

What is Anti-Palestinian Racism?

Anti-Palestinian Racism (“APR”) is a political concept created by the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA), adopted and advanced by anti-Israel activists in the U.S. and elsewhere.

According to the ACLA definition: “Anti-Palestinian Racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives.”

This definition of “racism” is not simply a description of discrimination against individuals based on their Palestinian identity. Such discrimination is already covered under existing anti-discrimination legislation.

APR, on the other hand, extends the label of “racism” to anyone who does not affirmatively espouse a preferred narrative or political view. By cynically exploiting society’s aversion to racism, APR aims to shield controversial Palestinian political expression while repressing Jewish and Israeli political, cultural and religious expression.

Repressing Disfavored Expression

APR condemns as “racist” any expression insufficiently supportive of the “Palestinian narrative.” How?

- by declaring it unacceptable to claim that Palestinian movements are inherently violent or are motivated by hate and antisemitism, according to the ACLA definition.
- by declaring it “anti-Palestinian racism” to describe Hamas as a terrorist organization, according to the Institute for the Understanding of Anti-Palestinian Racism. (notwithstanding Hamas’ designation as a terrorist organization by many countries and its actions before, during, and after October 7, 2023).
- by considering Jewish cultural and religious expression to be racist by “denying the settler-colonialization of Palestine.” This would include:
 - observing Jewish holidays or traditions that center on the Land of Israel, which is at the heart of Judaism.
 - acknowledging historical and archaeological facts that evidence the Jewish people’s indigeneity to the land.

APR also imposes viewpoint-based restrictions on speech by making controversial political and legal questions like the “right of return,” the “existence of Palestine,” and “the Nakba” off-limits for debate. Questioning the “Palestinian narrative” on these topics is deemed “racism.” This isn’t about tolerance. It’s about muzzling opposing views and shutting down debate.

Imposing Political Orthodoxies

The definition of APR extends the definition of racism to include:

- “erasing mention of...Palestinian narratives in mainstream media.”
- “denying funding or sponsorship for projects that include Palestinian narratives.”
- “excluding Palestinians from speaking opportunities on topics related to Palestine.”
- “omitting references to Palestinian identity or cultural contributions.”

In this way, APR seeks to impose political orthodoxies, compel anti-Israel political expression, and even subsidize anti-Israel activism.

In the words of the U.S. Supreme Court: “If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.”

Instead of protecting rights, the adoption of the concept of APR would lead to draconian restrictions, which threaten academic freedom and the free marketplace of ideas.