



## Israel's new far-right government: Unprecedented challenges and opportunities

### ANALYSIS

5 March 2023



### Executive Summary

Supporting the recent [pogrom](#) by [fascist](#) Jewish-Israeli militias [against Palestinians in Huwara](#) near Nablus in the occupied Palestinian territory and overtly inciting state terrorism, senior Israeli government minister, Bezalel Smotrich, a self-declared “fascist,” [said](#), “I think Huwara needs to be erased. The state should be the one to do that.”

Israel's new far-right government is the most racist, fundamentalist, sexist, corrupt, authoritarian and homophobic ever—*without masks*. It constitutes simultaneously an escalation in Israel's ongoing settler-colonial and apartheid policies against Indigenous Palestinians and a potentially radical departure in its far-reaching plans for judicial, social and cultural “reforms” affecting Jewish Israeli society, and most likely Israeli economy. This provides advocates of Palestinian rights worldwide, particularly in the BDS movement, an even more urgent responsibility and an opportunity that is unprecedented in 74 years.

Fierce and radical reactions from within the Israeli political-military-economic establishment, supported by stronger rhetoric from Israel's anti-Palestinian Western funders, enablers and defenders, are setting precedents that can potentially help to expose the foundations of Israel's regime of settler-colonialism, apartheid and military occupation to much wider audiences worldwide.

But opportunities alone do not lead to change but only provide the fertile ground for it. The anti-racist BDS movement for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality, led by the largest Palestinian coalition ever, has a special responsibility to push the limits even further in exposing Israel's regime of oppression and holding it accountable while, at the same time, carefully, accurately and effectively analyzing the current realities to help guide our human rights campaigning. If ever there was a time to get out of our comfort zones and further grow our intersectional movement and mainstream BDS pressure, it is now!

## **Index**

### **(1) Introduction**

### **(2) Different in kind or in degree?**

### **(3) Defending settler democracy**

### **(4) Reforming or Re-inventing the Settler Colony**

### **(5) Key indicators of the difference in kind**

### **(6) Key indicators of the difference in degree**

### **(7) Unprecedented responses: highlights**

7.1. Economic repercussions: "Start-Up Nation" to #ShutDownNation

7.2. Dropping the democracy mask: Growing BDS impact

7.3. Upheaval in the military-intelligence complex

7.4. Losing the "legal Iron Dome"

7.5. Academic and cultural impact

### **(8) Solidarity**

8.1. Solidarity with Palestinians

8.2. What about the Israeli "left" fighting the far-right?

### **(9) Conclusion**

## (1) Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Supporting the recent [pogrom](#) by [fascist](#) Jewish-Israeli militias against Palestinians in Huwara near Nablus in the occupied Palestinian territory and overtly inciting state terrorism, senior Israeli government minister, Bezalel Smotrich, a self-declared “fascist,” [said](#), “I think Huwara needs to be erased. The state should be the one to do that.” Smotrich, however, is not the first Israeli leader to publicly embrace or threaten genocidal acts against Indigenous Palestinians. Labor Party leader Matan Vilnai in 2008 threatened Palestinians with “[a bigger shoah \[Holocaust\]](#)” if resistance groups did not stop their armed retaliation to Israel’s criminal siege and violent attacks on Gaza. A recent error by Israel’s censors has accidentally revealed secret documents exposing [David Ben Gurion’s support for “wiping out” Palestinian villages](#) during the 1948 Nakba, with a minister in his first government admitting, “Let us say that instances of rape occurred in [the ethnically cleansed Palestinian city] Ramle. I can forgive instances of rape, but I will not forgive other acts,” such as forcibly removing “jewelry from women.”

Still, Israel’s new far-right government is the most racist, fundamentalist, sexist, corrupt, authoritarian and homophobic ever—*without masks*. It constitutes simultaneously an escalation in Israel’s *ongoing* regime of colonial oppression against Indigenous Palestinians and a potential rupture with the status quo in its far-reaching plans for judicial, social and cultural “reforms” affecting Jewish Israeli society, and most likely Israeli economy as well. Nothing less than a reconfiguration of the Zionist settler-colonial project is beginning to take shape. This provides advocates of Palestinian rights worldwide, particularly in the BDS movement, an even more urgent responsibility and an opportunity that is unprecedented in 74 years.

Opportunities alone, though, do not lead to change; they only provide the fertile ground for it. We still need to maximize our morally-consistent and strategic movement building efforts to have enough people’s power to realize a *qualitative* change in exposing the true face of Israel’s regime of oppression and holding it to account, as a contribution to the Palestinian liberation struggle. The [anti-racist](#) BDS movement, led by the [largest Palestinian coalition](#) ever, has a special responsibility to push the limits even further in this respect while, at the same time, carefully, accurately and effectively analyzing the current developments to help guide our evolving, context-sensitive human rights campaigning. Following is an analysis of the main changes happening in Israeli society and their potential impact on the struggle for Palestinian liberation in general and the BDS movement in particular.

## (2) Different in kind or in degree?

**This far-right Israeli government constitutes simultaneously:**

**(a) A difference in degree vs. the Indigenous Palestinians, as it is merely a more fanatic, unmasked *continuation* of Israel’s 74-year-old regime of settler-colonialism and apartheid<sup>2</sup>, and**

**(b) A difference in kind vs. Israel’s settler-colonial society, as it is the most corrupt, authoritarian, fundamentalist, sexist and homophobic ever.**

Where this government’s plans differ in kind is in the [social, cultural and judicial](#) policies that predominantly affect Jewish-Israeli society, where [corruption and populism](#) are assuming an unprecedented role in guiding radical change in governance. This is already impacting Israel’s economy and leading to a beginning of a “capital flight” that deeply worries Israeli economic planners.

The outrage of Israel’s “secular” Zionist, predominantly Ashkenazi establishment (represented by ranking politicians, bankers, high-tech executives, military-security leaders, academics, media personalities, economists, jurists, cultural figures, and others) and its supporters in the colonial West’s liberal mainstream revolves around (b) not (a). In their analyses, angry attacks on the “coup regime,” and their proposed “solutions,” they strive to at once [erase Palestinians](#) from the equation and whitewash the ongoing regime of oppression against us.<sup>3</sup>

### **(3) Defending Settler Democracy**

A quick examination of the main accusations this establishment opposition throws at the new government, or parts of it, underlines this conscious and persistent erasure of the Indigenous Palestinians: “fascist,”<sup>4</sup> “[fascistic messianic](#),”<sup>5</sup> “[authoritarian](#),” “[attacking freedom](#) itself,” “[naked illiberalism](#),” even a “[threat to world peace](#).” Former Israeli political, military, judiciary and even financial leaders are shouting in mass protests that the government plans may “[cripple the economy](#),” incite a “[civil war](#),” lead to “[constitutional and social collapse](#),” ignite a “[legal intifada](#),” cause a “[mortal wound to democracy](#),” “[kill Israel’s media](#),” “[override human rights](#),” etc.

The [fascist tendency](#) that is now commonly mentioned in the Israeli mainstream has always been *integral* to political Zionism. But it is now stronger and more audacious than ever in the current Israeli government, where senior ministers<sup>6</sup> *openly* advocate, cheer or otherwise [embolden genocidal or extremely violent and racist](#) theories or “solutions” to the Indigenous Palestinian “problem.”

[Kahanism](#)<sup>7</sup>, which a Haaretz chief editor calls “[the Jewish variant of fascism](#),”<sup>8</sup> is now squarely in the mainstream and in senior government positions, and this provides us with an important opportunity to expose the structures of oppression. Any state that is supposedly democratic and respects international law, no matter how hypocritical it may be, will find it [significantly more difficult](#) than ever, when faced with organized, effective resistance by the growing solidarity movement, to defend its warm – complicit – relations with Israel based on the pretense of “common democratic values.” But again, opportunity alone will not end complicity. An effective, strategic and principled mass solidarity movement can, or at least can be a major catalyst, as happened in several Western states against apartheid South Africa.

