

Eroding Free Expression in Israel Updated

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Like the US and other Western societies, democracy in Israel is pure fantasy, the notion abhorred by its ruling authorities.

Ordinary Jews are exploited to benefit privileged ones. Separate and unequal is official policy.

Arab citizens are considered 5th column threats, Arab Knesset members treated like potted plants, Occupied Palestinians reviled as enemies of the state, Gazans harmed most of all — suffocating under a politicized medieval siege.

Speech, press, and academic freedoms in Israel are gravely endangered.

The 2012 Nakba Law violates Arab history, culture, heritage, and the right to express, teach, or disseminate it freely. It compromises the ability of Palestinians to publicly denounce Israeli high crimes against them.

Israel's Anti-Boycott Law (2011) "prohibits the public promotion of academic, economic or cultural boycott by Israeli citizens and organizations against Israeli institutions or illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank," the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel explained, adding:

The measure "enables the filing of civil lawsuits against anyone who calls for boycott."

"It creates a new 'civil wrong' or tort. It also prohibits a person who calls for boycott from participating in any public tender."

It "severely restricts freedom of expression and targets non-violent political opposition to the (illegal) Occupation."

It also bans entry into Israel of foreign nationals who support the movement, or their deportation if in the country.

Last April, Israel's Jerusalem district court ruled against Human Rights Watch's Israeli office director Omar Shakir, a US citizen, ordering him deported for supporting the global BDS movement, his lawful free expression right.

HRW appealed the ruling, petitioning Israel's Supreme Court to overturn the injustice. It got an injunction to let Shakir stay in the country until the high court heard his case.

On November 5, the court ruled against him, approving his deportation. In response, 23

Israeli civil society group denounced the decision, the Hamoked Center for the Defense of the Individual, saying:

Israel's "Supreme Court not only approved the deportation of Omar Shakir, but severely harmed us all Israeli and Palestinian human rights activists who oppose the occupation," adding:

"The Supreme Court continues to legitimize the Israeli government's policy to silence criticism of its human rights violations in the (Occupied Territories)."

"Israel is trying to hide the occupation from view, but we will continue, together with Omar Shakir, to support peace activists and human rights activists who strive to expose the injustices of the occupation and bring it to an end."

The following organizations denounced the high court's ruling:

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel; Adalah; Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research; Amnesty International – Israel; B'Tselem; Bimkom; Breaking the Silence; Coalition of Women for Peace; Combatants for Peace; Emek Shave; Gisha; HaMoked; Haqel; Human Rights Defenders Fund; Ir Amim; New Israel Fund; Peace Now; Physicians for Human Rights Israel; Public Committee Against Torture in Israel; Rabbis for Human Rights; Torat Tzedek; Yesh Din; Zazim – Community Action.

Israel targets dissent, notably by Arab citizens, Occupied Palestinians, human rights workers, independent journalists, and anti-apartheid foreign nationals.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) earlier called its efforts to silence free expression criticism chilling.

Shakir earlier was a Bertha Fellow at the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, the group focusing on issues relating to civil liberties, human rights, and activism.

He was involved in providing legal representation for Guantanamo political prisoners, the vast majority there uncharged, untried, and guilty of nothing.

He was given 20 days to leave Israel. Deported on Monday, he said: "I'll be back when the day comes that we have succeeded in dismantling the system of discrimination impacting Israelis and Palestinians" — separately tweeting:

"At Ben Gurion airport for my deportation flanked by leading Israeli rights groups."

"It has been an honor of a lifetime working with you & our Palestinian partners who couldn't be there due to discriminatory Israeli restrictions. We won't stop. You can't hide rights abuse #WholsNext"

On Sunday, Shakir said "(w)e're talking about a half-century-long occupation defined by systematic repression and institutional discrimination."

"That requires important, urgent work, and it's unfortunate that I won't be able to do it on the ground, but we won't stop doing it."

PLO executive committee member Hanan Ashrawi slammed his deportation, saying:

“It is an alarming wake-up call to all those who seek peace and justice for both sides that Israel will resort to extreme measures to hide the truth.”

The global boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement is the single most effective campaign against Israeli apartheid ruthlessness.

It's why dark forces in the US, other Western nations, and the Jewish state want the movement undermined and eliminated, even criminalized.

There's nothing anti-Semitic about anti-Zionism, anti-Israel, or promoting boycotts, divestments and sanctions of the Jewish state.

It's over its fantasy democracy, its apartheid rule, its oppression of the Palestinian people, its institutionalized racism, occupation harshness, state terror, preemptive wars, economic strangulation, land theft, ethnic cleansing, mass arrests, gulag imprisonments, torture, targeted killings, suffocating Gazans by slow-motion genocide, and a whole lot of other high crimes — accountability never forthcoming.

Peaceful advocacy of any views is what speech, press, and academic freedoms are all about.

Israel wants groups and individuals supporting BDS punished.

The movement was inspired by South African anti-apartheid activism, the US civil rights campaign under Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and others, along with India's movement for independence from UK colonial rule.

Israel wants its high crimes suppressed, anyone exposing them punished.

BDS, other grassroots activism, and speech, media, and academic freedoms are the most effective ways to counter its colonization, occupation, apartheid, and other high crimes against peace.

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