

I'm a rabbi. I won't let Zionism's critics define the word for Jews.

Zionism, faith, noise and more, in readers' eyes.

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The Sept. 18 front-page article "Some Jewish leaders grow wary of term 'Zionism'" correctly noted that portions of the Jewish community are questioning the use of the word. For most, the reason has nothing to do with their support for Israel and everything to do with the deliberate distortion of the term "Zionism." For many Zionists, it simply refers to the Jewish people's right to self-determination in our native homeland, Israel.

Nearly everyone quoted in the article defined it as some variation of that theme. The lone dissenting voice in the article, who called Zionism "the policy of Jewish supremacy in Israel," is a former interim co-executive director of the anti-Zionist organization Jewish Voice for Peace. She has long been clear on her opposition to Israel's existence as Jewish state. Her position is hardly representative of American Jews.

A June AP-NORC poll found that by a margin of 73 percent to 16 percent, U.S. Jews said they support "Israel as a Jewish state."

Nevertheless, after years of activists using the term "Zionist" as a slur and a synonym for colonialism and oppression, some Jews understandably hesitate to embrace the label. That does not mean they have abandoned Israel or Jewish self-determination. It means Israel's opponents have successfully distorted a word to the point that even many people who believe in its central principle are uncomfortable saying it. Jews should not allow Zionism's fiercest opponents to define Zionism for them.

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