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Discussion

Complex Effects of International A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid

Kenneth Christie *

This paper, entitled “A Regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid” is a policy paper put out by B’Tselem, The Israeli information Center for Human Rights and is about eight pages in length.

The contention of the paper is that “the distinction between the two regimes has grown divorced from reality” (1) One regime here is the state of Israel and the other is the territories that Israel took over in 1967 and have occupied ever since. B’Tselem argues that because of this, the Israeli regime has the single goal (principle) of promoting and “cementing” the rule of supremacy of one ethnic group, the Jews, over another—the Palestinians. This is the Israeli regime’s principle encapsulated by the Basic Law, that of Israel—the Nation State of the Jewish people, which passed into legislation in 2018. As a human rights organization set up in 1989, they are examining and defining the regime and its principles with a fairly substantial caveat—that there is no historical review of the situation, no evaluation of Palestinian and Jewish national movements. It doesn’t really

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examine what apartheid is either and what the South African regime did in terms of creating and enforcing apartheid.

What it does do is to show the principles that guide the regime, how it implements these principles in practice and how this all works out for the theory and practice of human rights. In fact, it is an excellent summary from a human rights perspective of the control over Israeli sovereign territory. East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza strip in which the article illustrates how there are different packages of rights that Israel provides to the Palestinians living there. There is variation in treatment and action in several areas:

1. Immigration (which is for Jews and those who hold Jewish ancestry).
2. Undermining the rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories by taking over land for Jews while placing Palestinians in enclaves.
3. The Judaization of the area in which the supremacy of Jewish laws exists to maintain their position.
4. Lastly there is a complete denial of the Palestinian's right to self-determination and their right to participate politically.

According to the article, the policy is accomplished in several ways. Israel has managed to manipulate and control the space in which Israelis and Palestinians live in a series of orders that allow anyone of Jewish ethnicity or ancestry to become a citizen of Israel but denies the same rights to the Palestinians. The Israeli state has completed this by taking over and occupying of millions of dunams of land and creating Jewish-only communities, while placing and enforcing Palestinians into small enclaves. There are serious restrictions on Palestinian subjects. Movement is engineered through restrictions on Palestinian subjects, and political engineering excludes millions of Palestinians from participating in the processes that determine their lives and futures while holding them under military occupation.

The article argues that any regime that uses "laws, practices and organized violence to cement the supremacy of one group over another is an apartheid regime." Israeli apartheid, it continues, was not "born in one day or of a single speech. It is a process that has gradually grown more institutionalized and explicit."

The article covers the many ways in which Israel has adopted apartheid policy and put it into practice, though it never really deals with the theory or practice of apartheid which developed in South Africa over many years. I think it would have benefitted from even a summary of apartheid in South Africa and how it worked out. And although it provides a critique of Israeli policy, much of this has been written about before. Its policy of divide, separate and rule and the demographic engineering of space and land does not pull any punches in one of the longest standing conflicts on a global scale. It would have been good if suggestions on how human rights could be improved had been put forth and how the situation might change. South Africa has overcome decades of apartheid despite the system being “institutionalized.” And although the changes have been difficult we have to recognize that South Africa has made progress. Still, the article is well written and would be a good primer on how the human rights of the Palestinians have been exploited and reduced under these policies