

The Illegal Architecture of Apartheid in Palestine

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Abstract : Architecture plays a crucial role in the colonization and organization of spaces, as well as the preservation of cultures and history. As a result of 70 years of occupation, Palestinian land, culture, and history are endangered today. The government of Israel has used architecture to strangle Palestinians out and seize their land. The occupation has managed to fragment the West Bank and cause sensible scars on the landscape by creating obstacles, barriers, watchtowers, checkpoints, walls, apartheid roads, border devices, and illegal settlements to unjustly claim land from its indigenous population. The apartheid architecture has divided the Palestinian social and urban fabric into pieces, similarly to the Bantustans. The architectural techniques and methods used by the occupation are evidence of prejudice, and while the illegal settlements remain to be condemned by the United Nations, little is being done to officially end this apartheid. Illegal settlements range in scale from individual units to established cities and house more than 60,000 Israeli settlers that immigrated from all over Europe and the United States. Often architecture by Israel is being directed towards expressing ideologies and serving as evidence of its political agenda. More than 78% of what was granted to Palestine after the development of the Green Line in 1948 is under Israeli occupation today. This project aims to map the illegal architecture as a criticism of governmental agendas in the West Bank and Historic Palestinian land. The paper will also discuss the resistance to the newly developed plan for the last Arab village in Jerusalem, Lifta. The illegal architecture has isolated Palestinians from each other and installed obstacles to control their movement. The architecture of occupation has no ethical or humane logic but rather entirely political, administrative, and it should not be left for the silenced architecture to tell the story. Architecture is not being used as a connecting device but rather a way to implement political injustice and spatial oppression. By narrating stories of the architecture of occupation, we can highlight the spatial injustice of the complex apartheid infrastructure. The Israeli government has managed to intoxicate architecture to serve as a divider between cultural groups, allowing the unlawful and unethical architecture to define its culture and values. As architects and designers, the roles we play in the development of illegal settlements must align with the spatial ethics we practice. Most importantly, our profession is not performing architecturally when we design a house with a particular roof color to ensure it would not be mistaken with a Palestinian house and be attacked accidentally.

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