

How Amnesty International's New Report on Israel Is an Apartheid Failure

As I was checking out of the grocery store on Friday morning, thanking a Palestinian Arab worker for helping to bag my groceries so efficiently and quickly and wishing him and the Palestinian Arab cashier a Shabbat Shalom, I was pulled to the side by the store manager and reprimanded. "Don't you know, sir, that we are an apartheid state, and we are neither to show any interest in or empathy for the Palestinian Arabs workers, and certainly not treat them with kindness or respect because everything in our interaction with them needs to be about discrimination and subjugation, not appreciation?"

Of course, that's the truth. To document it, earlier this month, Amnesty International came out with a 200-plus-page condemnation of Israel, adding fuel to the fire of claims that Israel is an apartheid state. According to Amnesty, "Israel has established and maintained an institutionalized regime of oppression and domination of the Palestinian population for the benefit of Jewish Israelis—wherever it has exercised control over Palestinians' lives since 1948."

1948? Yes, you read that right. Amnesty delegitimizes Israel's very existence as a Jewish state, from its birth, not that it hasn't been in vogue to challenge Israel's "occupation" since 1967. What, you say, you're confused? You don't know the history? Not to worry, neither does Amnesty. So, let's straighten some things out.

First, it's simply unimaginable how much time went into putting together such a report, how many people were involved and how much money it cost to do so. The only thing missing was giving Israel a failing grade, because no objective and

honest measure shows Israel is an apartheid state. Here's why:

Let's start with what apartheid really is: The former South African policy of segregation and political, social and economic discrimination against (its) nonwhite majority. Under South African apartheid, every aspect of life of Blacks and "coloureds" was governed by these discriminatory racial laws.

Now let's look at how Israel fails to measure up. First, some demographics. Twenty-one percent of Israel's population of more than 9 million are Arabs, 1 in 5 Israelis. They have full rights under Israeli law. While Israel's Arab community thrives in many ways, as there are challenges, this is underscored by the fact that nearly 90% of them identify as Israeli Arabs, not Palestinian Arabs. And if there were to be a Palestinian state, the vast majority want to remain citizens of the Jewish state. By comparison, where there used to be thriving Jewish communities throughout the Arab world, albeit that in many of them Jews did indeed live as second-class citizens, today there are almost no Jews living there. The communities have fled, been purged and expelled. Perhaps the apartheid shoe is on the other foot.

Indeed, Amnesty's reference to 1948 is important. Israel's failure to discriminate against its Arab citizens began from day one. Its founding document, the Declaration of Independence, established that "The State of Israel ... will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." Unthinkable.

Israel is an apartheid failure to its core, starting in the

Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, which makes Israel's laws. Forget the fact that all Israeli Arabs have the right to vote and run their own political parties, there have been as many as three parties serving in the Knesset at one time, once running together as Israel's third largest party. Today, there are 14 (out of 120) Israeli Arab Knesset members.

Making legislative matters worse, Arab parliamentarians are free to use the Knesset podium and their Israeli-state-paid-for offices to speak openly, hostilely and even treasonously about Israel, while receiving a generous salary and benefits as an Israeli legislator. In one case, Member of Knesset Mosel Azmi Bishara fled Israel in order to escape legal action on charges of treason and espionage for Hezbollah. Not only that, but Israeli's government today is actively supported by an Israeli Arab party, which is not only Arab but Islamist. Who voted for this kind of apartheid?

Upholding Israel's laws are its courts in which numerous Israeli Arabs, both Christians and Muslims, have served as judges at all levels of the Israeli judicial system, including on the Israeli Supreme Court. Presently, Justice George Karra serves on Israel's Supreme Court, but there have been others. More recently, Osila Abu Assad has become the first female Arab-Moslem judge appointed to an Israeli district court. How inconvenient—and another big failure to Israel as an alleged apartheid state. The court says not guilty.

I had a personal experience with this reality over a labor dispute (I won) with an employer. There we were, two Jewish men and two Jewish lawyers making our case in front of an Arab Labor Court judge. All this is beyond an apartheid failure; it's apartheid malpractice.

Despite the seeming paradox and malice that some call Israel's military an occupation force, Israeli Arabs serve with distinction. Some are conscripted (Druze mostly) and many others volunteer, including Bedouin and Christians in

particular. Of course it's a failure of the highest proportions to have Arabs serving the Jewish apartheid country as loyal soldiers, some of whom even rising to become officers, commanding Israeli Jews.

Driving home from the store on Friday, I listened to commentary from a well-known Israeli Arab journalist in Hebrew more perfect than my own. What kind of apartheid state allows those being subjugated to be broadcast on national radio (and TV), much less tell us what they think or how we should think?