The elephant in the room that the Israeli opposition and its anti-Palestinian supporters are intentionally ignoring is that the real, *overarching* goal of this Israeli government, like all previous ones, is to entrench settler colonialism by [accelerating de facto and de jure annexation](#) of more of the occupied Palestinian territory. The High Court/Supreme Court, despite [supporting](#) and [enabling](#) Israel's illegal settlement enterprise and shielding its war crimes from international accountability for decades, is still accused by the far-right, led all along by Likud<sup>9</sup>, of hindering the completion of Israel's settler-colonial project that the coalition sees as its most fundamental goal, as Netanyahu admitted in his infamous but honest [tweet](#)<sup>10</sup>.

These attacks on a sitting Israeli government from within the Israeli establishment reflect genuine fear that its "irrational" and "irresponsible" plans may expose the true face of Israel's regime of oppression and unravel fundamental aspects of Israel's colonial **settler democracy**.<sup>11</sup> You "[cannot square the circle of 'Jewish democracy,'](#)" after all. Israel has indeed been a relatively vibrant democracy for its Jewish colonial settlers while simultaneously maintaining a brutal regime of oppression over the Indigenous Palestinian Arabs, including refugees. As [Ilan Pappé calls it](#), Israel is a "herrenvolk democracy, democracy only for the masters." It is this herrenvolk democracy, or what [Peter Beinart](#) calls "liberal democracy for Jews" only, that is [being undermined now](#).

[Daniel Blatman](#), a prominent Israeli scholar of fascism, Nazism, and the Holocaust, says Israel has "a populist government that is approaching fascism." Yet in a long interview, in which he fails to mention Palestinians once, he focuses on the government's "judicial reforms" saying:

If these judicial 'reforms' are implemented, in a reality as complex as that of Israel, it will lead to disaster. We are not Poland. In Poland, there will be an election in half a year. Whether or not the government is replaced, the people there will live with it. But in the place where Israel is, with its domestic social composition, with the occupation, with a minority [Arab] population of 20 percent, with such a complex state of affairs in terms of security, society, the economy – **populism is a recipe for ruin. Not only of moral values, but of the country's entire existence.** ...

**What was once extreme right is today center. Ideas that were once on the fringes have become legitimate. As a historian whose field is the Holocaust and Nazism, it's hard for me to say this, but there are neo-Nazi ministers in the government today. You don't see that anywhere else – not in Hungary, not in Poland – ministers who, ideologically, are pure racists.** [Emphases added]

What Blatman and his ilk are really terrified of is that this "fascism," which has always been a genuine and organic component of Zionist settler-colonialism directed against Indigenous Palestinians, is reaching its logical conclusion: morphing into a serious threat to the Jewish-Israeli establishment itself, potentially unraveling some of its foundations.<sup>12</sup> A racist regime of oppression cannot prevent the racism that is inherent in its system of injustice against the oppressed from spreading to its own society of oppressors, as some [honest Israeli commentators now admit](#).<sup>13</sup>

The fact that Israel's Supreme Court has consistently been a pillar of the settler-colonial system that provides an indispensable "[legal iron dome](#)" shielding Israeli war criminals from international accountability does not register on the Zionist establishment opposition's radar. Of its many crimes against Palestinians, for instance, the High Court in 2021 upheld the 2018 Jewish [nation state law](#), which declared that "the right to exercise national self-determination" in Israel is "unique to the Jewish people." It thus *formally* defined Palestinian citizens of Israel as second-class citizens, a status that they've always had. In 2022, the High Court – one of whose justices resides in an illegal settlement in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) – greenlighted the [forced expulsion of 1,000 Palestinians](#) from their homes in Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank to make way for an army "training zone." The decision explicitly rejected the principle that international law is "customary and binding" in the OPT.

[Orly Noy](#), the Chair of B'Tselem, reflected on this court complicity saying, "I won't go to a protest in Tel Aviv where there are military figures on stage, saying that we must fight the judicial reforms because otherwise the international community will have grounds to send our people to the international criminal court. The focus should be on not committing war crimes in the first place. I can't demonstrate to protect the status quo."

#### **(4) Reforming or Re-inventing the Settler Colony**

Though headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr. Neoliberalism, the coalition includes key fundamentalist parties (Shas and United Torah Judaism) that are fed up with the establishment's neoliberalism and austerity and that advocate for growing the "welfare state," even if only for Jewish Israelis. Though Shas has also in the past addressed internal Israeli racism (against Arab/Mizrahi Jews, Haredi/fundamentalist Jews, etc.), this issue was not prominent in their electoral program in the last election. Still, fundamentalist parties partially blame the demographic "corruption" of Jewish society on the hundreds of thousands of "fake" Jews ([the absolute majority of settlers who came from former Soviet republics](#)) and on the cultural corruption of Jewish society by the "[alien bodies](#)" and "degenerate" Western thought, especially Christian thought coming from churches in Europe. In parallel, [violent Israeli attacks on Christian Palestinians, their churches, cemeteries](#) and monuments, accompanied by [chants](#) of "Death to the Christians" and "Death to Arabs and gentiles," have been on the rise.

From the other side, the "secular" establishment blames the ultra-Orthodox for being a "burden" on the state's coffers without contributing much to them (on average, a non-Haredi Israeli pays six times the taxes paid by a Haredi, per capita) and for [being](#) "corrupt" and "fanatical." Eran Yashiv, a professor of economics at Tel Aviv University, sees judicial reform as a kind of resource grab by the ultra-Orthodox and the religious Zionist far-right. He [says](#), "It's a redistribution from the high-tech sector to religious and nationalist minorities. ... it would turn Israel into an illiberal country." Furthermore, the "secular" establishment and its intellectuals are increasingly reciting the philosopher Karl Popper's famous [paradox of tolerance](#) -- "in order to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance." They blame the secular ruling elite's

seemingly limitless “tolerance” of patently intolerant views and acts of the large and influential Haredi and ultra-nationalist religious Zionist communities for the coercive reality today. Again, the consensus-based Zionist “intolerance” to Indigenous Palestinians, to put it mildly, does not figure in such debates.

No longer satisfied with reforming the Zionist “secular” establishment, these ultra-Orthodox parties allied with ultra-nationalist religious parties are determined to overhaul it or reinvent it altogether, the “secular” establishment fears, to further institutionalize their exclusionary notion of “Jewish identity.” Maintaining the settler-colonial structures of oppression intact against the Indigenous Palestinians would still remain the common denominator between both sides of the settler-colonial coin.

## **(5) Key indicators of the DIFFERENCE IN KIND**

There are many changes that the new Israeli ruling coalition is planning to enact, some based on the coalition’s consensus platform and others voiced by some but not all of its ministers. Some of these plans de facto target or can affect basic pillars of the state’s power structures:

- Giving the [Knesset the power to override decisions by the High Court of Justice](#) and “politicizing” the composition of the Judicial Selection Committee, main demands of the powerful settlers’ movements in the OPT, threaten to undermine the relative separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches (both controlled by the ruling coalition) on one hand and the judicial branch on another. The latter has always enjoyed relative independence from intra-Jewish Israeli parliamentary politics despite its consistent and [fundamental role](#) as a pillar in the settler-colonial structure against Palestinians.<sup>14</sup> The current massive power of the High Court is considered the fundamental guarantor of the system of “checks and balances” in a state that has no constitution and only one parliamentary chamber.<sup>15</sup> Their potentially drastic impact notwithstanding, these reforms [enjoy strong support in the Jewish-Israeli public](#).
- Creating a [separate Ministerial position in the Ministry of Defense](#), appointed by Bezalel Smotrich, controlling Israel’s so-called “Civil Administration” in the OPT, which rules over Palestinians and illegal settlers there, is unprecedented. In parallel, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the “national security minister,” is to take on direct control over the entirety of the Border Police, a force that has been operating under “IDF” command in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This in effect could “shatter the IDF’s entire strategy,” [warned Giora Eiland](#), a retired Israeli general and former national security adviser.

Several high ranking Israeli military commanders have warned that these changes could “dramatically change the face of the IDF” or even lead to “dismantling [its] chain of command” and weakening its combat readiness. Some have expressed fears that these reforms would further entrench de facto and de jure annexation of the West Bank,

“complicating” relations with Israel’s Western funders and enablers, implicitly pointing to the growing impact the solidarity movement can have.

