

Israel, Palestine and the Question of Apartheid

Australian Friends of Palestine
Association

Prepared by: Georgia Yaritji Mansell (The
University of Adelaide)
Word count: 5,204

The author acknowledges and pays their respects to the Kaurna people, the traditional custodians upon whose ancestral lands this report was written. They wish to acknowledge the deep attachment and relationship of the Kaurna people to country and respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs. Sovereignty has never been ceded.

Executive Summary

Recent reports by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International labelling Israel an apartheid state have succeeded in reigniting international debate around the nature of Palestinian oppression in Israel and the Occupied Palestinians Territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Yet these reports are only the latest in a long historical trajectory of likening the Israeli treatment of Palestinians to the apartheid regime of South Africa in academia, activism, by progressive policymakers and by non-governmental humanitarian organisations. Increasingly, the idea that apartheid is the main organising principle of the Israeli state is capturing both international discourse on the conflict, and the popular discourse of Palestinians living under occupation. Clear breaches of international humanitarian law by Israel fortify the argument. Yet the application of the term apartheid, entrenched as it is in the historical context of South Africa, still causes discomfort in Australian politics and in the international political landscape more broadly. This discomfort is the discomfort of a harsh truth, one which the Australian and international political community must acknowledge and act to rectify.

Introduction

Oppression of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinians Territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza (OPT) by the Israeli state is of such magnitude and severity that it warrants the accusations of apartheid levelled by international humanitarian organisations with increasing frequency. A threshold has indeed been crossed. It is important that the international community and the Australian government and media are pressured to accept the reality of apartheid in Israel and to take subsequent actions to condemn and ultimately force its dismantling, as occurred in South Africa. To this end, this report uses a comparative lens to give further credence to apartheid analyses of Israel by drawing on the dynamics of, and lessons learned from, the former South African system of apartheid. In the first instance, it situates the research by giving a brief historical background of apartheid in South Africa and the application of the term to Israel and Palestine, before acknowledging the centrality of the concept of settler colonialism. It then moves to examine in more depth three case studies which illustrate the comparability of the apartheid regimes in South Africa and

Israel and Palestine. These are: citizenship, settlement and segregation, and backlash against anti-apartheid movements. In the final sections, responses to apartheid accusations from Australian media and politicians are considered.

Apartheid in South Africa

The etymology of the word 'apartheid', which literally translates to 'aparthood' in Afrikaans, makes evident the base presumption and impulse of the institutionalised system of racial discrimination which operated in South Africa between 1948 and 1994 under the white minority government of the National Party. The apartheid regime was the final iteration of a process of colonisation by the Dutch and English which began in 1652 and which was founded on the idea that the indigenous population ought either to be eliminated to make way for the settlers or enslaved and forced to provide free labour for the colonial process (Badran, 2009, p. 26). The Dutch, and their English successors, utilised a racist logic of white superiority and 'terra nullius'- the idea that indigenous populated land was vacant land- to justify the widespread theft of property and resources, the complete exclusion of Black South Africans from participation in the governance of their society, and the establishment of the Atlantic slave trade. In 1948, when the National Party rose to power, this racial inequality was institutionalised by the dual systems of apartheid and 'Herrenvolk democracy', a political system which is "democratic for the master race but tyrannical for the subordinate groups" (Van den Berghe, 1967, p. 19). What followed was nearly half a century of severe oppression, human rights abuses and systematic violence directed towards the Black South African population by the white minority. The following quote from the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1998, p. 6) describes how the National Party systematically racially vilified and legally, socially and politically ostracised Black South Africans:

White South Africans were constantly told by their parents, schools, the media and many churches that black people were different from them and at a lower stage of development. With the emergence of the bantustan scheme, they were told that blacks were not even South Africans. Thus a distinction emerged in their minds about the citizenship of South Africans. Whites were the South Africans while their fellow black residents were now foreigners, temporary sojourners in white South Africa, no different from other disenfranchised migrants

working outside of their home countries. They became ‘the other’, a short remove from what they were to become, ‘the enemy’”.

The eventual demise of the apartheid regime in 1994- the year that Black South Africans gained citizenship and suffrage- was a result of several factors which can be broadly characterised as either international political and economic pressure, or domestic resistance and collective action for Black liberation and racial equality. Domestically, the African National Congress (ANC) had succeeded in garnering significant support from both Black and white South Africans, delegitimising the apartheid system and popularising the notion of universal human rights. Concomitantly, international sanctions, trade embargoes and divestment campaigns had generated a fiscal and economic crisis for which there was no remedy except the relinquishment of apartheid (Schwartzman and Taylor, 1999, p. 117). Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that racial inequality and discrimination continues to be an issue in post-apartheid South Africa. Indeed, “the social architecture formed over more than three centuries of White rule has maintained South Africa’s position as the world’s most unequal society” (Sguazzin, 2021), and this inequality still cuts primarily across racial lines. Evidently, apartheid does not disappear ‘without a trace’.

