

Expert Opinion on Anti-Zionism

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Introduction

This opinion considers 'anti-Zionism', both as a political perspective and as a term used in public discourse, with respect to its place in recent and current pro-Palestinian demonstrations and other forms of activism in the United Kingdom, and in debates and controversies over that activism. The analysis offered here focuses on the issue of whether anti-Zionism should be considered as tendentially or intrinsically antisemitic, or otherwise hurtful or disrespectful to Jews.

This opinion addresses, in turn, the following topics and questions:

1. The history of Zionism and anti-Zionism
2. The primary concerns of current anti-Zionist thinking and activity
3. Is anti-Zionism tendentially or intrinsically antisemitic?
4. Is anti-Zionism tendentially or intrinsically offensive, hurtful or disrespectful to Jews?
5. Concluding summary opinion

1. The history of Zionism and anti-Zionism

1. There is no single definition of Zionism on which everyone can agree. In its most basic form – as formulated by the founder of the Jewish Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), at the end of the nineteenth century – Zionism was, until 1948, a political project to establish a state for the Jews in Palestine. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the term ‘Zionism’ has been used to describe various forms of support for Israel, identification with it, and advocacy for it.
2. Since the time of its emergence, the Zionist movement has been extremely diverse, disputatious and complicated. Zionism shares many features with other nineteenth-century nationalist movements: as well as Jews, other stateless groups at this time, such as Poles, Czechs and Finns, rallied around nationalism as a means of strengthening their cultural identity and political agency. Unlike these other ethnic groups, though, Jews were dispersed across Europe, and those who embraced the idea of Zionism sought to establish a Jewish homeland elsewhere, focusing on Palestine because of the importance of this land as the centre of Jewish life during the biblical period (broadly the first century BCE). The ‘ingathering’ of Jews in the Holy Land has also long been extremely resonant for many Christians. In Britain, this has been a significant focus of evangelical Christian activism since the 1840s (approximately fifty years before the emergence of Herzl’s Jewish Zionist movement).¹
3. For these early Christian Zionists, and also for Herzl and his followers, the Zionist project was closely associated with the projection of European (especially British) imperial power in the Middle East. A Jewish state in Palestine, Herzl famously wrote in his key pamphlet on the topic, would form ‘a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism’ and would safeguard the holy sites of Christianity in the Jewish people’s ‘unforgettable historic homeland’.² From the

¹ Donald Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

² Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, trans. Sylvie d’Avigdor (Dover Publications, 1988 [1896]) 99; Steven Beller, *Herzl* (Peter Halban, 2005).

outset, the majority Arab population in Palestine saw the Zionist movement as colonialist, and Jewish settlers there as unwelcome colonizers.

4. Broadly speaking, Zionist thinking can be divided into five broad strands: liberal Zionism, labour Zionism, religious Zionism, cultural Zionism, and revisionist Zionism. While these strands have often overlapped and cross-fertilized, they have also often been at odds with each other, and represent very different conceptions of the Zionist project. Arguments against rival forms of Zionism can readily be found within each of these traditions; these arguments are often very similar to some anti-Zionist critiques of the Zionist movement.
5. Liberal Zionists have generally emphasized their alignment with Euro-American political values and interests. Labour Zionism, strongly influenced by socialist and Marxist thought, has traditionally promoted a state-led socialist agenda: this was the dominant force in Israeli politics until the 1960s. Religious Zionism emphasizes the theological basis for Jews' entitlement to a state in Palestine – 'the land of Israel for the people of Israel' – and has often presented the fulfilment of Zionism as a key part of God's plan for all humanity. Cultural Zionism has emphasized the role of a Jewish homeland in strengthening fundamental Jewish values: fair treatment of the Arabs of Palestine has regarded by some leading cultural Zionists (such as Martin Buber) as an important aspect of this. Revisionist Zionism, in contrast, has emphasized the importance of an assertively muscular Zionist politics. Its founder, Vladimir Jabotinsky, was an admirer of Mussolini and was strongly influenced by the widespread belief, among European fascists and other right-wing groups in the 1930s, in the inevitability of racial struggle; the roots of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, dominant in Israeli politics since the late 1970s, lie in this revisionist Zionist tradition.³
6. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century most strictly religiously observant Jews were strongly opposed to Zionism. Their anti-Zionism was grounded on long-standing theological arguments according to which Jews were forbidden to 'hasten the end', or, in other words, to intervene in the messianic unfolding of Jewish destiny.

