

Jurists For Palestine Forum (Season 2)

Summary of Webinar 4¹

Anti-Palestinian Racism: Motives, Manifestations, and Solutions

Main Information:

- **Date of the Webinar:** 18-8-2022
- **Duration:** between 19.00-20.30 Jerusalem Time
- **Place:** Via Zoom
- **Speakers:**

Abigail Bakan: Professor in the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE

Dania Majid: Co-Founder and President of the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association and Toronto Palestine Film Festival

Ramzy Baroud: US-Palestinian Journalist, Media Consultant, Internationally Syndicated Columnist, and Editor of the Palestine Chronicle

- **Moderator:**

Mjriam Abu Samra: Senior Research Officer at ARDD

- **Attendees:** 40
- **Listeners (members of the Jurists Forum):** 1150
- **Recording link:** [Here](#)

Introduction

Throughout the Palestinian struggle, as Palestinian rights have been under attack at home, the situation was not brighter for those defending Palestinian rights worldwide, be them Palestinians or people of other nationalities advocating the cause of justice and human rights for Palestine, mainly

¹Disclaimer: This paper summarizes the most important opinions, positions and analyzes mentioned during the discussion. These opinions do not necessarily reflect the position of Law for Palestine or its partner ARDD. The two organizations aim, through their open discussion panels, to provoke discussion and deepen awareness of the different legal opinions on the issues at hand. However, it doesn't adopt or support any specific position.

in Western countries. Restrictions to their freedom of expression, excluding them from platforms, denying them opportunities and other forms of harassment, advocated by pro-Israel groups and often implemented by their allies in power, are a defining feature of pro-Palestinian activism.

This state of 'anti-Palestinianness' has been described through several terms; such as Anti-Palestinianism, Anti-Palestinian Discrimination, Anti-Palestinian Bias. This diversity of terms led to none of them being of regular use, or any of them being properly established, defined and framed. Recently, a term has been coined to capture it all; Anti-Palestinian Racism (APR). The APR term recently used, set out and framed comprehensively in a [Canadian report](#) released in April 2022. The report defines APR as "a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives. Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including: denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians; failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine; erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians; excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies; defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values."

In practice, the relative success of APR in suppressing voices leading to 'voluntary' and involuntary self-censorship is quite alarming, as besides suppressing the voice of the victims, it offers the Israeli government a blank cheque to continue violating international law with no fear of any sort of accountability. This requires a firm stance to stand united and stand behind one banner, as the multiple of definitions and terminology would lead to disorganized and ineffective action.

This webinar, gathering academics, experts and NGOs directly involved and having a first-hand experience with the variant manifestations of the concept, aims to:

- Highlight the different manifestations and consequences of APR.
- Examine the motives and incentives of APR, who suffers from it and how? and Who are the main instigators?
- Discuss the possible strategies to combat APR, what could be done by the international legal community, human rights lawyers, experts, and NGO's to combat it?

Speakers' Discussion

Dania Majid:

- The ACLA's report on APR grew out of their advocacy work arising from the hiring scandal at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.
 - The scandal involved a sitting judge, who was a donor to the University, interfered in the hiring of Dr. Azarova on behalf of a pro-Israeli lobby group he used to work for because they disagreed with her scholarship on Palestine and Israel.
 - Because ACLA did not want the Palestine piece to be erased from the scandal, they chose to describe it as APR in their advocacy work.
 - However, they soon realized how little material there was about and using an APR framing. Therefore, they decide to work on coming up with a description of the term that they could use to frame their advocacy work through an APR lens.
 - In order to not impose a definition on the community, they went on to conduct a year long process of consulting the community, activists, and lawyers to get feedback on their draft definition. This feedback turned into their peer reviewed report.
- The description they came up with through this process is: *"Anti-Palestinian racism is a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives. Anti-Palestinian racism takes various forms including: denying the Nakba and justifying violence against Palestinians; failing to acknowledge Palestinians as an Indigenous people with a collective identity, belonging and rights in relation to occupied and historic Palestine; erasing the human rights and equal dignity and worth of Palestinians; excluding or pressuring others to exclude Palestinian perspectives, Palestinians and their allies; defaming Palestinians and their allies with slander such as being inherently antisemitic, a terrorist threat/sympathizer or opposed to democratic values."*
 - The report provides a commentary on each of these elements, addressing the feedback they received. It was intentionally written broadly to be used outside of Canada.
- Some of the key points that came out of their consultations are:
 - ACLA decided to use the term APR instead of other terms because (1) fighting all forms of a racism is a main part of the Palestinian movement, (2) the oppression of

