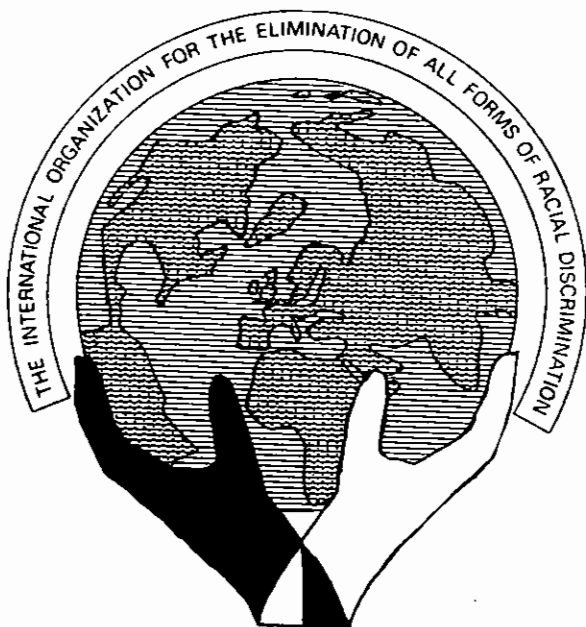


**THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION
FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
(EAFORD)**



ZIONISM, A SYSTEM OF APARTHEID
by
Elisabeth Mathiot

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The views expressed in this Paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of EAFORD.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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If the term apartheid, which originally refers to the South African system, can be applied by extension to any group which imposes – on the basis of ethnic and religious differences – on other groups a legal status of inferiority which deprives them of their fundamental rights in political, economic, social and cultural matters, then the Zionist regime deserves this appellation. The similarities between Zionism and South African apartheid have been the subject of studies both of the ideology underlying in both cases this policy of exclusion and of the methods used to apply it.

Nevertheless it is clear that the geo-political context is different, as are the history and claims of the two oppressed peoples: if the South African black peoples demand an integrated and democratic state all of whose citizens are equal, the Palestinian people is determined to secure its own state. This is the framework of what I want to say and I shall add two preliminary remarks.

1) While the white South African power openly proclaims its racist policy behind the discreet phrase, “separate development”, the Zionist has always sought to preserve a democratic facade, without which, given the historic circumstances, it would not have been admitted to the international community.

2) For that reason and for many others, the two systems are seen quite differently by Western opinion. While the West is quite willing to condemn South African apartheid it has always thought of the state of Israel as a Western outpost in the Middle East. Israel is seen through rose-tinted spectacles in terms of myths: little David standing up to the Arab Goliath, the desert “which blossoms again”, the kibbutzim which are the “marvellous achievements of a Socialist ideal”..

Nevertheless the cynical putting into practice of Israel’s expansionist strategy, a wider knowledge of the ghastly repression in the occupied territories despite the media’s barrier of silence, above all international perception of the reality of the Palestinian people as expressed in its heroic resistance: these have gradually replaced the old images of Israel by a picture of its true face. These traits are visible even before the creation of the state in the projects of its founder – fathers and statements of Zionist movement officials.

One of them, Yossef Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund with responsibility for acquiring land in Palestine, wrote, in 1940, to a correspondent:

“We must be clear that there is no room for two peoples in this country. If the Arabs leave it, it will be big enough for us . . . The only way is to displace all of them; we must not leave one single village, one single tribe . . . We must explain to Roosevelt and to all the heads of friendly states that the land of Israel is not too small if all the Arabs go away and if the frontiers are pushed back in the North along the Litani and in the East on the Golan Heights”.

(from the Diary published in Tel Aviv in 1969)

Such a programme – confirmed by a good number of similar statements – clearly implied the fate reserved for Palestinians who stayed behind on the territory of the new state after the mass exodus following the action of Jewish terrorist groups before 1948 and the war of 1947-48: they would be a scarcely tolerated minority, foreigners in their own country and subject to discrimination in every field. This has in fact occurred both in terms of the fundamental laws of the state (in the absence of a constitution) and concretely as seen in the national statistics which have two headings for each category: Jews and non-Jews.

For the Zionists the running of the territories they control on an apartheid (segregation, discrimination) basis has always been and remains a stop-gap measure, the ultimate objective being the total eviction of the Palestinians so as to create an exclusively Jewish state within the frontiers – as ambitious as they are mythical – of Greater Israel. This “ideal” can not be achieved for political and technical reasons, particularly as massive Jewish immigration did not take place in the way hoped for. It followed – by one of those internal contradictions to which this regime is so subject – that there was an imperative necessity to have a reservoir of Palestinian labour. Hence the setting-up of a system of exploitation and colonisation within a society where the Jewish population would have as much numerical superiority as possible and in any case a position of force economically and administratively. The objective of the Zionist state is to extend its control over all the territory of Palestine keeping only that part of the population which could be made of use and tightly controlled. This explains the policy of the “civil” administrator Milson, who is trying to replace democratically elected leaders by persons chosen by the occupier.