³ David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Clarendon Press, 1982); David Engel, *Zionism* (Routledge, 2015); Hillel Halkin, *Jabotinsky: A Life* (Yale University Press, 2014).

God alone, according to this belief, would bring about the ingathering of Jews in Zion. Some strictly religious Jewish groups – most notably the Neturei Karta movement and the sizeable Satmar grouping of Hasidic Jews – continue to adhere to this anti-Zionist worldview. They perceive the establishment of the state of Israel as an anti-messianic and sinful act, and vociferously reject and denounce Zionism.⁴

7. The early Zionist movement was also rejected by most working-class Jews in the early twentieth century. In eastern Europe, especially in the Jewish demographic heartland of the historically Polish lands, Zionism was strongly challenged by the Yiddish-speaking Bundist movement – the largest left-wing Jewish organization in the interwar period. The Bundists' guiding idea was *doykayt* ('hereness'): they emphasized the practical cultural and material needs of Jews in the countries where they lived, and sharply opposed what they regarded as the chauvinism and separatism of Zionism.⁵
8. The majority of middle-class Jews in early twentieth-century Europe and America were also hostile or indifferent to Zionism. In Britain, some leading Jewish figures feared that the British government's endorsement of Zionism, in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, would strengthen antisemitism, because it undermined the goal of the integration of Jews into British gentile society. Similar anxieties were felt in Germany, where leaders mostly emphasized the strength of their community's German identity and loyalty. In America, it was not until after the Second World War, in response to the crisis faced by displaced Jewish Holocaust survivors, that leading Jewish organizations moved away from their earlier non- or anti-Zionist positions.⁶
9. Before the Second World War controversies over Zionism predominantly took place among Jews. With growing clashes between Jews and Palestinian Arabs in British Mandate Palestine during the 1930s, though, this issue began to attract more international attention. It was not uncommon for outside observers to interpret this conflict in a broadly anti-colonial context. In 1938, for example, the Indian independence movement leader Mahatma Gandhi wrote: 'Palestine belongs to the

⁴ Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* (Zed Books: 2006)

⁵ Molly Crabapple, *Here Where We Live is Our Country: The Story of the Jewish Bund* (Bloomsbury, 2026).

⁶ Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford University Press, 1988) 335-7; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999) 75-7.

Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs'.⁷

10. From the first decade of the twentieth century Palestinian intellectuals and community leaders sharply critiqued Zionism, and (from 1917) British support for it. The shaping of Palestinian national identity and political mobilisation in the first half of the twentieth century was closely intertwined with opposition to Zionism. This intensified after the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba: when most of the Palestinian population living in mandatory Palestine either fled or were expelled across international borders and not allowed to return to their homes, thus creating 'the Palestinian refugee problem'. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964, aimed to articulate an effective anti-Zionist response to what almost all Palestinians saw as the unjust dispossession of their people by the Zionist movement.⁸ The work of Edward Said (1935-2003) – the leading late twentieth-century Palestinian intellectual and foundational thinking in the field of postcolonial studies – has been particularly important in promoting a morally principled anti-Zionism as a pillar of international solidaristic political thought.⁹

2. The primary concerns of current anti-Zionist thinking and activity

11. Like Zionism, anti-Zionism takes many different forms, and encompasses many different arguments, which are by no means all compatible with each other. It is impossible to reduce anti-Zionism to a single ideology or worldview. All forms of contemporary opposition to Zionism (which itself, as discussed immediately above, takes many forms and is grounded in many different arguments, also by no means all compatible with each other) can legitimately be considered as varieties of contemporary anti-Zionism.

⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, 'Jews in Palestine', *Harijan*, 26 November 1938.

⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance* (Profile Books, 2020).

⁹ Edward Said, 'Zionism from the standpoint of its victims', *Social Text* 1 (1979) 7-58: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionism_from_the_Standpoint_of_Its_Victims .

