

# WHY ISRAELI APARTHEID IS A QUEER ISSUE

## ISRAELI APARTHEID

The term “Israeli apartheid” is not a rhetorical slogan. It is a fact on the ground confirmed in a major study by South Africa’s national Human Sciences Research Council<sup>1</sup>. The term has been used by anti-apartheid heroes such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former US President Jimmy Carter, and former Israeli Minister of Education Shulamit Aloni, among others, and is widely employed in debate in Israel.

## ISRAELI APARTHEID IS A QUEER ISSUE BECAUSE:

### *Queer rights are human rights*

Since queer people are everywhere we are directly affected by human rights violations on the basis of race, gender, nationality, etc. For this reason queer activists have always been present in a range of human rights struggles, from the original struggle against South African apartheid, to women’s right to choose, to fights against racism. Queer Palestinians must fight against homophobia and transphobia in their own society and a brutal Israeli occupation. Supporting them is a queer issue.

### *The Pinkwashing campaign*

Since the decriminalization of homosexuality in Israel in 1988, Israeli queers have overcome government and religious resistance and have won important rights in a number of court cases. Now, the Israeli government is cynically trying to portray the country as an oasis of gay tolerance in the Middle East. It is using the rights that it once opposed as part of its propaganda efforts to deflect attention away from its abysmal human rights record toward Palestinians. It is important for queer communities around the world to be informed of, and resist, being used in this campaign.

The political gains of some queer communities in Israel shouldn’t obscure the suffering and the dispossession of millions of Palestinians. We must not let ourselves be implicated in Israel’s illegal occupation, ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

### *Palestinian Queers have no rights under occupation*

The rights won by Israeli queers do not extend to the occupied territories. The territories are under Israeli military law which controls almost every aspect of people’s daily lives. Israel’s apartheid pass system and the apartheid wall make it impossible for Palestinian queers to access the community life available to Israelis. As the Palestinian queer groups Aswat and AlQaws have stated, “As Palestinian queers, our struggle relates to social injustices caused by the discrimination that is deeply rooted in Israel’s policies and practices against the Palestinian people, straight and gay alike.”

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<sup>1</sup>South Africa Human Sciences Research Council. *Occupation, Colonialism, Apartheid*. May 2009. <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Document-3230.phtml>