

WHEN DOES CRITICISM OF ISRAEL BECOME ANTISEMITISM?

Israel, as a democracy, can and should be receptive to fair and legitimate criticism whether the criticism is from its own citizens or from members of the larger global community. However, all too often condemnation of Israel crosses the line from valid criticism into denigration that can be considered antisemitic. The generally accepted term for this type of disparagement is the “new antisemitism,” especially when the complaints against Israel and “Zionists” include controlling the government of the United States, conspiring to take over the world, starting world wars, and other similar ideas.

Natan Sharansky, minister in the Israeli government in charge of monitoring antisemitism, has developed what he calls the “Three Ds” test, to help distinguish legitimate criticism of Israel from antisemitism.

Demonization: When Israel and its leaders are being demonized; when Israel’s actions are blown out of all sensible proportion; when comparisons are made between Israelis and Nazis and between Palestinian refugee camps and Auschwitz—this is considered antisemitism, not legitimate criticism of Israel.

Double Standards: When criticism of Israel is applied selectively; when Israel is singled out by the United Nations for human rights abuses while the behavior of known and major abusers, such as China, Iran, Cuba, and Syria, is ignored—this is considered antisemitism.

Delegitimization: When Israel’s fundamental right to exist is denied—this too is considered antisemitism.