

Behind the Genocide in Gaza

**Palestine, Zionism, Israeli
Apartheid & Antisemitism**

Contents

Why Australia & the US support Israel's genocidal war on Palestine <i>by Peter Boyle</i>	3
Shared values or self-interest — 4 ● Protecting the powerful — 5 ● Genocide justifications — 6	
Palestinian Self-Determination & Zionist Colonialism <i>by Sean Malloy & Doug Lorimer</i>	7
Origins of modern anti-Semitism — 7 ● The Zionist movement — 9 ● 'Historical claim' to Palestine? — 10 ● Zionist colonisation of Palestine — 11 ● The creation of Israel — 12 ● The Holocaust & Israel — 13 ● Israel & the US — 14 ● What is national self-determination? — 15 ● A democratic, secular Palestine — 16	
Why Israel Is an Apartheid State <i>by Jonathan Cook</i>	19
Separate & unequal — 21 ● Citizenship & marriage — 23 ● 'Nationalisation' of land — 24 ● A democratic facade — 26 ● Residential segregation — 27 ● Starved of resources — 29 ● Childhoods apart — 31 ● 'Socially unsuitable' — 34 ● Two modes of apartheid — 35 ● 'Subversive' call for equality — 37	
Anti-Zionism Is Not Antisemitism <i>by Hadas Thier</i>	40
'A debate they know they can't win' — 41 ● One response among many — 42	
The Solution Is Clear: A Democratic, Secular Palestine for All Its Peoples <i>by Barry Sheppard</i>	47
Dispossession — 48 ● One state — 49 ● Palestine for all — 50	

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Why Australia & the US Support Israel's Genocidal War on Palestine

By Peter Boyle

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese once described himself as a “strong advocate of justice for Palestinians”. He once acknowledged the daily humiliation Palestinians undergo under Israeli occupation and, in 2013, helped found the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine.

But now he blames and demonises Hamas for instigating the bloody conflict and excuses Israel's brutal response as Israel's “right to defend itself against a terrorist organization”.

Echoing US President Joe Biden, PM Albanese has made an empty call for Israel to “operate by the rules of war” while continuing vital arms supplies and military targeting intelligence data (via the Pine Gap US-Australia spy base) to Israel.

However, since October 7, 2023 the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has blatantly flouted the rules of war with its ruthless bombing campaign that has killed nearly 30,000 Palestinians and wounded 70,000 — two-thirds of these casualties are women and children.

It has turned much of Gaza into rubble and displaced 1.8 million Palestinians (80% of the population).

Israel is blocking emergency humanitarian aid causing widespread starvation and the spread of diseases and United Nations aid and food agencies have warned that famine is imminent.

In the first two weeks after October 7, Israel detained without trial thousands (including many children) from the West Bank, swelling the numbers of Palestinians in detention to nearly 10,000. More have been detained since.

The gross disproportion between the alleged 1200 Israeli deaths and 240 hostages

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taken that day and the cold and calculated slaughter of so many more Palestinian civilians by the IDF has smashed the argument that this is in any way a justified response by Israel.

Public opinion in Australia has swiftly turned against the Albanese government's line. A Roy Morgan poll on November 9, 2023 found that 51% wanted the IDF to withdraw from Gaza immediately.

It also found that 65% of people aged 18–34 and 64% of women wanted an immediate Israeli withdrawal.

“Other proponents of an immediate withdrawal said that Israel has occupied Palestine for far too long and that Palestine needs to be free and that it is not Israeli land and that they are engaging in a genocide and that ‘war crimes are war crimes on both sides’ — the initial attack doesn’t justify the current actions of the IDF.”

Shared values or self-interest?

The US and Australian governments justify supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza with rhetoric about “shared values” and “sacred bonds” of friendship.

But US President Joe Biden inadvertently drew attention to the real reason when he repeated the line that “if there were not an Israel, we would have to invent one”.

However, when Biden originally said this in the US Senate in 1986, he was blunt about the reasons.

Proclaiming Israel “the best \$3 billion investment” the US had made, Biden then explained: “Were there not an Israel, the United States would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region.”

Biden emphasised that the US’ “naked self-interest” should always guide its Middle East policy. As Professor M Muhannad Ayyash explained in *The Conversation*, Biden’s support for Israel derives from that.

US interests in the Middle East have commonly been simplified into one word — “oil”.

But while this is clearly one important factor, imperial interests go beyond the protection of economic resources and specific trade routes, to the protection of wider political domination.

The RAND Corporation, a think tank created in 1948 by Douglas Aircraft Company to offer research and analysis to the US military, has never been coy about these interests.

The think tank spelled these out in its 2017 paper, *US Strategic Interests in the Middle East and Implications for the Army*.

It defined US interests as “ensuring the free flow of natural resources and

maintaining relationships with key allies and protecting them from external threats, in part to ensure access for US military operations”.

The paper made it clear that the US has no unconditional friends in the region and has no commitment to democratisation.

Protecting the powerful

University of Sydney Associate Professor Jake Lynch told *Green Left* that Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense under President Ronald Reagan, once described Israel as “America’s unsinkable battleship in the Middle East”, tasked with “upholding a so-called Pax Americana, sometimes called the ‘international rules-based order’, a phrase we are used to hearing from Australian politicians”.

What that means, Lynch said, is “a way of doing things which protects, but does not bind, the powerful, while it binds, but does not protect, the powerless”.

“It is there to perpetuate the unjust system of global relations and that is what is really at stake for the Australian military industrial complex, which is part of this war.”

By feeding data from the “joint” US-Australia military spy base in Pine Gap to the IDF to use in its bombing campaign in Gaza, the Australian state is doing its bit to protect this imperial order.

Labor has seamlessly adopted the Coalition’s plan to further integrate Australia into the US imperial military machine. It aims to grow the country’s military industrial complex to become the world’s 10th biggest arms exporter — a position currently held by Israel.

This has made powerful sections of Australia’s capitalist class business partners of the Israeli and US arms industries, cementing the strategic alliance between imperial allies.

Australia exports critical military components to Israel.

About 50 Australian companies, all enjoying lucrative government grants, are key parts of the US F-35 advanced fighter jet supply chain. These warplanes are only made available to key imperialist allies of the US, including Australia and Israel.

“Without Australian parts, those Israeli fighter jets could not fly and bomb Palestine,” explains Greens Senator David Shoebridge who has been relentless pursuing the Labor government on the issue of Australian military aid to Israel.

“Australia supplies the hard-armoured steel that’s used in Israeli fighting vehicles being used in Gaza and used by illegal Israeli armed settlers in the West Bank.

“The company Varley Rafael Australia makes critical components of the control system of the Spike missile, an obscene weapon designed to puncture through the

concrete walls of residential buildings with a payload of shrapnel to kill everybody inside.

“Australia makes drones and drone engines which are now sold to the IDF to target the Palestinians in the war on Gaza.”

Genocide justifications

The corporate media justifies Israel’s genocide in Gaza in a way that also points to the imperial interests behind it.

The Murdoch media, the commercial TV channels, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (now owned by Channel Nine) — and, increasingly, the ABC — have shamelessly appealed to the racist double standards on the value of human lives, including those of innocent civilians.

We are expected to accept that the lives of mostly European Israelis are more valuable than the lives of Palestinians.

The corporate media plays to the ugly racist legacy from Australia’s history as a European colonial settler state, as with Israel, based on the dispossession of indigenous peoples.

This racist mentality is reinforced by Australia’s membership of the self-perpetuating club of wealthy imperialist states.

“There is a clear congruence between the colonial settler states that adds to the reason why Australia is in the business of truth avoidance,” Lynch explained.

“A lot of this is cloaked in a tidal wave of euphemisms from Australian politicians, including from foreign minister Penny Wong. But people shouldn’t be distracted by that. We should focus on Australia’s complicity and demand that it be brought to an end.” ■

Palestinian Self-Determination & Zionist Colonialism

By Sean Malloy & Doug Lorimer

Supporters of Israel argue that the Israeli state is a result of a legitimate Jewish struggle for national self-determination and that anti-Zionism is equivalent to antisemitism. This assertion is wrong and only serves to legitimise Israel's denial of the right of the Palestinian Arabs to national self-determination.

Understanding the issues involved in this debate requires an explanation of often complex historical and theoretical questions.

Origins of modern anti-Semitism

The Zionist movement was founded on the claim that world Jewry constituted a single nation. But neither then nor now, do Jews constitute a single nation — an historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of a cohesive economic life based on capitalist economic relations within a common territory, giving rise to a common language and common culture. But what national cohesion, for example, could there be between Russian, German, American or Ethiopian Jews, who were completely separated from each other, inhabited different countries and spoke different languages? All these disparate communities had in common was their religion.

In the early days of the Zionist movement it was fashionable for its theoreticians to compare their movement with the European national movements of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The English have a state; the French have a state; the Jews should also have a state, “as Jewish as England is English”, ran the argument. Since the old bourgeois form of nationalism has become somewhat discredited today,

This is an edited version of an August 1993 article in *Green Left Weekly*. Sean Malloy was a frequent contributor to *GLW*. Doug Lorimer (1953-2013) was a longtime leader of the Democratic Socialist Party.

some Zionists (particularly “left” Zionists) seek to compare Zionism to the anti-colonialist movements of the oppressed nations of Asia and Latin America. Thus, the Zionists’ conflict with the British in the period immediately preceding the establishment of Israel in 1948 is portrayed as an anti-colonial struggle. However, both analogies are totally false.

Early European nationalism was based on developing capitalist society. French nationalism, for example, was a reflection of the will of the rising capitalist class in France to create a national basis for production and exchange of commodities, to eliminate the old feudal restrictions on free trade and free production.

During that time, European Jews were completely assimilationist in their outlook. The economic processes which gave rise to the European nation-states began to lay the groundwork for the integration of the Jews into these newly developing nations. But these processes did not proceed evenly.

Eastern European society, especially after the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1863, found itself in continuous crisis. The old feudalism began to rapidly decay. But there was no concurrent flourishing of a vigorous capitalism to take its place, as there had been in Western Europe during the decline of feudalism. Eastern European capitalism, was weak, distorted in its development, and in general unable to expand at a pace sufficient to absorb the dislocation resulting from the rapid disintegration of feudal relations.

Consequently, the influx of peasants into the cities and towns during the decay of feudalism began to make the position of the Jews, concentrated in the towns, untenable. Poverty-stricken peasants flocking to the cities in search of jobs saw the increasingly impoverished Jewish community as competitors in a highly restricted labour market. The newly emerging non-Jewish urban middle class sought to enrich itself in a limited market at the expense of Jewish traders and artisans. And the big landowners and capitalists sought to divert the discontent of non-Jewish workers and peasants from themselves toward a convenient scapegoat. All this resulted in a qualitative increase in anti-Semitism, continual anti-Semitic riots and pogroms.

The Eastern European crisis led in turn to a massive Jewish emigration. Some three million Jews left Eastern Europe, mostly for Western Europe and the US. The arrival of these Jewish immigrants coincided with a worsening of conditions for the Western middle classes who were threatened with bankruptcy by the rise of powerful capitalist monopoly corporations in the West. The ruling classes in the West lost no opportunity to divert the growing discontent of the ruined Western petty bourgeoisie away from themselves and onto the large numbers of Jewish immigrants. The result was a rise in Western European anti-Semitism in the last quarter of the 19th century.

In general, the collapse of East European feudalism and with it the traditional position of the Jews as small merchants, moneylenders, and artisans in the craft production of certain consumer goods, along with the inability of capitalism in Eastern or Western Europe to integrate millions of displaced Jews, led to the rise of modern anti-Semitism, different from and qualitatively more severe than medieval “anti-Semitism”.

The Zionist movement

The Zionist movement, which arose in the late 1800s as a response by a *minority* of the Jewish middle classes to this new wave of anti-Semitism, held that anti-Semitism was not caused by particular historical processes, but that it was inevitable as long as Jews lived among non-Jews. The Zionist leaders sought to solve the problem of Jewish persecution not by attacking its cause, the decadence of European social systems, but by forming a separate, exclusively Jewish state.

