



ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS: A GUIDE TO THE DEBATE

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Israel and the Palestinians: A Guide to the Debate

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INTRODUCTION

'Me' or 'Him' –
Thus begins the war. But it
Ends with an awkward encounter:
'Me and him.'

Mahmoud Darwish, Palestinian poet, 'State of Siege', translated
by Fady Joudah, 2002

'Who are the good guys? That's what every well-meaning European, left-wing European, intellectual European, liberal European always wants to know, first and foremost. Who are the good guys in the film and who are the bad guys? In this respect Vietnam was easy: The Vietnamese people were the victims, and the Americans were the bad guys...

'The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a Wild West movie. It is not a struggle between good and evil, rather it is a tragedy in the ancient and most precise sense of the word: a clash between right and right, a clash between one very powerful, deep, and convincing claim, and another very different but no less convincing, no less powerful, no less humane claim.'

Amos Oz, Israeli novelist, 'How to Cure a Fanatic'

Global civil society can play an important role in supporting Israeli and Palestinian democrats working for the 'two-states for two peoples' solution to the conflict. Only this solution can balance the legitimate demand of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples for sovereign independence and national self-determination.

However, too often these days, people are invited to pick sides and hate. They are told to participate vicariously in the dead-end conflict between what the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish called 'Me or Him' rather than help the two parties work out together how to become 'Me and him'.

They are urged to cheer and boo, reducing the conflict to the simple tale of right and wrong, rather than see it for what it is, a tragic clash between right and right, as

the late Israeli novelist Amos Oz put it.

People are told they must boycott Israel (and only Israel) but rarely if ever are they helped to see how they can work with Israelis and Palestinians to encourage their deep mutual recognition and so contribute to peace.

There are many sectarians on the prowl these days. They want to establish a culture of hatred against Israel, so they abuse 'the Zios' and smear Israel as the ultimate Bad Guy.

It's not surprising there have been some violent incidents and a growth in antisemitism. If the 'debate' continues like this, there will be more of both.

This well-organised extremism is stopping a constructive and serious conversation developing about Israel and Palestine. It is also preventing the emergence of a positive activism that is in solidarity with the progressive and democratic project of mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians: an activism that helps both parties reach the 'two-states for two peoples' solution.

This pamphlet aims to clear the space for that better conversation and that more useful activism. It challenges the one-sided presentation of Israel as the ultimate Bad Guy. Perfect, Israel is not; not by a long chalk. But neither is it the demonised caricature presented by the extremists: a 'Racist-Imperialist-Apartheid-Nazi-Baby Killing-Genocidal State that controls global media, global politics and global finance'.

If we can get Israel into proportion then perhaps the constructive debate that we desperately need can finally begin.

That's the modest hope of this pamphlet.

Part 1: History

What is 'Zionism'?

Zionism is the name given to the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, calling for the restoration of sovereign Jewish life and Jewish self-determination in the land of Israel after 2000 years of exile and persecution. While many Jews had been expelled from Judea by the Romans in the first and second centuries, a continuous Jewish presence existed in the Holy Land throughout the ages, focused around the holy cities of Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed and Hebron. The land of Israel – 'Zion' – has always been integral to Jewish religious, cultural and national life and has suffused the prayers and practices of Jews around the world.

Modern Zionism was a response to antisemitism – Jew-hatred. The persecution of Jews was a constant of European life in the medieval period. In the modern period, antisemitism took on new forms, such as the belief that Jews were racially inferior, or involved in a global conspiracy. Jews in Europe were subject to waves of pogroms and persecution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, culminating in the Holocaust when six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 marked the realisation of Zionism's central political goal of attaining an internationally recognised, legally secured home for the Jewish people, where Jews would be free from persecution and able to develop their national identity.

To describe Zionism as 'racist' is quite wrong. The charge is itself discriminatory because it denies to the Jewish people – and only the Jewish people – the right to national self-determination. Nationhood is a matter of self-definition, not external accreditation: the Jews see themselves as a people, with national rights, so whether others see them as only a religion is irrelevant. (Equally, anyone who says the Palestinians are not a people is quite wrong.)

Many of the Jews who moved to Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel came as refugees fleeing persecution in various parts of Europe. They did not seek to subjugate the local population, but hoped that the lives of all the residents of the area would be improved by the influx of Jewish immigrants. Jews did not enter Palestine by force, but legally purchased land and built many new communities.

Mainstream Zionists always believed that a non-Jewish minority would live alongside the Jewish people as citizens with full and equal rights. This principle was enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence in 1948, which promised Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel 'full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.'¹

Was Israel established according to international law?

Yes. The right of the Jewish people to create a national home in Palestine was first recognised by the British in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, and then enshrined in International Law by the League of Nations (the forerunner of the United Nations) in

1922, with a ringing endorsement of 'the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine' and on the grounds for 'reconstituting their national home in that country'.

In 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed Resolution 181 which approved the partition of the area into 'Independent Arab and Jewish States.' The Jewish leadership in Palestine accepted the UN plan, even though the borders for the Jewish state were drawn with no consideration for its security, were virtually indefensible, and included a lot of desert. The UN partition resolution used the expression 'Jewish state' no fewer than 27 times.

The Partition Plan, which came after decades of inter-communal violence, also gave the Arab community of Palestine a state and the opportunity for self-determination. Tragically, Palestinian leaders and the wider Arab world decided to reject the UN proposal and instead wage (and lose) a war against the infant Jewish state created by the UN. In 1949 a two-thirds majority at the United Nations accepted Israel as a full member. If the Arab world had also accepted the UN partition plan in 1947, Palestine would now be 72 years old.^[2]

I have been told that the Jews 'ethnically cleansed' the Palestinians in 1948. What happened?

A civil war immediately followed the Palestinian Arab rejection of the Partition Plan, with Palestinian Arabs forming a guerrilla army and launching attacks on Jewish communities. Atrocities took place on both sides. The atrocity committed by Jewish forces at Deir Yassin was followed a few days later by the massacre of 78 Jewish academics, doctors and nurses travelling to Mt. Scopus carried out by Arabs. A few weeks after that, a day before Israel declared independence, 127 Jewish men and women were massacred in Kfar Etzion after surrendering and laying down their arms.^[3]

After the British left in 1948, and the Jewish community declared the establishment of Israel in line with the UN partition resolution, six Arab armies immediately invaded, intending to crush the Jewish state at birth and 'drive the Jews into the sea.' The Jews of Palestine were forced to fight back. They waged a defensive war for their survival, a mere three years after the Holocaust.

Between November 1947 and the end of the war in March 1949 approximately 750,000 Palestinian Arabs fled their homes and became refugees. With war raging, the factors that caused them to flee were complex. The historian Benny Morris, in his detailed and highly praised book **The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem**, concludes that 'The Palestinian refugee problem was **born of war, not by design**, Jewish or Arab' (emphasis added). That's the crux of the matter. Morris goes on: 'It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterised the first Israeli-Arab war.'^[4] In the midst of the conflict, Israel's Declaration of Independence offered full citizenship and equal rights to all Arabs living within Israel. After the war, the 150,000 Arabs that remained in Israel were granted full citizenship. Arab members were elected to Israel's first parliament in 1949.

A future peace deal will have to define a just and viable solution for the Palestinian refugees while preserving the democratic principle of 'two-states for two peoples'.



The UN Partition Plan proposed the partitioning of the British mandate into two states, one Jewish and one Arab

Part 2: Peace

Does Israel seek peace with the Palestinians?

Yes. Israel seeks peace, but peace **with security**. Israel wants peaceful relations with the Palestinians and all its neighbours, but it won't commit national suicide. All Israel asks is that its neighbours acknowledge the right of Israel's citizens to live in peace. No more missiles, no more tunnels, no more suicide bombers.

How has Israel sought peace with the Palestinians?

Israel has sought peace with the Palestinians through the negotiated two-state solution – the agreed division of the small strip of land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea into a Palestinian state **alongside** Israel. But Israel will not accept the creation of a Palestinian state **instead** of Israel or **at war** with Israel.

Three times in recent decades Israel offered the Palestinians an independent state, in the West Bank and Gaza, with east Jerusalem as its capital and billions of dollars in international aid.

Three times the Palestinian government said no or failed to respond at all. Israel has been eager to negotiate. Israel will sign a peace agreement that will turn over disputed land as soon as the Palestinian leaders recognise Israel as a Jewish state and accept its right to exist in peace.

Everyone has so much to gain from peace.

Why is the two-state solution the best way to secure peace between Israelis and Palestinians?

Because only the two-state solution is a solution to three things.^[5]

First, the two-state solution solves the Palestinians' need for a state of their own in which to exercise their right to national self-determination as a people: it creates Palestine.

Second, the two-state solution solves the need of the Jewish people for a homeland, a place in which to express their right to national self-determination as a people: it secures Israel.

Third, the two-state solution, and only that solution, faces up to fact that both peoples seek to exercise their right to national self-determination **in the same narrow strip of land**.

Unless one people drives the other out and takes all the land for itself – unachievable without human suffering on a massive scale, but the dream of extremists on both sides, sadly – the only alternative is to negotiate a division of that land.

The Israel-Palestine debate is often treated as a Hollywood movie, with goodies and baddies. The real world is more complicated. Two legitimate claims to the same

land must be reconciled through deep mutual recognition, painful compromise, mutual security guarantees, the division of the land into two-states, and peaceful coexistence.^[6]

20 years of negotiations have not led to the two-state solution. Is it still viable?

Yes, for six reasons.

