Planned Study by UN Body Behind ‘Apartheid’ Report to Compare Israel to US Slavery

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By [Eric Cortellessa](http://www.timesofisrael.com/writers/eric-cortellessa/)

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<http://www.timesofisrael.com/new-study-by-un-body-behind-apartheid-report-plans-to-compare-israel-to-us-slavery/>

The Lebanon-based United Nations agency that was recently forced to remove a report on its website accusing Israel of establishing [an “apartheid regime](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-fumes-as-un-board-censures-apartheid-and-racial-domination/)” will soon release another appraisal of alleged Israeli malfeasance, The Times of Israel has learned.

The UN’s Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is currently planning to publish a report that will evaluate “the cost of the Israeli occupation” over the Palestinian territories, while looking at examples from apartheid in South Africa and slavery in the United States.

While the exact publication date is yet to be determined, it is slated to coincide with the 50-year anniversary of the1967 Six Day War this June, marking a half-century since Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Golan Heights.

ESCWA’s last report on Israel accused the Jewish state of a policy of apartheid against the Palestinians, the first time the term was used by the world body.

The publication was met with Israeli and American anger and it was quickly trashed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, with ESCWA head Rima Khalaf resigning in protest.

The new report, a joint project by ESCWA and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), will aim for the first time to put a dollar figure on 50 years of Israeli control of areas Palestinians claim for their own state.

The aim of the study will be to provide a framework for future reparations, which will be based on examples drawn from South Africa’s apartheid regime and slavery in the United States.

“ESCWA and UNCTAD have just begun to work together on a project to calculate the cost of the Israeli occupation,” Nabil Abu-Dargham, the head of ESCWA’s communication and information unit, told The Times of Israel.

“This research project is complex and will draw from a number of disciplines,” Abu-Dargham added. “It is way too early to be decisive on the duration of research and the outcome.”

During ESCWA’s 29th Ministerial Session December 2016, in Doha, Qatar, the body passed [Resolution 326 (XXIX)](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/resolutions/res_326_e.pdf) mandating that agency work on [a research project](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/justice_for_the_palestinian_people_fifty_years_of_israeli_occupation.pdf) dealing with the topic.

At the confab, the agency formulated what they called “[an innovative methodology](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/premises_and_approach_for_calculating_the_cumulative_cost_of_the_occupation.pdf) to accurately assess the direct and indirect cumulative costs of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.”

“This effort is unprecedented in terms of the depth and scope of the analysis,” said [the document outlining its plans](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/premises_and_approach_for_calculating_the_cumulative_cost_of_the_occupation.pdf). “The methodology aims to accurately determine the multilayered cost of occupation across all sectors.”

The document outlining the research proposal has a section titled “Previous Experiences from Other Regions” — which mentions proposals for assessing the costs to the black population that suffered under South Africa’s Apartheid regime and proposals to grant reparations to African Americans in the United States based off that country’s history of slavery.

The outline for the study that delineates its “premises and approach for calculating the cumulative cost of the occupation” claims these comparisons are vital to the process.

“It is necessary to consider experiences from other regions to assess the damage resulting from the injustices that various peoples, social groups and countries have been exposed to,” it says.

“An initial assessment reveals that these experiences are directly linked to the issue of reparations, focusing on individual compensation,” the text goes on. “Despite the absence of such a methodology to calculate the cost of long-term practices, these experiences can be useful in the context of measuring the cumulative and comprehensive cost of the Israeli occupation.”

Citing an assessment from South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it says “two types of such compensation were approved for Apartheid victims in South Africa: urgent interim reparations for victims and their families in dire need of medical, emotional, educational or financial assistance; and individual reparations paid annually for six years.”

Looking at attempts in the US to provide reparations for descendants of slaves, the study outline notes that “stakeholders have not identified an effective methodology, thus impeding the achievement of justice through reparations for victims of slavery.”

UNCTAD put [out a report on](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/app2016d1_en.pdf) estimating costs in September 2016 and other studies have also assessed the economic costs to Israel’s military presence in the West Bank, but this is likely the first to compare Israel’s experience to South African apartheid or American slavery.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry said while Jerusalem was unfamiliar with the upcoming report, it rejected ESCWA’s attempts to “delegitimize Israel.”

“ESCWA continues its work, as seen in previous reports meant to delegitimize Israel, work that has been rejected not only by Israel but by other countries in the region and the UN’s secretary general. We continue to reject anti-Israel reports,” said Michal Maayan, a deputy spokesperson at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. “We reject the continuous efforts to delegitimize Israel by writing new reports regarding the situation in the area.”

A source in Jerusalem said another ESCWA report on alleged human rights abuses by Israel and other Western countries had been quietly shelved before it was released.

Malcolm Hoenlein, who heads the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, expressed hopes this new report would also never see the light of day, predicting the study would be used as an instrument against Israel.

“We hope the United Nations will work to prevent its publication and distribution and posting it online,” he said.

The report will “be used by the Palestinians, either in negotiations or even going to an international court and making demands on Israel for compensation, saying, ‘Well, look, a UN agency evaluated it,'” he told The Times of Israel.

The report methodology outline itself says it aims to provide the “necessary tools to support the Palestinian people by revealing the impact of occupation on the economy and society” and that “broadening the scope of support material increases the ability to raise awareness of Palestinian rights and the parameters of international law that should be taken into account when considering the Israeli occupation and its practices.”

In an interview Tuesday evening, Hoenlein also questioned whether the cost of Israel’s presence in the West Bank could even be tallied.

“There’s no way that you can calculate that cost or even define it,” he said. “They claim that they have developed new methodologies in order to calculate it. This is at the very least specious.”

ESCWA head Khalaf resigned her post on March 17 after Guterres insisted [that the group’s previous report on Israel be removed from the agency’s website](http://www.timesofisrael.com/un-chief-requests-report-accusing-israel-of-apartheid-be-pulled-from-web/).

That report had concluded that “Israel has established an apartheid regime that systematically institutionalizes racial oppression and domination of the Palestinian people as a whole.”

It’s not clear if the resignation of Khalaf, long criticized by Israeli officials for her perceived anti-Israel positions, will affect the new study. The authors have not yet been named.

The shelved document was compiled by Richard Falk, a Princeton professor emeritus with a long track record of vehemently anti-Israel rhetoric who previously served as the UN’s Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Palestine.

Virginia Tilley, an American political scientist who authored the 2005 book “The One-State Solution,” also worked on the project that said Israel was guilty of “racial domination” over the Palestinians.

Khalaf’s stepping down came after the Trump administration vehemently called for the report’s removal.

US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said America was “outraged” by the report and dismissed ESCWA’s capacity to render an honest assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

“That such anti-Israel propaganda would come from a body whose membership nearly universally does not recognize Israel is unsurprising,” she said.

ESCWA latest Israeli-focused report comes to light to light just after Haley delivered an impassioned talk to the AIPAC’s annual policy conference Tuesday, in which she repeatedly said the US would no longer tolerate UN hostility to Israel.

“If you challenge us, be prepared for what you’re challenging us for, because we will respond,” she exclaimed, telling the crowd she has sent a message to the world body at large that “the days of Israel bashing are over and that “there’s a new sheriff in town.”

On Wednesday, [Haley continued to attack the UN at a conference](http://www.timesofisrael.com/haley-slams-bds-movement-as-nothing-to-do-with-justice/) organized at the world body to address the challenges of the anti-Israel Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement.

“The effort to delegitimize the state of Israel being waged on college campuses and the anti-Israel obsession at the UN are one in the same. They both seek to deny Israel’s right to exist,” she said.