

UN Special Rapporteur Accuses Israel of Apartheid in Human Rights Council Report

'Israel has imposed upon Palestine an apartheid reality in a post-apartheid world,' says Michael Lynk, UN special rapporteur on human rights in occupied territories

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The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied [Palestinian](#) territories has submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), concluding that the situation in Israel and the occupied territories amounts to apartheid.

In a 19-page [report](#) submitted to the body on Tuesday, Michael Lynk said Israeli Jews and Palestinians lived “under a single regime which differentiates its distribution of rights and benefits on the basis of national and ethnic identity, and which ensures the supremacy of one group over, and to the detriment of, the other”.

“The political system of entrenched rule in the occupied Palestinian territory which endows one racial-national-ethnic group with substantial rights, benefits and privileges while intentionally subjecting another group to live behind walls, checkpoints and under a permanent military rule... satisfies the prevailing evidentiary standard for the existence of apartheid,” he added.

Lynk said that while the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories differed from that experienced in South Africa, it still amounted to apartheid.

Apartheid is a legal term defined by international law that refers to systematic oppression by one racial group over another.

“There are pitiless features of Israel’s ‘apartness’ rule in the occupied Palestinian territory that were not practiced in southern Africa, such as segregated highways, high walls and extensive checkpoints, a barricaded population, missile strikes and tank shelling of a civilian population, and the abandonment of the Palestinians’ social welfare to the international community.

“With the eyes of the international community wide open, Israel has imposed upon Palestine an apartheid reality in a post-apartheid world.”

Lynk is slated to formally release his report on Thursday ahead of a debate on Agenda Item Seven, the permanent UNHRC item reserved for Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians and other Arabs.

In the report, the Canadian academic argued that Israel was pursuing a strategy of “strategic fragmentation of the Palestinian territory into separate areas of population control, with Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem physically divided from one another”.

Israel uses Gaza, Lynk said, for the “indefinite warehousing of an unwanted population of two million Palestinians”.

The issuing of thousands of work permits for Palestinian labourers in the West Bank and Gaza to work in Israel amounts to the “exploitation of labor of a racial group”, the report said.

‘We need action and accountability’

Last month, Amnesty International [labelled](#) Israel an apartheid state, becoming the latest organisation to join a cadre of human rights groups that have used the term to describe Israel’s treatment of Palestinians.

“The special rapporteur’s findings are an important and timely addition to the growing international consensus that Israeli authorities are committing apartheid against the Palestinian people,” said Saleh Higazi, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty.

“Palestinian human rights organisations have been calling the situation apartheid for years, and this report is a landmark moment of recognition of the lived reality of millions of Palestinians.

Despite the increasing number of rights groups labelling Israeli policies as amounting to apartheid, the United States and Israel’s other western allies have refrained from making any such declarations.

Beth Miller, the senior governance affairs manager at Jewish Voice for Peace-Action, said the report echoed what international human rights groups had been saying for years, that “Israel is committing the crime of apartheid”.

“For [US President Joe] Biden and Congress, the task is clear: end all US military funding to this violent apartheid regime.”

NYC Solidarity with Palestine, a group that works to open expansive spaces of resistance, told MEE: “We welcome these various international organisations finally saying and confirming publicly what the Palestinian people have been crying out with blood for years.

“And, that said, apartheid is only one mechanism and instrument of settler colonisation and illegal occupation. Palestinian’s right to self-determination dictates responsibilities that include ending the occupation by and all any means. Double standards must end.”

Ahmad Abuznaid, the executive director of the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, told MEE that “as more and more international institutions affirm what Palestinians have been saying for years, we hope to finally see what the international community is going to do about Israeli apartheid.

“We need action and accountability now.”

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Featured image: The Palestinian flag being waved at a rally in New York City on 18 September, 2021, during the anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila massacres (MEE/Zainab Iqbal)

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