



Response To Common Inaccuracy: Israel is an Apartheid State

Inaccuracy: Israel is an apartheid state and should be fought in the same manner that apartheid in South Africa was fought – through divestment, boycott and other punitive economic measures.

Response

The treatment of Arabs by the State of Israel cannot be compared in any way to the treatment of the black majority in South Africa under apartheid. There is no Israeli ideology, policy or plan to segregate, persecute or mistreat the Arab population.

Apartheid was a uniquely repressive system, through which South Africa's white minority enforced its domination over the black and other non-white racial groups who made up more than 90 percent of the population. Apartheid – which means “separate development” in the Afrikaans language – was put into effect through a systematic framework of racist legislation imposing strict segregation, including laws which banned blacks from “white areas,” prevented blacks and whites from marrying or even having sexual relations with each other, and which regulated the education of black children in accordance with their “subservient” social position. The regime imposed “Bantustans,” impoverished autonomous homelands whose borders were designed to exclude economically viable land, upon 12 million black South Africans.

No such laws exist in Israel, which in its Declaration of Independence pledges to safeguard the equal rights of all citizens. Arab citizens of Israel enjoy the full range of civil and political rights, including the right to organize politically, the right to vote and the right to speak and publish freely. Israeli Arabs and other non-Jewish Israelis serve as members of Israel's security forces, are elected to parliament and appointed to the country's highest courts. They are afforded equal educational opportunities, and there are ongoing initiatives to further improve the economic standing of all of Israel's minorities. These facts serve as a counter to the apartheid argument, and demonstrate that Israel is committed to democratic principles and equal rights for all its citizens.

Moreover, Israel's acceptance of a two-state solution as the outcome of bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations belies accusations that Israel's goal is the persecution of Palestinians.

To be sure, Palestinians in the West Bank and in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip do encounter hardships as a result of Israeli policies, including checkpoints, access into Israel, the security barrier and other issues. However, these procedures and structures have been developed to promote security and thwart potential terrorist action, not to persecute or segregate.

Finally, divestment and boycott campaigns singularly demonize Israel and designate Israel for pariah status, while ignoring other states, including many in the Middle East, which systematically abuse human rights. If anti-Israel divestment and boycott activists were truly interested in aiding Palestinians and promoting Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, they would advocate constructive initiatives between Israelis, Palestinians and others. Unfortunately, most of these activists ignore such initiatives, and focus solely on bashing Israel and promoting punitive actions against the state. Indeed, former South African Constitutional Court Justice Richard Goldstone wrote in a New York Times [op-ed](#) that accusing Israel of apartheid "is an unfair and inaccurate slander against Israel, calculated to retard rather than advance peace negotiations."