The idea of creating a Jewish “national homeland” was raised in 1882 by Leo Pinsker in his pamphlet *The Self-Emancipation of the Jews*. In 1895 Viennese journalist, Theodor Herzl, expanded on the theme in his book *The Jewish State*. In 1897 Herzl chaired the first congress of the World Zionist Organisation in Basle.

The most immediate problem for the Zionist movement was where the new state was to be located. By 1897 virtually the entire world had been divided up by the Western powers. The same processes which had created modern anti-Semitism, and thus Zionism, had also given rise to imperialist capitalism. The giant capitalist monopolies in Western Europe and the US had integrated the non-industrialised areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America into the world market, and had politically subordinated them as overseas colonial possessions.

Consequently, a new Jewish “national” state could be created from just two sources — either from out of the imperialist countries themselves, or from a colonial territory under the control of one of the imperialist powers.

The former course was excluded by the fact that within the imperialist countries the Jews did not constitute a oppressed *national* group, but a persecuted *religious community*. If they *had* constituted oppressed national groups like the Irish, Scots and Welsh did in the United Kingdom, or the Quebecois in Canada, then a movement for Jewish national self-determination would have directed itself *against* the imperialist ruling classes.

But being a middle-class movement with the aim of creating a separate “homeland” for a religious community, Zionism did not have the strength to act independently for its aims. The Zionist leaders therefore sought to persuade one or another of the

European imperialist ruling classes that the establishment of a Jewish state in the colonial world would be in their interest.

Herzl petitioned the Russian tsar, the German kaiser, the British king, even the pope, to obtain support for a Jewish state in Palestine. In return for their support, Herzl promised these rulers Jewish backing for their imperial aims in the Arab East.

In a letter to the German Duke of Baden in 1898, Herzl declared:

With the Jews a German cultural element will enter the East. The fact that the Zionist movement is headed by German writers even though of Jewish origin can serve proof of this. The [Zionist] Congress language is German. The great majority of the Jews belong to the German culture. We need protection. German protection is therefore the best for us: we alone cannot do this.

‘Historical claim’ to Palestine?

One particular Zionist myth is the purported “historical rights” of Jews in Palestine. This myth is a central element of Zionist ideology. As Abram Leon observed in his book *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*:

Whereas Zionism is essentially a reaction against the situation created for Judaism by the combination of the destruction of feudalism and the decay of capitalism, it affirms that it constitutes a reaction against the state of things existing since the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 of the Christian era ...

Zionism sees in the fall of Jerusalem the cause of the dispersion, and consequently, the fountainhead of all Jewish misfortunes of the past, present, and future ...

Zionism has never seriously posed the question: Why, during these 2000 years, have not the Jews really tried to return to this country? Why was it necessary to wait until the end of the 19th century for a Herzl to succeed in convincing them of this necessity?

In reality, just so long as Judaism was incorporated in the feudal system, the “dream of Zion” was nothing but a dream and did not correspond to any real interest of Judaism. The Jewish tavern owner or “farmer” of 16th century Poland thought as little of “return to Palestine” as does the Jewish millionaire in America today. Jewish religious messianism was no whit different from the messianism belonging to other religions. Jewish pilgrims who went to Palestine met Catholic, Orthodox and Moslem pilgrims. Besides it was not so much the “return to Palestine” which constituted the foundation of this messianism as the belief in the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem.

Even before the Roman conquest of Judea in 70 AD, three-quarters of the Jewish population lived outside Palestine. As for the indigenous Jewish community, it was gradually absorbed by neighbouring populations during the following centuries, just as were the Philistines, the

Phoenicians, the Nabateans, and other tribes of the ancient Orient.

Moreover, if the Jews have a historical claim to Palestine, then why don't the Arabs have a historical claim to Spain and Sicily which were once integral parts of the Islamic Empire?

Zionist colonisation of Palestine

After Herzl's death in 1904 the Zionists carried on his efforts to secure imperialist support for their plan to colonise Palestine. This negotiation process resulted in 1917 in the Balfour Declaration, in which Britain declared its support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jews in Palestine".

The Balfour Declaration was designed to win Jewish backing of Britain in the first world war. It was later revealed that Britain had promised independence to the Palestinian Arabs, who outnumbered the Palestine Jews by about eight to one at the time, in return for Arab support in the war.

When the League of Nations finally "legalised" the spoils of World War I, Britain received a mandate to rule over Palestine and to establish a Jewish "national homeland" there.

The attempt of the Zionist leaders to establish an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine dictated their policy toward the indigenous inhabitants. Generally, when European settlers came to colonial countries, their aim was to exploit the wealth of the country, including the labour power of the inhabitants. The Zionists, however, wanted not just the resources of Palestine, but the country itself, to serve for the creation of a new national state. The Arabs, therefore, were not to be exploited economically, but *replaced* by Jewish settlers. It was this fundamental aim that determined Zionist policy in Palestine from 1917 to 1948. Until there was sufficient Jewish settlement to constitute a Jewish state, the Zionist supported British control of Palestine and opposed repeated uprisings of the Palestinian Arabs fighting for their national independence. An independent Palestine would have put an end to the Zionist scheme of establishing a Jewish state at the expense of the Arab majority. Therefore, "whoever betrays Great Britain betrays Zionism", declared Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion — later to become Israel's first prime minister — in 1935.

While supporting British rule over Palestine, the Zionists proceeded to construct a "society within a society". The Jewish National Fund purchased land from absentee Arab feudal landlords and then evicted the Arab tenant farmers. Selling or leasing Jewish lands to Arabs was prohibited. The JNF opposed land reform, as this would have put land into the hands of the Arab farmers who worked it and who, unlike the feudal sheiks, would refuse to sell.

A policy of "Jewish labour" and "buy Jewish" was established. Arab labour and

production were boycotted by the Jewish settlers. This meant that Arab farmers who were evicted from their land were unable to find work in Jewish-owned businesses.

Throughout the period of the British Mandate, the Zionist colonisers confronted the Palestinian Arabs as a foreign invading force, intent on ousting them from their own country, opposing Palestinian independence, fighting alongside the British Army, opposing land reform. This process of colonisation initiated in 1917 culminated in 1948 with the establishment of the Israeli colonial-settler state.

The creation of Israel

After World War II, the Zionist organisations came into armed conflict with the British, who tried to hold on to Palestine as a colony instead of supporting the creation of the Israeli state. But in the meantime, the Zionist forces had gained the support of the United States.

Although some Zionists try to portray their conflict with the British as an anti-colonial struggle, it was really a conflict between two thieves. The establishment of Israel in 1948, with the full support of Washington, was made possible only by the expulsion of 900,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homeland and the confiscation of their land. The Palestinians who remained became, by Israeli law, second-class citizens in their own country.

The establishment of the Israel in 1948 was the culmination of a whole process of Zionist colonisation of Palestine *before* 1948. The United Nations' decision to partition Palestine — a decision made under extreme pressure from US imperialism — violated the right of the Palestinian Arabs to national self-determination. The demands of the Palestinians Arabs (who at that time constituted 76% of the country's population) for an independent, united Palestine were ignored.

The UN approval of the partition of Palestine doesn't make it right. If the UN were to endorse the British partition of Ireland, or to decide to partition South Africa into black and white "homelands" would that make the decision legitimate? The fact that the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union also approved this plan doesn't make it any less reprehensible.

While the creation of Israel was "legitimised" in the interests of imperialism, through the UN, it was not legitimised by Palestinian Arabs. As Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat observed in his address to the UN General Assembly in 1974:

This General Assembly, early in its history, approved a recommendation to partition our Palestinian homeland ... The General Assembly partitioned what it had no right to divide — an indivisible homeland ...

Furthermore, even though the partition resolution granted the colonial settlers 54% of the land of Palestine, their dissatisfaction with the decision prompted them to wage a war of terror against the civilian Arab population. They occupied 81% of the total area of Palestine, uprooting a million Arabs.

The creation of Israel is racist because it is based on the dispossession and eviction of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine by a colonial-settler state. Colonialism is, above all, *racism*.

The Holocaust & Israel

The Nazi Holocaust against the Jews plays a big role in Zionist ideology. It is certainly true that without the Nazi attempt to exterminate Europe's Jews, the Zionists could not have won the widespread allegiance of Jews (which they did not enjoy before World War II). However, it is false to say that the Nazi extermination program was the Jews' impetus to struggle to found the state of Israel. As we have already noted above, the Zionist colonisation of Palestine began long before the rise of Nazism in Germany.

During the 1930s the Zionist leaders actively opposed Jewish resistance to the Nazis and refused to launch a campaign to force the Western "democracies" to open their doors to the Jews. Immigration to the West would have destroyed the Zionist goal of creating an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine at the expense of its indigenous inhabitants. It is the Western "democracies" who, by systematically refusing to open their borders to the Jews seeking refugee from fascism during the 1930s, condemned millions of European Jews to the Nazi genocide.

The Jewish community in Palestine was saved from genocide simply because of the fortunate fact that Hitler didn't conquer the Middle East. As Nathan Weinstock observed in his introduction to Abram Leon's book *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*:

... the results of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine offer further proof of the impossibility of finding a lasting solution to the Jewish problem within the framework of capitalism. Zionism is based on the assumption that the concentration of the Jewish masses in a national homeland would insulate them from anti-Semitism. For the Zionist considers anti-Semitism to be an inevitable phenomenon in non-Jewish society — or, as Pinsker put it, a psychosis peculiar to the gentiles — and not an outgrowth of the social structure. But it is an illusory solution. Aside from the fact that at most it could only provide a *partial* answer to the Jewish problem (since more than four-fifths of world Jewry live outside Israel) it ignores the fact that the fundamental roots of anti-Semitism lie in the *worldwide crisis of capitalist society*. If a new wave of fascism were to arise, there is no

reason why its racist policies should mysteriously stop short at Israel's frontiers. After all, if Hitler had conquered Palestine would he have exempted Palestine Jewry from the gas chambers?

Still, it is true of course that *within* the almost purely Jewish society of Israel (at any rate before the 1967 conquests), anti-Semitism is out of the question. But it is a dubious achievement: ironically, the Israelis appear to be today the *only* Jewish community in fear for their physical existence.

Of course, what the Palestinian Arabs objected to was not Jewish immigration to Palestine, but Zionist colonisation of their country. In his 1974 speech to the UN General Assembly, Arafat pointed out that "if the immigration of Jews to Palestine had had as its objective the goal of enabling them to live side by side with us, enjoying the same rights and assuming the same duties, we would have opened our doors to them as far as our homeland's capacity for absorption permitted ...

"But that the goal of this immigration should be to usurp our homeland, disperse our people and turn us into second-class citizens — this is what no one can conceivably demand that we acquiesce in or submit to."

As Arafat and other PLO leaders have repeatedly explained, the real issue in the Middle East is not whether or not the Israeli Jews can live there, but whether they have the right to dispossess and oppress another nation.

Israel & the US

Because of its particular origin as a colonial settler-state, Israel has always been an ally of the US against the anti-imperialist movements of the Arab peoples. The character of Israel as an imperialist outpost in the Middle East was clearly demonstrated in October 1956 when Israel responded to the anti-imperialist measures of the Egyptian government, capped by its nationalisation of the Suez Canal, by joining Britain and France in invading Egypt.

Israel's aggression against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in June 1967 was motivated by the same aims as its 1956 invasion of Egypt. The Israeli ruling class hoped to be able to hold on to any territory it could grab. In addition, it sought to topple the nationalist governments in Egypt and Syria and replace them with governments that would be more amenable to recognising Israel.

The June 1967 war was a turning point for Israel. Before the 1967 war, Israel's capitalist economy had been heavily subsidised by aid from the US and West Germany. This imperialist aid, which continued and increased after 1967, combined with Israel's territorial expansion in the war, laid the basis for Israel's transformation into an imperialist power in its own right.

