

CORNERSTONE

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IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|---|-------|
| Introduction and Bible Study <i>Sabeel Staff</i> | p. 1 |
| Reflections on Apartheid <i>Dr. Lily Habash Hilal</i> | p. 4 |
| The Jewish National Fund (JNF) and Apartheid <i>Annie O'Gara</i> | p. 7 |
| Apartheid <i>Jonathan Kuttub</i> | p. 10 |
| Antisemitism and the question of Palestine <i>Fr. David Neuhaus SJ</i> | p. 13 |
| Zionism and Apartheid: A relationship? <i>Miko Peled</i> | p. 16 |
| What would the Israeli identity look like without Zionism? <i>Yuli Novak</i> | p. 19 |
| Umm Forat <i>Sari Bashi</i> | p. 21 |

ISRAEL: AN APARTHEID STATE?

Sabeel Staff

This month's issue of Cornerstone reflects on the issue of apartheid. It is notable that in both South Africa and Israel leaders utilized the scriptures to justify their racist regime, arguing that they were set apart—chosen exclusively by God—to rule over those who were already living in the land. Both the white Afrikaners in South Africa and Israeli settlers have used the exodus narrative to claim that they alone have sovereignty over the land. This reality humbles us to be careful how we read the scriptures. Do we weaponize the Bible to harm others for our own gain? Or do the words of scripture move us to sacrificial love for our neighbour?

Today we turn to Mark 11:12-25, Jesus cleansing the temple, to reflect on the issue of apartheid. At first this text might seem like a surprising choice—what does Jesus kicking the merchants out of the temple have to do with the racism of apartheid? Yet, as we explore the text together it becomes clear that Jesus' anger is not only directed towards money changers in the temple, but also the deeper, negative impacts of the temple structure at that time.

First, let us recall the story together. In Mark 11:15 we are told Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and upon seeing the money changers and those selling sacrificial animals forces them to leave saying, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? (Isaiah 56) But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"



What does Jesus mean when he says, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? To answer this, we have to consider the text Jesus is quoting: Isaiah 56. One of the central themes of Isaiah 56 is the inclusion of all peoples in worship. For example, in Isaiah 56:3 the author writes, “Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, ‘The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.’” In other words, when Jesus is quoting Isaiah 56, he is reminding the people that the Lord excludes no one from worship.

It is important to highlight that the temple during Jesus’ time was divided: there was the court of the Gentiles, the court of women, and the court of Israelites. The Gentile Court was located in the outermost region of the temple and if a Gentile dared to go beyond this designated area he risked death. Steven Seizer, in a recent talk he gave for the Sabeel-Kairos conference on apartheid, explains that the location of the merchants and money changers was in the Court of the Gentiles. As this was the only area Gentiles were allowed to occupy, this made worship difficult. Moreover, Steven Seizer goes on to explain that the prices for sacrificial animals in the temple market were exploitative, particularly for pilgrims who had traveled from afar and had little choice but to purchase from the temple market. Therefore, there are two kinds of injustice occurring in the temple: division between gentile and Israelite worshipers and economic exploitation.

It is in this context that Jesus is quoting the Hebrew scriptures to

show both that this temple division between the Jewish people and the Gentiles, and the exploitative structures of the temple market are wrong and against the will of God. The latter part of Jesus’ statement is important to discuss: You have made it (the Temple) a den of robbers. Jesus is saying that the merchants exploiting the people who come to the temple marketplace to obtain sacrifices to worship God are like thieves. In our own context, we see that apartheid and economic exploitation often come hand-in-hand—the powerful exploit the vulnerable for financial gain. One example of this is the Jordan Valley, which belongs to Palestine under international law. Nevertheless, Israel has been appropriating the natural resources, particularly water from this region, for its own ends at the expense of Palestinians. As a result, it is difficult for Palestinian farmers to grow food as they lack access to water that is rightfully theirs. Meanwhile, Israel continues to expand its own farms. Furthermore, it is also important to recognize that sometimes our own leaders within the church betray our own people, side with powerful politicians rather than the lay faithful, for the sake of money.

Jesus’ righteous anger emerges in response to a Temple system that reinforced exclusivity and racism rather than embracing all God’s children. In our own context, there continue to be holy sites where apartheid policies persist. For example, Rachel’s Tomb, which used to be a site of worship for Muslims, Christians, and Jewish peoples is now an exclusively Israeli Jewish site surrounded by the wall

and military checkpoints. Moreover, every Easter many of our brothers and sisters in the West Bank and Gaza cannot obtain visas to visit the Holy Sepulchre. However, it is important that we not just point at others but also look at ourselves. In our own churches, do we perpetuate exclusion and racism against those who are not like us in our communities? Do we set up barriers that make it difficult for some people to enter?

Returning to the story, it is interesting that this episode about the temple is sandwiched between the story of Jesus cursing the fig tree. This sandwich structure is typical in the gospel of Mark, and indicates that we ought to understand these two episodes together. Before Jesus enters the temple, he sees a fig tree that has not born fruit, as it is not in season, and says, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” Then, after the temple scene, the disciples discover that the fig tree has shrivelled and died.

For Sabeel staff and volunteers, as well as many others in our community, this story is troubling. Why is Jesus cursing a tree that has no fruit, even though it is not the season? In fact, the action seems spiteful. It doesn’t seem to fit with Jesus’ character. Some theologians have tried to resolve this problem by saying there were different kinds of fig trees in the region that had different seasons, so maybe the fig tree was actually in season. Others have taken the fig tree to represent Israel as a nation that did not bear fruit. At Sabeel we reject both of these readings: The first because it fails to address what is at

the heart of the story. The second, because it is an anti-Jewish reading of the text which has contributed to anti-Semitism.

Jesus cursing the fig tree only makes as an enacted parable—that is to say, it only makes sense as a dramatic action from Jesus to teach us something important about who God is and what it means to be his followers. As noted previously, Mark puts the fig tree story on either side of the temple narrative to indicate these two stories must be read together. Read in this way, like the overturning of the tables at the temple, Jesus is using the fig tree as a symbolic gesture—an enacted parable—to communicate with his followers. Just as the dramatic gesture of cleaning the temple market was a symbolic overturning of the injustices embedded in the temple system, with the fig tree Jesus is again dramatically demonstrating that God does not tolerate abusive systems that do not bear the fruits of love for neighbour and God. In fact, Jesus calls for these unjust systems that privilege some of God's children over others to die like the barren fig tree.

There are many other instances in scripture where imagery from nature is utilized to convey an important message. At Sabeel, the fig tree reminded us of the end of the story of Jonah, where God makes a plant grow so Jonah can have relief from the sun while he watches what will happen to Nineveh. When the people repent and God saves Nineveh, Jonah is spiteful. The people of Nineveh had been enemies of the people of Israel. At this point in the

story God allows the plant to die and Jonah becomes very angry. In response to Jonah's anger over the plant, God points out the limitations of Jonah's compassion—that he mourns for the plant but cannot rejoice for the people that have been saved. In the story, the plant dramatically dies so that Jonah can confront his own biases and recognize God's all-encompassing love. Listen to God's response to Jonah:

But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?” (Jonah 4:10).



At Sabeel we often refer to the author of Jonah as the first Palestinian liberation theologian because he critiques an exclusive view of God's people. In telling the story of how God saves Nineveh, the author shows the in-

clusive nature of God's love, which includes even the “enemies” of the ancient Israelites and their animals.

From the fig tree to the Temple, to the story of Jonah, the scriptures show us a God that does not tolerate systems that discriminate those who are different from us. In both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, a God who calls all nations and who loves all nations is revealed. It is clear that our God is not a God of apartheid! Therefore, like Jesus, we must overturn the systems that do not honour the dignity of all God's children. Both the physical walls and the walls in our hearts that divide and oppress God's children must be knocked down in order to encounter God's all-encompassing love and begin the journey of embodying this love in our places of worship, communities, and world.

1. This is according to Barclay's commentary on Mark.
2. One further thought: At the end of the narrative Jesus gives the disciples a lesson about prayer. He talks about telling a mountain to throw itself into the sea. In light of this, is one of the core points of this passage about both praying to God and acting with God to end injustice in our communities even when it seems impossible? Can we read the first scene where Jesus talks about no one eating from the fig tree as more of a prayer than a curse in light of the teaching on prayer at the end of the passage? Or maybe it's both?
3. This terminology comes from Barclay.



