Term
Durban Conference

Definition
The term 'The Durban Conference' refers to a conference held in Durban, South Africa under the patronage of the UN. The conference was convened to present an international front against racism and xenophobia, but in actuality became a campaign to de-legitimize the State of Israel with the encouragement of various NGO's (Non Governmental Organizations) that took part in the conference.

Background
The Durban conference can be regarded as a phenomenon of basic de-legitimization of the State of Israel – in other words, the convergence of states, movements and organizations not necessarily related to one another1 around the rejection of the Jewish character of the State of Israel.

The Durban conference (9/01) was originally planned to object to all forms of racism and xenophobia, discuss the origins and aspects of racial discrimination and to examine various methods to eradicate this phenomenon2. Present at the conference were official representatives of different states as well as non-governmental organizations who were invited to attend as observers (in accordance with UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/13)3.

Although the NGOs only had observer status, they managed to gain control over the conference's agenda4 and led an anti-Israeli, anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic front which turned the conference into a 'hate parade' against Israel5. The 'indictment' against Israel included a number of central motives:

- **Israel is an Apartheid state** - Israel should be isolated from the world and have all its social economic and military ties severed. Furthermore, it should be censured by all member states which support it.
- **Zionism is racism**6.
- **Israel is an occupying state** - Occupation is a crime against humanity and a threat to international peace and security
- **Israel perpetrates war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.**
- **The Holocaust is not unique** - The Holocaust against the Jewish people is one of many similar tragedies that happened to other nations in the world7.

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1 These organizations included some Arab states, developing countries, Islamist movements, European radical left movements, and anti-Semitic groups.
2 Click [here](#) for a full version of the ideas that led to the establishment of the conference and its goals.
3 Click [here](#) for a complete list of NGO's which attended the conference.
4 See NGO monitor's report of the Durban Conference
5 Prof. Irwin Cotler, *The Road to Durban*, 2001
6 Abraham H. Foxman, *Driving a Wedge of Racism*, ADL 2001
7 Nitzan Horowitz, *All too happy to ignore Africa’s 'double holocaust'*, *Ha'aretz*, 2001
Israel (as a Jewish state) was born in sin and established through "ethnic cleansing" of Mandatory Arab Palestine. The NGOs that the conference's closing declaration would mirror their positions and would include a declaration concluding Israel is a racist country that the international community should sever all ties with. However, a fierce diplomatic battle by Israeli, American and European diplomats prevented such a scenario and the conference ended with a more moderate compromise proposal.

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8 Key excerpts dealing with Zionism, Israel and the Holocaust, 2001
9 Dateline Durban: Final Declaration, 2001