

Freedom for Palestine End Israeli apartheid

by: Sid Lacombe

The vicious attacks on Palestinians by Israeli police and military are just the latest injustice meted out by the apartheid regime.

Over the past week, police attacked people in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood for defying the forced eviction of hundreds of Palestinians from their homes by Israeli settlers. The forced relocations are considered illegal under international law and are based on racist laws which give Israelis the right to take Palestinian land and homes, yet they go ahead with the support of the main imperial powers.

Israeli police then stormed the Al-Aqsa mosque while people were in prayer. The fact that it was done during Ramadan is an added insult. And the Israelis have begun another bombing campaign against the people of Gaza, already besieged and denied basic rights.

Not surprisingly, Palestinians are fighting back.

But you would not know about that context when listening to the mainstream media in the west. They always attribute the “violence” to both sides and portray it as a centuries old religious conflict with no end.

But that misses the real cause of the violence - the push for

ethnic cleansing by the Israeli state since its formation in 1948. This brutality is done with the full support of the main centres of power in Washington, London, and Ottawa. The Israeli state is seen as a security bulwark for the imperial ambitions of the Western powers.

But more and more people around the world are coming to realize that it is the apartheid regime of Israel that is the real root of the fighting.



Human Rights reports

The latest condemnation comes from Human Rights Watch (HRW). In their report, *A Threshold Crossed*, Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution HRW describes the situation clearly:

“Israeli authorities methodically privilege Jewish Israelis and discriminate against Palestinians.

Laws, policies, and statements by leading Israeli officials make plain that the objective of maintaining Jewish Israeli control over demographics, political power, and land has long guided government policy. In pursuit of this goal, authorities have dispossessed, confined, forcibly separated, and subjugated Palestinians by virtue of their identity to varying degrees of intensity. In certain areas, as described in this report,

a good deal of the attention but it is the daily grind of checkpoints, arbitrary arrests and home demolition that is the backdrop of the apartheid system that has been put in place.

In an attempt to cover their abuses, the Israelis and their supporters have developed new and far ranging rules that attack anyone who criticizes the state as anti-semitic. The IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism includes any critique of the state of Israel. The definition describes critiques of Israel as an attack on Jewish collectivity and is therefore anti-semitic.

This provides a cover for the state to engage in any form of oppression against the Palestinians with impunity. This serves the interests of the US led imperial order so it is, therefore, used by western governments as a cudgel to beat any who oppose the Israeli state policies.

But they are losing the argument. During the bombing of Gaza in 2014, millions took to the streets denouncing the slaughter. In the US, Jewish Voice for Peace gained 50,000 new members during the attack and showed the US and Israeli ruling class that there is a new generation of Jewish people who are opposed to the policies of the apartheid state.

Another recent report from B'Tselem, one of the most respected Israeli human rights groups, labeled the policies as apartheid.

The executive director of B'Tselem, Hagai El-Ad stated, "One government rules everyone and everything between the river and the sea, following the same organising principle everywhere under its control, working to advance and perpetuate the supremacy of one group of people – Jews – over another – Palestinians. This is apartheid. There is not a single square inch in the territory Israel controls where a Palestinian and a Jew are equal. The only first-class people here are Jewish citizens such as myself, and we enjoy this status both inside the 1967 lines and beyond them, in the West Bank."

The list of international organizations who are now joining the chorus of condemnation of Israel is growing. Amnesty International wrote about the evictions in Sheikh Jarrah, "We have been on the ground and witnessed Israeli forces use of excessive force against protesters and bystanders. Israel must end use of unlawful force and forced evictions of Palestinians.



International community must hold Israel accountable."

Black Lives Matter retweeted US representative Ilhan Omar's post on Twitter: "It is long past time we stop paying lip service to Palestinian human rights and finally take action to protect them,". The local BLM chapter in Patterson, New Jersey released a statement in support of Palestinians saying, "Our deep roots of solidarity are part of a rich tradition of mutual support and exchange between Palestine and US-based liberation movements, from the Black Panthers to the most recent communication between activists in Gaza and Ferguson, MO. Our struggles are connected in many ways, not least because the same Israeli forces forcibly expelling the original inhabitants of Sheikh

Jarrah train repressive police forces around the world, including the US."

In Canada, Indigenous groups like Idle No More have also come out clearly in support of Palestinians, "Idle No More stands in solidarity with Palestinian people against ongoing Israeli attacks and enforced settler colonialism. Idle No More calls upon the Canadian and US governments, along with the United Nations to Boycott, Divest and Sanction the Israeli government for international crimes against humanity." This is having a ripple effect throughout movements and is spreading the solidarity.

The mood is shifting. It is crucial for the left to use this moment to go on the offensive on the questions of Palestinian

rights. In Canada, we need to fight to end Canadian complicity in these war crimes. The recent resolutions passed at the NDP convention calling for a boycott of products from settlements and a ban on military sales to Israel is a good start. But we must also call on the Canadian government to cancel the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, end tax credits for donations to Israeli charities and enforce the laws that prevent Canadians from joining the Israeli army.

Crucially we need to build and spread the demonstrations in the streets. Palestine needs our solidarity now more than ever.



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