



In April, 2022, the Arab-Canadian Lawyers Association (ACLA) released a report titled *Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations* – publishing the first known formal definition of anti-Palestinian racism. The report and definition were developed after years of consultations with the Palestinian community and its allies in Canada, as well as with anti-racism academics and activists.

What is anti-Palestinian racism?

The ACLA's report proposes the following "description" of anti-Palestinian racism:

Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives. Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including:

- *denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians;*
- *failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine;*
- *erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians;*
- *excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies;*
- *defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values.*¹

In practice, most people will use the above as a "definition" for anti-Palestinian racism, even though the ACLA has important reasons for considering it only a "description" or "framework."²

Why is it important to define anti-Palestinian racism?

A definition of anti-Palestinian racism provides a useful tool to accurately describe the discrimination and struggles faced by Palestinians and their allies. Using it, Palestinians and their advocates can more easily identify the unjust, dehumanizing, exclusionary and discriminatory experiences they may encounter, as well as validate the harm caused by it.³

Anti-Palestinian racism effects one's ability to have open discussion on Palestinian rights because it positions Palestinian solidarity as something that is socially unacceptable.⁴ For example, people may be reluctant to participate in Palestine solidarity events due to the fear of being targeted for such involvement. The fear of retribution contributes to the suppression of Palestinian narratives by deterring people from speaking out in defence of Palestinian rights.⁵

Another major impact of anti-Palestinian racism is the harm and trauma caused by the targeting of a racial identity. Anti-Palestinian racism intensifies the anxiety of being Palestinian and can lead Palestinians to hide their identity for fear of being persecuted.⁶ This can have serious consequences, potentially resulting in isolation, depression and other mental health issues.⁷

The definition of anti-Palestinian racism is meant to address the censorship and personal harm caused by it, not prevent discussions on Palestine-Israel.⁸ The definition provides a framework Palestinians and their allies can use to address incidents of anti-Palestinian racism, enabling more productive discussions on the issue of Palestine-Israel, and avoiding attacks on the identities of those involved.⁹

What are examples of anti-Palestinian racism?

The ACLA gives a non-exhaustive list of examples in their report, namely: Nakba denial, the justification of violence against Palestinians, failing to recognize the indigeneity of Palestinians, erasing the human dignity of Palestinians, excluding Palestinians and allies, and attempting to defame them.¹⁰ Often, a single real-life instance of anti-Palestinian racism will touch on many of the listed examples due to their intersections.

Real-life examples of anti-Palestinian racism include: the CBC reprimanding journalists after they signed an open letter calling for better reporting on Palestine,¹¹ a children's book being taken off the shelves at Indigo Books for featuring a map labeled "Palestine" instead of "Israel,"¹² Postmedia apologising after it featured an Amnesty International advertisement that included a 15 year old Palestinian journalist,¹³ and the censorship of an

article on Palestinian perspectives in a Saskatoon student newspaper.¹⁴

Who is affected by anti-Palestinian racism?

The primary targets of anti-Palestinian racism are Palestinians, and in Canada, Palestinian-Canadians. Yet anti-Palestinian racism affects many more in addition to this core. It impacts those who are perceived to be Palestinian, perhaps because of their skin tone, their ethnicity, or their religion.¹⁵ It also impacts those who simply express support for Palestinian rights. In the example above, the CBC reprimanded journalists from a variety of ethnic backgrounds for their decision to sign the open letter, demonstrating that while Palestinian identity is always at the core of anti-Palestinian racism, it does not only affect Palestinians.

While non-Palestinians can be targeted by anti-Palestinian racism, the attack still targets the Palestinian identity and experience, and not the identity of the ally. Regardless of whether a Palestinian or an ally is the focus, every case of anti-Palestinian racism ultimately targets Palestinians. Ultimately, such racism entrenches the systemic oppression of Palestinians as an indigenous people whose lands have been taken and occupied by settlers.¹⁶

It should be noted that anti-Palestinian racism doesn't always affect everyone in the same way. The ACLA's report acknowledges that advocates and Palestinians who are affected by other, distinct forms of systemic oppression are affected by anti-Palestinian racism in different ways, depending on their identity.¹⁷ For example, anti-Palestinian racism directed at a woman may evoke elements of and gender-based discrimination specific to women, in addition to what the individual may also face as a Palestinian.

How does anti-Palestinian racism relate to anti-Arab racism and islamophobia?

Anti-Palestinian racism is distinct from both anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia, although individuals can simultaneously be the target of one or more of these forms of discrimination.

Palestinians are Arabs, so they often suffer discrimination in Canada for being Arabs, e.g. if they have an Arab-sounding name, if they have an Arab accent in English or French, if they use ethnic dress, etc. But in addition to this, they also face anti-Palestinian discrimination. For example, they may be "shut down" when they talk about their family's place of origin, or their views in support of Palestinian rights— as per the definition of anti-Palestinian racism.¹⁸

Religiously, Palestinians can be Muslim, Christian or Druze. Although a strong majority of Palestinians are Muslim, a disproportionate number of Palestinians in Canada are Christian.¹⁹ Nevertheless, many Canadians mistakenly assume that all Palestinians are Muslim. As such, Palestinians in Canada – even the Christian and Druze ones – frequently face Islamophobia, whether because of their name, their place of origin, their cultural habits, etc. But again, Palestinians will face anti-Palestinian racism *in addition* to any racism they face because they are Muslim, or perceived as Muslim.

Using Islamophobia as a proxy for anti-Palestinian racism is extremely misguided and unhelpful.²⁰ First, this strategy assumes that the only discrimination faced by Palestinians is Islamophobia, when of course Palestinians face additional insidious forms of discrimination as Palestinians.²¹ Second, this approach suggests that the Palestinian struggle is a global, religious-based struggle between Muslims and Jews rather than a regional Palestinian struggle against oppression and colonialism.²² Both of these shortcomings misrepresent or ignore the destructive impacts of anti-Palestinian racism, and contribute to the broader suppression of Palestinian identity and narratives.²³

¹ Arab-Canadian Lawyers Association, "[Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations](#)," April 2022, p. 14

² Ibid, p. 7-9, 14-20

³ Ibid, p. 8, 20

⁴ Ibid, p. 18

⁵ Ibid, p. 17, 18

⁶ Ibid, p. 18

⁷ Ibid, p. 18

⁸ Ibid, p. 20

⁹ Ibid, p. 20

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 18-19

¹¹ Manisha Krishnan, "[CBC Journalists Told They Can't Cover Israel-Palestine After Demanding Fairer Coverage](#)," *Vice*, May 21 2021

¹² CJPME, @cjpmeofficial, "[Shame on Indigo Books](#)," Instagram, December 14, 2021

¹³ CJPME, @cjpmeofficial, "[Outrageous Censorship!](#)" Instagram, December 8, 2021

¹⁴ Zak Vescera, "[Sheaf board votes to pull article on Palestine after lobby group complains](#)," *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, June 11, 2021

¹⁵ Arab-Canadian Lawyers Association, "[Anti-Palestinian Racism: Naming, Framing and Manifestations](#)," April 2022, p. 15

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 16

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 18

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 17-19

¹⁹ Jayson Casper, "[Why Many Christians Want to Leave Palestine. And Why Most Won't.](#)" *Christianity Today*, August 4, 2020

²⁰ Ibid, p. 20-22

²¹ Ibid, p. 20

²² Ibid, p. 21

²³ Ibid, p. 21-22