

Is Israel an Apartheid State?

Next week, the United Nations will host a conference marking the 20th anniversary of the 2001 World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa. The original Durban conference was hijacked by people and an agenda, which became rife with antisemitism and bashing Israel. Today, the Durban conference and everything that has come out of it is synonymous with hate. Delegitimization of Israel is its sole target.

The good news is that (so far) a number of countries are boycotting the upcoming conference: Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Hungary, Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States. The bad news is that the rest of the world seems to think there's no problem with the UN hosting another conference whose sole purpose is to smear Israel. But it's worse because a conference that's supposedly about racism not only perpetuates a lie, but diminishes addressing (much less overcoming) actual rampant racism or the suffering that people have endured.

Durban gave birth to the canard that Israel is an apartheid state and paved the way for the BDS movement to boycott, divest and sanction Israel. There's an egregious parallel made between the racist laws that existed in South Africa, encompassing every facet of the lives of people of different races in South Africa. Saying Israel is "apartheid" is a lie. There are no such racial laws in Israel and never have been. Its Declaration of Independence declares equal rights for Arab and indeed all citizens. Arabs serve in the government, as members of parliament, throughout the judicial system and even in the military on a growing basis. Calling Israel apartheid exploits and diminishes the actual suffering of those who were discriminated against and fought to change the system of apartheid.

The other egregious part of why the lie of Israel as an

apartheid state is so bad is because those who boycotted South Africa sought to change the system. Today, when the anti-Israel BDS movement cloaks itself in the apartheid lie, they neglect to reveal one salient fact. BDS is not about changing Israel but delegitimizing Israel and, ultimately, advocating for its destruction. The founder of BDS, Omar Barghouti, leaves no doubt: "It is not the occupation of the West Bank that is the problem, but the existence of Israel itself."

Indeed, Israel has a challenge with what Barghouti and others call "the West Bank." They perpetuate a myth that Israel is occupying a place that was ever an independent state or people who were citizens of that state. When they refer to apartheid, they want people to believe that all the suffering of Palestinian Arabs is all and only because of Israel; and that they experience the same kind of racial discrimination that encompasses their lives on a daily basis, which was the case for South Africa. The weapons of those who seek to delegitimize and eventually destroy Israel are not for social justice but terror and death. They try to oversimplify a decades-old conflict based on lies.

Few see the irony in the fact that was what born at a conference about racism has devolved into a racist movement itself, embracing a hatred that is as old as biblical history and delegitimizing Israel as the nation of the Jewish people.
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Jonathan Feldstein was born and educated in the U.S. and immigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He is president of the Genesis 123 Foundation, which builds bridges between Jews and Christians and writes regularly for a variety of prominent Christian and conservative websites. Inspiration from Zion is the popular webinar series and podcast that he hosts. He can be reached at

InspirationfromZion@.

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