Palestinians is settler colonial and apartheid, which are both racist systems privileging one group over another, and (3) these systems are upheld using racism.

- They call this a description of APR not a definition because they didn't want it to be perceived as rigid or final and therefore exclude anyone's experiences. By calling it a description, it serves as an invitation to the community to treat it as a start that communities can adapt to serve their purposes.
- Too often APR is conflated with Islamophobia. While they do overlap, it is very much a distinct form of racism experienced by those targeted by Israel's defenders for speaking out. By failing to name this distinct form of racism, we are permitting the Palestinian exception to persist, which further adds to the silencing of Palestinians and allies.
- APR can both target Palestinians and their allies. Palestinians said that they still felt targeted and attacked when an ally received that reaction. This was very in line with the way people felt about the scandal at the University of Toronto. That said, the harmed experienced by Palestinians experiencing APR were usually greater.
- The expression of APR may be intersectional. It may be amplified for those who are members of historically marginalized groups. For example, allies who are part of marginalized communities often are smeared even more for expression of support for Palestinian human rights. In silencing them, other forms of discrimination are leveraged to amplify the APR experience.
- At its core, APR aims to censor and erase Palestinians and their narratives from the public sphere and, in doing so, to preserve unchallenged Israel's settler colonial practices. It's form and impacts varies by context and environment. It may be experienced directly through punitive measures, causing harm to a person's reputation, or denying them opportunities. Or it can happen indirectly by eliciting broader fear to deter anyone in a community from sharing Palestinian narratives.
 - Some of the forms APR can take are defaming a person's character or reputation, falsely accusing them of antisemitism, denying or threatening to deny them opportunities or advancement, dehumanizing Palestinians, negating their experiences, or blaming them for their oppression, and portraying Palestinians as inferior people or not supportive of democratic values.

- The effect of this kind of backlash is the intended, chilling effect on open discourse on Palestine.
- Before we started using the terminology of APR, many of us tried to use international law to protect the community. However, international law is not accessible to all community members, isn't accepted in many venues, and often is readily dismissed when it is raised.
 - By naming APR, we have a new, direct, and accessible way to talk about our experienced.
- Initially, the writing on APR was for lawyers and judges to try to get them to understand the experiences of APR. But they ignored it all. So instead, ACLA took on the writing of this report for grassroots Palestinian communities to address their racial trauma head on and serve as a resource to let Palestinians know they are seen and validated. Hopefully this will empower to community to know they are not alone and can be empowered to speak.
- Campuses today remain a hotspot for APR, in part because this is where the most people are willing to speak. Public schools are becoming a new battleground. However, we are now seeing parents and educators using this report to mobilize against APR.
 - One recent success story in Ontario happened when parents and educators managed to get a large school board to add APR to their newly released anti-racism policy.

Abigail Bakan:

- The concept of APR is carefully named and framed to offer us a language and way to open space for Palestinian solidarity, advocacy, and studies with more confidence and breath. It also opens doors to the creative potential, beauty, and strength of the Palestinian experience and community. The concept challenges a deep absence known as the Palestine exception.
- As the report states, erasure is a central component of APR. Palestine is not included in any standard educational curriculum across all areas of study. Even disciplines like political science about states and power, Palestine is notably absent.
- Why is this notable absence not only tolerated, but advocated for and reproduced?
 - Certainly, APR is central to this.
 - In my research with Yasmeeen Abu-Laban, we identify a painfully effective, unwritten racial contract that we have named the Israel-Palestine Racial Contract. This contract

absents Palestinian lives, experiences, history, rights, contributions, and realities from global politics and related knowledge production.

