

Is Israel a Settler-Colonialist State?

Anti-Zionist propaganda portrays Israel as a type of European “settler-colonialist” state. **This is an inversion of the truth.**

What is Settler-Colonialism?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “settler-colonialism” as:

“a type of colonialism in which the indigenous peoples of a colonized region are displaced by settlers who permanently form a society there.”

According to the legal encyclopedia hosted by the Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School, “settler-colonialism” is based on “the theft and exploitation of lands and resources that belong to the indigenous.”

Jews Cannot Steal or Colonize Their Own Homeland

- Jews have been indigenous to the Land of Israel since biblical times. Those born in Europe or anywhere else cannot be considered colonizers of their own people’s homeland where Jewish communities have existed for millennia.
- Throughout various attempts to subjugate and expel Jews from their homeland, their descendants have returned to restore their communities in the Land of Israel.
- The Zionist waves of immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were part of a long history of immigration by Jews to their homeland. These immigrants did not forcibly displace anyone, but rather purchased lands on which to rebuild their communities.

Inversion of the Concept of Settler-Colonialism

- The concept of “settler-colonialism” more aptly describes the Muslim conquest of Byzantine Palestine in the 7th century CE than it does the purchase and habitation by Jews of land within the historic Jewish homeland.

- Similarly, it was Arab armies from neighboring lands that sought to annihilate the modern State of Israel and to displace the Zionist Jews who had come to rebuild communities that had been destroyed by previous colonialist powers. Jews developed what had been barren desert and swamp into a lush and fertile oasis. This benefited not only Jews, but also Arabs, who immigrated in even greater numbers than Jews to the land.
- Notwithstanding the attempt by modern Palestinian leaders to expunge Jewish history and present the Arabs as the natives of the land, the 1937 Peel Commission made it clear that the Arab population in Palestine significantly increased only as a result of Arab immigration in the 20th century subsequent to Jewish immigration and development of the land:
 - “The general beneficent effect of Jewish immigration on Arab welfare is illustrated by the fact that the increase in the Arab population is most marked in urban areas affected by Jewish development. A comparison of the census returns in 1922 and 1931 shows that, six years ago, the increase percent in Haifa was 86, in Jaffa 62, in Jerusalem 37, while in purely Arab towns such as Nablus and Hebron it was only 7, and at Gaza there was a decrease of 2 percent.”

Other Inapplicable Concepts of Settler-Colonialism

Other aspects of settler-colonialism include oppression based on racism, white supremacy and Eurocentrism -- none of which apply to the Zionists.

- Israel’s residents are of diverse races and colors. More Israelis are descended from Middle Eastern and North African cultures than from European ones.
- Israel’s Declaration of Independence ensures complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex.