

Perspective

## Is Intel supporting an Apartheid Regime?

by Mazin B. Qumsiyeh

Last year Intel exported products valued at nearly \$2 billion from Israel, of which \$1.3 billion were from a plant in "Qiryat Gat" called FAB-18. Intel investment in FAB-18 amounted to \$1 billion. The plant site is located between the rail line from Tel Aviv to Beer Sheva and the new Trans-Israel highway. This is land that belongs to the Palestinian village of Iraq al Manshiya.

Al-Faluja and Iraq Al-Manshiya were twin and peaceful Palestinian villages that came under Israeli rule on 24 February 1949 well after the war as part of an armistice agreement (See Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, Cambridge University Press, 1987). An Armistice Agreement sponsored by the United Nations laid out the conditions for transfer of the area from Egyptian to Israeli control. The agreement contains assurance for the safety of the persons and the property of these two villages. In an exchange of letters, repeating the same assurances, between Dr. Walter Eytan, Head of the Israeli Delegation and Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, the American UN Mediator on Palestine, it was stated that "Those of the civilian population who may wish to remain in Al Faluja and Iraq Al Manshiya are to be permitted to do so ... All of these civilians shall be fully secure in their persons, abodes, property and personal effects". This Armistice Agreement is lodged in the UN and constitutes an obligation on the contracting parties in international law.

According to Benny Morris, both Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and Weitz (head of the Jewish agency) approved driving the inhabitants out in contravention of international law and contrary to the Armistice Agreement that Israel signed. Israel expelled the population of Al-Faluja and Iraq Al-Manshiya by means of "intimidation using ALL means," Morris, 1948 p. 145. The inhabitants of the two villages could have become Israeli citizens had they not been expelled. Instead, they were deported to the Hebron area which was then under Jordanian rule. Some have since become US citizens. Israel demolished all village buildings as they did with close to 500 Palestinian villages ethnically cleansed to make way for new Jewish immigrants. Israel confiscated all Palestinian property and built the settlements of Qiryat Gat, Shajar, & Nehora on village lands. For details see: <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Gaza/Iraq-al-Manshiyya/>

The intimidation, which is in effect an ethnic cleansing plan, was an established policy. Moshe Shertok (Sharett), Israel's foreign minister, stated on 28 July 1949, some four months after the expulsion of the population of the two villages: "It is not possible in every place to arrange what some of our boys engineered in Faluja [where] they chased away the Arabs after we signed an ... international commitment ... There were warning from the UN and the U.S. in this matter ... [There were] at least 25-30,000 ... whom we could not uproot." (Morris, 249).

In contravention of international law, Israel built an industrial zone on confiscated village lands. Press reports indicate that Intel built the "boldest, most ambitious, most expensive and most controversial facility" on this Industrial Zone. Intel investment amounts to \$1 billion and Rabin government contributed an additional \$600 million. Intel employs 1,600 engineers and 2,000 workers. The site is located between the rail line from Tel Aviv to Beer Sheba and the planned location of the new Trans-Israel highway.

Today, the expelled population of Iraq Al Manshiya amounts to 14,345 registered refugees with UNRWA residing in the following areas: West Bank (about 5 thousand), Jordan (about 9 thousand), US and other countries/areas (about 500). Out of the total, about 1,500 are born before 1948, many of them can provide testimony to their ethnic cleansing. The Palestine Right to Return Coalition (Al-Awda.org) tracked down many of the previous residents of Al-Faluja and Iraq Al-Manshiya. The group and in collaboration with other groups are asking Intel to divest from Israel not only because of these legal and historical rights issues but also because of Israel's continued ethnic cleansing and occupation of Palestine.

Israel's apartheid policies of closure, collective punishment and siege, demolishing homes, etc. are serious violations of International Law and human rights as documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the UN Human Rights Commission, Physicians for Human Rights, and even Israeli Human Rights organizations. In the last eight months alone, the Israeli army has killed 500 and injured over 17,000 Palestinians. One third of the victims were under the age of 18. The Israeli army continues its policy of demolishing homes, collective punishment, uprooting trees, and siege of Palestinian towns and villages. Israel's peace block's Uri Avnery declared that these are bankrupt policies intended to protect colonial settlement of Palestinian lands in defiance of International law. Further, Israel continues to set up an Apartheid system in many ways worse than what South Africa tried to do. Intel would be wise to dis-invest now considering the actions described here and many others over the past 53 years combined. Israel would be wise to allow refugees to return and to abandon the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank instead of using might to suppress the call for justice. Until this happens, Israel/Palestine will remain

in turmoil and foreign companies considering investments in Israel would be wise to do some homework before investing in an unstable Apartheid regime.

(Dr. Mazin B. Qumsiyeh is Chair of the Media Committee, [The Palestine Right to Return Coalition](#))

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