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Israeli Apartheid

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I want to start by quoting a South African who emphatically stated as far back as 1963 that "Israel is an apartheid state." Those were not the words of Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Tutu or Joe Slovo, but were uttered by none other than the architect of apartheid itself, racist Prime Minister, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd.

He was irked by the criticism of apartheid policy and Harold Macmillan's "Winds of Change" speech, in contrast to the West's unconditional support for Zionist Israel.

To be sure Verwoerd was correct. Both states preached and implemented a policy based on racial ethnicity; the sole claim of Jews in Israel and whites in South Africa to exclusive citizenship; monopolised rights in law regarding the ownership of land, property, business; superior access to education, health, social, sporting and cultural amenities, pensions and municipal services at the expense of the original indigenous population; the virtual monopoly membership of military and security forces, and privileged development along their own racial supremacist lines even both countries marriage laws designed to safeguard racial "purity".

The so-called "non-whites" in apartheid South Africa, indigenous Africans, others of mixed race or of Indian origin - like second or third class non-Jews in Israel were consigned to a non-citizenship status of Kafkaesque existence, subject to bureaucratic whims and the laws prohibiting their free movement, access to work and trade, dictating where they could reside and so forth.

Verwoerd would have been well aware of Israel's dispossession of indigenous Palestinian in 1948 - the year his apartheid party similarly came to power of the unfolding destruction of their villages, the premeditated massacres and the systematic ethnic cleansing.

Within a few short years the apartheid regime was ruthlessly clearing South Africa's cities and towns of so-called "black spots" - where the "non-whites" lived, socialised, studied and traded - bulldozing homes, loading families onto military trucks, and forcibly relocating them to distant settlements. Unlike the "native reserves" - soon to be reconstituted as Bantustans - not too far away from industrial areas because the economy thrived on a quota of cheap black labour.

Whilst he did not live to see the division of Palestinian territory after the Six Day War, and the subsequent creation of miniscule Bantustans in the West Bank and Gaza, he would have greatly admired and approved of the machinations that enclosed the Palestinians in their own ghettoised prisons. This after all was the Verwoerdian grand plan, and the reason why Jimmy Carter could so readily identify the Occupied Palestinian Territories as being akin to apartheid. In fact the Bantustans consisted of 13% of apartheid South Africa, uncannily comparable to the derisory, ever shrinking pieces of ground Israel is consigning to the Palestinians.

A further comment about the Bantustans. When I visited Yasser Arafat in his virtually demolished headquarters in Ramallah as part of a South African delegation in 2004, he pointed around him and said "See this is nothing but a Bantustan!" No, we responded, pointing out that no Bantustan, in fact not even our townships, had been bombed by warplanes, pulverised by tanks. To a wide-eyed Arafat we pointed out that Pretoria pumped in funds, constructed impressive administration buildings, even allowed for Bantustan airlines to service the Mickey Mouse capitals in order to impress the world that they were serious about so-called "separate development."

What Verwoerd admired too was the impunity with which Israel exercised

state violence and terror to get its way, without hindrance from its Western allies, increasingly key among them the USA. What Verwoerd and his ilk came to admire in Israel, and seek to emulate in the southern African region, was the way the Western powers permitted an imperialist Israel to use its unbridled military with impunity in expanding its territory and holding back the rising tide of Arab nationalism in its neighbourhood.

After the Six Day War, Verwoerd's successor John Vorster, infamously stated: "The Israelis have beaten the Arabs before lunchtime. We will eat the African states for breakfast."

But it was not only the racial doctrine of Israel that excited apartheid's leaders, it was the use of the biblical narrative as the ideological rationale to justify its vision, aims and methods.

The early Dutch pioneers, the Afrikaners, had used Bible and gun as colonisers elsewhere, to carve out their exclusive fortress bastion in South Africa's hinterland. Like the biblical Israelites they claimed to be "God's chosen people" with a mission to tame and civilise the wilderness; disregarding the productivity and industriousness of people who had tilled the soil and traded for centuries claiming it was only they who would make the land flow with milk and honey.

They invoked a covenant with God to deliver their enemies into their hands and to bless their deeds. Until the advent of South Africa's democracy, the racial history books generally taught that the white man arrived in South Africa more or less as the so-called "Bantu tribes" from the north were wandering across the Limpopo - South Africa's border with Zimbabwe - and that they the were pioneer settlers in a land without people.

Such a colonial racist mentality which rationalised the genocide of the

indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australasia, in Africa from Namibia to the Congo and elsewhere, most clearly has its parallels in Palestine.

What is so shameless about this anachronistic colonial barbarism is that Zionist Israel has been permitted by the West to aspire to such a goal even into the 21st Century.