes – mass murder and population expulsion – a charge that is misapplied to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.