

The Judaism Project: The History of Israel and Zionism



The First Zionist Congress at Basal (1897)

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Introduction

Zionism is the movement that shaped modern Jewish identity and the state of Israel. Many people increasingly have many conflicting, and in some cases hateful ideas about what Zionism is and how Jewish people view it; this page aims to give a fair and informative overview of Zionism from the perspective of the Jewish people, its history, its perception, and the nature of Anti-Zionism.

What is Zionism?

Zionism is the belief **that Jewish people have a right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland**, which is now the state of Israel. So, in other words, Zionism means to believe in Israel's right to exist as a state. The name "Zionism" comes from "Zion," a biblical name for one of the hills in Jerusalem and the Land of Israel¹. Zionism came from religious and non-religious desires for Jewish self-rule in their ancestral homeland.

It's important to understand that about 97% of British Jews feel connected to matters in Israel, and **90% of Jewish people believe Israel has a right to exist**²³. This means that being against Zionism often feels like being against Jewish identity to many Jewish people.

¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2024, June 30). Zionism. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zionism>

² Panjwani, A. (2018, September 26). Are the majority of British Jews Zionists? Full Fact. <https://fullfact.org/news/are-majority-british-jews-zionists/>

³ Campaign Against Antisemitism. (2023, November 27). Almost 70% of British Jews are hiding their identity and almost half have considered leaving Britain since 7th October, new CAA polling shows. Campaign Against Antisemitism. https://antisemitism.org/almost-70-of-british-jews-are-hiding-their-identity-and-almost-half-have-considered-leaving-britain-since-7th-october-new-caa-polling-shows/?mc_cid=469d00f637

Early Zionism



Alfred Dreyfus the falsely convicted Jewish French Artillery Officer

Zionism's roots go back to the **long-standing Jewish connection to the Land of Israel**, which has been a key part of Jewish religious and cultural identity for thousands of years. However, the modern Zionist movement started in response to the oppression faced by Jewish communities in Europe during the 19th century, with its founder Theodore Herzl heavily influenced by the antisemitic prosecution of the “nominally Jewish” French military officer Alfred Dreyfus on false evidence⁴⁵.

In Eastern Europe, especially **in the Russian Empire**, Jews faced harsh economic and social limits. They were forced to live in the "Pale of Settlement," a specific area where Jews were allowed to live, and faced unfair laws that limited their chances and freedoms.⁶

The rise of nationalism across Europe in the 19th century also helped Zionism emerge. As various ethnic groups tried to establish their nation-states, some Jewish thinkers began to consider the idea of Jewish nationhood as a solution to the ongoing problems of anti-Semitism and being pushed to the sidelines.⁷



Map of the Pale of Settlement (1835 -1917)

⁴ Library of Congress. (n.d.). Chronicling America: The Dreyfus Affair. Retrieved from <https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-dreyfus-affair>

⁵ Pluralism Project. (2023). Zionism and Israel. The Pluralism Project. <https://pluralism.org/zionism-and-israel>

⁶ American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. (n.d.). The Pale of Settlement. Jewish Virtual Library. from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement>

⁷ Britannica, “Zionism.”

As more Jewish people moved to Palestine and bought land there (mainly from absentee Ottoman landlords), some Arab leaders organised attacks on Jewish communities. For example, in 1920, **Haj Amin el-Husseini**, the original Anti-Zionist, incited riots to attack Jews in Mandatory Palestine. They **killed eight Jews and injured 200 more in just two attacks.**⁸

Al-Husseini became Jerusalem's Grand Mufti (a top religious leader) in 1921, though he lacked religious training. The British, who oversaw Mandatory Palestine then, chose him for the job as an important elite in the Arab community.⁹

Al-Husseini spread the libel that "al-Aqsa is in danger."¹⁰ That is, he **spread the false story that Jews were planning to destroy the al-Aqsa mosque** and build a Jewish temple in its place. This caused a lot of anger and violence.

Al-Husseini was behind **extreme antisemitic violence in Mandatory Palestine during the 1920s-30s.** He led deadly riots against Jews, killing 43 in 1921, 133 in 1929,¹¹



Demonstrations at the Damascus Gate, Jerusalem (8 March, 1920)

⁸ Jewish Virtual Library. (n.d.). Arab Riots of the 1920's. from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/arab-riots-of-the-1920-s>

⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Amin al-Husayni. In Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Amin-al-Husayni>

¹⁰ Black, E. (2014, October). How the Mufti of Jerusalem created the permanent problem of Palestinian violence. The Tower, from <https://www.thetower.org/article/how-the-mufti-of-jerusalem-created-the-permanent-problem-of-palestinian-violence/>

¹¹ Jewish Virtual Library, Arab Riots.

