



Saying “No” to the Delegitimization of Israel

Every day we read something new about the global campaign to delegitimize Israel. From world capitals and the United Nations, to university campuses and so-called human rights organizations, Israel is branded with labels usually reserved for the world’s worst regimes.

With so much hostility directed toward Israel, it’s important to note whenever a group of people decides to push back against those who wish to demonize the Jewish state.

A new group called Friends of Israel is doing just that. Established in Europe over the summer, the group is led by people who are not Jewish and whose motivations are based on the firm conviction that Israel is part of the Western world. The initiative is led by Former Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar. “All we want is a normal and reasonable conversation about Israel,” he says on the group’s website. “Surely, that is not too much to ask.”

To publicize Friends of Israel, Aznar traveled to Washington, D.C., for his organization’s American premiere. While in town, he hosted a breakfast briefing for members of Congress and delivered the keynote address at a Georgetown dinner for Washington-area journalists.

“Israel is under a new kind of attack,” Aznar said in his speech. “Not conventional war as in 1948, ‘56, ‘67 or ‘73. Not terrorism as we saw in the 70s, 80s and 90s. But a new kind of attack—an attack on Israel legitimacy, on her right to exist. A “soft-war” where many of its adversaries are employing legal tricks, multinational bodies and an army of dubious NGOs to present internationally Israel as an illegitimate state, as a barbarian state, a state that should be isolated and converted into a pariah state.

We think this is intolerable. It is unjust, morally wrong, and a strategic risk—not only for Israel and its people—but for all of us.”

Friends of Israel has assembled an impressive group of founding members, including Vaclav Havel, former Czech president and anti-Communist dissident; Alejandro Toledo, former president of Peru; Lord William David Trimble, former first minister of Northern Ireland and a Nobel Peace Prize winner; Marcello Pera, former president of the Italian senate; Fiamma Nirenstein, Italian journalist, author and politician; and many more.

The group, if it is to be successful, must overcome the widespread view that Israel is to blame for the decades-long Arab-Israeli conflict. Here’s to hoping that the voice of reason prevails in Europe, and that Israel is treated as an equal member in the community of nations.