



## CONSENSUS STATEMENT ON THE DELEGITIMIZATION OF ISRAEL

Approved by the JCRC Assembly June 12, 2018

### Preamble

Following an education and research process, JCRC Consensus Policy Statements are crafted by the relevant JCRC committee and presented to the JCRC Assembly for deliberation and approval. These statements, which directly guide our advocacy, are the result of extensive discussion among our members and a wider swath of the Jewish community with divergent viewpoints. We seek to bring together the rich diversity of the Bay Area's organized Jewish community in order to find where there is consensus. Led by the Board President, the Assembly meets quarterly for education, deliberation and consensus building. Members include at-large and organizational representatives throughout the Bay Area. When the Assembly gathers, members air views and think critically about what Jewish values and experience have to teach us about the issues at hand.

The JCRC Consensus Policy Statement on the Delegitimization of Israel was crafted following a nine-month process for JCRC members and member organizations across the Bay Area. It was led by JCRC's Middle East Strategy Committee. The committee and JCRC professionals conducted over thirty confidential, in-depth interviews with Bay Area Jews representing diverse opinions about Israel and Zionism. We hosted three Town Halls to learn what our community believes and how it envisions change. Topics of the Town Halls included The First Amendment and Israel on Campus, Engaging Zionism, and When Does Criticism of Israel Cross the Line into Anti-Semitism? The Town Halls included panels of noted experts, advocates and community leaders discussing these key issues. Videos from the Town Halls and other resources are available online at <https://jcrc.org>.

JCRC is committed to a secure, vibrant, democratic and Jewish State of Israel. JCRC's [2007 Statement on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process](#) declared JCRC's support for "*a two-state solution to end the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, in which the parties peacefully coexist with fully normalized diplomatic relations, in mutual cooperation that promotes the economic development and social welfare of their respective citizens.*"

This statement is still relevant today, and JCRC continues to work toward the vision of two states for two peoples through projects such as our [Invest in Peace](#) campaign.

At the same time, we have watched the rhetoric and actions of groups protesting Israel become increasingly strident and divisive in the community and on campus. Criticism of particular Israeli government policies often morphs into questioning Israel's right to exist and the legitimacy of its founding. JCRC therefore decided to focus on an examination of this movement to delegitimize Israel and its strategies and tactics, such as anti-normalization and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS).

## Background

Organized attempts to delegitimize Israel are not new. Since its founding, there have been efforts to isolate Israel and deny its legitimacy. A turning point was the NGO Forum of the 2001 World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa. The NGO Forum branded Israel a "*racist, apartheid state in which Israel's brand of apartheid [is] a crime against humanity.*" The Forum issued a call to the international community to completely isolate Israel with comprehensive boycotts and sanctions, comparing it to apartheid South Africa.<sup>i</sup>

Over the past decade, the primary organizing tactic of the movement to delegitimize Israel has been BDS. While there were efforts at boycotts and divestment starting in the early 2000s on campus and in churches, the "official" BDS Movement began in 2005 with what is known as the original "Palestinian United Call for BDS against Israel," signed by 170 Palestinian organizations. The BDS Movement states that it will promote BDS against Israel "*until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights.*"<sup>ii</sup>

However, the realization of the goals in the "Call to BDS," when taken together, is incompatible with a two-state solution, which recognizes the right of self-determination of both peoples.<sup>iii</sup> Statements emanating from many prominent BDS leaders locally and internationally show broad support for a one-state solution, meaning the dissolution of the Jewish State of Israel.<sup>iv</sup> [For more information on the BDS Movement and quotes from leaders see - <https://jcrc.org/resources/>.]