Historical background of the use of the term apartheid in relation to Israel and Palestine

The use of the term apartheid in relation to Israel and Palestine has a long historical pedigree in academia, policymaking and protest movements. Reverend Desmond Tutu once stated: “I have been to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and I have witnessed the racially segregated roads and housing that reminded me so much of the conditions we experienced in South Africa under the racist system of apartheid” (Tutu in Al Mayadeen, 2021). Ties between the Israeli state and the apartheid government of South Africa and, conversely, between the ANC and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) stretch back to the 1970’s (Turner, 2019, p. 500). As early as 1976, the United Nations formally condemned collaboration between Israeli government and apartheid South Africa (Resolution 31/6-E). Countless academic, media and non-governmental organisation publications have since examined how the application of the term apartheid to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the comparison with South Africa, is a powerful rhetorical tool which implies serious legal, political and ethical ramifications.

However, more recent publications, including the 2019 HRW report and the 2022 Amnesty International report, go beyond this discursive analysis. Increasingly, the use of the term apartheid in relation to Israel is no longer analogous, it is a direct and defensible accusation. Both reports prove that the Israeli state engages in every one of the practices of apartheid as they are defined by the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, including “measures restricting particular groups from participating in political, social, economic and cultural life, and that deliberately deny them their basic human rights and freedoms: the right to work, assemble, and organise; to education; to a nationality; to freedom of movement and residence; and to freedom of opinion and expression” (Greenstein, 2012, p. 150). There are also a number of significant Israeli media and humanitarian organisations which now recognise Israel as an apartheid state, including B’Tselem (2021) and Israeli news outlet Haaretz (Levy, 2021).

There are, of course, points of difference between the South African apartheid regime and apartheid in Israel and Palestine. For example, in the case of South Africa, the ruling white minority was dependent on maintained access to cheap or free labour provided by the Black population. While this was of course an egregious violation of human rights, it proved beneficial to the struggle to end apartheid as Black South Africans were able to leverage trade union connections to organise collective resistance. This is not the case in apartheid Israel, where “the economic imperative of the Israeli system has been to create employment for Jewish immigrants” (Greenstein, 2012, p. 156). Nevertheless, the concept of apartheid, while categorical by nature, is not so restrictive as to be rendered inapplicable by these differences. Rather, these differences prompt awareness of the value of understanding how apartheid functions in different historical, social and political contexts. Apartheid should not be thought of as a singular event, but rather a political, social and economic system of racial discrimination which can and does present in various forms, at various times and in a range of national contexts which endogenously determine the particularities of its functioning.

Apartheid and settler colonialism

Any discussion of apartheid in Israel and Palestine needs to be framed in the context of settler colonialism. The implication of using a settler colonial lens to analyse the policies of the Israeli

state is that it requires acknowledgement of the fact that the primary purpose of Israel as a settler-colonial Jewish nation-state has always been, and remains, the complete elimination of Palestinians. The most striking instance of this is of course the 1948 Nakba which saw some 720, 000 Palestinians displaced, around 80% of the population at the time (Pappé, 2006). Apartheid is then understood as an attendant (and illegal) state structure designed to marginalise as much as possible those Palestinians who remained in Israel and the OPT after this ethnic cleansing campaign. Academics working in the growing field of settler colonialism research have made significant contributions to analyses of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Patrick Wolfe influentially asserted that “settler colonialism destroys to replace... (and) elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388), assertions for which he explicitly cites Israeli settlements in the OPT of the West Bank. ‘Carcerality’ has also been identified as one of Israel’s fundamental methods of settler colonial governance, which is practiced to the most severe degree in Gaza, where an ongoing goods and services embargo deprives Gazan Palestinians of bare necessities such as water and electricity, where Gazan Palestinians are often denied exit from Gaza in order to receive medical treatment, and where attempts to protest conditions in the ‘world’s largest open-air jail’ are repeatedly crushed using immensely disproportionate military force (Pace and Yacobi, 2021, p. 1222).

With this in mind, the report now moves to examine in more depth three case studies which illustrate the comparability of the apartheid regimes in South Africa and Israel and Palestine. These are: citizenship, settlement and segregation, and backlash against anti-apartheid movements.

Inequalities in formal and substantive citizenship in South Africa and Israel and Palestine

As is the case in many ethno-religious states including apartheid South Africa, the Israeli government has, at every stage since its foundation in 1948, strategically used citizenship law as a tool to formally alienate all non-Jewish persons living in Israel and the OPT. Indeed, “nationality status in Israel is not linked to origin from, or residence in a territory, as is the norm in international law. Rather, the basic theocratic character of the Israeli legal system establishes ethnic criteria as the grounds for the enjoyment of full rights” (White, 2012, p.

