



COUNCIL OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

President: Rev Dr D. Moerane

Cell No: 084 876 3525

E-Mail: gmoerane@gcc.org.za

Secretary: Rt. Rev S Mloi

Cell No: 082 376 9503/083 399 7447

E-mail: moloi.shadrack@gmail.com

Please address all correspondence to the General Secretary

MEDIA STATEMENT

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APARTHEID IN THE HOLY LAND - ISRAEL

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Council of African Independent Churches (CAIC) leadership descended on the Holy Land of Palestine-Israel recently.

The church leadership found Israeli abuses of Palestinian human rights to be appalling! Israel has mastered well from the South African apartheid regime and actually surpassed its architect, Hendrik Verwoerd, through its design and application! One may cite numerous examples in this but the following automatically invaded my recollection:

1. Expansion and establishment of illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian territories
2. Establishment of illegal Israeli checkpoints manned by hostile Israeli army officers to monitor the movements of Palestinians while Israelis and Israeli settlers are having it on a golden spoon! For example, harrowing and humiliating experience is felt by each Palestinian in checkpoint 56 between the holy towns of Bethlehem and Jerusalem where Palestinians are humiliated and access is fully controlled by rude and hostile Israeli army officials! The Apartheid wall being built by Israel is installing separate development between Israelis and Palestinians and thereby dividing not only geography but humans and their livelihood!
3. The ruins of Lifta village just outside Jerusalem is a taunting pain in Palestine and what's worse, Israeli settlers "hijacked" this village!
4. The South African forest in Luby, in which the South African flag hangs, is a sordid remainder to a 73 year old Palestinian whose village was mercilessly destroyed in 1948 when he was a mere 4 year old boy!!! Echoing in my ears is a South African struggle chant **senzenina** that we SACC and CAIC delegates sung while there in an expression of active solidarity to the Palestinians!
5. Palestinian children are raised under devastating conditions in Hebron where some of the streets are exclusive to Israeli settlers only!

What else to say save to plea with the Israeli community to refrain from diabolic acts of apartheid towards Palestinians! Question is, how much holy does the Holy Land still possess???

Every effort including BDS boycott of Israel programs should and must be pursued to dismantle this Israeli Apartheid! I urge the South African government to lead from the front. One of the first acts must be the withdrawal of our flag and symbols from the so called South Africa Forest built by Israeli supporters in and on the destroyed Palestinian village of Luby!!!

Bishop Dr. TS Ngcana

Deputy General Secretary

thami.ngcana@gmail.com