REFLECTIONS ON APARTHEID

Dr Lily Habash Hilal

The elimination of South Africa's system of legalized racial discrimination known as apartheid was on the agenda of the United Nations since its inception in 1945. On 12 November 1974, the United Nations General Assembly suspended South Africa from participating in its work due to international opposition to apartheid. Despite the many obstacles that faced the final criminalization of the apartheid system in South Africa that included the often hesitant and double-standard policies of countries such as the United States, France, and Britain within the UN Security Council, eventually, the persistence of the ANC along with the successful international movement led to the successful ending of the apartheid system. In the decades that followed, the United Nations, whether at its member states or its organizations, contributed to the global struggle against apartheid. By drawing the world attention (criminalizing) to the inhumanity of apartheid, legitimizing and supporting

popular resistance and instituting economic sanctions and boycotts of the apartheid system, international efforts culminated with the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid in 1974¹ and that has gradually led to the elimination of the apartheid system.

Similarly, the Palestine question has been omnipresent on the United Nations agenda since 1947, with hundreds of related UN resolutions, mainly calling upon Israel to abide by international law. Although the Palestinians continue to cling to the United Nations and international law as the safeguard of Palestinian rights, it is saddening to see that the UN system has been unsuccessful in taking a clear stance against the ongoing and ever proof of Israel's continuous crimes against humanity of persecution and apartheid against millions of Palestinians. The question that forcibly begs itself today is why the international system has been

unwilling to end the decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people.

The question becomes more urgent, especially with the increasing analogy between Israel's policies and the practices of apartheid in South Africa. Increasing reports have been emerging and indicating the gravity of Israel's practices against the Palestinian people, referring to them as crimes of apartheid, which is sufficient for criminalizing Israel in the international court system. Indeed, such crimes include Israel's treatment of Palestinians who remained in what has become Israel after the war of 1948 and whose status as second-class citizens has been deteriorating since the inception of the State of Israel and exacerbated since the culmination of the 2018 Israeli "Nation-state law".

It is hard to imagine the international community's inaction and the emerging increase of Palestinian, Israeli, and international reports describing the entrenched Israeli policies against the Palestinians rising to the level of crimes against humanity. Some of these reports induced considerable alerts to the international community, including the 2017 ESCWA report², the 2020 report of Palestinian Human rights organizations presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in its forty-third session³, the 2021 B'Tselem report⁴ and the latest Human Rights Watch report.⁵ All accounts have a standard message warning of the gravity of Israel's apartheid policies and practices and calling for the criminal charges against Israel, thus calling for the need to take legal action to end the

suffering of the Palestinian people. Israeli apartheid policies extend to affect all Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the territories occupied in 1967 and establish the basis upon which an independent Palestinian state is founded. Such policies include, among other things, an entrenched discriminatory policy of building illegal settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem, the Israel Separation Barrier, building roads allowed only for the Israelis to use, the hundreds of Israeli military checkpoints erected throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem, the abuse of Palestinian labour, and the bantustanization of the West Bank especially after the signing of the Oslo Agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1994 and the establishment of the Palestinian self-governing authority.

One has to recognize the internal dilemma that the Palestinians have cornered themselves in.

Ironically, this dilemma started along the same period of the “International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid in 1974⁶, and that has paved the road for eliminating the apartheid system. In 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was recognized as the representative of the Palestinian people and was granted an observer status at the UN. Having sought recognition from the early days of its establishment, the PLO’s ten-point program⁷ and phased approach toward statehood steered by its urge to seek international recognition based on accepting the two-state solution and eventually negotiated

process with the occupying state of Israel.

Without delving into historical details, one can only highlight the outcome of the PLOs approach toward the two-state solution, and that has been (whether intentionally or unintentionally detrimental to the Palestinian people. The seeds of the Madrid peace process of establishing a Palestinian state only on 22% of historical Palestine have been inherently deficient in theory and practice. Theoretically, the two-state solution relinquished the rights of most of the Palestinian people to reclaim their rights to the land.

Practically, given the lack of willingness of the international community to enforce its implementation and stay in the back seat, provided Israel with unprecedented impunity against the enforcement of international law, starting from the need to end its settler-colonial enterprise in all of Palestine and later in the West Bank, including Jerusalem and Gaza. Eventually, all such practices have led to the fragmentation and abandonment of more than half of the Palestinian people, including those who remained in the territory that became Israel after the war of 1948, Palestinian refugees, and Palestinians in the Diaspora. All things being equal, Israel’s understanding of the two-state solution has wholly contradicted the Palestinian aspirations upon understanding international law focused on a “negotiated approach” with the occupier. In Israel’s mindset, the most that can be accorded to the Palestinians has always been a limited and constrained self-governing

authority that will not evolve into a sovereign and independent state in the Weberian-Westphalian sense of statehood that entails the elements of a sovereign state having a central government with power over its population, full sovereignty and control of its territory and resources and monopoly over the use of violence. The Palestinian entity that has been framed within the Oslo Agreements was only to be concerned with partial responsibility for civilian matters, without Jerusalem, without the return of Palestinian refugees, without the dismantlement of the Israeli settler-colonial system, and for sure without any actual control of territory or resources.

As such, the Oslo Agreements were designed in such a manner that consolidated Israel’s system of control, dispossession, abuse of human rights, with a far-sighted policy of creeping ethnic cleansing as a by-product of Israel’s apartheid policies in all historic Palestine



Though as a political scientist, I have no choice but to acknowledge the predominance of realism in world politics, it is hard to put all the blame for our ailing condition only on the Palestinian leadership. Having said this, there might be some agonizing truth in the fact that the PLO’s de-

cision to undertake an open-ended approach of bilateral negotiation for Palestinian statehood with the occupying state within an unfavourable international context and under a situation of colossal power asymmetry.

But this does not absolve the world consciousness and the United Nations from assuming their responsibilities to end the ongoing Palestinian plight. There is a high sense of emergency and unity amongst the international solidarity movement, the United Nations organizations and member countries, whether singly or collectively, to unite against Israel's entrenched policies and put an end to the Israeli domination system.

No one can deny the commendable efforts led by the Palestinian liberation theology that has guided and accompanied the BDS movement, resulting in the growing international solidarity for Palestine and favour of Palestinian human rights. But apparently, this is not enough. Israel's impunity has also rendered it a rising unrivalled power with hegemonic trends in a continuous asymmetry of power and changing regional and global politics.

Although it may seem complicated to undo the international discourse regarding the "bilaterally negotiated agreement" following international law and the seemingly irreversible facts on the ground that Israel has been solidifying since its inception in contravention to international law, there is an urgent need to unite and act to put an end to such practices. We cannot despair because if we do,

we will cease to exist.

Despite its failure to do justice to the Palestinian people, the Palestinians continue to believe in the power of the founding principles of the United Nations as embedded in its founding charter. We cannot despair despite the ongoing Israeli aggression against Palestinian human rights organizations. There is a need to unite all forces, including Palestinian human rights organizations, liberation theology organizations (such as Sabeel, Kairos, Jesus at the Cross), the BDS and the international solidarity movement and push for a UN reshaping of its position vis a vis the "bilaterally negotiated agreement", cease back the responsibility that has initially started as the responsible body for the creation of the Palestine question and hence the requirement to solve it.



The United Nations has to reconcile with its primary purpose to instate world peace and stability, transform its spineless discourse pleading the oppressor to abide by international law and cease back the initiative. The way forward can start by having the UN grouping together all its organs that have been working on monitoring Israeli abuses and violations to Palestinian human rights,

re-establish its forums, and convene an international forum to reset its policies and enforce an immediate end to the Israel apartheid system. This is universal responsibility that cannot be born alone by human rights organizations and activists or even by the quasi-Palestinian observer state at the United Nations.

1. International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid G.A. res. 3068 (XXVIII), 28 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 30) at 75, U.N. Doc. A/9030 (1974), 1015 U.N.T.S. 243, entered into force July 18, 1976. https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.10_International%20Convention%20on%20the%20Suppression%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Apartheid.pdf
2. <https://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-launches-report-israeli-practices-towards-palestinian-people-and-question-apartheid>. Unfortunately the ESCWA report has been withdrawn from the official UN ESCWA website
3. <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AHRC43NGO185.pdf>
4. https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid
5. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>
6. International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid G.A. res. 3068 (XXVIII), 28 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 30) at 75, U.N. Doc. A/9030 (1974), 1015 U.N.T.S. 243, entered into force July 18, 1976. https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.10_International%20Convention%20on%20

the%20Suppression%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Apartheid.pdf

7. The PLO's ten-point program called for the establishment of a national authority "over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated" with the aim of "completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory". Although this program provided the passport for the PLO's international recognition, it became the basis upon which the Palestinian leadership started a series of unending compromises as reflected in the Oslo Agreements.