12). Moreover, Palestinians living in the OPT and Arab citizens of Israel have been 'securitised' as a 'demographic threat' to the Jewish majority in Israeli political discourse. The strategic conceptualisation of these demographics as a threat to the security of the state of Israel has been leveraged to justify the introduction and amendment of citizenship laws which severely limit their civil, social and political rights or indeed to deny them access to citizenship status altogether. The first key law which was designed to this end was the 1950 Law of Return, which "has guaranteed automatic citizenship to any Jew upon immigration to Israel, without any length-of-residence or language requirement" (Shafir and Peled, 1998, p. 412). By contrast, the 720,000 Palestinians who were displaced to neighbouring and nearby states such as Jordan and Egypt during the 1948 Nakba are barred from returning to and gaining citizenship in their former homes and ancestral lands. Those Palestinians who remained in the OPT, and those who remained in Israel and legally became Arab Israelis, were subject to a process whereby "the occupation divided and hierarchized Palestinians into multiple categories which were then inscribed on their identity cards: some are holders of Jerusalem residency cards, while some are West Bank Palestinian residents, others are Gaza residents, and some hold Jordanian passports" (Peteet, 2016, p. 264). Figure 1 visually represents how these hierarchically stacked citizenships affect and diminish the rights of Palestinians to varying degrees.

Over time, the citizenship status of Palestinians in Israel and the OPT has actually eroded (Peled, 2007, pp. 608-617). As recently as 2018, the Knesset passed the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People, which "determines the constitutional identity of the regime and defines the political community that constitutes the locus of sovereignty, its aspirations, vision and cultural identity" (Saïd, 2020, p. 481). Israel did not shy from the reason for introducing the law, with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid stating at the time that "the law was more about demographic engineering, adding that it 'is of security importance (and) there is no need to hide from the purpose of the (citizenship) law... It's one of the tools meant to secure a Jewish majority in Israel'" (Al Jazeera, 2021). Arab lawmakers protested the passing of the Basic Law in the Knesset by tearing up drafts of the law and shouting 'apartheid', demonstrating just how much the claims of Israel as an apartheid state resonate with those actually living under the oppressive regime (The Independent, 2018). Figure 2 details a selection of racist apartheid citizenship laws in South Africa and Israel.

Whereas South Africa was overt in its subjugation of Black South Africans to second-class citizenship— or subjecthood— owing to the fact that it was a regime less concerned with projecting an illusory image of liberal democracy, Israel seeks to maintain a contradictory commitment to both liberal democratic notions of citizenship (extensive and universal rights for all) and an exclusive, racist and apartheid form of citizenship which discriminates against Palestinians and Arab Israelis. According to Cook (2015, p. 124), “visible equality— the appearance of equality, as opposed to real or substantive equality— neatly encapsulates Israel’s approach to its one in five citizens who are Palestinians... In this respect, Israel has been extremely careful not to follow in the footsteps of Apartheid South Africa, where the overarching policy of discrimination against non-whites was flaunted both legally and administratively”. Haifa University sociologist Sammy Smooha recognises this same conflict between a stated commitment to and outward projection of democracy and a social and legal reality grounded in the dominance of a majority ethnic group over a minority in his theory of Israel as an ‘ethnic democracy’ (Smooha, 1997, p. 199). Others have argued that Israel’s subjugation of Palestinians citizens is so severe that it ought to be considered a fully-fledged ethnocracy (Yiftachel, 2000, p. 730). Regardless of which categorisation of Israeli ‘democracy’ one subscribes to, it is clear that the Israeli state wields a system of apartheid against Palestinians so as to entirely exclude or limit as much as possible their ability to participate in the decision-making processes which determine their livelihoods and those of their children.

There is a significant cross-over in citizenship-based analyses of apartheid and analyses of the geographies of apartheid because membership to a political community is necessarily tied to an associated political territory. These compare the unequal regulation and surveillance of human movement across political boundaries such as Bantustans in South Africa and the walls, fences and physical barriers which delineate the OPT. It is to these ‘geographies of apartheid’— settlement patterns and segregation— which the report now turns.

