



My local Labour controlled council has just voted, like other councils, as well as universities and the UK government, to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. This consists of a rather loose basic definition, followed by a rambling discourse around the subject that twice mentions Israel and then 11 examples, 7 of which refer to the state of Israel. Anyone with a functioning brain might suspect that this definition has less to do with protecting Jews from antisemitism than with shielding Israel from criticism.

When the European Parliament were due to vote on whether to adopt this definition, I wrote to my MEPs urging them to reject it. Two replied in identical terms, pointing out that the definition makes it clear that *'criticism of Israel cannot be regarded as antisemitic'*. Except that it doesn't. They lied. Why would they do that? What it actually says is that *'criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic'*

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The italicised phrase changes everything. Why is it there? Obviously to muddy the waters. Who is to decide whether criticism of Israel goes beyond that levelled against any other country? In any case, Israel is not like any other country. It is a settler colonial state, founded on massacres and ethnic cleansing. It is, by any definition, a criminal state. Transferring Israeli settlers into the occupied territory is illegal, as is transferring Palestinian prisoners into Israeli jails. The Wall, built largely on Palestinian land was judged illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004. The collective punishment inflicted on the people of Gaza is a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel itself is a racist state where 'Arabs' are viewed as a demographic threat. Unlike other countries (Myanmar is an exception), it is **not a state for all its citizens but for all the Jews in the world** , who are given the 'Right of Return', a right denied to the indigenous people.

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