Lily Habash-Hilal is a veteran Palestinian expert/advisor known to have played an instrumental role in establishing several Palestinian Authority institutions since the inception of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 and several Palestinian civil society institutions. Since 2009, Dr Habash has worked in several senior positions related to post-conflict governance, state-building and policy reform with UNDP in Palestine, Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq, USAID in Niger and is currently leading a project for the European Union in Libya.



THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND (JNF) AND APARTHEID.

Annie O'Gara

"Anyone who still has their doubts, yes apartheid or no apartheid," writes the renowned Israeli journalist, Gideon Levy, "needs to get to know the JNF. With members of the right and left in its top posts and positions for Meretz too – here you have the Jewish national fund for apartheid, the Israeli consensus."

Levy is right: we, in the world outside Palestine, do need to get to know the JNF. The JNF's central role in establishing Israeli apartheid has been fully documented by Palestinian grassroots campaigners and human rights organisations. Western observers, too, have added their voice. In 1989, Uri Davis published "Israel: An Apartheid State"; in 2017, Falk and Tilley's UN report, followed, in 2021, by the denunciation by Israel's leading Human Rights organisation, B'Tselem, of the state's apartheid

practices. Most recently, Human Rights Watch named the JNF in its meticulous charting of the crimes of Apartheid and Persecution committed under Israeli rule, from the river to the sea. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) stated in December 2019 that the JNF and other para-statal bodies in Israel carry out material discrimination against non-Jewish persons.

The charge sheet against the JNF is long, yet it has branch offices across the globe, many with charitable status, as here in the UK, deriving tax benefits from unwitting citizens. And the JNF still has Observer Status as part of Israel's delegation to the Conference of Parties on Climate Change.

It is worth following Levy's advice and getting to know the JNF's history, which reveals its true nature as

a primary agent of settler colonialism and apartheid. In 1884, Prof Herman Shapira proposed a “body that would redeem the land of Israel from foreigners to turn it into a national acquisition that would not be for sale but would rather be for leasehold only”. In 1901 the JNF came into being, its “primary objective” being to acquire land “for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands” and establishing Jewish exclusivity, in perpetuity, on those lands.

In 1940 this drive to “redeem” Palestine from “foreigners”, (aka its indigenous population) found more chilling expression in Yosef Weitz, a JNF leader of the time: “There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them... not one village must be left... for this goal funds will be found.” To this day, the JNF worldwide still channels funds to Israel which continues to drive Palestinians out of their homes and off their lands.

Thus, the pattern was set for the JNF by its early leaders, and the organisation has remained true to its mission throughout its 120-year long history. Before the Nakba, JNF leaders promoted the doctrine of ethnic cleansing, via the Transfer Committee, influencing Ben Gurion’s Consulate in particular, and Zionist ideology in general. On the military level, the Village Files, drafted by the JNF, offered detailed descriptions of Palestinian villages which aided the Zionist militias as they swept through Palestine from 1947-49, evicting 750,000 people and destroying their villages.

After the Nakba (the catastrophe that befell the Palestinians in 1947-49), the JNF played a role in thwarting the UN Resolution 194 (enshrining the Right of Return of refugees forced to flee their homes) by taking swathes of Palestinian land and developing Forests and Parks. 46 of the 68 JNF Forests and Parks lie across stolen Palestinian land. In some cases, trees of European origin have been planted in them, both to prevent the return of those who historically owned and worked the land and to create a Europeanised landscape, comforting to Jewish newcomers. The Forests and Parks are political constructs, the purpose of which is to defy Resolution 194. They also comprise acts of “memoricide”, erasing from collective Israeli memory the truth of Palestinian life and the horrors of the Nakba. In an act of cynical deception, the JNF has tried to build a reputation as an environmental organisation on these Forests and Parks.

The JNF continues its historic mission to this day. The organisation Himnuta is a shadowy proxy of the JNF. You will find no mention of it on the official websites, but it is the outsourcing arm of the JNF, working to acquire deeds to Palestinian homes, in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, using Israel’s discriminatory legal system (as has been recently highlighted in the case of the Sumarin family). However, even this tactic of land acquisition is proving insufficient for the JNF. With the recent change of leadership, the organisation has become ever more brazen in its defiance of international law. Against a backdrop

of international criticism and dissent even within its own ranks, the JNF has openly declared its intention to acquire land in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, flagrantly defying International Law. The JNF has taken off its mask and now shows its true face to the world.

The crime of Apartheid is a crime against humanity - an offence of the highest order. But this is not the only identifier of the JNF. The term “occupation” is now seldom heard – Israel’s conduct reveals that the rule it enforces is no temporary measure and the settler-colonial framework has replaced it. Settler colonialism has many strands and aspects, one of which is “the logic of elimination”, a term coined by Patrick Wolfe. It is worth looking into this phrase as it applies to the JNF.

The JNF’s historic contribution to the Nakba, both before and in its aftermath are obvious applications of the settler colonists’ eliminatory impulse, from its crudest manifestation in the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their land to the destruction of their villages, and then the obliteration of the historical evidence under forests, nature reserves and parks. But elimination also takes more subtle forms. One illustration is the seemingly apolitical act of cartography, the ascription of names to places, which can become a tool for achieving national goals. The JNF Naming Committee was formed in 1925 to give Hebrew names to new Jewish colonies; by May 1948 it had assigned names to 200 communities and by 1951 another 200 were added. In 1949, the Negev Committee was formed,

tasked with replacing Arabic names in the region with Hebrew ones, a different matter. Then in 1951, the two committees mentioned above merged to form the Government Names Committee, in which the JNF remains represented to this day. The committee works on its mission which is “the formation of a bond between the space on one side, and the Zionist endeavour on the other”. (p 95 “Erased from Space and Consciousness”, Kadmon, 2015). Cartography is being used to build one nation, by eliminating another (fortunately, Palestinian collective memory and the work of scholars such as Dr Salman Abu Sitta, are preserving an accurate record of the Palestinian landscape).

The JNF carries the logic of elimination forward in its forests and parks, resolutely ignoring key elements of what lies beneath their planting. The linguistic threads used by the JNF to characterise their parks weave only around Biblical references, environmental descriptions of plants and trees and non-specific “ancient” ruins. What is missing is any recognition of the people forcibly removed from the land beneath, who still claim their right of return and of whom visible traces remain, from cacti to walls and cisterns. The Israeli group Zochrot performs a sterling service, prompting fellow Israelis to recognise the state’s origins, but the JNF remains impervious.

A word on naming: the JNF’s naming of Parks and Forests acts to obliterate one bond (to the Arabic past) and create another (a bond of complicity between Zionism and

the wider world). Thus, British Park seeks to draw the UK into complicity with the building of a park over the lands of 7 Palestinian villages. The Coretta Scott King Forest attaches an anti-racist nuance to a place that witnessed the notorious Ayn al Zaytoun massacre. In the words of Seamus Heaney, “Right names were the first foundation / For telling truth”: JNF’s naming practices, which obliterate the Palestinian truth, build instead of a web of deceit.



But there are inspiring challenges to the JNF’s forests and parks. The JNF created a forest over Bayt Natiff, an ethnically cleansed village, planting trees supposedly to honour the Rev. Bastiaan Jan Ader, who saved many Jewish lives during World War 11. The minister’s son, Erik Ader, a Dutch diplomat, was horrified at the association of his father’s name with a scene of ethnic cleansing and denounced the JNF, partnering with Palestinians to plant trees as an act of resistance and solidarity. Similarly, Balfour Forest, the JNF’s first major forestation project, was established near Nazareth on al-Mujaydil village land. In 1950, following pressure from the Pope, Palestinian Christian villagers were offered the opportunity to return - they refused to do so without their Muslim neighbours. Such exemplary instances of solidar-

ity provide us with models of action. In conclusion, the JNF’s ideology and contribution to the development and sustenance of the state of Israel rightly draw to it the opprobrium of being an agent both of the settler-colonial logic of elimination and of Apartheid, in all their manifestations, from ethnic cleansing to the erasure of the truth. In the year of its 120th anniversary, Yaara Bengier Alaluf raises the perfect question: “Why does the JNF still exist?”

Annie O’Gara is a retired teacher of English who now spends time working to promote justice for Palestine. She is involved in a number of BDS campaigns e.g. Stop the JNF and the challenge to JCB. Annie is a member of PSC (UK) and a founder member of Northern Women for Palestine.