First, despite everything, Israelis and Palestinians still support the two-state solution.

Second, the international community - with its diplomatic weight, its capacity to legitimise a deal and its material resources to support the fledgling Palestinian state - still supports the two-state solution.

Third, the Arab League - a diplomatic grouping of the Arab states - supports the two-state solution. The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative - which offers recognition to Israel in return for a two-state deal along the 1967 lines - was renewed in 2013 with an amendment; the principle of 'land swaps' between Israel and Palestine was accepted. This matters **hugely** for two reasons: the Palestinians need the regional diplomatic cover to make the two-state deal; the Israelis need the regional buy-in to take the tremendous security risks involved in making the two-state deal.

Fourth, both leaders, Mahmoud Abbas and Benjamin Netanyahu, are still (reluctant) two-staters. Abbas gave a television interview in 2012 to Israel's Channel 2 which he said, 'Look, I want to visit the village I was born in, Safed, but I know I can't go back to live there.' He has declared that for him Palestine is the West Bank and Gaza 'now and forever'. Benjamin Netanyahu committed himself to the two-state solution in a speech at Bar Ilan University in 2009. He reaffirmed that commitment during President Obama's visit to Israel in 2013, saying he is ready to make a 'historic compromise' in order to 'end the conflict'. In September 2018, reacting to remarks made by President Trump supporting a two-state solution, Netanyahu said 'I am willing for the Palestinians to have the authority to rule themselves without the authority to harm us'. Although he does not think the security situation is conducive to a two-state solution **tomorrow**, he has said he remains committed to it because he has no intention of allowing Israel to drift into bi-nationalism.

Fifth, the gaps between the two parties have narrowed dramatically in the last 25 years. We have gone from a situation where it is a criminal offence for an Israeli to speak to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, to a handshake on the White House lawn between an Israeli prime minister and the PLO chairman in 1993. We have gone from the two-state solution being a fringe idea to it being the only serious policy framework, accepted as the way forward across enough of the political spectrum for it to happen - in Israel, Palestine, the Arab world, the US, and Europe.^[7]

Sixth, settlements have **not** killed the two-state solution. The expert Shaul Arieli points out that 80 per cent of the settlers live in large 'blocs' close to the Green Line. To connect those blocs up to what Michael Walzer calls 'Little Israel' will require a land swap of about 6 per cent. That is possible and the principle of land swaps is supported by the US, the EU and the now Arab League. 20 per cent of the settlers live outside these green line blocs, often dotted around Route 60, the ridge running down the

West Bank from North to South. These settlements will not be part of Israel after a deal. Between 20-30,000 households will have to be absorbed back into Israel (not the half a million people of legend).^[8]

Is that scale of absorption of settlers doable?

Yes. Israel does absorption. Israel's population has doubled from 4 to 8 million since 1980. Israel also does disengagement: from Sinai, Southern Lebanon, Gaza, and the northern West Bank. And the Israeli Defence Forces – religious soldiers included – does **forcible** disengagement. 8,000 settlers who had lived in Gaza for decades were removed within one week. Traumatic, for sure, but it happened once the political leadership declared its policy and the majority of Israelis believed it was in the national interest.

Yes, the challenges ahead remain huge. No, settlements have not killed the two-state solution – they have not even come close.

But is Israel really serious about peace?

Yes. Israel has repeatedly tried to make peace with its Arab neighbours based on the principle of 'land for peace.' Let's review the record.

The Zionist movement in Palestine accepted the 'two-states for two peoples' solution when it was first proposed by the British Peel Commission in 1937. Tragically, the Arabs rejected that solution.

The Zionist movement in Palestine accepted the United Nations Partition Plan in 1947, which would have created an Israel and a Palestine. Tragically, the Arabs rejected that solution.

In 1967, in the immediate aftermath of the **defensive** Six-Day War – sparked by Arab armies once again massing on the borders of the Jewish homeland and issuing blood-curdling threats to 'drive the Jews into the sea' – Israel hoped that the Arab states would seek peace in return for Israeli withdrawal from the territory it had captured. Again, the opportunity was missed. In September 1967, at a conference in Khartoum, the Arab League made its notorious 'three no's' declaration: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiation with Israel.

Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in return for peace and recognition in 1979. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came to Israel and was cheered when he said 'No more war, no more bloodshed'.

Israel withdrew from Palestinian population centers in Gaza and the West Bank as part of the Oslo Accords with the PLO, signed in 1993.

Israel made territorial concessions to Jordan as part of the 1994 peace treaty between the two countries.

At the Camp David peace talks in 2000, the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak tried to negotiate the creation of a Palestinian state. US President Bill Clinton supported this effort and took part in the talks. Clinton proposed two-states: a Palestinian state in 94 per cent of the West Bank plus an additional swap of land, and a sovereign capital in

East Jerusalem. Israel broadly accepted this proposal but it was rejected by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who made no counter-offer.^[9]

In 2000, Israel complied with United Nations Security Council resolutions relating to Lebanon by withdrawing all its forces from south Lebanon, where it had been confronting the Hezbollah terrorist movement.

In 2005, Israel withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip and part of the northern West Bank, uprooting 8000 Jewish settlers, many forcibly.

In 2008 Israel made its most comprehensive peace offer yet to the Palestinians at the Annapolis Peace Talks. Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, proposed:

- **A Palestinian state in 93.7 per cent of the West Bank and the whole of Gaza**
- **A compensating land swap: Israeli land – equivalent to 5.8 per cent of the West Bank – transferred to the new Palestinian state.**
- **A land corridor across Israel connecting the West Bank and Gaza Strip.**
- **The Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, as the Palestinians wanted.**
- **An international consortium of countries, including Jordan and Saudi Arabia, to work with both parties to address future arrangements for the Old City and its holy sites.**

This was a serious, comprehensive offer from the Israeli side to make peace, and for many Israelis something of a litmus test as to whether it had a partner for peace. Mahmoud Abbas, now President of the Palestinian Authority, did not respond to Israel's offer.

Once again, a Palestinian leader made no counter offer.

In 2013 the US Secretary of State John Kerry tried once more, inviting both parties to peace talks. After months of negotiations, Israel indicated its assent to a 'framework agreement' – a set of broad parameters for resolving the conflict – that John Kerry set down as a basis for continuing the talks. US President Obama met with the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in the Oval Office and pleaded with him to do likewise. Abbas, yet again, walked away, never getting back to Obama. He signed a unity agreement with Hamas instead.

The Israeli Prime Minister continues to call for the talks to restart without preconditions. Netanyahu in September 2016 said he would be willing to meet Abbas 'wherever,' and hold face-to-face negotiations. He said 'Every difficult issue will be on the table: mutual recognition, incitement, borders, refugees and yes, settlements – everything'.^[10]

Every Israeli government since 2000 has endorsed the two-state solution. A plurality of the Israeli people back the two-state solution.

Many people – including many people in Israel – feel that Israel could do even more to promote peace. Many want to see a settlement freeze now. But laying the responsibility for the failure, thus far, to reach a peace agreement solely at Israel's feet ignores the historical record.

Why are negotiations even needed? Why doesn't Israel simply get out of the West Bank and so end the occupation?

Because it would be too risky to walk out of the West Bank without negotiated security guarantees.

For many people all that matters is the occupation. That is understandable. The Palestinians have neither a vote nor a state of their own, nor the dignity that comes with having both. And in 2017 we marked the 50th anniversary of the occupation.

The Palestinian people have a right to that state. The current situation is not sustainable, and the danger of a drift into a third intifada is ever-present. The stabbing intifada was the product not just of incitement – though the level of official and unofficial antisemitic incitement is disgraceful – but also of hopelessness and frustration at occupation, statelessness and humiliation.

However, for Israel to 'just get out' of the West Bank without any security guarantees or a negotiated final status agreement would be to risk the very existence of the state of Israel. That is because the West Bank is the strategically critical high ground overlooking Israel's narrow coastal plain where most of its population and industry, and its main international airport, are situated. A risky unilateral withdrawal from the high ground of the West Bank could be followed by a Hamas, or Jihadi takeover of the West Bank and its conversion into an Iranian-supplied missile base from which missiles could rain down on Israeli cities.

These Israeli fears are not an 'excuse' as the extremists say. That is an example of 'decontextualising to demonise'. The Israeli fears are reasonable. Again, there is a record.

Israel 'just got out' of a security zone it controlled in Southern Lebanon in 2000 and there are now over 130,000 rockets aimed at Israel in the hands of the antisemitic and terrorist organisation Hezbollah, an Iranian proxy.

Israel 'just got out' of the Gaza Strip in 2005. Thousands of missiles have since been fired from the Strip onto Israeli civilians, including around 500 in 48 hours in November 2018. And those missiles are getting more powerful. In November 2012 Iranian-supplied Farj-5 missiles with 70km range fell on Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. As you read this, tunnels are being dug underneath Israel by Hamas to prepare a mass casualty terrorist attack. Fifteen such tunnels were discovered in 2018.

And the security threat is not just from Hamas. Israelis know that a few hours' drive away there has been radical Islamism and Jihadism, the slaughter of minorities, waves of desperate refugees, and even child sex slave markets. **This** is the collapsing Middle East in which Israelis are being asked to take a huge risk for peace and 'just get out' of the West Bank, hoping that its enemies will not just move in and continue the war against them.^[1]

And of course there is the radical Islamist and terror-sponsoring regime in Iran,

whose foremost leaders continue to threaten to 'wipe Israel off the map'.^[12]

So, as awful as it is that the occupation continues, Israelis have decided to seek to end the occupation by negotiations leading to a final status agreement overseen by the international community, not by a risky unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank without security guarantees or genuine mutual recognition.