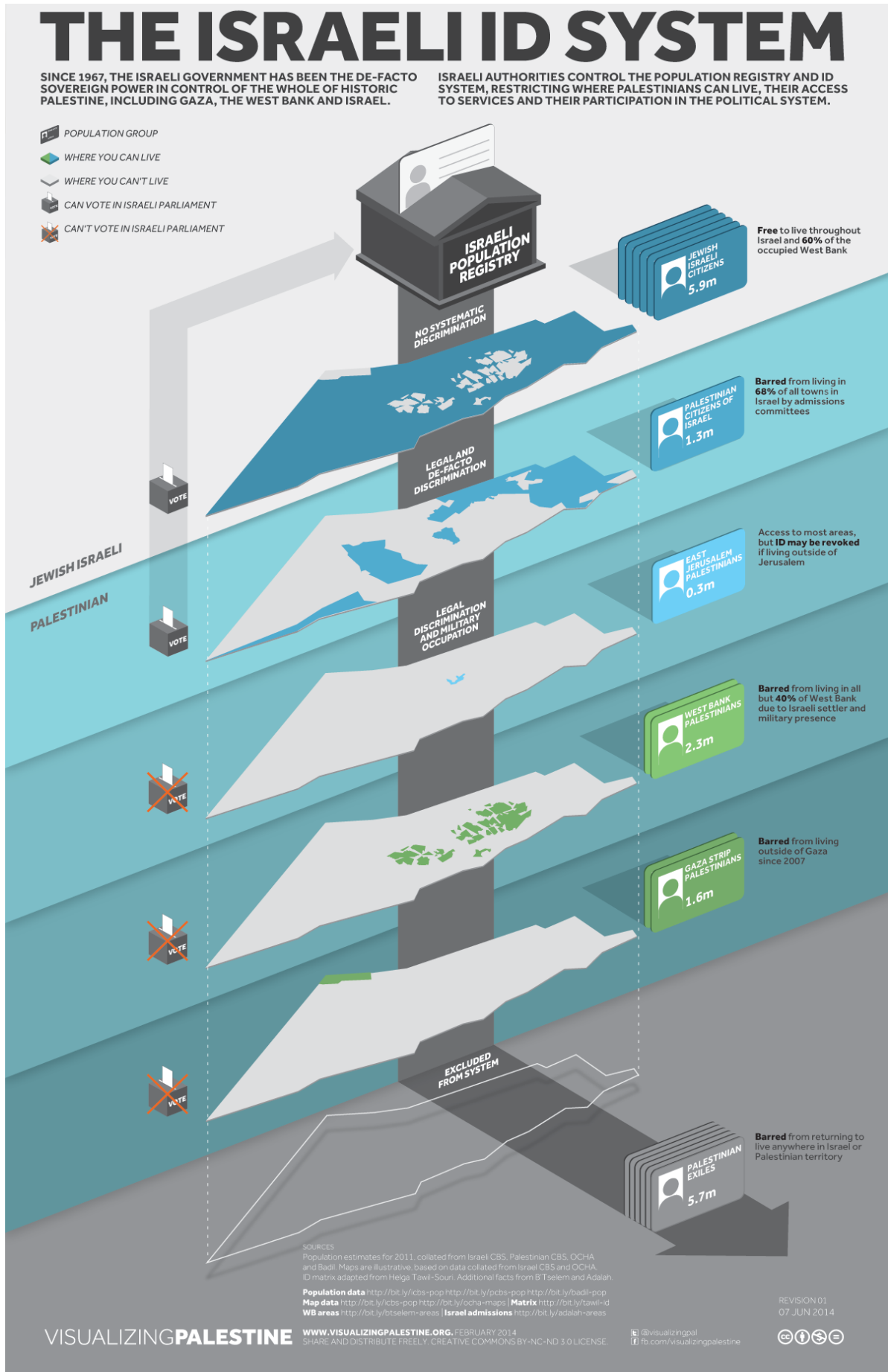


Figure 1: Hierarchically stacked citizenship in Israel and the OPT

Discriminatory citizenship laws in apartheid South Africa	Discriminatory citizenship laws in apartheid Israel
Black Homelands Citizenship Act 26 of 1970. Denaturalised Black South Africans, designated them citizens of the Bantustans and rendered them aliens in most urban areas.	Law of Return 1950. Established the right of every Jewish person to become a citizen of Israel without meeting other typical requirements such as lengthy residency or language proficiency.
The Population Registration Act 30 of 1950. Required all South Africans to be registered at birth as one of four racial groups, required all Black South Africans carry racial identification.	Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People 2018. Determines that Israel is a nation-state for only or primarily Jewish people.
The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949. Prohibited marriages between white South Africans and non-white South Africans.	The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Ban on Family Unification) 2003- renewed and fortified 2022. Bars Palestinians with Israeli citizenship or residency from extending their legal status to spouses holding Palestinian Authority passports.
The Immorality Act 5 of 1927- amended 1950. Prohibited sexual intercourse between 'Europeans' and 'non-Europeans'.	The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Residency Revocation for Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territory of East Jerusalem) 2003- renewed and fortified 2022. Expands the criteria for revoking residency status of Palestinians in Israel and East Jerusalem.

Figure 2: Comparison of racially discriminatory citizenship laws in South Africa and Israel and the OPT

Geographies of apartheid in South Africa and Israel and Palestine

The process of dispossessing and displacing indigenous populations was and is central to the settler colonial apartheid projects of both South Africa and Israel. In 1948, “Palestinians didn’t merely lose their putative state and political power. At an individual and familial level, they lost their homes and property, in almost all cases for good. Collectively, they lost their society, and were condemned to live as exiles or stateless subjects... They had a society, and then they didn’t” (Ibish, 2018). As discussed earlier, in South Africa, Black South Africans were forced into geographically fragmented ‘Bantustans’ in order to maintain geographical segregation. In the case of Israel, Palestinians have, since 1948, been forcibly removed from their land and property in Israel and increasingly marginalized in the OPT (Petee, 2016, pp. 250-251). Illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank continue this dispossession and render impossible any prospect of Palestinians achieving a meaningful state of their own. Indeed, “from 1967 through 2017, over 200 Israeli settlements were established in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem); their current population is almost 620,000” (B’Tselem, 2017). Concomitantly, “between 1988 and 2016 Israel issued a total of 16,085 demolition orders for Palestinian-owned structures

Palestine in Trump’s ‘Peace Plan’



Bantustan in Apartheid South Africa



Figure 3: Comparing fragmentation due to settlement patterns in the OPT and Bantustans in South Africa

located in Area C of the occupied West Bank” (Joronen and Griffiths, 2019, p. 562). Other mechanisms such as Israeli control over land and building permits in the West Bank, military checkpoints, the Separation Wall, the razing of Palestinians farms and olive trees, the killing of livestock and the issuing of various identity cards which are used to restrict movement within and between the OPT also reinforce the fragmentation of Palestinian land and lives (Abdulla, 2016, p. 58). Figure 3 demonstrates the striking similarity between South African Bantustans and Palestinian territories as proposed in a ‘Peace Plan’ by former United States President Donald Trump in 2020. Trump’s proposed ‘Peace Plan’ was welcomed by Australian politicians, including former Prime Minister Scott Morrison and former Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne, without sufficient criticism.