APARTHEID

Jonathan Kuttab

When describing the situation in Palestine, comparisons to South African apartheid are no longer necessary to prove that apartheid in Palestine exists. South African apartheid provided us with the historical blueprint for designating the practice of apartheid as a crime against humanity. Over the years, however, the word apartheid has obtained a precise legal definition and is now recognized as a crime against humanity in its own right. When referring to apartheid today, the elements of the crime of apartheid are a matter of law. Even though its association with South African Apartheid remains fixed, this article refrains from comparing the present-day situation of Palestine with South Africa given that there is a clear legal structure defining the crime of apartheid and its parameters.

Three important documents describe a situation of apartheid as a crime against humanity: The Geneva Convention, The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Article 85, 4c of The Geneva Convention considers the practice of

apartheid as a war crime and a crime against humanity. It specifically mentions that “the implementation of the system of Apartheid is a grave breach of International Law.” The second document is located in The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which the UN General Assembly adopted on November 30, 1973. It defines apartheid as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”

The third and most recent document that further cemented apartheid as a crime against humanity is found in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Article 7, 1, describes apartheid as “the inhuman acts of a character...committed in the context of an institutionalized 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.” More importantly, the jurisdiction of the ICC lists apartheid and similar practices as within its criminal jurisdiction.

A careful analysis of the documents reveals three seminal elements necessary to define the crime of apartheid and its paradigms: First, The implementation of a system of separation or segregation based on race, creed, or ethnicity designed with the intent to maintain domination by one racial group over another is the first element that makes up the crime of apartheid. Second, the use of legislative measures to enforce separation and segregation, essentially legalizing separation from within its own legal system.

Third, the commission of inhumane acts, human rights violations, denial of freedoms, and forced ghettoization. This element concerns the practices used to impose and enforce separation within its regime.

To reiterate, There must be separation, there must be a legal system providing for the separation, and there must be inhuman practices enforcing this system. All three elements must exist for a country to be considered practicing apartheid. Between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, it is abundantly clear that Israel fulfills all three elements of that crime under international law. Whether through the laws it adopts or its inhumane practices, Israel actively works to promote separation and segregation through a biased legal regime that offers specific rights and privileges to one group at the expense of the other to maintain its domination.

Identifying the elements in Israeli apartheid used to be as simple as highlighting how two populations

residing in the same territory and sharing the same sovereign power live in different conditions: Jewish settlers, who reside in West Bank settlements, live under an entirely separate legal, administrative, and economic regime than the Palestinians. Today's situation is much more complicated as the regime of apartheid has evolved into something far more sinister. The designation of apartheid no longer only applies to the occupied territories annexed in 1967, but to the whole area encompassing the river to the sea.

On the surface, the two groups consist of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs living close by yet, fall under entirely different systems. As an Israeli Jew, there are no restrictions to movement or limitations to deciding where to live throughout Israel and the West Bank. Israeli Jews also enjoy certain laws, administrative structures, and privileges, such as education, social, and health benefits, not afforded to the Palestinians. Aside from living and benefiting from the privileges brought by the regime of apartheid, four other features characterize the reality of Israeli-practiced apartheid. The four features only apply to the Palestinian population, exempting the Jewish population solely based on their Jewish identity. A closer inspection of the situation reveals that the four features have the characteristics of the seminal elements that designate Israeli actions as Apartheid. All four features are enacted into laws and military orders in an elaborate legislative system. Moreover, the features are adopted into legal structures through practices and legislative schemes perpetrated

by the Israeli authorities, including the oppressive and discriminatory treatment of the Palestinian population.

One of the features of Israeli apartheid is fragmentation. Israel not only created a system of separation between the Jewish and Palestinian populations but also managed to fragment the Palestinian community into separate identities based on their locale. The long-lasting occupation of the Palestinian territories created a reality in which the Palestinian population is categorized into different identities based on where they live. Each category is given certain privileges. Privilege, unlike rights, can easily be stripped away. As history has shown, it is far easier for Israel to strip rights than to grant them to Palestinians.

At the top of the heap are the Palestinians who, despite holding Israeli citizenship and occasionally serving in the army, have yet to enjoy full equality in Israel. This category of a Palestinian is afforded the most privileges compared with the other categories. While this group enjoys the right to vote for the Israeli Knesset, they hold little to no political power. They are systematically discriminated against by the state that openly defines itself solely as the state of the Jews, and not the state of all its citizens. Moreover, there are approximately 63 laws granting privileges to Jews and that are not granted to Palestinian Arab citizens of the state. They are, by law, relegated to a lower class of citizenship.

The second category is the three-hun-

dred-thousand residents of East Jerusalem. The East Jerusalemites were given their status as residents after the illegal annexation of Jerusalem in 1967. Unlike the Palestinians of 48, Palestinian Jerusalemites are "residents but not citizens" of Israel. While Israeli law and administration apply to them, they cannot participate in Israeli Elections. Much like the rest of the Palestinians, East Jerusalemites have their own struggles to tackle. At the top of the list of struggles is their right to remain. In the case that Palestinian Jerusalemites dare to live in Bethlehem or Ramallah or on the outskirts of Jerusalem, they run the risk of losing their residency status. Possessing the status of a Jerusalem resident proves to be a privilege rather than a right. However, although they hold fewer privileges than the Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinian Jerusalemites hold more privileges than the rest of the Palestinians living in the west bank. One of those privileges is the health care system.

3) the third group are the Palestinian residents of the west bank. Approximately three million residents live there. The majority of them live in enclaves that fall under areas A and B. The Palestinians of the West Bank fall under military rule. Some authority has indeed been delegated to the Palestinian authority. However, this does not negate the fact that they live under its command and authority. While the Palestinian Authority (PA) bravely claims its status to be a "state in the making" and works to obtain and maintain symbols and appearances of statehood and sovereignty, Israel continues to

treat it as a subcontractor, primarily in charge of controlling the West Bank population and relieving it of responsibility for services to them, even as Israel holds effective control and power exclusively in a number of vital areas.

4) The Fourth category is arguably the most disadvantaged of the groups. They are the two million Palestinians of Gaza that live in the most crowded place on earth. Since 2005, Israel has essentially established a military and economic embargo in Gaza where no person or product can enter or exit without Israel's approval. Even though Israel left Gaza on the ground, Israel still holds the keys to the open-air prison it created.

Another category could be added here—the Palestinian refugees who reside outside Israel and the occupied territory. The Refugees and their descendants are still waiting for their right to return to their ancestral homeland. The refugees have zero rights in Palestine. Even the privilege of visiting is many times denied. In comparison, any person on the face of the earth who affiliates with the Jewish religion can enjoy the freedom to immigrate and live in Israel, all while receiving financial and economic incentives.

In addition to this systematic fragmentation, a second distinctive feature of Israeli Apartheid is the pervasive system of permits that Israel has instituted to control all aspects of life for the Palestinians including their economic development and natural growth. This feature is a biased sys-

tem designed to work in the interest of Israel. All aspects of Palestinian lives are tied to an arbitrary system of permits and licenses. Whether one wants a medical, business, individual, or collective permit, Palestinians must submit a request through the military government that holds total discretion. In other words, the military administration holds the right to grant or deny Palestinians permits as it chooses.

The third feature of Israeli apartheid is the act of limiting where one chooses to live. It is not enough for Israel to separate and favor the Jewish Israeli citizen; Israel has controlled the zoning schemes and ultimately determines and limits how and where Palestinians can live. Israeli zoning differs from building zones set in other countries' municipal zones because Israel deliberately sets zones and requirements based on the needs and interests of Israel. The limitation of housing and economic development is explicitly seen throughout the Arab areas of Israel, and East Jerusalem. It is also found in many parts of the west bank, most notably area C, where settlement construction continues to grow at the expense of Palestinian growth, and virtually no building permits are granted.

The fourth feature of Israeli Apartheid is the persistent use of collective punishment. Collective punishment, a violation of international law, is the imposition of sanctions or punishments on a group of people for the actions of one individual. Israel routinely punishes Palestinian cities, neighborhoods, and families as

a means of collective punishment. Gaza is the most prominent example, where its two million inhabitants are punished for the acts of a few. Other examples include demolishing an alleged perpetrator's family's house and revoking permits and privileges to a group of people instantly. the Separation Wall; the myriad checkpoints and travel restrictions throughout the Occupied Territories; the extensive use of administrative detention (no charges/no trial); and various other instruments of control.