The movement to delegitimize Israel has shifted tactics to more heavily focus on anti-normalization.<sup>v</sup> One of the leading organizations promoting anti-normalization, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), defines "*normalization*" in a Palestinian and Arab context as "*the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people.*"<sup>vi</sup>

Support for BDS is often used as a litmus test for anti-normalization. In other words, any project, program or individual that does not adhere to and support the Call to BDS, would be unacceptable and therefore be the target of anti-normalization activities, such as protests and boycotts. Anti-normalization advocates insist on "*co-resistance*" instead of "*co-existence.*"<sup>vii</sup>

It is important to note that many advocates of anti-normalization reject Israel's right to exist and therefore define "*the occupation*" as encompassing all of Israel, not just the West Bank and Gaza. In other words, they contest the establishment of Israel in 1948 and aren't focused on the territories that Israel has controlled since 1967. They often describe Zionism as a form of racism. Many, but not all, supporters of the BDS Movement engage in anti-normalization.

In the U.S., supporters of anti-normalization may also reject engagement with any groups or individuals who are Zionist and/or oppose BDS (regardless of their position on the policies of the Israeli government).<sup>viii</sup> One of the leaders of the Women's March famously said in 2017 that Zionism and feminism are incompatible.<sup>ix</sup> Another example is the Chicago Dyke March, whose leaders said the 2017 march was anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian, and so they forced two marchers to leave because they said that the Star of David on the marchers' Jewish and LGBTQ pride flag was associated with Zionism and that made people feel "unsafe."<sup>x</sup>

Anti-normalization supporters may disrupt speakers or programs by Israelis or Israel supporters. In 2016 at San Francisco State University, for example, protesters chanted and shouted expletives and threatening language so loudly that the mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, was unable to speak to the audience. After he left, these shouts turned toward the Jewish students.<sup>xi</sup> This scene has been repeated across the United States, particularly on college campuses.<sup>xii</sup>

The exclusion of San Francisco Hillel, a Jewish campus organization, as a participant in the Know Your Rights Fair in 2017 at San Francisco State University is an example of how anti-normalization has led to discrimination against Jewish students due to perceived support for Israel.<sup>xiii</sup> Because of anti-normalization, some Jewish student groups on campus find themselves unwelcome in campus activities and social justice spheres where their values and agendas otherwise align.

Other forms of anti-normalization include when performing artists are lobbied to cancel appearances in Israel, sports teams refuse to play Israeli teams and academic associations vote to boycott Israeli professors.

## **Policy Principles**

### ***Definitions***

For purposes of this consensus statement, we will use the following definitions:

- *Zionism* is the right of Jews to self-determination and sovereignty in their ancient homeland of Israel. This aspiration was realized with the establishment of the modern Jewish and democratic State of Israel. Zionists have a wide range of political perspectives, and Zionism does not mean support for any particular policies or actions of the government of Israel.

- *Anti-Zionism* is the rejection of the right of Israel to exist as the homeland for the Jewish people.
- *Anti-Semitism* is prejudice and/or discrimination directed toward Jews as individuals or as a group. Anti-Semitism is rooted in age-old stereotypes and myths that target Jews because of their religious beliefs, religious practices or identity as a people.
- *Anti-normalization* is the rejection of any form of engagement with Israelis or individuals/organizations that support Israel – or don't support BDS or don't denounce Zionism – even if those individuals/organizations are working to change the actions and policies of the Israeli government.
- *Delegitimization of Israel* is the attempt through rhetoric or action to undermine Israel's legitimacy as a nation and its right to exist as the homeland for the Jewish people.

### **Zionism**

JCRC strongly supports Israel's existence as the democratic homeland of the Jewish people with full and equal rights for all of Israel's citizens. We are an institution that embraces Zionism. Israel is integral to modern Jewish identity and tied to the personal, communal and religious values of many Jews. However, there are a variety of ways that people relate to Israel, regardless of the depth of their passion. The Zionism of many Jews is, for example, shaped by social justice values, to which they also want Israel to adhere. Others consider security and the continuity of Israel to be of primary concern. For many Jews, Zionism means the right of Jews to have a sovereign state that is treated like any other state by the international community.

The definition of Zionism has been and continues to be distorted by some to further a political agenda against the State of Israel. Harkening to overturned UN resolution 3379<sup>xiv</sup>, critics of Zionism have falsely equated it with racism and labeled Zionists as racists. This has been a basis for exclusion of Zionist Jews, including those working to change Israeli government policies, from social justice and other circles.

