

W H A T I S

APARTHEID!

Apartheid is the Afrikaans word for “**separateness**.”

Afrikaaners are the descendants of early Dutch settlers in South Africa. They were later conquered by the English, who seized control of South Africa in 1806. When the country became independent in 1948, Afrikaners made up the majority of the country’s White population. More than 80% of the country’s population was Black.

In order to maintain their control of the country, the White population introduced official policies of **racial segregation**. Black people were forced out of “White” areas and moved to “Bantustans.” They lost the right to vote since they were no longer considered citizens. Blacks needed special passes to enter White areas. Indians and Coloureds also had their own areas. All non-Whites faced varying degrees of discrimination, but South Africa claimed it was still a democracy, since there were regular elections for Parliament among the White population.

White South Africans justified apartheid as a necessity in order to protect their unique culture and to defend themselves against the hostile surrounding Black populations.

THE THREE PILLARS OF APARTHEID WERE:

A **registration system** that classified all South Africans in four “racial groups”—Black, White, Coloured, and Indian.

Unequal treatment on the basis of these categories that ensured that those classified as White maintained political and economic control.

A **system of repression** including the army, the police and the courts to suppress anyone resisting their unequal treatment.

In 1973, the **United Nations** General Assembly declared **apartheid a crime**, and defined it as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”

The Israeli government uses the Hebrew word **Hafrada**, to describe its separation policies.

In 2009, **South Africa’s Human Sciences Research Council** published the results of an extensive study by a team of international scholars of the Israel-Palestine situation and concluded that “Israel, since 1967, has been the belligerent Occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and that its occupation of these territories has become a colonial enterprise which implements a system of apartheid.”¹

¹Human Sciences Research Council. *Occupation, Colonialism, Apartheid? A re-assessment of Israel’s practices in the occupied Palestinian territories under international law. Executive Summary.* <http://www.scribd.com/doc/24033521/May-2009-Study-Occupation-Colonialism-Apartheid-Human-Sciences-Research-Council-HSRC>

