

# Resolution 5: on Opposing Israel's Apartheid

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- 1 **RESOLVED**, that the 127th Convention of the Diocese of Washington submit the following resolution
- 2 to the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church:
- 3 **RESOLVED**, that the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, the General Convention of the
- 4 Episcopal Church recognize that Israel's discriminatory legal system and treatment of the
- 5 Palestinians correspond to the definitions of apartheid elaborated in the International
- 6 Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and set out in
- 7 the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; and be it further
- 9 **RESOLVED**, that the General Convention condemn Israel's apartheid system as antithetical to the
- 8 Gospel message and to our Baptismal Covenant to "strive for justice and peace among all people
- 10 and respect the dignity of every human being;" and be it further
- 11 **RESOLVED**, that the General Convention, recognizing the complicity of the U.S. government
- 12 in supporting and protecting Israel in its apartheid practices against the Palestinians, and deeming
- 13 that support antithetical to America's fundamental values, call on the President and the U.S.
- 14 Congress to condemn and oppose Israel's apartheid by all appropriate means, including imposition
- 15 of sanctions and suspension of military aid.

## *Explanation*

The crime of apartheid is codified in international law. Article II of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid summarizes it as "an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime." The Palestinian people qualify as a racial group under the Convention because they have been treated as a racial group.

Since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, indigenous Palestinian Arabs who managed to avoid expulsion from their homeland have lived in Israel subject to a de facto regime of apartheid (until 1966, they were under martial law) because they lack Jewish "nationality". After Israel conquered East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 War, Palestinians not excluded from remaining in those areas have lived under a military occupation of an even more severe apartheid-like nature.

Over the years many knowledgeable people argued that Israel should be deemed an apartheid state (e.g., “Report of UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine”, John Dugard, 2007; “Occupation, colonialism, apartheid?” 2012, Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa). Others objected that, unlike South Africa, Israel did not intend to maintain an apartheid regime. This objection is no longer tenable.

In 2018, Israel enacted the Nation State Law into its “Basic Law” (equivalent to its constitution), which declared that “the right to exercise national self-determination” in Israel is “unique to the Jewish people,” made Arabic no longer an official language, and established “Jewish settlement as a national value” which the state “will labor to encourage and promote.” In 2020, Israel declared its intention to permanently annex more than half of the West Bank. To date, it has delayed execution of the decision, which would violate international law, but has not altered its intention. These two actions established beyond reasonable doubt that Israel intends to maintain an apartheid regime discriminating against all non-Jews it governs.

In response, leading human rights organizations (HROs) issued major reports documenting in detail how the term apartheid is fully applicable as a legal description of the human rights regime in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.<sup>1</sup>

Christian Churches have formally condemned Israel’s apartheid as a “sin against God’s children” and condemned U.S. government “complicity”.<sup>2</sup>

In May 2021, 93 American rabbinical students issued an open letter identifying a “spiritual crisis” in the fact that “Israel upholds two separate legal systems.”

Beginning as early as 1976, the Episcopal Church ever more forcefully opposed apartheid in South Africa. Christian churches have a special responsibility to stand with Jews against bigotry and discrimination. Likewise, we have a duty to support Palestinians against apartheid.

Adoption of this resolution would not impact the diocesan budget.

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<sup>1</sup> Reports include, “This Is Apartheid,” January 2021, by leading Israeli HRO B’Tselem; “A Threshold Crossed,” April 2021, by global HRO Human Rights Watch; and “Legal Opinion,” 2020, by Israeli HRO Yesh Din (only examining Occupied Palestinian Territories).

<sup>2</sup> “Declaration for a Just Peace between Israel and Palestine,” July 2021, General Synod of the United Church of Christ (passed by 83%); “Recognition of Apartheid in Israel/Palestine,” November 2021, Episcopal Diocese of Vermont (passed 89-25-16); “Resolution F-184,” November 2021, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago (passed 78% to 22%); “Cry for Hope: A Decisive Call for Action,” July 2020, Global Kairos for Justice (ecumenical Palestinian Christian coalition urges an end to “exclusivity and apartheid”).