



## THE DELEGITIMIZATION OF ISRAEL

Attacking Israel's legitimacy is contesting its very right to exist as a Jewish state. This is the aim of delegitimization, which seeks to isolate Israel as a pariah state and reject the notion of a two-state solution. Delegitimizers garner support by appealing to North America's most vulnerable targets, including college campuses, churches, labor unions, human rights organizations and minority groups. But defining and confronting delegitimization is no easy feat; it takes place on many playing fields with varied voices.

### What is delegitimization?

Delegitimization negates the right of the Jewish people to live in a sovereign democratic and Jewish state in the historical homeland of the Jewish people (modern day Israel). This assault on Israel's legitimacy is intended to brand Israel as a "pariah" nation, to isolate it from the international community and make it increasingly difficult to support it economically and politically.

### How is this threat different to what Israel has faced in the past?

Current efforts to undermine Israel's right to sovereign statehood constitute a new, popularized, and decentralized means of attacking the foundations of the Jewish state. The current international campaign was crystallized at the infamous 2001 UN Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa. The proponents of the current campaign unjustly seek to equate Israel with Apartheid South Africa, Nazi Germany, and other odious national and political movements. By morally equating Israel with other evils, it embeds a notion of Israel that is often difficult to shake.

### What is the role of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement?

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) have become the central organizing principle in the current campaign to delegitimize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish, democratic state. They are but one set of tactics employed by the delegitimization network which seeks to undermine Israel's legitimacy. The introduction of BDS jargon into the conversation about Israel is an attempt to place Israel among the unholy ranks of Apartheid South Africa, Iran and other rogue regimes.

### How is delegitimization different from criticism?

Criticism is a natural function of any democracy. Its purpose is to strengthen democracy by questioning leaders and holding them accountable for their actions. In contrast, the purpose of delegitimization is to destroy a country. Regarding Israel, delegitimization includes questioning the validity of Israel's founding, demonizing Israel and equating its policies with Nazism, apartheid and racist ideologies, holding Israel to double standards, and promoting a one-state solution (Israel's demographic dissolution). If you are unsure whether an organization is questioning Israel's legitimacy, ask yourself the following question: *Does the organization or person voicing the criticism or pursuing the policy, share a commitment to a two-state solution and support Israel's right to exist as a democratic Jewish state living beside a democratic state of Palestine?*

### What organizations are involved in delegitimization activities?

Organizations that delegitimize Israel include groups and individuals of the radical left, Arab and Islamic groups, and so-called post or anti-Zionist Jews and Israelis. Seemingly strange bedfellows, these groups negate Israel's right to exist based on a variety of political and philosophical arguments.

### How can we overcome this challenge?

The Jewish community needs to mobilize itself to reach out to audiences that are vulnerable to messages that demonize Israel and Israelis. We must also educate our friends and ourselves about the tools of delegitimization. Only when we are aware of the attack and understand its motive, can we effectively respond. We must maintain a coordinated effort and remain vigilant of the threats and assaults on Israel's legitimacy. When threats and assaults arise, we must quickly and effectively respond using the necessary tools in our arsenal.