In conclusion, to call Israel an apartheid regime, is not a political epithet, nor does it require comparisons with South Africa, but an examination of the actual facts on the ground, which fulfills the legal elements established for the crime of Apartheid. These elements are so clearly there, that it is no surprise that Israel is worried about the International Criminal Court, or that it seeks to label as "terrorist organizations" those organizations that are carefully documenting its behavior on the ground, in preparation for the day when the ICC will hear this case.

Jonathan Kuttab has a long history of working for human rights. He cofounded the first Palestinian Human Rights organization, Al Haq, as well as the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners, as well as the international HURIDOCS organization for documenting systems of Human Rights violations. He is also an active practitioner of Nonviolence, having cofounded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, and Nonviolence International. Kuttab is a cofounder of Sabeel and currently serves as the executive director of FOSNA.



ANTISEMITISM AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Fr. David M. Neuhaus SJ

Antisemitism a reality

A few years ago, I taught a course on the Israel-Palestine conflict in a Catholic university in the United States. In an informal conversation with some colleagues, I shared my strong disapproval of the political options of the Israeli government, my ongoing opposition to the strategies of the Israeli army and my resounding critique of the ideology of Zionism. During a lull in the conversation, an urbane professor of English literature, turned to me and with an anguished voice commented, “It is indeed terrible what those Jews are doing!” I was taken aback as I had not used the word Jew in any of my comments however what followed took my breath away. Gently he added, “But what

really gets to me is the lies the Jews spread about the Germans... a more civilized nation has never graced the planet.” My criticism of Israel, its leaders, military and ideology had encouraged this man to share with me his theories of Holocaust denial and Jewish conspiracy.

Sadly, Antisemitism remains a reality today. Indeed, there are Jews who still face slurs against their identity, discrimination, injustice and even violence because they are Jews. This cannot be denied. Furthermore, it needs to be said loud and clear that the just struggle for an end to occupation and discrimination in Israel/Palestine is not in competition with or opposed to the struggle to root out Antisemitism wherever it raises

its ugly head. In fact, the struggle against Antisemitism and the struggle for the rights and dignity of Palestinians are parts of one and the same struggle for a world free of injustice, racism and violence of any kind.

Antisemitism: a catastrophe for Jews and for Palestinians

Anti-Judaism was transmitted for centuries within wide-spread traditional Christian discourse. Jews were defined as those that had killed God when they crucified Jesus and as blind as they continued to deny that he was the Messiah and Savior. Jews were too often discriminated against and marginalized, victimized and expelled over the centuries because of a teaching of contempt that promoted hostility to Jews and Judaism. However, modern Antisemitism has been a catastrophe for both Jews and Palestinians. Although directly destroying the lives of Jews, it has also inflicted devastating collateral damage on Palestinians.

Anti-Judaism mutated into Antisemitism at the dawn of modernity and gathered impetus in the second half of the nineteenth century. Exclusion, discrimination, outbursts of violence and finally precision organized genocide directed against Jews in various places in Europe and beyond was no longer based upon theological tropes but rather on ethnocentric rhetoric that framed Jews as the perpetual outsiders, essentially treasonous, unable and unwilling to integrate and ominously hostile. From the end of the nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century millions of Jews were murdered and

millions more uprooted as Antisemitism materialized into state policies, bureaucratized brutality and genocide. The pathological impulses of ethnocentric nationalism and racist populism brought a cataclysmic end to much of the variegated Jewish cultures that had enriched the European continent for two millennia. Jews who had clung to their multiple European homelands over centuries and had hoped to integrate in them as equal citizens in the wake of the emancipation heralded by the French Revolution, too often found themselves forced to choose between death and exile. This reached its peak during the Second World War, when millions of Jews were murdered, entire communities were obliterated and the center of the remnant Jewish world transferred from Europe to Israel/Palestine and the United States of America.

This catastrophe for the Jews of Europe became a Palestinian catastrophe too in the twentieth century. Some survivors from the Jewish communities, decimated by Antisemitic violence, opted for laying an increasingly exclusive claim to Palestine from the 1880s onwards. Modern Jewish migration to Palestine began in the aftermath of the Antisemitic pogroms in the Russian Empire. The trickle, then flow and finally mass migration of Jews to Palestine was aided and abetted by some Europeans who sympathized with Jews in their suffering. Christian and Jewish Zionists, who promoted this migration and cultivated Jewish political aspirations in Palestine, acted on their convictions within the context of the European colonialist

enterprise, the building of empires in Asia and Africa. British 19th century politician Lord Shaftesbury phrased the agenda for Palestine, one future Asian piece of the British Empire, as “a land without a people for a people without a land”. Nobly troubled by Jewish suffering in Eastern Europe, he was remarkably uninterested in the fate of the people that lived in Palestine, an indigenous people in a soon to be colonized territory, just one more non-European people woefully overlooked as if it did not exist. Lord Arthur Balfour shared his sympathies and his ignorance and the declaration that bore his name changed the course of history in Palestine.

The Shoah, the term used to speak of the destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War, is an indelible historical stain on the history of humanity. However, the Shoah and the Nakbah, the term used to speak of the destruction of Palestinian society in 1948, are undeniably linked together in history. During the Shoah, Antisemitism reached a satanic apotheosis. The industry of genocide attained heights of efficiency that can only terrify the human imagination. Many insist that this event is incomparable to other events and no comparison is intended here. The horrific events of the Shoah convinced many more that the Jews indeed needed a land and a state. In engineering the realization of those goals, the Nakbah was set in motion. Was this necessarily so? The speculative academic debate that seeks to answer this query does not however change the reality that devolved from those events – the establishment of a

state defined as Jewish and the relegation of Palestinians to the margins of their homeland.

Whereas the Shoah was brought to an end by the victory of the Allies and the destruction of Nazi rule, the Nakbah has had no resolution as of yet and the life of Palestinians persists in its shadow: life in exile, under occupation and facing discrimination. A highly recommended recent collection of articles courageously proposes a language that has Shoah and Nakbah sharing a syntax and grammar in order to promote deeper understanding of the shared world out of which both Jews and Palestinians emerged profoundly scarred. Its editors suggest: “The aim of this book is to mitigate or challenge the dichotomy between these two mainstream narratives. It seeks to transcend the binary, dichotomous confines that these national narratives impose on history, memory, and identity in order to consider the two narratives together. We propose another register of history and memory - one that honors the uniqueness of each event, its circumstances and consequences, as well as their differences, but also offers a common historical and conceptual framework within which both narratives may be addressed. We are suggesting a wholly different syntax and grammar of history and memory, in which the combination “Holocaust and Nakba” or “Nakba and Holocaust” makes historical, cultural, and political sense” (Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (editors). *The Holocaust and the Nakba; A New Grammar of Trauma and History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, 5).

Defining anti-Semitism today

Whereas the ongoing fight against Antisemitism is undoubtedly a necessary part of the wider struggle against all forms of racism and xenophobia, some have developed definitions of Antisemitism that delegitimize the struggle for justice and peace in Palestine. Cynical political use of Antisemitism has been made in order to silence Palestinians and their supporters, accusing critics of Zionism and the State of Israel of engaging in anti-Jewish discourse and action. Criticism of Zionism and Israel are presented as indistinguishable from rejection of Jews and Judaism.

Needless to say, some might indeed be prone to Antisemitic discourse or action in defending the rights of Palestinians and promoting justice in Palestine. However, criticizing Zionist ideology, the politics and practices of the State of Israel, its military or state organisms and acting against them do not constitute Antisemitism per se. It is true that there is a fine line to be drawn here to prevent legitimate criticism from becoming racist diatribe but the line must be drawn. A number of recent definitions try to do this with greater or lesser finesse. However, ultimately this can only be done coherently and with moral integrity when the struggle against all forms of racism, injustice and human rights abuses includes an awareness of both the pernicious traces of continuing Antisemitism and the myriad forms of anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab sentiment, Islamophobia and the brutal whitewashing of occupation

and discrimination in Israel-Palestine today. Ultimately, those fighting Antisemitism, those defending the rights of Palestinians and those promoting a vision of a society in Israel/Palestine based upon justice, peace and equality are allies in building a better world and not foes.

Fr. David Neuhaus SJ, born in South Africa of German Jewish parents, moved to Israel in 1977. He was baptized as a Catholic in 1988. He completed a BA, MA and PhD at Hebrew University before joining the Society of Jesus in 1992. He studied theology in Paris and specialized in Scripture in Rome before being ordained a priest in 2000. He teaches in various institutions in Israel and in Palestine. He was Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew speaking and Migrant Catholics in Israel between 2008 and 2017. He presently serves as the superior of the Jesuit community in the Holy Land.

