

Israeli apartheid and The Big Ride for Palestine

The Big Ride for Palestine opposes Israel apartheid against the Palestinian people. Like the many other organisations that focus on defending human rights and fighting for justice, the Big Ride cannot – and will not – be silent while Israel continues to systematically oppress Palestinians and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

This year, human rights groups including Human Rights Watch (one of the leading authorities on global human rights) and B'tselem (an Israeli human rights organisation) released thorough reports detailing why they are officially declaring Israel an apartheid state. The reports are based on on-the-ground legal, civil and military observations and examinations of Israel and Palestine, over several decades.

THE CRIME OF APARTHEID

The 1998 Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court and 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid define apartheid as a **crime against humanity** consisting of three main elements:

- 1 AN INTENT TO MAINTAIN DOMINATION**
BY ONE RACIAL GROUP OVER ANOTHER
- 2 A CONTEXT OF SYSTEMATIC OPPRESSION**
BY ONE RACIAL GROUP OVER ANOTHER
- 3 INHUMANE ACTS**

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH VISUALIZING PALESTINE

SOURCES: HRW (2021), A Threshold Crossed
WWW.VISUALIZINGPALESTINE.ORG

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Why is this important?

Historically, many groups and individuals opposing the military occupation of Palestine have labelled Israel an apartheid state, making parallels between their mode of governance and that of apartheid South Africa, as well as highlighting discrepancies in civil laws that apply to Jewish Citizens of Israel but not Palestinian Citizens of Israel. This has been dismissed as 'extreme', 'undocumented' and even 'anti-Semitic' by those opposing these groups.

However, the introduction of the National State Law in 2018, which stipulated that only Jewish people have the right to self-determination in the country, resulted in some EU, Israeli-Arab and Israeli opposition politicians, as well as Jewish groups saying it 'amounted' to apartheid. Furthermore, in 2021, B'tselem released a damning report outlining how they, as an Israeli organisation fighting for human rights in the occupied territories, rejected the notion that their country is a democracy, and have ***"reached the conclusion that the bar for defining the Israeli regime as an apartheid regime has been met after considering the accumulation of policies and laws that Israel devised to entrench its control over Palestinians."***

Up until recently there had been no investigation by an official global organisation into whether legally, in accordance with the Apartheid Convention and their definition of apartheid, Israel could be classed as an apartheid state. In April 2021, Human Rights Watch released a lengthy report after conducting 'a *detailed legal analysis based on the international crimes of apartheid or persecution*' into Israel's policies and practices towards Palestinians and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Apartheid Convention defines the crime against humanity of apartheid as "inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them." Human Rights Watch concluded in their report that Israel has crossed this threshold.



How are they committing the atrocity of apartheid?

Whilst we strongly recommend our riders and supporters reading both HRW and B'tselem's full reports, we have summarised some of the key areas that are being used as evidence of Israel's apartheid:

Water

Israel and illegal Israeli settlements have full access to unlimited clean water. Since the 1995 Oslo Accords, Israel also controls 100% of the water in the West Bank, with Israel and their settlements receiving 80% of this water. The remaining 20% of the West Bank's water is for Palestinians. This is despite the fact that there are more than three times as many Palestinian's living in the West Bank as there are illegal settlers". In reality, the West Bank only actually receives 75% of the water agreed upon. Unlike in Israel and Israeli settlements, water is a constant shortage for many Palestinians living in the West Bank. In Gaza, where Israel has full control over the water supply, the situation is even worse than this. The UN declared 96% of water available in Gaza as 'unfit for human consumption'. As a result of this, around 1.8 million people in Gaza require some form of humanitarian Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) assistance; according to UNICEF, of this 1.8 million, children make up around 52 per cent.

Electricity

In Gaza, electricity is controlled by Israel, and Palestinians living here do not have centrally provided electricity for 12-20 hours of the day. Gazans usually receive electricity in 8-hour rotations: 8 hours on, 8 hours off. During times of violence, Israel will often close the border and prevent fuel from entering Gaza; this can limit electricity to as little as 4 hours a day. With such erratic electricity supplies, every area of Gazans lives are affected, including work, education, transportation, refrigerators, washing machines, fans, communication and healthcare. In stark contrast, Israelis, including illegal Israeli settlers in settlements throughout the West Bank, have unlimited electricity.



