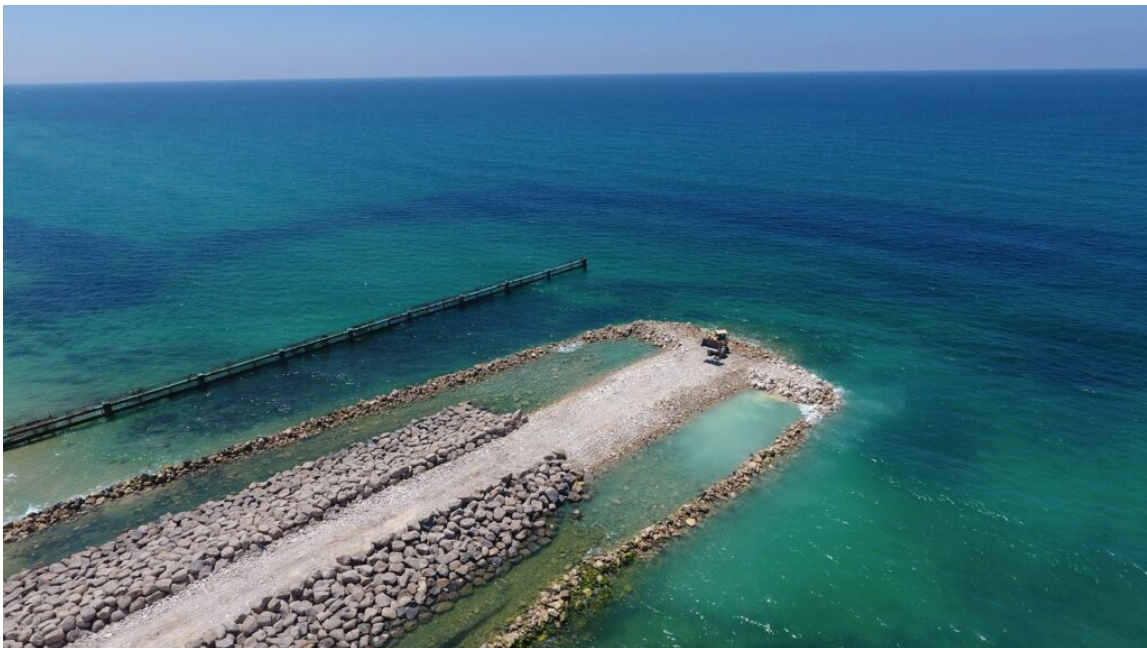


Against all Apartheid Regimes: From the Occupation of Palestine to Global Borders

Contre tous les régimes d'apartheid :
De l'occupation de la Palestine aux
frontières globales

A declaration of solidarity by Border Forensics, November 2023



Israel's underwater barrier at Zikim beach approximately three kilometres from Gaza's northern frontier. Image © Ministry of Defense Israel

While violence has been structural to the regime imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people since 1948, the last weeks have seen an unprecedented escalation. On the 7th of October 2023, the Hamas forces cut across the Gaza fence. This fence delimits the blockade Israel has imposed on Gaza for 16 years, which has turned Gaza into an open-air prison and violated the most fundamental rights of the Palestinians of Gaza. While it will take time to know precisely how the events unfolded, we do know that during Hamas' military operation more than 1,200 civilians, mostly Israeli citizens, were killed in often horrifying acts of violence, while around 240 hostages were taken back to Gaza. Since then, claiming the right to defend itself, Israel has unleashed a high intensity war against Gaza, with the full support of states of the global north. While Israel claims to target Hamas so as to neutralise the threat it constitutes, it is in effect attacking disproportionately the population of Gaza, which was uniformly described by the Israeli Defence Minister as "human animals". To date, more than 13,000 people have been killed, and the horrendous violence we are witnessing shows no sign of decreasing. We mourn all lives, especially civilians, that have been lost over the last month and before due to the violence and counter-violence that is generated by the occupation of Palestine.

Border Forensics' team follows with anguish and anger the current flaring up of violence. Our diverse team includes Israeli and Jewish members, as well as a Palestinian member, who are thus directly affected. Furthermore, all our team members have in common the aim to strive towards freedom, equality, and justice for all, and our opposition to all forms of oppression. We recognize a deep resonance and continuity between the violence of the Israeli occupation and the violence of borders we document and contest through our investigations.

In addition to the Holocaust that led to the death of 6 million Jews at the hands of the Nazi regime, the racist closure of the borders of European states and of the United States of America to Jews fleeing persecution contributed to making the prospect of Jews living in dignity and security in Europe and North America more distant. As a result, founding a state for Jewish people in the former British Mandate of Palestine was perceived as a necessity by more Jewish refugees. The closure of borders in the past, which we oppose in the present, has thus played an important role in the very foundation of Israel in Palestine.

After expelling more than 700,000 Palestinians in 1948, Jews inherited and further advanced British colonial policies, ultimately imposing an apartheid regime on Palestinian people with varying elements in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. While the nature of this regime has long been apparent to Palestinian intellectuals and activists, the reality of apartheid has now been increasingly recognized, including by leading human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Palestinians are denied the recognition of collective self-determination and equal rights. A range of practices are designed to systematically keep them apart from and inferior in relation to Israeli Jews, including through differential rights to mobility. This case of apartheid resonates with the apartheid-like mobility regime which powerful states impose on the basis of citizenship, class and race on most people of the global south. We recognize this regime as foundational to the changing forms of border violence we document and oppose.

The resonance we see between the Israeli apartheid and the global mobility apartheid is lived as a continuity in the trajectories of numerous Palestinian refugees we have met during our investigations over the last years. Whether they attempt to cross the Mediterranean, the Balkans or Eastern Europe, Europe's borders continue to deny Palestinians their rights, and their rights to mobility in particular, just like the apartheid regime they escaped. Even after they have reached European soil, many remain for extended periods of time without the full recognition of their right to stay and work, joining other people of the global south as Europe's second-class citizens.

As a result of the resonances and continuities between the apartheid regime imposed on Palestinians and the inequality experienced by illegalised migrants from the global south and other negatively racialised subjects, feelings of solidarity with Palestinians are widespread among them. However, the blanket equation of expressions of solidarity with Palestine with antisemitism we are witnessing across Europe and the global north is denying the legitimacy of these sentiments and experiences. The policing of the boundaries of freedom of speech in relation to Palestine is thus also having the effect of reinforcing the racial borders that already cut across societies of the global north.

As an organisation we recognize the continuity between the apartheid regime imposed on Palestinians and the hierarchisation of rights and lives imposed through the violent border regimes we oppose across the global north. From the different locations and paths of solidarity of our members, we see it as our duty to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and with those who are denied the right to express that solidarity. Antisemitism is a real phenomena and should be opposed wherever it manifests itself, as all other forms of racism. It should not, however, be conflated with demands for national liberation, equality, or justice. We condemn the legitimisation of the massacre of the people of Gaza by states of the global north and join all voices that demand an immediate ceasefire and an end to the violence against Palestinians. We believe such a ceasefire should be attached to a prisoner swap and the return of hostages. We further join the voices that demand the full recognition of the lives, dignity and rights of Palestinian people, and ultimately their liberation from colonial oppression. We believe this to be the condition for a just peace between Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews, from the river to the sea.

We call for transnational solidarity across and against apartheid regimes, wherever their politics and infrastructures of separation materialise.

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