

Zionism as a Moral Cause

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Sixty-five years ago, after the British occupiers departed, Ben Gurion addressed the nation, declaring “the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel”, whose legitimacy was established “by virtue of our natural and historic right.” In response, most Arab leaders immediately rejected any Jewish rights to sovereign equality and self-determination in this ancient homeland, and determined to use all means available to reverse the creation of Israel.

Despite extensive military, political and economic warfare, including a widespread Arab boycott, these efforts have failed, but the war against Israel’s legitimacy continues. The current version exploits terms and allegations like “apartheid”, “racism”, “war crimes” to portray Israel, based on a Jewish majority, as a rogue state with no right to exist. Unique criteria and legal requirements are invented to apply to Israel alone, embodying the rejectionism of 1948.

Extending far beyond much of the Middle East, this form of political warfare and delegitimization targeting Israel has developed a strong foothold in Europe, with some support also in North America and other democratic countries. Although sometimes couched in terms of opposition to the post-1967 “occupation”, this is an excuse, while the language used to attack Israel is general. In this reincarnation of the spirit of 1948, Jews are always the aggressors, and Arabs are victims of a catastrophe – the “nakba”.

Thus, while millions of Israelis celebrate independence and freedom, members of the Swedish Parliament from the Liberal Party (Folkpartiet) will be engaged in political warfare, disguised as a seminar and abusing the language of morality. One of the speakers is from the fringe group of anti-Israel Israelis known as Breaking the Silence, whose funders include (no surprise) the Swedish government, as well as the EU and other European governments. The theme of this presentation will be on allegations of Israeli “war crimes” – one of the main vehicles for the demonization campaigns against Israel.

Another speaker in this parliamentary “seminar” comes from the militantly pro-Palestinian church-based group calling itself the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). In contrast to the use of the term “ecumenical”, there is nothing in the group’s activities that suggests tolerance and understanding. Instead, like the others, EAPPI exploits moral rhetoric to attack Jewish self-determination, and is deeply involved in promoting BDS (boycotts, divestment and sanctions). And the third speaker is from Diakonia, a Christian “humanitarian aid” group also funded by the Swedish government which has obsessively promoted hatred of Israel through false allegations of human rights and international legal violations. Not surprisingly, there are no speakers on the program to question or dispute the official party line in this fundamentally immoral program.

There are many more examples of this form of warfare, particularly in Western Europe, and it is deeply entrenched in the media, universities, church groups, parliaments and other platforms. The common theme is the exploitation of the language and principles of moral behavior to justify the deep prejudices against the existence of the Jewish nation state.

Israelis citizens and supporters, with a few fringe exceptions, are able to separate the propaganda from

the reality in this political war. We know that the Jewish nation is entitled to the same rights of sovereign equality, self-determination and self-defense that are claimed by Europeans and other peoples. The Zionism that we celebrate is an important expression of these moral principles.

Chag Atzmaut sameach