Other plans include bringing apartheid Israel’s policy of “Judaization” to a qualitatively new level. Beyond its consistent use as a settler-colonial strategy to forcibly displace Indigenous Palestinians and steal their land,<sup>16</sup> “Judaization” is becoming a policy that threatens – albeit to a lesser extent – also sectors within the dominant Jewish Israeli society:

- The government is pushing for a [Basic Law on Legislation](#) that states that any Basic Law (a law with constitutional power) previously passed with a majority of fewer than 61 members of parliament will lose its status as a Basic Law and become a “regular” law. The main objective is to demote the *Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty*, passed in the 12th Knesset by a majority of 32 members to 21.

Retired Supreme Court Justice Ayala Procaccia [commented](#), “turning the Basic Law [on Human Dignity and Liberty] into a regular law means negation of the supremacy of human rights and subjecting them to the will of any passing government, and it also compromises the ability of the court to protect the individual or the minority from disproportionate harm to their most fundamental rights.” She added that the harm may apply to “all aspects of life in which we have human rights: Equality and nondiscrimination, freedom of expression, private property rights, the right to privacy, to movement and the right to freedom of religion and from religion.” Again, her statement refers, without any sense of irony, to the fundamental rights of Jewish Israelis, surely not those of Indigenous Palestinians. Israel’s High Court has consistently rejected calls for full equality<sup>17</sup> for Palestinian citizens of Israel, with leading justices arguing that such equality would [undermine the state’s “Jewishness.”](#) For obvious reasons, equality is not enshrined in Israel’s Basic Laws to start with.

- According to the coalition agreements, about [\\$500 million](#) will be allocated for “strengthening Jewish identity” in Israel — a phrase that is understood by the “secular” establishment to mean Orthodox religious indoctrination. There are also plans to make studying Torah a value equal to military service, which would allow the government for the first time to pass a law exempting yeshiva students from military service, making this exemption *de jure*, not just *de facto* as it has always been.<sup>18</sup>
- MK Avi Maoz (Noam party), [deputy minister in the PM’s office](#) responsible for establishing the [“authority for identity security”](#) and for extra-curricular education programs, is committed to deeply “judaizing” education, emphasizing Jewish law (halacha) and Jewish supremacy. He [says](#), “Our flag is an unequivocal war on progressiveness. The status quo needs to be changed, and we need to make sure that Judaism is recognized in every corner. Israel will be a state that observes Shabbat in public. LGBT families will not be recognized, and women will not serve in the IDF. Their contribution will be getting married and raising a family.”

- The coalition's plans include "[increasing](#) the powers of religious courts that discriminate against women, increasing gender segregation in the public sphere, and resisting initiatives combating violence against women in the name of preserving male authority in the home." The coalition's "[misogyny](#)" is being regularly attacked by the opposition.<sup>19</sup> In Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, dozens of Israeli women protested dressed up as handmaids from Margaret Atwood's book "[The Handmaid's Tale](#)" about a fictional fundamentalist society that oppresses women.
- Legislation is being proposed giving service providers, including [doctors](#), the right to deny service to anyone if providing such a service would conflict with their religious beliefs. This is largely interpreted as empowering Israelis of all walks of life to deny services not only to Palestinians (Muslims and Christians), but also to Jewish LGBTQI+ people and Jewish women in immodest dress, etc. Like all religious fundamentalisms, Jewish fundamentalism is exclusionary and promotes racial hatred and violence.<sup>20</sup> Throughout, however, as a [consistently anti-racist](#) movement, BDS calls for avoiding any generalization or analysis that may unintentionally evoke antisemitic tropes.
- Other than its obvious impact on Palestinians, another important aspect of the rising power of Jewish fundamentalism in the Israeli government is the expected further restriction on Israel's definition of Jews to exclude those converted by non-Orthodox rabbis. Ben-Gvir has [called](#) for revoking state recognition of non-Orthodox conversions. This, and similar measures, will likely [infuriate](#) millions of non-Orthodox Jews, particularly in the US where Reform Judaism remains the largest Jewish denomination, providing further opportunities for progressive anti-Zionist Jewish groups – whose role in the movement is crucial and more important than ever – to grow support.
- In a precedent, a senior government minister recently [said](#), "I'm a fascist homophobe," dealing a heavy blow to Israel's well-oiled [pinkwashing strategy](#).
- Following the deadly attack on Israeli settlers in occupied East Jerusalem on 27 January 2023, settlers were [chanting](#) not only their anthem – "Death to the Arabs!" – but also "Death to the leftists!" The Israeli far-right has always detested what it regards as "leftist" Jewish-Israelis, mostly hard-core establishment Zionists (like Labor leaders as well as the likes of Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Yair Lapid, key High Court justices, etc.). Their fault is that, though they wanted to strengthen the regime of settler-colonialism and apartheid, which [they had built to start with](#), they were ready to relinquish some control over a tiny piece of historic Palestine to cage millions of Palestinians in bantustans/ghettos in order to maintain the necessary propaganda mask of democracy and liberalism. To those Zionist "leftists," Gaza is the perfect settler-colonial model of how to deal with the "problem" of Indigenous Palestinians across historic Palestine—"maximum land with a minimal number of Arabs." This establishment "left" has one ultimate and overarching goal: safeguarding the settler-colony by prolonging Israel's Jewish demographic majority and supremacy for decades to come.

While [not new](#), the attack by far-right settlers on “leftist” Jewish-Israelis, equating them with the dehumanized natives, is now emboldened by support from senior government ministers.

On the contrary, true Jewish Israeli leftists, who are by definition anti-colonial and support dismantling settler-colonialism and apartheid, are beyond the pale in this establishment debate.<sup>21</sup>

## (6) Key indicators of the DIFFERENCE IN DEGREE

For Palestinians, the ongoing policies of settler-colonialism and apartheid have become more brutal while long-term plans are accelerated with a far more arrogant approach to international relations that outrightly dismisses the genuine concerns expressed by Israel’s partners in crime in the US and Europe:

- This government is finally implementing the dream of the far-right: [de facto and arguably de jure annexation](#) on steroids of [most, if not all, of the OPT](#) by intensifying and “legalizing” colonial settlement everywhere, including in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, in line with the Trump-Netanyahu Annexation Plan/“Deal of the Century.” The first [official steps towards de jure annexation](#) have already been taken.
- Successive Israeli governments, especially those ruled by Likud and its far-right partners, have gradually erased the so-called Green Line (1949 armistice border), in effect if not in law.<sup>22</sup> This has included the widespread treatment of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship (1948 Palestinians) as part of the “enemy” native Palestinian-Arab population, no longer as “Israeli Arabs” who must be differentiated from Palestinians elsewhere and effectively co-opted to accept as fate their second-class citizenship under the overall settler-colonial system of oppression. With the current Israeli government, this tendency will become much sharper and harder to hide, giving further impetus to the Palestinian unity that manifested itself most robustly during the May 2021 uprising across Historic Palestine. Kahanist or Kahane-inspired ideas of a “[second Nakba](#),” heightened ethnic cleansing of 1948 Palestinian communities, or “[static transfer](#),” which have for decades been popular among key Labor Party and Likud leaders, are now expected to gain even more currency in the mainstream.
- [Nachman Shai](#), a former Israeli Minister of the Diaspora, said the coalition’s plans to deepen Orthodox Jewish domination in Israel would alienate non-Orthodox Jews worldwide, aggravating their rift with Israel.<sup>23</sup> These plans include [banning mixed-gender Jewish prayers](#) in any part of the so-called Western Wall “plaza”<sup>24</sup> ([ethnically cleansed Mughrabi quarter](#) in the occupied Old City of Jerusalem) and [canceling the “grandson” clause](#) in the settler-colonial “Law of Return,” effectively excluding from eligibility under this racist law the grandsons and granddaughters of a non-Jewish grandfather.

