

Intervention in Response to the Invitation to an Expert Roundtable by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance on:

“Climate Justice, Environmental Racism and Racial Equality and Non-discrimination”

**UN Special Rapporteur, Prof. Achiume,
Distinguished colleagues,**

I'm honoured and humbled by the Special Rapporteur's invitation to participate in this expert round table in preparation for her next report to the United Nations General Assembly, which will focus on climate justice, environmental racism and racial equality and non-discrimination under international human rights law. It is with great pleasure that I participate in my personal capacity and on behalf of Al-Haq, an independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organisation based in Ramallah, Palestine.

In my intervention, I intend to focus on insights from our work on the subject of ecological/climate apartheid, with the ambition that it would inform and contribute to the Special Rapporteur's analysis in her forthcoming and timely report. I have also included a list of relevant materials that I believe will be of value in the preparation of the Special Rapporteur's report.

It is not a secret, nor is it disputable, that the responsibility for the climate crisis we have today lies with wealthy, highly industrialized countries, often with colonial history, and with non-state actors, especially powerful corporate actors. Yet, countries and communities in the Global South, especially indigenous Peoples, who evidently have contributed the least, if at all, to this crisis, are the ones that greatly and rapidly suffer the most from it.

These affected communities are being increasingly confronted with great climate impacts and challenges with limited resources due to the legacy of colonialism, slavery and the global extractivist economy that continues to increase their climate vulnerabilities and undermine their adaptive capacities.

Strikingly, the most prosperous nation-states today appear to wish to believe and behave, as if the legacy of colonialism only belongs to an era of our past. This cannot be further from the truth, as these states continue to prosper and profit from intentionally-constructed inequalities produced by the unjust legacy of colonialism.

Colonialism and its practices of domination, conquest, settlement, and exploitation of indigenous peoples' land and natural resources have ruptured many ecosystems around the world. To achieve its goal of creating a “settler identity and territorial belonging”, settler-colonialism, in particular, is greatly contingent upon the notion of space. Thus, settler-colonialists have always deliberately altered the ecological conditions of the environment in which they have settled.

The situation in Palestine is no exception. The settler-colonial nature of Israel's Zionism is profoundly consistent with land settlement and territoriality, through its ever-expanding settlement enterprise and its persistent denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and right to return to land from which they were ethnically cleansed.

The right to self-determination, enshrined in international law and fundamental to the Palestinian struggle, encompasses the right to decide upon the climate change adaptation options indigenous Palestinians want to implement in order to mitigate climate change's impact on their land and population. Not only Indigenous Peoples are best suited to select relevant responses to climate change as they have the ancestral knowledge of the land, but it is also part of their achievement and realisation of their right to self-determination and their sovereignty over their natural resources.

Israel's ecological destruction and restructuring of Palestine's topography has been orchestrated militarily with the objective of colonising the land. To achieve their colonial endeavours, including the elimination and destruction of any signs of Palestinian indigenous presence, Zionists destroyed hundreds of Palestinian villages. Moreover, to conceal the remnants of those villages and to make the landscape look less alien and more European, native trees (such as oaks and carobs) and agricultural crops (such as olives and figs), were systematically uprooted and replaced by European pine trees, which Palestinian indigenous farmers have always considered counterproductive for their environment because they consume large amounts of water causing droughts and because they are very susceptible to fire.

Israel's ecological apartheid policies and practices are not limited to trees or landscapes. The Israeli government has provided tax incentives to Israeli companies with the highest rates of pollution, including the settlements waste-dumping industry, to move their business into the occupied Palestinian territory instead of working in Israel. Al-Haq has documented the devastating effect of such practices on Palestinian residents, nature and agriculture. The genotoxic effects on Palestinian residents are immense. Specialists have affirmed that these effects include damaging DNA and chromosomes, which led to increasing cases of miscarriage, cancer, and congenital birth defects. In addition, the pollution of the air and water has also caused several serious diseases to the Palestinians.

