

Israeli Apartheid: It Is Time for the Canadian Government to Take Action

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Global Research, April 04, 2022

Region: [Canada](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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Michael Lynk is the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied after the 1967 nakba. He is Associate Professor of Law at Western University in London, Ontario, where he teaches labour law, constitutional law and human rights law.[1] His report, “Israel’s 55-year occupation of Palestinian Territory is apartheid – UN human rights expert”, was published recently.[2] In the report he stated,

“a political regime which so intentionally and clearly prioritizes fundamental political, legal and social rights to one group over another within the same geographic unit on the basis of one’s racial-national-ethnic identity satisfies the international legal definition of apartheid.”

The report identifies the many facets of the apartheid system, ranging from the “wall”, checkpoints, an over riding military presence through to “to arbitrary and extra-judicial killings, torture, the denial of fundamental rights, an abysmal rate of child deaths, collective punishment, an abusive military court system, periods of intensive Israeli military violence in Gaza and home demolitions.” Gaza is identified appropriately as an “open air prison”.

The perspective of most Canadians supports this idea as seen through a series of polls conducted through Independent Jewish Voices (IJV – Canada) and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.[3] In contrast to the opinions of ‘regular’ Canadians, the main political parties and their leaders do not acknowledge the apartheid status as indicated by their own native son, and by several international human rights groups.

All the mainstream political parties in Canada still support the defunct two state solution, the result of the secret negotiations of the Oslo Peace Process which ultimately resulted in the creation of a quisling Palestine Authority under Abbas and a ‘process’ leading towards more and more settlements on Palestinian land. The socialist NDP come closest to recognizing Palestinian concerns as NDP Foreign Affairs critic Jack Harris said of Israel’s recent Sheikh Jarrah demolitions and the subsequent protests,

“Escalating violence in East Jerusalem as a result of the ongoing illegal occupation is deeply troubling. The demolitions, forced removal of Palestinians from their homes, and blocking access to popular gathering spots must end. Israel needs to put a stop to the illegal evictions and de-escalate, and Canada must increase efforts to seek a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict.” [4]

The only follow through was a call to limit arms sales to Israel, a small step in the right direction but still wholly insufficient to change the apartheid system.

The other political parties continue to use the language of the mainstream media, ranging from the mild verb ‘clash’ to describe the overwhelming force of the Israeli military, to the extreme use of the old reliable terrorist designation for a people defending not just their native land, but their very homes. There are several reasons these stale views remain embedded in the Canadian political landscape at the top levels.

One of the simplest reasons is that when it comes to elections, most Canadians are concerned only with short term domestic items that have been sensationalized by one party against another, the most common being as usual the economy – and within that – jobs. The main parties have their set lines for the few questions on foreign policy, most of which support the agenda of NATO, the Five Eyes, and all aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

The majority of debate concerns the economy, even having environmental concerns, social concerns, and foreign wars all subsumed under that category. The average voter is led by the media to express their concerns about jobs and wages over any other category – although the recent “truck convoy” – that was not supported by a clear majority of Canadians – may bring false tirades about “freedom” to the next election.

Speaking of which, the NDP very recently signed an agreement with the minority Liberal government of Justin Trudeau to not allow a non-confidence motion to succeed in parliament, nor to bring one forward for the next three years. As they usually do the Liberals are copying some of the NDP’s easier social policies while the NDP support the government in order to engage those policies – but they do not extend to any benefits for foreign policy concerning the apartheid nature of Israel and the subjugation of the Palestinian people.

Other aspects, mostly unseen by the average voter, are issues relating to power and control. Canada and Israel have economic and military/security agreements with Canada being on the receiving end of Israel’s field tested methodology and materials. The domestic Jewish vote is not large on a percentage basis, but has power financially and more importantly emotionally with the familiar canard about calling out anti-semitism anytime anyone criticizes Israel.

The IHRA definition of anti-semitism, readily criticized, has been formally adopted by the Canadian federal government in a non-binding vote. Many larger city centers and provinces have not adopted the definition (Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Toronto) along with many universities.

While the majority of Canadians want to have stronger actions taken against Israel, including tasking them with war crimes (see note 3), the Canadian political hierarchy remains stuck in its decades old media wash about “terrorists” versus “civilization” while the real conflict is about a colonial settler society (of which Canada’s settlement is a prime

example) militarily dominating an indigenous population within an apartheid regime.

Canada's UN Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk has it right. It is about time the Canadian government gets it right, on side with Lynk and the majority of Canadians.

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Jim Miles is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Notes

[1] see: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-palestine>

[2]

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/israels-55-year-occupation-palestinian-territory-apartheid-un-human-rights>

[3] <https://www.ijvcanada.org/survey2020-3/> and <https://www.cjpme.org/survey2020>

[4]

<https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/ndp-takes-major-turn-by-condemning-israeli-attacks-on-palestine>

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