

Words of condemnation are not enough – South Africa must act against apartheid Israel

Release Date: 18 April 2023

“Until South Africa acts against apartheid Israel we are complicit in its oppression of the Palestinian people” warned Ronnie Kasrils, Patron of the South African BDS Coalition.

On Al Quds Day, the SA BDS Coalition utterly condemns the barbaric attack on worshippers in Al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan; the ongoing restrictions and violation of Christian holy sites; home demolitions; illegal settler provocations; and occupation force violence taking place in Jerusalem. These repressive actions by apartheid Israel and its illegal settlers are gross violations of human rights, contravene international law and in many cases amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Al Haq, the Palestinian human rights organisation described the attack on Al Aqsa as a further measure entrenching the ongoing annexation of the city of Jerusalem, breaching international law principles prohibiting the acquisition of territory through the use of force. UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, deplored the “reckless and unlawful actions” of Israeli occupying forces which allowed Jewish Israelis to enter the compound, in violation of the Status Quo Agreement. “The well-known desire of Israeli settlers [is] to either destroy the mosque or forcibly convert all or part of the compound into a synagogue, as happened to the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron” she said.

The atrocities carried out by the occupation forces in Jerusalem are part of a settler colonial strategy to erase the presence, identity, and history of Palestinians throughout Palestine. Under the current extreme right-wing Israeli government there is an escalation of atrocities: the ongoing siege of Gaza, now in its 16th year, with more airstrikes into Gaza this month; the destruction of villages, farmlands, livestock and schools in Masafer Yatta; the pogrom carried out by illegal settlers who set fire to homes and property in Huwara last month; and the extra-judicial killing of Palestinians in the West Bank - numbering 94 Palestinians murdered including 17 children this year alone. Israeli government ministers openly call for the destruction of villages and expulsion of the Palestinian people.

Yet the attack at Al Aqsa Mosque, where occupation forces were seen by the world beating worshippers with rifle butts and firing stun grenades into the building, has well and truly unmasked Israel’s so-called ‘liberal democracy’, revealing the cruel nature of the settler colonialist Israeli apartheid regime. Palestinian demonstrations within ‘48 territories in support of those brutalised at Al Aqsa were met with police violence, yet Palestinians continue to raise their flag in public – an illegal act according to apartheid Israel - and resist segregation, domination and oppression.

In a call to action, Kasrils said: “Handwringing over the three horrific attacks on worshippers at Al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan this year does nothing to end the occupation of Palestine. It is vital that we move from expressions of regret to break ties with the settlercolonial Israeli regime – it is up to us, the international community, in solidarity with the resistance of the Palestinian people, to end Israel’s impunity and make it accountable for the horrific violence it meters out to Palestinians on a daily basis”.

South Africa has a political and moral responsibility to heed the Palestinian call for international solidarity through implementing boycotts, divestment and international sanctions including an arms embargo to isolate apartheid Israel.

We call on the South Africa government to:

- Declare the Israeli Ambassador persona non-grata and end full diplomatic relations with the apartheid Israeli state.
- Implement policy for a sporting, cultural and academic boycott of complicit institutions and events held in apartheid Israel.
- Ban all trade with illegal settlements in the Palestinian occupied territories.
- Ensure that the National Prosecuting Authority expedites cases of South Africans that join the Israeli occupation forces in contravention of the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act.
- Act within the UN system to reinstate the anti-apartheid mechanisms towards international sanctions and an arms embargo.

We call on all South Africans to heed the Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their steadfast resistance to Israeli apartheid and colonialism.

For more information please contact:

Usuf Chikte: 082 877 9522

Roshan Dadoo: 082 816 2799

Jaamia Galant: 079 231 4273

Noor Ahmad: 079 363 2126

This press statement was released by SA BDS Coalition on 14 April 2023.