- The often censored discussion about the rising power of Jewish fundamentalist Zionism in Israel and its potentially fatal impact on Indigenous Palestinians is more public now under this government. For decades, leading Jewish fundamentalist Zionist figures have called for [genocide](#) and massacres against Arab (especially Palestinian) and other Muslims and Christians, using [fanatic interpretations of Jewish law](#) (Halacha) to justify them. For instance, Shmuel Eliyahu, the Chief Rabbi of Safad and father of a current government minister, has [cheered the death of tens of thousands in Turkey and Syria](#) as a result of the devastating earthquake in February 2023, calling it “divine justice” against the “enemies” of Israel.
- If Netanyahu’s previous, less fascist and less fundamentalist governments formed strong alliances with far-right, authoritarian and despotic parties, movements and regimes worldwide, almost all explicitly antisemitic, his new “most racist ever” government promises to take these alliances to a whole new level. His top diplomatic priority, for instance, is to [normalize relations with the Saudi dictatorship](#).
- Israel’s current Minister of Strategic Affairs and former ambassador to Washington [Ron Dermer](#) said in 2021 that Israel should spend more of its energy reaching out to “passionate” American evangelicals than Jews. Christian Zionists, he said, are the “backbone” of US support for Israel whereas Jewish Americans are “disproportionately among [Israel’s] critics.” Israel’s close partnership with Christian Zionists, arguably one of the most powerful, deeply antisemitic<sup>25</sup> communities in the world (in the West and increasingly in the Global South too), presents a bigger threat not just to the rights and lives of Palestinians, women, LGBTQI+, and other communities of faith, but also to Jewish safety worldwide, as many progressive Jewish groups have consistently warned.

## **(7) Unprecedented responses: highlights**

The above and many other evolving developments have alarmed, angered and radically unsettled like never before the Zionist Ashkenazi – relatively secular – establishment, that has been hegemonic for decades in Israel and among Jewish communities in the US and elsewhere. Following are some of the most significant indicators, since the new government was sworn in, of this unprecedented expression of alarm at an “existential” threat to Israel from within, as well as heightened fear, albeit often expressed implicitly, of growing isolation and boycotts<sup>26</sup>:

### **7.1. ECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS: “Start-Up Nation” to [#ShutDownNation](#)<sup>27</sup>**

The government’s planned “judicial reforms” have caused more mainstream “liberal” fury in Israel and the West than any other of its plans or concrete actions on the ground have. The [governor of the Bank of Israel](#) warned Netanyahu that his sweeping judicial reforms could damage Israel’s economy. He reportedly conveyed worries shared by fellow attendees at the recent World Economic Forum summit in Davos that the overhaul of

Israel's justice system would erase democratic checks and balances. This could potentially damage the currency, lead to a decision to lower the country's credit rating, and [scare away foreign investment](#). The governor, it seems, was then unaware that the earliest vote of no confidence in the Israeli economy and investment environment would come from *Israeli*, not foreign, business leaders.

The [OECD](#)<sup>28</sup> in a draft of its annual report said, "Corruption in Israel has increased in recent years and is higher than other OECD countries." It warned that undermining trust in public institutions and the judiciary could lead to the loss of both domestic and foreign investments in Israel.

[Hundreds of top Israeli economists](#) wrote in a letter to Netanyahu: "The concentration of vast political power in the hands of the ruling group without strong checks and balances could *cripple the country's economy*." [Emphasis added] Following that, [56 world-renowned economists, including 11 Nobel laureates](#), warned that the reforms were "detrimental to ... [Israel's] economic prosperity and growth."

The most influential high-tech executive to join the protests is [Intel VP Tzahi Weisfeld](#), who recently said, "I helped found many huge companies in Israel. I did it from here because I'm a Zionist and a proud Israeli, and committed to the industry. I was always able to explain why everything must be managed from here. Many times I have been called upon to convince managers of multinational companies why they should come here. In the last few weeks, something has broken in me and I am not the only one experiencing this." Weisfeld concludes, "We are at a moment just before the disappearance of high-tech from [Israel]." His is arguably the most significant indicator to date of the major influence that the ideological commitment to Zionism and to its settler-colonial project has played in determining massive international investments in Israel despite its exceptionally risky "security" conditions.

[HSBC](#) joined the chorus of concerned investors saying that the reforms may lead to "a deterioration in the investment environment and thus weighing on the currency."

Reflecting the mood in Israel's business community, [Leo Bakman, president of the Israel Institute for Innovation](#), an incubator for 2,500 start-ups, summarized the concerns of the Israeli business community saying, "Investors are taking a step back and saying: 'First, decide whether you are a democracy or a dictatorship, and then we'll talk.' ... If I thought this [judicial] 'reform' was like shooting oneself in the foot, I would probably think twice about speaking out. But I believe that we are shooting ourselves in the head." An anonymous senior [Swiss banker](#) has reportedly used the same metaphor.

As fears of a "judicial coup" mount, the high-tech sector's protest is transcending symbolic gestures to concrete financial measures. Israeli banking sources have affirmed that already by *mid-February* some [\\$4 billion had already been transferred from Israeli banks](#) to mostly US and European banks. High-tech companies alone have [transferred more than \\$780](#)

[million](#). In addition, an aggregate revenue of \$2.2 billion generated from activities abroad has been kept in banks abroad, not transferred to Israeli banks.

By the end of February, according to Zvi Stepak, founder and owner of Meitav Investment House, which has one million customers and manages funds worth \$60 billion, Israeli investors had already decreased their investments in mutual funds that specialize in State of Israel bonds and bonds of Israeli companies by a [whopping NIS 3.4 billion](#) (almost \$1 billion). This may convince institutional investors in Israel bonds, especially in the US, to consider divestment over fiduciary risks.

Boaz Barak, a senior Israeli banker who has worked for decades for Swiss banks, [estimates](#) that “the outflow of funds from Israel to Switzerland alone has in [the last few weeks] reached billions of dollars.” He explains: “The world economy moves on the basis of emotions and herd psychology. It is absolutely clear that trust in local financial systems and government institutions is the driving force of everyday life in developed countries. This trust is easy to lose and very difficult to restore. Distrust is a contagious element. When Israelis lose faith in their country, the foreign bankers also tend to adopt this message. The lack of trust discourages investments in internal ventures in the country and in the leading industries.”

The loudest protests over the planned “judicial reforms” have come from the influential Israeli high-tech sector, whose total contribution to the economy is approximately [25% of GDP](#), according to a 2022 Deloitte study, and at least [40% of total exports](#). The US-based [Insight Partners](#) fund, the largest investor in Israeli high-tech (invests in 75 companies/startups), issued a letter to all the companies in which it has invested, indirectly warning against the judicial and cultural “revolution” that the Israeli government is pursuing. It also condemned its “attempts to trample on personal freedoms” as well as “acts of hatred, violence or discrimination.”

[Dozens of Israeli high-tech leaders](#) sent Netanyahu a letter saying: “We, entrepreneurs and founders of startup companies in Israel, and investors and managers of venture capital funds, are approaching you with concern due to the destructive implications for the economy in general, and the high-tech industry in particular, that could arise from the legislation moves taking place these days in the Knesset. ... weakening the status of the courts, as well as harming minority rights based on religion, race, sex, or sexual orientation, would present a substantial *existential threat [to] the glorious high-tech industry* that has been built in Israel through much toil over the past three decades. ... The weakening of the trust in the judicial system and as a result in Israeli democracy, legislation that places a question mark over basic and fundamental rights for every person, could deter these investors who have driven the growth of this wonderful industry.”<sup>29</sup> [Emphasis added]

At least 16 large Israeli high-tech companies organized an unprecedented [strike for one hour](#) late January in Tel Aviv and other high-tech centers. The CEO of one high tech company [said](#), “High-tech brings a lot of money [to Israel]. It drives the economy here in

parts of it. 40% of Israeli exports are from high-tech - it will disappear in a second. These people receive inquiries from American companies everyday; think how quickly they will get up and fly away. What will happen if the top 10% of high-tech disappears? The business will end.”

Among high-tech companies that have gone public about their large divestments from Israel are [cybersecurity company Wiz](#), [Disruptive and Disruptive AI venture capital](#) funds, together managing \$250 million, and [Papaya Global](#), a supplier for Microsoft and Toyota. Papaya’s CEO and co-founder said that she decided to withdraw “all of the company’s funds from Israel” because “there is no certainty that we can conduct international economic activity from Israel. This is a painful but necessary business step.”

Companies aside, [well-to-do individual Israelis](#), each with savings around \$1 million deposited in Israeli banks, are reportedly “lining up for meetings with their banks and saying that they want to transfer half of their money abroad.”

