

Anti-Semitic?

To those who would decry Palestinian supporters as anti-Semitic

There has been a call on many US campuses for divestiture of US companies in Israel. Unfortunately, those who would decry this movement are falling into the same trap as that into which the United States government has already fallen. Moreover, their slanderous name-calling is jeopardizing perhaps the sole source of hope for finding a solution in the Middle East.

In the end it is not so much a matter of blaming Israel for all the ills of the Middle East, as it is coming to terms with the reality of the current situation. There are several points to be made in this regard.

The Israeli nation was born as an act of colonial aggression on territory set aside by the former British empire and later sanctioned by the United Nations. Since its inception the Palestinian people have known little but misery at the hands of the Israel government. Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian land can only aggravate an already bad situation.

In its effort to defend Israel against the Arab world, which has tried on several occasions to dislodge the Israeli state, the United States has been indirectly, if not directly, responsible for the post-war misery of many Palestinians. So long as the United States government continues to provide Israel with generous financial and military support, the situation is unlikely to improve.

The uncompromising support of the United States for the state of Israel perpetrates a tradition of colonial oppression and US expansionism that has led to the misery of millions of people the world over. In effect, the Palestinians are for the Israelis, what native North Americans were for early US Americans -- a savage people of "inferior culture" occupying land that can be put to more efficient economic use by a "superior culture". No one is asking the US government to remake history, rather simply put an end to its misguided past.

The Arab world blames Israel, however wrongly, for much of its own short-comings. This is because Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian homeland represents the perpetuation of British and French colonial oppression. Removing the Middle East conflict from the face of Arab news reports, would eliminate a major source of confrontation between the West and the Islamic world. It would also help the Arab world perceive the United States and other Western nations as wealthy and knowledgeable friends, rather than neo-colonial oppressors.

Though one cannot blame Israel for the ill-will the United States has created among the Arab peoples in Israel's defense, one can certainly encourage the United States government to cool its friendship with Israel in the name and protection of its own citizens. Part of Al Qaeda's popularity among many Muslims rides on the US reputation of a post-war colonial aggressor in Palestine.

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Israel is the dominant party in a two-sided conflict. One cannot find peace by looking for balance in an asymmetric relationship. Though it was once a conflict between Israel and the Arab world, today it is principally a struggle between Israelis and Palestinians. Though few Arab nations have lost interest, many Arab governments would like to see the conflict put to an end. But for a few radical, militant groups it is no longer a question of Israel's continued existence; rather, it is a matter of who must cede in rapprochement. Clearly it is Israel's turn.

There is no one more to blame than Israel itself for the bad publicity that it is currently receiving. The same propaganda machine that for so many years whitewashed Israeli atrocities against the Palestinian people can only be defeated by an equally strong propaganda machine that moves in the opposite direction. In order to awaken the United States government from its many years of complacent somnambulation the USAmerican people must be awakened - not by continued Palestinian violence against civilian targets, but by organized political action on the part of USAmerican anti-colonial supporters.

Finally, there is nothing anti-Semitic or hypocritical about being against the current Israeli government. There are many Jewish people living both inside and outside of Israel that see the current Israeli government for what it is -- a racist, self-aggrandizing, oppressive political organ with little sense of shame or human compassion that it does not employ to deceive those who would support democratic institutions around the world.

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