

The Mutation of Antisemitism¹

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, April 2017²:

*... what is antisemitism? Let's be clear – not liking people because they're different isn't antisemitism. It's xenophobia. Criticizing Israel isn't antisemitism: it's part of the democratic process... Antisemitism is something much more dangerous – it means **persecuting Jews and denying them the right to exist collectively as Jews with the same rights as everyone else.***

It's a prejudice that like a virus, has survived over time by mutating.

1. *... in the Middle Ages, Jews were persecuted because of their religion.*
2. *In the 19th and 20th centuries ... because of their race.*
3. ***Today, Jews are attacked because of the existence of their nation state, Israel. Denying Israel's right to exist is the new antisemitism.***

And just as antisemitism has mutated, so has its legitimization. Each time, as the persecution descended into barbarity, the persecutors reached for the highest form of justification available.

1. *In the Middle Ages, it was religion.*
2. *In post-Enlightenment Europe it was science: the so-called scientific study of race.*
3. *Today it is human rights.*

Whenever you hear human rights invoked to deny Israel's right to exist, you are hearing the new antisemitism.

So, why has it returned? There are many reasons, but one root cause is ...scapegoating.

When bad things happen to a group, its members can ask one of two questions: ...

If it asks, "What did we do wrong?" it has begun the process of healing the harm. If instead it asks, "Who did this to us?" it has defined itself as a victim. It will then seek a scapegoat to blame for all its problems. Classically this has been the Jews, because for a thousand years they were the most conspicuous non-Christian minority in Europe and today because Israel is the most conspicuous non-Muslim country in the Middle East.

The argument is always the same. We are innocent; therefore they are guilty. Therefore if we are to be free, they – the Jews or the state of Israel – must be destroyed...

Why then should we all care about this? After all, if we're not Jewish, what has it got to do with us? The answer is that antisemitism is about the inability of a group to make space for difference. And because we are all different, the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews...

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² <http://rabbisacks.org/the-mutation-of-antisemitism/>

It matters to all of us. Which is why we must fight it together.

Criticism of Israel or Antisemitism?

Not all criticism of Israel is antisemitic, but some of it is. Extreme anti-Israel policies are often widely regarded as antisemitic, or at least provide a cover and a rationalization for antisemites to express and promote their divisive hatred. It represents an assault on the rights and security of Jewish people everywhere, including in Australia.

Famous Soviet dissident, Natan Sharansky, devised a simple “3D test”³ to distinguish antisemitism from valid political criticism of Israel. The test was distilled from the deliberations of a European conference on antisemitism in 2004, hosted by the president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, to fight the new wave of antisemitism that has engulfed Europe in recent years.

The deliberations of the conference were later published by the European Forum on Anti-Semitism as a “Working Definition of Antisemitism”⁴ The definition was later adopted in The London Declaration of 2013 and by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2016. (See below.) Australia has effectively adopted this definition.

Natan Sharansky’s “3D test”⁵ includes the following conditions

- The first "D" is the test of **demonization**. When the Jewish state is being demonized; when comparisons are made between Israelis and Nazis and between Palestinian refugee camps and Auschwitz — this is anti- Semitism, not legitimate criticism of Israel.
- The second "D" is the test of **double standards**. When criticism of Israel is applied selectively; when Israel is singled out by the United Nations for human rights abuses while the behavior of known and major abusers, such as China, Iran, Cuba, and Syria, is ignored; when Israel's Magen David Adom, alone among the world's ambulance services, is denied admission to the International Red Cross — this is antisemitism.
- The third "D" is the test of **delegitimization**: when Israel's fundamental right to exist is denied — alone among all the nations of other peoples in the world — this too is antisemitism.

In May 2013, Australia’s Prime Minister⁶, the Opposition Leader⁷, and over a hundred Australian Members of Parliament across the political spectrum, expressed their commitment

³ <http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48892657.html> and <http://forward.com/articles/4184/antisemitism-in--d/>

⁴ <https://european-forum-on-antisemitism.org/>

⁵ <http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48892657.html> and <http://forward.com/articles/4184/antisemitism-in--d/>

⁶ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/australia-pledges-to-combat-anti-semitism/>

⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/australian-lawmakers-sign-anti-semitism-declaration/>

and dedication combatting hatred and discrimination, by signing The London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism⁸.

The London Declaration states that ‘ **“We are alarmed at the resurrection of the old language of prejudice and its modern manifestations – in rhetoric and political action - against Jews, Jewish belief and practice and the State of Israel.”**

In May 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a working definition of antisemitism⁹. The Alliance has 33 member nations, including Australia, and another 9 nations in the process of becoming members.¹⁰ In addition, the committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial provided examples to “serve as illustrations” of the new definition. These include examples of the **ways in which antisemitism manifests itself regarding the State of Israel**, including:

- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign

The BDS campaign is aimed at destroying Israel, not promoting peace between Israel and its neighbours.

It is a product of the NGO Forum held in parallel to the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa^{11,12}, which was marked by repeated expressions of naked anti-semitism and condemned as such by the United States government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson.

The Forum’s final declaration described Israel as a state that was guilty of “racist crimes including war crimes, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing.” The declaration established an action plan—the “Durban Strategy”—promoting

⁸ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/39223?download=true>

⁹ <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/ihra-adopts-new-working-definition-antisemitism/>

¹⁰ <http://holocaustremembrance.com/countries-and-membership>

¹¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/australian-lawmakers-sign-anti-semitism-declaration/>

¹² <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/durban1.html>

“a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel ...the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel”

The BDS movement deliberately draws a false parallel to South African apartheid¹³. According to BDS proponents, if South Africa was worthy of a boycott and sanctions campaigns that eventually led to the downfall of that despicable system, *“Israel should be subject to the same kind of attack, leading to the same kind of result.”*

The founder of the BDS movement, Omar Barghouti, claims Palestinians have a "right to resistance by any means, including armed resistance," and denies that the Jews are a people or have a connection to the land of Israel.

Other leading figures in the movement have openly asserted the campaign's purpose of destroying Israel. As'ad Abu Khalil stated that "justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the State of Israel," while Ahmed Moor put it in ever plainer terms, asserting that "BDS does mean the end of the Jewish State."

While some proponents of BDS may be well-meaning, the campaign certainly provides cover for antisemites to disseminate their hatred.

- Former Minister Christopher Pyne has suggested that the BDS campaign has made antisemitism fashionable¹⁴ on Australian campuses.
- In WA, a supporter of the BDS campaign was jailed for 3 years under the Racial Discrimination Act, for actions he took at a BDS demonstration in South Perth.

The bottom line: the BDS campaign has as its ultimate aim the destruction of a sovereign nation and meets the internationally accepted definition of antisemitism.

Steve Lieblich

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¹³ http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/ngo_apartheid_state_campaign_deliberately_immoral_or_intellectually_lazy and http://static.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BICOM_Apartheid-Smear_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ <http://israelissueswa.blogspot.com.au/2014/09/australian-universities-hit-by.html>