

Indeed there is Apartheid in Israel

A new order issued by the GOC Central command bans the conveyance of Palestinians in Israeli vehicles. Such a blatant violation of the right to travel joins the long list of humans rights violations carried out by Israel in the [Occupied] Territories.

Shulamit Aloni

Jewish self-righteousness is taken for granted among ourselves to such an extent that we fail to see what's right in front of our eyes. It's simply inconceivable that the ultimate victims, the Jews, can carry out evil deeds. Nevertheless, the state of Israel practises its own, quite violent, form of Apartheid with the native Palestinian population.

The US Jewish Establishment's onslaught on former President Jimmy Carter is based on him daring to tell the truth which is known to all: through its army, the government of Israel practises a brutal form of Apartheid in the territory it occupies. Its army has turned every Palestinian village and town into a fenced-in, or blocked-in, detention camp. All this is done in order to keep an eye on the population's movements and to make its life difficult. Israel even imposes a total curfew whenever the settlers, who have illegally usurped the Palestinians' land, celebrate their holidays or conduct their parades.

If that were not enough, the generals commanding the region frequently issue further orders, regulations, instructions and rules (let us not forget: they are the lords of the land). By now they have requisitioned further lands for the purpose of constructing "Jewish only" roads. Wonderful roads, wide roads, well-paved roads, brightly lit at night – all that on stolen land. When a Palestinian drives on such a road, his vehicle is confiscated and he is sent on his way.

On one occasion I witnessed such an encounter between a driver and a soldier who was taking down the details before confiscating the vehicle and sending its owner away. "Why?" I asked the soldier. "It's an order – this is a Jews-only road", he replied. I inquired as to where was the sign indicating this fact and instructing [other] drivers not to use it. His answer was nothing short of amazing. "It is his responsibility to know it, and besides, what do you want us to do, put up a sign here and let some antisemitic reporter or journalist take a photo so he that can show the world that Apartheid exists here?"

Indeed Apartheid does exist here. And our army is not "the most moral army in the world" as we are told by its commanders. Sufficient to mention that every town and every village has turned into a detention centre and that every entry and every exit has been closed, cutting it off from arterial traffic. If it were not enough that Palestinians are not allowed to travel on the roads paved 'for Jews only', on their land, the current GOC found it necessary to land an additional blow on the natives in their own land with an "ingenious proposal".

Humanitarian activists cannot transport Palestinians either

Major-General Naveh, renowned for his superior patriotism, has issued a new order. Coming into affect on 19 January, it prohibits the conveyance of Palestinians without a permit. The order determines that Israelis are not allowed to transport Palestinians in an Israeli vehicle (one registered in Israel regardless of what kind of numberplate it carries) unless they have received explicit permission to do so. The permit relates to both the driver and the Palestinian passenger. Of course none of this applies to those whose labour serves the settlers. They and their employers will naturally receive the required permits so they can continue to serve the lords of the land, the settlers.

Did man of peace President Carter truly err in concluding that Israel is creating Apartheid? Did he exaggerate? Don't the US Jewish community leaders recognise the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination of 7 March 1966, to which Israel is a signatory? Are the US Jews who launched the loud and abusive campaign against Carter for supposedly maligning Israel's character and its democratic and humanist nature unfamiliar with the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 30 November 1973? Apartheid is defined therein as an international crime that among other things includes using different legal instruments to rule over different racial groups, thus depriving people of their human rights. Isn't freedom of travel one of these rights?

In the past, the US Jewish community leaders were quite familiar with the meaning of those conventions. For some reason, however, they are convinced that Israel is allowed to contravene them. It's OK to kill civilians, women and children, old people and parents with their children, deliberately or otherwise without accepting any responsibility. It's permissible to rob people of their lands, destroy their crops, and cage them up like animals in the zoo. From now on, Israelis and International humanitarian organisations' volunteers are prohibited from assisting a woman in labour by taking her to the hospital. [Israeli human rights group] Yesh Din volunteers cannot take a robbed and beaten-up Palestinian to the police station to lodge a complaint. (Police stations are located at the heart of the settlements.) Is there anyone who believes that this is not Apartheid?

Jimmy Carter does not need me to defend his reputation that has been sullied by Israelophile community officials. The trouble is that their love of Israel distorts their judgment and blinds them from seeing what's in front of them. Israel is an occupying power that for 40 years has been oppressing an indigenous people, which is entitled to a sovereign and independent existence while living in peace with us. We should remember that we too used very violent terror against foreign rule because we wanted our own state. And the list of victims of terror is quite long and extensive.

We do limit ourselves to denying the [Palestinian] people human rights. We not only rob of them of their freedom, land and water. We apply collective punishment to millions of people and even, in revenge-driven frenzy, destroy the electricity supply for one and half million civilians. Let them "sit in the darkness" and "starve".

Employees cannot be paid their wages because Israel is holding 500 million shekels that belong to the Palestinians. And after all that we remain "pure as the driven snow". There are no moral blemishes on our actions. There is no racial separation. There is no Apartheid. It's an invention of the enemies of Israel. Hooray for our brothers and sisters in the US! Your devotion is very much appreciated. You have truly removed a nasty stain from us. Now there can be an extra spring in our step as we confidently abuse the Palestinian population, using the "most moral army in the world".

[Translated by Sol Salbe]