Why can't Israel and Palestine just agree a 'One-State Solution'?

Some ideas, wrote George Orwell, are so absurd that you can only get the intellectuals to believe in them. 'The One State Solution' is one of those ideas.

The idea of creating a single state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, in which Israelis and Palestinians will both give up sovereignty and merge the Israeli Defence Forces and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade into one united and harmonious military force - is indeed absurd.

'One state' is anti-democratic and patronising

The two peoples **don't want** the one-state solution. In 2018 a poll by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research (TSC) found that the two-state solution was the clear favourite option for both Israeli Jews and Palestinians. One-staters simply ignore this. Left-wing Israeli writer Gadi Taub has complained about this attitude: 'The natives - we Jews and Arabs - aspire to national self-determination. But the good 'ol Brits, never tired of carrying the White Man's Burden, know that the natives are too barbaric to understand what the right form of self-determination should be for them.'

'One state' is politically impossible

Given the century-long history of conflict, forcing the two peoples into one state would be a recipe for permanent civil war. The one state solution ignores a century of bloody conflict in a well-meaning but wilfully naïve John Lennon-esque spirit, singing 'imagine there's no countries, it's easy if you try'. This can't work because, as the Guardian journalist Jonathan Freedland puts it - and he is a sharp critic of Israeli governments, past and present - the one state solution is rather like advising a couple that can no longer bear the sight of each other that the answer is for them to get married.

The one state solution also flies in the face of recent history. The nation-state, far from being an 'anachronism' as the late historian Tony Judt once claimed, is going through a purple patch. Nation-states proliferated as the Soviet Union splintered, as Yugoslavia broke up, and in Eastern Europe when the wall fell. Even Czechoslovakia went for a peaceful two-state solution - dividing amicably into the Czech Republic and Slovakia - despite not having a century of murderous conflict behind them. Cosmopolitan Europeans may think they have moved beyond the nation-state, but they should not demand everyone else does. And they really must stop demanding that the 70 year old Jewish nation-state, founded after the genocide of six million Jews, should go first.

In the real world, the 'One State Solution' means violent conquest

The core leaders of the anti-Israel boycott movement know that outside of seminar room discussions, the 'one state solution' means the **conquest** of Israel. That's for a simple reason: in the real world, and for obvious reasons, Israelis will **never again** put their fate in the hands of others. As for putting their fate in the hands of the Arab world, in the year 2019, well, the idea is ludicrous.

Some anti-Israel academics even admit that the one state solution can only be realised by violent conquest. Saree Makdisi, an English professor at UCLA, and a boycott movement leader, said, 'No privileged group in the history of the world has ever voluntarily renounced its privileges... the Israelis will never relinquish their privileges until they are compelled, preferably by non-violent means ... to accept the parameters of a single democratic state.' (That 'preferably' is a tissue-thin barrier to pogrom and conquest.)

The 'One-State Solution' also gets wrong what the conflict is actually about

Two highly developed and distinct societies, Israeli and Palestinian, each based on a powerful sense of national identity, must divide the land. When there are strong desires for national self-determination the one-state idea collapses, the world over.

To divide the land each people needs to feel confident and secure if it is to make the necessary excruciating compromises. Each people must feel itself to be understood as a permanent feature of the Middle East. One-statism goes in the opposite direction. It proposes to resolve a national question by simply denying the right to national self-determination of both peoples!

Won't the Trump Plan and annexation destroy the Two-State Solution?

They might, if either of them happened.

The Trump Plan is actually a proposal for a kind of Two-State Solution, but one that is extremely tilted towards or even beyond the most ambitious negotiating stance Israel could imagine for itself, as it proposes almost all West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley becoming part of Israel, in exchange for very large land swaps along the Egyptian border, linked to Gaza. The US Administration seems to have been trying to provoke the Palestinians into responding with a more reasonable counter-proposal, but this wasn't how they reacted.

The Trump Plan did give a green light to Netanyahu that he could propose unilaterally extending sovereignty to or annexing parts of the West Bank that the Plan appeared to earmark for Israel - perhaps settlements (but how many, and where?), perhaps the Jordan Valley. Any such move would be unhelpful to any negotiated peace deal as it would be a unilateral rather than a negotiated move, could anger the Palestinians so much that they permanently walk away from negotiations, or even cause an intifada. Depending on how much territory was annexed, it could physically erode the contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

But the much-anticipated 1 July 2020 date has come and gone, and nothing has happened. The window for Israel to move before the US Presidential election is closing.

Perhaps there will be no annexation at all. Perhaps what happens will be symbolic and only involve major settlement blocks that have always been earmarked for land-swaps.

On 13 August 2020 Israel surprised the world by signing a peace deal with the United Arab Emirates that agreed a full normalisation of relations but also agreed what Netanyahu described as a delay to applying sovereignty in the West Bank, but President Trump and the UAE described as an agreement to drop the concept.

If anything does happen, those of us who support a Two-State Solution need to react in ways that don't talk down the possibility of our desired outcome. It was an idea that came about during a period when Israel was occupying the totality of the West Bank and Gaza, so presenting it as unachievable if Israel changes the status of parts of the West Bank is unduly pessimistic. The biggest threat to achieving Two States for Two Peoples is its supporters losing faith that it is achievable.

In July 2020 Shaul Arieli, the leading expert in the feasibility of the two-state solution, and a critic of Benjamin Netanyahu, showed that the two-state solution is still completely possible and pointed out that the current 'low feasibility of a two-state solution stems from the lack of political feasibility'. Its supporters, he suggested, should instead 'propose moves that would effect change', because politics can be changed thorough the steady work of human agency. They should not take easy refuge in the dangerous fantasy of a so-called 'one-state solution' that neither people wants. ^[13]

Part 3: Gaza

Why does Israel not just negotiate peace deal with Hamas, so there are no more conflicts? After all, you must negotiate peace with your enemies not with your friends.

Diplomacy is preferable to destruction. And all Israelis hope Hamas will reform. And Israel maintains a back channel to Hamas through Egypt to discuss cease fires when conflict breaks out. But right now, a full peace deal is out of reach because Hamas is a radical Islamist terror organisation that thinks the destruction of Israel is a sacred duty. ^[14]

What you say about negotiations is true in most circumstances. But how do you negotiate with people who are committed, in principle, to your destruction - and teach that hatred to their children every day?

Hamas wants **no** state of Israel. Their original Charter directs its followers to kill all Jews who are to blame for all the wars and revolutions, past and present. Their revised 2017 version omits the mention of Jews but still calls for Jihad on Zionists. The 2017 Charter rejects recognition of Israel, calling it the "Zionist enemy" and said a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders would be transitional as a step towards "liberation of all of Palestine" but will not rest until they have all of Israel.

What the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank should have is the opportunity for a two-state solution - a negotiated peace where Palestinians and Israelis agree to live next to each other in two separate states, with mutual peace and security.

If Hamas recognised Israel's right to exist, negotiations could be opened. But Hamas's then foreign minister Mahmoud al-Zahar has said: 'Israel is a vile entity that

has been planted on our soil, and has no historical, religious or cultural legitimacy. We cannot normalise our relations with this entity ... [We say] no to recognising Israel, regardless of the price we have to pay [for our refusal].'

We should not blame the people of Gaza for feelings of grief, anger and desperation. We should blame the Hamas leadership who sow the seeds of hate and tell innocent civilians to live as human shields while hiding in tunnels paid for by the international community. Why not build schools rather than tunnels?

We tend to treat pathological movements with no negotiable grievance as if they are rational political movements with grievances that can be negotiated. But not every terrorist group is the IRA in the 1990s, seeking to lay down its arms and negotiate a Good Friday Peace Agreement.

Paul Berman, author of **Terror and Liberalism**, warns about the 'rationalist naïveté' of many progressives in the West - we imagine that, deep down, **everyone** thinks just like us. But not everyone does, and our failure of imagination can make it impossible for us to grasp the nature of many modern extremist religious-political movements, especially radical Islamist movements like Hamas.

As Berman says, our rationalist naïveté stops us seeing that sometimes people 'behave in irrational ways or have succumbed to the allure of a cult of death'. When the Israelis turned over Gaza to the Palestinians they turned over nearly 3,000 greenhouses and a thriving flower industry that would have earned Palestinians tens of millions of dollars in exports. What was the Palestinian government's response? The destruction of the 3,000 greenhouses and the impoverishment of its people.^[15]

But aren't the Hamas missiles a defensive reaction to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip?

No, they are not. It's actually the other way round. The Israelis (and Egyptians) imposed restrictions on what can enter the Gaza Strip as a defensive response to the Hamas missiles being fired on Israeli civilians.

Egypt has the exact same policy towards Hamas as Israel does: to stop the illegal tunnels and the illegal weapons.

The mistaken belief that the Israeli blockade came first misrepresents that blockade as a motiveless and cruel Israeli action. And it misrepresents the firing of Hamas missiles on Israeli civilians as heroic and understandable acts of resistance to a cruel and motiveless blockade.

The fallacy also leads people to think that if only Israel 'lifted the blockade' then peace would break out.

This fallacy about the missiles being a response to the blockade rather than vice versa spreads because of what people don't know.

People do not know that when Israel left Gaza in 2005, the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said: 'We desire a life living side-by-side, in understanding and peace. Our goal [in disengaging] is that the Palestinians will be able to live in dignity and freedom in an independent state, and, together with us, enjoy good neighbourly relations.'

