

OPINION

Letter: Stop the Palestinian 'apartheid'

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Since 1980, the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights has opposed apartheid. We write now, 40 years later, in anguished protest of the rise of apartheid again — not in Africa, but in Israel-occupied Palestinian lands. Trump's "deal of the century" officially endorses Palestinian "bantustans," holding Palestinians in open-air prisons, in perpetuity, surrounded by Israeli territory.

The plan would transfer to Israel: East Jerusalem, the intended capitol of an independent Palestinian state; all Israeli West Bank "settlements," including Ariel, built on and controlling the West Bank's largest aquifer; and the West Bank's most fertile land: the Jordan Valley, the Palestinian "breadbasket." The plan gravely violates Palestinian rights under international law, including U.N. Res. 242, making an occupying power's seizure of occupied land unlawful.



Israeli soldiers fire tear gas towards Palestinians during clashes in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, Thursday, Feb. 6, 2020. Israeli forces have killed two Palestinians in clashes in the occupied West Bank and a third in Jerusalem after he opened fire at a police officer. (Photo: Mahmoud Illean, AP)

What's left for Palestinians are three isolated islands, separated fully from each other by east/west belts of Israeli settlements, each running entirely across the designated Palestinian West Bank areas; Gaza; and two isolated enclaves on the Egyptian border.

The Gaza Strip is deemed presently uninhabitable by the U.N.

Palestinians win no freedom of movement; Israel retains checkpoints and broad "security" powers over Palestinians, including even children going to and from school when not barred by IDF soldiers, armed to the teeth, who arbitrarily deny passage. They would still be barred from traveling on the Israeli-only roads connecting Israeli West Bank settlements with jobs and society within Israel.

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The plan tells Palestinians to build a tunnel or bridge to travel between Gaza and the West Bank, a distance of nearly 40 miles at the closest point. And Palestine would remain barred from creating a Palestinian army, rendering it helpless against attack.

Yet the U.S., including such major news media as the New York Times and Washington Post, urges Palestinians to accept this "deal," reasoning that nothing better may be forthcoming.

But the "deal of the century" accepts Israeli crimes against Palestinians as a permissible status quo; it becomes acceptable to force Palestinians to demilitarize but not Israel, and for Palestinians to give up their right of return, while Israel gets 20% of the West Bank on top of the 78% of historic Palestine.

We refuse to remain silent in the face of such injustice — an act of hypocrisy and bullying against a powerless indigenous community and culture facing extinction. Palestinians deserve dignity, freedom and equality, just as Israeli Jews do.

Barbara Harvey, board member, Michigan Coalition for Human Rights

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