Adam Fisher, a co-founder of Bessemer Venture Partners, which has funded more than 30 Israeli start-ups, foresaw a bleak future whereby international investment in Israeli high-tech will follow the entrepreneurs if they leave the country. Some [90 percent of all investment in Israeli tech comes from foreign sources](#). Fisher says, “When I invest in Israel, I’m not really investing in the Israeli economy; I’m not looking at the shekel or railroad infrastructure or G.D.P. growth. I invest in entrepreneurs, and if those entrepreneurs want to set up somewhere else, that’s fine.”

On 27 February 2023, the results of [a new survey](#) by Fisher and Michal Tsur, president of the software company Kaltura, were released, showing that 90% of Israeli entrepreneurs and executives of high-tech companies say that if they had to re-establish their respective companies today, they would incorporate them outside of Israel.

Gigi Levy-Weiss, a partner in the venture capital fund NFX, [one of the largest investors in Israeli high-tech](#), said, “This thing that we have built for many years can in one second fall and descend into an abyss from which we won't be able to get out. Although the damage to high-tech is severe, it does not stop there. It will lead to an increase in the dollar exchange rate, a weakening of the shekel, a downgrading of Israel's credit rating, and an increase in interest rates. This combination means immediate damage to the pocket of every citizen and a direct hit to pensions.”

## **7.2. DROPPING THE DEMOCRACY MASK: GROWING BDS IMPACT**

Whether connecting the current process of undermining Israel’s settler democracy to its decades-old regime of settler-colonialism and apartheid against Indigenous Palestinians or not, Israeli voices from within the Zionist mainstream are decrying the erosion of “democracy” and are suddenly calling on Israel’s enablers, most importantly the U.S. and Europe, to impose targeted “[sanctions](#)” on Israeli leaders. Veteran analyst Akiva Eldar goes

much further, calling on the West to [stop shielding Israel from international sanctions](#) at the UN Security Council, to refrain from blocking the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) demands that Israel sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and even for the EU to end its generous free-trade agreement with Israel.

Anti-Palestinian racist Western leaders, like French president [Emmanuel Macron](#), warned Netanyahu that his planned erosion of the High Court's "independence" would force France to "conclude that Israel has broken away from the prevailing perception of democracy." But while the EU had frozen the transfer of billions of euros to Hungary after it failed to implement democratic reforms, the EU has never taken similar accountability measures against Israel's decades old system of mass human rights violations, including ruling over millions of Palestinians with no democratic rights whatsoever. The EU with its typical [colonial hypocrisy](#) still rejects calls for imposing sanctions on Israel, arguing that it is still a "[functioning democracy](#)."

Rabbi [Rick Jacobs, President of the Union for Reform Judaism](#), the largest Jewish denomination in the U.S. (about 2 million members), addressed "anti-coup" protesters in Tel Aviv on 25 February, expressing deep concerns and effectively saying that if Israel loses its democratic mask it would make defending it against BDS in the US much more difficult. "Every day we fight against those who delegitimize Israel. Every day we stand our ground on behalf of the special relationship between the United States and Israel – a relationship based in no small measure on our shared values of democracy and human rights," he said, adding, "Threats to Israel's democracy threaten Israel's standing in the global community of democratic nations."

Over [200 Jewish-American establishment leaders](#), including former AIPAC officials, criticized the Netanyahu government's plans that target non-Orthodox Jews or that may lead to further annexation of occupied Palestinian land.

Two former US officials, both with unquestionable Zionist credentials, former senior State Department official Aaron David Miller and former ambassador to Tel Aviv Daniel C. Kurtzer, co-authored an [op-ed in the Washington Post](#) calling Netanyahu's coalition partners, "radical, racist, misogynistic and homophobic far-right parties." They recommended that the Biden administration should "not provide offensive weapons or other assistance for malign Israeli actions in Jerusalem or the occupied territories;" should "have no dealings with Ben-Gvir, Smotrich or their ministries if they continue to espouse racist policies and actions;" and should inform Netanyahu that "U.S. support for Israel in international forums, including the U.N. Security Council and the International Court of Justice, has its limits."

The [most senior Jewish member of the US Congress](#) warned that Israel's "critical relationship" with the US "could be irrevocably strained should Israel move forward with the Justice Minister's proposed anti-democratic judicial amendments." Several initiatives by members of Congress, mostly from anti-Palestinian typical supporters of Israeli

apartheid whose overt intention is to “save Israel” from itself, are now [calling for White House pressure on Israel](#). They argue that Netanyahu’s reforms would “jeopardize Israeli democracy, which in turn would undermine the very foundation of the U.S.-Israel relationship.” They would also “empower far-right lawmakers seeking to entrench settlement of the West Bank and advance a pro-annexation agenda, undermining the prospects for a two-state solution and threatening Israel’s existence as a Jewish and democratic state.”

The influential [Institute for National Security Studies](#) at Tel Aviv University recently issued its annual assessment of threats to Israel, ranking as the highest the gradual loss of US support, which includes loss of Jewish American support. Implicit in its analysis is the growing [impact of BDS](#) including among [younger Jewish Americans](#), as recent polls affirm. Its main conclusion is that Israel’s “special relationship” with the US is in danger due to a generational shift expressed in “the influence that the progressive young generation has had in denying the legitimacy of Israel and Zionism, which they see as expressions of white-colonialist supremacy.” Israel’s shift to the far-right with the *unmasked* fascist tendencies in government will only aggravate and speed up this “danger.”

Leading establishment [Zionist Jewish figures in the UK](#) started to express muted criticism following Israel’s pogrom in Huwara. A prominent historian called on world Jewry to speak out against Israel’s “complete disintegration of the political and social compact,” warning of Israel becoming a “nationalist theocracy.” Rabbi Jonathan Romain said, “The extremist faction in the [Israeli] government is anti-gay, anti-women, anti-civil liberties, anti-pluralism, hostile to Palestinians. The mood is shifting from British Jews being out-and-out supporters [of Israel] to being critical friends – and voicing that criticism publicly.”

### 7.3. UPHEAVAL IN THE MILITARY-INTELLIGENCE COMPLEX

It’s been often said that [Israel is an army with a state](#), not like normal states. [The army is by far the institution that is most trusted](#) (almost by 90%) and revered by Jewish-Israeli society. Instability or early signs of revolt in this pillar of Israel’s regime is therefore far more consequential than in any other domain. For the first time ever, an upheaval is brewing inside the military-intelligence establishment in protest against the government’s reforms, particularly its plan to pass a law exempting yeshiva students from military service, making this exemption *de jure*, not just *de facto* as it has always been.

This is a major factor behind the widely reported wave of thousands of [Israeli military reservists refusing to serve](#), or declaring their intention not to serve<sup>30</sup>, a trend that is causing – somewhat exaggerated – fears among seasoned observers that [the Israeli army may “disintegrate.”](#) The judicial reforms and the potential *de jure* exemption from military service of the ultra-Orthodox are “eroding the morale and motivation of soldiers in both compulsory service and the reserves, and undermining the ethos of ‘the people’s army,’” according to Yossi Melman, a [prominent Israeli journalist and an authoritative expert in intelligence and military affairs](#). Based on conservative estimates, he says that “thousands

[of soldiers] are either hesitating or outright refusing to show up for duty,” concluding that, “The dam has already burst, and the dispute has already penetrated the army.” The upheaval has reached the [elite of the elite](#), not just 1,200 pilots, but also 500 veterans of Unit 8200 (signals intelligence), 410 reservists in the top-secret **Military Intelligence** units that support special forces and Mossad, as well as, according to [Melman](#), 500 former **Shin Bet** agents and **current Mossad agents**.

Moreover, about [150 reservists who serve as cyber warfare specialists](#) announced on 2 March 2023 that they will stop reporting for duty if the judicial overhaul is advanced. Among them are officers in the ranks of colonel, lieutenant colonel and major. Without any irony, they are concerned that the “moral and legal framework that enables us to develop and run the sensitive capabilities we operate will be harmed,” and that “a **regime** that has no judicial oversight may use these capabilities immorally and in a way that is contradictory to democratic values.”<sup>31</sup> [Emphasis added]

#### 7.4. LOSING THE “LEGAL IRON DOME”

Israeli soldiers and organizations advocating for them have protested the drastic impact that undermining the power of the High Court would have on shielding Israeli war criminals from the International Criminal Court (ICC). One such organization [Darkenu](#) said: “The High Court is the flak jacket of IDF soldiers, it is protection for our sons and daughters that serve in the army, from attempts to petition against IDF soldiers at the [ICC] in The Hague.”

