

Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Israel reacts to 'apartheid' label from Amnesty International

Rights group has said the treatment of Palestinians amounts to systematic oppression



A Jewish settlement visible beyond Israel's separation barrier: Amnesty's assessment stemmed from a five-year analysis of civilian and military law © AP

Mehul Srivastava in Tel Aviv YESTERDAY

Israel's treatment of Palestinians, including those with Israeli nationality, amounts to systematic oppression and apartheid, Amnesty International said in a report released on Tuesday.

The rights group claims Israeli laws, both within the state and in the territories it occupies, meet the internationally accepted definition of apartheid, bringing Amnesty in line with Human Rights Watch, the Israeli rights group B'Tselem and dozens of Palestinian non-governmental organisations.

The [report](#) drew immediate charges of anti-Semitism from the Israeli government, which said Amnesty's "extremist language . . . will pour fuel on to the fire of anti-Semitism" and could lead to violence against Jews around the world.

"Amnesty isn't a human rights organisation but just another radical organisation which echoes propaganda without seriously checking the facts," Yair Lapid, foreign minister, stated on video on Monday night, before the report was released. "Instead of seeking the truth, Amnesty echoes the same lies shared by terrorist organisations."

Gideon Sa'ar, justice minister, said Amnesty was "whitewashing terror" and ignoring the plight of two Israeli civilians held captive by the militant group Hamas.

The apartheid claims are not new: Palestinians have tried for decades to bring the

Jimmy Carter, the former US president, reached the same assessment in a 2006 book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, attracting the same charge of anti-Semitism from pro-Israel organisations in the US.

Amnesty's assessment stemmed from a five-year analysis of Israeli civilian law, which governs 2mn Palestinians who hold Israeli nationality, and military law, which governs millions more living in the occupied West Bank. It also examined the blockaded Gaza Strip, where another 2mn Palestinians are hemmed in.

The group's report did not present any new evidence but said longstanding discrimination was part of Israeli state policy to perpetuate a Jewish hegemony at the expense of the Arab population.

It asked the International Criminal Court, which is carrying out a preliminary examination of what it describes as "the situation in Palestine", to include the international crime of apartheid in its investigations.

"Israel has imposed a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians wherever it exercises control over the enjoyment of their rights," the report said.

"The segregation is conducted in a systematic and highly institutionalised manner through laws, policies and practices, all intended to prevent Palestinians from claiming and enjoying equal rights to Jewish Israelis within Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories, and thus intended to oppress and dominate the Palestinian people."

While population numbers in the occupied territories are disputed, experts believe the number of Jews and Arabs living between the Mediterranean and the river Jordan — the area that Israel controls — to be roughly equal.

That differs from the South African model of apartheid, which resulted in a much smaller white minority ruling over the black majority.

Amnesty said its analysis did not see the Israeli system as "analogous" to that of apartheid South Africa, but Palestinian activists have long hoped to spur the kind of international boycotts that stigmatised apartheid South Africa.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement has struggled to gain traction and