People are never told that the reply from the Hamas bomb-making chief

Mohammed Deif was instant. On the website of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades he declared: 'I thank Allah the exalted for his support in the Jihad of our people. I ask for your assistance to our jihad... We shall not rest until our entire holy land is liberated ... To the Zionists we promise that tomorrow all of Palestine will become hell for you.'

They do not know that in spite of the Hamas threats, Israel signed an Agreement on Movement and Access with the Palestinian Authority after leaving Gaza. This gave the Palestinians control over their own borders for the first time in history, allowed for imports and exports, and even raised the prospect of the construction of a seaport and discussions on an airport. But unfortunately, Hamas does not respect deals made between the PA and Israel.

They do not know that Hamas launched a coup against other Palestinians in 2007, took over the Strip, drove out its Palestinian political rival Fatah, threw Palestinians who opposed them from rooftops, and declared that, as the new rulers of Gaza, that they would now use the Strip as a base to **destroy Israel**.

They do not know that as a direct result, not only Israel but **also Egypt** put restrictions on the borders with Gaza to stop Hamas terrorism. Israel instituted a legal maritime blockade around Gaza to keep missiles and other weapons out of the hands of Hamas, while letting food and other humanitarian aid in.

They do not know that a UN inquiry (the 2011 Palmer Report) concluded that Israel's maritime blockade was legal **given the threat it faced**.

They do not know that in March 2014, Israel intercepted an Iranian ship, one of several intercepted by Israel, with a cargo of weapons for Hamas in Gaza, including advanced M-302 surface-to-surface missiles, showing again why the naval blockade is necessary.^[16]

What you say about Hamas might be true but the children of Gaza are not being killed by Hamas. They are being killed by Israeli air strikes.

Israel didn't want any of the recent conflicts. War is never good for anyone.

Israel supported every cease fire proposal in 2014 – including those proposed by Egypt and the Arab League – but Hamas refused to stop firing rockets on Israelis civilians.

Hamas's rockets are more potent now. Israelis no longer face the short-range and crude Qassam rockets fired by Hamas into Sderot in Israel in 2005. They face sophisticated Iranian-supplied Fajr-5, R-160 and M-302 missiles capable of reaching Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In 2014 a Hamas missile reached Zichron Ya'akov, **100 miles** from Gaza.

90 per cent of Israel is now within range of missiles from Gaza. Israel has no choice but to try and reduce the threat to its citizens by restoring deterrence against Hamas missiles.

Israel faces an excruciating dilemma: **how** to restore deterrence, **how** to use force against the terrorists of Gaza to stop missiles landing on the civilians of Israel, without that force endangering the **civilians** of Gaza.

Israel has developed three responses to this dilemma. Three ways to try as best it can in a complex combat situation to avoid innocent civilians being caught up in the crossfire. None are fool proof.

First, **intelligence**. Each target is selected following long-term intelligence efforts

indicating a direct link to terrorist infrastructure (rocket launchers, command and control, etc).

Second, **warnings**. Israel uses a variety of methods, each constantly refined, to avoid strikes causing civilian casualties. These methods include: leaflet drops, texting, phone calls to buildings, the use of pin point precision rockets and the use of the 'knock on the roof' tactic - where Israel deploys a 'bomb' which only makes a loud noise in order to warn civilians to leave the targeted area. Missions are aborted or altered, when they may cause civilian deaths, sometimes at huge cost to Israeli security.

Third, **self-limitation**. Israel has deliberately limited its use of the range of awesome weaponry it has available.

The result was noted by former British Army Colonel Richard Kemp. A United Nations study of the 2008-9 conflict between Israel and Hamas showed that 'the ratio of civilian to combatant deaths in Gaza was by far the lowest in any asymmetric conflict in the history of warfare.' Kemp said that 'there has been an average three-to-one ratio of civilian to combatant deaths in such conflicts worldwide. Three civilians for every combatant killed. That is the estimated ratio in Afghanistan: three-to-one. In Iraq, and in Kosovo, it was worse: the ratio is believed to be four-to-one. Anecdotal evidence suggests the ratios were very much higher in Chechnya and Serbia. In Gaza, it was less than one-to-one.'

In the 2012 Gaza conflict, 1,600 Israeli strikes against long-range missiles and Hamas military infrastructure caused 60-70 Palestinian civilian deaths.

Each victim matters. Each is a tragedy. But again, the **ratio of combatant to non-combatant deaths** was without precedent in modern warfare. Again, in 2014, Israel estimates that around half the Gazan fatalities caused by the conflict were combatants. In the November 2018 flare-up between Hamas and Israel, 160 Israeli air strikes (in response to 450 missile attacks) caused the relatively low total of seven deaths because Israel warned residents to leave targeted buildings.

So why, despite all these Israeli efforts, do civilians still die?

First, because of what the military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously called 'the fog of war' - intelligence is always incomplete, sometimes mistaken, while soldiers and planners are not just subject to human limit like anyone else but have to act in a fevered and terrifying environment.

Second, because of the destructive power of modern munitions, which means that their sustained use within urban settings in which combatants and non-combatants are co-mingled, will always - despite every effort - produce civilian casualties.

Third, the fact that Hamas deliberately **engineers** the co-mingling of combatants and non-combatants. Hamas deliberately locates missiles in populated areas, inside housing complexes, mosques, hospitals and schools. Hamas have even encouraged Gazans not to heed IDF warnings but to go up onto the roofs to prevent an air strike. Meanwhile Hamas commanders spent the 2014 conflict hiding in a bunker underneath Shifa hospital in Gaza.

The UN and the world community condemns all this. Why does Hamas continue to

put Palestinian children in danger?^[17]

But surely Israel's actions in Gaza have been disproportionate?

In international law and in 'just war' theory, **proportionality is not the same thing as symmetry**. Princeton Professor Michael Walzer, author of the seminal study *Just and Unjust Wars*, puts it like this:

Proportionality doesn't mean 'tit for tat,' as in the family feud. The Hatfields kill three McCoys, so the McCoys must kill three Hatfields. More than three, and they are breaking the rules of the feud, where proportionality means symmetry. The use of the term is different with regard to war, because war isn't an act of retribution; it isn't a backward-looking activity, and the law of even-Steven doesn't apply. Like it or not, war is always purposive in character; it has a goal, an end-in-view.

Israel's stated goal was simple, necessary and rightful: to protect the citizens of Israel by stopping the missile attacks. The question Israel faced was: what level of force is necessary **to stop these missile**? During the last conflict Israel kept pausing, proposing, and accepting cease-fires. **Hamas broke each one**. It is against that fact, as well as the dangerous combination of the Hamas missile threat and the Hamas ideology of genocidal hatred towards Jews (and what that terrible combination may yet inflict upon over a million citizens of Israel in the line of rocket fire if deterrence is not restored) that the 'proportionality' of the Israeli efforts to restore deterrence must be judged.^[18]

Why does Israel need to respond at all? People say that Hamas do not have missiles, they only have fireworks.

This is simply wrong. Hamas have missiles not fireworks, and that is why Israel has no choice but to respond.

Yes, back in 2001, Qassam rockets fell on Sderot and nearby villages, a mere 1.5 kilometers from Gaza. But then came Qassam missile with a maximum range of 3 to 4 kilometers. Soon upgraded, their range was 12 to 15 kilometers by 2005. Before long, the Israeli city of Ashkelon, 20 kilometers north of Gaza, with a population of 120,000, was a target. By 2006, Katyusha missiles made in Gaza were being fired 12 miles into Israel. More powerful Grad-type missiles were smuggled into Gaza from 2008 and were hitting the town of Netivot, 20 kilometers east of Gaza, and soon after that, Kiryat Gat and Beer Sheva, about twice as far away.

And then the Iranians began supplying Hamas with Fajr-5 missiles, smuggled through Sudan and Egypt, and they were capable of hitting Tel Aviv and the Jerusalem outskirts. By 2014, Hamas was firing Syrian-made M-302s and hitting Zichron Yaakov, around 160 kilometers, or about 100 miles, from Gaza.

The idea that Israel can simply ignore these missiles is simply not serious. By

2009, 15 Israeli civilians had been killed by missile fire and Fred Abrahams, the senior emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch, was denouncing Hamas as guilty of war crimes, as more and more of southern Israel came under fire.

By 2009, Amnesty International was reporting that 1 million Israelis now lived in fear of rockets as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired on 'homes, businesses, schools, other public buildings, and vehicles in and around towns and villages in southern Israel'. Had Israel not invested heavily in air raid shelters and the Iron Dome anti-missile system, Israeli casualties would have been significantly higher.

Year	Number of Missile Attacks
2019	1,403
2018	1,000
2017	35
2016	15
2015	21
2014	4897
2013	44
2012	2771
2011	680
2010	365
2009	858
2008	3557
2007	2433
2006	1777
2005	1255

As Barack Obama said in July 2008 when he visited Sderot, an Israeli town on the Gaza border, 'If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing.'

In October, 2018, a missile from Gaza struck and destroyed a building in Beer Sheva, 40 kilometers from the strip. A woman and three children narrowly escaped after bomb sirens went off in the city. A month later, a Palestinian working in Israel was killed in a missile attack that hit an apartment building in Ashkelon.

Can't Israel rely on its 'Iron Dome' system to knock the Hamas missiles out of the sky?

Unfortunately not.

For one thing, the success rate of Iron Dome, Israel's missile defense system, is not 100 per cent. That matters hugely because nearly 20,000 missiles and mortars have targeted Israel since 2001.