Elite Israel Air Force [pilots](#) are joining the protests, and their top concern is that reforms could make them the “first in the sights of the court in The Hague.”

A [US lawyer](#) who has been for decades a fervent apologist for Israeli war crimes explains, “There’s a concept in the International Criminal Court called complementarity. And that means that the International Criminal Court doesn’t have jurisdiction over individuals if their countries have legal systems that can satisfactorily pursue justice. Right now, the International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction over Israel because the Israeli [High Court] does a wonderful job in protecting the rights of individuals and of alleged victims of war crimes. They put soldiers and settlers on trial, and that **legal Iron Dome** [the Israeli High Court] would be considerably weakened by these judicial reforms, which would make it easier for Israel’s enemies to claim that the International Criminal Court should have jurisdiction over individual Israelis.”

#### 7.5. ACADEMIC & CULTURAL IMPACT

The committee of [presidents of all major Israeli universities](#), including the colony-college Ariel, warned that the radical judicial reforms will lead to “fatal damage” to the country’s educational institutions and exacerbate academic boycotts. They wrote: “This is liable to manifest itself as a brain drain ...; that students ... and international colleagues will not come to Israel; that our access to international research funds will be limited; that foreign

industries will withdraw themselves from cooperating with Israeli academia; and we will be excluded from the international research and educational community.”

In response to another government bill that would give the minister of education overall control over appointing the board of directors of Israel’s National Library, the Hebrew University, which co-owns the library with the state, [threatened to pull all of its collections out of the library](#), a move that would seriously damage this [colonial institution](#)’s standing. Donors from around the world are also stating that they would end their support of the library if it became a political instrument.

[Prominent Israeli filmmakers](#) called for the boycott of the Rabinovich film fund for requiring a “declaration of loyalty.” Crucially, they had never called for such a boycott under previous governments, in spite of the fact that the [loyalty oath has been enforced since 2017](#). Their timing is reportedly a preemptive protest against the new Culture Minister’s plans to oblige all Israeli government film funds to add their own declaration of loyalty, as part of the conditions for dispensing funds to new productions.

The president of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities warned of risks posed by the judicial reforms to Israel’s main research funder, the Israel Science Foundation (ISF), which relies heavily on external reviewers from abroad. He [said](#), “[W]e are seeing the first signs of an increase in refusals to review. If this trend continues in a big way, it will critically damage the ability of the ISF to evaluate Israeli science, which will have far-reaching ramifications.”

## **(8) SOLIDARITY**

### **8.1. Solidarity with Palestinians**

Effective solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality is more urgent than ever. Fascist Israeli militias, supported openly by senior ministers in the far-right government, are relentlessly – and with impunity – burning Palestinian homes, orchards, ancient olive trees and shops, and stealing our land, while suffocating our people everywhere in ever shrinking spaces under siege. Our popular resistance on the ground, supported by meaningful solidarity from millions around the world, is the only factor keeping them from perpetrating far worse pogroms.

The fundamental prerequisite for solidarity is ending complicity with the regime of oppression. Escalating BDS actions now -- breaking academic, cultural, economic, financial and military-security ties with apartheid Israel, with complicit institutions, banks and corporations -- is indispensable not only for raising our morale and keeping hope for a just, peaceful and dignified life alive. It is literally indispensable for saving our lives and livelihoods against their unabashedly genocidal chants and intentions.

## 8.2 What about the Israeli “left” fighting the far-right?

In mostly Western academic, cultural or anti-pinkwashing campaigning circles, there is a new Zionist talking point emerging: “now more than ever the world must not boycott Israel but stand in solidarity with the Israeli left against the growing far-right that is undermining democracy and freedoms.” Of course this refers to defending *settler democracy* and settler-colonial freedoms that have always been systemically denied to the Indigenous Palestinians.<sup>32</sup>

An effective, time-honored response to this disingenuous talking point is to adhere to the BDS movement’s strongest ethical litmus test of complicity:

- a. **Does the Israeli organization/activity that is seeking “solidarity” support the 3 basic Palestinian rights under international law or not?**
- b. **Has it ended all forms of complicity in Israeli apartheid?**

If the answer to *either* question is negative, then the organization/activity is racist and cannot possibly qualify as “left” or even “liberal” by any international standard. Far from “fighting” the far-right regime, it is part of the settler-colonial apartheid system, only fighting to safeguard its own narrow interests and privileges, without challenging the foundations of oppression. Standing with such organizations and heeding their appeals to disregard the call from Indigenous Palestinians will only serve to maintain the overall regime of oppression.

Solidarity is with those truly struggling to end systems and structures of oppression, not those that want to make them “nicer” for some, who want to make our chains “[more comfortable](#)” rather than help us shatter them, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said. Did white settlers in South Africa fighting only for their specific communities’ narrow rights (white women’s equal rights, say) or privileges while being part of the overall apartheid system deserve solidarity from the world?

The true Jewish-Israeli leftists, the anti-Zionist and anti-colonial left, who are our partners in struggle, are also attacked not only by the Israeli far-right but also by the so-called mainstream “left.”

## (9) CONCLUSION

Nothing stops Israel, with the rise of its unmasked fascist tendencies, from perpetrating more severe massacres and en masse ethnic cleansing except its fear of serious international boycotts and sanctions. Indigenous Palestinians everywhere are calling on people of conscience worldwide to channel your moral outrage into more effective BDS pressure to stop the wildfires of their colonial, violent oppression—our ongoing Nakba.

In many countries, governments, corporations and institutions are deeply complicit with Israel's decades-old regime of military occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid, just as they were with the apartheid regime in South Africa. Israel can only sustain this regime of oppression with international complicity.

Here are the **5 most effective things you can do** to challenge this complicity and support the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality:

1. Work with progressive networks to pressure parliaments and governments, including local governments/city councils to (a) [end all military-security cooperation and trade](#) (military funding in the US case) with apartheid Israel and similarly criminal regimes of oppression worldwide, (b) **ban (or exclude from procurement) all goods/services of companies operating in Israel's illegal colonial settlements and similarly grave human rights violations anywhere**; and (c) **promote [UN action to investigate and dismantle Israeli apartheid](#), as was done with the apartheid regime in South Africa.**
2. Mobilize institutional pressure campaigns (including boycotts or divestment) against Israeli and international companies and banks that are complicit in Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity. This includes all Israeli banks (**Leumi, Hapoalim**, etc.) and major multinationals such as: **Elbit Systems, [Google](#), [Amazon](#), [HP and HPE](#), CAT, JCB, Volvo, [Hyundai Heavy Industries](#), [Chevron](#), [Siemens](#), [CAF](#), [G4S/AlliedUniversal](#), [AXA](#), [PUMA](#), [Carrefour](#), [Booking.com](#), [Airbnb](#), [Sabra](#), [Barclays](#), Expedia, Israeli military and Spyware companies**, and more.
3. Mobilize your community, trade union, association, church, social network, student government/union, [city council](#), cultural center, or other organization to declare itself an [Apartheid Free Zone \(AFZ\)](#), or otherwise end all relations with apartheid Israel and companies/institutions that are complicit in grave human rights violations worldwide.
4. **Initiate/support boycotts of all academic, cultural, sports, and tourism engagements** taking place in or sponsored by apartheid Israel, its lobby groups, or its complicit institutions.
5. [Join a BDS campaign](#) or a strategic Palestine solidarity group near you to act collectively and effectively.

**Channel your anger and mobilize BDS pressure to dismantle settler-colonialism, apartheid and all forms of racism and oppression.**

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> This document relies heavily on mainstream Israeli sources, by design. It is intended as a resource to guide and support ongoing efforts to *mainstream* our evidence-based knowledge of Israel’s regime of oppression in this unprecedented phase and, most importantly, to mainstream accountability measures, particularly BDS-related.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent resource on [apartheid as a tool of Israel’s settler-colonial regime since 1948](#) is the report published in November 2022 by Al-Haq, the leading Palestinian human rights organization. A historical reference document is the January 2023 [Call for a Global Front to Dismantle Israel’s Regime of Settler-Colonialism and Apartheid](#), authored by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Anti-Apartheid Department, in partnership with the BDS Movement, the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), the Palestinian Ministry of Justice, and the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC), with the participation of legal experts, journalists, political activists, academics and supporters. Even the Haaretz editorial board now says that the Israeli government is advancing a “[full-fledged apartheid](#)” in the OPT.