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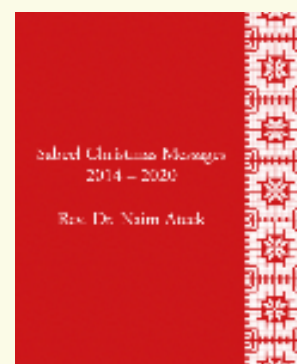
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ZIONISM AND APARTHEID : A RELATIONSHIP?

Miko Peled

I thank the editors for inviting me to share my thoughts on the relationship between Zionism and Apartheid. I want to emphasize that the knowledge and insight I have about Zionism does not only come from studying Zionism thoroughly for several decades, but also from a deeply personal experience that I wish to share here.

In my house Zionism was sacred. Everything one did or did not do had to be examined as to how it benefited Zionism and whether it was “good for the State.” The people in my immediate surroundings, family members and close friends of my parents were almost all people who had dedicated their lives to the State. Chief among these was my father, the general who served as an officer in 1948 and then as a general, a member of the Israeli military high command which planned and executed the 1967 war.

On my mother’s side of the family, there was my grandfather who was among the signatories of the Declaration of Independence. My mother’s uncle was president of the State of Israel, and other members of the family were judges, heads of the various state agencies and ministries, and on and on. All men and women who were not only ideologically committed to Zionism but had spent their entire lives making the Zionist State a force to be reckoned with.

“Which version of Zionism, in your opinion, can coexist with Palestinians without completely neglecting the Nakba?”

The short answer is, “none.” While there are various streams of Zionism which we will touch on later, history has shown us that Zionists with all their differences were, in the end, united when it came to dealing with the land and the Arabs. The

Zionist movement and the State of Israel which it serves, are dedicated to two objectives which are tightly connected and interdependent: The first objective is the creation of a Zionist, so-called Jewish State in Palestine. The second is the destruction of Palestine - or in other words, The Nakba. The first cannot be achieved without the second.

The reason these two are interdependent is quite simple although not at all easy to come to terms with: the justification for the creation of a so-called Jewish State in Palestine is the claim that the Jewish people who live in the world today are descendants of the ancient people of Israel who lived in Palestine some 3000-4000 years ago. The ancient Hebrews were eventually forced into exile, the theory goes, and therefore all Jews today have a right to colonize Palestine. Another claim that the Zionist use to justify the creation of a state for themselves on Palestinian land, is that according to the bible, Palestine was promised to the Jewish people by the almighty.

We will not examine whether any of these claims are founded, but the impression given by the Zionist narrative is that nothing of any historical significance took place in the “Land of Israel,” other than what is written in The Bible. Then there was a two-thousand-year pause in history until the Jewish people, like the Phoenix, rose from the ashes to create the wonder that is “Israel.” The rich history of Palestine, which spans thousands of years has been turned into a historical footnote with the main story being the biblical-Zionist

narrative.

For this narrative to work, the state of Israel along with its Jewish and Christian Zionist partners embarked on a large-scale campaign to erase the history of Palestine and replace it with stories from The Bible. The actual recorded history of Palestine, so we are told by University of London Professor Nur Masalha, spans thousands of years. According to Masalha's epic book, "Palestine, A Four Thousand Year History," the name Palestine was used by the Greek historian Herodotus, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, to describe the country we know today to be Palestine. The ancient Egyptian and Assyrian empires, going back four thousand years, had used the name Palestine as well.

As we view the destruction the State of Israel has brought upon Palestine, we cannot but realize that there exists an obvious strategy of erasure. Monuments that had immeasurable value historically, religiously, and culturally were destroyed, as were historical towns and villages. The names of localities from street names to the names of towns were changed. Worst of all, people were systematically displaced and killed so that others, Jewish people, would replace them. The Zionists were united in executing the Nakba to turn Palestine into Israel.

“We (Sabeel) believe that the practices of Apartheid in Israel serve as a transitional period until Israel decides which Zionist doctrine the

Israeli state wants to pursue.”

From its very inception, the State of Israel was established as an apartheid state. The very first laws that were passed by the Knesset regarding land, property, and citizenship - all of which define the fundamental nature of the State - make it unmistakably an apartheid state. The segregation of Jews and non-Jews, or Arabs, was absolute. The methods used to control the Palestinians within the newly created State were brutally violent and inherently racist. As we look at the seven decades since Israel was established there is no evidence to suggest that there is anything “transitional” about the Apartheid nature of the Zionist state.

Israel was established after a campaign of brutal massacres and ethnic cleansing known as The Nakba. The Palestinians who remained in Palestine after 1948 were forced into one of three different realities, none of which they chose, or which gave them any control over their lives or destiny as a people:

1. Forced to become so-called citizens of the State of Israel. I use the term “so-called” because their lives, their rights, and the entire reality in which they live are totally removed from and completely dissimilar to the lives of the Jewish citizens of the state. Until 1966 Palestinian citizens of Israel were living in ghettos that were controlled by the Israeli army and monitored by the Israel secret police. After 1966, when the military rule was lifted, their living conditions improved only nominally,

and their lives are still monitored by the Israeli secret police or Shabak. Many Palestinian localities within 1948 Palestine still have no access to running water, electricity, internet, education, or health care. Severe limits are still in place as to where Palestinian citizens may reside and how they make a living. In many cases, Palestinian citizens of Israel are refugees in their own country.

2. Forced to become second class citizens in a de-fact occupation of the Kingdom of Jordan within the West Bank. In 1967 the West bank changed hands and now the Palestinians living there became residents without rights living under military law. At the same time, Israeli citizens with full rights have settled throughout the West Bank enjoying full rights and a very high standard of living

3. Forced into the Gaza Strip which has been a humanitarian disaster for decades and subjected to constant, brutal attacks by the Israeli military.

For over seven decades Israel has been practicing Apartheid as it is defined in international law. Furthermore, this apartheid regime has been engaged in an ongoing ethnic cleansing and a campaign of genocide - as these terms are defined in international law. It is a grave mistake to argue that this deeply entrenched state of apartheid is somehow temporary.

B'tselem and Human Rights Watch agree that the current realities in Palestine equate to Apartheid.

Surely we are all relieved to see that human rights organizations like B'tselem and Human Rights Watch agree that the current realities in Palestine equate to Apartheid. The question that begs to be asked is, what took them so long. The treatment of Palestinians by the State of Israel had not changed in any significant way since Israel was established. Killing, displacement, arrests, home demolitions, collective punishment and bombing of refugee camps have been part of Israel's policy from the very beginning. One has to wonder why it took human rights organizations seven decades to come out with a clear statement about this.

In our opinion, Apartheid is the result of the effort put into maintaining the status quo.

There has not been a status quo in Palestine since the Zionists began to colonize it. It has been a march towards the creation of a Zionist state. There is no part of Palestine in which the destruction, killing and building for Jews only is not moving forward in full force. Mosques, cemeteries, churches and other monuments that have religious and historical value are being destroyed or allowed to fall into disrepair. "Judaizing" or "de-Arabizing" the Naqab, the Galilee, the West Bank and Jerusalem are top priorities for Zionism and the State of Israel is using all of its resources to achieve this.

As an example in the Naqab, home to some 250,000 Palestinian Beduin, Israelis who wish to engage in development and agriculture enjoy gen-

erous subsidies and have established settlements that offer a very high standard of living. The Palestinians who own the land and have cultivated it since time immemorial are not permitted to live in these settlements, are prohibited from engaging in agriculture and live in abject poverty. The Zionist assault on the Naqab and its people is relentless, with over 2000 home demolitions per year, a specialized, militarized police force named "Yoav" dedicated to "dealing" with the local Palestinian Beduin, no access to water or electricity, there is no evidence of any status quo.

Unlike Apartheid, which seeks the separation and control of two peoples, Zionism's ultimate goal is to gain control over most of the land with the least amount of non-Jewish inhabitants to ensure the Jewish identity of the land remains dominant.

Israel seeks to do both. Israel controls both people by keeping them separate and unequal. Israelis have the privilege of living in a liberal democracy, and they care little about their Palestinian neighbors, who very often live across the street. Palestinians live with few rights and are under the watchful eye of the State and its intelligence services. It is through this tight control that Israel can dispossess Palestinians and make their lives unlivable while raising the standard of living of Jews and expanding access to Palestinian land and water. Zionism created a system whereby these two elements, control and dispossession work in unison.