The apartheid analogy has been fortified in recent years by these exponentially increasing patterns of Palestinian land annexation, as the possibility of a two-state solution appears more remote in the face of renewed efforts by the Israeli government to marginalise the Arab population both within Israel and in the OPT. Indeed, “the more the Palestinians— and Israeli Jews for that matter— view the current reality not merely as a temporary, transitional reality from occupation to statehood but as a reality without any horizon for a future Palestinian state, the more the apartheid image captures their political consciousness and shapes their structure of experience” (Zreik and Dakwar, 2020, p. 685).

The consequences of this spatial fragmentation and associated settler violence perpetrated against Palestinians affects every aspect of the lives of subjected Palestinians. The everyday violence that Palestinians experience as their bodies and lives are subjected to intense surveillance and control as they seek to complete the most routine daily tasks— travelling to work, visiting family, going to school— generates significant emotional trauma (Amira, 2021, p. 5). The experience of prolonged and severe dislocation and dispossession has resulted in intergenerational and cultural trauma which reshapes how Palestinians understand their own identity. The impact on mobility of barriers and checkpoints cripple social and economic development as Palestinians can often neither travel for work nor access land for farming. The fragmentation of Palestinian communities makes organising collective protest virtually impossible (Baylouny, 2009, p. 40).



Figure 4: Signs in Israel and the OPT and apartheid South Africa warn whites and Israelis of the ‘threat’ of Black South Africans and Palestinians

Backlash in South Africa and Israel and Palestine against anti-apartheid movements

Another point of comparison between the apartheid regimes in Israel and South Africa involves the treatment of anti-apartheid activists and the nature of the political backlash meted out on them by both respective states and their allies in the international community. In South Africa, the apartheid government infamously mobilised its considerable propaganda apparatus to attack the legitimacy of the anti-apartheid movement by labelling them a ‘communist threat’ and portraying white South Africans as the ‘vulnerable minority’. For example, outspoken American apartheid supporter Reverend Jerry Falwell is quoted as having said “the number one issue in South Africa is not apartheid but communism, and the only alternative to the present government is Soviet domination” (Windrich, 1989, p. 56).

Just as fear over the spread of communism did in South Africa, the collective memory of the Holocaust is being weaponised by Israel and its allies to legitimise and prolong an apartheid regime. Various incidents involving the Israeli government declaring expressions of support for Palestine and Palestinians anti-Semitic demonstrate this. In July of 2021, American ‘activist

company' Ben and Jerry's announced that it would cease selling its products in the OPT. The backlash from Israeli officials was swift, with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Affairs Minister Yair Lapid labelling the decision not only anti-Semitic but also 'an act of terrorism' (Shanes, 2021). Nowhere has this anti-Semitism refuted been wielded more zealously than in the case of the Boycott, Divest, Sanction movement, perhaps due to fear over the efficacy of such a strategy (Harvard Law Review, 2020, p. 1365). The hypocrisy of using an anti-discrimination argument to justify discrimination remains unaddressed by the Israeli government and its supporters in the United States and Australia. The Israeli government has also made a habit of declaring, often pre-emptively, the commission or release of any reports into the Israeli oppression of Palestinians anti-Semitic. The authors of a United Nations report entitled 'Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid' (Falk and Tilley, 2017, p. 5) actually found it necessary to preface their report by stating that they "reject the accusation of anti-Semitism in the strongest terms... (and) even broaching the issue (of apartheid) has been denounced by spokespersons of the Israeli Government and many of its supporters as anti-Semitism in a new guise".

In 2020, AFOPA's own co-founder Abby Hamdan, together with AFOPA Patron Paul Heywood-Smith, represented former Labor Party Member of Parliament Melissa Parkes against former Liberal Party Member of Parliament Dave Sharma and head of an influential Jewish Lobby Colin Rubenstein in a legal proceeding concerning defamation. Sharma publicly accused Parkes of anti-Semitism after Parkes reportedly said "Israel's treatment of Palestinians was a 'fully fledged system of apartheid'" (Whitbourn, 2020). She also stated her support for a right of return for Palestinian refugees. While the case was settled satisfactorily in her favour, Parkes was effectively forced to step aside from her candidacy, demonstrating the force of the backlash experienced by anti-apartheid activists.

Just as was the case in South Africa, labelling anti-apartheid actions as anti-Semitic, or drawing links between the anti-apartheid movement and anti-Semitic rhetoric, is an attempt to discredit the movement by association. This 'battle for both moral and political legitimacy', which pits one form of racial discrimination against the other and which plays out before the audience of the international community, serves well the function of obfuscating the reality of Israel's apartheid regime.