Some rockets get through and they kill Israelis (and Palestinians). Aharon Smadga, Itzik Amsalem, and Mira Sharf (who was reportedly pregnant) were victims of a direct hit on their house in the Israeli town of Kiryat Malachi in 2012. Abu Asaba, a Palestinian from Hebron working in Ashkelon, Israel, was killed by a missile strike in November 2018.

For another thing, you have to understand the impact of the missiles that **don't** get through. The sirens, the terror, the rushing to the bomb shelter - all have a profoundly traumatic impact on Israeli children.^[19]

The city of Sderot in southern Israel, less than 2 kilometers from the Gaza Strip, first came under Palestinian missile fire in 2001. Hamas would time the missiles to hit the school run. Between April 2001 and December 2008, more than 1,000 alarms were sounded in or near Sderot. By then, according to NATAL, the Israel Trauma Center for Victims of Terror and War, between 75 per cent and 94 per cent of Sderot children ages 4 to 18 were exhibiting symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

By 2008, 120 of Sderot's children were in long-term mental health therapy. 30 per cent of Sderot's one- to six-year-olds needed long-term psychological treatment and 60 per cent of infants refused to sleep alone. And - this is the crux of the matter - as the reach of the Hamas missiles has increased so has the number of Israeli children going through what the children of Sderot have gone through and are still going through.

No government can tolerate that.

This is a very different picture of Hamas than I get from the media.

Hamas has a long record of shutting down news bureaus, arresting reporters and cameramen, confiscating equipment and beating up journalists. That record has already been documented by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

In the 2014 conflict the Foreign Press Association (FPA) issued an astonishing protest about the 'blatant, incessant, forceful and unorthodox' intimidation of journalists in the Gaza Strip by Hamas. 'In several cases,' the FPA complained, 'foreign reporters working in Gaza have been harassed, threatened or questioned over stories'. The FPA said this amounted to 'denying readers and viewers an objective picture from the ground,' adding 'we are also aware that Hamas is trying to put in place a 'vetting' procedure that would, in effect, allow for the blacklisting of specific journalists. Such a procedure is vehemently opposed by the FPA.'^[20]

But the Israelis have all the power. Palestinians have no choices so can't be held responsible for their actions. Surely it's all down to the Israelis to sort this out?

Few ideas have done more damage to the prospects of building a realistic, genuine and enduring peace than this one.

It's time to stop infantilising the Palestinian government and Hamas.^[21]

It is a myth that the Palestinian leaders are helpless, dominated by circumstance and driven by emotion, lacking all political choice, and below the age of responsibility. It is a myth that the Israelis are masters of all circumstances, rational and calculating, the root cause of everything, and responsible for everything.

In reality this is an **Orientalist** view of the Palestinians, except that this time the Oriental Other is not disdained but **affirmed as a noble savage**. It's a bit racist, to be honest - the racism of low expectations.

For example, the former Liberal Democrat MP David Ward tweeted after the Jerusalem synagogue murders of 2014 - when Palestinian terrorists hacked rabbis at prayer to death as well as killing a Druze police officer - that the killers had been 'driven to madness', which not only removed the agency of Palestinians but also their sanity.

This infantilisation of the Palestinians completely distorts our understanding of the three things: the history of the conflict, Israel's security needs, and the reasons for the failure, thus far at least, of the peace process.

Getting History Wrong

Infantilising the Palestinians distorts our understanding of the responsibility for the key turning points of the conflict such as the war of 1948, the 1967 war, the collapse of the Camp David peace talks in 2000, and what happened in Gaza after Israel left in 2005. The Palestinians are cast in each case as a **people beyond the reach of judgement**. Israel, and only Israel, is held to be to blame.

Getting Security Wrong

The infantilisation of the Palestinians distorts our understanding of the threats to Israel's security. These threats are often simply **discounted** by western activists, as if they don't exist, as if they are **made up**, while the security measures taken by Israel to defend itself against these threats are framed as motiveless and cruel acts.

For example, the barrier initially planned and constructed in 2002 to keep out Palestinian suicide bombers who were killing Jews **and** Arabs is completely twisted into an 'Israeli Apartheid Wall' built to segregate Jews **from** Arabs.

Getting the Peace Process Wrong

Infantilising the Palestinians also warps our understanding of the reasons for the failure of the peace process thus far, because it excludes from consideration Palestinian rejectionism, terrorism, authoritarianism, Islamism, corruption, culture of incitement, demonisation and antisemitism.

This infantilisation of the Palestinians does untold damage.

The Palestinians are allowed to take maximalist positions that make a final status agreement impossible. For example, Palestinian refusal to recognise the Jewish people's right to self determination. For example, the Palestinians insist that not only the refugees of 1948-9, but also their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren 'return' to Israel, ensuring that Israel will become yet another Arab state - yet no one points out that these demands are an obstacle to the **only** viable peace: two-states for **two peoples**.

The Palestinians are allowed to reject one Israeli offer of statehood after another

- Camp David, Annapolis - safe in the knowledge that people in the West will blame all-powerful Israel for the absence of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian leaders are allowed to feed their population a diet of hate and incitement and receive unconditional aid from the international community.

As for Hamas, they can break every ceasefire in the summer of 2014 - even the ones they declared themselves! - they can locate missiles in hospitals, they can have their HQ in the basement of Shifa hospital, but few journalists will even mention any of this let alone criticise them for it.

Because they have been infantilised, Hamas can fire 875 missiles **at** Gazans - i.e. the missiles that didn't even make it out of the Strip in 2014 but fell short - knowing that no one will point that out.

Because they have been infantilised, 600,000 tons of cement can go to build tunnels instead of a vibrant, prosperous Gaza, and yet the aid keeps coming.

Part 4: The Apartheid Smear

Some people say that Israel is an 'Apartheid state'. Is that true?

No. 'Apartheid' is the Dutch-Afrikaans term for separation, used to describe the racial segregation and discrimination enforced violently by white minority governments on non-whites in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Benjamin Pogrund, former anti-apartheid activist, deputy editor of the **Rand Daily Mail**, and a friend of Nelson Mandela said this: 'Applying the word "apartheid" to Israelis is both factually wrong and politically naïve.'

We should listen to Pogrund. The 'apartheid' smear is factually wrong, politically polarising and it damages both the debate and, more importantly, the peace process. It should be dropped.^[22]

Is there 'apartheid' for the 20 per cent of Israelis who are not Jewish?

No. Israel is a thriving multi-ethnic democracy in which the Arab minority is guaranteed equal rights under the Basic Laws. All faiths vote and all enjoy freedom of worship. There are no legal restrictions on movement, employment, or sexual or marital relations. Universities and hospitals are integrated and discrimination is illegal.

Israel's Arab citizens hold collective rights as a national minority. Israel is the only place in the Middle East where **all** minorities are protected. Its parliament has the widest and most far-reaching representation of different voices.

There is a thriving Arabic mass media, literature and theatre scene. An Israeli Arab sits on the Supreme Court. 20 per cent of the students at the elite Technion University are Arabs. Israeli Arab infant mortality rates are better than those of the USA.

Although they are rightly very critical of a range of discriminations and inequalities, in 2014 77 per cent of the Arab citizens of Israel said that they would prefer to live under Israeli rule rather than Palestinian.^[23]

Yes, Israel's Arab citizens suffer from a number of disadvantages but to use the term 'apartheid' to describe those disadvantages is ridiculous. There have been 18 Arab MKs (MPs) in the current 120-member Knesset including some of the government's harshest critics. The 'Joint List' - an alliance of four Arab-dominated parties - is the third largest party in the Knesset. Arabs have served in the Cabinet (e.g. Raleb Majadele), in the civil service (7.8 per cent of civil servants in Israel are Arab)^[24], and on the Supreme Court (Justice Salim Joubran). It was an Israeli Arab judge, George Karra, who sentenced former President of Israel, Moshe Katsav, to jail for seven years on a rape conviction.^[25]

The infant mortality rate in Israel in 2016 was 3.5 deaths to 1000 live births - 2.2 for Jews and 6.1 for Arabs. That's unequal, yes, but the infant mortality rate for the Arab minority in Israel is similar to the rate for the **majority** in the United States and EU. It is far better than the infant mortality rates in the surrounding Arab world

Israeli governments have been pursuing policies to close the remaining economic gaps between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority by opening up the civil service, equalising welfare, introducing Arabic into Jewish schools, and improving access to higher education.

Writing in 2012 at the radical +972 website, Ron Gerlitz and Batya Kallus, the co-executive directors of Sikkuy, an Arab-Jewish organisation working to advance equality, argued that as a result of a government drive from above and pressure from below by Arab civil society, 'over the last ten years, the government has begun to initiate significant and innovative processes to close the gaps of inequality, advance economic development, and promote employment for the Arab population.'^[26]

In 2016 Sikkuy hailed the Government's 5 year Arab Economic Development Plan - as 'historic'. The plan entails an investment of NIS 12-15 billion (around £2-2.6 billion in 2016 pounds) in the economic development of Israel's Arab community. Investment is being funneled into improvements in education, physical infrastructure, the empowerment of Arab municipalities and security arrangements.

But isn't there apartheid on the West Bank?

Since 1967 Israel has occupied the West Bank after winning the Six Day War, a pre-emptive war of self-defence against the Arab armies that were once again massed on its borders, intent on 'driving the Jews into the sea'.

The occupation has persisted for over 50 years not because Israel wants to rule over the territories but because peace talks - in which Israel seeks recognition and security guarantees in return for the creation of Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and West Bank - have failed thus far. **That** is why the occupation continues, not because Israel is running a permanent 'apartheid' regime.