How different is each party's Zionism from the other?

While the various Zionist political parties differ from one another, when it comes to Palestine and the Arabs the differences remain in discourse alone, not in policy or strategic objectives. Right Revisionist, Left Labor and everyone in between had argued and even hated one another from the very start of the Zionist project. Religious and secular, traditional religious and the newer, Religious-Zionists all have their differences but as we have seen for over seven decades, these differences are easily bridged when it comes to Palestine and its people.

Hebron, Al-Khalil is a city where it is well known that the most fanatic militant Zionists terrorize Palestinians with the full support of the Israeli army. If there was one place where one would have never expected a moderate Zionist like Yitzhak Hertzog to set foot in, was Hebron, and specifically not in the Ibrahimi Mosque which was violently appropriated by settlers.

In December of 2021 the President of the State of Israel, Yitzhak Hertzog who comes from a "moderate left" Zionist background had just given legitimacy and the approval of the highest office in Israel to the most extreme expression of Zionist racism and brutality. He had visited and conducted a Chanukah service at the Ibrahimi Mosque in the city of Al-Khalil, Hebron.

Are there Israeli anti-Zionist political parties?

An Anti-Zionist political party would be disqualified by the election commission from participating in the Israeli elections. Balad is the only political party in the Knesset that declares itself as non-Zionist, and there are a few other members of the Joint List, like Ofer Cassif, who would define themselves as non-Zionist or even anti-Zionist.

So far they have been successful in overcoming attempts to disqualify them from running for the Knesset by appealing to the Israeli High Court. Their success is often tied to the fact that there is a racist candidate that was also being disqualified and the Israeli courts would rule that they can both run, thus reinforcing the symmetry between those fighting against racism and those who are blatantly racist.

To summarize, as long as the Zionist state remains in control of Palestine, Palestinians will have to endure Apartheid. People who seek justice and freedom must act to end the Zionist regime in Palestine and replace it with a democratic state.

Miko Peled (born 1961) is an Israeli-American activist and author. He is author of the books *The General's Son: The Journey of an Israeli in Palestine* and *Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five*. He is also an international speaker.



WHAT WOULD THE ISRAELI IDENTITY LOOK LIKE WITHOUT ZIONISM?

Yuli Novak

“The fact is that we are ill, very ill” wrote Jean-Paul Sartre to the French in 1957, commenting on the blindness of his own society vis-à-vis their responsibility for colonial rule in Algeria. The fact is that we (*who are We?*), too, are ill. Very ill. And acknowledging one’s own illness is, for me, the hardest phase.

Growing up in Israel, under a political system that manifests the Zionist idea exclusively, we proudly believe in a clear distinction between “our” Zionism as it has been practiced inside the Green Line, and the settlers’ project beyond the pre-1967 lines. But hard as it is to admit, this logic is artificial, and it is blinding us. In recent years, I have spent a great

deal of time in South Africa. I have been particularly drawn to a group smaller than 10 percent of the population: White Afrikaners, the descendants of Europeans who arrived at the southern tip of Africa in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the early 20th century, with British colonialism coming to an end in Southern Africa, the Afrikaners gained political control over the land. In 1948, they established Apartheid as a political system that lasted for 50 years before it was abolished in 1994.

During the Apartheid years, only very few Afrikaners succeeded in recognizing their own illness (today it is acknowledged by almost all Afrikaners who desire to keep it a thing of

the past). Those precious few faced a daunting impasse: they realized that something in the narrative of their upbringing was fundamentally off, that the logic of white domination over blacks — the numerous justifications offered notwithstanding — could not be valid.

Acknowledging this involved grappling with the most fundamental assumptions of their social, familial, and professional circles. Upending Apartheid's justification meant turning their backs on family, nation, and state. They were seen — correctly — as traitors. But they never betrayed their motherland, only its regime. Their impasse was first and foremost internal: they had no alternative narrative to that of the regime through which they could imagine themselves. While the Black Consciousness Movement, which was evolving in South Africa at the time, provided a solid backbone of identity for the struggle against Apartheid, it did not speak to them as whites. Since the regime equated itself with Afrikaner nationalism, it followed that being anti-Apartheid meant being anti-Afrikaner. Thus, being an Afrikaner against Apartheid meant opposing one's very self. One Afrikaner explained it to me: "We had to ask ourselves: what does it mean to be who we are — Afrikaners — without Apartheid? We discovered we had no answer." This is the essence of the illness.

"What does it mean to be Jewish-Israeli without Zionism?" A question I never asked myself.

The Zionist regime (Zionism as it

has been practiced, not its ideological or philosophical "could have been" version) never did much by way of democracy. Already in its early years, the Israeli regime worked to secure a Jewish majority through the likes of the Absentees' Property Law and the Law of Return, and to impose a two-tiered system via a military apparatus imposed on Arab areas in the new Israeli state. 1967 saw a new-old task added to our national project: settling and controlling territories beyond the internationally recognized Green Line. The Jewish-Zionist left was given a new issue to struggle over: "the occupation of the territories," which while in line with the original settler logic underlying Zionism ("our right to the land") was far uglier in the eyes of both left-leaning Jews, and the world.

Our illness did not begin in 1967. For those unwilling to cast doubt upon the narrative of exclusive Jewish sovereignty over the land, marking the beginning of "a different story" in 1967 is a convenient way not to look the illness in the eye. We can tell ourselves that treating the symptoms of occupation — if only that was possible — would have paved the way toward continuing the "unblemished" Zionism project. In recent years, events on the ground have disrupted us from continuing to tell ourselves this story. As de facto annexation of large parts of the West Bank is in place, and a de jure annexation of these territories have the support from much of the Jewish public, it is becoming harder and harder to hold on to distinguishing between "Israel" and the "occupation."

A good starting point can be the infuriating question often posed to us by the right: "What is the difference between Ramat Aviv (the Tel Aviv neighborhood built on the ruins of Sheikh Muwannis) and Kiryat Arba (the West Bank settlement near Hebron)?" It is a question we too should dare ask — not in defiance, but with courage, humility, and sincerity. For what is, in fact, the difference — when looking through the lens of national and historical justifications — between applying Zionism over Yaffa or al-Lydd, and applying the same regime over Bethlehem or Nablus?

The queasiness we feel when faced with such questions is a symptom worth thinking through, as it brings us closer to our true illness: that we do not have a national or group identity that neither involves nor depends on subjugating Palestinians under Jewish supremacy. I fear we never had one.

The Jewish-Israeli left has never come up with an alternative narrative to that of the regime. When such attempts were made, they remained on the margins, and were never adopted wholesale as the basis for a broader liberation struggle (and of this regime, we Israeli Jews must also liberate ourselves, not only the Palestinians).



Presenting such ideas in Israel today may be considered treason, yet it is essential to sincerely think them through if we are to grow a new politics — and a new identity, for us to struggle in its name. This new political Jewish identity will have to acknowledge the wrongs of the past, but not be subjugated by them. And it will free us not only from an identity defined by fears and threats, both real and imagined, but also from the knowledge — repressed, hard to put into words — that we, too, are ill, very ill.

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Yuli Novak is an Israeli activist and a writer. She was born and raised in Israel and served as the executive director of Breaking the Silence between 2012-2017. Her first book “who do you think you are” (Hebrew) was published January 2022.



UMM FORAT

Sari Bashi

About a week had passed since I brought my daughter Forat home from the hospital. A married couple with whom we are friendly came to our apartment in Ramallah. They admired Forat as she slept in the living room, and we all drank coffee. As Forat’s mealtime approached, she awoke, crying. I picked her up and, speaking in Hebrew, told her I would take her into the bedroom to breastfeed her. Our guests froze, mid-conversation. There was a short silence and then they laughed, breaking the tension.



They had never heard the Hebrew language spoken lovingly.

Later, when Forat grew older and began speaking back to me in Hebrew — in the middle of downtown

Ramallah, in the middle of the grocery store, at the top of her lungs: “Ima! You didn’t buy me the lollipop!” — I had to account for our use of the Hebrew language. I found ways to explain that I’m an Israeli Jew, married to a Palestinian resident of Ramallah, not a Jewish settler claiming Palestinian land. But how to be a guest in a society that your government’s army is occupying? How to reclaim the Hebrew language and other beautiful aspects of Jewish tradition, from a government that designated itself as the guardian of Jewish heritage?

