

Israel on Trial Leadership Course 2022

Session 2 – What is the Jewish State of Israel?

27 October 2021

Yitzhak Sokoloff: What is Zionism

Outline of the presentation

As a starting point Mr Sokoloff took the recent frontal attack of the organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) on the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. He argued that the HRW report and part of the international legal community have redefined the meaning of racism and apartheid but chosen nevertheless to maintain the use of those terms because of the emotional potency they continue to command, all this in the service of a “higher” agenda.

The new language was chosen purposely not because it describes the reality of Israel-Palestinian relations, but forwards an agenda that denies legitimacy to the Jewish ethos. Thus, ironically, Jews who suffered genocide at the hands of Nazis who justified their atrocities in the name of racist theory at its most extreme are now being denied the right of Jewish national self-determination on the grounds that Zionism is a uniquely racist phenomenon, similar to white supremacy in the United States or South Africa.

The HRW report completely ignores (i) the agency of the Palestinian leadership in rejecting compromises that could have it made possible for both national movements to co-exist with mutual respect, and (ii) the ongoing strategic dilemmas faced even by Israelis who are in favor of the Partition paradigm.

In the second part of the presentation Mr Sokoloff addressed original questions of Zionism, the nature of the concept, and the history of Jewish peoplehood in ancient and modern times.

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ISRAEL *and* INTERNATIONAL LAW