

Israeli Apartheid Policies

The archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was a leading opponent of Apartheid in South Africa, has said Israel will “never get true security and safety through oppressing another people.”

A state becomes apartheid when it has official policies of racial segregation involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against another race of people. Since the Israeli occupation of Palestine from 1948, it has employed many apartheid and ethnic cleansing policies in order to drive out the native Arab population and attempt to create a pure ‘Jewish’ presence in the whole of Palestine. This racist ideology is being achieved through mass discrimination against Palestinians, intended to make their living conditions so unbearable that Palestinians are forced to leave their homeland.

Many who experienced Apartheid in South Africa have declared Israeli policies as worse than Apartheid in nature. At the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the “Anti-Apartheid movement against Israel” was launched to expose the overall racist nature of the Israeli government policies.

Many veterans of the struggle against white rule in South Africa have noted the similarities between their oppression and that of the Palestinians, including: the restrictions on travel, the military checkpoints, the arbitrary arrests, the detentions and shootings, the overwhelming poverty and brutal working conditions.

At present, Palestinians are being treated as non-human beings; people without rights or human dignity who are forced to face daily humiliations. Israel ruthlessly uses military jets, helicopter gun-ships and tanks on civilians, assassinates activists, tortures political prisoners, kills stone throwing children and imposes mass collective punishment.

Israeli Apartheid Policies include:

Collective punishment: this is illegal under international law, yet it is the daily experience of Palestinian people living under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Collective Punishment takes a number of forms including:

House Demolitions and the destruction of property – the Palestinian population is increasing at almost 4% each year. Yet despite this, Palestinians are rarely granted rights to build in area's such as Jerusalem, and houses are routinely demolished all across the occupied territories.

- Since the occupation began, Israel has demolished over 12,000 homes leaving over 60,000 Palestinians homeless in Gaza and the West Bank. Nearly 5,000 of these were demolished since 29 September 2000 alone.

- Houses are demolished as a punitive measure against the entire Palestinian population.

- The building of Israel's separation wall across the West Bank has resulted in the destruction of thousands of acres of Palestinian land, including the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of fruit trees and the isolation of farm lands on the Israeli side of the wall. The wall can be described as an apartheid wall as its impact has been disproportionately adverse for many Palestinians.

Instead of building the wall across the internationally recognised border between Israel and the occupied territories, Israel is building the wall, in its entirety, on Palestinian land, which is confiscated without compensation. Many villages have been isolated from their farmlands and now face desperate situations as they have lost their livelihoods. Israel's promise to allow access to the lands has proved treacherous.

Removal and relocation of people or ‘transfer’ away from their homes – this involves deportation between the West Bank and Gaza, or out of the Palestinian territories altogether. Once a person is removed from the West Bank to Gaza, or vice versa, there is no way they can go back home without Israeli authorization. This is rarely given. Thus, this becomes worse than imprisonment.

Imprisonment of family members – Since 1967, over 600,000 Palestinians have been held in Israeli prisons. Israel uses a policy of arresting family members when it is unable to locate its prime suspect. Israel routinely uses torture in its prisons, and even subjects children to such brutality. Prisoner accounts are well documented by many leading human rights organisations.

Closures – This is the ultimate form of collective punishment, where Israel employs policies of closure effecting entire communities. Towns or villages are closed off barring entrance and exit. Closures have lasted for weeks, cutting off vital food and medical supplies to its inhabitants.