The Israeli authorities have been spectacularly successful in identifying the Israeli state with the Jewish people. They have persuaded many Jews, Palestinians and outsiders that they speak on behalf of the Jewish people, including Jewish Israelis and Jewish citizens of other countries. Their champions have even managed to label as anti-Semitic what they consider to be unfair criticism of the Israeli government.

My Palestinian mother-in-law doesn’t have a birth certificate, but if you ask her age, she’ll say she was eight

years old “when the Jews came.” By Jews, she means the Zionist militias organized into the nascent Israeli army that conquered her village in 1948, forcing her family to flee to a refugee camp in Gaza. Most of “the Jews” she met throughout her life have been men with guns.



During our current extended stay in the United States, our son’s American Jewish preschool asked the children to dress in blue and white, to celebrate Israeli Independence Day. In response to our question, the preschool director told us that the day commemorating the establishment of the State of Israel – which is also the Palestinian Nakba, or catastrophe – is a Jewish holiday. We kept our son home that day, trying to protect him from confusing a proud tradition – Judaism – with the takeover of land from Palestinians in 1948 and the refusal to allow Palestinian refugees, including his paternal grandparents, to return to their homes.

The Israeli government also claims to represent the Jewish people when it designs and implements laws and policies that seek to maintain the

domination of Israeli Jews over Palestinians. These policies include systemic discrimination in housing and services within Israel, unlawful land seizures and forced displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, and travel restrictions over Gaza that keep 2 million Palestinians – 70 percent of whom are refugees and their descendants – inside one of the small, densely populated enclaves that the Israeli government designates for Palestinians.

A growing chorus of voices, led by Palestinian intellectuals and activists, has said that these practices amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution. Human Rights Watch recently reached a similar finding, based on an Israeli government policy to maintain the domination by Jewish Israelis over Palestinians wherever they live, and grave abuses against Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian Territory. The crime of apartheid is committed when these elements come together. To perpetuate these crimes, the Israeli authorities divide the population into opposing racial groups, dominant and subordinate, and police the boundaries between them.

More broadly, the Israeli government uses its control over the Palestinian and Israeli population registries to define our identities. The Israeli authorities approve the issuance of identity cards for the seven million Jews and the seven million Palestinians living in the space of historical Palestine or the Biblical land of Israel, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. They

refuse to grant identity cards – and thus the ability to return – to the refugees who fled or were forced to leave in 1948 and their descendants. They lumped together the Palestinian Muslims and Christians who remained in what became the State of Israel as “Arabs,” while designating the Jews who had lived in Palestine for generations prior to 1948 as “Jews,” together with the Jews who came from Europe. As Arab Jews arrived, many of them fleeing persecution and the geopolitical impossibility of remaining in their home countries after the State of Israel was established, the Israeli government registered their nationality as Jewish. It registered them as Jewish even though they were also Arab, born, like my father, in Arab countries and to Arabic-speaking parents. After capturing the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the Israeli government added Palestinians there to its military and administrative control, issuing them ID cards that defined them as Arabs subject to Israeli military rule.



There is power behind these designations, printed on laminated plastic and listed in official databases. Jewish citizens of Israel are first-class citizens. Palestinian citizens of Israel, designated as “Arabs,” are second-class citizens, a status most recently codified in Israel’s Nation

State Law. Palestinian residents of Gaza and the West Bank are non-citizens, living under military occupation.

These categories of identity are as rigid as they are artificial. In a system of apartheid, you don't get to choose your place in the racial hierarchy. No individual has the ability to overcome the overwhelming power imbalance. But as individuals and as groups organizing ourselves, we can choose to respond intentionally to those power dynamics. We can choose to resist, each from our own position.



As an Israeli Jew, I belong to the privileged group, and that privilege requires me to listen carefully to the way those in the subordinated group – Palestinians – define the terms of their struggle: against apartheid and settler-colonialism. I cannot resist as Palestinians do. I must engage in resistance grounded in my own identity, but in solidarity with Palestinians and through taking responsibility for the acts committed in my name and in the name of other Israeli Jews.

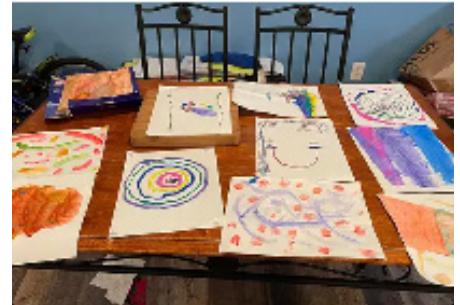
Together with other Jews, in Israel and in other countries, I am trying to deconstruct the link between Judaism and Israeli government pol-

icies, including the government's weaponizing of Zionism. We Israeli Jews have important work to do, to organize, to unlearn what we have been taught about our identity and to begin the difficult process of creating a new, decolonized identity. In doing so, we take responsibility for the privilege the Israeli government bestows upon us and also pursue internal and external support for dismantling the systems that perpetuate it.

For the last two years, I have written a Hebrew-language blog in an Israeli newspaper about raising my kids in the West Bank, and my Hebrew-language political memoir and love story was published this year. My writing is an attempt to disrupt the construction of Israeli Jews and Palestinians as opposing racial groups. It's a protest against blurring the distinction between Judaism and the oppressive actions of the Israeli government. It's also an attempt to reclaim the Hebrew language from the abusive government with which it has come to be identified.

When Palestinians ask me where I'm from, I sometimes say, "from among your uncle's children." It's an awkward reference to the traditional belief that Jews and Muslims are the children of Abraham, descending from his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, respectively. Invoking an ancient cousinly relationship does not erase the contemporary power dynamics that exist between Israeli Jews and Palestinians of all religions. But I choose to introduce myself that way to remind myself and others that these power dynamics are recent

constructions, and that we can and must deconstruct them.



Sari Bashi is an Israeli lawyer, Jewish, married to a Palestinian resident of Ramallah, and author of the book, *Maqluba – Upside Down Love* (Hebrew), which describes how she met and fell in love with her husband. She writes about raising their two children, 7-year-old Forat and 3-year-old Adam, in the West Bank and more recently in the United States, where they are staying for a sabbatical year.

Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA)

Friends of Sabeel North America
PO Box 3192
Greenwood Village, CO 80155 USA
Tel: +1-503-653-6625
Email : friends@fosna.org
Website: www.fosna.org

Canadian Frinds of Sabeel (CFOS)

Executive Director: Yara Shoufani
CFOS Office
7565 Newman Blvd.
P.O. Box 3067
Montreal, QC H8N 3H2
Tel: +1 416 846 6344
Email : info@friendsofsabeel.ca
Website : www.friendsofsabeel.ca

Sabeel-Kairos UK

Sabeel-Kairos
Office Above AGE UK
60 the Parade
Oadby
Leicester
LE2 5BF
Email: info@friendsofsabeel.org.uk
Website: www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk

Kairos-Sabeel Netherlands

Marijke Gaastra
Lobbendijk 5
3991 EA Houten Netherlands
Email: info@kairos-sabeel.nl
Website: www.kairos-sabeel.nl

Friends of Sabeel Sweden (FOS Sweden)

Director :Kenneth Kimming
Address :Nickelgränd 12
SE-16256 Vällingby Sweden
Email : sabeelsverige@gmail.com.
Website : www.sabeelsverige.se

Friends of Sabeel Scandinavia in Norway

C/O Gro Wernø
Address: Radhusgata 1-3
0151 Oslo / Norway
Tel: +47-92048968
Email : gro.werno@gmail.com
Website:www.sabeelnorge.org

Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc. (FOSAI)

Secretary : Ken Sparks
Address PO Box 592, Burpengary Qld 4505
Phone +641 930 1914
Email : ken@sparks.to
Website: www.sabeel.org.au

Friends of Sabeel France

Director : Ernest Reichert
Address: 12, rue du Kirchberg
F- 67290 Wingen s/Moder – France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 89 43 05
Email : ernest.reichert@gmail.com
Website: http://amisdesabeelfrance.blogspot.fr/

Friends of Sabeel Germany

c/o Ernest-Ludwig Vatter
Address: Im Lutzen 5
73773 Aichwald / Germany
Tel: +49 (0) 711 7657996
Email : fvsabeel-germany@vodafone.de
Website www.fvsabeel-germany.de

PURPOSE STATEMENT *of* **SABEEL**

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. Sabeel strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns.

It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

P.O.B. 49084 Jerusalem 91491

Tel: 972.2.532.7136

Fax: 972.2.5327137

Cornerstone: cornerstone@sabeel.org

or visit our website at: www.sabeel.org