

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**March 30, 2017**



*Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

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The six featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on an UNESCWA report which concluded that the State of Israel has established an apartheid regime; Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesperson's response to the report in which he compares it to a Nazi propaganda publication that was strongly anti-Semitic; the U.S. calling on the United Nations to withdraw this report; the resignation of UN Under-Secretary General and ESCWA Executive Secretary Rima Khalaf following pressure from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to withdraw the report; reflections by Peter Falk on the report and reactions to it; and many links to other articles of interest. Links to recent CMEP Bulletins are also provided.

**Commentary:** For centuries people held the belief that the sun revolved around the earth, until objective facts proving the opposite were finally accepted. Initially those offering such facts were ignored, ridiculed, and condemned. This issue of the Middle East Notes focuses on the crime of apartheid to which the government of Israel stands accused by an array of objective facts. The messengers of these facts are likewise being ignored, ridiculed, and condemned rather than the facts presented being refuted. Personal beliefs and emotional appeals ("post truth") continue to be used in an attempt to control public opinion.

- A report by UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Rima Khalaf concluded that Israel has established an apartheid regime.
- Haaretz notes that this report is the first time a UN body has stated the charge of apartheid against Israel.
- Haaretz also reports that the United States called on the United Nations to withdraw this report.
- Ali Abunimah in Electronic Intifada states that Rima Khalaf resigned, following pressure from Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to withdraw the landmark report.
- Ma'am News Agency states that the report, now withdrawn, concluded that Israel is guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt" of imposing apartheid policies upon Palestinians.
- Richard Falk in The Nation writes reflections on the report made by himself and Virginia Tilley noting the degree to which Israel's supporters, in response to criticism, have sought to discredit the messengers rather than address the message.

**1) [ESCWA Launches Report on Israeli Practices Towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid](#) Beirut, Lebanon, March 15, 2017**

"United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Rima Khalaf pointed out today that it is not an easy matter for a United Nations entity to conclude that a State has established an apartheid regime. In recent years, some have labelled Israeli practices as racist, while others have warned that Israel risks becoming an apartheid State. A few have raised the question as to whether in fact it already has." ...

"Khalaf noted that Israel, encouraged by the international community's disregard for its continual violations of international law, has succeeded over the past decades in imposing and maintaining an apartheid regime that works on two levels. First, the political and geographic fragmentation of the Palestinian people which enfeebles their capacity for resistance and makes it almost impossible for them to change the reality on the ground. Secondly, the

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oppression of all Palestinians through an array of laws, policies and practices that ensure domination of them by a racial group and serve to maintain the regime.” ...

“Khalaf maintained that the report shows that there can be no solution, be it in the form of two States, or following any other regional or international approach, as long as the apartheid regime imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people as a whole has not been dismantled.” ...

“The report was prepared, at the request of ESCWA, by two specialists renowned for their expertise in the field: Richard Falk, a former United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University; and Virginia Tilley, a researcher and professor of political science at Southern Illinois University with a wealth of experience in Israeli policy analysis.” ...

## **2) [In First, UN Agency Accuses Israel of Being an 'Apartheid Regime'](#), Haaretz , Reuters, March 16, 2017**

“A UN agency published a report on Wednesday accusing Israel of imposing an ‘apartheid regime’ of racial discrimination on the Palestinian people, and said it was the first time a UN body had clearly made the charge.” ...

“The report concluded ‘Israel has established an apartheid regime that dominates the Palestinian people as a whole.’ The accusation - often directed at Israel by its critics - is fiercely rejected by Israel.

“UN Under-Secretary General and ESCWA Executive Secretary Rima Khalaf said the report was the ‘first of its type’ from a U.N. body that ‘clearly and frankly concludes that Israel is a racist state that has established an apartheid system that persecutes the Palestinian people.’”

“The United States, an ally of Israel, said it was outraged by the report. ‘The United Nations secretariat was right to distance itself from this report, but it must go further and withdraw the report altogether,’ the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said in a statement.”