* * *

More than 90% of the land has been taken over by the Jewish National Fund, hundreds of Arab villages have been destroyed, those that remain have deteriorated for lack of space and money. The Palestinian population living in Israel has become a proletariat seeking a living in collective or private Jewish enterprises. Numerous authors have described this process and the precarious situation of the workers. On this point, as on other

aspects of "Israeli apartheid", I should just like to mention a few facts: So that the Palestinians should not have to make the journey every day from their workplace to their village a large number are shut in – from outside – in their employer's buildings or sleep in crowded conditions in any place that they can find, liable to be roughly woken up by "civil defence" teams responsible for action against those with "irregular" status. After a television programme showing one of these checks an Israeli journalist wrote:

"The society we saw through these images was really repulsive. No programme from South Africa could be worse . . . The truth is that today in Tel Aviv masses of workers undergo conditions of inhuman slavery and have no recourse against the worst kind of employers and against people – including sadists and adolescent "volunteers" – who think it their job to apply the law".

(Haolam Haze, 28.2.79)

* * *

The "new towns" (Carmiel, Nazareth-Ilith, Herzor and others) set up to be lived in entirely by Jews are among the most significant aspects of Israeli apartheid. In connection with Carmiel (12,000 inhabitants) which has been built on 5,500 dunams of land taken from neighbouring villages the Israeli journalist Amos Elon has pointed out that, "the only service it offers to the Arabs of the region is the police headquarters of the district" and he goes on:

"If the phrase 'public interest' had the same sense it has in a democratic state . . . if at least a small effort had been made to modernise the villages whose lands have been taken, if we had set up industries to give their inhabitants another means of existence, if we had installed electricity and if we had spent on education one third of the money we spend on education in Carmiel: that is to say if the development programme had been Israeli and not simply Jewish . . . the revolt would perhaps be less great".

That is the whole point; the Zionist state – the apartheid state – is not the state of Israeli citizens, whatever their ethnic or religious background, but a state belonging by right to all the Jews in the world and in which others – Muslim or Christian Palestinians – are a foreign body.

* * *

Education is one of the fields in which Israeli apartheid has the most serious consequences. Schooling is segregated from the nursery school right up to secondary schools. Teachers lack sufficient qualifications and the schools

lack thousands of classrooms as well as school books etc . . . As a result of this situation, made worse by the economic difficulties of the families who have to cope with 130% inflation, the percentage of Palestinian pupils and students diminishes at higher educational levels as is shown in the attached table published by El Fajr 8-14.2.81 (see page 00).

A very small proportion of young Palestinians can arrive at university level and less than 1% of those who do have scholarships. Numerous fields, scientific or technical, are closed to them, because they are "linked to the military sector" like the medical and engineering professions and outlets in the administration, commercial companies, diplomacy, journalism etc . . .

On the campus, extreme-right Jewish groups are becoming more and more aggressive. There have been real pogroms recently against Arab students of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem when members of the Likud and National Religious parties have burst into rooms, breaking everything they could lay hands on, illtreating the people in the rooms (nearly a hundred had to be treated in hospital) and shouting: "You Arabs have no place in Eretz-Israel! Get out!"

* * *

The most revealing document in recent years in the fields we are dealing with is the famous memorandum drafted for the Israeli government by the chief Ministry of the Interior official for the northern region (Galilee), Israel Koenig. Several months after the protest demonstrations of "the Day of the Land" this document shows the alarm of the Zionist leaders at the numerical increase of the Arab population, its political weight and the place it is taking in the country's economy. The author of this report sums up the situation, has gloomy predictions about what will happen and suggests measures which will tend to increase discrimination in all fields. He recommends in particular:

- enlarging and intensifying Jewish settlement and scattering the Arab population, especially in the regions like Galilee where it is most concentrated
- creating Arab party to rival Rakah and in which "certain Israeli institutions" would exercise secret pressure
- reducing family allowances for Arab families by giving control of distribution to the Jewish Agency which would give priority to Jewish families
- by making agreements with managers of enterprises to limit the proportion of Arabs to a maximum of 30% of the work force
- by encouraging Arab students to continue their studies abroad, by creating difficulties for them in returning to Israel and finding work there and thereby "making it easier for them to emigrate".