### **Criticism of the Israeli Government**

The organized Jewish community has a broad range of views on the policies of the State of Israel. Criticism of policies of the State of Israel is not inherently anti-Semitic nor is it delegitimizing of Israel as a democratic and Jewish state. However, it may be anti-Semitic and/or delegitimizing to collectively blame Jews for the actions of the State of Israel; use anti-Jewish stereotypes or language to criticize Israel; use Holocaust and Nazi comparisons with reference to Israel; call for the elimination of the Jewish State of Israel; single Israel out for condemnation for behavior or policies that are ignored when carried out by other countries; or deny that Jews as a people have a historic connection to the land.

### ***Delegitimization of Israel and the BDS Movement***

We oppose any attempts to delegitimize Israel, including the BDS Movement and anti-normalization. The ultimate goal of the BDS Movement and its leaders is the elimination of the world's only Jewish state<sup>xv</sup>. Israel was founded after millennia of dispossession, persecution and forced dispersion of Jews and this is why, for many, delegitimizing Israel is perceived as anti-Semitic.

We acknowledge that not all supporters of the BDS Movement oppose the existence of Israel. While JCRC disagrees, some believe that BDS tactics are the best way to force Israel to make changes in its policies toward the Palestinians and to promote a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The issue of products made in Israeli settlements in the West Bank is one that inspires heated debate. There are some Israelis and Jews who strongly support Israel and who choose to refrain from buying products made in West Bank settlements as a way to send a message about their concerns regarding specific Israeli government actions and policies. Others believe this is counter-productive and punishes both Israelis and Palestinians, while offering no prospect of constructive change, as well as discrediting Israel and further isolating her in the international community. JCRC does not endorse any boycotts of Israel, and also acknowledges that an unwillingness to purchase products made in West Bank settlements is distinct from the BDS Movement, which seeks to eliminate Israel.

### ***Language***

We reject the use of inflammatory language and symbols when describing Israel, such as apartheid, colonialism, white supremacy, genocide and Nazi analogies. Narratives that equate Zionism with racism and colonialism and deny Jewish connection to the land are used in an attempt to portray Israel as fundamentally illegitimate. This definition of Zionism is inaccurate and is not used by most scholars nor by the majority of Jews globally. It is politically motivated and seeks to impose an external definition of Zionism without regard for how the Jewish community defines it.

This use of extreme language, as well as attempts to shut down civil discourse and exclude Zionist perspectives, has created a very unwelcoming atmosphere in segments of the community, particularly on college campuses. Furthermore, some groups, although they claim to oppose anti-Semitism, tacitly allow classic anti-Semitic language and tropes to be used. Some Jewish students have reported feeling threatened on campus, and many Jews have felt shunned in liberal and progressive circles.

Just as we decry attempts to delegitimize Israel and the Jewish right to self-determination, we oppose attempts to delegitimize the rights of Palestinians to self-identification and national self-determination. We oppose anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim rhetoric.

### ***Civil Society and Anti-Normalization***

JCRC strongly opposes anti-normalization.<sup>xvi</sup>

Freedom of speech is unquestionably necessary in a democracy. A robust and open exchange of ideas is a foundational part and must be a norm of civil society. Nowhere is this more important than on college campuses, where students should be encouraged to go outside their “*comfort zone*” to explore new ways of thinking. Individuals on campus and in the community should be encouraged to engage with positions different from their own and should do so with civility.

Anti-normalization works to oppose these values by shutting down the exchange of ideas. Attempts to disrupt programs are attacks on the speaker rather than just the argument, and they are inherently discriminatory and stifle free speech. Additionally, the anti-Zionist/pro-BDS litmus test used by some progressive and social justice groups purposely excludes many members of the mainstream Jewish community from working on causes they care about that are totally unrelated to Israel.