While Israel remains dependent on inflows of US financial aid, this does not mean it is simply Washington's "cat's paw" in the Middle East. Israel is an imperialist ally of the US, but like Australia it has interests which can conflict with those of the US. For example, the US would like to see some token accommodation to the Palestinians demand for the liberation of that part of their homeland occupied by Israel in 1967, in order to stabilise the political situation in the Middle East. But Israel refuses to make any such accommodation, because any weakening of its control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip could undermine its colonial super-exploitation of Palestinian Arab labour.

What is national self-determination?

A common Zionist argument is the appeal to the right to national self-determination, abstracted from the actual relations between nations.

According to this line of argument, the Jewish people, after being oppressed throughout the world, have a right to "national self-determination". The establishment of the state of Israel was the realisation of that "right". Because of the historical persecution of the Jews, their right to maintain the state of Israel supersedes the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs, including their right to return to their country.

This argument mixes together the plight of Jews elsewhere in the world, as an often persecuted religious community, and the situation of the Hebrew-speaking people today in Israel, who have come to constitute a distinct nation dominating a state that oppresses the Palestinian Arabs.

The claim that the Israeli Jews have an equal right to self-determination with the Palestinian Arabs ignores the fact that the Israeli Jews already have a separate state — one founded on the homeland of an expelled nation, the Palestinian Arabs. That's the *source* of the problem, not one possible solution.

As Marxists, we do not view the right to self-determination as some abstract moral right belonging to all nations at all times and under all circumstances. National self-determination is a progressive demand only insofar as it mobilises an *oppressed nation* against its oppression. Moreover, support by the working people of an oppressor nation for the right to self-determination of the oppressed nation lays the basis for an internationalist alliance between the working people of both nations directed against the ruling class of the oppressor nation.

National self-determination means that an *oppressed nation* has the right to choose whatever state forms it decides are necessary *to end its national oppression*. To reverse their national oppression, the Palestinian Arabs demand the dismantling of the colonial-settler state that took over their country, the right of the refugees to return, and the establishment of a united, democratic, secular Palestine.

A democratic, secular Palestine

Usually, struggles for national self-determination take the form of the oppressed nation demanding the right to separate from the oppressor nation and form its own independent state, as today in Puerto Rico, Quebec or British-occupied Ireland.

Palestine presents a different variant. There, national oppression was carried out by the establishment of a colonial-settler state through the forcible partition of the country and the expulsion of much of its indigenous population.

The demand for a democratic, secular Palestine arose out of this specific history. It flows from the reality that the Israeli state is anti-democratic, since it denies the rights of the majority of the country's indigenous inhabitants and prevents them from returning or even participating in its future.

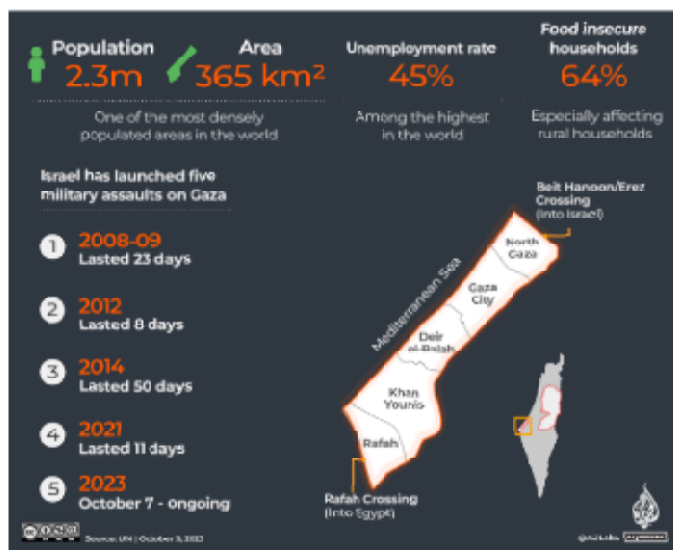
The PLO calls for a secular state in opposition to the state of Israel where Jews, by virtue of their religion, are granted rights that are denied to Christians and Muslims. Jewish religious law bears down heavily on Israeli life, regulating everything from marriage to public transportation. The fight for separation of church and state has been a part of the program of democratic revolutions for more than 200 years.

Finally, the demand for a unitary Palestinian state addresses the forcible partition of "an indivisible homeland".

Much of the Israeli left and many Jewish leftists around the world are imbued with the contradiction of supporting the existence of Israel and an end to the national oppression of Palestinians. But the national oppression of the Palestinians cannot be ended as long as the Israeli state is maintained. Self-determination for the Palestinian Arab nation means the dismantling of the Israeli state and its racist, colonialist institutions. How can the Palestinians exercise their right to national self-determination if they are not allowed to return to their country? Yet if the Palestinian Arabs do return, and are accorded their full rights, then, as the Zionists themselves point out, it would mean the end of Israel as a separate Jewish state.

To demand self-determination for the oppressor nation robs the concept of national self-determination of its democratic content. It gives the oppressor nation — in this case the Israeli Jews — a veto power over the choice of the oppressed nation and thus guts the demand for *self*-determination of the oppressed nation.

At the moment the majority of the Hebrew-speaking workers in Israel support the maintenance of the Jewish state. This support helps keep them ideologically enslaved to the Israeli capitalist ruling class, blocking them from fighting for their own class interests. Unless and until the Israeli Jewish working class ends its support for the Israeli state and supports the demand of the Palestinian Arabs for a united, democratic, secular Palestine, it will remain the cat's paw of Zionist colonialism. ■



Top: Palestine under Israeli occupation (2020). *Bottom:* Israel's attacks on Gaza. (Graphics from Al Jazeera.)



Top: Israel's apartheid "separation wall". *Bottom:* Wall divides road reserved for Israelis from one allocated to Palestinians.

Why Israel Is an Apartheid State

By Jonathan Cook

North from Nazareth's city limits, a mile or so as the crow flies, is to be found an agricultural community by the name of Tzipori — Hebrew for “bird.” It is a place I visit regularly, often alongside groups of activists wanting to learn more about the political situation of the Palestinian minority living in Israel.

Tzipori helps to shed light on the core historic, legal and administrative principles underpinning a Jewish state, ones that reveal it to be firmly in a tradition of non-democratic political systems that can best be described as apartheid in nature.

More than a decade ago, former US president Jimmy Carter incurred the wrath of Israel's partisans in America by suggesting that Israeli rule over Palestinians in the occupied territories was comparable to apartheid. While his bestseller book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* broke a taboo, in many ways it added to the confusion surrounding discussions of Israel. Since then, others, including John Kerry, when US secretary of state, and former Israeli prime ministers Ehud Olmert and Ehud Barak, have warned that Israeli rule in the occupied territories is in danger of metamorphosing into “apartheid” — though the moment of transformation, in their eyes, never quite seems to arrive.

It has been left to knowledgeable observers, such as South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to point out that the situation for Palestinians under occupation is, in fact, worse than that suffered by blacks in the former South Africa. In Tutu's view, Palestinians under occupation suffer from something more extreme than apartheid — what we might term “apartheid-plus”.

There is a notable difference between the two cases that hints at the nature of that “plus”. Even at the height of apartheid, South Africa's white population understood that it needed, and depended on, the labor of the black majority population. Israel, on the other hand, has a far more antagonistic relationship to Palestinians in the

March 18, 2018. From www.jonathan-cook.net. Reprinted with permission. *Jonathan Cook* writes regularly on the Palestinian struggle and Israel; for many years he lived in Nazareth.

occupied territories. They are viewed as an unwelcome, surplus population that serves as a demographic obstacle to the political realisation of a Greater Israel. The severe economic and military pressures Israel imposes on these Palestinians are designed to engineer their incremental displacement, a slow-motion ethnic cleansing.

Not surprisingly, Israel's supporters have been keen to restrict the use of the term "apartheid" to South Africa, as though a political system allocating key resources on a racial or ethnic basis has only ever occurred in one place and at one time. It is often forgotten that the crime of apartheid is defined in international law, as part of the 2002 Rome Statute that created the International Criminal Court at The Hague. An apartheid system, the statute says, is "an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime". In short, apartheid is a political system, or structure, that assigns rights and privileges based on racial criteria.

This definition, it will be argued in this essay, describes the political regime not only in the occupied territories — where things are actually even worse — but in Israel itself, where Jewish citizens enjoy institutional privileges over the 1.8 million Palestinians who have formal Israeli citizenship. These Palestinians are the remnants of the Palestinian people who were mostly dispersed by the 1948 war that established a Jewish state on the ruins of their homeland. These Palestinian citizens comprise about a fifth of Israel's population.

Although it is generally understood that they suffer discrimination, the assumption even of many scholars is that their treatment in no way undermines Israel's status as a western-style liberal democracy. Most minorities in the west — for example, blacks and Hispanics in the U.S., Asians in the UK, Turks in Germany, and Africans in France — face widespread prejudice and discrimination. Israel's treatment of its Palestinian minority, it is claimed, is no different.

This is to profoundly misunderstand the kind of state Israel is, and how it relates to all Palestinians, whether they are under occupation or Israeli citizens. The discrimination faced by Palestinians in Israel is not illegal, informal, unofficial, or improvised. It is systematic, institutional, structural and extensively codified, satisfying very precisely the definition of apartheid in international law and echoing the key features of South African apartheid.

It was for this reason that the United Nations' Economic Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) published a report in 2017 concluding that Israel had "established an apartheid regime that dominates the Palestinian people as a whole", including its Palestinian citizens. Under severe pressure from Israel and the US, that report was quickly retracted but the reality of apartheid in Israeli law and practice

persists.

This argument is far more controversial than the one made by President Carter. His position suggests that Israel developed a discrete system of apartheid after the occupation began in 1967 — a kind of “add-on” apartheid to democratic Israel. On this view, were Israel to end the occupation, the apartheid regime in the territories could be amputated like a gangrenous limb. But if Israel’s treatment of its own Palestinian citizens fits the definition of apartheid, then it implies something far more problematic. It suggests that Jewish privilege is inherent in the Israeli polity established by the Zionist movement in 1948, that a Jewish state is apartheid-like by its nature, and that dismantling the occupation would do nothing to end Israel’s status as an apartheid state.

Separate & unequal

Tzipori was founded by Romanian and Bulgarian Jews in 1949 as a moshav, a socialist agricultural collective similar to the kibbutz. It specialised in dairy production, though most of its inhabitants long ago abandoned farming, as well as socialism: today its 1000 residents work in offices in nearby cities such as Haifa, Tiberias and Afula.

Tzipori’s Hebrew name alludes to a much older Roman city called Sephoris, the remains of which are included in a national park that abuts the moshav. Separating the moshav from ancient Sephoris is a large pine forest, concealing yet more rubble, in some places barely distinguishable from the archeological debris of the national park. But these ruins are much more recent. They are the remnants of a Palestinian community of some 5000 souls known as Saffuriya. The village was wiped out in 1948 during the Nakba, the Arabic word for “catastrophe” — how Palestinians describe the loss of their homeland and its replacement with a Jewish state.

The Palestinians of Saffuriya — an Arabised version of “Sephoris” — were expelled by Israel and their homes razed. The destruction of Saffuriya was far from an isolated incident. More than 500 Palestinian villages were ethnically cleansed in a similar fashion during the Nakba, and the ruins of the homes invariably covered with trees. Today, all Saffuriya’s former residents live in exile — most outside Israel’s borders, in camps in Lebanon. But a proportion live close by in Nazareth, the only Palestinian city in what became Israel to survive the Nakba. In fact, according to some estimates, as much as 40% of Nazareth’s current population is descended from Saffuriya’s refugees, living in their own neighborhood called Safafri.

Nowadays, when observers refer to Palestinians, they usually think of those living in the territories Israel occupied in 1967: the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Increasingly, observers (and the various peace processes) overlook two other

significant groups. The first are the Palestinian refugees who ended up beyond the borders of partitioned Palestine; the second are the 20% of Palestinians who managed to remain on their land. In 1948, some 150,000 survived the Nakba — a figure far higher than intended by Israel's founders.