Attitude and policies of major Australian media corporations regarding use of the term apartheid

The title and content of journalist John Lyons' (2021) book on reporting on Israel and Palestine remains compelling today; the Israel/Palestine so-called 'conflict' really is 'journalism's toughest assignment'. The reasons for this are numerous. Abroad, and particularly in the OPT, Israel has adopted a policy of undermining, intimidating and terrorising those reporters and media organisations who report the realities of Israeli apartheid. In May of 2021, Israeli forces targeted and bombed the offices of Associated Press and Al Jazeera in Gaza (Gregoire, 2021). At the time of writing, investigations by the International Criminal Court are pending regarding the death of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead by Israeli forces engaged in raiding the West Bank city of Jenin. The Israeli government has attempted to hinder the progress of the investigation and suppress or discredit accounts of the killing which highlight the fact that Abu Akleh was wearing press identification at the time of the shooting and there was no active Palestinian resistance in the immediate area (Saifi et al., 2022). Figure 5 shows a Twitter post by South African born Al Jazeera producer comparing the treatment of Abu Akleh's funeral procession by Israeli forces to that of anti-apartheid activist Ashley Kriel in apartheid South Africa.

Israel's approach outside of its borders is less direct but works towards the same end. The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) and its executive director Colin Rubenstein are well-known by Australian media organisations for the sway they hold over coverage of Israeli occupation and apartheid, even having the power to veto articles run in certain newspapers which do not portray Israel in a positive light (Fray, 2021). The effect of the Zionist lobby on Australian media coverage is chilling. Still today, "the dominant interpretations of the Palestine conflict and the language that conveys them show that the consensus of the print and electronic media is based on denying the existence of the Palestinians as a nation, generally absolving Israel of responsibility, and, to appropriate Edward Said's terminology, a tendency to blame the victim" (Safty, 1991, p. 91).

The increasingly prevalent use of the term apartheid in relation to Israel no doubt poses an even greater problem for Australian media corporations and journalists who, due to the aforementioned reasons, have neither the political capacity nor the will to report fairly on the reality of oppression and occupation experienced by Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli state. As a liberal democratic state with purportedly free press, Australia ought to be in a position to report fairly on Israeli apartheid. This is especially so considering its own settler colonial origins and its efforts to recognise and repair wrongdoings past and present which have created socio-economic inequality amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. However, both major media corporations, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) have demonstrated a reticence to 'call it what it is'. Indeed, "the publicly funded ABC recently tried to restrict its reporters' use of the word apartheid in reporting on Israel and Palestine. According to a leaked internal memo, ABC management told staff that "the term has a very specific meaning in South African history and should not be applied to Israel by the ABC itself" (McNeill, 2021). Moreover, in 2021, outspoken pro-Israel lobbyist Vic Alhadeff was appointed to the SBS board by Communications Minister for the Liberal Party Paul Fletcher, without following the due process which typically ensures the independence of the broadcaster (Browning, 2021).

Foreign editors and heads of news from both the ABC and SBS were contacted for comment on their policies and practices regarding the use of the term apartheid in relation to Israel but no response was given by either.



Tony Karon ✓
@TonyKaron



S. African police in '87 attacking the coffin of Ashley Kriel to seize the ANC flag that draped it; Israeli police attacked the coffin of [#ShireenAbuAkleh](#) today, trying to seize Palestinian flags. Apartheid regimes waging war on their victims, even after death



5:50 am · 14 May 2022 · TweetDeck

Figure 5: Comparison of the treatment of funeral processions bearing ANC and Palestinian flags under two apartheid regimes

Attitude of Australian Government and major politicians to the use of the term of apartheid

The release of the 2019 HRW report and the 2022 Amnesty International report has reinvigorated the political debate in Australia surrounding Israel's treatment of Palestinians, although major politicians and policy makers remain shamefully reluctant to recognise apartheid, let alone take action. Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, in a move that can only be described as rendering him an 'apartheid apologist', stated the following: "Australia

has been one of the closest and strongest friends of Israel, of any nation in the world other than the United States, and we continue to be a very strong friend of Israel... *No country is perfect* and there are criticisms made of all countries, but I can assure you that Australia and my government, in particular, will remain a staunch friend of Israel” (Haydar, 2022, emphasis added). Opposition leader Anthony Albanese offered equally concerning comments. Albanese labelled the use of the term apartheid in relation to Israel “not appropriate for describing the Israeli political system and structure... It cheapens, to be frank, the struggle against apartheid that occurred in South Africa” (Galloway, 2021). He added, “I think that it is a dangerous thing where people look for simplistic terms that are ahistorical because they are not only offensive to the people, the structures to which they are directed, they are offensive to where the terms originated” (Galloway, 2021). The shocking irony of a white Australian politician feigning offense over the application of the term apartheid to Israel on the basis that it discredits the struggles of Black South Africans when those who actually lived under that system of oppression, such as Reverend Desmond Tutu, repeatedly make the comparison was apparently lost on Albanese. Moreover, Albanese has previously been outspoken in his opposition to the BDS movement, stating that he considers the BDS movement to be based on the racial targeting of Israel. Most recently, Members of Parliament belonging to Albanese-led Labor Party were outspoken in their opposition to the boycotting of the Sydney Festival by artists protesting funding received from the Israeli embassy.

