

OPINION

The Apartheid Lie and the Movement That Practices It



BY STEVE WINSTON

For decades, Israel has been accused of being an “apartheid state”. Alongside it, other grave accusations, “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing”, have been routinely levelled against Israel without basis in fact. These are not conclusions reached through careful legal or historical analysis. They are political weapons, chosen for their emotional force rather than their accuracy. The focus of this op-ed is not merely on the falsity of the apartheid charge, but on a deeper irony: those who deploy it are increasingly promoting patterns of exclusion that resemble apartheid themselves, directed not at Israel, but at Jews, Israelis, and supporters of Israel in their own societies.

This inversion has been especially stark since the Hamas massacres of 7 October. Those atrocities were filmed and celebrated by Hamas itself. Civilians were murdered, raped, and abducted. Yet in the immediate aftermath and beyond, weekly marches across Western cities did not centre on condemning terrorism, mourning its victims, or calling for the hostages to be returned. Instead, they were dominated by chants of “From the river to the sea” and “Globalise the intifada”, slogans that explicitly call for Israel’s eradication. Alongside them came repeated claims that Israel is an apartheid state, not as analysis, but as moral cover for demands that would end the world’s only Jewish state.

Language shapes behaviour. Branding Israel as uniquely evil casts those associated with it as morally suspect by extension. From there, exclusion is not an excess or a mistake. It becomes the objective.

The hypocrisy is striking. Within Israel’s internationally recognised borders, Arab citizens, Muslim and Christian, enjoy full civil and political rights. They vote, sit in the Knesset, serve across public life, and increasingly choose to volunteer for service in the Israel Defense Forces, including growing numbers of Muslim Arabs. Arabic retains recognised special status and is widely used. Israel debates

inequality openly, as democracies do. Apartheid states do not.

Yet while the allegation against Israel remains frozen in slogan form, the movement advancing it has moved steadily towards segregation elsewhere.

On university campuses, Jewish and Israeli students are singled out, harassed, and pressured to renounce Zionism as a condition of acceptance. Jewish symbols are hidden. Israeli accents become liabilities. Jews who support Israel are targeted precisely because they support Israel, which is to say because they reflect the overwhelming majority of world Jewry.

Jewish and Israeli academics face similar pressures. In October 2025, Israeli economist Michael Ben Gad was targeted during a lecture at City St George’s, University of London, after activists disrupted his class and threatened violence. Academic freedom, so often invoked, appears conditional when Jewish identity intersects with Israel.

Beyond campuses, the pattern becomes explicit. In Boston and Barcelona, activists produced online maps cataloguing Jewish institutions, synagogues, schools, charities, and businesses under the banner of identifying “Zionist influence”. These initiatives were defended as education. In reality, they served intimidation.

The UK is no exception to these trends. The same patterns of intimidation and exclusion seen elsewhere are seen here too. A Jewish MP was prevented from visiting a school in his own constituency. Israeli Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters were banned by a police force from attending a match, a decision that explicitly targeted Israeli fans and, by association, excluded Jewish supporters in the UK as well as non-Jewish fans who simply wished to support the team.

This is the central hypocrisy. Activists insist they oppose “Zionism”, not Jews. But as the Chief Rabbi has explained in his essay What is Zionism?, Zionism is an expression of Jewish peoplehood and self-determination. When Zionists are excluded, Jews are excluded.

These dynamics do not arise in a vacuum. Much contemporary anti-Israel activism draws on ideological currents linked to Islamist movements such as the

Muslim Brotherhood. While not formally aligned with Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, they are ideological bedfellows in hostility to Israel and Western democratic norms. That is why the National Jewish Assembly (NJA) and We Believe In Israel (WBII) are campaigning for the proscription of both organisations in the UK, given their influence here.

If apartheid is to retain any moral meaning, it cannot be weaponised to excuse discrimination. Israel does

not practice apartheid. Yet many of those who shout the word loudest are constructing one of their own, through intimidation and exclusion. That is the apartheid lie, and it is being enforced not in Israel, but in the West, against Jewish communities told to hide, recant, or be pushed out.

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