House demolitions

House demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are commonplace. In March 2021 alone, the Israeli authorities demolished, forced people to demolish, or seized, more than 58 Palestinian-owned structures across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This resulted in the displacement of 81 people, including 42 children, as well as affecting the livelihoods, or access to services, of nearly 200 others. According to the recent report by Human Rights Watch into Israeli apartheid, from 2009 through 2020 Israeli authorities demolished 7,118 structures in East Jerusalem and Area C, displacing 10,493 people. Throughout the same period, Israeli human rights organisation, B'Tselem, documented that Israeli authorities fully demolished 2,319 homes throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, for lacking a building permit; this left 9,053 people displaced. Those whose homes were taken were not offered resettlement options or compensation. According to B'tselem, Israeli authorities also carried out 84 punitive home demolitions during this period – leaving a further 345 people without a home. This goes against international humanitarian law.

In the most recent bombing campaign against Gaza – events triggered by Israel's attempt to (illegally) remove Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, to replace them with Jewish Israeli settlers – the UN's office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said nearly 17,000 residential and commercial units were damaged or destroyed.

In contrast, Jewish Israelis are offered a range of incentives, including housing benefits, business subsidies, budgetary perks, and tax breaks to encourage them to move to settlements in the West Bank. These settlements are illegal under international law.

Child prisoners

According to B'tselem, in September 2020 there were 157 Palestinian minors in Israeli prisons. This is the latest data they have, as the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) have since refused to provide them with further information and data. Each year around 500-700 Palestinian children are detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system. Israeli children, as well as most children around the world, are governed by civil law; this does not apply to Palestinian children. They are instead subjected to trials by *military* court judges. The most common charge for these children is typically 'throwing stones'; they can receive up to 20 years in prison if found guilty of this. Their trials are often held in Hebrew, with little to no translation for the children (who predominantly speak Arabic as their first language).

Former child detainees have informed many human right organisations of the horrific conditions they are kept in. Save the Children consulted more than

470 children from across the West Bank who were detained and found that most children were taken from home at night, blindfolded, had their hands painfully bound behind their backs, and many said they were not told why they were being arrested, or where they were being taken.

Children are held in overcrowded cells, few have available sanitary products and they have almost no access to medical assistance. According to Save the Children's consultation with hundreds of these children, 81% endured physical beatings, 89% suffered verbal abuse, 52% were threatened with harm to their families, 86% were subjected to strip searches, 88% did not receive adequate and timely healthcare - even when explicitly requested - and almost half (47%) were denied contact with a lawyer.



Freedom of movement

This is a significant factor in why numerous B'tselem, Human Rights Watch and numerous other organisations, including the Big Ride for Palestine, have concluded that Israel is an apartheid state.

Israelis and foreign nationals are free to move throughout Israel, East Jerusalem and large parts of the West Bank. Unlike Palestinians and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Palestinians living in Israel, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza are issued with a colour-coded identity card. Those living in Israel or East Jerusalem have a blue ID card, whilst those in the West Bank and Gaza have a green ID card. These cards effect many things, but significantly: travel and

freedom of movement. Travel for Palestinians living in the four different areas breaks down as such:

- 1) Palestinian citizens of Israel can move freely around parts of Israel, but are barred from hundreds of Jewish-only towns and are largely concentrated on just 3% of the land (despite making up 20% of the entire population of Israel). Furthermore, if they leave the country (from Israel, as Palestine is not permitted to have its own airport), they may be denied entry by Israel upon their return.
- 2) In East Jerusalem, an area illegally occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War, Palestinian occupants' residency is conditional and revocable. Many Palestinians living here also have to cross checkpoints to travel – ones Israel installed to cut off them off from other Palestinian neighbourhoods and areas.
- 3) Palestinians living in the West Bank must obtain permits from Israel to leave. Travel in and out of the West Bank is fully controlled by Israel. Their travel is impacted significantly by 600 permanent obstacles, such as military checkpoints and roadblocks, located throughout the West Bank. They are also barred from entering Israeli settlements. According to B'tselem, 40 kilometres of West Bank roads prohibit Palestinians from traveling on and another 19 kilometres restrict Palestinian travel.
- 4) Gaza inhabitants have been living under an illegal blockade since 2007, and those who live there are mostly barred (unless they receive a permit from the military, which are rarely issued) from leaving Gaza: this restricts the movement of its two-million residents.