## **3) [U.S. Urges U.N. to Withdraw Report Accusing Israel of Apartheid](#), Haaretz, March 16, 2017**

“The United States called on the United Nations to withdraw a report that accused Israel of committing apartheid against the Palestinians.

“The U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia — an agency based in Beirut, Lebanon, and comprised of 18 Arab member states, including what is identified as the State of Palestine — released the report Wednesday. In its conclusion, the report says it ‘establishes, on the basis of scholarly inquiry and overwhelming evidence, that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid.’”

“The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations called on Guterres to directly reject the report.

“‘This latest outrage perpetrated against Israel by a U.N. body must not be allowed to stand,’ said a statement quoting the Presidents Conference chairman, Stephen Greenberg, and executive vice president, Malcolm Hoenlein. ‘Secretary General Guterres should unambiguously reject the ESCWA report and undertake to prevent similar unwarranted attacks in the future.

4) [UN official resigns after pressure to withdraw Israel apartheid report](#), [Ali Abunimah](#), [Electronic Intifada](#),  
March 17, 2017

“A senior United Nations official has resigned, following pressure from Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to withdraw the landmark report published earlier this week finding Israel guilty of apartheid.

“Rima Khalaf, the head of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) which published the report, announced her resignation at a press conference in Beirut on Friday.

“Reuters reports that Khalaf took the step ‘after what she described as pressure from the secretary-general to withdraw a report accusing Israel of imposing an ‘apartheid regime’ on Palestinians.’

“‘I resigned because it is my duty not to conceal a clear crime, and I stand by all the conclusions of the report,’ Khalaf stated.” ...

“Khalaf’s resignation indicates that Guterres acted obediently and swiftly to carry out the orders from the United States. In a [tweet](#), the Anti-Defamation League, a powerful Israel lobby group in the United States, thanked Guterres for urging ESCWA to withdraw the report.” ...

“‘The fact that a UN secretary general has bowed to threats and intimidation from the Trump administration to protect Israel from accountability, yet again, is hardly news,’ the BNC said. ‘The real news is that this time round, Israel, with all its influence in Washington, cannot put the genie back into the bottle.’

“‘Palestinians are deeply grateful to ESCWA’s director, Dr. Rima Khalaf, who preferred to resign in dignity than to surrender her principles to US-Israeli bullying,’ the BNC added.” ...

See also:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=qMjOWQa61979107113aqMjOWQ>

[Ashrawi denounces UN decision to remove ESCWA report on Israeli apartheid](#)

5) [Head of UN agency resigns following report accusing Israel of being ‘apartheid’ state](#), [Ma’an News Agency](#),  
March 18, 2017

“UN Under-Secretary General and ESCWA Executive Secretary Rima Khalaf said she resigned following pressure from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to withdraw a report, Reuters news agency reported Friday evening.

“ESCWA, which comprises 18 Arab states, had said it was the first time a UN body had clearly [accused Israel of being an apartheid regime](#). ‘Aware of the seriousness of this allegation, the authors of the report conclude that available evidence establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Israel is guilty of policies and practices that constitute the crime of apartheid as legally defined in instruments of international law,’ an executive summary of the report read.”

“‘Based on that, I submitted to him my resignation from the United Nations,’ Khalaf reportedly said.

“Nonetheless, Khalaf stood by the report, calling it the “first of its kind” from a UN agency that sheds light on ‘the crimes that Israel continues to commit against the Palestinian people, which amount to war crimes against humanity.’

“The report, which Khalaf had said had been prepared at the request of ESCWA member states, was no longer visible on the commission's website on Friday.”

6) [The Inside Story on Our UN Report Calling Israel an Apartheid State](#), Richard Falk, The Nation, March 22, 2017

“Six months ago, the UN’s Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) asked Virginia Tilley and me to write a study examining the applicability of the international criminal law concept of apartheid to Israel’s policies and practices toward the Palestinian people. We were glad to accept the assignment, and conceived of our role as engaging in an academic undertaking. ESCWA, one of several UN regional commissions, requested the study as a result of an uncontested motion adopted by its 18 Arab member governments.