Nonetheless, the recent HRW and AI reports have empowered some dissenting voices in the Australian Government and broader political landscape who have spoken out against Israeli apartheid, often breaching party lines by doing so. Queensland Liberal National Party Member of Parliament Ken O’Dowd, in response to Morrison’s statements on the AI report, urged the Australian government to acknowledge that a ‘form’ of apartheid is being practiced in Israel (Hurst, 2022). Senator Janet Rice of the Australian Greens Party voiced support for Amnesty International’s report and for a Palestinians ‘right of return’. Unfortunately, these anti-apartheid voices remain a minority in Australian politics.

Conclusion and recommendations

The application of the term apartheid to Israeli policies towards Palestinians and Arab Israelis living in both Israel proper and the OPT is accurate. It is also useful to the struggle for Palestinian liberation because it carries significant legal and political ramifications and serves to draw international attention to the reality of the experiences of Palestinian people. There is a pressing need for the international political community to recognise the existence of an apartheid regime in Israel and the OPT and to take categorical action to address this reality on humanitarian grounds. Moreover, attention should be paid to the success of the anti-apartheid boycotting approach taken by the international community to apartheid South Africa and the calls of its Israeli counterpart, the Boycott, Divest, Sanction movement, should be heeded. State-level sanctions work, and Israel must be pressured to relinquish its apartheid policies. Nevertheless, it is important to supplement the Boycott, Divest, Sanction approach with support for Palestinian liberation struggles in the form of popular organization and collective action 'on the ground'. As was seen in the case of apartheid South Africa, sanctions are most effective when accompanied by these endogenous elements. Finally, it is recommended that academics, activists and policymakers remain sensitive to the local context and needs of the Palestinian people when discussing this presentation of apartheid and possible responses. The tide is turning on Israeli apartheid, and Australia and the wider international community ought now to concern itself with being on the right side of history because, ultimately, the apartheid system does not offer a safe or peaceful future for Palestinians or Israelis.

References

Abdulla, R. 2016. 'Colonialism and Apartheid Against Fragmented Palestinians: Putting the Pieces Back Together', *State Crime*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 51–80.

Al Jazeera, 2021. Israeli government fails to extend controversial Citizenship Law. Available at: <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/6/israeli-government-fails-to-extend-controversial-citizenship-law>> (accessed 25 May 2022).

Al Mayadeen. 2021. Western media omits Desmond Tutu's fight against apartheid "Israel", (online, accessed 3rd June 2022). Available at:

<https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/western-media-omits-desmond-tutus-fight-against-apartheid-is>.

Amira, S., 2021. The slow violence of Israeli settler-colonialism and the political ecology of ethnic cleansing in the West Bank. *Settler Colonial Studies*, pp.1-21.

Amnesty International, 2022. *Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity*. Amnesty International.

Badran, A. 2009. *Zionist Israel and Apartheid South Africa: Civil Society and Peace Building in Ethnic-National States*. Taylor & Francis Group, London.

Baylouny, A. 2009. Fragmented Space and Violence in Palestine, *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 39-68.

B'Tselem, 2021. *A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This Is Apartheid* (online). Available at: https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid#:~:text=A%20regime%20of%20Jewish%20supremacy,This%20is%20apartheid%20%7C%20B'Tselem.

B'Tselem. 2017. *Settlements* (online, accessed 3rd June 2022). Available at: <<https://www.btselem.org/settlements>>.

Browning, G. 2021. The Israeli lobby and the disturbing SBS board appointment, *Pearls and Irritations* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://johnmenadue.com/the-israeli-lobby-and-the-disturbing-sbs-board-appointment/>.

Cook, J. 2015. 'Visible Equality' as Confidence Trick. In: I. Pappé, ed., *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*. Zed Books, London.

Falk, R. and Tilley, V., 2017. *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*. Beirut: United Nations.

Fray, P. 2021. Is Australian journalism really a victim of the 'pro-Israel lobby'?, *Crikey* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.crikey.com.au/2021/10/08/is-australian-journalism-really-a-victim-of-the-pro-israel-lobby/>.

Galloway, A. 2021. Albanese slams 'counterproductive' Labor motion calling for boycott of Israel, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/albanese-slams-counterproductive-labor-motion-calling-for-boycott-of-israel-20210715-p589zv.html>.

Greenstein, R. 2012. Israel/ Palestine and the Apartheid Analogy. In: A. Lim, ed., *The Case for Sanctions Against Israel*. London: Verso.

Gregoire, P. 2021. Apartheid Israel Destroys Gaza Press Tower in Attempt to Silence Journalists, *Sydney Criminal Lawyers* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/apartheid-israel-destroys-gaza-press-tower-in-attempt-to-silence-journalists/>.

