

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Apartheid in the Arab Middle East

How can the U.N. turn a blind eye to hateful, state-sponsored discrimination against people because of their race, ethnicity, religion and gender?

While apartheid—the legally-sanctioned practice of segregation, denial of civil rights and persecution because of race, ethnicity, religion or gender—has been eliminated in South Africa, where the term originated, it continues to be practiced in many parts of the world, particularly in the Arab Middle East and Iran. Why does the United Nations Human Rights Council continue to attack free, democratic Israel, yet refuse to condemn these true crimes against humanity?

What are the facts?

Apartheid has been practiced in Middle East nations for decades, yet it has managed to escape the scrutiny and condemnation of most of the world, including the United Nations Human Rights Council. It's time to denounce these discriminatory laws and customs and declare them illegal. Can moral people ignore such blatant, heinous examples of apartheid in the Middle East?

Racial Apartheid against Black Africans.

One of the world's most deadly examples of racism is in Sudan, where native black Sudanese have been enslaved, persecuted and slaughtered by Muslim Arabs. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, the "Darfur pogrom is part of a historic continuum in which successive Arab governments have sought to entirely destroy black Africans in this biracial nation . . . The raison d'être of the atrocities committed by government-supported Arab militias is the racist, fundamentalist, and undemocratic Sudanese state." Since 1983, more than two million black Sudanese have been killed, displaced or exiled.

Ethnic Apartheid against the Kurds. Few ethnic minorities in the Middle East have suffered as much repression as the Kurds. In Syria in 1962, hundreds of thousands of Kurds had their citizenship taken away or were denied citizenship. In 2008, the Syrian government issued Decree 49, which expelled Kurds from the country's so-called "Arab Belt" and dispossessed them of rights to own land. The Kurdish Union Party called this an "ethnic cleansing decree . . . aimed at ending national Kurdish existence." In Iran, following the Islamic revolution, the Shiite majority denied the Kurds a role in defining the new constitution, and in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini declared a holy war against Kurdish political organizations: Entire Kurdish villages and towns were destroyed, and thousands of Kurds executed without due process.

Ethnic Apartheid against Palestinian Arabs. For some 40 years Palestinians have been denied citizenship in Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Palestinians have been expelled from many Middle Eastern countries,

including Kuwait, Jordan, Libya and Iraq. In Lebanon, Palestinians must live in designated areas, cannot own homes and are barred from 70 occupations.

By contrast, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are self-governing. They have their own government—the Palestinian Authority—hold elections (albeit irregularly) and run all aspects of civil society.

Religious Apartheid against Christians and Jews.

Persecution, discrimination and attacks against religious minorities, especially Christians and Jews, are rampant in the Middle East. Pressure by radical Islamists has become so great that in the last 20 years some two million

Christians have been driven out of their Middle East homelands. Christians in the Palestinian territories have dropped from 15 percent of the population in 1950 to just two percent today. In Egypt, two Coptic Christian churches were burned down over the past year, and according to a recent NPR report, Egyptian police commonly stand by and watch as Copts are physically attacked by Islamist vigilantes. In Saudi Arabia, Christians and Jews may not be citizens at all. Some 700,000 Jews have been forced out of Arab nations, effectively extinguishing the Jewish population in the region, except in Israel, the world's only Jewish state. In the disputed Palestinian territories, Jews are the victims of hate-motivated murders and, according to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, Jews will be banned from any future Palestinian state.

Gender Apartheid against Women. A 2002 United Nations report states that "women in Arab League countries suffer from unequal citizenship and legal entitlements often evident . . . in voting rights and legal codes [and] from inequality of opportunity, evident in employment status, wages and gender-based occupational segregation." In Saudi Arabia, women must walk on separate sidewalks, must be covered from head to toe, and are not allowed to drive or vote in municipal elections. Women in many Middle Eastern countries are commonly forced into marriages, the law usually requires absolute obedience to husbands, and millions of girls must undergo genital mutilation.

"Isn't it time for the U.N. Human Rights Council to stop persecuting Israel and protest apartheid where it really lives—in Arab nations?"

Only Israel, among all Middle Eastern nations, guarantees equal civil rights for all its citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual preference. Israel is the only country in the Middle East in which the Christian population is growing. Some 1.4 million Israeli Arabs enjoy more rights than citizens in any Arab country. Isn't it time for the U.N. Human Rights Council to stop persecuting Israel and condemn apartheid where it really lives—in Arab nations—and demand immediate reform and sanctions against all countries that commit such crimes against humanity?

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