



ISRAEL'S APARTHEID AGAINST  
PALESTINIANS: AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL SOUTH AFRICA  
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## **About the CMA**

The goal of the CMA is to help make mediation efforts throughout Africa more effective. We do so by offering academic and practical courses in mediation, researching new and current best practices, and offering support to organisations and governments involved in mediation processes.

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### **Seminar Summary**

The Centre for Mediation in Africa (CMA) in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria in association with the Afro Middle East Centre (AMEC), The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and Amnesty International (AI) South Africa hosted a seminar to discuss Amnesty International's report on Israel's apartheid against the Palestinians. The seminar was held in the Senate Hall at the University's Hatfield campus and was attended by approximately 75 people. The discussion was facilitated by Zeenat Adam from AMEC. The opening welcome and introductory comment was made by Professor Maxi Schoeman, Board Member of the CMA. Considering the stringent Covid\_19 protocols for indoor events, we reached the maximum capacity and were delighted that a significant number of students attended the event and confidently engaged on the issues. This was the first on-campus event in the Senate Hall since the imposition of the Covid\_19 lockdown in South Africa in 2020 and the CMA is grateful for the support it received from Vice-Principal Professor Norman Duncan who also made time to attend the event.

The seminar included high profile speakers from DIRCO and Amnesty and was attended by senior ambassadors, diplomats, DIRCO affiliates, members of the public and graduate

students. The discussion was charged, dynamic and occasionally intensely emotional as when former Minister Ronnie Kasrils stated that young South Africans must know how akin Israeli Apartheid is to South African Apartheid. Min. Kasrils stated that “if anybody needs to ask if Israel is an apartheid state, all we need to do is look at the law that was passed a few years ago and that is that Israel is a Jewish state. This would be like South Africa saying that anybody who wasn’t white, wasn’t a citizen of the country.” The audience reacted when the Minister took time to note the absence of European Diplomats at the event. The keynote address was led by Saleh Hijazi who is Head of the AI Office in Jerusalem. His opening comment, likewise was intensely emotional as he mentioned the names of the two Palestinian children murdered by Israel at the beginning of 2022. Hijazi clarified that the report is based on the definition of apartheid and looks at how one group of people dominate another, and it was thus “a people’s view rather than a geographic view.” The report documented how Israel “perpetrates inhuman acts as defined under international law to maintain this domination.” The Director General of DIRCO, Mr Zane Dangor highlighted the need to shift from political solidarity to legal duty and affirmed that there is enough evidence on Israel’s breach of International Laws and Treaties. Dangor commented that countries had a duty to act against international wrongful acts and South Africa would now champion the “resuscitation” of the UN Apartheid committee which is different from the Palestinian committee.

Various guests highlighted the importance of solidarity and citizen engagement with their governments. Ambassador Ashraf Suliman, Director: SADC at DIRCO, supported the notion of a shift from political solidarity to legal duty and said that this could happen when South Africans apply pressure on the government. Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed Taher Elfadly commented on the impact of the Palestinian occupation on Egyptians noting that the “Palestinian suffering is the most important domestic issue for Egyptians.” Additional comment from DIRCO diplomats, other Arab ambassadors, NGO representatives and students contributed valuable insights into the content of the Amnesty report. That the spectre of apartheid was present and still practised in this day and age and the fact that Western states were largely complicit in its continuation, a case of “history repeating itself” from a south African perspective motivated a vigorous round of comment from the students and other audience members.

### **The Way Forward**

It was evident that the AI report was a hot potato as was evidenced from the response by the AI Chapters in Israel and Germany. According to Hijazi the report has however, strengthened the apartheid claim in societal debates across the globe. The report seeks to challenge the

status quo by coaxing the majority of states to no longer accept the grave human rights violations perpetrated by Israel as normal and to not regard the ongoing occupation as a normative state of affairs that exists detached from a “democratic Israel”. From the report it was evident that “There is no place for apartheid in our world. It is a crime against humanity, and it has to end. TELL ISRAEL: DEMOLISH APARTHEID, NOT PALESTINIAN HOMES.” From a CMA perspective it is necessary to raise the debate on human rights violations, conflict, occupation and apartheid from a global South perspective and to motivate for alternatives and approaches that will drive towards fostering peace and ending any form of aggression.