Harvard Law Review. 2020. 'Wielding antidiscrimination law to suppress the movement for Palestinian rights', *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 133, no. 4, pp. 1360-1381.

Haydar, N. 2022. Australia urged not to ignore Amnesty International findings of apartheid in Israel, *ABC News* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-02/palestinian-advocates-urge-government-act-israel-report/100800256>.

Human Rights Watch, 2021. *A Threshold Crossed Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*. Human Rights Watch.

Hurst, D. 2022. 'There is a form of apartheid': LNP backbencher urges PM to face facts on Israel, *The Guardian* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/04/there-is-a-form-of-apartheid-1np-backbencher-urges-pm-to-face-facts-on-israel>.

Ibish, H. 2018. A 'Catastrophe' That Defines Palestinian Identity. *The Atlantic* (online, accessed 3rd June 2022). Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/the-meaning-of-nakba-israel-palestine-1948-gaza/560294/>.

Joronen, M. and Griffiths, M., 2019. The affective politics of precarity: Home demolitions in occupied Palestine. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37(3), pp.561-576.

Lyons, J., 2021. *Dateline Jerusalem: Journalism's Toughest Assignment*. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing.

Levy, G. 2021. We Can Keep Lying to Ourselves on 'Apartheid,' but Israel Has Crossed the Line, *Haaretz* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2021-04-28/ty-article/.premium/we-can-keep-lying-to-ourselves-on-apartheid-but-israel-has-crossed-the-line/0000017f-f469-d487-abff-f7ff5dd50000>.

McNeill, S. 2021. Australians Should Know That Apartheid Is Still Happening Today, *Human Rights Watch* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/03/australians-should-know-apartheid-still-happening-today>.

Pace, M. and Yacobi, H. 2021. 'Settler Colonialism (Without Settlers) and Slow Violence in the Gaza Strip', *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 1221-1237.

Pappé, I. 2006. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld, Oxford.

Peled, Y. 2007. 'Citizenship Betrayed: Israel's Emerging Immigration and Citizenship Regime', *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 603-628.

Peteet, J. 2016. 'The Work of Comparison: Israel/Palestine and Apartheid', *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 89, no. 1, pp. 247-281.

Safty, A. 1991. 'Language And Propaganda: Challenges to Media Interpretations of the Palestine Question', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 3/4, pp. 91–117.

Saifi, Z., Mackintosh, E., Alkhaldi, C., Khadder, K., Polglase, K., Mezzofiore, G. and Salman, A. 2022. 'They were shooting directly at the journalists': New evidence suggests Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in targeted attack by Israeli forces, *CNN* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/24/middleeast/shireen-abu-akleh-jenin-killing-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html>.

Schwartzman, K. and Taylor, K. 1999. 'What caused the collapse of apartheid?', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 109-139.

Sguazzin, A. 2021. South Africa Wealth Gap Unchanged Since Apartheid, Says World Inequality Lab, *Time Magazine* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://time.com/6087699/south-africa-wealth-gap-unchanged-since-apartheid/>.

The Independent. 2018. Israel passes Jewish nation law branded 'racist' by critics (online, accessed 3rd June 2022). Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-jewish-nation-state-law-passed-arabs-segregation-protests-benjamin-netanyahu-a8454196.html>.

Turner, M. 2019. 'Fanning the Flames or a Troubling Truth? The Politics of Comparison in the Israel-Palestine Conflict', *Civil Wars*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 489-513.

Van den Berghe, P. 1967. *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*. Wiley Press, New York.

Whitbourn, M. 2020. 'Former Labor MP sues Liberal MP Dave Sharma for defamation over tweet', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at:

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/former-labor-mp-sues-liberal-mp-dave-sharma-for-defamation-over-tweet-20200130-p53w8q.html>.

White, B. 2012. *Palestinians in Israel: Segregation, Discrimination and Democracy*. Pluto Press, London.

Windrich, E. 1989. 'South Africa's Propaganda War', *Africa Today*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 51-60.

Wolfe, P. 2006. 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 387-409.

Said, I. 2020. 'Some are more equal than others: Palestinian citizens in the settler colonial Jewish State', *Settler Colonial Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 481-507.

Smooha, S. 1997. 'Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype', *Israel Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 198-241.

Shafir, G. and Peled, Y. 1998. 'Citizenship and Stratification in an Ethnic Democracy', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 408-427.

Shanes, J. 2021. Ben & Jerry's Aren't Nazis and Their Settlement Boycott Isn't Antisemitic, *Haaretz* (online, accessed 3rd June 2022). Available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2021-07-21/ty-article-opinion/.premium/ben-jerrys-arent-nazis-and-their-settlement-boycott-isnt-antisemitic/0000017f-e49f-dc7e-adff-f4bfb2d40000>.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 1998. *TRC Report Volume 2* (online, accessed 4th June 2022). Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume%202.pdf>.

Yiftachel, O. 2000. 'Ethnocracy and Its Discontents: Minorities, Protests and the Israeli Polity', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 725-756.

Zreik, R. and Dakwar, A. 2020. 'What's in the Apartheid Analogy? Palestine/Israel Refracted', *Theory and Event*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 664-705.