12. Anti-Zionism can nonetheless broadly be defined as a political perspective critical of the political movement (Zionism) that is currently dominant in the former territory of British Mandate Palestine. This perspective may be based on a view of Zionism as a settler colonial movement, which aims to dispossess and displace the indigenous Palestinian population. It may, alternatively, be based on an interpretation of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as a clash of two rival nationalist movements – Jewish Zionism versus Palestinian nationalism. In this case, anti-Zionists may also be critical of Palestinian nationalism.
13. The large majority of mainstream Jewish organizations today, in the UK and beyond, are – in varying ways and to differing degrees – broadly aligned with Zionism. There are, though, many Jewish organizations in the UK that are either explicitly anti-Zionist, or that embrace members who are anti-Zionist. These include: Jewish Network for Palestine (JNP), Jewish Socialist Group (JSG), International Jewish anti-Zionist network (IJAN), Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JJP), Jewish Voice for Liberation (JVL), and the sizeable campaigning organization Na’amod (‘a movement of British Jews seeking to end our community’s support for the occupation, and to mobilise it in the struggle for freedom, equality and justice for all Palestinians and Israelis’). This is in addition to the widespread indifference and significant opposition to Zionism among strictly religiously observant Jews, notably in Neturei Karta and the Satmar Hasidim (discussed above).
14. Opposition to Zionism seems to be increasing quite rapidly among younger Jews. A recent (October 2025) report by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR – a mainstream Jewish research organization) found that among Jews aged between 20 and 29, 24% self-defined as ‘anti-Zionist’, 20% as ‘non-Zionist’, and less than half (47%) as ‘Zionist’. Across all age groups, the report found that the proportion of British Jews identifying as Zionist has held steady at just below two thirds (64%), while the proportion defining as ‘anti-Zionist’ had risen by 50% in the three years from 2022 to 2025 (from 8% to 12%).¹⁰

¹⁰ Jonathan Boyd, ‘Two years after the October 7 attacks: British Jewish views on antisemitism, Israel and Jewish life’, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, October 2025, 19: <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/two-years-after-october-7-attacks-british-jewish-views-antisemitism-israel-and-jewish-life>

15. Across the British population as a whole, there is very broad and diverse infrastructure of anti-Zionist organizations, many with religiously and ethnically diverse membership and supporter bases. This includes: the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), Association of Student Activism for Palestine, Voices for Palestine, British Palestinian Committee, Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS), Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), Artists for Palestine, Council for Arab British Understanding (CAABU), Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC).
16. Anti-Zionist activism today often focuses on matters of historical record and current empirical fact. Anti-Zionist campaigners often seek to draw attention to the impact of Zionism on Palestinians, above all since the 1948, and in the present (in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Israel and beyond). They particularly highlight the on-going impact of displacement, dispossession and discrimination on Palestinians. Several widely admired and reputable international organizations, such as United Nations agencies, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Al Haq, and even Israel's leading human rights organisation have judged that the Israel's treatment of Palestinians amounts to a form of apartheid.¹¹
17. Resistance to Zionism, and support for Palestinian resistance to Zionism, is central to much anti-Zionist activity. This takes many forms. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is particularly prominent and widely supported: a Palestinian-led movement that aims to apply political and economic pressure on governments, companies and other entities that are materially complicit in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the denial of basic rights and dignity to Palestinians. This strategy closely resembles the widely supported cultural and economic boycotts of apartheid South Africa in the 1980s.

¹¹ Richard Falk and Virginia Q. Tilley, *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (United Nations, 2017); Amnesty International report, 'Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians', 2022: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/knowledge-hub/all-resources/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-2022/>; Human Rights Watch report, *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, (New York, 2010): <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution> ; B'Tselem report, *A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid* (Jerusalem, 2021): https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid

18. Since October 2023, solidarity with the people of Gaza, and pressuring the British and other governments to take a stronger stand against the Israeli military onslaught there, has been the primary focus of anti-Zionist mobilization. It has now been widely argued that Israel has committed the crime of genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, and in early January 2024 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the case alleging this, put to it by the government of South Africa, was plausible. Central to the many large pro-Palestinian demonstrations in London and elsewhere since October 2023 has been a call for equal rights for Palestinians. The popular slogan ‘From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ is generally intended as an encapsulation of this demand. As Ben Jamal, until recently the director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), has explained, this slogan does not call for the dispossession and expulsion of Jewish Israelis, but for equal rights and freedom for all who live in Israel-Palestine (or in whatever future state structures might exist on that territory).¹²

3. Is anti-Zionism tendentially or intrinsically antisemitic?

19. The question of how to define antisemitism has become extremely confused and mired in controversy over the past decade or so. A sensible starting point is its ‘normal, commonly understood meaning’, which can be drawn from the Oxford English Dictionary definition: ‘*Prejudice, hostility, or discrimination towards Jewish people on religious, cultural, or ethnic grounds*’.

