**Apartheid report**

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In late January 2022 the human rights organization Amnesty International released a 278-page evidence-based report entitled Israel’s Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity. The report covers Palestinians both in the Occupied Territories and in Israel within the Green Line. It even notes Israeli attempts to limit the rights of Palestinians living in other countries.

The evidence all points in one direction: Israel constitutes an apartheid state as defined under international law. As Paul O’Brien, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA put it, “the Israeli government’s system of apartheid violated international law, and serious human rights violations committed to maintain the system constitute crimes against humanity.” He goes on to point out that “This system does not exist in a vacuum – foreign governments, including that of the United States, facilitate apartheid by supplying the Israelis with arms and failing to hold Israeli authorities accountable for their systemic human rights violations.”

The Amnesty International report does not stand alone. It follows similar investigations by Human Rights Watch, the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, and Palestinian organizations as well. Indeed, the collective documentation proving that Israel is an apartheid state is so overwhelming that Israel and its allies no longer bother to address the evidence. Instead they summarily dismiss it with three formulaic responses:

One, the individuals and organizations making such charges are, ipso facto, anti-Semitic; two, the individuals and organizations making such charges are attempting to deny Jews their right to self-determination; and three, those individuals and organizations making such charges are holding Israel to a uniquely harsh standard not applied to others. All three responses are unable to stand up to close examination

Response one: Those accusing Israel of apartheid are anti-Semitic. The Israeli Foreign Ministry characterized the Amnesty report as “pure antisemitism” that “legitimizes attacks against Jews.” This accusation has been repeated and expanded upon by mainstream ‘official’ Jewish groups in the United States.

This response relies on a specialized definition of anti-Semitism presented by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016. Among the more historically recognized and accepted anti-Semitic behaviors, the IHRA specifically adds that “claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor” constitutes an act of anti-Semitism. It does not qualify this claim by considering the case where evidence is given that the State of Israel is in fact behaving like a ‘racist endeavor,’ and this is where the definition becomes implausible.

Indeed, there is something strikingly illogical about the IHRA insistence that calling out the racist policies and practices of Israeli governments is anti-Semitic. What the IHRA is offering is an example of circular reasoning – thus, citing evidence of Israeli racism is wrong because doing so is racist.

Response two: Those accusing Israel of apartheid behaviors that violate international law and result in crimes against humanity are attempting to deny the Jews the right of self-determination.

It is incorrect to assume that Jews, or any other group, have an inherent (or if we go with the supernatural, a divine) ‘right’ to ‘self-determination’ apart from the actual geopolitical circumstances of that group. There are quite a few existing groups whose claim to a ‘right’ to national status – take the Kurds, for instance – is ancient yet unrealized because of prevailing geopolitics. Thus, the claim to this sort of ‘right’ is subject to the political lay of the modern landscape. It is because of historical happenstance over the years since 1917 that the state of Israel exists and Palestine does not.

The US State Department raised the issue of ‘the right’ of Jewish self-determination in its reaction to the Amnesty International report on Israeli apartheid practices. The spokesman, speaking as the voice of the US foreign policy establishment, gave the impression that asserting, indeed even proving, that Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinians constitute apartheid is objectionable because it challenges Israel’s right to maintain itself as a Jewish state (self-determination). There is something deeply unethical about this position. It implies that it is acceptable for a state, be it of Jews or any other group, to be racist in practice if that is where their ‘right’ of self-determination takes them. This position is in stark contradiction to international law.

Response three: Those accusing Israel of apartheid behaviors that violate international law and result in crimes against humanity are applying double standards to Israel – standards that they do not apply to others.

This response is factually untrue. In the case of Amnesty International it is obviously so. Amnesty has issued reports on the status of human rights in 149 countries always using the same standards of international law. The same can be said for Human Rights Watch. B’Tselem is different because it is focused on Israel as its home country. The same can be said for Palestinian organizations critiquing Israeli behavior. However, they all use the same internationally designated standards for human rights. Thus, for Israel and its allies like the United States to accuse these organizations of double standards is to retreat into propaganda. This usually happens when one has no other way of responding to hard evidence.

What Israel really wants is be treated as a special case – one excused from all standards. The unspoken appeal goes like this: Israel represents a people who have been historically mistreated and have even survived attempted genocide. Much of the West shares some guilt stemming from these endeavors. Therefore Israel should be left alone to mistreat others without criticism from those who have mistreated Jews.

Professor Mordechai Kremnitzer, a columnist for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, and former Dean of the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: “The report gives the impression that it loathes Israel as a country that was founded and recognized as the nation of the Jewish people.”

It should be pointed out that the Amnesty report goes out of its way to stress that its findings are not to be attributed to ‘the Jewish people.’ It addresses the policies of Israeli governments since 1948. That those governments happen to errantly claim to represent ‘the Jewish people’ is, under the circumstances, an attempt to implicate the Jews as a whole in the crimes of a state.

Excerpted: ‘Israeli Reactions to Amnesty’s Apartheid Report’.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org