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Hiding Israel's Crimes of State behind false claims of victimization

By Richard Falk

I along with many others am being victimized these days. They are being labelled anti-Semites, and in some instances, self-hating Jews as well.

This is a Zionist and Israeli effort to shut down our voices and punish our non-violent activism, with special venom directed at the [BDS Campaign \(Boycott, Divest and Sanctions\)](#) because it has become so effective in recent years.

This negative branding of the opposition is being called 'the new anti-Semitism.' The old anti-Semitism was simply hatred of Jews as expressed through negative images and attitudes, as well as discriminatory practices, persecution, and vigilante violence.

The new anti-Semitism is a criticism of Israel and Zionism, and it has been endorsed by governments friendly to Israel and pushed by a variety of prominent Jewish organizations, including some associated with Holocaust survivors and memories. Emmanuel Macron, President of France, put this pushback by apologists for Israel rather clearly, in a rather malicious form: "We will never surrender to the expressions of hatred. We will not surrender to anti-Zionism because it is the reinvention of anti-Semitism."

The false premise is equating Zionism with Jews, automatically making criticism and opposition to the Zionist state of Israel as anti-Semitism.

Already in 2008, the U.S. State Department moved more subtly in a direction similar to that of Macron with this formal statement: "Motives for criticizing Israel in the UN may stem from legitimate concerns over policy or from illegitimate prejudices. [...] However, regardless of the intent, disproportionate criticism of Israel as barbaric and unprincipled, and corresponding discriminatory measures adopted in the UN against Israel have the effect of causing audiences to associate negative attributes with Jews in general, thus fueling anti-Semitism."

The fallacy here is to view criticism as 'disproportionate' without ever considering the realities of Israel's long record of unlawfulness with regard to the Palestinian people.

To those of us who view the reality of Israeli policies and practices have little doubt that the criticisms being advanced, and the pressures being exerted, on in every sense proportionate.

A related argument often made is that Israel is being held to higher standards than other states, and this discloses an anti-Semitic sub-text. Such an argument is disingenuous. It is not a defence to suggest that the criminality of others is more severe.

Besides, the U.S. subsidizes Israel to the extent of at least \$3.8 billion a year, besides its unconditional backing of its behaviour, creating some responsibility to impose limits according to with international humanitarian law.

As well, the UN contributed to the Palestinian ordeal by failing to implement the partition solution and allowing for 70 years for millions of Palestinians to be subject to apartheid structures of domination. No other people can so justifiably blame external forces for its own sustained tragedy.

In 2014 Noam Chomsky explained the false logic of such an allegation with typical moral and intellectual clarity:

“Actually, the locus classicus, the best formulation of this, was by an ambassador to the United Nations, [Abba Eban](#), [...] He advised the American Jewish community that they had two tasks to perform. One task was to show that criticism of the policy, what he called anti-Zionism – that means actually criticisms of the policy of the state of Israel – were anti-Semitism. That’s the first task.

Second task, if the criticism was made by Jews, their task was to show that it’s neurotic self-hatred, needs psychiatric treatment. Then he gave two examples of the latter category. One was [I.F. Stone](#). The other was me.

So, we have to be treated for our psychiatric disorders, and non-Jews have to be condemned for anti-Semitism, if they’re critical of the state of Israel. That’s understandable why Israeli propaganda would take this position. I don’t particularly blame Abba Eban for doing what ambassadors are sometimes supposed to do. But we ought to understand that there is no sensible charge. No sensible charge. There’s nothing to respond to. It’s not a form of anti-Semitism. It’s simply criticism of the criminal actions of a state, period.”