

The Zionist Entity: Apartheid System

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR ISRAEL SHAHAK

The following interview by Dr. Israel Shahak was given in occupied Jerusalem in February 1975 to Intercontinental Press. Dr. Shahak settled in Palestine in 1945 as a refugee from the Bergen concentration camp. He was a supporter of Zionism until his views were changed by his experiences in the army during and after the June 1967 war. The Zionist aggressive war and its immense psychological and social impact upon Arabs and Jews increased Dr. Shahak's awareness of the calamity of the human rights situation in occupied Palestine and the newly occupied territories.

Q. In the mass media in the United States and in most West European countries "Israel" is portrayed as a democratic society. What is your opinion?

A. My opinion is that this is the greatest deception of the twentieth century, and I am not speaking about hidden matters, I am speaking about completely official matters. "Israel" is about as apartheid as South Africa in reality. It is simply more hypocritical and more able to shape United States public opinion.

For example, take the official statistical abstract of "Israel" for 1974, which is issued by the "Israeli" Bureau of Statistics. If you open it at any table, let's say the table of births, deaths, infant deaths, and so on, you'll see that officially in "Israel" there are no "Israelis". This is the first deception. When the New York Times or other United States papers use the word "Israeli", they are lying, because inside "Israel" there are no "Israelis". There are Jews, and non Jews.

When "Israeli" statistics report how many infants have died in "Israel", you will not find any statistics about "Israeli" infants. You will find Jewish infants and you will find non Jewish infants. Sometimes you will find a total or a grand total. You will never find "Israelis".

And it is not only for infants. If you look, for example, at the statistics on "Israeli" potatoes, you will see potatoes from Jewish farms, and you will see potatoes from non-Jewish farms. There are no "Israeli" potatoes in "Israel". This is the definition of the Jewish state.

This isn't the only thing. If you go any place where there are so-called twin cities, like Nazareth and New Nazareth, you will see that the old Nazareth is an open city. Anyone can come, buy or sell or by agreement can dwell there. But in New Nazareth, the so-called Upper Nazareth, to obtain a flat you have to bring proof that you are a Jew.

A society in which such a thing is required for more than 90 percent of its inhabited areas has no other name than an apartheid society. Exactly the same proof is required in Johannesburg. The only difference is that people know about Johannesburg, but not about Nazareth.

This goes for many areas too. For example, you have now an official plan in "Israel" for what is called the "Judaization" of Galilee. This means that the government thinks there are too many Arabs in Galilee, so it has decided officially and openly to confiscate some of their land, convert it into pure Jewish land, and settle only Jews there.

Q. What about discrimination in the area of schooling at the pre-university level?

A. First of all there are two completely separate school systems in "Israel", a Hebrew one and an Arabic one. They are separated in statistics, as I said before, but they are also separated in other things.

First of all, the Arab school system is heavily discriminated against in every material area: no buildings; or, bad buildings; almost no laboratories; bad teachers; bad teachers-aides.

The most important discrimination is in the area of schooling itself. The Arab students have to learn an enormous amount of Hebrew literature — including Hebrew religious material, the Bible, the Talmud, and so on — as well as Zionist literature, both in Hebrew and in Arabic translations. The Koran is taught less than 10 percent of the time allotted to the Old Testament. All Arabic literature written after the year 1800 is prohibited.

Even from the older literature there is a very heavy concentration on poems praising the beauties of nature and so on. All poems that can be interpreted as nationalistic, even in a remote way, are prohibited. Most European literature and all Asian literature — the literature of classical China for example — is also prohibited. They have to learn Hebrew literature instead. And of course they have to pass examinations in it. If they do not pass them they are prohibited from going any further.

Q. What is the situation in schools in the big cities, where there are both Arab and Jewish communities?

A. Completely separated. There is a school for Arabs, and there is a school for Jews. Jews are completely prohibited from sending their children to Arab schools, but Arabs can sometimes obtain permits to send their children to a Jewish school. Not in their own area, however, but in a different area, especially to a school in a different village, where there will be one Arab in a class of about a hundred Jews. Even this needs very special permission.

Q. What about discrimination in jobs?

A. Here the discrimination is like that in the United States. There is no legal discrimination, but you will find hardly any Arabs in what are called the nicer jobs. The Arabs predominate in three kinds of jobs. First, unskilled agricultural work. Second, unskilled or semiskilled construction work. Third, the lower-paying jobs in services, such as washing dishes.

Q. When the Arab people protest against these conditions, what oppression do they face?

A. Inside "Israel" the oppression of Arabs takes several aspects. First of all, one has to remember that in the so-called sole democracy in the Middle East we still have the defense regulations of 1945 by which the military authorities can arrest, imprison, exile, or

limit the movement of any "Israeli." However, these regulations are employed solely against Arabs. No "Israeli" Jew, including those who advocate terror, will ever be, let's say, exiled or imprisoned without trial. But many Arabs who advocate co-operation with Jews, or who are leftist, are imprisoned or exiled without trial.

For example, when an Arab friend of mine began to just sympathize with a group he was arrested without trial and given thirty-five days in a punishment cell in complete isolation without books or reading material. I should point out that punishment cells in "Israeli" prisons are especially horrible. The size can be something like one yard by two and a half yards, which means that the bed or lying space on the floor takes up nearly all the cell. The place where the man has to make use of the toilet is also inside this cell.

Practically every Arab who becomes sympathetic to any leftist group faces something similar. For example, take what is happening right now with another of my friends — Nafî Salim — a poet in the village of Pekyis. He is a truck driver, and the truck he operates is from the town of Acre. A few months ago he received an order forbidding him to leave his village, so of course he cannot operate his truck. He cannot even go to Acre to bring it back home. He has six children and now has to live on the charity of his neighbours. All this not only without a trial, but without a charge. There are literally thousands of such examples.

Q. Can you give any current examples of persecution suffered by Arab dissenters?

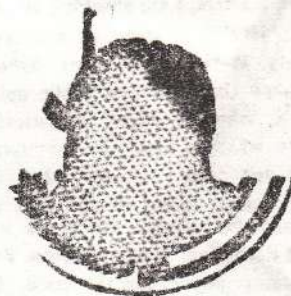
A. Yes. In Tel Aviv University there is an especially active radical committee of Arab students, and the following means of repression were employed against them.

Three members of the committee while walking on one of the main streets of Tel Aviv were suddenly stopped by the police. They were ordered to strip down to their underpants in the middle of the street, taken to a building that is not a police station and beaten. I would call it torture, really, because they were beaten around their genitals. They were then turned loose and warned that if they continued to be active in the committee, they could expect similar treatment in the future.

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