They included 30,000 in Nazareth — both the original inhabitants and refugees like those from Saffuriya who sought sanctuary in the city during the fighting. They avoided expulsion only because of a mistake. The commander who led the attack on Nazareth, a Canadian Jew called Ben Dunkelman, disobeyed an order to empty the city of its inhabitants. One can guess why: given the high profile of Nazareth as a center of Christianity, and coming in the immediate wake of the war crimes trials of Nazis at Nuremberg, Dunkelman presumably feared that one day he might end up in the dock too.

There were other, unforeseen reasons why Palestinians either remained inside Israel or were brought into the new state. Under pressure from the Vatican, a significant number of Palestinian Christians — maybe 10,000 — were allowed to return after the fighting finished. A further 35,000 Palestinians were administratively moved into Israel in 1949, after the Nakba had ended, when Israel struck a deal with Jordan to redraw the ceasefire lines — to Israel's territorial, but not demographic, advantage. And finally, in a far less technologically sophisticated age, many refugees who had been expelled outside Israel's borders managed to slip back hoping to return to villages like Saffuriya. When they found their homes destroyed, they “blended” into surviving Palestinian communities like Nazareth, effectively disappearing from the Israeli authorities' view.

In fact, it was this last trend that initiated a process that belatedly led to citizenship for the Palestinians still in Israel. The priority for Israeli officials was to prevent any return for the 750,000 Palestinians they had ethnically cleansed so successfully. That was the only way to ensure the preservation of a permanent and incontrovertible Jewish majority. And to that end, Palestinians in surviving communities like Nazareth needed to be marked out — “branded,” to use a cattle-ranching metaphor. That way, any “infiltrators,” as Israel termed refugees who tried to return home, could be immediately identified and expelled again. This “branding” exercise began with the issuing of residency permits to Palestinians in communities like Nazareth. But as Israel sought greater international legitimacy, it belatedly agreed to convert this residency into citizenship.

It did so through the Citizenship Law of 1952, four years after Israel's creation. Citizenship for Palestinians in Israel was a concession made extremely reluctantly and only because it served Israel's larger demographic purposes. Certainly, it was not

proof, as is often assumed, of Israel's democratic credentials. The Citizenship Law is better understood as an anti-citizenship law: its primary goal was to strip any Palestinians outside the new borders — the vast majority after the ethnic cleansing of 1948 — of a right ever to return to their homeland.

Two years before the Citizenship Law, Israel passed the more famous Law of Return. This law effectively opened the door to all Jews around the world to immigrate to Israel, automatically entitling them to citizenship.

Anyone familiar with modern US history will be aware of the Supreme Court decision of 1954 in the famous civil rights case *Brown v. Board of Education*. The judges ruled that the creation of separate public schools for white and black pupils was unconstitutional, on the grounds that “separate is inherently unequal”. It was an important legal principle that would strike a decisive blow against Jim Crow, the Deep South's version of apartheid.

If separate is inherently unequal, Israel's segregated structure of citizenship is the most profound form of inequality imaginable. Citizenship is sometimes referred to as the “foundational right” offered by states because so many other basic rights typically depend on it: from suffrage to residency and welfare. By separating citizenship rights on an ethnic basis, creating an entitlement to citizenship for Jews with one law and denying most Palestinians citizenship with another, Israel institutionalised legal apartheid at the bedrock level. Adalah, a legal rights group for Palestinians in Israel, has compiled an online database listing Israeli laws that explicitly discriminate based on ethnicity. The Law of Return and the Citizenship Law are the most significant, but there are nearly 70 more of them.

Citizenship & marriage

Ben Gurion was prepared to award the remnants of the Palestinians in Israel this degraded version of citizenship because he assumed this population would pose no threat to his new Jewish state. He expected these Palestinian citizens — or what Israel prefers to term generically “Israeli Arabs” — to be swamped by the arrival of waves of Jewish immigrants like those that settled Tzipori. Ben Gurion badly miscalculated. The far higher birth rate of Palestinian citizens meant they continue to comprise a fifth of Israel's population.

Palestinian citizens have maintained this numerical proportion, despite Israel's strenuous efforts to gerrymander its population. The Law of Return encourages — with free flights, financial gifts, interest-free loans and grants — any Jew in the world to come to Israel and instantly receive citizenship. More than three million Jews have taken up the offer.

The Citizenship Law, on the other hand, effectively closed the door after 1952 on the ability of Palestinians to gain citizenship. In fact, since then there has been only one way for a non-Jew to naturalise and that is by marrying an Israeli citizen, either a Jew or Palestinian. This exception is allowed only because a few dozen non-Jews qualify each year, posing no threat to Israel's Jewish majority.

In practice, Palestinians outside Israel have always been disqualified from using this route to citizenship, even if they marry a Palestinian citizen of Israel, as became increasingly common after Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine in 1967. During the Oslo years, when Palestinians in Israel launched a legal challenge to force Israel to uphold the naturalisation of their spouses from the occupied territories, the government hurriedly responded by passing in 2003 the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law. It denied Palestinians the right to qualify for Israeli residency or citizenship under the marriage provision. In effect, it banned marriage across the Green Line formally separating Palestinians in Israel from Palestinians under occupation. The measure revealed that Israel was prepared to violate yet another fundamental right — to fall in love and marry the person of one's choice — to preserve its Jewishness.

‘Nationalisation’ of land

Most citizens of the United States correctly assume that their citizenship and nationality are synonymous: “American” or “US”.

But the same is not true for Israelis. Israel classifies its citizens as holding different “nationalities”. This requires rejecting a common Israeli nationality and instead separating citizens into supposed ethnic or religious categories. Israel has recognised more than 130 nationalities to deal with anomalous cases, myself included. After I married my wife from Nazareth, I entered a lengthy, complex and hostile naturalisation process. I am now an Israeli citizen, but my nationality is identified as “British”. The vast majority of Israeli citizens, on the other hand, hold one of two official nationalities: Jewish or Arab. The Israeli Supreme Court has twice upheld the idea that these nationalities are separate from — and superior to — citizenship.

This complex system of separate nationalities is not some arcane, eccentric practice: it is central to Israel's version of apartheid. It is the means by which Israel can both institutionalise a separation in rights and obscure this state-sanctioned segregation from the view of outsiders. It allows Israel to offer different rights to different citizens depending on whether they are Jews or Palestinians, but in a way that avoids too obvious a comparison with apartheid South Africa. Here is how.

All citizens, whatever their ethnicity, enjoy “citizenship rights”. In this regard, Israel looks — at least superficially — much like a western liberal democracy. Examples

of citizenship rights include health care, welfare payments, the domestic allocation of water, and education — although, as we shall see, the picture is usually far more complex than it first appears. In reality, Israel has managed covertly to subvert even these citizenship rights.

Consider medical care. Although all citizens are entitled to equal health provision, hospitals and major medical services are almost always located in Jewish communities, and difficult for Palestinian citizens to access given the lack of transport connections between Palestinian and Jewish communities. Palestinian citizens in remote communities, such as in the Negev (Naqab), are often denied access to basic medical services. And recently it emerged that Israeli hospitals were secretly segregating Jewish and Palestinian women in maternity clinics. Dr Hatim Kanaaneh, a Palestinian physician in Israel, documents these and many other problems with health care in his book *A Doctor in Galilee*.

More significantly, Israel also recognises “national rights”, and reserves them almost exclusively for the Jewish population. National rights are treated as superior to citizenship rights. So if there is a conflict between a Jew’s national right and a Palestinian’s individual citizenship right, the national right must be given priority by officials and the courts. In this context, Israel’s right-wing justice minister, Ayelet Shaked, observed in February 2018 that Israel should ensure “equal rights to all citizens but not equal national rights.” She added: “Israel is a Jewish state. It isn’t a state of all its nations.”

The simplest illustration of how this hierarchy of rights works can be found in Israel’s citizenship laws. The Law of Return establishes a national right for all Jews to gain instant citizenship — as well as the many other rights that derive from citizenship. The Citizenship Law, on the other hand, creates only an individual citizenship right for non-Jews, not a national one. Palestinian citizens can pass their citizenship “downwards” to their offspring but cannot extend it “outwards,” as a Jew can, to members of their extended family — in their case, Palestinians who were made refugees in 1948. My wife has relatives who were exiled by the Nakba in Jordan. But with only an individual right to citizenship, she cannot bring any of them back to their homes now in Israel.

This distinction is equally vital in understanding how Israel allocates key material resources, such as water and land. Let us consider land. Israel has “nationalised” almost all of its territory — 93%. Palestinian communities in Israel have been able to hold on to less than 3% of their land — mostly the built-up areas of their towns and villages — after waves of confiscation by the state stripped them of at least 70% of their holdings.

It is not unprecedented in western democracies for the state to be a major landowner, even if Israel's total holdings are far more extensive than other states. But Israel has successfully masked what this "nationalisation" of land actually means. Given that there is no recognised Israeli nationality, Israel does not hold the land on behalf of its citizens — as would be the case elsewhere. It does not even manage the land on behalf of Jewish citizens of Israel. Instead the land is held in trust for the Jewish people around the globe, whether they are citizens or not, and whether they want to be part of Israel or not.

In practice, Jews who buy homes in Israel effectively get long-term leases on their property from a government body known as the Israel Lands Authority. The state regards them as protecting or guarding the land on behalf of Jews collectively around the world. Who are they guarding it from? From the original owners. Most of these lands, like those in Tzipori, have been either seized from Palestinian refugees or confiscated from Palestinian citizens.

A democratic facade

The political geographer Oren Yiftachel is among the growing number of Israeli scholars who reject the classification of Israel as a liberal democracy, or in fact any kind of democracy. He describes Israel as an "ethnocracy", a hybrid state that creates a democratic façade, especially for the dominant ethnic group, to conceal its essential, non-democratic structure. In describing Israel's ethnocracy, Yiftachel provides a complex hierarchy of citizenship in which non-Jews are at the very bottom.

It is notable that Israel lacks a constitution, instead creating 11 Basic Laws that approximate a constitution. The most liberal component of this legislation, passed in 1992 and titled Freedom and Human Dignity, is sometimes referred to as Israel's Bill of Rights. However, it explicitly fails to enshrine in law a principle of equality. Instead, the law emphasises Israel's existence as a "Jewish and democratic state" — an oxymoron that is rarely examined by Israelis.

A former Supreme Court judge, Meir Shamgar, famously claimed that Israel — as the nation-state of the Jewish people — was no less democratic than France as the nation-state of the French people. And yet, while it is clear how one might naturalise to become French, the only route to becoming Jewish is religious conversion. "Jewish" and "French" are clearly not equivalent conceptions of citizenship.

Netanyahu's government has been trying to draft a 12th Basic Law. Its title is revealing: it declares Israel as "the Nation-State of the Jewish People". Not the state of Israeli citizens, or even of Israeli Jews, but of all Jews around the world, including those Jews who are not Israeli citizens and have no interest in becoming citizens.

This is a reminder of the very peculiar nature of a Jewish state, one that breaks with the conception of a civic citizenship on which liberal democracies are premised. Israel's ethnic idea of nationality is closely derived from — and mirrors — the ugly ethnic or racial ideas of citizenship that dominated Europe a century ago (and are in places being revived). Those exclusive, aggressive conceptions of peoplehood led to two devastating world wars, as well as providing the ideological justification for a wave of anti-semitism that swept Europe and culminated in the Holocaust.

Further, if all Jewish “nationals” in the world are treated as citizens of Israel — real or potential ones — what does that make Israel's large minority of Palestinian citizens, including my wife and two children? It seems that Israel regards them effectively as guest workers or resident aliens, tolerated so long as their presence does not threaten the state's Jewishness. Ayelet Shaked, Israel's justice minister, implicitly acknowledged this problem during a debate on the proposed Nation-State Basic Law in February. She said Israel could not afford to respect universal human rights: “There is a place to maintain a Jewish majority even at the price of violation of rights.”

The hierarchy of citizenship Yiftachel notes is helpful because it allows us to understand that Israeli citizenship is the exact opposite of the level playing field of formal rights one would expect to find in a liberal democracy. Another key piece of legislation, the Absentee Property Law of 1950, stripped all Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war of their right to any property they had owned before the Nakba. Everything was seized — land, crops, buildings, vehicles, farm implements, bank accounts — and became the property of Israel, passed on to Jewish institutions or Jewish citizens in violation of international law.