¹² and a significant revolt against the British and Jews in the 1930s. During this revolt, **over 200 civilians died and over 1300 injured**¹³, including **Arabs who disagreed with al-Husseini.**¹⁴



Israel declared independence 14 May 1948



Map of the Partition

In 1947, the UN, because of significant debate over the findings of the British Peel Commission, an inquiry into the violence against Jews in the Mandate, adopted a plan to split the land into two parts - one for Jews and one for Arabs, with Jerusalem under an international regime.¹⁵¹⁶ **The Jewish people were content with the partition. Still, the Arab countries and Palestinians rejected it out of hand.**¹⁷ This led to a large war in 1948 when Israel became an independent country and when Palestinian narratives now refer to the Arab displacement in that conflict as "Nakbah".

¹² CAMERA. (n.d.). Anti-Jewish violence in pre-state Palestine: 1929 massacres., from <https://www.camera.org/article/anti-jewish-violence-in-pre-state-palestine-1929-massacres/>

¹³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.). Hajj Amin al-Husayni: Arab nationalist and Muslim leader. Holocaust Encyclopedia. from <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hajj-amin-al-husayni-arab-nationalist-and-muslim-leader>

¹⁴ Kopel, H. (2023, 24 September). De-Nazify the Palestinian leadership. JNS. from <https://www.jns.org/israel-palestinianconflict/palestinians/23/9/24/321578/>

¹⁵ United Nations. (1947). Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine. from [https://undocs.org/A/RES/181\(II\)](https://undocs.org/A/RES/181(II))

¹⁶ Jewish Virtual Library. (n.d.). Map of the U.N. partition plan., from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/map-of-the-u-n-partition-plan>

¹⁷ Arab League Declaration on the Invasion of Palestine, 15 May, 1948.

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/1793-1948-05-15-JVL-IEM.pdf>

To this day, the claims made by the Grand Mufti have been perpetuated over the decades by every generation of the Palestinian leadership, all prescribing an intolerant and anti-Jewish nationalism that cannot tolerate a Jewish state.¹⁸

Post-Independence Israel

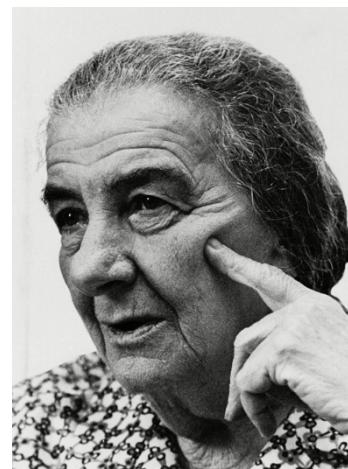
Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Israel faced ongoing hostility. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in 1964, well before Israel controlled the West Bank or Gaza, indicating that the conflict was not primarily about borders but about Israel's very existence. **The PLO's initial charter explicitly called for the destruction of Israel**, emphasising a broader Arab nationalist objective. There is still some disagreement at this time among Arab leaders over whether Palestine is to be treated as part of a larger Arab whole or a people in their own right¹⁹²⁰.



The PLO Crest: note the outline claims all the land in Israel



This period also saw the rise of **fedayeen attacks against Israeli civilians**. These guerrilla fighters launched many cross-border raids from the Egyptian-controlled All Palestine Protectorate in Gaza; between 1951 and 1955, **hundreds of Israeli civilians were killed in these attacks**, contributing to an atmosphere of tension and terror²¹.



¹⁸ Kopel, H. (2023, 24 September). De-Nazify the Palestinian leadership. JNS. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://www.jns.org/israel-palestinianconflict/palestinians/23/9/24/321578/>

¹⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2024). Palestine Liberation Organization. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palestine-Liberation-Organization>

²⁰ Jewish Virtual Library. (2024). The Original Palestine National Charter (1964). <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-original-palestine-national-charter-1964>

²¹ U.S. Department of State. (n.d.). Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Volume XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, 1955. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v15/d255#fn:1.7.4.4.12.192.12.4>

*Map of Fedayeen attacks
1951-1955*

The Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973 are further symptoms of the

Arab League's Anti-Zionist opposition to Israel. The Six-Day War was a brief but intense conflict **because**

of the posturing and mobilisation of the Egyptian President, Gamal Nasser, in the Sinai.²² Israel pre-emptively struck against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, resulting in significant territorial gains²³.