Anti-normalization also undermines the goal of building peaceful coexistence in the future and the many Israeli and Palestinian groups working for social change and toward making the two-state solution a reality.<sup>xvii</sup>

### ***Two-State Solution***

There is a wide range of perspectives on how best to bring about change and a lasting peace in the region. We know from scientific polling data that the vast majority of the Bay Area Jewish community, affiliated and unaffiliated, supports a two-state solution and opposes the elimination of the State of Israel. The same poll also found strong support for the two-states among the general Bay Area voter population.<sup>xviii</sup>

Based on this data, we know that anti-Zionism and the delegitimization of Israel do not resonate with the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community and with the values of the Bay Area generally, regardless of political perspective on the policies of the government of Israel.

### **Recommendations for JCRC Response**

The JCRC should:

- a) Promote approaches that help Israelis and Palestinians create models of peaceful coexistence and sustain support for a two-state solution, such as JCRC’s Invest in Peace Campaign,<sup>xix</sup> and the Alliance for Middle East Peace’s (ALLMEP) International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.<sup>xx</sup>
- b) Encourage universities and other institutions, especially where individuals feel marginalized because of their Zionist perspectives, to set a tone and expectation of open and civil exchange on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to not allow anti-normalization to harm that process.

- c) Vigorously oppose attempts to delegitimize Israel and to shut down and/or suppress pro-Israel views from being heard in the public sphere and on campus.
- d) Educate the community on a narrative of Zionism and the creation of Israel that is inclusive and reflective of the organized Jewish community's values and how we define Zionism.
- e) Provide opportunities to the Jewish community for civil engagement on all of the issues mentioned in this statement. Discussion and dialogue do not imply endorsement of a particular point of view.
- f) Actively engage in coalitions that pursue a just society so that we can advance that vision, and also not cede space to groups who seek to drive a wedge between the Jewish community and social justice and other communities.
- g) Encourage confident, proud Jewish presence in diverse coalitions, which will ensure that when Israel-related issues are raised, our aspirations for a two-state solution and our community's values are represented.
- h) Refuse to allow anti-normalization and others' definitions of Zionism to preclude JCRC and Jewish community members from exercising our responsibility to be engaged in all aspects of civil society, including fighting for social justice, as that would be a victory for BDS.
- i) Encourage Jewish Institutions in the United States to engage in civil discourse about Israel that is inclusive of diverse opinions, including on how to best support the democratic and Jewish State of Israel and advance efforts to move toward a peaceful and just two-state solution.

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<sup>i</sup> "...impose a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state as in the case of South Africa which means the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel."

<http://academic.udayton.edu/race/06hrights/WCAR2001/NGOFORUM/Palestinans.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> The "official" BDS Movement began in 2005 with what is known as the original "Palestinian United Call for BDS Against Israel" (<https://bdsmovement.net/call>), in which 170 Palestinian "civil society" organizations signed a statement with three main goals:

1. *Ending Israel's occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;*
2. *Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and*
3. *Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194. See [https://jcrc.org/uploads/BDS\\_Movement\\_2016.pdf](https://jcrc.org/uploads/BDS_Movement_2016.pdf) for more details.*

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/opinion/global/zero-dark-zero.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/opinion/global/zero-dark-zero.html?_r=0),  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iggdO7C70P8>

<sup>iv</sup> Examples:

- 1) <https://web.archive.org/web/20160629230932/http://mondoweiss.net/2016/06/please-boycott-governor/#sthash.0cUOYNYm.dpuf> “individuals to cease and avoid all economic, academic and cultural activity that supports the racist state of Israel until that state dissolves itself, welcomes all Palestinians to return to their homes, restores all of their property and pays damages for the harm it has done to Palestinians and their property”.
- 2) <https://web.archive.org/web/20100619212701/http://counterpunch.org/barghouti12132003.html> “Good riddance! The two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is finally dead. But someone has to issue an official death certificate before the rotting corpse is given a proper burial and we can all move on and explore the more just, moral and therefore enduring alternative for peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Mandate Palestine: the one-state solution.”
- 3) <https://web.archive.org/web/20160103000502/https://electronicintifada.net/content/boycotts-work-interview-omar-barghouti/8263> “AM: Finally, you have argued numerous times in your published works that ultimately you would like to see in historic Palestine a binational, secular, democratic state. OB: Not a binational state — I am completely against binationalism. A secular, democratic state, yes, but not binational. There is a big difference.”
- 4) At 14:05: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZMp83syN40&feature=youtu.be&t=839> “it matters to us not only as Palestinians but because bringing down Israel will really benefit everyone in the world and everyone in society, particularly workers”
- 5) At 10:41: <https://youtu.be/bZMp83syN40?t=642> “I think BDS shouldn't just be limited to the points that have been brought out internationally, I think you should boycott any Zionist institution, academic, organization, whether it be from 1967 occupied Palestine or 1948 occupied Palestine because BDS really should be about shifting the cultural framework and shifting how we see Israel and isolating it and making it feel unwelcome anywhere and everywhere, and the only way we can do that is by making it clear that we are not only disengaging ourselves as workers as activists from institutions or organizations or individuals that profit off of occupation in 1967 Palestine. The way we do that is we make it clear that the real issue, the heart of the issue is an anti-colonial struggle, we're resisting colonialism in Palestine and colonialism entails all of occupied Palestine from Haifa to Jerusalem to Ramallah, right?”