What makes it worthwhile recalling this document is that the advice of I. Koenig has in general been followed by the government. For example the splitting into sectors and Judaisation of Galilee (small Jewish settlements and observation posts on the heights to control the movements of the Arab population): the systematic eviction and persecution of the Beduin by Sharon's infamous "Green Patrols" who destroy tents and confiscate or kill flocks to terrorise the shepherds in order to force these tribes to leave the zones where they have been since generations to go and live in "reserves" under construction. 60,000 Beduin have been driven out of the Negev on the pretext of building a new airport which would be an important American base in the region and tens of thousands of others on all sorts of other pretexts.

Discriminatory measures against Israeli Arabs, particularly in social affairs, are very often taken and applied in a roundabout way. It was, for example, decreed in 1979 that government subsidies for certain absolutely essential food products should be reserved for families of which "at least one member is serving or has served in the Army", thereby automatically excluding the Arab population and leading Dr Shahak to say: "what on earth can be the connection between the milk a baby needs and the military service a cousin or a member of his family may have done? . . . Only Zionists could talk like this!"

Commenting on this "new discrimination" an Israeli journalist noted that it is very close to the statement of Koenig who compared the Arabs of Gallilee to "a cancer in the body politic" and he added:

"Discrimination with respect to the Arabs exists in practice since the creation of the state. They suffer from it in all aspects of life. The present government has only changed the style, not the content, of this policy and it does not even feel the need to rely for justification on 'security' and other patriotic explanations".

(M. Benvinishti, Haaretz 15.8.79)

* * *

Certain Israeli liberals are now beginning to show serious alarm about this overtly racist orientation in which they see not an expression of the intrinsic nature of the state but the growing influence of right-wing religious national and fanatical parties. Thus Mrs Aloni, a deputy and leader of the Movement for Civil Rights, has written:

"Everything goes on as if they were trying to ram into Jewish minds the idea that there is a qualitative and normative difference between Jews and non-Jews. In other words our people have a right to privileges others can not claim because it is said in the Torah: You have been called human beings as others have not?"

This is the principle which inspires all the laws and regulations of the state, as far as its internal policy, the status of individuals and of families, the criteria of citizenship . . . This is the principle which dictates our behaviour towards Israeli Arabs, Beduin and the inhabitants of the West Bank and of Gaza and our way of replying to their aspirations.

. . . No distorted use of Jewish Law can reduce to silence those who know how to discern between the law of the priests and the vision of the prophets. We shall not allow anyone to make Israel a religious ghetto with Messianic pretensions and thereby sweep aside universal principles of humanity and international law”.

(“In the name of Judaism”, Yediot Aharonot 25.6.78)

* * *

The Begin government was only taking up and amplifying the policy already put into practice by the Labour party leaders since 1967 and preparing for the annexation of new territories considered as “an integral part of the historic Jewish fatherland”. Instead, however, of claiming “State Security” reasons the Likud team openly refers to a mystic-nationalist doctrine which the Gush Emunim settlers on the West Bank expressed in the following way:

“We believe that God has given to us and to us alone this land. We must draw the conclusions. The Arabs are looking for national identity: we must make things more difficult for them. For that it is not necessary to throw bombs or expel them; but there’s nothing wrong in making their life so difficult they decide to emigrate . . .

(Ha’Makar, the West Bank and Gaza settler’s bulletin, August 1980).

It is significant that Mr. Begin’s autonomy plan – a very loose version of Camp David – speaks of “autonomy” for the inhabitants and not for the territory itself. In this perspective and in flagrant violation of international law and basic Human Rights, the Likud government has speeded up the settlement process to create an “irreversible” situation: since 1967 the Israelis have taken over more than 203,000 hectares – that is to say 37% of the West Bank – by confiscating land and have taken an essential part of the water resources for their own benefit and for that of the settlers. Since the beginning of the occupation, the Palestinians have not had the right to dig a sole well for irrigation purposes although those that existed beforehand have often been polluted by the digging of deep wells for the Jewish settlements.

These conditions, together with the decline of small-scale local industry, have led to a process of forced proletarianisation which is well-known: every-day 74,000 Palestinians cross – they are strictly forbidden to spend the night in Israel – the West Bank and Gaza boundaries to do the least interesting and

lowest paid work. The high proportion of “irregulars” recruited other than through the official work bureaux are even worse affected by the effects of the economic situation.

In connection with these “irregulars” Israeli journalists have described in 1978 and more recently the “slave markets” where thousands of men meet everyday early in the morning to wait for the employer who will come and choose, as if they were cattle, the workers he will need for the day. The same journalists have denounced the fact that there are hundreds of 9 to 15 years old children who also offer their services for a ridiculously low wage.

* * *

Since the Jewish state, as the Zionists conceived it, could only be achieved by denying the existence of “the other” – that is to say the Palestinian, Muslim or Christian – this “other” finds himself deprived of everything that allows him to express his national personality. Economic asphyxia, political suppression and cultural oppression go together.

