

## Double standards and the other ‘occupations’

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In contrast to most of my colleagues, I am one of the pragmatists among Israeli political pundits – neither left nor right on issues of territory and borders.

In my vision of Zionism, the central goal is to maintain and strengthen Jewish democratic sovereignty in the Land of Israel, within the existing international and regional framework. I don’t see how borders that reflect biblical Israel, and encompass millions of Palestinians, further this objective, but neither do I find evidence that a return to the armistice lines set after the 1948 Arab invasion, including a divided Jerusalem, will bring us lasting peace based on mutual acceptance.

Which leaves a realistic, as distinct from messianic, middle ground to be defined and carefully nurtured.

Based on this pragmatic and non-ideological perspective, I have lost patience with the torrent of self-righteous and hypocritical condemnations of Israeli “occupation” and false cries of “apartheid.”

The scale of Islamic (or Arab) occupation, settlement and racism around the world is far greater than anything that Israel is accused of, but this is never mentioned in polite or diplomatic company. The Arab tribes that followed Muhammad spread their conquest and settlement activities throughout the Middle East, and then kept going to central Asia, western Europe (Spain and Portugal), eastern Europe (to Kosovo and Albania), northern Africa, and east to Asia, including parts of India, (and what is now Pakistan), Malaysia, Indonesia, and southern Thailand.

In these jihads, anyone who didn’t accept Islam was simply killed – there was no “resistance,” because no one was left to resist. Unlike Israel in 1948 or 1967, these occupiers and settlers did not have the excuse of fighting for their lives against a powerful enemy sworn to “drive them into the sea.”

After many centuries (not decades), this Arab and Islamic occupation continues to be characterized by intolerance for different faiths and opinions. The brief period of enlightened Islamic rule, under the Umayyad Caliphate beginning in the 10th century in Spain (Al-Andalus), still left Christians and Jews as second class citizens –

dhimmis – who were tolerated, at best, and often persecuted and expelled. But none of this is mentioned by the politically correct defenders of Islam in the United Nations (as it prepares for its Durban Review Conference), nor is it discussed by so-called “human rights” organizations, journalists, and academics and activists on campuses (York University being a case in point).

Some Christian leaders and groups are no better in their obsessive attacks on “Israeli occupation,” such as retired South African archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well as the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Lutheran leaders campaigning for divestment, the Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Aid, Caritas and others.

They deign to preach to Israel while ignoring the history of occupation, mass murder of “non-believers” and expulsion in the histories of their own institutions. As the successors to the occupying armies that massacred and brutally persecuted Jews, they are certainly in no position to moralize or preach to Israelis. Europe and its former colonies are largely Christian societies today as a result of this violent and intolerant history – the “occupation” continues.

The claim that Muslim and Christian occupation and intolerance is all ancient history – and, therefore, irrelevant – while Israel’s so-called “crimes” are recent is another canard designed to excuse the double standards. If morality (or rather immorality) had a statute of limitations, how many years would it take before these various occupations became legitimate and settlers turned into citizens? Would 20 years be enough? Or 60? Or perhaps 200 years?

The bottom line is that pseudo-moral rhetoric should have no place in political considerations. Stripped of the self-righteous posturing, the emphasis on Israeli “occupation” and “settlement” should be recognized as simply another form of the ongoing racism and anti-Semitism that seeks to prevent the Jewish people from maintaining sovereign equality among the nations of the world.