20. There are two further sources which are often considered on this issue: the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IRHA) ‘working definition’ of antisemitism, and the Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism (JDA). The IHRA document has been strongly backed by the Israeli government and many mainstream Jewish organizations, and it has been formally adopted by many governmental and other bodies in the UK and elsewhere. It has, however, been widely criticized both by legal experts and by scholars of antisemitism on the grounds of its blurring of the distinction between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel, which has been

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuInxOHh4ZA>

used to criminalise lawful speech and chill public debate on Israeli actions and policies towards Palestinians.¹³ The IHRA definition has its roots in an almost identical document published by a now-defunct European Union body, devised by representatives of American Jewish and Israeli organizations closely aligned with Zionism.¹⁴ The JDA, in contrast, was designed and published by a large group of international scholars of antisemitism and related fields.¹⁵

21. The core IHRA ‘Working Definition’ is very short, the key defining sentence being simply ‘**Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews**’. This isn’t a very clear statement, but its essence is that antisemitism is based on a blanket negative view specifically of Jews as a collective, and that it tends to be expressed in a form of hatred. The historical roots of antisemitism are very complicated, but antisemitic hatred has been based on a set of beliefs about Jews that see them, as a collective, as profoundly different from others: as conspiratorial, rapacious, exploitative, oversexed, malodorous, etc. In the writings and statements of noted antisemites, such as Adolf Hitler and many others, it is clear that characteristics such as these are ascribed to Jews as a whole. It is not, of course, necessarily antisemitic to ascribe these characteristics to some Jews, in particular circumstances: some Jews, just like plenty of non-Jews, might indeed be conspiratorial, oversexed, malodorous, etc. To judge something as antisemitic, it is necessary to show such negative characteristics are ascribed to Jews in general. This is reflected in the OED Definition of antisemitism, as *prejudice, hostility, or discrimination towards Jewish people* (i.e. towards Jews as a generality: not towards certain Jews).

22. The IHRA document then offers various ‘examples’ of antisemitism, which, it states, ‘**could, taking into account the overall context**’, constitute ‘contemporary examples of antisemitism’. The specific context, then, is crucial. One of these examples is ‘Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination’, and another is ‘Denying the right of Jews in the State of Israel to exist and flourish,

¹³ Rebecca Ruth Gould, ‘The IHRA Definition of Antisemitism: Defining Antisemitism by Erasing Palestinians’, *Political Quarterly* 91 (2020): <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12883> ; Neve Gordon, ‘Antisemitism and Zionism: The Internal Operations of the IHRA Definition’, *Middle East Critique* 33 (2024): <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2024.2330821> .

¹⁴ Antony Lerman, *Whatever Happened to Antisemitism? Redefinition and the Myth of the Collective Jew* (Pluto Press, 2022) 124-35.

¹⁵ The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism is available in full here: <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org>

collectively and individually, as Jews, in accordance with the principle of equality'. In some contexts, the IHRA Working Definition suggests, these attitudes could be a form of antisemitism, but in other contexts this would not be the case.

23. One problem with the Working Definition is that it isn't very helpful on this key issue of context. Presumably, though, we must interpret it as indicating that these attitudes might be antisemitic if they are linked to the 'core definition': i.e. to hostile attitudes to Jews as a collective, expressed in the form of hatred towards them. Denying Jews self-determination, or existence and flourishing in Israel (or indeed anywhere else), on the grounds that Jews are manipulative, mean, or in some other way repugnant as a collective, would be antisemitic. If there is no evidence of such hatred of Jews, or singled-out hostility to them, then these attitudes would not be antisemitic.
24. One main weakness of the IHRA 'Working Definition' is that it offers no guidance in assessing this all-important dimension of context. This issue is, however, addressed by the JDA. The core analysis of antisemitism offered by the JDA is much crisper and clearer than that of the IHRA, and this document includes, in relation to the Israel / Palestine conflict (the matter in hand in most contemporary controversies on antisemitism), a consideration not only of what sort of statements are likely to be antisemitic, and also of what sort of statements, in themselves, are likely not to be antisemitic.
25. The JDA clearly and correctly states that 'criticising or opposing Zionism as a form of nationalism' is not in itself antisemitic. There are, indeed – as discussed above – very strong Jewish traditions of vociferous anti-Zionism, both religious and secular, which continue to be vocally expressed to this day and are part of the diversity of contemporary Jewish opinion. The JDA also correctly notes that 'political speech does not have to be measured, proportional, tempered or reasonable to be protected under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ... and other human rights instruments'. This seems particularly relevant in dealing with many anti-Zionist statements that have stirred controversy, especially when these have been made on social media, as brief social media posts are often impulsive, heated or hyperbolic, especially when dealing with matters on which feelings run high, and at times of bloody conflict.

