

Israel Created 'One-state' Reality Where Palestinians Live Under Apartheid System

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Faced with possible jail time in an everlasting trial on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been accused of tailoring the Israeli political system to end his legal peril and to meet the territorial expansionist demands of his extreme right-wing settler coalition partners. They were the only factions prepared to join his sixth spell as prime minister.

Since Netanyahu's legal jeopardy has plagued him for six and a half years, he has striven mightily to win elections and stay in the country's top office to gain the immunity he believes the premiership accords him. Without his current partners, he could be incarcerated.

Israel's police opened their investigations in December 2016, in November 2021 indictments were levelled against him, and in May 2020 his trial began in the Jerusalem district court with witness testimonies beginning in April 2021. This week, the chief witness in Case 1000, Israeli billionaire filmmaker Arnon Milchan testified that he provided Netanyahu and his wife with expensive cigars, champagne, clothing and jewellery worth \$200,000 over two decades. In exchange, Netanyahu has been accused of using his influence to help Milchan to secure an extension for his US visa and pressing for Israeli legislation which would give Milchan major tax breaks.

The fact that code names were given to the gifts indicated that both sides understood that they were dodgy. Nevertheless, Milchan was quoted as saying he did not "think it was something that would lead to an investigation".

Case 2000 involves 2008 and 2014 meetings between Netanyahu and Yediot Ahronoth publisher Arnon Mozes during which they discussed legislation which would curb circulation of rival newspaper Israel Hayom, hiring pro-Netanyahu journalists and positive coverage of

Netanyahu. While Mozes plead guilty for considering the prospect of such a deal, he did not follow through. He was charged with bribery and Netanyahu with fraud and breach of trust.

In Case 4000 Netanyahu is charged with promising to make changes in regulations favourable to Saul Elovitch, owner of the communication conglomerate Bezeq, in exchange for positive coverage of Netanyahu and his family in the news website "Walla!". Netanyahu faced the same charges as those in case 2000 while Elovitch was accused of bribery.

Fears of conviction and imprisonment fuel Netanyahu's nightmares. Likud colleague Ehud Olmert — who served as prime minister and cabinet minister — was convicted and jailed for accepting bribes and obstructing justice while mayor of Jerusalem. And, President Moshe Katsav, another Likudnik, was sentenced to seven years in jail for rape and sexual harassment of an employee. Olmert completed two-thirds of his 27-month sentence and Katsav five of his sentence.

Yehuda Shaul, co-director of the Israeli Centre for Public Affairs, told Jonathan Guyer of Vox.com that Netanyahu's latest government is carrying out two revolutions. "One is inside Israel: Getting rid of any remains of checks and balances, independence of the judiciary, going full-blown illiberal democracy" comparable to the Hungarian system. If he succeeds in this effort, Netanyahu will eliminate the checks and balances which maintain Israel's constitution-less democracy. Once this is completed, Netanyahu hopes his legal problems will disappear.

The other revolution is overt Israeli annexation of the occupied West Bank. On Monday, Netanyahu's government approved plans to build 5,700 housing units in West Bank colonial settlements and approved settler squatting in three outposts which do not have approval. There are now nearly half-a-million Israelis living in the West Bank and another 220,000 in illegally occupied East Jerusalem in flagrant violation of international law which prohibits an occupying power from transferring its citizens into occupied territory.

The first revolution has inspired months of mass anti-government protests over fears of the loss of Israel's deteriorated democracy while the second has elicited increasingly violent Palestinian responses which have led to deadly Israeli raids on Palestinian towns and villages.

Both revolutions have unmasked Israel, too long the darling of the West, as an expansionist, colonial state and increased condemnation of its policies. As usual, however, this revelation has not translated into serious sanctions against Israel. The Biden administration responded to Monday's land-grab provocation by saying it was "deeply troubled" by this action.

Instead of taking action, the US and Europe continue to bleat their pointless support for the "two-state solution" involving the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. This policy ignores the fact that through its colonisation of the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem and remote occupation of Gaza, Israel has created a "one-state" reality where Palestinians live under an apartheid system. In the directly occupied territories, Israeli settler colonists dwell separately under laws enacted for Israel "proper" and enjoy the benefits of superior infrastructure, tax breaks and privileged water and electricity supplies. Palestinians are ruled by a military-run Israeli civil administration, suffer land expropriations and home demolitions, receive few essential services and benefits enjoyed by Israeli settler colonists, and have no control over their daily lives and future. Since Palestinians form a slender majority in the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, Israel and its

friends can no longer project the myth that Israel is a democracy.

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