The Absentee Property Law applied equally to Palestinian citizens, such as those from Saffuriya who ended up in Nazareth, as it did to Palestinian refugees outside Israel's recognised borders. In fact, as many as one in four Palestinian citizens are reckoned to have been internally displaced by the 1948 war. In the Orwellian terminology of the Absentee Property Law, these refugees are classified as “present absentees” — present in Israel, but absent from their former homes. Despite their citizenship, such Palestinians have no more rights to return home, or reclaim other property, than refugees in camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Residential segregation

Although Tzipori was built on land confiscated from Palestinians — some of them Israeli citizens living close by in Nazareth — not one of its 300 or so homes, or its dozen farms, is owned by a Palestinian citizen. In fact, no Palestinian citizen of Israel has ever been allowed to live or even rent a home in Tzipori, seven decades after

Israel's creation.

Tzipori is far from unique. There are some 700 similar rural communities, known in Israel as cooperative communities. Each is, and is intended to be, exclusively Jewish, denying Palestinian citizens of Israel the right to live in them. These rural communities control much of the 93% of land that has been “nationalised”, effectively ensuring it remains off-limits to the fifth of Israel's population that is non-Jewish.

How is this system of ethnic residential segregation enforced? Most cooperative communities like Tzipori administer a vetting procedure through an “admissions committee”, comprising officials from quasi-governmental entities such as the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund and the World Zionist Organisation, which are there to represent the interests of world Jewry, not Israeli citizens. These organisations — effectively interest groups that enjoy a special, protected status as agents of the Israeli state — are themselves a gross violation of the principles of a liberal democracy. The state, for example, has awarded the Jewish National Fund, whose charter obligates it to discriminate in favor of Jews, ownership of 13% of Israeli territory. A Jew from Brooklyn has more rights to land in Israel than a Palestinian citizen.

For most of Israel's history, there was little need to conceal what the admissions committees were doing. No one noticed. If a Palestinian from Nazareth had applied to live in Tzipori, the admissions committee would simply have rejected the applicant on the grounds that they were an “Arab”. But this very effective mechanism for keeping Palestinian citizens off most of their historic homeland hit a crisis two decades ago when the case of the Kaadan family began working its way through Israel's court system.

Adel Kaadan lived in a very poor Palestinian community called Baqa al-Ghabiyya, south of Nazareth and quite literally a stone's throw from the West Bank. Kaadan had a good job as a senior nurse in nearby Hadera hospital, where he regularly treated Jewish patients and had on occasion, he told me when I interviewed him in the early 2000s, helped to save Israeli soldiers' lives. He assumed that should entitle him to live in a Jewish community. Kaadan struck me as stubborn as he was naïve — a combination of personality traits that had got him this far and ended up causing Israel a great deal of legal and reputational trouble.

Determined to give his three young daughters the best opportunities he could manage, Kaadan had built the family an impressive villa in Baqa al-Ghabiyya. While I sat having coffee with him, one of his daughters played the piano with a proficiency that suggested she had a private tutor. But Kaadan was deeply dissatisfied with his lot. His home was grand and beautiful, but Baqa was not. As soon as the family stepped outside their home, they had to wade into the reality of Palestinian life in Israel. Kaadan was proof that it was possible for some Palestinian citizens, if they were

determined and lucky enough to surmount the many obstacles placed in their way, to enjoy personal success, but they could not so easily escape the collective poverty of their surroundings.

Like many other Palestinian citizens, Kaadan was trapped by yet another piece of legislation: the Planning and Building Law of 1965. It advanced a core aim of Zionism: “Judaising” as much land as possible. It achieved this in two main ways. First, communities in Israel were only recognised by the state if they were listed in the Planning Law. Although nearly 200 Palestinian communities had survived the Nakba, the law recognised just 120 or them.

The most problematic communities, from Israel’s point of view, were the dispersed Bedouin villages located among the remote, dusty hills of the semi-desert Negev, or Naqab, in Israel’s south. The Negev was Israel’s biggest land reserve, comprising 60% of the country’s territory. Its vast, inaccessible spaces had made it the preferred location for secretive military bases and Israel’s nuclear program. Israel wanted the Bedouin off their historic lands, and the Planning Law was the ideal way to evict them — by de-recognising their villages.

Today the inhabitants of dozens of “unrecognised villages” — home to nearly a tenth of the Palestinian population in Israel — are invisible to the state, except when it comes to the enforcement of planning regulations. The villagers live without state-provided electricity, water, roads and communications. Any homes they build instantly receive demolition orders, forcing many to live in tents or tin shacks. Israel’s aim is to force the Bedouin to abandon their pastoral way of life and traditions, and relocate to overcrowded, state-built townships, which are the poorest communities in Israel by some margin.

Starved of resources

In addition to creating the unrecognised villages, the Planning and Building Law of 1965 ensures ghetto-like conditions for recognised Palestinian communities too. It creates residential segregation by confining the vast majority of Palestinian citizens to the 120 Palestinian communities in Israel that are officially listed for them, and then tightly limits their room for growth and development. Even in the case of Palestinian citizens living in a handful of so-called “mixed cities” — Palestinian cities that were largely “Judaised” after the Nakba — they have been forced into their own discrete neighborhoods, on the margins of urban life.

The Planning Law also drew a series of blue lines around all the communities in Israel, determining their expansion area. Jewish communities were awarded significant land reserves, while the blue lines around Palestinian communities were invariably

drawn close to the built-up area half a century ago. Although Israel's Palestinian population has grown seven or eight-fold since, its expansion space has barely changed, leading to massive overcrowding. This problem is exacerbated by Israel's failure to build a single new Palestinian community since 1948.

Like the other 120 surviving Palestinian communities in Israel, Baqa had been starved of resources: land, infrastructure and services. There were no parks or green areas where the Kaadan children could play. Outside their villa, there were no sidewalks, and during heavy rains untreated sewage rose out of the inadequate drains to wash over their shoes. Israel had confiscated all Baqa's land for future development, so houses were crowded around them on all sides, often built without planning permits, which were in any case almost impossible to obtain. Illegal hook-ups for electricity blotted the view even further. With poor refuse collection services, the families often burnt their rubbish in nearby dumpsters.

Adel Kaadan had set his eyes on living somewhere better — and that meant moving to a Jewish community. When Israel began selling building plots in Katzir, a small Jewish cooperative community located on part on Baqa's confiscated land, Kaadan submitted his application. When it was rejected because he was an "Arab", he turned to the courts.

In 2000, the Kaadans' case arrived at the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court. Aharon Barak, the court's president who heard the petition, was the most liberal and respected judge in Israel's history. But the Kaadans' case was undoubtedly the most unwelcome he ever adjudicated. It placed an ardent Zionist like himself in an impossible situation.

On one hand, there was no practice in Israel more clearly apartheid-like than the ethnic-based residential exclusion enforced by the admissions committees. It was simply not something Barak could afford to be seen upholding. After all, he was a regular lecturer at Yale and Harvard law schools, where he was feted, and had often been cited by liberal counterparts on the US Supreme Court as a major influence on their judicial activism.

But while he could not be seen ruling in favor of Katzir, at the same time he dared not rule in the Kaadans' favor either. Such a decision would undermine the core rationale of a Zionist Jewish state: the Judaisation of as much territory as possible. It would create a legal precedent that would throw open the doors to other Palestinian citizens, allowing them also to move into these hundreds of Jewish-only communities.

Childhoods apart

Barak understood that much else hung on the principle of residential separation. Primary and secondary education are also segregated — and largely justified on the basis of residential separation. Jewish children go to Hebrew-language schools in Jewish areas; Palestinian children in Israel go to Arabic-language schools in Palestinian communities. (There are only a handful of private bilingual schools in Israel.)

This separation ensures that educational resources are prioritised for Jewish citizens. Arab schools are massively underfunded and their curriculum tightly controlled by the authorities, as exemplified by the 2011 Nakba Law. It threatens public funding for any school or institution that teaches about the key moment in modern Palestinian history. Additionally, teaching posts in Arab schools have historically been dictated by the Shin Bet, Israel's secret police, to create spies and an atmosphere of suspicion in classrooms and common-rooms.

A side-benefit for Israel of separation in residency and education is that Palestinian and Jewish citizens have almost no chances to meet until they reach adulthood, when their characters have been formed. It is easy to fear the Other when you have no experience of him. The success of this segregation may be measured in intermarriages between Jewish and Palestinian citizens. In the year 2011, when the Israeli authorities last issued statistics, there were only 19 such marriages, or 0.03%. Israeli Jews openly oppose such marriages as “miscegenation”.

In fact, Israel is so opposed to intermarriages, that it prohibits such marriages from being conducted inside Israel. Mixed couples are forced to travel abroad and marry there — typically in Cyprus — and apply for the marriage to be recognised on their return. Notably, the 1973 United Nations Convention on Apartheid lists measures prohibiting mixed marriages as a crime of apartheid.

Residential separation has also allowed Israel to ensure Jewish communities are far wealthier and better provided with services than Palestinian ones. Although all citizens are taxed on their income, public-subsidised building programs are overwhelmingly directed at providing homes for Jewish families in Jewish areas. Over seven decades, hundreds of Jewish communities have been built by the state, with ready-made roads, sidewalks and public parks, with homes automatically connected to water, electricity and sewage grids. All these communities are built on “state land” — in most cases, lands taken from Palestinian refugees and Palestinian citizens.

By contrast, not one new Arab community has been established in that time. And the 120 recognised Palestinian communities have been largely left to sink or swim on their own. After waves of confiscation by the state, they are on the remnants of private Palestinian land. Having helped to subsidise housing and building programs for

millions of Jewish immigrants, Palestinian communities have mostly had to raise their own money to install basic infrastructure, including water and sewage systems.

Meanwhile, segregated zoning areas and separate planning committees allow Israel to enforce much tougher regulations on Palestinian communities, to deny building permits and to carry out demolition orders. Some 30,000 homes are reported to be illegally built in the Galilee, almost all of them in Palestinian communities.

Similarly, most of the state's budget for local authorities, as well as business investment, is channeled towards Jewish communities rather than Palestinian ones. This is where industrial areas and factories are built, to ensure greater employment opportunities for Jewish citizens and to top up Jewish communities' municipal coffers with business rates.

Meanwhile, a central government "balancing grant" — intended to help the poorest local authorities by redistributing income tax in their favor — is skewed too. Even though Palestinian communities are uniformly the poorest in Israel, they typically receive a third of the balancing grant received by Jewish communities.

Residential segregation has also allowed Israel to create hundreds of "national priority areas" (NPAs), which receive preferential government budgets, including extra funding to allow for long school days. Israeli officials have refused to divulge even to the courts what criteria are used to establish these priority areas, but it is clearly not based on socio-economic considerations. Of 557 NPAs receiving extra school funding, only four tiny Palestinian communities were among their number. The assumption is that they were included only to avoid accusations that the NPAs were designed solely to help Jews.

Israel has similarly used residential segregation to ensure that priority zoning for tourism chiefly benefits Jewish communities. That has required careful engineering, given that much of the tourism to Israel is Christian pilgrimage. In the north, the main pilgrimage destination is Nazareth and its Basilica of the Annunciation, where the Angel Gabriel reputedly told Mary she was carrying the son of God. But Israel avoided making the city a center for tourism, fearing it would be doubly harmful: income from the influx of pilgrims would make Nazareth financially independent; and a prolonged stay by tourists in the city would risk exposing them to the Palestinian narrative.

Instead the north's tourism priority zone was established in nearby Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, a once-Palestinian city that was ethnically cleansed during the Nakba and is now a Jewish city. For decades investors have been encouraged to build hotels and tourist facilities in Tiberias, ensuring that most coachloads of pilgrims only pass through Nazareth, making a brief hour-long stop to visit the Basilica.

Although Nazareth was very belatedly awarded tourism priority status in the late 1990s — in time for the Pope's visit for the millennium — little has changed in practice. The city is so starved of land that there is almost no room for hotels. Those that have been built are mostly located in the city's outer limits, where pilgrims are unlikely to be exposed to Palestinian residents.