- Naming APR at least gets our foot in the door to advance the conversation about this contract.
- All racisms today are coded in various forms. One way APR is coded is under false charges of antisemitism.
 - To have effective solidarity we need to be clear about what antisemitism is and is not.
 - The word antisemitism is imperfect but there are three meanings in contemporary usage that should be suggested:
 - Anti-Judaism, which is a prejudice against the Jewish religion.
 - Anti-Jewish Racism, which, like other forms of racism, is grounded in ascribed phenotypes and stereotypes about “Jewish blood” into which one is born and thus cannot overcome
 - This is the main way we understand antisemitism in the context of anti-oppression politics
 - It is important to note that we are misguided challenging antisemitism as Anti-Jewish Racism by the misuse of the term new antisemitism as if it applies to all forms of antisemitism (i.e., the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, which actually is coded APR that also makes difficult any real discussions of antisemitism as Anti-Jewish Racism)
 - New antisemitism, which is a politically constructed claim that any criticism of Israel is the same as antisemitism and must therefore be silenced and opposed
 - This latter meaning is put forward by powerful political forces associated with Israel. It is a dangerous misuse of the term but is widely adopted.
 - There is a cold, hard materiality of Israel’s occupation of Palestine, the violent and ongoing dispossession of Palestinians, and the collaboration of major states like Canada and the US with the suppression of Palestinian rights in the diaspora. This violent reality has been in part reproduced and covered up by racist serotypes and coded charges against Palestinians.

- All this said, we continue to make every effort to build new communities of resistance and inspiration. It is immensely important that we have the language and concept of APR as one form of racism. We are stronger when we help each other and resist the divide and conquer tactics that are so finely tuned by defenders of colonialism, neoliberalism, apartheid, and oppressive practices.
- Understanding the particularities and details of APR and naming and framing it clearly and carefully has immense potential for liberation across communities, including the Palestinian and Jewish communities.
 - The ACLA report, and its methodology of consultation and review, allows us to share a discussion about the context and offers lessons so that we can build a community of greater solidarity in the future.

Ramzy Baroud:

- We need to understand the relationship between dehumanization and racism. This is very much applicable to the Palestinian context.
 - Any Palestinian history book written in Arabic about the history of the Zionist movement, the nakba, etc. is always going to dedicate a section to the terminology used by Zionists in their dehumanization and erasure of Palestinians.
 - This erasure is institutionalized in Israel through nation state law and the behavior of the Zionist community. This is the kind of racism that defines Israel's relationship with the Palestinian community.
- Western media, academia, intelligence, etc. are in many ways a reflection of that existing racist mentality that governs Israel's relationship with the Palestinians.
 - The notion that the West exists in some sort of independent space from Palestine and Israel has been proven wrong time and again.
 - Western ruling elites, mainstream media, and academia really do see things eye to eye with Israel and fully embrace the Israeli perspective.
 - Western media's coverage of the three-day war is just another example of this relationship wherein they actively protected Israel.
- Palestinians living in Palestine and those living outside of it all have to confront the same kinds of experiences.