The Palestinian population in the Territories has continued to expand rapidly. According to the UN, the total Palestinian population in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem was 1,094,000 in 1970, 2,152,000 in 1990, and now stands at 4,400,000.^[27]

Judge Richard Goldstone a former Justice of the South African Constitutional Court, who led the United Nations fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict of 2008-9, objected strongly to the Apartheid smear: '[In the West Bank] there is no intent to

maintain “an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group” [the definition of apartheid under the 1998 Rome Statute]. South Africa’s enforced racial separation was intended to permanently benefit the white minority, to the detriment of other races. By contrast, Israel has agreed to the existence of a Palestinian state in Gaza and almost all of the West Bank, and is calling for the Palestinians to negotiate the parameters.^[28]

Exactly.

UN Security Council Resolution 242, passed in the wake of the Six Day War, and accepted by Israel, calls for peace to be based on two principles: ‘(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; (ii) The termination of all claims or states of belligerency.’ In other words, Israel is expected to relinquish territory whilst the Arab states are expected to recognise Israel’s right to exist peacefully in the region. 242 did not call for immediate and total Israeli withdrawal from all of the Territories but established that the basis for peace was these **two** principles.

Since 1967, the Israeli presence in Gaza and the West Bank has been the subject of entirely legitimate criticism (much of it coming from within Israel itself, including from Israeli Prime Ministers, Ministers, security chiefs, and intellectuals).^[29] Israel has a moral responsibility to do all it can to avoid human rights abuses and to end the occupation as soon as possible, but it also has a responsibility to do the latter in a way that does not endanger the lives and future of its own citizens, or bring about the circumstances for an even worse conflict. That is Israel’s dilemma. It seeks to resolve that dilemma through negotiations to establish two states for two peoples.

What about the ‘apartheid wall’ built to keep Arabs away from Jews? That sure sounds like apartheid!

Many of the measures taken by Israel in the Territories that are labelled ‘apartheid’ – the so-called ‘apartheid wall’ for example – are actually security measures.

The barrier – 90 per cent of which is actually a fence – was not built to **separate** Jews **from** Arabs because of racism. It was built **to protect** Jews **and** Arabs from Palestinian suicide bombers. There are both Jews and Arabs living on both sides of it.

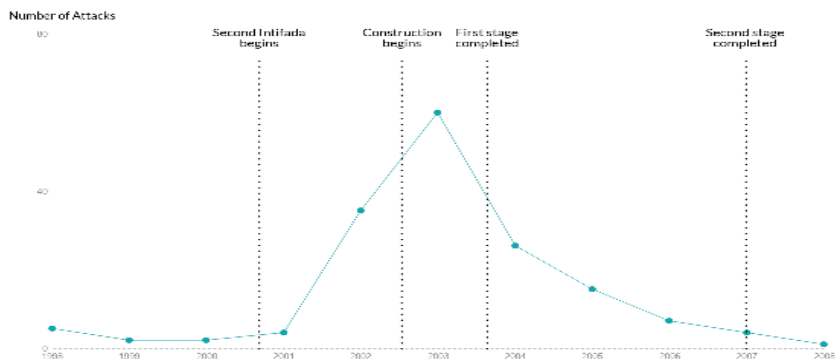
Simona Rodin was 18 when, on 1 June 2001 she went to the Dolphinarium nightclub in Tel Aviv. So did Said Khutari, who travelled from the West Bank town of Qalqilya with a deadly mix of powerful explosives and hundreds of steel ball bearings strapped to his chest. In the club, at 11:26 p.m. he blew himself up, murdering Simona and 20 other youngsters, and injuring 132.

This was the Second Intifada – a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks on Israel. By 2002, a fatal suicide bombing was carried out in Israel nearly every two weeks on average. In just three years, over 900 Israeli civilians were killed and 6000 injured by terrorism coming from West Bank.^[30]

The barrier worked.

It was not the only factor, but it was an important factor in achieving a fall of more than 90 per cent in the number of attacks and 70 per cent in the number of Israelis murdered, from an average of 103 slain per year before the barrier to 28 after its

Israel's Security Barrier and the Effect on Terrorism



Israel calls itself a 'Jewish state.' Doesn't that mean it discriminates against non-Jews?

The term 'Jewish state' is misunderstood. 'Jewish', in this context, refers to a people not a religion. It does not mean that Israel is a theocracy (rule by clerics) or a state exclusively for Jews. Israel is a democracy (rule by the people), governed by the rule of law as drafted by an elected parliament, the Knesset. All faiths vote and enjoy freedom of worship.

'Jewish state' just means that Israel is the national homeland for the Jewish people with citizenship, civic equality and minority rights for its non-Jews. 'The homeland of the Jewish people' is a more accurate and more helpful phrase.

Israel is a nation-state. There are many of those in the world. Tal Becker, the Israeli lawyer and peace-negotiator under the Annapolis process in 2007-8, puts it most clearly: 'When we say Israel is a Jewish state, we mean that it is the national home of the Jewish people, where the Jewish people realise their right to self-determination. The Jewish people realising their right to self-determination is not a principle that is contrary to democracy. It is a universal legal principle.'

But Israeli Jews wish to preserve a 'Jewish majority' in Israel. Isn't that a form of racism towards non-Jews?

No. It is not unusual that one community is the majority within a nation-state and seeks to maintain that status. **In fact, this is true in nearly every country in the world.**

Moreover, societies usually reflect the cultural identity of the majority. India and Pakistan were established at the same time as Israel, but no one believes these nations are illegitimate because one is predominantly Hindu and the other Muslim, or because the laws and customs of each country - from the role of Islam in Pakistan to the treatment of cows as sacred in India - reflect those majorities.

Many states define their immigration policies based on their own specific context,

history and ethnic or national character. As Gil Troy and Martin J. Raffel point out 'The German constitution offers automatic citizenship to refugees and displaced persons of German ethnic origin from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe - individuals who for many generations had no geographic or civic relationship with the state. Greece's citizenship law confers special advantages on ethnic Greeks, including dispensing with the residency requirement for naturalisation purposes. Finland repatriates ethnic Finns from the former Soviet Union. In Poland, anyone whose Polish origin is confirmed in accordance with its constitution may settle permanently in that country. The Irish nationality law empowers the Ministry of Justice to grant an exemption from naturalisation prerequisites when the applicant is of Irish descent or Irish associations.^[37]

The 'Law of Return' grants a Jew from anywhere in the world an automatic right to become an Israeli citizen. This right is not enjoyed by non-Jews. Isn't that apartheid?

No.

In every generation throughout its history, the Jewish people have suffered persecution and expulsion. This culminated in the Holocaust, a genocide from which the Jews of Europe found no place of refuge. One of the primary goals of the Zionist movement was to create one state in the world, which would be a national home for the Jewish people, and a **refuge** open to Jewish immigration.

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, one of its most urgent challenges was to absorb hundreds of thousands of stateless Jewish refugees who had been forced from their homes and lost everything in the Holocaust. At the same time it had to absorb over 850,000 Jews who fled rising persecution or were expelled from Arab and Muslim lands after the 1948 War of Independence.

Israel duly passed a law - The Law of Return - which granted the right of citizenship to any Jew who wished to live in Israel. Whilst the traditional religious definition of a Jew is someone who has a Jewish mother, the law of return takes a broader definition.

In Nazi Germany, individuals were murdered as Jews if they had two Jewish grandparents, and classified as Mischlinge (a derogatory word meaning "mongrel") if they had even one Jewish grandparent and that is why the State of Israel defines a Jew for the purposes of the right of return as anyone with one Jewish grandparent. The principle is that anyone who could be persecuted for being Jewish ought to have the right of refuge.

And the sad truth - which a cursory look at the daily papers, will confirm - is that antisemitism has not gone away, and **there is still a need for the Law of Return.**

Part 5: The anti-Israel boycott movement

Isn't the best way to reach a solution to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel until it leaves the West Bank?

No, that's pretty much the worst possible way to help the two parties find a negotiated and agreed solution. The road to peace is paved with diplomacy and discussion, not isolation. Boycotting Israel will not help the Palestinians.

Boycotts get wrong what the conflict is actually about. Boycotts are counterproductive, boycotts are unfair, and boycotts get in the way of the progressive 'pro-peace' activism that could contribute something to a solution.^[32] Boycotts are ugly - there is a dark history to boycotts of Jewish businesses.

What do you mean when you say boycotts 'get wrong what the conflict is actually about'?

I mean that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is best understood as an unresolved and complex national conflict between two peoples; both Europe's victims, both of whom have legitimate claims for national self-determination in a sovereign nation-state, but who have so far failed to divide the land between them.

Negotiations to secure the two-state solution came close but ultimately failed at Camp David in 2000, Taba in 2001, Annapolis in 2007-8, and most recently, during the John Kerry-led talks in 2013-14. The two parties need to get back to the table.

Boycotts are based on the misguided view that only one side is responsible for the impasse. So their promoters fail to consider the possibility that by pressuring Israel, they might encourage the Palestinians to harden their position, and so deter them from making the necessary concessions for peace. Indeed, boycotts can only strengthen the rejectionists on the Palestinian side, leading them to think that 'one last heave' can get rid of Israel altogether. This is not a recipe for peace.

