

# Political Incongruities in the Olympic Games. Apartheid South Africa, Fragmented Palestine

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*Victorious Olympic athletes are awarded medals, their national flags arise behind them, and the national anthem of the gold medalist plays. The athletes thus represent not just themselves but collective national pride before the world. But what if that pride is incongruous with national behavior in matters far more important than sports?*

*Such was the world’s judgment of apartheid South Africa, which was prohibited from Olympic participation [from 1964 through 1988](#).*

South Africa’s apartheid system was launched in 1948 to assure political and economic dominance by the White European settler-colonial population over the Black indigenous population. Citizens were classified by race, with Blacks dispossessed of properties and transferred into Blacks-only “townships” or “homelands” quickly labeled “bantustans” implying division into separate, fully autonomous nations replicating the India-Pakistan model with equal rights for all within each state. However, this 2-state vision was a cruel euphemism for segregation and disenfranchisement of Africa’s native peoples with Whites maintaining control of the land and resources while Blacks were confined to powerless, disconnected enclaves administered by Black collaborators.

Implementation of this plan extended across the next three decades without Black consent, with massive dislocations of the Black population. Meanwhile, South Africa’s institutions and public spaces became segregated to minimize inter-racial contact that might produce friendships, cooperative ventures, romance, and everyday relationships that risked evoking White awareness, empathy and conscience.

International condemnation of this suffocating racism led eventually to a [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions \(BDS\) movement](#) against the state, including exclusion from Olympic participation until early 1990s political transformation dismantled apartheid.

A simultaneous parallel movement, a different trajectory

Also launched in 1948, the European Zionist movement seized Palestine as British mandate

forces withdrew, leaving its disarmed indigenous population helpless against displacement and property confiscation by Zionist terrorist militias described by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé in his book based largely on declassified Israeli archives, "[The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine](#)."

Almost a million Palestinians were driven from their homes, businesses and communities and never allowed to return in defiance of UN Resolution 194, Articles 13 and 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Israel's own [pledges for its 1949 admission to the UN](#). Israel's UN ambassador Abba Eban assured the UN of its intentions to comply fully with the UN Charter, "the resolutions of the Assembly and the Security Council" and the UN's mission and principles of self-determination and equality (while offering excuses for its failure to yet do so). This pledge has remained unfulfilled, including UNGA resolutions 181 and 194 calling for return of Palestinian refugees, compensation for lost properties, and international administration of Jerusalem.

The takeover continued in 1967 with Israel's seizure of the West Bank and Gaza from Jordan and Egypt in the 6-day war falsely justified as defensive, a fabrication Menachem Begin admitted in a [1982 speech to Israel's National Defense College](#). The UN demanded Israeli withdrawal to no avail. Similarly, Israel not only illegally incorporated but is now relentlessly colonizing Palestinian East Jerusalem, ignoring 1980 [UNSC Resolution 478](#) declaring this "null and void." Their West Bank separation wall was [judged illegal in 2004](#) by the International Court of Justice but it remains nevertheless.

The UN Security Council has voted overwhelmingly 45 times to censure Israel, [each time vetoed by the US](#) while joined 44 times by no other member state. In numerous UN General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel, few members ever [vote against](#) these (only the US, Israel, and three South Pacific island US protectorates do so consistently).

Israel's human rights violations continue to parallel and arguably exceed those of apartheid South Africa. The Palestinian Arab population remaining after 1948 and 1967 have grown to some 6.5 million, [approximately equal to the Israeli Jewish population](#), living under flagrantly unequal conditions tightly controlled or trapped entirely by Israel.

A crushed and fragmented Palestine

A 20% Palestinian minority population of Israel lives under a [comprehensive set](#) of some 65 apartheid laws, denied numerous basic rights and liberties in virtually every significant area of life including property ownership restrictions and the 2018 [Jewish Nation-State Law](#) formally declaring Jewish supremacy and exclusive entitlement to the entire state.

A second population lives under undemocratic UN-designated "belligerent occupation" in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, separated by Jewish-only roads and physical barriers into non-contiguous enclaves (i.e., Bantustans), subjected to [Israeli military law](#) with Palestinian collaborators (the PA) in Areas A and B not under full Israeli "security." Although formally constrained by the [Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel violates this at will](#). Among dozens of other violations, this includes prohibition against moving its own population into occupied territory, which has continued unabated since 1967.

A third population lives in Gaza, where removal of Israeli settlers in 2005 cleared the way for a continuous modern replication of medieval siege warfare amplified by frequent direct military assaults, [compared with the Warsaw ghetto](#) by Princeton emeritus professor of

international law and UN rapporteur Richard Falk (who is Jewish). Gaza long ago eclipsed Soweto.

A [fourth](#) population of 2,350,000 remains within 27 impoverished refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, supported not by those who expelled them but by the rest of us through UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Who will discipline the spoiled children who never grow up?

Although comfortably self-sufficient, well-developed and prosperous, Israel is the largest single recipient of US foreign aid. Why? to support our democratic values? Israeli professor [Nurit Peled-Elhanon](#) thinks not. In a detailed [study](#), she documents flagrant racism in Israeli schoolbooks grossly distorting and obscuring Palestinian history and culture. She views this as preparing young Israelis for IDF violence, repression and degradation intended to obliterate an ancient Arab civilization from history.

I spoke with her brother Miko after a speaking engagement in Oregon where he recounted that he had grown up in Jerusalem not far from Palestinian neighborhoods, but had never met a Palestinian until moving to San Diego as an adult and joining a Middle East discussion group. Segregation and supremacy would appear to be a multi-generational Israeli intention.

South Africa matured morally, Israel still hasn't. But despite its long criticism as an international outlaw state, Israeli Olympic participation has never been excluded or made conditional on the same human rights reforms required of South Africa.

Perhaps today's BDS movement should be speaking with the IOC.

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