Resource distribution

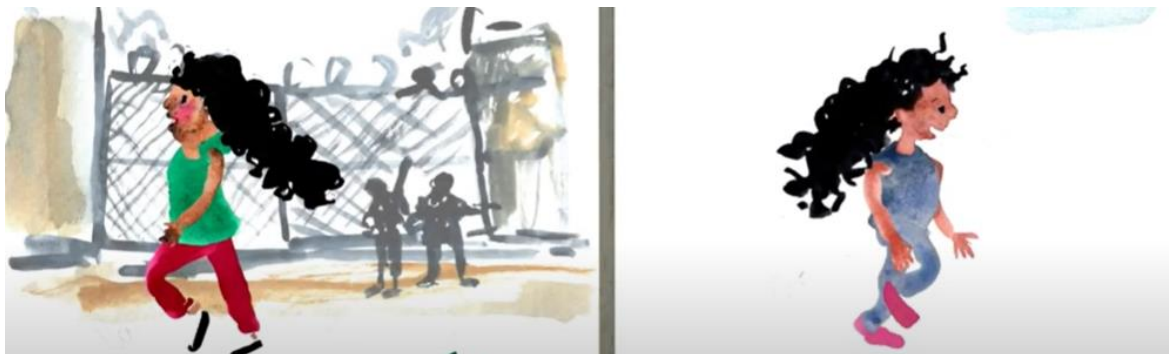
According to Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Israel has over 65 laws that discriminate against – or do not apply to - Palestinians. Resource allocation is another way Israel persecutes Palestinians and Palestinian citizens of Israel; this includes areas such as planning, budget allocation, policing and political participation.

In 2020, Amnesty reported that the majority of Palestinians in Israel, comprising over 20% of the total population, live in around 139 towns and villages, yet only received 1.7% of the state budget for local councils. Most Palestinian neighbourhoods in Israel have poor infrastructure and inadequate facilities, whereas the predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods have good roads, numerous parks and playgrounds, adequate rubbish collection, and sufficient school places. According to Human Rights Watch, in January 2016,

the Jerusalem district court ordered the municipality to build more playgrounds in two Palestinian neighbourhoods, after residents of those neighbourhoods alleged that they only had two playgrounds for a population of 60,000, while nearby Jewish neighbourhoods had a playground for every 1,000 residents.

The organisation Playgrounds for Palestine said that in Gaza, where there is a population of over 1 million children, there are only 30 playgrounds. They, along with organisations like The Big Ride for Palestine, are focusing on changing this disparity, to bring more joy and fun to children traumatised by war and bombing.

There are many more examples that could be provided as evidence of Israel's apartheid, and most of these are outlined in reports released by Human Rights Watch and B'tselem, as well as organisations like Amnesty International, UNICEF, Save the Children, Adalah and more. We have provided several links below for those who would like to read more.



Why we are fundraising for the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA)

As we have outlined above, resource allocation is yet another area used by Israel to discriminate against Palestinians. Last year our fundraising campaign through The Big Ride for Palestine raised over £58,000. This money was used by MECA to build a secure playground in the village of Khuza'a – an area of very dense population close to the Gaza border with Israel. Over the years Khuza'a has been subject to heavy bombing.

Whilst the playground was not affected during the most recent bombing campaign on Gaza, now more than ever children in Gaza need support from those who can provide it. We would like to continue our fundraising efforts and help build further playgrounds and resource centres. We recognise that whilst our fundraising campaigns will not alleviate the physical and emotional violence these children have been subjected to, it does help provide them with a safe space to be.

Find out more about The Big Ride for Palestine by visiting our website www.thebigride4palestine.com or following us on social media (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter).

What other action can I take?

Whilst taking part in physical acts of solidarity and fundraising campaigns, like the Big Ride for Palestine, is hugely important – particularly in showing Palestinians that UK and other citizens stand by them – there are many other key actions you can take.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement was critical in dismantling the apartheid state of South Africa. Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is a similar non-violent, Palestinian led campaign for the international community to hold Israel to account for its violations of international law and apartheid regime.

Boycotts involve withdrawing support for Israeli sporting, cultural, musical and academic institutions, as well as Israeli and international companies, in order to apply pressure to the Israeli state to end its apartheid regime.

Divestment campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds and universities to withdraw investments from the State of Israel, as well as Israeli and international companies that sustain Israeli apartheid.

Sanctions pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligations to end Israeli apartheid by withdrawing aid or assistance, such as by banning business with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade and free-trade agreements, as well as suspending Israel's membership in international forums (such as UN bodies and FIFA).

Find out more here: bdsmovement.net

Links to key reports

- [Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution | HRW](#)
- [A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid | B'Tselem](#)
- [Everything you need to know about human rights in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories | Amnesty International | Amnesty International](#)
- [Palestinian children suffer inhumane treatment in Israeli prisons \(savethechildren.org.uk\)](#)

Visit www.thebigride4palestine for information on this year's ride or visit our fundraising page to support us www.justgiving.com/team/TBR-2021