Think about boycotts in light of the actual situation on the ground and what is needed for a solution. What do we have? We have an unresolved national question with a tangled history; we have two peoples holding fiercely to a narrative that is incompatible with that of the other in several places; we have great political complexity; we have the toughest diplomatic and security challenges imaginable; and we have a regional environment that is alarming to say the least, as Arab states collapse and barbaric Jihadi armies such as ISIS rise. And on top of all that there is the fear and resentment that has been bred bone-deep on both sides by the long conflict.

All that must be overcome. Trust must be built, engagement encouraged, and deep mutual recognition secured, so that each side can take the huge risks and make the excruciating compromises required if they are to divide the land.

Now consider this: into all that complexity and difficulty steps the movement to boycott Israel with a proposition: we can secure trust between the two parties, we can encourage them both to engage in deep mutual recognition, we can secure their willingness to compromise if we... exclude Israelis, and only Israelis from the economic,

cultural, sporting and academic life of humanity.

To be blunt, boycotting Israel is a ridiculous proposition if what you are interested in is two-states for two peoples.

Is that what you mean when you say 'boycotts are counterproductive'?

Yes. Boycotts are counterproductive if what you want is two-states for two peoples. Many of the leaders of the boycott movement do not support the two-state solution of course. They - Ali Abunimah, Omar Barghouti et.al. - support the **abolition of Israel**. Don't take my word for it. Listen to the leading anti-Israel writer and campus polemicist Norman Finkelstein:

[The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions - BDS - movement] can't answer the Israelis when they say BDS seeks to eliminate Israel because it's true! It's not an accident that BDS does not mention Israel. You know that and I know that. I'm sick of it. Are you going to reach the Israeli public with a message of 'they want to destroy us'? No. And you know what? You shouldn't. At least be honest - say 'we want to destroy Israel and this is our strategy for doing it. But this duplicity and this disingenuousness! 'Oh we are agnostic about Israel' ... you are not agnostic! You don't want it! Just say it! You don't because you know that if you do, you don't have a prayer of reaching a broad public.^[33]

Boycotting Israel will only create a sense of siege within Israel - obviously - and so reinforce those reactionary trends in Israeli politics that oppose all compromise with the Palestinians. That's why Noam Chomsky calls the proposal to boycott Israel 'a gift to Israeli hardliners.'

The boycott proposal damages the peace camp in Israel because it demonises all Israelis **indiscriminately** and **uniquely**.

That is why the New Israel Fund, the major left-wing NGO that is working for a shared society and true equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel, says 'We see global BDS as a tactic that embodies the message that Israel cannot and will not change itself and for that reason we think it is inflammatory and counterproductive.'

Boycotts are also counterproductive because they strengthen extremists and weaken moderates on both sides.

So-called 'anti-normalisation' activism (i.e. breaking up, often violently, any links between progressive pro-peace Israelis and progressive pro-peace Palestinians) attacks the very forces that are most committed to mutual recognition, two-states and peace. It is obscene.

Boycotts are counterproductive because, whether this is intended or not, boycott campaigns have - as a matter of undeniable fact - sometimes incubated an environment that has been hostile to Jews per se, not just to Israelis. Boycotts of Israeli goods have become boycotts of kosher goods. A demonising anti-Israelism can descend into hate and Jew-baiting.

Even Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority President, thinks boycotts are counterproductive. Though he supports people who decide not to buy settlement

produce, he does not support the boycott of Israel. 'We do not want to boycott goods coming from Israel,' he says. 'We do not ask anyone to boycott Israel itself. We have relations with Israel, we have mutual recognition of Israel.'^[34]

Abbas knows the Western activists calling for a boycott do not speak for the Palestinian people. According to one survey, 85 per cent of Palestinians want to cooperate **more** with Israel.^[35]

Why do you say that boycotts are unfair?

Boycotts are unfair because Israeli civil society (trade unions, universities, dance companies, orchestras, football teams) is not the same thing as the Israeli government! Punishing one to get at the other is just plain wrong.

And stupid. As Sari Nusseibeh, the former Palestinian President of Al Quds University, said in 2006, 'It is within the academic community ... [that you find the] most progressive, pro-peace views ... seeing us as equals ... if you want to punish any sector, this is the last one to approach.'

No one opposed the UK invasion of Iraq by calling for English football teams to be banned from the Champions League. So why is it OK for Israel's Batsheva Dance Company to be targeted by the boycotters, forced off the Edinburgh Festival programme by bullying and harassment?

Boycotts are unfair because there is a double-standard at work. It's a very dubious thing to single out just one state in the whole world for boycott when it is the Jewish one. Are only Israeli Jews to be excluded from the life of humanity?

Noam Chomsky, no friend of the current Israeli government, raises an objection to this singling out of Israel. He invites us to apply the 'glass houses test' to any boycott proposal: 'If Tel Aviv University is being boycotted because Israel violates human rights at home, then why not boycott Harvard because of greater violations by the US?' It's a good question, and one that some would say applies to LSE and SOAS too.

Boycotts contradict every principle of working class trade union solidarity because they break the links between the Israeli and Palestinian trade unions. What we should be doing is supporting the agreement of 2008 signed by the Palestinian trade unions, the PGFTU and the Israeli trade unions, the Histadrut. The agreement was drawn up under the guidance of the UK TUC, the International TUC and every Global Union Federation.

In 2010 the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group 2010 report concluded, 'The rights of Palestinian workers have been strengthened over the last two years with increased cooperation between the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and the Histadrut.' So what did the boycott movement do? It organised its members in the UK unions to **break the links** between the Histadrut and the PGFTU. That is insane.

Part 6: The New Antisemitism

People are talking about 'antisemitism on the left', particularly regarding the Labour Party. Does this exist or is it just smearing people to prevent criticism of Israel?

Sadly it exists.

Antisemitism on the left became headline news and a major political issue during Jeremy Corbyn's period as Labour Leader, due to a series of scandals involving prominent Labour figures.

But it isn't a new phenomenon.

There has long been a distinctively left-wing hostility to Jews. It has never been the dominant strand of opinion on the Left, and it is not so today, but it is growing and it is causing a breakdown in the relationship between Jews and the Left.^[36]

Left-wing antisemitism got going during the foundations of the socialist movement in the late 19th century when some parts of the left, often as a tactical ploy, identified 'the Jew' with finance and capitalism.

August Bebel, the German Social Democrat leader, shook his head and called this the 'socialism of fools'.

There was much foolishness in Britain, too. 'Wherever there is trouble in Europe, wherever rumours of war circulate and men's minds are distraught with fear of change and calamity,' warned the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1891, 'you may be sure that a hooked-nosed Rothschild is at his games somewhere near the region of the disturbances.'

Left-wing antisemitism never went away. It became the 'anti-imperialism of idiots' in the last third of the 20th century, when vicious, well-funded and long-running anti-Zionist campaigns were conducted by the Stalinist states, in alliance with the authoritarian Arab states and parts of the western New Left.

Those campaigns laid the ground for the form taken by left-wing antisemitism today - antisemitic anti-Zionism.

Antisemitic anti-Zionism bends the meaning of Israel and Zionism out of shape until both become fit receptacles for the tropes, images and ideas of classical antisemitism. In short, that which the demonological Jew once was, demonological Israel now is: malevolent, full of blood lust, all-controlling, the obstacle to a better, purer, more spiritual world.

Antisemitic anti-Zionism has three components. First, it is a political programme aiming at the abolition of the Jewish homeland.

Second, it is a demonising intellectual discourse and system of concepts: 'Zionism is racism'; Israel as a 'settler-colonialist' which ethnically cleansed the 'indigenous' people, went on to build an apartheid state and is now engaged in an 'incremental genocide' against the Palestinians.

Third, it is a global social movement (the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions or BDS movement).

The Left got into this mess because it wanted to dissolve Jewish peoplehood in the solvent of progressive universalism. They thought the proletariat would make a

revolution that would solve 'the Jewish question' once and for all.

But when the European socialist revolution failed and fascism and Nazism triumphed, culminating in the Holocaust, the appeal of the Left's universalism was in tatters.

In response to that rupture in world history the Jews insisted on defining their own mode of participation in universal emancipation: i.e. Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel.

Tragically, parts of the Left - not all, by any means - didn't get the memo. And everything hinges on this failure of imagination.

'Anti-Zionism' and attacks on 'Zios' became the reactionary programme to eradicate the Jewish homeland, a programme which converged with Arab nationalism and, latterly, even with radical Islamism, both of which could now be coded as singularly progressive by the Left. For example, the leading academic Judith Butler says Hamas and Hezbollah are now 'part of the global Left'. Or, put more simply by Jeremy Corbyn, they are 'friends'.

At that point, of course, the left is lost.

The old antisemitism said 'the Jew is our misfortune'. The new antisemitism says 'the Zionist is our misfortune'.

The new antisemitism wants to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, free of a Jewish state, while a previous antisemitism wanted to make the world *Judenrein*, free of Jews.

As Ben Gidley has noted, down the centuries, antisemitism has always been protean. It is mercurial (shape-shifting through history), promiscuous (in the genres of language and modes of justification employed), and advances through euphemism and code ('God-killers', 'Aliens', 'Cosmopolitans,' 'Sub-humans' and 'Zionists' have all served as code words to mark the Jew for destruction). The new antisemitism renews the core motif of antisemitism which is that the Jews, collectively, in their essence, are not just Other but malign.^[37]

The precise content of this perceived Jewish malevolence changes with the times and - as David Nirenberg has shown us in exhaustive detail in his seminal book *Anti-Judaism: The History of a Way of Thinking* - also with the needs of the antisemites: now the Jew is God-killer, now the Jew is the Rootless Cosmopolitan dissolving the integrity of every Nation, now the Jew is the world-controlling Capitalist-Bolshevik conspirator subverting the Gentile world for Jewish purposes, now the Jew is the *Untermenschen*, the Biological Pollutant of the Master-Race. And now the Jew is Israel, the 'Racist-Imperialist-Apartheid-Nazi-Baby Killing-Genocidal State whose lobby controls global media, politics and finance'.