Public transport links have also privileged Jewish communities over Palestinian ones. The national bus company Egged — the main provider of public transport in Israel — has established an elaborate network of bus connections between Jewish areas, ensuring that Jewish citizens are integrated into the economy. They can easily and cheaply reach the main cities, factories and industrial zones. Egged buses, however, rarely enter Palestinian communities, depriving their residents of employment opportunities. This, combined with the lack of daycare services for young children, explains why Palestinian women in Israel have long had one of the lowest employment rates in the Arab world, at below 20%.

Palestinian communities have felt discrimination in the provision of security and protection too. Last November the government admitted there was woefully inadequate provision of public shelters in Palestinian communities, even in schools, against missile attacks and earthquakes. Officials have apparently balked at the large expense of providing shelters, and the problem of freeing up land in Palestinian communities to establish them. Similarly, Israel has been loath to establish police stations in Palestinian communities, leading to an explosion of crime there. In December Palestinian legislator Yousef Jabareen pointed out that there had been 381 shootings in his hometown of Umm al-Fahm in 2017, but only one indictment. He said the town's inhabitants had become "hostages in the hands of a small group of criminals."

In all these different ways, Israel has ensured Palestinian communities remain substantially poorer than Jewish communities. A study in December 2017 found that the richest communities in Israel — all Jewish — received nearly four times more welfare spending from the government than the poorest communities — all Palestinian. A month earlier, the Bank of Israel reported that Palestinian citizens had only 2% of all mortgages, in a sign of how difficult it is for them to secure loans, and they had to pay higher interest charges on the loans.

Among the 35 member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Israel has the highest poverty rate. This is largely because of high rates among Palestinian citizens, augmented by the self-inflicted poverty of Israel's ultra-Orthodox community, most of whose men refuse to work, preferring religious studies. In evidence of how Israel has skewed welfare spending to benefit poor Jews like the ultra-Orthodox, rather than Palestinian citizens, only a fifth of

Jewish children live below the poverty line compared to two-thirds of Palestinian children in Israel.

‘Socially unsuitable’

Back at the Supreme Court, Aharon Barak was still grappling with the conflicting burden of Zionist history and the expectations of American law schools. The judge understood he needed to fudge a ruling. He had to appear to be siding with the Kaadan family without actually ruling in their favor and thereby creating a legal precedent that would let other Palestinian families follow in their path. So he ordered Katzir to rethink its decision, warning that it could not keep them out on religious or national grounds.

The Jewish community did rethink its policy, but not in a way that helped Barak. Katzir responded that they were no longer rejecting the Kaadans because they were Arab, but because they were “socially unsuitable.” Barak knew that would not wash at Yale or Harvard either — it too obviously sounded like code for “Arab”. He ordered Katzir to come back with a different decision regarding the Kaadans.

The case and a few others like it dragged on over the next several years, with the court reluctant to make a precedent-setting decision. Quietly, behind the scenes, Adel Kaadan finally received a plot of land from Katzir. Unnerved, cooperative communities across the Galilee started to pass local bylaws — insisting on a “social suitability” criterion for applicants — to pre-empt any decision by the Supreme Court in favor of the Palestinian families banging at their doors.

By 2011, it looked as if the Supreme Court was running out of options and would have to rule on the legality of the admissions committees. At that point, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu stepped in to help out the court. There was no statutory basis for the admissions committees; they were simply an administrative practice observed by all these hundreds of Jewish-only cooperative communities. The Netanyahu government, therefore, pushed through an Admissions Committee Law that year. It finally put the committees on a statutory footing, but also made them embarrassingly visible for the first time.

As the parliament backed the legislation, reports in the western media labeled it an “apartheid law” — conveniently ignoring the fact that this had been standard practice in Israel for more than six decades.

A petition from the legal group Adalah against the new law reached the Supreme Court in 2014. Barak had by this time retired. But in line with his aversion to issuing a ruling that might challenge the racist underpinnings of Israel as a Jewish state, the judges continued not to make a decision. They argued that the law was too new for

the court to determine what effect the admissions committees would have in practice — or in the language of the judges, they declined to act because the law was not yet “ripe” for adjudication. The ripeness argument was hard to swallow given that the effect of the admissions committees in enforcing residential apartheid after so many decades was only too apparent.

Even so, the legal challenge launched by the Kaadans left many in the Israeli leadership worried. In February 2018, referring to the case, the justice minister Ayelet Shaked averred that in “the argument over whether it’s all right for a Jewish community to, by definition, be only Jewish, I want the answer to be, ‘Yes, it’s all right’.”

Two modes of apartheid

It is time to address more specifically the nature of the apartheid regime Israel has created — and how it mirrors the essence of South Africa’s apartheid without precisely replicating it.

Close to the forest planted over the ruins of the Palestinian homes of Saffuriya is a two-storey stone structure, an Israeli flag fluttering atop its roof. It is the only Palestinian home not razed in 1948. Later, it was inhabited by Jewish immigrants, and today serves as a small guest house known as Tzipori Village. Its main customers are Israeli Jews from the crowded, urban center of the country looking for a weekend break in the countryside.

Scholars have distinguished between two modes of South African apartheid. The first was what they term “trivial” or “petty” apartheid, though “visible” apartheid conveys more precisely the kind of segregation in question. This was the sort of segregation that was noticed by any visitor: separate park benches, buses, restaurants, toilets, and so on. Israel has been careful to avoid in so far as it can this visible kind of segregation, aware that this is what most people think of as “apartheid”. It has done so, even though, as we have seen, life in Israel is highly segregated for Jewish and Palestinian citizens. Residence is almost always segregated, as is primary and secondary education and much of the economy. But shopping malls, restaurants and toilets are not separate for Jewish and Palestinian citizens.

The same scholars refer to “grand” or “resource” apartheid, which they consider to have been far more integral to apartheid South Africa’s political project. This is segregation in relation to the state’s key material resources, such as land, water and mineral wealth. Israel has been similarly careful to segregate the main material resources to preserve them for the Jewish majority alone. It does this through the establishment of hundreds of exclusively Jewish communities like Tzipori. As noted previously, almost all of Israel’s territory has been locked up in these cooperative

communities. And in line with its Zionist sloganeering about making the desert bloom, Israel has also restricted the commercial exploitation of water to agricultural communities like the kibbutz and moshav. It has provided subsidised water to these Jewish-only communities — and denied it to Palestinian communities — by treating the commercial use of water as a national right for Jews alone.

A thought experiment using Tzipori Village guest house neatly illustrates how Israel practices apartheid but in a way that only marginally differs from the South African variety. Had this bed and breakfast been located in a white community in South Africa, no black citizen would have been allowed to stay in it even for a night, and even if the owner himself had not been racist. South African law would have forbidden it. But in Israel any citizen can stay in Tzipori Village, Jew and Palestinian alike. Although the owner may be racist and reject Palestinian citizens, nothing in the law allows him to do so.

But — and this is crucial — Tzipori's admissions committee would never allow a Palestinian citizen to buy the guest house or any home in the moshav, or even rent a home there. The right a Palestinian citizen has to spend a night in Tzipori Village is "trivial" or "petty" when compared to Israel's sweeping exclusion of all Palestinian citizens from almost all the country's territory. That is the point the scholars of South African apartheid highlight in distinguishing between the two modes of apartheid. In this sense, Israel's apartheid may not be identical to South Africa's, but it is a close relative or cousin.

This difference is also apparent in Israel's treatment of suffrage. The fact that all Israeli citizens — Jews and Palestinians — have the vote and elect their own representatives is often cited by Israel's supporters as proof that Israel is a normal democratic country and cannot therefore be an apartheid state. There are, however, obvious problems with this claim.

We can make sense of the difference by again examining South Africa. The reason South African apartheid took the form it did was because a white minority, determined to preserve its privileges, faced off against a large black majority. It could not afford to give them the vote because any semblance of democracy would have turned power over to the black population and ended apartheid.

Israel, on the other hand, managed to radically alter its demographic fortunes by expelling the vast majority of Palestinians in 1948. This was the equivalent of gerrymandering the electoral constituency of the new Jewish state on a vast, national scale. The exclusion of most Palestinians from their homeland through the Citizenship Law, and the open door for Jews to come to Israel provided by the Law of Return, ensured Israel could tailor-make a "Jewish ethnocracy" in perpetuity.

The Israeli-Palestinian political scientist Asad Ghanem has described the Palestinian vote as “purely symbolic” — and one can understand why by considering Israel’s first two decades, when Palestinian citizens were living under a military government. Then, they faced greater restrictions on their movement than Palestinians in the West Bank today. It would be impossible even for Israel’s keenest supporters to describe Israel as a democracy for its Palestinian citizens during this period, when they were under martial law. And yet Palestinians in Israel were awarded the vote in time for Israel’s first general election in 1949 and voted throughout the military government period. In other words, the vote may be a necessary condition for a democratic system but it is far from a sufficient one.

In fact, in Israel’s highly tribal political system, Jews are encouraged to believe they must vote only for Jewish Zionist parties, ones that uphold the apartheid system we have just analysed. That has left Palestinian citizens with no choice but to vote for contending Palestinian parties. The one major Jewish-Arab party, the Communists, was in Israel’s earliest years a significant political force among Israeli Jews. Today, they comprise a tiny fraction of its supporters, with Palestinian citizens dominating the party.

With politics so tribal, it has been easy to prevent Palestinians from gaining even the most limited access to power. Israel’s highly proportional electoral system has led to myriad small parties in the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. All the Jewish parties have at various times participated in government in what are effectively rainbow coalitions. But the Palestinian parties have never been invited into an Israeli government, or had any significant impact on the legislative process. Israel’s political system may allow Palestinian citizens to vote, but they have zero political influence. This is why Israel can afford the generosity of allowing them to vote, knowing it will never disturb a tyrannical Jewish-majority rule.

Palestinian parliament member Ahmed Tibi has expressed it this way: “Israel is a democratic state for Jewish citizens, and a Jewish state for Arab citizens.”

‘Subversive’ call for equality

But increasingly any Palestinian presence in the Knesset is seen as too much by Israel’s Jewish parties. When the Oslo process was initiated in the late 1990s, the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships agreed that Israel’s Palestinian citizens should remain part of Israel in any future two-state arrangement. In response, Palestinian citizens began to take their Israeli citizenship far more seriously. A new party, Balad, was established by a philosophy professor, Azmi Bishara, who campaigned on a platform that Israel must stop being a Jewish state and become a “state of all its citizens” — a liberal

democracy where all citizens would enjoy equal rights.

This campaign was soon picked up by all the Palestinian political parties, and led to a series of documents — including the most important, the Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel — demanding major reforms that would turn Israel into either “a state of its citizens” or a “consensual democracy”.

The Israeli leadership was so discomfited by this campaign that in 2006 the prime minister, Ehud Olmert, held a meeting with the Shin Bet. Unlike usual meetings of the secret police, this discussion was widely publicised. The Israeli media reported that the Shin Bet regarded the so-called Future Vision documents as “subversion” and warned that they would use any means, including non-democratic ones, to defeat such a campaign for equal rights.

A year later, when Bishara — the figurehead of this movement — was out of the country on a speaking tour, it was announced that he would be put on trial for treason should he return. It was alleged that he had helped Hizbullah during Israel’s 2006 war with Lebanon — a claim even the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* dismissed as preposterous. Bishara stayed away. Effectively, the government and Shin Bet had declared war on efforts to democratise Israel. As a result, most Palestinian politicians turned the volume down on their demands for political reform.

However, their continuing presence in the Knesset — especially as a succession of governments under Netanyahu has grown ever-more rightwing — has enraged more and more Jewish legislators. For years, the main Jewish parties have used their control of the Central Elections Committee to try to prevent leading Palestinian politicians from standing in parliamentary elections. However, the Supreme Court has — by ever-narrower margins — repeatedly overturned the CEC’s decisions.