Golda Meir – Prime Minister of Israel during the Yom Kippur War

The Yom Kippur War, started by a surprise attack from Egypt and Syria on the Jewish holy day, initially succeeded in catching Israel off guard²⁴; despite Israel securing victory, the constant conflict intended by the Arab leaders was clear. However, the result of that same conflict, Israel's military success, paved the road to the Camp David Accords, with **Israel returning the occupied Sinai to secure peace with Egypt in 1979²⁵²⁶**.

²² U.S. Department of State. (n.d.). The 1967 Arab Israeli War. from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/arab-israeli-war-1967>

²³ Council on Foreign Relations. (2024). How Six Days in 1967 Shaped the Modern Middle East. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/how-six-days-1967-shaped-modern-middle-east>

²⁴ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, May 31). *Yom Kippur War*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Yom-Kippur-War>

²⁵ Yale Law School. (n.d.). The Camp David Accords. from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/campdav.asp

²⁶ U.S. Department of State. (n.d.). The Camp David Accords, 1978, from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david>

The Intifadas



December 9, 1987, a bus was hijacked en route from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and driven off a cliff, killing 14 Israelis and wounding 27.

The First Intifada began in December 1987 and lasted until the Oslo Accords in 1993. A time of Palestinian violence against Israel and Israelis, the Intifada was marked by widespread demonstrations, strikes, and civil disobedience, as well as violent confrontations between Israeli soldiers and **Palestinian youths using stones, Molotov cocktails, and eventually firearms supplied by different factions.**²⁷²⁸

During the First Intifada, antisemitic attitudes were especially common. **Palestinian propaganda regularly included antisemitic tropes and rhetoric, which were used to rally the population against Israelis.** Educational materials, media broadcasts, and public speeches often showed Jews (and crucially not necessarily Israelis) in a negative light, continuing historical antisemitic stereotypes. **The hostility contributed to**

²⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Intifada. In Encyclopaedia Britannica. from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intifada>

²⁸ ADL. (2022). The Intifada: 1987-1990. <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/intifada-1987-1990>

frequent violence, including stabbings, shootings, and bombings targeting Israeli civilians.²⁹

Arafats PLO eventually agreed in 1988 to UN Security Council resolution 242, pledging to allow Israelis to “live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force”³⁰. This



*Bill Clinton, Yitzhak Rabin, and Yasir Arafat at the signing ceremony for the Oslo Accord, on September 13, 1993.
(William J. Clinton Presidential Library)*

formed the basis for negotiating peace with Israel. Arafat saw the value in a Palestinian Government in the West Bank at the price of giving up the Anti-Zionist ideal of Israel’s destruction, ending the first Intifada by signing the initial Oslo Accords in 1993³¹³².

²⁹ Jewish Virtual Library. (n.d.). Palestinian anti-Semitism: History and overview. from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/palestinian-anti-semitism-history-and-overview>

³⁰ United Nations Security Council. (1967). Resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/242>

³¹ Knesset. (n.d.). The Oslo Accords: Declaration of Principles, from https://web.archive.org/web/20021115183950/http://knesset.gov.il/process/docs/oslo_eng.htm

³² U.S. Department of State. (n.d.). The Oslo Accords, 1993, from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo>

Unfortunately, the mantle of the PLO passed to **Hamas**, whose 1988 charter carried the PLO legacy of explicit antisemitism and avowed Israel's destruction.³³ **Their opposition to Israel was openly religious, set in the demand for an Islamic state and the killing of the Jews**³⁴.



2 December 2002 A Bus Bombing in Haifa during the second Intifada killing 16

The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada in the early 2000s, saw a return to violence, with **Palestinian suicide bombings and other terror attacks targeting Israeli civilians and killing over 1,000**. It also saw a significant increase in antisemitic incidents, both in Israel and

³³ Hamas. The Avalon Project (1988). The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

³⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Intifada

worldwide, particularly in Western countries³⁵. The second intifada petered out after building the infamous security barrier with the West Bank.