Not only are rights to travel, to meet, to publish restricted or suppressed but representative personalities (mayors and elected councillors, trades unionists, journaists etc) are expelled or confined to their houses and municipal prerogatives limited. “All we are left with is collecting the rubbish, filling in forms and paying the municipal employees”, says Karim Khalaf, mayor of Ramallah. This situation has got much worse since the decree – issued at the instigation of the “civil administrator” Menahem Milson – forbidding municipalities to receive money from Arab countries coming through a joint PLO-Jordanian channel. At the same time, Milson is trying to break the unity of the population and its solidarity around its recognised representatives by getting hold of “Quislings” to put at the head of the so called Village Leagues before trying to present them as “spokesmen” in discussions about bogus autonomy.

Cultural oppression completes the picture. The occupier wants to suppress every manifestation of Palestinian identity and creativity. The list of banned books grows constantly longer. Censorship and banning of newspapers (edited in East Jerusalem) is a regular event like the closing of universities and schools (Amendment 854 of 1980 gives full powers to the military government to intervene at any time at all levels of the educational structure). In 1961, the Israeli authorities promulgated a law forbidding Palestinians Arabs to fly their national flag, to chant slogans favourable to the PLO or to sing national songs. An exhibition of paintings was closed because one of the pictures showed flowers with the Palestinian national colours. In this particular field – and subject to the previously mentioned reservations about this kind of comparison – the destructive rage of the Zionist leaders is worse than that of the white racists of South Africa.

So oppressive a system – whether one calls it apartheid or something else

– cannot operate without a terrible machinery of repression. Weighed down by decrees, taxes, fines, limitations and prohibitions of every kind, the Palestinian population is also exposed to methods aimed at permanently terrorising it. The weapons used include collective punishment (curfews, the dynamiting of houses, mass arrests) interrogations involving brutality and torture, long terms in prison without trial, intolerably crowded conditions in prison.

In a recent interview in Al Mostaqbal, Yasser Arafat said:

“According to the ad hoc International Committee, 230,000 militants have been through the hands of Israeli ‘justice’, 24,000 of them have been imprisoned and tortured. When you think that the total population of the occupied territories is only 1,100,000 and subtract the number of children, old people and invalids one can say that every adult or adolescent has been in the hands of Israeli interrogators”.

Let us remember that women and young people are not spared. An article in the French edition (no 1) of the Revue d’Etudes Palestiniennes has ghastly testimony about the hundreds of women and young girls arrested, brutalized, humiliated and who are tortured to make them give away the whereabouts of a husband or a son. During protest demonstrations against the closure of universities and schools, “a long number of young Palestinians, some less than 14 years old, have been arrested, imprisoned for months without trial after having been interrogated by methods which David Shipler (New York Times) has denounced in a carefully documented article. But not one in a thousand Israelis will admit that such things happen in a territory under their jurisdiction. If anyone tries to shed light on such facts, he runs a strong risk of seeing himself accused of an offence against state security”. (International Herald Tribune 10.3.82).

* * *

Is the system we have briefly described exactly “apartheid”? It seems that it goes further, because it is less a refusal to share the resources and power structure of a country than purely and simply a refusal to recognise the people who are legitimately in the territory.

It has not been my objective to make a theoretical study comparing one colonialist model with another but to recall the fate today of the Palestinian people, victim of zionist settlement which has profited from the powerful backing of a superpower and the absence of effective reaction from those who proclaim themselves champions of the Rights of Man and of Peoples.

I am glad that this symposium has been able, in different ways to break through the wall of silence and complicity. We are grateful that it has taken place in this country, Greece, which has made the significant gesture of

solidarity with this martyred people publicly in front of the world and its European partners by recognising fully and with all that that implies the representativity of those who speak in its name.'

Level and kind of educational institution	Total No. of students	Jewish students	% of Jews	Arab students	% of Arabs
Total in all	1,170,957	1,000,852	85.5%	170,105	14.5%
Kindergartens	262,580	244,700	93.2%	17,880	6.8%
Elementary Schools	537,098	419,512	78.1%	117,586	21.9%
Special Schools	13,314	12,587	94.6%	727	5.4%
High Schools	158,054	138,250	87.5%	19,804	12.5%
Vocational Schools	70,014	68,164	97.4%	1,850	2.6%
Agricultural Schools	6,096	5,349	87.7%	747	12.3%
Teachers Colleges	12,544	11,979	95.5%	565	4.5%
Non-academic but Post Secondary Institutions	14,287	14,141	99%	146	1%
Other Educational Institutions	92,920	92,600	99.6%	320	0.34%
Universities	55,360	53,360	97.4%	2,000	3.6%

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