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.jta.org/2017/07/18/news-opinion/united-states/forget-bds-its-anti-normalization-you-should-be-worrying-about>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.pacbi.org/atemplate.php?id=100>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://lisaschirch.wordpress.com/2018/01/07/dialogue-bds-and-anti-normalization-reflections-on-israeli-and-palestinian-changemakers/>

<sup>viii</sup> For more information see: <http://thirdnarrative.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Anti-normalization-Brief.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/linda-sarsour-zionism-and-feminism-are-incompatible-1.5448822>

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/chicago-dyke-march-bans-jewish-pride-flags-they-made-people-feel-unsafe-1.5488238> and <https://forward.com/news/national/376009/chicago-dyke-march-controversy-misunderstanding-anti-semitism/>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.jweekly.com/2016/04/09/sfsu-president-promises-full-investigation-after-protesters-disrupt-jerusal/>

<sup>xii</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/students-are-shouting-down-pro-israel-speakers--and-silencing-free-speech/2016/12/07/9211c3b8-bbd7-11e6-91ee-1adddfe36cbe\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.24e2a33af675](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/students-are-shouting-down-pro-israel-speakers--and-silencing-free-speech/2016/12/07/9211c3b8-bbd7-11e6-91ee-1adddfe36cbe_story.html?utm_term=.24e2a33af675)

<sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.jweekly.com/2017/08/04/investigation-finds-hillel-improperly-excluded-sfsu-student-fair/>

<sup>xiv</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_General\\_Assembly\\_Resolution\\_3379](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_3379)

<sup>xv</sup> See endnote #4

<sup>xvi</sup> Some have argued that there is an inconsistency between opposing anti-normalization, on the one hand, and the guidelines of many Jewish organizations that do not permit hosting speakers for the purpose of advocating in favor of BDS, on the other hand. We do not believe these positions to be at odds. While Jewish organizations may or may not decide to host pro-BDS speakers themselves, most do not assert that such speakers be denied their



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constitutionally protected right to speak and be heard. By contrast, the anti-normalization movement consistently seeks to disrupt and prevent viewpoints with which they disagree from being heard in any public or private forum.

<sup>xvii</sup> See <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Encountering-Peace-Anti-anti-normalization-460960> and

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/why-palestinians-should-support-normalization-with-israel>

<sup>xviii</sup> Private poll JCRC conducted in the summer of 2015 of over 2000 Bay Area voters. The poll found that 80% of affiliated Bay Area Jews and 72% of unaffiliated Bay Area Jews supported a two-state solution. Among the general population of Bay Area voters, 19% declined to state/didn't know. Of those who did respond, 69% supported two-states, 14% favored the status quo, 11% favored a binational state and 5% believed that all of Israel should be given to the Palestinians. This translates into a margin of greater than 5 to 1 that Bay Area voters support the existence of the Jewish State of Israel.

<sup>xix</sup> <http://investinpeace.org/>

<sup>xx</sup> <http://www.allmep.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ALLMEP-International-Fund-Concept-Paper.pdf>