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Israel/Palestine

2021, the year of Israeli apartheid

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More than 1000 academics, artists and intellectuals have signed a “Declaration on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid in Historic Palestine,” in a sign of the growing acceptance of the term in the west.

When in a few years historians look at the year 2021 in Israel, it's a safe bet that the salient theme will not be COVID-19 or the exit of Netanyahu but apartheid. The year began on January 12 with the publication of B'Tselem's report "[A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid](#)". Three months later, on April 27, Human Rights Watch drove the point home by publishing its report "[A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution](#)". Just two months later, on July 6, more than 600 academics, artists and intellectuals from more than 45 countries issued a [Declaration](#) calling for the dismantling of the apartheid regime in historic Palestine. Since then, the number of [signatories](#) has grown steadily and has now reached 1,000, including Nobel Prize winners, prominent academics and artists.

Apartheid is a crime. It has been internationally recognized as such since November 30, 1973, when the UN General Assembly adopted the "[International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid](#)". In the [Rome Statute](#) of 2002 which established the international criminal court, apartheid is specified as a crime against humanity "committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over other racial group or groups and committed with the intension of maintaining that regime."

The fit with Israel's discriminatory laws and policies against Palestinians is manifest, and yet remained for decades virtually impossible to acknowledge publicly. When President Jimmy Carter in 2006 dared to publish a book about Israel with 'apartheid' in its title there was uproar. When more than a decade later a UN study came to the same conclusion ("[Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid](#)", United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2017) the reaction was convulsive. Outrage by Israel-supporting bodies and countries at the use of the 'A' word led to a directive from the UN Secretary General that the report be withdrawn; and ESCWA Executive Director Rima Khalaf [resigned](#) rather than implement this instruction.

In 2021, the year of Israeli apartheid, that log jam has broken. This year, the [world's civil societies have had enough](#). Across countries and continents, across age groups and ethnicities, the marches, the manifestos, the opeds, the motions passed overwhelmingly have swelled into a torrent. And Israel's practice of apartheid now adds to its violations of international law in the compelling pressure for international action.

The "[Declaration on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid in Historic Palestine](#)", now with an impressive weight of [one thousand prominent endorsers](#), will add to that pressure. Its signatories include the former ESCWA Executive Director Rima Khalaf and the ESCWA report's authors Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley, as well as Nobel Peace Prize laureates Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Mairead Maguire, the Nobel Chemistry Laureate George Smith, academics with legal expertise Monique Chemillier-Gendreau and John Dugard, scholars Bertrand Badie, Étienne Balibar, Hagit Borer, Ivar Ekeland, Suad Joseph, Edgar Morin, Nurit Peled-Elhanan, Jacques Rancière, Roshdi Rashed and Gayatri Spivak, health researcher Sir Iain Chalmers, composer Brian Eno, musician Roger Waters, author Ahdaf Soueif, economist and former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN Sir Richard Jolly, former Vice President of the European Parliament Luisa Morgantini, South African politician and veteran anti-apartheid leader Ronnie Kasrils and Canadian peace activist and former national leader of the Green Party of Canada Joan Russow.

The endorsers declare their categorical rejection of the apartheid regime set up on the territory of historic Palestine

and imposed on the Palestinian people as a whole, including refugees and exiles wherever they might be in the world.

They call for the immediate dismantling of this apartheid regime and the establishment of a democratic constitutional arrangement that gives all its inhabitants equal rights and duties, regardless of their racial, ethnic and religious identities, or gender preferences, and which respects and enforces international law and human conventions, and in particular gives priority to the long deferred right of return of Palestinian refugees expelled from their towns and villages during the creation of the State of Israel, and subsequently.

They urge their governments:

- to cease immediately their complicity with Israel's apartheid regime;
- to join in calling for the dismantling of apartheid structures and their replacement by an egalitarian democratic governance that treats everyone subject to its authority in accordance with their rights and with full respect for their humanity; and
- to support this necessary transition in a manner sensitive to the right of self-determination enjoyed by both peoples presently inhabiting historic Palestine.

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Source [Mondoweiss](#).

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