During the Second Intifada, antisemitic sentiments and actions increased in the West. **The violence in Israel encouraged antisemitic sentiment in Europe and North America.** Jewish communities experienced a sharp rise in verbal abuse, physical assaults, vandalism, and other forms of antisemitism.³⁶

Synagogues, Jewish schools, and cemeteries were frequently targeted, **causing the need for unprecedented security measures at synagogues and other Jewish facilities**, and there was a notable increase in public demonstrations featuring antisemitic slogans and imagery.³⁷

In the current world, many on social media talk about ‘globalising the intifada.’ a slogan often heard at pro-Palestinian rallies. Many will claim this slogan is not antisemitic, another word for resistance, and that it could be meant peacefully. As you’ve seen, **Intifada to Israelis in Israel is most prominently expressed as extreme antisemitic violence**, and expanding that phase globally sounds to many Jews like a call for violence against them. It is difficult to see **in the context of the thousands of Jews dead and injured in the name of Intifada how it could be interpreted any differently**³⁸.



November 2023: A pro-Palestinian group created and shared this map of businesses and organisations in New York City, many of which are Jewish-owned or led. The title of the map, “Globalize the Intifada,”

³⁵ ADL. (2016). The Second Intifada 2000. <https://notoleranceforantisemitism.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/second-intifada-2000>

³⁶ Lerman, A. (2003). Anti-Semitism revived: The impact of the intifada on Muslim immigrant groups in Western democracies. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://jcpa.org/article/anti-semitism-revived-the-impact-of-the-intifada-on-muslim-immigrant-groups-in-western-democracies/>

³⁷ EUMC. (2004). Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002-2003. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Retrieved from https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/184-as-main-report.pdf

³⁸ American Jewish Committee. (n.d.). Translate Hate. Globalize the Intifada. from <https://www.adc.org/translatehate/Globalize-the-Intifada>

The 2005 Withdrawal from Gaza

In 2005, Israel made a major move towards peace by withdrawing from the Gaza Strip. This action, known as the Disengagement Plan, was led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The plan involved removing all Israeli settlers and soldiers from Gaza. This decision was difficult for many Israelis, as it meant evacuating around 8,000 settlers who had lived there for years. Despite internal opposition, the Israeli government hoped this withdrawal



2005: IDF soldiers force an Israeli settler from his home in Gaza

would lead to a reduction in hostilities and create opportunities for peace with the Palestinians³⁹.

³⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n. d.). Israel's disengagement from Gaza. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Israels-disengagement-from-Gaza>

The Gaza withdrawal showed Israel's willingness to compromise for peace significantly. The hope was that the Palestinian Authority (PA) would take control of Gaza and create a peaceful, self-governing society, potentially leading to deeper peace negotiations⁴⁰.

However, the situation in Gaza did not improve after the withdrawal. In 2006, Hamas, a militant group, won the Palestinian legislative elections. By 2007, Hamas had violently seized control of Gaza from the PA. Hamas is considered a terrorist organisation by Israel, the United States, and the European Union. Engaging in targeted assassination of political rivals, suspected collaborators and torture⁴¹. Hamas has since used Gaza as a base for launching rocket attacks against Israeli civilians⁴².



*The Hamas Emblem:
note just like the PLO,
the outline of all the land
in Israel*

Under Hamas, Gaza has become a staging ground for terrorist activity. Thousands of rockets have been fired into Israeli territory⁴³, leading to several Israeli military operations (2008 and 2014 being full-ground conflicts) to stop these attacks and dismantle Hamas's military infrastructure. Hamas conducting their Anti-Zionist war from dense civilian areas has created substantial casualties and a dire humanitarian situation for the people of Gaza.⁴⁴

Modern Anti-Zionism

There is a broad debate on Israel's treatment of Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza; **many Jews will have strong views on settlement**

⁴⁰ Levine, N. My Jewish Learning. (2024). Understanding the Gaza Disengagement. Retrieved from <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gaza-disengagement/>

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch. (April 2009). Under cover of war: Hamas political violence in Gaza. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://www.hrw.org/reports/ipt0409web.pdf>

⁴² Council on Foreign Relations. (2024). Hamas. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

⁴³ Jewish Virtual Library. (n.d.). Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/palestinian-rocket-and-mortar-attacks-against-israel>

⁴⁴ Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. (2023). Crisis Situation Update: Humanitarian Conditions in Gaza. Retrieved from <https://hhi.harvard.edu/news/crisis-situation-update-humanitarian-conditions-gaza>

building, for example, and other policies of the Netanyahu government that have blocked peace.

However, the history of Arab violence against Jews continues to this day; **Israel and its citizens do have legitimate security concerns**—and the **October 7, 2023, pogrom, which resulted in 1,200 civilian casualties and over 240 hostages taken, was the manifestation of all of them**⁴⁵.