When I went to take money out of the ATM before doing my Friday morning shopping, I was reminded that Israel fails as an apartheid state in banking too. The antisemitic slander (somehow Amnesty missed) is that Jews control the banking. Well, that's not even the case in the Jewish state. In 2018, Dr. Samer Haj Yehia became the first Arab Israeli to be appointed chairman of Bank Leumi, one of Israel's oldest and largest banks. How can we allow an Arab to be responsible for so much Israeli money in the apartheid state? It just doesn't make (dollars and) sense.

The day before my shopping experience, my daughter had a medical procedure in one of Jerusalem's hospitals. She's fine, but she was surrounded by Arab doctors and nurses treating Jewish patients, and Jewish doctors and nurses treating Arab patients. That it's one of Jerusalem's biggest hospitals, funded by one of the oldest Zionist organizations in the world, won't get a footnote in the Amnesty report. This is, of course, a stark difference from apartheid South Africa (or the segregated south in the United States) where Blacks were not even allowed into white medical facilities. The fact that it's common for Palestinian Arabs from Gaza and the "West Bank" (Judea and Samaria) to receive medical treatment in Israeli hospitals is just another sign of the illness that Israel's alleged apartheid suffers. Oh, and of course there are Arabs as heads of major hospitals, because Israeli apartheid is that sick. More than an apartheid failure, this indicates a serious

malignancy in Israel's apartheid state.

Speaking about segregation, in South Africa (and the American South), among other ways in which Blacks were discriminated against was not being able to use public drinking fountains. Imagine how shocked I was the other day in one of Jerusalem's malls to see a young Arab couple sitting in the center of the food court, holding hands and engaged with one another in a way that clearly showed they were in love, without a care in the world. Who let them into the mall? In real apartheid, that would never happen.

Under apartheid, Blacks were subjected not just to the back of the bus but to their own buses. But Israel really missed the boat on this one. Not only do we sit, squish and intermingle together on all public transportation, but bus and other related signage as well as the announcements includes Arabic. The other day I was on the train and checked to see what the next stop was. The sign alternates between Hebrew and Arabic and English. When I looked up, it was in Arabic, and in my line of vision was a group of modestly dressed Arab women, making me wonder rhetorically if we were in Saudi Arabia. Another apartheid failure.

Walk through many Israeli cities and drive on our highways and you'll see almost every street sign has Hebrew, Arabic and English. In fact, Arabic is an official language of Israel in which all state business can be conducted. Recently, two Israeli Knesset members had an argument on the floor of the Parliament in Arabic. All legal. All kosher. No apartheid. Through this, it's been a great way to learn some basic Arabic.

Speaking of learning, go to any Israeli university and you'll see many Israeli Arabs in the lecture halls and courtyards, speaking Arabic and studying together with Israeli Jews everywhere. One would think this is normal, particularly in those known to be more "left wing," but it's no less the

reality in Ariel University, Israel's only university over the green line. If the "occupation" were so bad indeed, why is it that Israeli Arabs would attend a university that's in one of Israel's largest West Bank cities in the center of Samaria? And if the apartheid were so bad, how is it that Israel would let Arabs study with Jews equally, in any academic program, completely integrated with Israeli Jews?

Even in the Judean mountain town in which I live (the West Bank by way of geography and identification), hundreds of Palestinian Arabs come to work here every single day. Dozens of Palestinian Arabs' cars transverse my town freely. They shop here. And while a broader conflict does exist that's not resolved, the Palestinian Arabs who enjoy this access are not discriminated against either. I joke sometimes that, on a given workday, there are more Palestinian Arab men here than there are Jewish men who have gone to work outside the community. A few weeks ago, I went to the post office and just ahead of me were three Arabs, talking in Arabic. Nobody bothered them; nobody blinked. They were sending a package, but the clear message also sent was that there's no apartheid.

I could go on but long ago passed my 1,000-word limit. Yet all these points are needed to refute Amnesty's libel. I may need more than 1,000 words but won't go as far as 200 pages. Rather than being subjugated and discriminated against in every facet of life as Blacks were in South Africa, Israeli Arabs are an equal pillar of Israeli society, *de facto* and *de jure*. A lot of better things could have been done with the hundreds of pages of paper, hundreds (or likely more) hours of time and the hundreds of thousands of dollars, pounds or euros (or more) that could have been spent to do something good in the world.

No matter how hard one tries, sour grapes will not make a fine wine. Similarly, when an organization like Amnesty International, whose anti-Israel bias is as sure as the sun rising and setting, sets out to write a report about Israel,

it can only be bad, grossly inaccurate and dishonest, and the report and everyone involved should be condemned for its lies.
{eoa}

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@.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.