

Choosing to Act

Anti-Semitism is Wrong

By **Alison Weir**, Executive Director of If Americans Knew

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for a decent person to do is to act in a way that feels somehow disloyal. To betray one's family and friends, one's deeply held principles, is wrenching, disorienting, shaming. For a decent person, it is profoundly difficult to do something that feels so immeasurably wrong.

It is for this reason that so many of us have found it difficult to examine closely the situation in Israel and Palestine. We are crippled by the very decency that would normally require us to speak out.

For many of us, if we are Jewish, the very act of questioning Israel's actions in Palestine arouse deep and immobilizing feelings of disloyalty - to our families, to our parents and their principles, to relatives who may have died in death camps.

If we are not Jewish, questioning Israel's actions arouses unexamined feelings of disloyalty to values by which we have determined to live our lives. Anti-Semitism is abhorrent to us. Acting in a way that even hints at this feels contaminating, morally and emotionally obscene. Acting in a way that even suggests disloyalty to Jewish friends feels unthinkable.

And so we all avoid the subject.

It is not until we force ourselves to study the situation for ourselves, to delve deeply beneath the mostly skewed information of our news outlets, that we realize that our definition of disloyalty has been tragically inverted – that speaking out for the human rights of Palestinians is, in fact, the profoundest loyalty of all: to the values of decency, of humanity, of Judaism, of Christianity, of Islam, of numerous religious and spiritual traditions.

We learn that, in reality, equating the wrongdoing of Israel with Jewishness is the deepest and most insidious form of anti-Semitism of all. We learn that if we are Jewish – or if we are not Jewish – our silence is the most profound betrayal of all – of the principles by which we seek to live moral and meaningful lives.

It is time for all of us to stop our self-censorship.

Every generation has a chance to act courageously – to oppose the kind of injustice and unthinkable brutality that is going on in the Middle East right now. Or to avert our eyes, and remain silent.

It is time to stop saying, "They came for the Palestinians... and I did nothing." It is time to begin acting in a way that will allow us to say, "They came for the Palestinians ... and I stopped them."

For more information about If Americans Knew and Alison Weir, visit iakn.us/WhoWeAre