Avigdor Lieberman, the Soviet-born Israeli defense minister who has been leading the attack on Palestinian legislators, managed to push through a Threshold Law in 2014 that raised the electoral threshold to a level that would be impossible for any of the three large Palestinian parties to surmount. But in a major surprise, these very different parties — representing Communist, Islamic and democratic-nationalist streams — put aside their differences to create a Joint List. In a prime example of unintended consequences, the 2015 general election resulted in the Joint List becoming the third largest party in the Knesset.

For a brief while, and to great consternation in Israel, it looked as if the List might become the official opposition, providing Palestinian legislators with access to security briefings and the right to head sensitive Knesset committees.

The pressure to get rid of the Palestinian parties has continued to intensify. In 2016 the Knesset passed another law — initially called the Zoabi Law, and later

renamed the Expulsion Law — that allows a three-quarters parliamentary majority to expel any legislator, not because they committed a crime or misdeed but because the other legislators do not like their political views. The law's original name indicated that the prime target for expulsion was Haneen Zoabi, who is now the most prominent member of Bishara's Balad party.

According to commentators, it will be impossible to raise the three-quarters majority needed to approve such an expulsion. But in a time of war, or during one of the intermittent major attacks on Gaza, it seems probable that such a majority can be marshaled against outspoken critics of Israel — and supporters of a state of all its citizens — like Zoabi.

In fact, it only requires the expulsion of one member of the Joint List and the other members will be placed in an untenable position with their voters. They will be in the Knesset only because the Jewish Zionist legislators have chosen not to expel them — yet. This is why the *Haaretz* newspaper referred to the Expulsion Law as the first step in the “ethnic cleansing of the Knesset.”

As Israeli officials seem increasingly determined to abolish even the last formal elements of democracy in Israel, the country's Palestinian leaders are finding themselves with limited options. Their only hope is to bring wider attention to the substantial democratic deficit in the Israeli polity.

In February, responding to the government's moves to legislate a Basic Law on “Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people”, Knesset member Yousef Jabareen submitted an alternative Basic Law. It was titled “Israel, a democratic, egalitarian, and multi-cultural state”. In any western state, such a law would be axiomatic and redundant. In Israel, the measure stood no chance of gaining support in the Knesset except from legislators from the the Palestinian parties.

Jabareen admitted in an interview that the bill would be unlikely to secure backing even from the five members of Meretz, by far the most left-wing Jewish party in the parliament. Optimistically, he observed: “I want to hope that Meretz will be among them [supporters]. I have shared with Meretz a draft of the bill, but I have not asked them at this stage to join, in order to give them time to mull things over.”

There could hardly be a more ringing indictment of Israeli society than the almost-certain futility of seeking a Jewish legislator in the Knesset willing to support legislation for tolerance and equality. ■

Anti-Zionism Is Not Antisemitism

By Hadas Thier

Just days after he was warmly applauded by a Zionist group for delivering a stunningly antisemitic speech, Donald Trump issued a cynical “antisemitism” decree meant to stamp out campus criticism of Israel. It’s just the latest episode in Zionism’s long history of allying with antisemites.

Few people would trust Donald Trump to protect Jews from a rise in antisemitism. In the United States alone, there were more than a hundred cases of physical attacks, arson, vandalism, and threats in 2018, including last October’s assault in Pittsburgh that left 11 Jews dead at the Tree of Life synagogue. Tuesday’s shooting at a Jersey City kosher market appears to be the latest anti-Jewish attack.

Trump once called himself “the least antisemitic person that you’ve ever seen in your entire life.” But his December 11 executive order, which claims to target antisemitism on campuses, ironically employs an antisemitic trope. By defining Judaism as a nationality, Jews, the logic flows, are inherently foreign. This should come as no surprise, given the home that white nationalism and antisemitism have found in the Trump White House.

This isn’t new territory for Trump, who famously refused to call out antisemitic white supremacy after the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Most recently, he told a room full of Jews at the Israeli American Council:

... You’re brutal killers, not nice people at all. But you have to vote for me — you have no choice. You’re not gonna vote for Pocahontas, I can tell you that. You’re not gonna vote for the wealth tax. Yeah, let’s take 100% of your wealth away! Some of you don’t like me. Some of you I don’t like at all, actually. And you’re going to be my biggest supporters because you’re going to be out of business in about 15 minutes if they get it. So I don’t have to spend a lot of time on that.

But the intention of the executive order is plainly not to protect Jews, but to silence

the movement for Palestine. As Peter Beinart put it: “It is a bewildering and alarming time to be a Jew, both because antisemitism is rising and because so many politicians are responding to it not by protecting Jews but by victimising Palestinians.”

The executive order adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which so broadly defines the term that it includes such items as: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.” And by defining Judaism as a nationality, the order has power to withhold federal money from educational institutions that don’t adequately clamp down on these broadly and cynically defined affronts.

Trump isn’t actually trying to fight antisemitism here. He’s cynically trying to shut down criticism of Israel’s barbaric policies — the latest episode in Zionism’s long history of allying with antisemites.

‘A debate they know they can’t win’

Trump’s order is but the latest salvo in a years-long campaign to redefine antisemitism for the purposes of shutting down criticism of Israel.

As Yousef Munayyer, the executive director of the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, told the *New York Times*: “Israeli apartheid is a very hard product to sell in America, especially in progressive spaces. And realising this, many Israeli apartheid apologists, Trump included, are looking to silence a debate they know they can’t win.”

Across the ocean, France’s parliament recently passed a resolution equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism. And in Britain, today’s elections, in which a victory for Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour party would dramatically turn around the state of British politics, have already been marred by nonstop smears purporting endemic antisemitism within the Labour Party. These attacks have mirrored the attempts to silence Ilhan Omar, an outspoken critic of Israeli aggression.

Supporters of Israel have been waging a coordinated, well-resourced counteroffensive to discredit the Palestine movement. The charge of antisemitism has been their weapon of choice, and campuses have been their ground zero.

As the *Guardian* recently reported, this strategy has been quite explicit, and it has been driven by a sundry assortment of right-wing forces. At a conference this summer of the American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative network that promotes right-wing policies, Republicans met with pro-Israel lobbyists.

Their aim was to draft laws that, in the words of Randy Fine, a Republican representative from Florida, would mean that “antisemitism [will] be treated

identically as how racism is treated. Students for Justice in Palestine is now treated the same way as the Ku Klux Klan — as they should be.”

Joseph Sabag of the Israeli American Council — the same group that hosted Donald Trump and applauded his openly antisemitic speech — agreed:

[Students for Justice in Palestine] is one of America’s most prominent anti-Israel propaganda groups and has material connections to organisations designated by the US justice department as terrorism co-conspirators. In the course of promoting BDS, or national-origin based discrimination against Israel, SJP members typically employ classic antisemitic themes and blood libels.

In fact, US lobby groups have a long history of working with the Israeli government’s Ministry of Strategic Affairs and its hasbara (propaganda) efforts to sabotage Palestinian activism on campuses. Particularly, they have targeted the advances made by Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaigns to pass resolutions to divest their universities from companies that support Israeli occupation.

One response among many

Thankfully, a growing chorus of voices is making it clear that criticism of Israel cannot be equated with antisemitism — including a significant and ever-growing number of Jews and Jewish organisations.

Some progressives choose to differentiate between criticism of Israel’s most indefensible policies and deeper objections to the Zionist project as a whole. But this is a mistaken concession to a project that, no matter its claims, has always been one of colonisation rather than Jewish emancipation. Not only does Israel not speak for the world’s Jews, but there is no correlation between support for Zionism or Israel on the one hand, and opposing antisemitism on the other.

Until the rise of fascism in Europe, Zionism was a fringe movement among Jews. Most had no interest in moving to Palestine, let alone driving out its native population. Between 1880 and 1929, almost 4 million Jews emigrated from Russia and Eastern European countries. But only 120,000 moved to Palestine, while more than 3 million moved to the United States and Canada.

In 1914, there were only 12,000 members of Zionist organisations across the entire United States. The Socialist Party had that many Jewish members in the Lower East Side of New York alone.

Modern antisemitism was born out of the tumultuous period of Eastern European and Russian history when feudalism was giving way to capitalist development. In Russia, antisemitic scapegoating deliberately organised and provoked by the czar was used as a means of dividing and weakening workers’ struggles. A wave of pogroms

— anti-Jewish riots — exploded through Russia from 1881 onward, spreading to Poland and other Eastern European countries. Another outbreak of anti-Jewish violence reached even more barbaric proportions in 1903. Not coincidentally, both 1882 and 1904 saw waves of immigration to Palestine and other countries.

From its inception, Zionism was a secular rather than a religious movement and, in that sense, was never a “Jewish” idea. Religious Jews, by and large, opposed the growth of Zionism at that time, and some Orthodox groups still do today, on the basis of Jewish religious law.

Jewish liturgy refers to a return to the Holy Land on a spiritual level, and some Jewish religious pilgrims had emigrated to Palestine in the past to form religious communities — but not to establish a state. Political Zionism — which sought to form an exclusive Jewish state — was a new phenomenon that arose in Eastern Europe in response to the growth of modern antisemitism.

But Zionism was just one (minority) response to antisemitism, among many. Many more Jews flocked to socialist and communist movements, which were critical in the fight against fascism. Zionism’s response, on the other hand, was one of resignation to antisemitism and, at times, even collaboration with it.

The basic ideological starting point of Zionism was the idea that antisemitism could never be defeated. The notion that Jews and non-Jews couldn’t live together was raised by Zionists to a scientific principle. Leon Pinsker, an early Zionist leader, claimed that antisemitism was “a psychic affliction, it is hereditary and as a disease has been incurable for 2,000 years.” Theodor Herzl, commonly referred to as the “father of Zionism,” wrote of how his experience of antisemitism during the notorious Dreyfus affair in France allowed him to achieve “a freer attitude toward anti-Semitism, which I now began to understand historically and to pardon. Above all, I recognised the emptiness and futility of trying to combat anti-Semitism.”

As a member of the (now-defunct) Israeli Socialist Organisation put it, Zionism “accepts at least tacitly the basic assumptions of racism.” That is, there is something inherent either in Jews or non-Jews that necessarily warrants a separation.

A number of leading Zionists concurred with popular racist ideas aimed at Jews themselves. Herzl accepted the idea that Jews were an economic burden to non-Jews, and in this way brought antisemitism on themselves anywhere they went. Thus, there has always been a disquieting symmetry between Zionism and antisemitism.

At minimum, Zionism resigned itself to antisemitism. Some major strands within the movement consciously articulated a common interest between Zionism, on the one hand, and antisemites — even fascists. One particularly appalling example of this attitude was expressed by Joachim Prinz, a Zionist leader in Germany in the

1930s. Commenting on Hitler, who pushed to institute total separation between Jews and non-Jews, especially a prohibition on intermarriage, he wrote:

The theory of assimilation has broken down. We have no longer any refuge. We want assimilation to be replaced by the conscious recognition of the Jewish nation and the Jewish race. Only those Jews who recognise their own specificity can respect a state founded on the principle of the purity of nation and race ... From every last hiding place of baptising and mixed marriage [the Jews] are being pulled out. This does not make us unhappy. In this coercion to acknowledge and clearly stand by one's own community, we see at the same time the fulfillment of our dreams.

Practically speaking, the most overarching reason that emerged for why so many Zionists could view antisemitic regimes in a favorable light wasn't necessarily that they actively preferred antisemites (though sometimes they did), but that the Zionist project was, and remains, dependent on the backing of imperial powers — first the Ottoman Empire, then the British, then the United States.

A minority settler community simply could not colonise a majority native population without the military support of one or more of the major powers. Zionists, including those in the mainstream “Labor” camp, weren't discriminating as to where that backing came from, even when it was motivated by a disdain for Jews.

For instance, the British ruling class agreed with the Zionists that it would be mutually beneficial to support a Jewish state in Palestine, because a Zionist state could act as an important counterweight to growing Arab nationalism as well as to the tendency of many Jews in Britain to join radical and revolutionary movements.

Winston Churchill made this argument in an article called “Zionism versus Bolshevism,” which argued that it was important to “develop and foster any strongly-marked Jewish movement” such as Zionism that could “lead directly away from” the “worldwide conspiracy” of “the International Jews” (and here he mentions Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Emma Goldman, and Rosa Luxemburg) “for the overthrow of civilisation.”

