

Jimmy Carter Charged "Anti-Semitic"

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AG - Marwan Bishara - The bitter controversy surrounding former President Jimmy Carter's insightful book, *Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid*, demonstrates how the United States is far behind Israel and Europe in facing up to the ongoing discrimination, segregation, and suffering in Palestine. Although wary of using the term "racism" as he speaks out against Israeli injustices and treatment of the Palestinians, the former President has nonetheless been accused of anti-Semitism.

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*Marwan Bishara contemplates the courage of Jimmy Carter in writing *Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid*, and summarizes the kind of separation -- apartness -- that Carter portrays as the decades-long activity of Israel in Palestine.*

Carter and Palestine: Don't Condemn the Messenger

Marwan Bishara

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Paris -- Carter's courage in warning against the dangers of the apartheid system in the occupied territories -- at times worse than in South Africa -- contrasts sharply with Washington's callous indifference to the deterioration of human rights in the Holy Land. But unless the historical and ideological roots of Israel's apartheid policies are acknowledged, its leaders and their American cohorts will continue to justify the terrible reality decried by Carter.

A growing number of Israeli historians affirm that the Jewish state was realized using wide-scale ethnic cleansing, leading to the displacement of three-quarters of Palestine's indigenous population. The "new Israelis" destroyed over 300 Palestinian villages and towns, establishing 600 new Jewish localities -- some in place of the Palestinian villages, others on lands confiscated illegally from their "absentee" landlords. According to former Jerusalem deputy mayor Meron Benvinisti's eye-opening book, *Sacred Landscape*, there is no parallel to Israeli "reconsecration of Palestinian places of worship" since the conquests of the mid-15th century.

Mr. Carter is overly generous when he restricts his analysis to Palestine and praises Israel's equal treatment of its Jewish and Palestinian citizens. For six decades, Arabs who are citizens of Israel have suffered from official discrimination in "their" Jewish state, which considers them

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a "demographic threat" that must be either transferred or subdued like ants in a bottle. That discrimination denies them a "right of return" or equal rights to the land as their fellow Jewish citizens. The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, among others, has expressed shame at the way Israel has treated its Palestinian minority.

The Civil Rights Movement in Jimmy Carter's Georgia was a struggle for freedom and equality for American Blacks during the 1950s and 1960s. During those same decades, the Palestinians in Israel were striving peacefully to attain the same freedoms, albeit less successfully. Although they enjoy certain political and civic rights, the Jewish state continues to treat its Palestinian citizens as undesirable aliens and many Israeli leaders have publicly stated their desire to be rid of the non-Jewish citizenry.

Israel's settlement project in the occupied territories also has its roots in a strategy of "Judaization" in the populated Palestinian areas. This includes creating separate territorial and economic development for Arabs and Jews, controlled by, and favorable to, the latter. This economic and territorial separation is the apartheid Jimmy Carter is writing about.

Israel has generally designed its policies and laws to acquire Palestinian land in numerous ways -- permanently if possible. After the 1967 occupation, it was the moderate Labor leadership that spearheaded the illegal colonization of the West Bank and Gaza through "strategic settlements" in proximity to water resources and frontiers. And with the right-wing takeover in 1977, settlements have proliferated through government directives and planning spearheaded by Ariel Sharon.

Two decades later, the Labor leadership oversaw the largest increases of settlers and Palestinian segregation during the "Peace Process" and with the tacit approval of the Clinton administration. Beginning in 1994, Premiers Rabin, Peres, and Barak created two separate road networks, land zoning, and security systems in favor of the Jewish settler minority. And this was replicated in Jerusalem between its old Arab and new Jewish neighborhoods.

As Carter argues, it is generations of cool, calculating Israeli leaders from both left and right -- rather than hot-blooded extremists -- who are responsible for the segregationist system in the occupied territories. Those settlements couldn't have survived if it wasn't for government-sponsored infrastructural projects, preferential treatment, and huge subsidies.

The former U.S. president makes the case that Israel is capable of discriminating against and subjugating another people through violence, but predictably refrains from invoking its ideological underpinning. For their part, the Palestinians have been vocal in their denunciation of Israeli racism as they see it from behind their barbed wire refugee camps and walled-in Bantustans.

Carter's message is clear -- Israel's disastrous apartheid-like policies are a roadblock to peace. Now we need the courage to confront those policies, especially in America, for the sake of peace and justice in Palestine and Israel.

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