

# Scholars Circle Resource Guide

Double-sided

## A New Kind of Response to Anti-Israel Claims

SCHOLARS CIRCLE



### About Dr. Andrew Pessin

Andrew Pessin is Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies at Connecticut College and Campus Bureau Editor of the *Algemeiner*. His many books include *Anti-Zionism on Campus*, *Poisoning the Wells: Antisemitism in Contemporary America*, and *The Jewish God Question*, as well as several novels. One recent novel is *Bright College Years*, published 2024 by Open Books. Long ago he enjoyed some moments of fame portraying “The Genius” on the David Letterman Show.

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“*Bright College Years* is a wistful trip in a time machine...travel there with Pessin to a Yale of the early 80s, when a handful of friends thought ever-so-briefly they owned the world.”—**Scott Johnston, Yale '82**  
**author of Amazon bestseller, *Campusland***



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# Common Q&A's

## **In what way is the 2024 anti-Israel campaign still really about 1948?**

Today's anti-Israelists allege various injustices committed by contemporary Israel, but these allegations are largely based on the assumption about 1948. For if the founding of Israel were perfectly just, then many Israeli actions that anti-Israelists object to (such as the security barrier) would be seen not as illegitimate measures of domination but as legitimate measures of self-defense. If the establishment of Jewish sovereignty is just in the first place, in other words, then most of what Israel does would be justified as self-defense. That anti-Israelists claim those measures are unjust, then, reflects their belief that the establishment of Jewish sovereignty was unjust. 2024, then, is really still about 1948.

## **So how can you grant (for the sake of argument) the injustice of 1948 yet still reject today's anti-Israelists' claim that they are now fighting for "justice"?**

The short answer is that it is not just to rectify a previous injustice by means of even greater injustices, and that most of what anti-Israelists demand today is profoundly unjust. There are several ways of developing that point. One illustration might be that, while there may be very good reasons for a couple not to have a child, once that child is born it would be quite unjust for them to murder it on the basis of those reasons. Similarly once the Jewish State of Israel was established, dismantling it, likely to require the ethnic cleansing or even murder of millions of people who were not themselves responsible for the alleged injustice of 1948, would be a profoundly greater injustice.

## **But isn't there a legal right to "resist" "occupation," even "by any means necessary," as anti-Israelists claim?**

Even granting (for the sake of argument only) that Israel is "occupying Palestinian territory," the answer is actually no. Anti-Israelists cite a U.N. General Assembly resolution that does not in fact have the force of law. To the contrary, both the Geneva Conventions and U.N. Security Council resolutions that do have the force of law make it explicitly clear that it is always and without exception illegal to target and kill civilians. So even if 1948 were unjust, the violent "resistance" perpetrated by groups such as Hamas is simply not permitted.

# Key Takeaways

- ✓ One cannot understand what motivates today's anti-Israel movement without seeing that, what motivates them, ultimately, is the belief that the 1948 establishment of Israel was a massive injustice. They may be alleging various Israeli misdeeds in 2024, but their objection ultimately is about 1948.
- ✓ That realization suggests two complementary ways of responding. First, defenders of Jews and Israel must counter their "false narrative" about the injustice of 1948. But second, one may argue that 1948 is irrelevant: even if 1948 were unjust, that ultimately fails to justify the actions and goals of today's anti-Israel movement, aiming to dismantle the Jewish state.
- ✓ "International law" has in many ways been hijacked and weaponized against Israel. For just one example, anti-Israelists defend terrorism, including the Hamas massacre of October 7, by insisting that Palestinians have a (legal) "right" to "resist by any means necessary." But this claim is based on a blatant misreading of international law, and directly rejected by a proper reading of international law.

*The views expressed by the speaker don't necessarily reflect Chai Mitzvah's official position.*

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