<sup>3</sup> As B’Tselem’s Hagai El-Ad [writes](#), “The current debate in Israel is not about the actual oppression of Palestinians— a matter of broad consensus—but about how and to what extent their rights should be trampled.”

<sup>4</sup> [Primo Levi](#), a prominent Jewish-Italian expert on fascism, famously wrote that fascism was “very far from being dead. It was only hidden ... keeping quiet, to reappear later under a new guise, a little less recognizable, a little more respectable.” Fascism has never before been used as extensively in the hegemonic Western mainstream and the Israeli media as it has in the last few months to describe key tendencies in the new Israeli government, with the focus being almost exclusively on Jewish Israelis as the perceived victims of these tendencies. See, for instance, [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). This more than anything else has the potential to undo Israel’s carefully and quite effectively projected propaganda image of being “the only democracy in the Middle East.”

<sup>5</sup> In a precedent, a senior government minister recently [said](#), “I’m a fascist homophobe.”

Regardless, while it is important to highlight this fascist tendency, particularly in the West, describing the whole government as fascist is – until now – inaccurate and may unnecessarily alienate potential allies.

<sup>6</sup> The Israeli minister of propaganda (hasbara), for instance, in trying to justify Israeli war crimes [refers to Palestinians](#) as being “brainwashed murderers programmed to seek Jewish blood since age zero.”

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Meir Kahane famously repeated in his popular rallies in Israel, especially in mixed Palestinian-Jewish towns, that while there is only one Kahane who speaks out, there are a million Kahanes who remain silent. Now there are more than a million Kahanes, voters of the fascist parties, that are emboldened to *overtly* defend their genocidal plans, while millions of other Kahanes remain silent. According to the [most authoritative survey of Jewish Israeli opinion](#), 62% define themselves as being on the “Right,” which is equivalent to the far-right elsewhere by international standards; almost 50% believe that “Jewish citizens of Israel should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens;” 43% prefer to see Israel more Jewish than democratic; 66% think that human rights organizations cause damage to the state; and the institution they trust the most is the Israeli army (88% trust on average).

<sup>8</sup> Ironically, Meir Kahane used to call his “leftist” Jewish opponents who tried to cancel him, “fascists.” In a presentation in the US in 1984, for instance, he pointed at his Jewish opponents [shouting](#), “Don’t talk to me, you leftists, about love of Jews. I know what you are! Fascists? Those are the fascists!”

<sup>9</sup> Likud’s Central Committee [voted overwhelmingly in 2017 to support the full annexation](#) of the OPT.

<sup>10</sup> English translation of Netanyahu’s tweet: “The Jewish people have an exclusive and unquestionable right to all areas of the Land of Israel. The government will promote and develop settlement in all parts of the Land of Israel — in the Galilee, the Negev, the Golan, Judea and Samaria.”

<sup>11</sup> Israeli journalist Meron Rapoport [writes](#), “Like other settler colonies, such as the United States, Canada, and South Africa, Zionism boasted that it had established a ‘model society’ in Palestine — for the settlers, of course, not for the indigenous population. One of the manifestations of this ‘model society’ was the internal democracy that the Zionist movement established between the river and the sea.” Israeli sociologist Eva Illouz [writes](#), “Like many other

examples of settler nationalism, the history of Zionism is a chronicle of force that is required to overcome an indigenous population. The history of Zionism is also the history of the mythologizing of that force.”

<sup>12</sup> Yossi Klein [writes](#) in Haaretz, for instance: “For 75 years they dribbled fascism in the schools without calling it by name. ‘Love of country,’ ‘settlement,’ ‘far right.’ They taught us that we are better than the whole world, but also its victims. Thanks to the connection between self-pity and arrogance, we did what democracy rejects and fascism accepts. Every education minister contributed to the advancement of fascism. Every curriculum reinforced it. They diluted it with ingredients meant to cloud its essence; ‘our right to the land’ gave us the right to expel refugees and torment the occupied. Parents rubbed their eyes in disbelief: They went to sleep with good kids and woke up with shock troops. If they really want to know where their children got this evil from, they should go to their school and read the curriculum, check what they’re learning and especially what they’re not allowed to learn.”

<sup>13</sup> Israel Frey [writes](#) in Haaretz, “It’s over. This is no longer our state. It has been occupied by fascist forces. Now it’s time to think like opponents of the regime. And the new regime’s opponents don’t fight for “sanity” and good government. They fearlessly represent the bloc of full equality, which will likely undermine the foundations of Jewish supremacy.” B’Tselem’s [Hagai El-Ad](#) criticizes the dishonest “nostalgia” of the anti-government camp saying, “Israel didn’t only occupy the territories, it implemented the practices ‘there’ that it [had] implemented ‘here’ starting in 1948. Such practices include the imposition of a military government and the promotion of ‘Jewish settlement’ – a Jewish takeover of Palestinian land and a reengineering of political power, geography and demography. Everything began ‘here,’ and since 1967 it has also been implemented “there” – the same ideology, the same policy.”

<sup>14</sup> As [Kohélet Policy Forum](#), Israel’s most influential think tank that is guiding the current coalition’s “reforms,” repeatedly says in defending this diminution of the courts’ power, Israel is the only OECD state in which the politicians don’t choose the judges, and where Supreme Court judges have the power to repeal laws passed by politicians.

<sup>15</sup> Investments in dictatorships, like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, do not seem to be affected by the utter lack of democratic checks and balances there. What is omitted in discussions about the peculiar volatility of Israel’s economy, despite its unquestionable power – mainly a factor of Western colonial complicity and ideological commitment, not simply “innovation” – is the impact of Palestinian resistance and international solidarity (particularly BDS) on it. Israel’s economic leap, after all, came as a direct result of the Oslo Accords with the PLO and all the tens of markets that were opened up to Israeli products and services as a result. During the first and second Palestinian intifadas, Israel witnessed its most severe flight of capital and talent to North America and Europe. Following Israel’s 2014 massacre in Gaza and the qualitative leap in BDS activism that followed, Israel’s economy took a hard hit, and major financial think tanks, like Rand Corporation, and credit rating agencies acknowledged the impact of BDS on it.

<sup>16</sup> In 2012, for example, [UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing described Israel’s “strategy of Judaization”](#) as aimed at controlling Palestinian land saying, “In very different legal and geographical contexts, from the Galilee and the Negev to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the Israeli authorities promote a territorial development model that excludes, discriminates against and displaces minorities, particularly affecting Palestinian communities.”

<sup>17</sup> In its groundbreaking report on apartheid as a tool of Israeli settler colonialism since 1948, [Al-Haq](#) says, “In May 1948, the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel announced a Jewish state.<sup>132</sup> Although it guaranteed the right to “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants”, this has not been given full effect through legislation, and the right has not been guaranteed in the Basic Laws, which act as constitutional documents in the absence of a written constitution. Across all the Basic Laws, legal provisions on equality are subordinated to those that privilege Jewish Israelis and establish the State of Israel as Jewish.” The High Court has consistently [rejected petitions for recognizing an Israeli civic nationality](#) that would provide guarantees for equality among all citizens as that would “endanger Israel’s founding principle: To be a Jewish state for the Jewish people;” it has refused to allow discussion of full equal rights and the “[state of all its citizens](#)” bill in the Knesset; it has [turned down appeals against the racist JNF’s massive power](#) in running the Israel Land Authority; etc.

