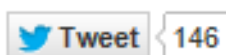




When Zionism becomes a dirty word

Anti-Zionism is not just about being critical of Israel; it's a form of anti-Semitism.

By Nora Gold / Jewish World blogger | Aug. 27, 2014 | 11:06 PM | 17



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What do people mean when they say, "I'm not anti-Semitic; I'm just anti-Zionist"? Photo by Reuters

Since the beginning of the Gaza war, many Jews in Israel and the Diaspora have been shocked by the virulent anti-Zionism - also known as anti-Israelism - that has exploded online. Extending far beyond the legitimate act of critiquing Israel's wartime decisions, many recent blogs and social media posts have been full of hatred toward Zionism, Zionists and Israel. Because of this, some Israeli and Diaspora Jews feel that what were once friendly online social spaces for them have now become unpleasant, threatening, even unsafe. One woman [blogged](#) about how, in order to cope with this, she had "unfriended" many of her Facebook "friends."

As a result of this online climate, some people have begun asking themselves questions they hadn't considered before: When did "Zionism" become a dirty word? What do people mean when they say, "I'm not anti-Semitic; I'm just anti-Zionist"? And is this loathing for Israel really just

These questions are all related. "Zionism" officially became a dirty - or at

least a more complicated - word on November 10, 1975, when the United Nations passed Resolution 3379, equating Zionism with racism. (This was a moment I'll never forget. I was working in a kibbutz henhouse, I'd just finished collecting the eggs, and I was so shocked by what I heard on the radio that I dropped all the eggs on the floor.) Resolution 3379 immediately provided enormous credibility to those wishing to delegitimize Israel. Their group has burgeoned ever since and is now prominently represented in the online world.

As for anti-Zionists claiming to be “just anti-Zionist,” but “not anti-Semitic,” this is nonsensical to anyone who knows what anti-Zionism is. Anti-Zionists are not just critical of Israel's policies or actions (like the war with Gaza or the occupation); they believe that the State of Israel does not have a right to exist. They oppose Israel's very existence and survival, yet do not oppose the existence and survival of any other country, including those with human rights records infinitely worse than Israel's. As Irwin Cotler points out, the fact that Israel - the only Jewish country in the world - is singled out for this condemnation is inherently anti-Semitic.

Anti-Zionism, in fact, is so anti-Semitic that it has been dubbed “the new anti-Semitism.” It promotes and exploits all the classic tropes, stereotypes and myths of the “old” (traditional) anti-Semitism (for instance, that Jews are plotting to take over the world, Jews murder

non-Jewish babies to use their blood for making matzot, etc.). The main difference between anti-Zionists' "new" anti-Semitism and the "old" kind is that previously it was the individual Jew who was the detestable "Other" and the symbol of all the world's evils; now it is the Jewish collectivity, the State of Israel, that is detested and that symbolizes all the evil in the world.

I am pained by the anguish and shock of progressive Jews in Israel and the Diaspora now as they struggle with what they've been encountering online since the start of this war. For some, this is their first introduction to anti-Semitism, courtesy of Facebook, Twitter, and the blogosphere. This war has provided anti-Zionists with an excuse to drop their masks and to give voice to the anti-Semitic views they have held all along.

But perhaps there is something to be gained from these recent blog and social media posts that have exposed anti-Zionists for what they really are. They have forced Israeli and Diaspora Jews - especially those of the younger generation - to learn how to differentiate between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism in disguise. Only with this knowledge will we be able to strategize a creative and effective response to our current situation.

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