

Efforts to Reduce Israeli Influence in Africa Continues

In March the South African National Assembly downgraded the status of Tel Aviv's diplomatic presence to that of a liaison office.

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Global Research, April 13, 2023

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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As the Israeli government intensifies its efforts to win influence on the African continent and other geopolitical regions, several governments have responded by heightening their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In South Africa, the National Assembly based in Cape Town voted in early March to further downgrade the diplomatic presence of Israel inside the country.

Since 2019 there has been no South African ambassador credentialed to its embassy in Tel Aviv. This measure stems directly from the failure of the Israeli government to negotiate a settlement to end the occupation of Palestine.

In fact, repressive policies against the Palestinians have worsened over the decades with massive bombing campaigns by the Israeli Air Force in Gaza killing thousands and displacing many more from their homes and refugee camps. Every year more Palestinian communities are being taken over by the Israelis through the building of settlements for Jewish households.

United States foreign policy towards Israel has not changed since the formation and recognition of the state 75 years ago. Billions of dollars in direct financial assistance along with trade, military and diplomatic support characterize the relations between Washington and Tel Aviv.

The National Assembly in Cape Town is the highest legislative body in the Republic of South Africa which has nearly 60 million people. South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), has maintained fraternal relations with the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO) while endorsing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns domestically and internationally which are geared towards the complete isolation of the racist apartheid regime in Tel Aviv.

The resolution to reduce Israeli diplomatic status in South Africa was introduced by Member of Parliament Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam of a small opposition grouping called the National Freedom Party (NFP) and was supported by the majority ANC. This parliamentary action is not binding legally although symbolically it reflects the mass sentiment throughout South Africa and the continent as whole which views the oppression of the Palestinians as a struggle against racism and colonial rule.



[Emam said](#) of the vote in favor of his resolution that:

“This is a moment Madiba [Nelson Mandela] would be proud of. He always said our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians. This resolution demands accountability from Israel. ... As South Africans, we refuse to stand by while Apartheid is being perpetrated again.”

The Israeli Foreign Ministry responded rapidly to the South African parliamentary vote saying:

“The symbolic resolution taken yesterday (March 8) by the South African parliament calling for the downgrading of relations between South Africa and Israel is shameful and disgraceful. Even as a symbolic resolution, it does not contribute in the least to the promotion of any viable solution in the Middle East. At a time when many African and Muslim countries are strengthening and deepening ties with the State of Israel for the benefit of everyone’s common interests, it is unfortunate that South Africa continues to adhere to anachronism and the deterioration of relations, a move that will only harm South Africa itself and its standing.”

What the Israeli Foreign Ministry is referencing is the Abraham Accords, an initiative of Tel Aviv and Washington to undermine solidarity with the Palestinian people as well as those impacted by the military and economic policies of the Zionist regime. Several states among the Gulf monarchies, Egypt and Sudan in North Africa have normalized relations with Israel.

However, as these diplomatic maneuvers are ongoing, the repression against the Palestinians is resulting in brutality, imprisonment and death. In addition, there has been a series of aerial bombardments by Israeli fighter jets in Gaza along with neighboring Syria and Lebanon.

Israel and the African Union

During the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in February, the Israeli Foreign Ministry attempted another hostile disruption of the continental organization composed of 55 member-states representing 1.4 billion people. In 2021, the AU Commission Chair, Moussa Faki Mahamat, made a unilateral decision to grant Israel observer status within the body.

This move was roundly denounced by several African governments who are leading members of the AU. Algeria along with the South African government pointed to the illegal nature of the granting of observer status to Tel Aviv absent any discussion or debate in the AU Executive Council. At the following AU Summit, the decision was suspended and since 2021 the issue has not been debated publicly.

In 2021, South Africa described the surprising move as “unjust” and “shocking”. The Republic of Namibia, also in Southern Africa, said:

“granting observer status to an occupying power is contrary to the principles and objectives of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.”

However, an Israeli diplomatic official entered the AU Headquarters in Ethiopia at the February summit and took a seat. The person was soon removed by the security personnel guarding the meeting.

The incident at the most recent AU Summit represents the renewed independent foreign policy orientation of the continent. Along with the attempts by Israel to gain greater diplomatic status within individual African states and the AU, the western imperialist paymasters to Tel Aviv are also canvassing the continent seeking to persuade governments and mass organizations to become sympathetic to the U.S. positions on Ukraine, Russia, China and Israel.

Several high-level officials, including Vice-President Kamala Harris, have visited African countries which are important strategic players in continental and international affairs. During these recent calls on the capitals of Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, etc., spokespersons for the administration of President Joe Biden are careful not to criticize the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China directly. Comments related to the burgeoning global debt crisis occurring in a number of African states such as Egypt, Ghana and Zambia are framed to implicate Beijing and Moscow. Yet the major source of the world economic crisis is to be found in the geoeconomic policies emanating from Western Europe and North America.

[Middle East Eye](#) news website emphasized in relation to the ejection of Israeli officials from the AU Summit in Addis Ababa:

“An Israeli observer delegation was removed on Saturday (February 18) from the African Union summit being held in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. A video shared online showed Sharon Bar-Li, the deputy director of the African Division at the Israeli foreign ministry, being escorted out at the opening ceremony of the two-day convention. An AU official told AFP the individual who was ‘asked to leave’ was not invited to attend the meeting, with a non-transferable invitation only issued to Aleli Admasu, Israel’s ambassador to the African Union. Israeli newspaper Haaretz, citing

unnamed diplomatic officials, said Bar-Li had the proper authorization to attend the summit and that discussions are being held to allow her to return.”

Israel blamed South Africa and Algeria for engineering the removal of the diplomat from Tel Aviv at the AU gathering. The Israeli Foreign Ministry went as far as to say that Algeria and South Africa are controlled by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such an absurd claim only highlights the failure of the regime to rationalize its presence in international forums within the Global South.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa dismissed the statements by Israel saying they are unsubstantiated. Such an allegation implies that African states do not have their own reasons for being opposed to colonial occupation.



South African demonstration in solidarity with Palestine

Africa has waged liberation struggles for many years for independence, unification and sovereignty. The alliance between the Palestinian national movement and the progressive forces in Africa are based upon mutual interests and concern for the emancipation of humanity from all forms of exploitation and oppression.

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