26. It is sometimes argued that anti-Zionist statements are antisemitic on the basis of the IHRA ‘example’ that states that, depending on the context, it may be antisemitic to ‘deny the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavour’. If, as discussed above, these views formed part of a generally hateful attitude towards Jews, then they could potentially be seen as an expression of antisemitism. One might, though, reject the idea of Jewish self-determination in contemporary Israel on other grounds, as many people, Jewish and non-Jewish, indeed do. One might deny Jews self-determination because one does not accept the applicability of the concept of self-determination, or its applicability in this case. Many Spaniards, for example, reject the concept of ‘Catalan self-determination’; successive French governments have rejected the concept of ‘Corsican self-determination’; many British citizens reject Scottish nationalist arguments that the UK government does not properly allow ‘Scottish self-determination’. Kurdish and Basque aspirations to self-determination have secured very little external support, but opponents of these claims have not been portrayed as prejudiced against Kurds or Basques.¹⁶
27. One might also reject Jewish rights in Israel as currently constituted because these rights are not regarded as currently ‘in accordance with the principle of equality’ (a condition cited in the IHRA document) for Palestinians. This is, indeed, a very widespread anti-Zionist argument. Whether or not the legal and material privileges accorded to Jews in Israel, and not to Palestinians, make contemporary Israel ‘a racist endeavour’ is most fundamentally an empirical question: such allegations cannot be considered as antisemitic if they are plausibly true. As discussed above, the Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem, Amnesty International and other respected international organizations regard Israeli policies towards Palestinians as apartheid. This suggests that many critiques of Israel as ‘a racist endeavour’ may indeed plausibly be true, and that allegations that they are antisemitic are therefore spurious.

¹⁶ Peter Beinart, ‘Debunking the myth that antisemitism is antisemitic’, *The Guardian*, 7 March 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/mar/07/debunking-myth-that-anti-zionism-is-antisemitic> .

4. Is anti-Zionism tendentially or intrinsically offensive, hurtful or disrespectful to Jews?

28. It is sometimes argued that anti-Zionism, or expressions of anti-Zionism, are ‘grossly offensive’ to the overwhelming majority of Jews, or, in similar terms, that such statements are deeply hurtful or disrespectful to Jews. The legal and intellectual status of such allegations is unclear. There is no definitive definition of what constitutes unacceptable offensiveness, and it is often argued – though usually not in relation to statements considered upsetting to many Jews – that in robust public debates, for example on university campuses, we should accept that we might be offended by other people’s views, and that attempts to shut down debates on these grounds are illegitimate.
29. While there is no authoritative overall definition of ‘gross offensiveness’, a legal definition of it is provided in Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act (1988). It is there stated that the sender of indecent or ‘grossly offensive’ material is guilty of this offence if ‘his purpose, or one of his purposes, in sending it is that it should ... cause distress to the recipient or to any other person to whom he intends that it or its contents or nature should be communicated’. Beyond the question of whether or not the content of the sent message is ‘grossly offensive’, then, there must also be a conscious intent, in sending it, to cause distress to others. When anti-Zionists are expressing their sincerely held views, though, and there is no evidence that they are doing so with the primary intent of causing distress to others, then their statements cannot be considered, on this definition, as ‘grossly offensive’.
30. The evidence discussed above of significant levels of self-proclaimed anti-Zionism among British Jews, and relatively high levels of anti-Zionism among younger Jews, shows that it is empirically untrue that anti-Zionist statements, in themselves, are offensive or distressing to Jews in general. More than a third of British Jews, we have noted, do not consider themselves to be Zionist.
31. The core argument that anti-Zionism is antisemitic can be formulated as a syllogism: i) antisemitism is hatred of Jews; ii) to be Jewish is to be Zionist; iii) therefore anti-Zionism is antisemitic. The error here is with the second proposition. Claims that

Zionism is intrinsic to Jewishness, or that a seamless equation can be made between Zionism and the Jewish people, are false.