- In America, I am a victim of American racism that is an extension of the very Israeli racism that I deal with when I am back in Palestine.
- Zionist dehumanization of Palestinians and the way that Western media and culture adopted and reproduced it are one and the same.
- Additionally, it is important to understand the unique experience that Palestinians and their supporters deal with as distinct from anti-Arab racism and Muslim prejudice.
 - After 9/11, there was a conflation of the Zionist movement with the institutionalized anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia in the United States. The Zionists worked carefully to ensure this conflation happened to capitalize on their movement.
 - The Israeli American media conflation and 'shared enemy' became so powerful that many Palestinians had to leave the US because they were living in fear.
- As a result of many Western societies entirely embracing the Israeli position, Palestinians are not met with a neutral environment in which we can present and defend our point of view as a part of a cultural dialogue and international debate. No debate exists at all because no one is given the benefit of the doubt, instead are under attack, accused, and marginalized.
- Recent polls coming out of Israel illustrate the incredibly racist view that Israelis have of Palestinians in Palestine, Israel, and the diaspora. Israeli political thinking and elections are all based on this foundation and cornerstone of APR.
 - This is then taken at wholesale value in Western societies to define their perception of Palestinians.
- The ACLA's project on APR represents a pivotal move from merely highlighting the kind of racism, prejudice, marginalization, and dehumanization to a whole new sphere of having our own definition that are consistent with common sense, international law, humanitarian law, and civil laws of any given society. It shows that we too are capable of holding racists accountable.
 - The question now is can this serve as a first step in a collective movement wherein we hold the media accountable for every sentence, line, and word.

Comments and Q & A

Comments and Questions #1: Yasmeen Abu-Laban (Professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta)

- At one level a concern with racism is not inherently new and has been voiced by Palestinian scholars and activists for decades. However, for a variety of reasons including the murder of George Floyd and the disproportionate devastation of COVID-19, we are living in a moment where there is increased political attention being paid to anti-racism by governments and civil society groups across many states.
- In thinking about how to combat racism, it is becoming ever more apparent that we also need to think about specific forms of racism.
 - Therefore, the framework provided by the ACLA and by this discussion are timely, constructive, and hugely contributory.
- The APR framework has elements that potentially bring together the experiences of Palestinians across geographic spaces of the Green Line, occupation, and diaspora.
 - This unifying power is important because about three quarters of Palestinians cannot visit their homeland and those who are there live in fragmentation.
- This discussion raises some questions about how we understand combatting APR:
 - (1) If we are to talk about APR and combat it, it seems useful to think about where it originates. So where would each of the panelists place the origin of APR? Is it in 1948 with the nakba? Is it in the Balfour declaration? Does it come before? Or, alternatively, are we looking at something more recent that comes post nakba?
 - (2) How does APR relate to other expressions of racism and discrimination that have been identified in scholarship and law through terms like orientalism, anti-Arab racism, and Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism as well as anti-Black racism, anti-Jewish racism, etc.? As important as it is to identify the specificity of APR, can this form of racism be combatted without simultaneously addressing other expressions of racism and discrimination?
 - (3) How is APR best combatted? Today we arguably can see ways in which the settler colonial violence directed at the Palestinian movement is being combated such as the BDS movement and the growing number of reports at the UN and other human rights organizations saying Israel is practicing apartheid. Does APR require its own specific form of mobilization to combat it or is it contained in these other movements and trends? If it needs something more specific, what does that ideally look like?

Panelist Response:

Dania Majid:

- (1) I did come across the history question when doing my research and my instinct was that a lot of APR is rooted in settler colonialism so it must be tied to the 1948 timeline.
- (2) As to how APR interacts with other forms of racism, there absolutely is an intersectionality that we have seen play out. For example, I was recently contacted by activists in the UK because they were dealing with a racialized Muslim woman who was elected to her student council. She was attacked for her position on Palestine that came in the form of Islamophobic tropes and attacks. In our report, we wanted to focus on making a point about APR being a unique form of racism because what we heard from a lot of the people we spoke to was that when APR was raised to institutions they often responded with “we are committed to fighting Islamophobia.” There was never any acknowledgement of the distinct experience of APR.
- (3) I think co-solidarity is important. At least in the Canadian and Western context, we have seen so much mobilizing around settler colonialism for indigenous communities, anti-Black racism, and homophobia. Palestinian activists have been very involved in participating in these issues as allies and these communities have been outspoken in supporting the Palestinian community. From this we have learned from one another and benefited from each other’s successes. The groundswell of support we saw in North America and Europe around the attacks in 2021 was unprecedented. I think this was because we had just learned lessons from the George Floyd moment. The gains made by our allies opened the doors for us as Palestinians to come in and talk about the racism we experience. Even if people don’t understand the history and politics of Palestine, they understand racism. As a result, we now can talk about it and call it out without having to limit our audience to people who are well versed in all things Palestine. In addition to these solidarities, there are still gains we need to make in the Palestinian community so that young people no longer feel afraid to speak openly about Palestine. We need to continue to work within our own community to have these conversations, to acknowledge the feelings and trauma, work through it, and build those spaces to gain the confidence to say Palestine in public. If we are afraid to talk about it, we cannot get others to join us.