The bodies of civilians lie on a street, killed during a mass-infiltration by Hamas gunmen from the Gaza Strip, in Sderot, Southern Israel, Oct. 7, 2023. Photo: REUTERS/Ammar Awad

The attack was methodically planned and executed and involved coordinated infiltrations from Gaza into southern Israel.⁴⁶ Hamas terrorists used a combination of rocket barrages and ground assaults to get past Israeli defences, inflicting severe casualties and widespread terror. The violence of October 7 showed the deep hostility and violent intent of Hamas. First-hand accounts emphasised the extreme brutality of the attacks, including random mass killings and the targeting of civilian areas.

⁴⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Israel-Hamas War. In Encyclopaedia Britannica, from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Israel-Hamas-War#ref364609>

⁴⁶ Times of Israel. (2023). Israel revises death toll from Oct. 7 Hamas assault, dropping it from 1,400 to 1,200. Retrieved from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-revises-death-toll-from-oct-7-hamas-assault-dropping-it-from-1400-to-1200/>

It was one of the deadliest attacks on Israeli soil since the country's establishment in 1948.⁴⁷

As we have seen throughout Israel's history, the ideology and the violent intent behind this atrocity did not come out of nowhere. Palestinian leadership groups in both Gaza and the West Bank do not tolerate Jews⁴⁸, and **UNWRA-controlled schools in the Palestinian Territories teach young people to hate Jews and Israelis, to believe in the destruction of Jews as an aspiration**⁴⁹, which over generations has consistently prevented stability and peace.

Internally, Israel, like any country, has structural issues; access to public services and inequality are all issues faced by Arab Israelis; however, Israel is still a democracy governed and administered by law with constitutional rights and protections for its citizens, 21% of which are Arab. Israeli Arabs can and do hold high-level roles in government and civil society⁵⁰ and can and do live in an open society with their Jewish neighbours, showing **its possible to coexist in peace despite Hamas's desire to see the world galvanise in support for their murderous struggle.**

Zionism and Anti-Semitism

Many Jews in the diaspora, along with various observers, view Zionism as a legitimate expression of Jewish self-determination and national identity. They argue that Zionism is simply the right of the Jewish people to

⁴⁷ American Jewish Committee (AJC). (2023). Israel-Hamas War: What You Need To Know. Retrieved from <https://www.ajc.org/news/israel-is-under-siege-for-american-jews-this-is-not-some-distant-issue-its-personal>

⁴⁸ American Jewish Committee. (2023, 7 September). *American Jewish Committee condemns unhinged antisemitic rant by PA President Abbas*. AJC, from <https://www.ajc.org/news/american-jewish-committee-condemns-unhinged-antisemitic-rant-by-pa-president-abbas>

⁴⁹ IMPACT-se. (2022). Review of 2022 UNRWA-produced study materials in the Palestinian territories, from <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/Review-of-2022-UNRWA-Produced-School-Materials.pdf>

⁵⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. (2023, 11 May). What to know about the Arab citizens of Israel, from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-know-about-arab-citizens-israel>

establish and maintain a state in their ancestral homeland, like any other nation's right to self-rule⁵¹.

Some people argue that you can be against Zionism without being antisemitic (prejudiced against Jews)⁵². They would say that Zionism has had detrimental impacts on Palestinians, leading to significant displacement and conflict⁵³. However, **most Jewish people feel that anti-Zionism is usually just a cover for antisemitism**. It's like saying you're okay with Jewish people existing but not with them having their own country, and, given their history of persecution, sanctuary in that country.⁵⁴

Many anti-Zionist arguments are based on old stereotypes about Jewish people. Even if the people making these arguments don't realise it, they're often repeating ideas that have been used to discriminate against Jews for a long time⁵⁵. For instance, claims about Zionists seeking economic exploitation of the Middle East mirror age-old tropes about Jewish financial control.⁵⁶

Not to say that criticism of the Israeli government is at its core antisemitic; it's not. **Many Israelis and Jews across the globe criticise the policies of the Netanyahu government**⁵⁷. However, arguing over government policy is not the same as the Anti-Zionism declaration that Israel

⁵¹ Munk Debates. (2024). *Munk debate on anti-Zionism*, from <https://munkdebates.com/debates/munk-debate-on-anti-zionism>

⁵² Brookings. (2024, January 27). 75 years after Auschwitz, anti-Semitism is on the rise. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/75-years-after-auschwitz-anti-semitism-is-on-the-rise/>

