

## Understanding Zionism, Anti-Zionism, and Antisemitism FAQ

### Q: What is the relationship between Zionism and anti-Zionism?

A:

- Zionism is the belief in the right to self-determination and sovereignty for the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland, the Land of Israel.
- Anti-Zionism is the denial or rejection of Zionism.
- While the Zionist vision was realized in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, today Zionism has a range of meanings. For many Jews, it means caring about and feeling connected to Israel and its people. Because more than half of the world's Jewish population (which is .2% of the global population) lives in Israel, most Jews in the diaspora have family or friends living in Israel.

### Q: Is anti-Zionism antisemitic?

A:

*As a nonpolitical education organization, ICS does not:*

- Take a stance on the actions of the Israeli (or any other) government
- Endorse a particular definition of antisemitism
- Provide an answer to the question of whether or not anti-Zionism is antisemitic.

*Instead, we can share the following facts and resources to support teachers' understanding of this issue:*

- Several mainstream Jewish organizations—including the [World Jewish Congress](#), the [American Jewish Committee](#), and the [Anti-Defamation League](#)—consider most expressions of anti-Zionism to be a form of antisemitism.
- Likewise, some definitions of antisemitism—including, most prominently, that of the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\)](#)—consider many expressions of anti-Zionism to be antisemitic (while not equating all forms of anti-Zionism with antisemitism).
- Teachers should be aware that, as with many questions and topics, Jewish Americans hold a variety of views on Zionism and the question of whether anti-Zionism is antisemitic. Some believe all forms of anti-Zionism are antisemitic; some believe anti-Zionism is not antisemitic; some believe it depends on context and intent; and some may not have a strong opinion either way. Some Jews—including fringe Haredi (traditionally Orthodox) sects opposed to modern Zionism on theological grounds and leftist Jews opposed to Zionism on ethical, religious, or political grounds—consider themselves anti-Zionists. The vast majority of Jewish Americans (82%), however, agree

that “caring about Israel is an essential or important part of what being Jewish means to them.”<sup>1</sup>

- Criticism of the Israeli government is not necessarily viewed as anti-Zionist or antisemitic by most Jews, just the way many Americans do not see criticism of the American government as unpatriotic.
- When criticism of Israel includes antisemitic beliefs and tropes (a figurative or metaphorical use of a word or expression), most Jews will see that criticism as antisemitic. Examples include use of antisemitic canards, or rumors, about Jewish power or greed, derogatory depictions of Jews, use of terms such as *Zionist* and *Zionism* as euphemisms for Jews, and physical or verbal harassment or attacks on Jews or Jewish institutions.
- Teachers should be cognizant of Jewish students in their classrooms and the diversity of Jewish Americans’ opinions about Israel. Jewish students should not be made to feel responsible for the actions of Israel’s government, nor should they be pressured to represent or speak for the larger Jewish community or the State of Israel. Likewise, they should not be singled out for their beliefs or attachment to Israel. The same is true for students with ties to other countries and communities.

### **Q: How can I help students understand contemporary antisemitism better?**

**A:**

- Through participating in ICS asynchronous online courses on the [History of European Antisemitism](#) and [Jewish Americans](#), teachers will learn to recognize antisemitic beliefs and tropes, how they have played out specifically in an American context, and how they affect American Jews today. This context will help teachers identify antisemitism in a variety of contexts, including in the context of criticism of Israel.
- ICS’s Lesson Plan on the History of European Antisemitism includes a Gallery Walk of current examples of antisemitism, including a few that reference ties to Israel. View entries H, K, and N, in the Gallery Walk for reference.