Comments and Questions #2:

- The most important effect that I feel living in Canada from the ACLA report that came out is the feeling that there is a support network. It makes people feel like even if they don't have legal support, they have a community and something they can pick up and point to to show that what they feel is real. It also gives those who use wrongfully use accusations of antisemitism less ability to do so by showing that actually something else is going on.
- It is very important now to use this work to push these conversations into governments and bring APR to the forefront.
- Could you clarify a bit about the difference between the term anti-Palestinianism and APR?

Question #3:

- How do we determine the community intent behind an act of APR? Are there any legal instruments to help us do so?

Comment #4:

- An additional way that I have noticed Zionists have used language to perpetrate APR is by calling it two equal sides. However, it is not like this at all. They use this language to suggest that it is both sides mission to find a solution. This kind of soft language is used to couch something that is in fact really dangerous.

Panelist Responses:

Abigail Bakan:

- In looking at different manifestations of racism, we don't always look for intent. We also know that racism can sometimes happen systemically because of systemic bias. Hopefully overtime we can start to expand this understanding in terms of how we understand APR.
- The notion of two equal sides is another feature of the way APR operates.
- We have this complexity because Israel established itself through the Zionist response to antisemitism in the West in a reactionary way. So, the language of Jewish rights has been

militarized through the existence of the Israeli state. For those who are progressive and want to be on the side of justice, being accused of antisemitism can be an incredibly painful charge.

- The issue of history is so essential in terms of understanding APR. We know it hasn't been invented recently, but unlike certain forms of racism that have waned over time it is actually intensifying. Part of the intensification is a result of the refusal to name it and the challenges of naming it without also dealing with other forms of oppression.
 - Naming apartheid is completely consistent and helpful with understanding APR.

Ramzy Baroud:

- Racism differs and is not an outcome of a specific experience but of a collective experience in a specific time and space.
 - Racism is not fixed. It is different from one collective experience to another. It moves and it changes. But ultimately, racism is a functional idea. It serves a purpose of emphasizing the superiority of one group and the inferiority of others. It constantly tries to undermine, marginalize, dehumanize, and suppress those who are meant to be the victim.
- I think it will take a long time for APR to be a fixed principle. Even though some may not accept it, we need this definition because Palestinian has been lumped into so many other contexts even in liberal, pro-Palestine spaces. We often fail to recognize the way it is unique and its role throughout the years. As a result, Palestine often gets lost. It is important that we ask why, like the way Israel and its apartheid, colonial, racist regime can impose its centrality on the Western mind, we as Palestinians cannot call for a just and fair resolution.
 - This is why we need the APR framework to emphasize the centrality and singularity of the Palestinian experience in contemporary society.

Dania Majid:

- I want to emphasize that if community members want to use certain terminology like anti-Palestinianism or want to view this as a definition, they absolutely should. We don't want to impose anything onto such a diverse community with different experiences, but everyone should feel free to use this however is best for them.

- As to the question on discriminatory intent, it is often the impact not the intent we focus on when looking at racist incidents. If you are a legal contact, this kind of evidence should be treated like anything else. You're connecting the dots to show that this was intended.
- For the most part, when I see this term used it is for advocacy. We shouldn't be too hindered by the legal context as courts have only ever ignored it. We will and should keep pushing judges and politicians, but we should remember that they are not the only target for this definition. It is also for us to use in telling our stories and pushing our advocacy forward.

END