

Joint Memorandum

A Call from South African Civil Society to the South African Government: Act against Apartheid Israel

The SA BDS Coalition and the undersigned civil society organisations call on the South African government to give meaningful support to the Palestinian people.

It is critical that the South African government take a firm stand for justice and the elimination of human rights abuses, ethnic cleansing and apartheid. We believe that it is our responsibility as people who have experienced apartheid to stand firm against oppression and inequality. We call on our government to ensure that Israel is held accountable for the crimes of apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Israel continues to act with impunity, violating international law on a daily basis, and was acknowledged as an apartheid state in the most recent report by the Human Rights Watch titled 'A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Apartheid and the Crime of Apartheid and Persecution.' The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopted its concluding observations on Israel in December 2019, recognising the continuity of Israeli policies and practices of racial segregation and apartheid targeting Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

The world is once again witnessing an escalation of violence perpetrated by the Israeli Defence Force and the Israeli Settlers. The community of Sheikh Jarrah, the Palestinian neighbourhood in occupied East Jerusalem is at the coal face of this violence and ethnic cleansing. The use of illegal and quasi legal means to evict Palestinian families from the homes they have lived in for decades, in order to replace them with Jewish illegal settlers, is a clear example of demographic manipulation and ethnic cleansing.

Backed by the state and its discriminatory laws, violent illegal settlers have claimed ownership of houses in Sheikh Jarrah and implemented a sinister takeover of Palestinian homes, aided and abetted by Israeli courts and the security forces.

We welcome the fact that South Africa is finally signing the 'Apartheid Convention'. Our government must acknowledge the role the international community played in taking action against apartheid South Africa by using our accession to the Convention to call out Israeli apartheid and play a decisive role within the UN system to isolate apartheid Israel.

The situation has never been more urgent. Israel continues to expand settlements and usurp Palestinian territory, implement segregationist laws, launch attacks on innocent communities, carry out extra-judicial killings and arbitrarily arrest and use torture against Palestinian prisoners, all of which are violations of international law. If South Africa is serious about confronting colonialism, racism and all forms of discrimination, we must act now to end these injustices against the Palestinian people.

Given our own history as South Africans, we are morally, ethically and politically compelled to act in support of the Palestinian people. International solidarity extended to us in our struggle against apartheid South Africa helped to defeat that vile regime. It is incumbent on us to play a leading role globally to ensure that apartheid Israel is similarly treated as a pariah state by the international community, facing full economic sanctions and an arms embargo. We cannot sit by and watch as the Palestinian people suffer an incremental genocide.

The increasing severity of Israel's violations and its impunity obliges us to respond to the call issued by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian civil society organisations. Having lived for decades under Israel's regime of occupation, colonization and apartheid, Palestinians are urging states to take effective measures against Israel's further annexation and violation of their human rights and the right of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

We endorse the Palestinian call for an arms embargo and suspending all trade agreements with Israel.

The so called 'peace process' was dead in the water. The relentless process of annexation through building and expanding settlements, with U.S. and EU complicity, has eroded any possibility for a just and lasting peace.

We demand that the South African government:

- Holds Israel accountable and takes meaningful action to prevent the further ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Jerusalem.
- Establishes a UN global envoy for crimes of apartheid; a UN commission of enquiry to investigate systematic discrimination and repression in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT); and an international commission of inquiry to investigate systematic discrimination and repression based on group identity in the OPT and Israel.
- Ensures the regular updating of the UN database of companies involved in business with Israel's illegal settlements.
- Supports the International Criminal Court's probe into Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in the occupied Palestinian territories.

More than this we call on the government to:

- Publicly acknowledge that Israel is an apartheid state
- Legislate for sanctions and divestment from apartheid Israel
- Declare that Palestinians traveling to South Africa do not require Visas
- Break diplomatic, trade and all other ties with apartheid Israel.
- Work with progressive forces in the rest of our continent to make Africa an Apartheid Free Zone.
- Prosecute those South Africans that join the Israeli Defence Force
- Support all efforts to find a meaningful, and viable solution that secures human rights for all and is based on our common struggle values of Freedom, Justice, Equality and Dignity.

Our long history of struggle for self-determination and against colonialism, apartheid and the racist ideologies that were used to justify it, is at the core of our deep solidarity with the Palestinian people in its quest for liberation and self-determination.

We cannot allow Israel's actions to invalidate or undermine the most basic principles of our global cooperation for world peace and justice.

The joint memorandum is coordinated by the South African BDS Coalition and endorsed by:

1. PSC Cape Town
2. PSC Johannesburg
3. PSA Johannesburg
4. PSA Lenasia
5. PSA Benoni
6. Young Hearts for Palestine
7. KZN PSF
8. WITS PSC
9. SU PSF
10. SAJFP



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