

If Daesh, Why Not Zionist Occupation Forces?

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There's something truly disturbing about the fact that British prime minister David Cameron's efforts to decide how the media refer to the Islamic State are being taken seriously. So seriously, in fact, that 120 MPs have backed the idea that the BBC should not use the name Islamic State and refer to the group by the Arabic acronym "Daesh" instead. Cameron's argument is that Islamic State is neither Islamic nor a state.

The coverage has implied that the BBC is taking a brave editorial stand and refusing to kowtow to Cameron's diktat. But there are already signs that the BBC may capitulate. In a statement, the BBC said: "We call the group by the name it uses itself, and regularly review our approach. We also use additional descriptions to help make it clear we are referring to the group as they refer to themselves, such as 'so-called Islamic State'."

Let's put this debate in a little perspective. The Israeli army calls itself the "Israel Defence Forces", or "IDF" for short. And yet it is not "Israeli" in the sense that it does not represent all Israelis, especially the fifth of the population who are Palestinian, and it is not a defence force because its primary role is to enforce a belligerent occupation of Palestinians. So according to Cameron's logic, he and the media should be referring to it as the "Zionist Occupation Forces". I wonder if he can get a 120 MPs to sign up to that idea.

Meanwhile, can we imagine the BBC issuing a statement saying that, though they refer to the Israel Defence Forces by the name they use for themselves, the broadcaster tries when possible to be clearer by using additional descriptions such as "the so-called Israel Defence Forces"?

And while we are on the subject, the world might look a very different place if groups could only call themselves names that reflected their true character. Not least Cameron's own party would have to abandon its name the "Conservatives". Since Margaret Thatcher began leading the party in the mid-1970s, there has been nothing "conservative" about the party in the sense that it believes in conserving tradition. At that point it became a party of neoliberal revolution, breaking up British society's major institutions and implementing changes to allow financial speculators to sell off the family silver.

So let us agree that Cameron can insist on the BBC calling Islamic State "Daesh" when he also insists on the broadcaster referring to the Conservatives as the "Revolutionary Neoliberal Party".

www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jun/29/bbc-to-review-use-of-islamic-state-after-mps-prot-est-against-term

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