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Israel: An Apartheid State?

Is there any truth at all in this oft-repeated calumny?

Only a short time ago, many universities, goaded by left-wing professors and students and their substantial Muslim student bodies, “celebrated” Israel Apartheid Week in which divestiture from, boycott of and sanctions against Israel were demanded. Is there any truth, any justification at all in this odious characterization?

What are the facts?

South African Apartheid. “Apartheid,” the Dutch-Afrikaans term for separation, was the social order of the former South Africa. It meant exactly that. The Black majority of the nation and the so-called Colored were kept strictly apart in all aspects of life. White domination over the native population was mandatory. For instance: Non-Whites had to carry a “passbook.” Passbook infringement could lead to deportation to one of the Bantu “homelands.” Blacks and Coloreds were being kept from a wide array of jobs. Black-White sex was a serious jail-time criminal offense. Hospitals and ambulances were strictly separated. Whites enjoyed free education until graduation. Not so for Blacks, whose education was strictly limited by the oppressive “Bantu Education Act.”

By law, no mixed sports were allowed. Park benches, swimming pools, libraries, and movies were strictly separated. Blacks were not allowed to purchase or imbibe alcoholic drinks – etc, etc, etc. And that is only a partial and small list of the many abusive impediments that non-Whites suffered under the South African apartheid regime.

Israeli Equality. To tar Israel with that kind of brush is utterly malicious. The exact opposite is the case. Not one single apartheid practice applies to Israel. Israel is by far the most racially mixed and tolerant nation in the entire Muslim Middle East. Arabs, who are about 20% of Israel’s population, enjoy, without any exception, the same rights and opportunities in all fields as their Jewish fellow citizens. The total equality of all Israelis is assured in Israel’s founding document. All non-Jews (which means primarily Muslim Arabs) have full voting rights. At present, eleven Arabs sit in Israel’s Knesset (parliament): Three Arabs are deputy speakers. Arabs are represented in Israel’s diplomatic service all over the world. Arab students may and do study in all Israeli universities. All children in Israel are entitled to subsidized education until graduation, without any restrictions based on color or religions. In short, Muslim Arabs and other non-Jews are allowed everything that Jews

are allowed, everything that non-Whites were not allowed in apartheid South Africa.

But, yes, there is one difference: Jewish Israeli men are obligated to a three-year stint in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and serve in the reserve until they are 50 years old. For Arabs, this service is voluntary. Except for the Druze, hardly any Arabs volunteer to serve in the armed forces.

“To call Israel an apartheid state is an expression of ignorance, anti-Semitism, and malice.”

Israel has granted permanent residence and full citizen rights to a large number of legal and illegal foreign workers and their families – from the Philippines, Eritrea, Colombia, Nigeria, and from many other countries. Nobody,

of course, is forced or requested to convert to Judaism as a condition of their being allowed to stay. Israel has accepted a shipload of Vietnamese refugees who had sought asylum. No Arab country has accepted a single one of those refugees. Israel has brought in about 70,000 black Ethiopian Jews, who despite their backwardness have become fully integrated citizens of Israel. Everything that Blacks were not allowed to do in South Africa is totally open to non-Jews in Israel.

The “Apartheid Wall.” Another reason for which left-wing zealots and anti-Semites like to refer to Israel as the “apartheid state” is the fence between Israel proper and the territories. This fence (which is indeed a fence and not a wall over most of its length) was constructed at great cost in order to prevent the suicidal attacks that had killed hundreds of Israelis and grievously wounded thousands more. Thankfully, this “wall” is exceptionally successful and has totally prevented any such attacks since its completion. There is little question that this separation fence is the cause of inconvenience for some of the Arab population. But it is an annoyance that they have brought about themselves. And, of course, there are walls for protection all over the world. The Chinese invented it hundreds of years ago. Our own country has a long, high, very sophisticated wall across our border with Mexico. It is a wall, not to keep out criminals who want to kill Americans, but people who want to come here only in search of a better life. To call the Israeli fence an “apartheid wall” is an expression of ignorance and of malevolence.

Israel is a light unto the nations. It has, regrettably, many enemies – all or most of the world’s Muslim nations and left-wing ideologues who mostly hate the United States and who consider Israel to be America’s cat’s-paw in the Middle East. The reality, of course, is that Israel is the exact opposite of an apartheid state. It is a country in which all residents, all citizens, enjoy the same full rights. All other countries in the Middle East are benighted theocracies, ruthless tyrannies, or mostly both. To call Israel an apartheid state is an expression of ignorance, anti-Semitism, and malice.

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