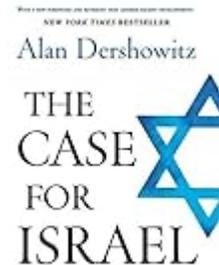


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Alan Dershowitz. *The Case for Israel.* Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003. vii + 264 pp. \$19.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-471-46502-7.



Reviewed by Shalom Freedman (Writer, Jerusalem, Israel)

Published on H-Judaic (December, 2003)

The past three years have seen a tremendous intensification in the propaganda war against Israel. A strange alliance of the anti-Semitic far-right, and the anti-Israel and increasingly anti-Semitic far left have come together to pour hate and scorn in the Jewish state, in an effort to de-legitimize and ultimately lead to its destruction. Throughout the Arab and now the Islamic world Israel is seen as the root of all evil, the great enemy that must at any and all cost be destroyed. More surprisingly, less than sixty years after one third of the Jewish people were murdered on its soil, Europe has also begun to give a respectable place and voice to Anti-Semitic feeling. Alarmingly in the intellectual centers of the world's single superpower, and at present the state of Israel's most important friend, in the United States the discourse of anti-Zionism is harsh and strong. Attacks on the state of Israel as being the great oppressor of the world, and the source of all evil, have gained currency and favor.

Alan Dershowitz, Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard, one of America's best-known appellate lawyers, and a well-known defender of individual liberties takes the state of Israel, and in a sense the Jewish people, as his client. In this book he seeks to offer a powerfully convincing defense against the most common charges made against the Jewish State. In each of his thirty-three short chapters he opens with a question:

Is Israel a Colonial, Imperialist State? Were the Jews Unwilling to Share Palestine? Did Israel Create the Arab Refugee Problem? Has Israel Made Serious Efforts at Peace? Is Israel a Racist state? Is Israel the Prime Human Rights Violator in the World? Dershowitz then identifies Israel's accusers before providing compelling and convincing argument in two sections called, "The Reality" and "The Proof." Dershowitz time and again shows the terribly irony and injustice of the present world situation, one in which backward, non-democratic regimes, with monstrous human rights records, are putting the Middle East's only democratic nation, Israel, repeatedly in the dock. He shows how Israel has become the "Jew of the nations," uninterruptedly attacked regardless of its actions. He points to the fact that it is precisely the Palestinian Arabs who have promoted terror and violence, engaged in the largest number of acts against the civilians who are seen as the darlings of the international community, and subject of seemingly unlimited attention and support. He writes: "Between 1968 and 1990, Palestinian terrorists murdered thousands of innocent civilians, including international travelers, Jews at prayer in synagogues throughout Europe, Olympic athletes, nursery school children, diplomats, and Christian pilgrims. They blew up airplanes, planted bombs in shopping markets, threw hand grenades at children, sent letter bombs to businesspeople, hijacked a cruise liner, including throw-

ing a wheelchair bound passenger into the sea. Although all of these actions constitute war crimes and violations of international law, the international community—and especially the United Nations—has repeatedly rewarded Palestinian terrorism by according to the PLO far greater recognition than accorded to other stateless groups that have not restored to terrorism.“

Dershowitz is familiar with both the history of the conflict, and the ins and outs of Israeli society. One of the central threads of his story is how first the Jews of the Yishuv, and then later the state of Israel repeatedly sought accommodation and peace with their Arab neighbors, only to be rebuked and rejected. He shows how the whole history of the conflict revolves around this fundamental asymmetry, a Jewish people whose first ideal and dream is peace, and a far vaster Arab nation for whom the presence of an independent “stranger” among them is an unending source of humiliation.

As a lawyer and civil rights advocate, Dershowitz is particularly sensitive to Israel’s record in this area. He acknowledges that it not been perfect in adhering to its own elevated ideals. But he nonetheless affirms “that no nation in the history of the world that has faced comparable threats to its survival—both external and internal—has ever made greater efforts at, and has ever come closer to, achieving the high norms of the rule of law. Yet no civilized, nation in the history of the world, including totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, has ever been as

repeatedly, unfairly, and hypocritically condemned and criticized by the international community as Israel has over the years. The net result is that the gulf between Israel’s actual record of compliance with the rule of law and its perceived record of compliance with the rule of law is greater than for any other nation in history.”

Along with the defense of Israel as a society of law, Dershowitz provides a great deal of evidence on how Israel has been a success story not only in its absorbing large numbers of Jewish immigrants, but also by greatly improving the social and economic conditions of its Arab minority. In health, education, and scientific and technical contributions to mankind, Israel has made contributions disproportionate to its number. Israel has been one of those states which has contributed to the overall well-being of mankind. This work is a must read for anyone who would understand the Israeli-Arab conflict in its international dimension. Shalom Freedman is a writer on Jewish subjects .His most recent book “Small Acts of Kindness: Striving for *Derech erez* will be published by Urim Publications early in 2004.

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Citation: Shalom Freedman. Review of Dershowitz, Alan, *The Case for Israel*. H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews. December, 2003.

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