“Almost within hours of its release on March 15, our report was greeted by what can only be described as hysteria. The US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, denounced it and demanded that the UN repudiate it. The newly elected secretary general, António Guterres, quickly and publicly called for ESCWA to withdraw the report from its website, and when Rima Khalaf, the head of the commission, resisted, Guterres insisted. Rather than comply, Khalaf resigned. Soon thereafter, the report was withdrawn from the commission’s website, despite its having been published with a disclaimer noting that it represents the views of its authors and not necessarily that of ESCWA or the UN.” ...

“ To my surprise, I never received substantive pushback regarding my allegations, but I did have the unpleasant experience of having my words on unrelated issues torn out of context.” ...

“In the past, a thorough study by international law scholars found that Israel’s practices in the occupied Palestinian territories are consistent with apartheid. (First domain)” ...

“A second domain investigated in the report involves Palestinians who are residents of Jerusalem.” ...

“The third domain concerns the Palestinian minority living in Israel.” ...

“A fourth domain, and the one affecting the largest demographic segment, is made up of Palestinians registered as refugees by UN procedures or living under conditions of involuntary exile.” ...

“From the perspective of international law, the crime of apartheid has been detached from its historical origins in South Africa. Neither the 1973 Convention nor the 1998 Rome Statute underlying the International Criminal Court ties apartheid to South Africa, but rather treats its practice as a stand-alone crime against humanity.” ...

“It remains our central hope, one shared by ESCWA, that the widespread availability of the report will lead to a clearer understanding of the Palestinian plight and encourage more effective responses by the UN, by governments, and by civil society. Beyond this, it is our continuing wish that people of good will throughout the world, especially within Israel, will work toward a political solution that will finally allow Jews and Palestinians to live together in peace, with justice.” ...

See also:

[Ashrawi denounces UN decision to remove ESCWA report on Israeli apartheid](#)

[Palestinians denounce UN decision to remove report accusing Israel of apartheid](#)

**CMEP Bulletin – [Wanted: Sustainable and Real Peace](#) March 17, 2017**

Some Links from this Bulletin:

[At 15, He was Shot in the Back by an Israeli Soldier. Now this Palestinian has Dedicated His Life to Peace \[The Washington Post\]](#)

[Trump’s Team Should Avoid the Settlements Vortex \[Israel Policy Forum\]](#)

[Trump Tells Saudis: I Have Strong Desire to Reach Comprehensive, Just Israeli-Palestinian Deal \[Haaretz\]](#)

[Most Palestinians Barely See Chance for Two-state Solution Under Trump, Poll Shows \[Haaretz\]](#)

[The Double Oppression of Gaza’s Women \[+972\]](#)

[Swiss Lower House Votes to Defund Pro-BDS Groups \[The Times of Israel\]](#)

[New Israel Law Bars Foreign Critics From Entering the Country \[The New York Times\]](#)

**CMEP Bulletin - [\[Bulletin\] Politicians Argue Over Report. Gazan's Live the Reality.](#) March 24, 2017**

Some links from this Bulletin:

[US Boycotts UN Discussion on Israeli Human Rights Abuses \[The Times of Israel\]](#)

[Senior U.N. Official Quits After 'Apartheid' Israel Report Pulled \[Reuters\]](#) [Click here to read the executive summary](#) and [here to read the full report](#).

[Opinion We, the Women of Gaza, Face a Concrete Ceiling \[Haaretz\]](#)

[How Israel Uses Gas to Enforce Palestinian Dependency and Promote Normalization \[Al - Shabaka\]](#)

[Are Trump’s Israeli-Palestinian Peace Efforts Not Getting Enough Credit? \[Israel Policy Forum\]](#)

[US Asked Israel to Halt Building Outside Settlement Blocs, Impose Quota: Report \[i24News\]](#)

[Why Netanyahu Won’t Attend this Year's AIPAC Conference \[Al - Monitor\]](#)

[In Bid to Expel Arab MK, Israel Manages to Break Its Own Record \[+972\]](#)

[A Lifetime Achievement Award for Normalizing Settlements \[+972\]](#)