⁵³ Freie Universität Berlin. (2024, July 5). Is anti-Zionism antisemitic? About the weaponization of antisemitism in current debates. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/campusleben/kalender/2024/antisemitismus-rassismus-diskriminierung/20240705-is-anti-zionism-antisemitic.html>

⁵⁴ DW. (2024, May 5). Antisemitism rising dramatically across the world — report, from <https://www.dw.com/en/antisemitism-rising-dramatically-across-the-world-report-finds/a-69000456>

⁵⁵ Anti-Defamation League. (2024). Antisemitic attitudes in America 2024, from https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-2024?utm_adcontent=webpage

⁵⁶ Journalist's Resource. (2024). Antisemitism on the rise in America: An explainer and research roundup. from <https://journalistsresource.org/home/antisemitism-on-the-rise-an-explainer-and-research-roundup/>

⁵⁷ Anti-Defamation League. (2024). What is antisemitism, anti-Zionism, anti-Israel bias? No Tolerance for Antisemitism. from <https://notoleranceforantisemitism.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/what-antisemitism-anti-zionism-anti-israel-bias>

should not exist at all, denying the Jewish people's right to self-determination and statehood.⁵⁸

When people criticise Israel as “apartheid”⁵⁹, they often ignore some important facts. Arab citizens can and do serve in the government and judiciary. **Arab citizens make up about 21% of Israel's population**, and they have equal voting rights and representation in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Additionally, Arab citizens hold significant roles in various sectors, including medicine and academia, and enjoy legal protections under state law⁶⁰.

Zionism, despite attempts to redefine it, is not a monolith; different Zionists have different ideas - religious, cultural, and political - about how Jews connect to their ancestral homeland. This variety shows there's no single "Zionist" viewpoint, and indeed, not the viewpoint assumed by many pro-Palestinian activists.

The conversation about Zionism and anti-Semitism reaches beyond just the Jewish community. As the late former **UK Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks noted in 2014**, "*The hate that starts with the Jews doesn't end there*".



Jonathan Henry Sacks (1948 – 2020) served as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013

Rabbi Sacks observed that messages of Anti-Zionism seamlessly blend old and new forms of Jew hate together, with these attitudes echoing history, such as in the Dreyfus Affair, demonstrating antisemitism is a barometer of societal health, reflecting broader capacity for intolerance and dehumanisation in our society.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Waxman, D. (2021). Arguing about antisemitism: Why we disagree about antisemitism, and what we can do about it. Ethnic and Racial Studies. Retrieved July 7, 2024, from <https://www.dovwaxman.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Arguing-about-antisemitism-why-we-disagree-about-antisemitism-and-what-we-can-do-about-it.pdf>

⁵⁹ Silverstein, A. (2024). *Does Israel practice apartheid against its Arab and other non-Jewish citizens?* The Times of Israel Blogs. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/does-israel-practice-apartheid-against-its-arab-and-other-non-jewish-citizens/>

⁶⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. (2023). *What to know about the Arab citizens of Israel*

⁶¹ Sacks, J. (2014, August 16). The hate that starts with the Jews never ends there, from <https://rabbisacks.org/archive/hate-starts-jews-never-ends-there/>



In the end, the relationship between Zionism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Semitism isn't simple. While criticising Israel isn't automatically anti-Semitic, consider how **anti-Zionist arguments can easily echo harmful prejudiced ideas**. Understanding the history and context of modern Jew-hatred, it's possible to have a sensible dialogue about Israel without devolving into such ideas. Plurality and understanding lead to more productive conversations for everyone involved.

Conclusion

Zionism has played a significant role in shaping Jewish history and the politics of the Middle East by creating a Jewish state. However, it's still a topic that sparks many debates and strong opinions. To understand Zionism, it's essential to know the history, culture, and politics behind why Jews feel a strong connection to Israel and their right to have their own country.

Many criticisms of Zionism miss key points. They often overlook Israel's genuine security concerns and the lack of interest from the Palestinian leadership in peace. Sometimes, anti-Zionism can hide antisemitic feelings, where criticism of Israel goes beyond its policies to deny the Jewish state's right to exist.

As we discuss these issues, **We should aim for honest conversations that tackle the harsh realities of the region's politics but not by scapegoating the Jewish people. By facing the real issues and understanding the actions of everyone involved**, we hope to find a better path towards understanding Judaism, Zionism and peace and stability in the Middle East.