32. The identification of all Jews with Zionism is widely assumed even though over half of the worldwide Jewish population does not live in Israel and over 40 percent of American Jews (by far the largest concentration outside Israel) say they do not feel any attachment to the country.¹⁷ Indeed, many Jews are not Zionists, and some are anti-Zionist, while, simultaneously, Zionism has numerous traits that are in no way embedded in or characteristic of Jewishness, but rather emerged from the socialist, nationalist and settler colonial ideologies that have shaped it. A critique of Zionism is not necessarily a product of an animus towards Jews, while hatred towards Jews does not necessarily entail an anti-Zionist stance. There are people who characterise themselves as Zionist but also make antisemitic statements.¹⁸ One may even be Zionist for antisemitic reasons: a significant current of early European non-Jewish support for Zionism was motivated by a desire to reduce the number of Jews in Europe by relocating them elsewhere.

33. For Jews who *do* consider themselves Zionist, and / or are strongly emotionally attached to Israel, it may well be upsetting to confront allegations that, for example, Israel has committed a genocide in Gaza. If, however, this allegation is plausibly true – which according to the ICJ it is – then such arguments cannot be considered to be offensive. Many British citizens find confronting the violence of Britain’s colonial past upsetting, and many Germans, one would expect, find confronting the crimes of the Nazis particularly upsetting because they are Germans. The root of this pain, though, lies not in the manner in which British or German people are confronted with this history, but in the historical record itself.

5. Concluding summary opinion

34. It is clear that anti-Zionism is a serious political perspective. Large numbers of people, in the UK and elsewhere, hold sincere anti-Zionist beliefs, and these beliefs

¹⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/u-s-jews-connections-with-and-attitudes-toward-israel>

¹⁸ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-08-16/ty-article/richard-spencer-to-israelis-im-a-white-zionist-respect-me/0000017f-e2ed-d75c-a7ff-feed950d0000>

are for many of them a very important part of their political outlook. For the vast majority of Palestinians, and for many people who readily identify with Palestinians for political or cultural reasons, the historical record of Zionism, not only in the past few years but since the early twentieth century, is seen as uncontroversially leading them to an anti-Zionist position. A significant number of Jews also consider themselves anti-Zionist, for a range of reasons, as discussed above.

35. Many people consider themselves anti-Zionist for reasons associated with their wider political commitments to antiracism, anticolonialism and/or economic, political and legal justice. It is clearly reasonable to argue, on the basis of numerous reputable studies that have found Israel to be, in effect, an apartheid-style state, that Zionism is a structurally unjust and/or racist or supremacist ideology.
36. There are many different forms of anti-Zionism, just as there are many different forms of Zionism. Anti-Zionists, just like Zionists, often disagree with each other on quite fundamental issues. Any blanket dismissal of anti-Zionism is intellectually meaningless and almost invariably politically motivated.
37. It is very important to note that the seriousness and validity of anti-Zionist views have been recognized in legal terms. Anti-Zionism has been recognized as a ‘protected belief’ within the framework of the UK Equalities Act (2010).¹⁹ The expression of anti-Zionist beliefs is protected free speech under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
38. Antisemitism is a hateful stance towards Jews *in toto*. Anti-Zionism, in contrast, is a critique of a political perspective. Both Jews and non-Jews can be, and are, Zionist, anti-Zionist, or neither of the two. There is no intrinsic connection between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. Attempts to argue that there is such a connection

¹⁹ Frank Cranmer, ‘Anti-Zionism as a protected belief: final judgment in *Miller v University of Bristol*’, ‘Law and Religion UK’ website, 16 October 2024: <https://lawandreligionuk.com/2024/10/16/anti-zionism-as-a-protected-belief-final-judgment-in-miller-v-university-of-bristol/>; Rebecca Denvers, ‘Anti-Zionist beliefs and the Equality Act 2010’, ‘Local Government Lawyer’ website, 16 April 2024: <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/education-law/343-education-features/57069-anti-zionist-beliefs-and-the-equality-act-2010> ; *University of Bristol v Miller* appeal court ruling, 4 August 2026: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a71b3b8331a9965a2ed46a9/University_of_Bristol_v_Dr_David_Miller_2026_EAT_84.pdf

typically confuse two profoundly different types of perspective, often using arguments that are highly spurious (as discussed in more detail above).

39. The IHRA ‘working definition’ of antisemitism is not helpful on this matter because of its lack of clarity. Many of its ‘examples’ of antisemitism seem to cast many forms of anti-Zionism under broad suspicion of antisemitism, and this document has often been used to shut down lawful speech.
40. Anti-Zionist arguments also cannot reasonably be considered, in themselves, as offensive, hurtful or disrespectful to Jews. Such arguments, in contrast, generally rest on long-standing traditions of serious thought (including Jewish traditions of thought such as Bundism), and are sincerely held by many people, including a significant and increasing number of Jews.