<sup>18</sup> Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) children make up a [quarter of all Jewish children in the Israeli school system](#) and [40% of all its Jewish first-graders](#). The [majority](#) of ultra-Orthodox pupils — 74% — study in unofficial-but-recognized schools,

which are meant to follow the majority of the secular core curriculum (though most do not) in exchange for 75% funding; another 22.5% study in “exempt” schools that teach a smaller portion of the core curriculum and receive a commensurate amount of state funding, while just 3.5% learn in fully state-run Haredi schools that teach the full core curriculum. Only half of ultra-Orthodox Israeli men work. The more secular Zionist Israeli establishment is expressing loud concerns that, with this government’s [promise to increase funding for studying the Torah](#), the incentive for the ultra-Orthodox to pursue a secular education or to work will diminish significantly. This secular Israeli Ashkenazi establishment, which is obsessive about demographics, is deeply concerned that, with their [much higher fertility rate](#) (double the Israeli average), their unrelenting aspiration to separate from, not integrate into, Israeli society, and considering that their religious education leaves most of them ill-equipped to assume a functioning role in Israel’s modern economy, the threat to Israel’s future as a strong economy is looming larger than ever. The vast majority of ultra-Orthodox high school graduates [do not meet the minimum university entry requirements](#). Prof. Yedidia Stern, president of the influential Jewish People Policy Institute, comments, “When the Haredim were a small group, that was OK. Now it’s impossible. To allow this to go on despite the large numbers of Haredim means the country won’t be able to function.”

<sup>19</sup> While misogyny, structural patriarchy, and gender-based discrimination and violence have always existed in Israel’s hyper-militarized settler-colonial society, the new government is trying to impose more Orthodox/religious laws in the public sphere in ways that will further undermine women’s rights. As a self-declared “Jewish state,” Israel has never had a real separation between “church” and state, and the religious establishment has always played a critical role in suppressing women’s rights.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the book authored by Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, [Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel](#).

<sup>21</sup> Acknowledging these anti-colonial Israelis as potential partners in the liberation struggle, the historic [BDS Call](#) of 2005, endorsed by the Palestinian political parties as well as the broadest cross-section among Palestinians in historic Palestine and in exile, explicitly says, “We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace.”

<sup>22</sup> In fact, it was Israel’s Labor Party, which led the occupation of 1967, that initiated the literal erasure of the “Green Line” from maps and later on the ground in an [official government decision in 1967](#). When Likud led by Netanyahu returned to power in 2009, it simply committed to a policy of “[re-erasing](#)” that line, by expanding settlements in the West Bank and legitimizing them internally among Jewish Israelis as well as on the international stage. On their part, [Indigenous Palestinians through their resistance have also erased that line](#), uniting two main constituencies of the Palestinian people (67 and 48) in a joint liberation struggle with diverse manifestations and contexts.

<sup>23</sup> Former Labor party minister Nachman Shai [writes](#), “Israel may discover that bilateral relations are customary in this world. Those who seek the support of Diaspora Jews in the fight against BDS, in the fight against anti-Semitism or God forbid [against] lowering Israel’s credit rating, will find that [Diaspora Jews] are not there. They don’t have to. Now they do it out of love, out of appreciation, out of their own good will. When they see that the State of Israel does not count them, they will not count it either.” The [Reform Movement](#), with about 2 million followers in the US, has called the bill “thuggery” and “an absolute shame,” saying the Western Wall “can’t be managed as if it’s a Haredi synagogue.” Reform and Conservative Jews constitute about 60% of Jewish Americans, whereas the Orthodox are merely 10%.

<sup>24</sup> Without any sense of irony, former Israeli prime minister Yair Lapid reacted to this looming bill [saying](#), “If this legislation passes, Israel will no longer be a free country. Rather than a symbol of unity, the Western Wall will become a symbol of the oppression of women, discrimination against secular people, and the dismantling of our alliance with world Jewry.”

<sup>25</sup> Main fundamentalist Christian Zionist Israel lobby groups in the US have interpreted Armageddon as the return of Christ to salvage from eternal damnation only those who believe in him. Those who do not, who refuse to convert to Christianity, would all be “[wiped out and sent to hell](#),” as there is no salvation for them. Christian Zionists have always normalized Zionist settler colonialism in Palestine and the ethnic cleansing in the 1948 Nakba and the ongoing Nakba, as a catalyst for the return of the Messiah.

[Gershon Gorenberg](#), the Israeli-American author of “End of Days,” a widely referenced book about Christian Zionists, says: “The Jews die or convert. ... [Christian Zionists] don’t love real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their

story, in their play, ... and we never auditioned for that part, and the play is not one that ends up good for us. If you listen to the drama they're describing, essentially it's a five-act play in which the Jews disappear in the fourth act."

<sup>26</sup> Since 2013, senior Israeli leaders have been sounding the alarm about the growing impact of BDS, including economically. In 2013, for instance, then justice minister [Tzipi Livni](#) warned that international financial and economic boycotts started with settlements in the OPT, but over time they will reach the rest of the country, saying, "The boycott is moving and advancing uniformly and exponentially. Those who don't want to see it, will end up feeling it."

<sup>27</sup> On 14 February 2023, the BDS movement posted indicators of Israeli economic instability and capital flight, ridiculing Israel's self-description as a "Start-Up Nation" by coining the slogan/hashtag, #ShutDownNation. Since then, [Israeli protesters in Tel Aviv on 25 February appropriated the slogan](#) in a large banner, followed by a [Financial Times columnist](#) using it in his column's title on 2 March.

<sup>28</sup> OECD's annual reports on the Israeli economy are considered the most authoritative and are relied upon by international financial institutions and credit rating agencies. They also have a far-reaching impact on foreign investors considering business opportunities in Israel.

<sup>29</sup> The Israeli high-tech sector's protests against the current far-right government must be understood in the context of the sector's essential need for the mask of "liberal democracy" that this government is tearing apart. As [Shir Hever, an expert on Israel's military industry, says](#), "Israeli high-tech employees don't expect the government to end apartheid and the other daily violations of international law. They expect the government to maintain the mask, pretend to be a liberal democracy, and have photo opportunities with Western world leaders. This is what the new ultra-right-wing government refuses to do." The Israeli [high-tech sector has flourished due to its ties to the Israeli security-military establishment](#) and in direct proportion to bloody attacks on Palestinians under occupation, especially in Gaza. The OPT is the "field" where Israel's military and "security" technologies have been "field-tested" and exported to the world.

<sup>30</sup> As an [example](#) of the effect this is having on morale and motivation among military reservists, Dr. Yuval Horwitz, a lieutenant colonel in the reserves (with 20 years of service) and director of the nephrology clinic at Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv, said, "We, the people who are opposed to the occupation, have served for decades under right-wing governments. At their behest, **we did things that are explicitly not legal. Ambulances were used to do patrols, maintain roadblocks. We removed the ambulance symbol so it wasn't identifiable, but we knew very well what we were doing. We did not object, we did not refuse to obey orders**, because we understood that this is a democratic country. And if it decided to send settlers to a certain area, it was our duty to guarantee their security. But, that's no longer the case. After all, in the end there will be a war, because that is the way things are in the State of Israel. And in the next war, I will have many doubts about the motivations behind it." [Emphasis added]

A battalion commander who has served for 10 years in the reserves said, "Now this is our war. This is the most difficult war there has ever been here, by the way, because the enemy is from within. The most complicated war since the state was founded."

Dr. Yishay Szekely, a cardiologist at Ichilov and lieutenant colonel on active duty in the reserves, tweeted, "I will not carry out reserve service in a country ruled by a single, individual authority. I will not report to serve in a dictatorship." He said, "The question, 'Why have you only remembered now, after 20 years in the army of occupation?' is a legitimate and challenging question. The answer is that until today at least, you could tell yourself that all those decisions, even when they were controversial and they included a blend of fighting the enemy inside civilian territory, with all that that implies, were made within the rules of the game of a democratic country. You may not have been able to agree with them, or you thought they were **immoral**, but they were carried out in the context of a years-long conflict between two sides, one of which was acting like a democracy. That was the contract. And the moment one of the sides to a contract violates it in such a crude way, it will automatically cancel itself. It's not reasonable to maintain it, it is not moral to maintain it."

<sup>31</sup> With a typical Israeli settler-colonial mentality, these spyware specialists are not bothered with the facts that the very essence of their cyber warfare technology is a [threat to the world](#), tested on the captive Palestinian population under occupation, and exported to dictatorships and the most repressive regimes worldwide to [enable further repression, murder, pillage and agony](#).

---

<sup>32</sup> The so-called Zionist “left” in Israel has all but vanished from the political spectrum, where the main opposition no longer carries the banner of the “left” even rhetorically, given how far to the right the Israeli settler-colonial majority has shifted over the last decades.