In 1917, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration, formally declaring support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Lord Balfour, who wrote the declaration, was a known antisemite who had sponsored legislation against Jewish immigration into Britain.

British officials began to give economic and political support to the burgeoning Zionist proto-state in Palestine. For instance, 90% of economic concessions were granted to Jews even though they made up a fraction of the population. As settlers drove Palestinians from their lands and workplaces, Arab nationalism grew in response to what was clearly an unfolding disaster.

It was with the rise of fascism in Europe that the Jewish population in Palestine experienced its greatest growth. But it was also in this period that Zionism showed its ugliest face with regard to Europe's Jews. Within months of Hitler's coming to power, the leading German Zionist organisation sent him a memo offering collaboration. While the Nazis were smashing socialist and Jewish resistance organisations, they allowed the Zionists to continue operating. The leading Zionist organisations, for their part, worked to undermine a worldwide anti-German boycott.

Zionist leaders believed that fighting antisemitism in Europe was a distraction from winning a Jewish state in Palestine. Time and again, they chose to negotiate for more immigration of Jews to Palestine rather than confronting antisemitic regimes. In the process, they decided which immigrants were desirable. Chaim Weizmann, for instance, declared:

... From the depths of this tragedy I want to save young people. The old ones will pass. They will bear their fate or they will not. They are dust, economic and moral dust in the a cruel world ... Only the branch of the young shall survive.

Similarly, the Jewish Agency, the central Zionist organisation in Palestine, refused to devote funds to the rescue of European Jews. It decided to spend the money on acquiring land in Palestine.

And David Ben-Gurion, who was to become Israel's first prime minister, opposed a plan to allow German Jewish children to emigrate to Britain. His explanation:

If I knew that it would be possible to save all the children in Germany by bringing them over to England, and only half of them to Israel, then I would opt for the second alternative. For we must weigh not only the life of these children but also the history of the people of Israel.

By 1947 — on the eve of Israel's establishment — Jews still made up less than one-third of the population of Palestine. Settlement alone couldn't create a Jewish state. The other arm of the strategy had to be the "transfer" of the Arab population (an antiseptic euphemism for ethnic cleansing.)

This idea was embraced by the majority of Zionist leaders, from Herzl to Ben-Gurion. As Yosef Weitz, the head of the Jewish Agency's Colonisation Department, said:

Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country. We shall not achieve our goal if the Arabs are in this small country. There is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to neighboring countries — all of them. Not one village, not one tribe should be left.

The UN partitioned Palestine in 1947, reserving 55% of the land for a Jewish state and leaving the Arab majority with only 45% of their own country. The Zionist

leadership publicly accepted the partition, but privately drew up plans to capture the rest of the country and drive the Arab population out. In the months between the partition and the British army's withdrawal, Zionist militias took the opportunity to terrorise the Arab population. It was at this time that atrocities like the infamous Deir Yassin massacre — in which every man, woman, and child in the village, 254 in total, were killed — took place.

The final irony of Zionism is that it turned the oppressed minority Jews of Europe into an oppressor majority in Palestine. Rather than challenge domination, Zionists accepted discrimination and separation as natural principles of humanity. The rise of European fascism not only created a massive impetus for immigration to Palestine, it also, in the eyes of many Zionists, legitimised the ethnic cleansing of Arabs. The most right-wing strands of Zionism embraced ideas of racial purity as their own.

Ultimately, the fight against antisemitism has to be linked to the wider fight against oppression. For that reason, the fight against Palestinian oppression has far more in common with the struggle against antisemitism than Zionism does. This struggle must avoid compromising with the slanders against it — whether they come from the likes of Donald Trump or Israeli hasbara.

A movement that includes Jewish Voice for Peace and Bernie Sanders as much as it does Ilhan Omar and Jeremy Corbyn can get us a step closer to a world where the brutality of pogroms and occupations are consigned to the dustbin of history. ■



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The Solution Is Clear: A Democratic, Secular Palestine for All Its Peoples

By Barry Sheppard

As Israeli troops violently suppress Palestinian protests, the road forward for the Palestinian struggle is again being seriously discussed.

An article in the December 8 *New York Times* with a headline “Two State Option, a Mideast Keystone, Is Sent Askew,” begins:

President Trump, in formally recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on Wednesday, declared that the United States still supported a two-state solution to settle the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, provided it was “agreed to by both sides.”

For the first time in his 26 years as a peacemaker, the chief negotiator for the Palestinians did not agree.

Saeb Erekat, the secretary general of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO] and a steadfast advocate for a Palestinian state, said in an interview on Thursday that Mr. Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel “have managed to destroy that hope.” He embraced a radical shift in the PLO’s goals — to a single state, but with Palestinians enjoying the same civil rights as Israelis, including the vote.

“They’ve left us with no option,” he said. “This is the reality. We live here. Our struggle should focus on one thing: equal rights.”

To understand how we got here, it is useful to review the historical development, starting with the different approaches to the fight against the physical and cultural oppression of Jews in Europe, especially Eastern Europe. Zionism was always a generally right-wing force within the European Jewish movement in the first half of the 20th century, explicitly counterposed to the socialist movement, including to

Jewish socialists who outnumbered the Zionists.

At times, the most reactionary Zionists even sought alliances with anti-Semites, since both sought the removal of Jews from Europe, although with opposing arguments. (There is an echo of this today, as the right wing of the Christian Evangelicals, who think all Jews, including in Israel, should go to Hell unless they convert to the Evangelical version of Christianity, yet they support Israel. Anti-Semites in the Alt-Right also support Israel.)

After World War II, in the wake of the Holocaust, the Zionist movement gained strength. The British, French and US imperialists threw their support behind the creation of a Zionist state in British-controlled Palestine.

Without this imperialist backing, Israel would not and could not have been created. (Stalin backed the West in this endeavour but that's another story.)

Dispossession

The creation of Israel meant the dispossession by terrorist violence of an estimated 500,000–700,000 Arab peoples, mainly Muslims and a large Christian minority, that had lived for more than a millennium in what became Palestine. This created the Palestinian diaspora, in what the Palestinians refer to as the *Nakba* (catastrophe) — an historic crime.

Ever since, imperialist political and material support with money, arms and imperialist threats against resisting groups and Arab states have kept Israel alive. One example: without the huge emergency airlift of heavy weapons by the US to Israel in the 1973 Israeli-Arab war, Israel would have been defeated.

(Then Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir later admitted that Israel, when it looked like it was losing the war, was ready to use nuclear weapons, which would likely have triggered Soviet intervention and World War III.)

The objective of the Arab states involved in the 1973 war was to take back the areas Israel conquered in 1967 (specifically the West Bank and Gaza Strip), not to destroy Israel. That the Israeli leaders were ready to use nuclear weapons to keep its conquered territories is relevant to the discussion about the Israeli reality today.

Today, Israel has occupied all of Palestine in the 1967 war, as well as the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt. Later, the Sinai was returned to Egypt when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat capitulated to Israel, but the West Bank remained under Israeli control to the present day. Gaza, a heavily populated urban strip of land, is brutally suppressed, its borders on land and sea patrolled by Israeli forces.

For 50 years, the actual borders of Israel have not been the pre-1967 “Green Line”, but the borders the Israeli armed forces defend, from the Mediterranean Sea to the

Jordan River, from Egypt to Syria. Within these, its real borders, there is one currency, the shekel. There is one foreign policy, one army and navy and one government.

The Palestinian Authority is not the governmental power in the West Bank. It is allowed to police the area, is responsible for some services, etc., but the real state power is the Israeli government. The same is basically true in Gaza, and Israel every few years “mows the lawn” (launches a war) in Gaza to show who’s the boss.

One state

In short, there is already one state, between Egypt and Syria in one direction, and the Mediterranean and the Jordan in the other. The “occupation” is not temporary or subject to negotiation — i.e. the West Bank and Gaza are not occupied territories but conquered zones incorporated into Israel.

Within this single state there are Arabs, Druze and others who are citizens of Israel within the “Green Line”. They are severely oppressed as second-class citizens — more accurately as oppressed nationalities — like Blacks in the US.

But Arabs and others in the West Bank and Gaza, who are under Israeli state control, are not citizens of Israel and have no rights. This is what makes Israel an apartheid state.

Israel’s policy is not only to preserve the present apartheid state, but to reinforce it by continuing to build new settlements that are legally part of Israel and defended by the permanent presence of Israeli forces in the West Bank. The settlements are connected by roads to Green Line Israel, roads which Palestinians are not allowed to use.

“No two-state solution” while he is Prime Minister, Netanyahu boasted.

We should note that there never was a real “two state” solution. Both Israel and the US have always insisted that any Palestinian “state” could not have its own armed forces, could not control its own borders, nor have its own foreign policy — these would be under Israeli jurisdiction. That is not a state.

The “really existing” Israel is already a single state. The only question now is what kind of state — the present semi-theocratic Jewish supremacist, apartheid state or a democratic and secular one with equal rights for all its people?

The later position recognises that Israeli Jews have become part of Palestine, and have been so for many generations. As opposed to any conceptions of driving the Jewish people out, a democratic state would encompass them as equal citizens.

As opposed to a Jewish, Muslim or Christian state, a secular state would guarantee religious freedom for all and strict separation of religious institutions and the state.

This is not a new discussion for me. In 1968, as a young leader of the Socialist

Workers Party in the United States, I accompanied the SWP presidential candidate, Fred Halstead, in a trip around the world.

Fred was a leader of the anti-war movement, and our main objective was to go to south Vietnam to talk to US soldiers about the war. Among other objectives of our trip, one was to go to Cairo to interview people from a new Palestinian fighting organisation, named Fatah.

While sitting down in my Cairo hotel room with two young leaders of the group who spoke English, I first heard of the proposal for a democratic, secular Palestine.

Palestine for all

They explained that the leaders of Arab nations had sought to “drive the Jews into the sea”, and that this was wrong. The Jews were there to stay. Fatah’s solution was equal rights for all, in a democratic, secular Palestine. They were against Zionism, not Jews, they said.

A photo of a Fatah slogan painted on a wall read: “We fight Israel because it oppresses our people.”

This was discussed in the SWP. In the preparation of our 1971 convention, I and Gus Horowitz (who knew a lot more about Jewish and Israeli history than I did) drafted a resolution on Israel that included support for a democratic, secular Palestine. This resolution was adopted by the SWP at the convention.

How the situation on the ground has evolved in the decades since, with Israel becoming a fully-fledged apartheid state, has not only made the arguments for a democratic single state more glaringly obvious, but a burning necessity.

The only realistic solution, as Erekat said, is a single state with equal rights for all. This position is gaining ground among Palestinians, as the two-state option fades into oblivion.■

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.

Israel is occupying and colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches and grassroots movements across the world. Since its launch in 2005, BDS is having a major impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

bdsmovement.net

Israel's genocidal war against Gaza has shocked the world. What lies behind this murderous campaign?

Ever since its establishment in 1948, Israel has been enveloped in a thick fog of propaganda myths, spread by both its Zionist rulers and Western imperialism which supports it fanatically.

The reality is that Israel is a capitalist settler-colonial state, founded on the dispossession of the Palestinian people who have been waging a just struggle ever since to regain their homeland. And far from providing a safe haven for the Jewish people, Israel is necessarily in permanent conflict with the whole Arab world.

This pamphlet provides essential background information and analysis for understanding Israel's war on Gaza and the Palestinian people's long struggle for self-determination. It takes up the key questions that the Western corporate media never clarify:

- Why does Western imperialism, including Australia, defend Israel in the face of one ghastly atrocity after another?
- What is Zionism? How did the Zionists steal a whole country and subjugate the Palestinian people?
- How does Israeli apartheid actually work on the ground?
- How Israel and its supporters to have weaponised charges of antisemitism in an attempt to marginalise and destroy supporters of Palestine.
- Finally, the pamphlet explains why a single democratic secular Palestine where all its peoples can live together with equal rights is the only viable solution.

Resistance books

