Amnesty’s apartheid lies abet global anti-Semitism

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In its latest publication levying the apartheid canard at the Jewish state, Amnesty International offers a derivative repackaging of similar efforts from Human Rights Watch (HRW) and B’Tselem in 2021. These, in turn, largely mimicked a report issued by a group of BDS activists in 2009. The NGO publications are part and parcel of the 70-year ongoing campaign to delegitimize Israel, exploiting legal terminology and using discriminatory tropes originating in anti-Semitic propaganda.

And make no mistake. Amnesty’s report is a paradigmatic example of anti-Semitism. As the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism makes clear, “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor” is anti-Semitic. The European Commission’s handbook on IHRA expounds that “denying the Jewish people the right to self-determination and a national homeland is anti-Semitic because it denies the religious and historic ties of Jews to the land of Israel … asserting that a country is a racist endeavour, by portraying ambivalent aspects of modern statehood in a demonizing manner exclusive to the State of Israel, is an attempt to undermine the international legitimacy of a country.”

An organization genuinely dedicated to human rights and peacemaking would surely do more than recycle the same incessant talking points and political propaganda. They would combat anti-Semitism instead of promoting it. And they would offer a pragmatic and realistic solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. What vision of peace is Amnesty offering? The group claims that it does not advocate for a particular political outcome; this claim, however, is wholly disingenuous.

Like its predecessors and throughout Amnesty’s screed, they make it abundantly clear that their apartheid accusation has nothing to do with contested borders, settlements or policies. Instead, their recommendations provide an ultimate wish list of sanctions and boycotts against Israel, in addition to the harassment and arrest of Israeli officials. The ultimate goal, however, is the elimination of Israel’s legitimacy as the nation-state of the Jewish people. This objective is reflected in support for a so-called Palestinian “right of return,” as well as the revocation of any laws or practices that protect Israel as a safe haven against Jewish persecution or preserve Jewish identity and national expression.

Amnesty also demonizes efforts by Israel to end the conflict by ascribing nefarious intent to every move towards peace, while at the same time erasing more than 90 years of Arab and Palestinian rejectionism. In particular, the group claims that the Oslo Accords are an integral part of a supposed apartheid regime, despite their being mutually agreed to by the PLO and witnessed by the international community. Nevertheless, such moves towards the creation of a Palestinian state are falsely described by Amnesty as anathema to international law.

Cardboard denials aside, it is obvious that Amnesty believes that the only “solution” to the conflict is a transformation of the world’s only Jewish state into a single state dominated by Arab and Muslim Palestinians.

It is also important to note that Amnesty’s publication degrades the reality of apartheid South Africa. In essence, apartheid denialism, by decontextualizing apartheid from the experiences in Southern Africa and reinventing the definition so as to attack Israel’s legitimacy. As Barrister Joshua Kern and I comprehensively detail in a [December 2021 report](https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/apartheid-report/), Amnesty’s proffered definition of apartheid, which simply copies that of HRW and B’Tselem, is not in keeping with that found in international law. Amnesty, like HRW, refuses to engage with this unassailable analysis.

These groups—through their personal connections and singular influence at the U.N. Human Rights Council, and the acquiescence of Europe—instead will simply get U.N. Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk and the Navi Pillay-headed Commission of Inquiry to uncritically adopt their claims and mark them with the U.N. stamp of approval in the next few months. Unsurprisingly and in keeping with his history of anti-Israel activism (as well as in violation of U.N. rules), although he is ostensibly currently conducting an independent and objective investigation of apartheid, Lynk [promoted](https://twitter.com/MichaelLynk5/status/1488651031747575809?s=20&t=Jx_m44kiZLgfkvfQJixRwQ) the group’s report on Twitter. There is no doubt that the COI will act in a similar fashion.

The most tangible impact of this report, however, will likely be its use to bolster harassment of young Jews on college campuses, boycott initiatives and even encourage overt violence of the type we have seen running amok in Europe and North America. As in the past 20 years, Amnesty will be nowhere to be found when the predictable consequences of its calumny result in real-world human-rights abuses.

All people of moral conscience and integrity must denounce Amnesty and others who continue to abet this pernicious and dangerous libel.