

The global civil campaign against Israeli apartheid gathers momentum

ANALYSIS



By Dr Hanan Chehata

The situation in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is worsening every day. In blatant disregard of international law, illegal settlements continue to spring up on confiscated Palestinian land. Palestinian houses are demolished, sometimes bizarrely at the hands of their Palestinian owners under the threat that if they don't tear down their own homes they will simply be charged for the Israeli demolition of them instead, and the illegal *"Separation"* or

"Apartheid Wall", as many now refer to it, is growing all the time.

All of this is playing out in front a world audience and yet what are world leaders doing to stop it? Notwithstanding all their rhetoric, they are failing to effect change. For example, despite the high hopes that the world had for US President Barak Obama, he has thus far failed to promote a positive change in the region. Even with his new title of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, he has failed to bring any semblance of peace to that increasingly troubled part of the world. His backsliding on the issue of settlements did him no favours and only exposed the fact that even America can no longer control Israel. It also highlighted the entrenched mentality of the Israeli establishment in pursuing their own goals even if it entails jeopardising the interests of their allies and benefactors. Similarly, the American rejection of the landmark Goldstone Report confirmed to all that America's support for Israel will blindly continue, regardless of international law and in open defiance of world opinion.

However, things are slowly changing finally from a grassroots level. International public opinion has seen a dramatic shift recently, especially since the Israeli invasion of Gaza in December 2008 - January 2009. The news reports depicting the graphic scenes of the murder of innocent children and women and the wanton destruction of homes, schools, hospitals, mosques and even UN property brought home to the public just how far Israel considers itself to be above the law and beyond reproach.



Given the obvious ineffectuality of world leaders to hold Israel to account for its actions, civil society is at last sitting up and demanding to be heard and counted. Mass demonstrations, boycotts and protests have swept the world and in the last couple of years initiatives such as the *Viva Palestina* convoy, which hopes to break the siege on Gaza this December, are gaining more and more popular support. There is also a growing movement to implement the laws of Universal Jurisdiction and an increasing number of prominent campaigns by human rights lawyers in Europe to act of behalf of Palestinian victims and bring charges against the Israeli authorities.



One primary form of civil protest against Israel that is gathering momentum is that of BDS - Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. One of the reasons that this approach is gaining popularity stems from lessons learned in South Africa. There is no doubt that what is happening in Israel is a form of Apartheid. [Desmond Tutu](#) has voiced his distress at seeing Apartheid taking grip in the Holy Land and even ex-Israeli Attorney General [Michael Ben-Yair](#) admits that Israel “**established an apartheid regime in the occupied territories immediately following their capture. That oppressive regime exists to this day.**”

Copying the model of global public resistance to the South African apartheid regime, acts of protest such as boycotting Israeli goods are finally really starting to take hold. More and more people are becoming conscious of the unjust reality of Israel’s economic stranglehold of Palestine through their siege on Gaza, through their destruction of Palestinian olive crops, through their restrictions on Palestinian access to clean and sanitary drinking water, in addition to the well documented dumping of Israeli settlement sewage onto the Palestinian villages and homes below and so on. As a result more people are starting to act on that consciousness and denounce Israel through the power of their own spending.

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly clear to many that the “two-state solution” that has been the apparent and yet unrealised goal for so many years is just a stalling process during which time, Israel continues its illegal land grab and seizure of Palestine. There is, as such, an increasing number of calls to follow the South African model one step further and renew efforts towards realising a one state solution, with “one person - one vote” at its core because, as it stands, the “two state solution” for Palestine is in reality a “no state solution”. However, whether or not a one state solution will ever be the way forward has yet to be determined and only time will tell. All that is certain, however, is that, thus far, the purported goal of a two-state solution has failed abysmally.