In short: 'For World Peace We Must Destroy Israel' says the new antisemitism, literally putting that slogan on a placard.

Today is springtime for left-wing antisemitic anti-Zionism (with a sprinkling of antisemitic anti-capitalism added).

We have had Ken Livingstone, former Mayor of London, making the disingenuous claim that there was 'real collaboration' between the Nazis and Zionists, and former Momentum Vice-Chair Jackie Walker falsely claiming Jews were 'the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade'.

Prior to 2018, the concern about Jeremy Corbyn, then Labour Party leader, had not been that he indulges in antisemitism himself. It had been that he indulges the antisemitism of others unless they are skinhead neo-Nazis. When faced with the new antisemitism, with antisemitic anti-Zionism, he simply overlooks the antisemitism. For example, he defended the antisemitic Palestinian Islamist Raed Saleh and said he was a great leader of his people, even though Saleh's vile Jew-hatred was a matter of public record (a matter of court records, come to that). ^[38]

In 2018, after two years of mounting pressure in response to a litany of cases of antisemitism within the party, Corbyn wrote to the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council and said that he now realised that the party had not done enough to combat antisemitism in the party, that he was 'sincerely sorry for the pain which has been caused' and he took a significant step forward by acknowledging that there had long existed a distinct tradition of left-wing antisemitism which he called, quoting Bebel, the socialism of fools and which he said was often 'woven into criticism of Israeli Governments.' However, the subsequent meeting with the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council went badly because Corbyn and his Labour colleagues backtracked on a previous Labour adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) wouldn't sign up to four of the key examples: comparing contemporary Israeli policies to those of the Nazis; suggesting Jewish people are more loyal to Israel than their home country; holding Israel to different standards to other democratic countries; and denying Jewish people have a right to self-determination - for example by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a 'racist endeavour'.

With the issue not put to bed, during the summer of 2018 things went from bad to worse.

Labour Party National Policy Forum member George McManus attacked Deputy Leader Tom Watson for receiving '£50,000 from Jewish donors' and saying 'At least Judas only got 30 pieces of silver'. NEC member Pete Willsman ranted at an NEC meeting that he would not be 'lectured to by Trump fanatics', and arguing the NEC should ask 68 leading rabbis who had called on Labour to adopt the IHRA definition for 'evidence of severe and widespread antisemitism', but was still re-elected to Labour's ruling body.

Corbyn has faced accusations that he had participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial in Tunisia to the planners of the terrorist attack on the Israeli team at the 1972 Munich Olympics; that he had defended a mural in Tower Hamlets that portrayed Jews as capitalists playing Monopoly on the backs of exploited workers; and that he had said 'Zionists' have 'no sense of English irony', implying the British Jews he was referring to were foreign to Britain, ignorant and humourless.

Meanwhile the party started disciplinary processes against two of the MPs most vocal in condemning antisemitism: Margaret Hodge for allegedly calling Corbyn 'an antisemite and a racist' and Ian Austin for confronting party chair Ian Lavery.

Eventually, in September 2018, Labour's NEC did sign up to the full IHRA definition, but not without a caveat about freedom of speech, and a summer of further

reputational damage to the Labour Party.

At the Annual Conference a few days later a debate on Palestine, held for the first time in many years, endorsed an arms embargo on Israel, with hundreds of delegates waving Palestinian flags. There seemed to be an implication that supporting Palestine is some kind of counterweight to tackling antisemitism, when it shouldn't be that at all.

According to Populus' annual poll for BICOM, by 2018 38 per cent of the British public believed that 'Whatever Jeremy Corbyn claims, his actions and past history point to him being antisemitic' while only 25 per cent accepted his narrative that he 'a committed campaigner against racism of all kinds including antisemitism.'

During 2019 the EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission), the UK's statutory equalities watchdog, launched an investigation into allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party.

The reputational damage done to Labour by its failure to take firm and speedy action against antisemitism undoubtedly contributed to its heavy defeat in the 2019 general election.

A major test for the new party leader Keir Starmer will be the way in which he responds to the report of the EHRC investigation.

Are you suggesting it is always antisemitic to criticise Israel?

Not at all! But what we need to see is that **sometimes** what is presented as 'criticism of Israel' or 'criticism of Zionism' is **much more** than that. It is so over the top, so demonising, and so closely resembles the old antisemitic stereotypes about 'the Jew' that you have to ask yourself whether Israel has been given the role that antisemites once assigned the 'the Jew'.

Luke Akehurst put it well, writing at the left-wing blog Labour List.^[38]

Antisemitism can also come into the debate about Israel when people use language and images that are drawn from historic antisemitic tropes that were previously applied to Jews per se, and use them to attack the only Jewish State:

- Claims of Jewish or Zionist conspiracy theories, Jewish or Zionist control of the media, finance and political processes...
- Claims that British Jews have a dual loyalty that means they are more loyal to Israel than to the country they are citizens of.
- Allegations that Israel is acting like the Nazis, that events in Gaza or the West Bank constitute a Holocaust, that Gaza is a concentration camp or like the Warsaw Ghetto...
- Substitution on placards at demos or on social media memes of swastikas for Stars of David...
- Use of language such as 'baby killers' to describe Israeli military actions, when this has echoes of the Blood Libel, the medieval

Christian myth that Jews killed gentile babies...

- Denial of Jewish peoplehood and historical connection to Israel - including the allegation that Ashkenazi (European) Jews have no genetic connection to Middle Eastern Jews and are not 'real Jews' but stem from some mass conversion in the Dark Ages.
- Use of Zionism, Zionist and 'Zio' not to describe simple belief in Jewish rights to a state but as an insult implying conspiratorial power and evil intent (exactly mirroring traditional antisemitic images of Jews).
- Dehumanising and demonising language that was historically used against Jews being deployed against Israel and Zionists e.g. 'bacteria, rats, cancer, plague'.
- Signalling out Zionism and Israel as uniquely illegitimate when you don't target any other forms of national movement or country.

Just swapping the word Zionist for of the word Jew isn't a get out clause for using old-fashioned antisemitic tropes...

We should not stop supporting Palestinian statehood. Two-states for two peoples is the only solution to the conflict. But we should radically rethink the currently fashionable demonising and hateful 'anti-Zionism'. If we refuse the right to national self-determination of just one people, the Jewish people, and if we are committed to boycotting just one state in the whole wide world, the little Jewish one, then this singling-out is antisemitic **in consequence**, whatever the subjective feelings or motivations of individual boycotters.

Part 7: The Alternative

What's the alternative to boycotts and antisemitic anti-Zionism?

The alternative is an activism based on solutions not sides: pro-Palestinian, pro-Israeli, pro-peace.

We need more conversations, not fewer; more listening, not less. We should actively support **all** those in Israel and Palestine who promote mutual recognition and peace. Many organisations do just that, including Darkenu, Zimam Palestine, Taghyeer Movement, Roots / Shorashim, the Blue-White Future Group, Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF), MEET, The Peres Centre for Peace, the Abraham Fund, and the Geneva Initiative.

Getting involved with these constructive 'pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, pro-Peace' organisations is the real alternative to the dead-end and destructive politics of boycotts, the Apartheid Smear and antisemitic anti-Zionism.

Invite these pro-peace groups to speak and engage with them. Support them, give them a platform, raise money for them, and be educated by them. Isn't that more worthwhile than staging yet another one of those gladiatorial contests dressed up as

an 'Israel-Palestine debate'?

This alternative style of activism will have plenty room for criticism of Israel. This activism will **challenge** all the obstacles to peace. But try to make the challenge balanced. Challenge Israel, for sure, but do not infantilise or romanticise the Palestinians. Be willing to also challenge the Palestinian national movement when it is guilty of rejectionism, terrorism, authoritarianism, corruption, and the promotion of a culture of incitement, demonisation and antisemitism. For those things are **also** obstacles to the two-states for two peoples solution.

The constructive pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, pro-peace approach we need must be willing to wrestle with the complexities of the conflict, not evade them.

The new approach must be fully aware of the determining contexts of the conflict. These include both genuine Israeli security fears and genuine Palestinian demands for an acknowledgment of their trauma, their need for recognition and dignity as well as statehood.

The new approach will refuse to demonise the peacemakers on either side. And it will refuse to be apologists for the extremists on either side. By working with democrats among both peoples, the new activism should seek to play its part in fostering links, co-existence, compromise, mutual recognition and peace.

Nelson Mandela set out the balanced approach that democrats and internationalists should take towards the conflict.

'As a movement we recognise the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism just as we recognise the legitimacy of Zionism as a Jewish nationalism. We insist on the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure borders, but with equal vigour support the Palestinian right to national self-determination.'

What if we took that approach? What if we recognised the legitimacy of both sides and supported the moderates of both sides to move towards the two-state solution? What if we too encouraged and assisted so that this conflict of right and right can finally come to an end?

What if, like the late Amos Oz, the Israeli novelist, we decided to stop treating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a Wild West movie and saw it instead as 'a tragedy in the ancient and most precise sense of the word: a clash between right and right'? And what if, doing so, we were brave enough to encourage what Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet called the 'awkward encounter' that marks the beginning of the end of every human conflict?

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