

Israel's 70th birthday will be celebrated Thursday. Note the passive voice. I would have preferred "the world will join in celebration of Israel's 70th birthday," but immediately saw its impossibility. The reality is more people will be cursing than congratulating Israel on this occasion. Cursing, rhetorically speaking, comes easy. Israel haters rely on emotive, triggering words: "occupation," "stolen land" and "foreign colonialists," amongst other misleading or downright false statements. Defence of Israel comes hard. There are no similarly succinct countering tropes — or at least none that resonate with social-justice warriors, for whom the words Jews (too white, too successful) and "Indigenous rights" cannot coexist in harmony. Making the case for Israel's territorial and political rights involves a deep knowledge of Jewish and Arab history, understanding of the complexities around the reconstruction of the modern Middle East from the ashes of the Ottoman empire, and a plod through a litany of declarations, mandates, commissions, conferences and international legal documents that most Israel defenders aren't even aware of, let alone able to deploy in debate with rhetorical economy. (--image--)

Israelis watch fireworks in the Mediterranean coastal city of Netanya on April 15, 2013, during Israel's 65th Independence Day celebrations.

Jack Guez/AFP/Getty Images

Moreover, since the 1967 war, which changed so much on the ground, even the Israeli government hasn't pressed itself to defend Israel's historic rights in any systematic way (apart from crises, as in 2016, when the Palestinians drafted a resolution for UNESCO, whose language deliberately detached Jewish ties from Judaism's holiest sites). With the 1993 Oslo peace process, the issue of legal rights fell further off the communications radar. When it became clear over the next tumultuous decade that terrorism could not destroy Israel, Israel's enemies ramped up the campaign to undermine her legitimacy as a member state within the international community. Once the Palestinian strategy of revisionist history replaced organized physical violence — including outright lies as in the UNESCO fiasco — it became clear that a fact-based counteroffensive was needed. For in the end, it will be international law and accords, not blood libels and emotional mantras, that will settle the matter of Israel's literal legitimacy. Israel was created, like many other countries, after a successful war in which no other country came to its aid. Gaza, Judea and Samaria were conquered by Jordan and Egypt illegally, as they had no claim to them, while Israel did. The Palestinian territories are not in fact "occupied" in law; rather they are "disputed." The word "settlements" imply Jews are foreigners in their own homeland, which they are not. Jews have built 140 communities in Judea and Samaria since 1967, which excites condemnation. The Arabs have built 260 communities in Judea and Samaria since 1967, which excites ... silence. This book should be on the reading list of all university courses dealing with the Middle East, and a handout at anti-Israel rallies (--image--)

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Even though it cuts little or no ice in superficial debate, Israel's defenders need a resource to fill this knowledge void, one that offers clarity and comprehensiveness of this legal history in a single summary text. Fortunately, such a reader-friendly gem exists: *The Jewish People's Rights to the Land of Israel (JPRLI)*, written by the late Salomon Ben-Zimra, underpinned by the extensive labours of International Law lawyer Howard Grief (of Quebec and Israel,) and issued under the auspices of Canadians for Israel's Legal Rights. I cannot recommend this little book, indexed and lavishly annotated, highly enough. There are many scholarly tomes containing the same information and more, but embedded in histories too discursive for the average reader to extrapolate from easily. This slim little volume is a tour de force of fat-free precision which, in the words of the foreword, "completely undermines the arguments of the de-legitimizers." JPRLI spans three millennia of Jewish history in Israel, incorporating the recognition of the Jews' collective, national rights in international law, through the crucial way stations of the 1918 Balfour Declaration, Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points," the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, The Covenant of the League of Nations, the critically important 1920 San Remo Conference, the Peel Commission, and on up to the UN's contentious 1947 Partition Resolution No. 181. Everything is boiled down, but nothing of significance is omitted. All key documents of modern international law are examined and

explained in simple terms any layperson can grasp. All should be central to any discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict, because the provisions contained therein have never been revoked. Barbara Kay: Canada's own little Stalins are making politically incorrect authors disappear Barbara Kay: This spring, the fight to protect free speech in Canada continues Barbara Kay: If ideologues are teaching our judges, the public has a need to know The book is structured to provide the reader with a gradual level of detail in every chapter, colour-coded for efficient access: blue for a summary of historical events and key legal documents with a brief explanation, and enlightening maps; red for an in-depth review of these events and documents. The writing is crisp and clean. All relevant web links are embedded in the e-version. This book should be on the reading list of all university courses dealing with the Middle East, and a handout at anti-Israel rallies. It's a useful crash course for politicians. But reporters on the Middle East beat need it most of all. • Email: [kaybarb@gmail.com](mailto:kaybarb@gmail.com) | Twitter: [BarbaraRKay](#)