Israel's Apartheid regime not only alters the Palestinian nature to achieve its colonial endeavour and racially discriminates against the Palestinians, but it also uses nature as a pretext attempting to justify these discriminatory policies and practices. For example, Israel has been using the claim of protecting nature reserves to confiscate more Palestinian land and then build illegal settlements on it. This practice has been accurately described as 'greenwashing' of Israel's apartheid.

Indeed, Israel's colonial settlement enterprise has facilitated and enabled its apartheid system. Israel's extensive network of bypass roads, for example, serves only its settlers, while Palestinians are prohibited from using these roads. Any buildings or trees within 75 meters from

these bypass roads are bulldozed and declared closed military zones. Consequently, Israel confiscates more agricultural and pastoral Palestinian land.

The disparity between the settlers and the indigenous Palestinian people, including land control and the quality of life and services, is a result of the gap in access to natural resources, especially water. As 91% of the total water of the West Bank is being expropriated solely for Israeli settler use, Israel's water apartheid is yet another illustration of its larger goal of ecological/climate domination over Palestinians' natural resources and capacity for self-determination.

To conclude, ecological/climate apartheid emerges from the interplay between racism and the environmental exploitation of indigenous people's natural resources. Israel's settler-colonial apartheid regime is cunningly orchestrated with the explicit objective of entrenching its domination over Palestinians. This is done with the aim of keeping Palestinians vulnerable to further ecological manipulation by Israel and private corporations, who profit from Palestine's captive economy and dwindling resources. It is through its belligerent prolonged illegal occupation and military rule that Israel maintains its domination over Palestinians and their limited natural resources.

In the words of our late colleague, Suha Jarrar:

“Adaptation to climate change will not be possible for Palestinians without the genuine realization of the right to self-determination and permanent sovereignty over their natural resources.”

Thank you,

Ahmed Abofoul
Legal Research and Advocacy Officer, Al-Haq.

AL-HAQ
Defending Human Rights



- **Resources and materials for the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism relevant to the preparation for her forthcoming report:**
 - ESCR-Net, Al-Haq et al., [“Collective Submission on Loss and Damage to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights & Climate Change.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Environmental Injustice in Occupied Palestinian Territory.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Adaptation Under Occupation: Climate Change Vulnerability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Water For One People Only: Discriminatory Access and ‘Water-Apartheid’ in the OPT.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Pillage of the Dead Sea: Israel’s Unlawful Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“An Environmental Approach: The Protection of Natural Resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“The Sun Belongs to Everyone: Israeli Demolitions and Confiscations of Solar Panel Aid Projects in Area C of the West Bank.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 47/24 “Human Rights and Climate Change”, entitled: [“Climate Oppression: A Major Tool to Establish and Maintain Israel’s Apartheid Regime over the Palestinian People and Their Lands.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Unpacking Gender in Coercive Environments: The Case of the Jordan Valley.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“The Struggle for Self-Determination in the Face of Climate Change.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Geshuri Chemical Factories.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Sumoud - Israel’s creation of coercive environments in Al-Hadidiya.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Natural Resource Exploitation in the Dead Sea Area - The Case of Ahava.”](#)
 - Suha Jarrar, [“No Justice, No Adaptation: The politics of climate change adaptation in Palestine.”](#)
 - Ahmed Aboufoul, [“Israel’s Ecological Apartheid in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”](#)
 - Suha Jarrar, The Ajyal Podcast, [“Palestinian Land Rights and Inequality in Resource Acquisition.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“In the Aftermath of COP26: A Rights-Based Solution to Climate Change is Needed to Counter Israel’s Greenwashing.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Shrinking Dead Sea, at the Collusion between Israel’s Intensive Exploitation, Corporate Extraction and Climate Change.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Al-Haq Joins ESCR-Net’s Call to Deliver on Loss and Damage with a Focus on Human Rights.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Protection of Natural Resources against Adverse Effects of Climate Change in Palestine: A Perspective Based on International Law.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Jerusalem Wildfires in Summer 2021, When Climate Change-Related Wildfires Expose the JNF’s Colonial Afforestation Project.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Intersectional Oppression, the Aggravated Impacts of Climate Change on Palestinian Women.”](#)
 - Al-Haq, [“Al-Haq Sends A Letter to the Gates Foundation on its Partnership with Israel.”](#)