

## **Press Release**

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### **Mr. Albanese's Statements on Israeli Apartheid**

In a recent Zoom call with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Mr. Anthony Albanese, Federal Leader of the Opposition, denounced the use of the term apartheid to describe Israeli violations against the Palestinian people, despite an ever-increasing number of evidence-based reports and expert statements outlining the ways that Israel's crimes constitute apartheid.

Human Rights Watch recently released their report, "A Threshold Crossed" which presents a legal analysis of Israeli crimes, and determines that they constitute apartheid and persecution. The editor of Human Rights Watch, Eric Goldstein, has said: "We're not using [apartheid] as an insult word. It's a term meant to refer to a particularly severe type of systemized kind of discrimination."

Mr. Albanese's argument against using the word to describe Israel's crimes was that it, "cheapens the struggle against apartheid that occurred in South Africa led by Mandela and others." In fact, it is Mr. Albanese's exploitation of this struggle in an attempt to gain popularity from Zionist voters that cheapens it. In reality, Nelson Mandela was a firm supporter of the Palestinian people. Mandela's grandson, Zwelivelile Mandela MP, has said that Israel's Nation-State Law (which declared that Israel is a Jewish nation state, and that the exercise of the right to national self-determination in the state of Israel is unique to the Jewish people), "confirmed what we have always known to be the true character and reality of Israel: Israel is an apartheid state". In a speech in London, he outlined what apartheid looked like for Black South Africans, and said, "all these characteristics were present in apartheid Israel since its inception".

Many South African activists have pointed out the parallels. One activist, Muhammed Desai, born in apartheid South Africa and now involved with the group, "Africa4Palestine", spent a year in Israel and described his time there as, "a stark reminder of South Africa's apartheid regime and of Israel's own complicity with apartheid South Africa." He is referring here to the fact that Israel had a close relationship the South African apartheid regime and was one of the last Western nations to cut ties after the imposition of global sanctions in the 1980s. Even former South African prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd, known as the "architect of apartheid", said after Israel voted against South African apartheid at the UN: "Israel is not consistent in its new anti-apartheid attitude ... they took Israel away from the Arabs after the Arabs lived there for a thousand years. In that, I agree with them. Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state."

Since the invention of the term in the context of South African, apartheid has become a legal term with a very specific definition and criteria. According to numerous human rights organisations including Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem, Israeli violations against the Palestinian people constitute apartheid according to the criteria outlined in the 1973 Apartheid Convention and the 1998 Rome Statute. The recent and ongoing forced eviction of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in order to make room for Jewish settlers and change these neighbourhoods from Palestinian to Jewish are very clear and current examples of Israel's crimes of apartheid.

Mr Albanese also condemned the Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) as anti-Semitic. BDS is modelled after the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and is a legitimate and legal form of protest protected by international human rights law. BDS aims to place pressure on Israel to meet its obligations under international law and end its injustices against Palestinian rights. BDS demands the following:

1. Israel should end its occupation of land seized in 1967 (this has also been called for by the United Nations on multiple occasions);
2. Full equality for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel (this is a right protected by countless international laws, treaties, and UN resolutions); and
3. The protection and promotion of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties (this is explicitly supported by UN Resolution 194).

There is no way to argue that these demands are anti-Semitic except by using definitions which conflate anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism, such as the definition by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) which Mr Albanese has endorsed. This definition was adopted by the IHRA in 2016 and has been widely criticised for its troubling conflation of anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism which attempts to silence criticism of Israel and Zionism by weaponizing the very serious threat of anti-Semitism. In 2020, a group of scholars in Anti-Semitism Studies and other related fields released a joint statement in response to the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, asserting that the definition, "...causes confusion, while delegitimizing the voices of Palestinians and others, including Jews, who hold views that are sharply critical of Israel and Zionism. None of this helps combat anti-Semitism."

Mr. Albanese's disappointing and regressive analysis is an insult to the Palestinians who are suffering under Israel's oppressive regime of Jewish supremacy. We ask that Mr. Albanese considers his constituency before making such ill-informed and hurtful statements. As Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, activist, politician, and wife of Nelson Mandela, said: "apartheid Israel can be defeated, just as apartheid in South Africa was defeated."