

# Palestinian ambassador to Denmark: apartheid is a reality and the Israeli smokescreen is fading

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*By Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark.*

On May 26, Benny Dagan, the Israeli ambassador to Denmark, wrote a column in Berlingske, which can best be described as a smear campaign against Politiken and a direct attack on the free media, which performs its role by describing reality and the Israeli apartheid regime. But people see through the lies and the Israeli smoke is fading without a doubt.

Sadly, I am not surprised by the ambassador's rhetoric, as it has become the standard for Israel to throw around words like anti-Semitism when media criticism is accurate and factual. Being exposed as an apartheid regime is a serious concern and in that sense I understand the frustration. But Ambassador Dagan and Israel need to wake up and face the realities; Israel's modus operandi has become an apartheid regime that carries out systematic ethnic cleansing and oppresses the entire Palestinian population with violence and discriminatory legislation.

What really set in motion the recent onslaught on Gaza is the extensive ethnic cleansing process in Sheikh Jarrah and the displacement of 78 people from their houses in a district situated in the heart of occupied East Jerusalem. Moreover, the village Silwan situated at the southern part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is exposed to the same discriminatory Israeli conduct.

For decades, the Israeli government and Jerusalem's municipal authorities have pursued a policy aimed at increasing the Jewish demographic presence in the city and restricting population growth of the Palestinian society. In fact, this meant expanding Jerusalem's borders and building Jewish settlements to the east of the city. However, over the past decade right-wing groups and settlers backed by the Israeli government have also spearheaded efforts to increase the Jewish presence by expelling Palestinians residents living in the heart of East Jerusalem - including the Sheikh Jarrah.

This is implemented through an Israeli discriminatory law that dictates Jews can reclaim property owned in East Jerusalem before 1948. However, this law does not apply to Palestinians, which contravenes with international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Recently, 14 families were forcibly displaced and replaced by Israeli settlers, while another 175 families are at risk of losing their homes as a result of this discriminatory law.

This, combined with Israeli security forces' attacks on Palestinian civilians in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the middle of Ramadan, which was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

From here we know the story; Hamas is launching rockets at Israel to show resistance and Israel responds by bombing the civilian population in Gaza - or 'mowing the grass', as it is popularly called in Israel.

Ambassador Dagan also attacks the 'political left', which in his own words is "known for their massive and persistent criticism of Israel and the lack of condemnation of Hamas". Firstly, all parties in Danish politics condemn Hamas. There is nothing new in that. Secondly, I must inform Ambassador Dagan that criticism of Israel today comes from all corners of the Danish parliament, let alone from the international community.

On May 27, 2021, a large majority in Parliament reached an agreement to work actively to stop the illegal Israeli blockade in Gaza and support an independent investigation into the war crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This majority did not only consist of what Benny Dagan refers to as 'the political left'. On the contrary, the agreement included the Socialist People's Party, the Social Liberals, the Red Green Alliance, the Social Democrats, the Liberal Party, the Conservative People's Party and the Liberal Alliance. This is a broad agreement, which include parties that have previously tended to succumb to Israeli lobbying and propaganda machine.

But recent events in Palestine, and especially in Gaza, have exposed Israel for what it is; an apartheid and rogue regime. That is why more parties in the Danish parliament are now putting their foot down and calling a spade a spade.

In fact, it is not just parliaments and governments that have started rejecting Israeli propaganda and the mere pack of lies. Very interestingly, people of Jewish faith and even former Israeli soldiers are popping up everywhere to distance themselves from Israel in the wake of the recent Israeli naked aggression. They simply reject Israel as a representative of the Jewish people, which is otherwise something Israel and the far-right government of Netanyahu have boasted of being.

In a world where violence and oppression are being documented massively through social media, it is no longer possible to perpetuate the misleading Israeli narrative. So even though Israel during the recent bombing of Gaza destroyed the building that houses international media, the truth is leaking out through other very visual and virtual channels. Consequently, Israeli fabrication of lies is exposed and the smokescreen is fading into the dustbin of history.