



# Middle East Spotlight

## Israel and the “Longest Hatred”

In 2004, Israel officially designated January 27 as “National Day to Combat Anti-Semitism.” On that date in 1945, the Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated by the Soviet army. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many had hoped that the horrors of state-sponsored genocidal anti-Semitism would inspire the world’s communities to abandon the age-old hatred of Jews. Unfortunately, instead of disappearing, anti-Semitism has undergone yet another transformational change.

Over the past two millennia, anti-Semitism has repeatedly evolved. In the Middle Ages, Jews were hated for their religion; in post-Enlightenment Europe, for their race; and today, for their nation-state. Previous forms of anti-Semitism have not disappeared, instead they have adapted to the changing social milieu.

The zeitgeist of today is human rights, and the target is the nation-state of the Jewish people. Like every country, Israel must balance delicate political and policy issues. But no other country in the world receives such a high level of criticism. This, as Britain’s Chief Rabbi Emeritus Lord Jonathan Sacks [wrote](#) in April 2016, “is why Israel—the only fully functioning democracy in the Middle East with a free press and independent judiciary—is regularly accused of the five crimes against human rights: racism, apartheid, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and attempted genocide. This is the blood libel of our time.”

One of the most prominent enablers of this “new” anti-Semitism is the United Nations. Created in 1945 to promote humanitarian values, the U.N. played an important role in the founding of Israel in 1948. However, since then it has routinely attacked Israel. For example, since the creation of the U.N. Human Rights Council in 2006, it has passed more resolutions condemning Israel than it has for the rest of the world combined. The Council consistently displays both an unseemly focus and double-standard in its treatment of the Jewish state. In April 2017, the entire U.S. Senate—Democrats and Republicans alike—sent a [letter](#) to U.N. General Secretary Antonio Guterres decrying that “[t]oo often, the U.N. is exploited as a vehicle for targeting Israel,” which has “reinforced the broader scourge of anti-Semitism.”

The U.N. has also facilitated the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, which falsely claims to promote human rights, while actually working to delegitimize and isolate Israel. BDS proponents seek to drive a wedge between Israel and the rest of the world—separating Israel’s government, businesses, universities and people from their partners abroad. By manipulating the language of international law, the BDS movement depicts Israel as an illegitimate aggressor, then seeks to sanction those who interact with the Jewish state.

Right now, two important bills are moving through Congress: the Combatting BDS Act of 2017 and the Israel Anti-Boycott Act. Both bills, if passed and signed into law, will put the U.S. squarely on the side of standing with Israel against those who wish to do her, and the Jewish people, harm.

To confront anti-Semitism’s long and troubling history, we must start by understanding how anti-Semitism continues to be manifested today. Defending Israel’s legitimacy is part of that responsibility. As Rabbi Sacks [instructs](#), “The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews.”