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Analysis

Israel and the A-Word - (John Reynolds)

The word resonated loud and clear from South Africa. Hendrik Verwoerd, widely described as a key architect of apartheid, was the far-right National Party's propagandist, political strategist and, ultimately, party leader. In 1961, as South African Prime Minister, he noted that Israel was built on land taken 'from the Arabs after the Arabs lived there for a thousand years.' The point was to express his approval and to highlight Zionism's common cause with the Afrikaner pioneers: 'In that, I agree with them. Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state.'

Verwoerd was able to make this diagnosis without needing to live to see the brutality of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza after 1967. Israel's apartheid foundations were laid in its dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948. They were reinforced by the immediate erection of colonial constitutional structures that cemented the exclusion of the colonised.

Since then, Israeli law and policy has only deepened the state apparatus of separation and segregation, discrimination and domination. Over the years, countless activists, authors and artists, as well as leading anti-apartheid figures from South Africa, have referred to Israel's particular brand of structural discrimination as akin to apartheid. In the last decade, international lawyers have also begun to do likewise, but with reference to

the definition of apartheid under international law rather than by analogy to southern Africa.

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