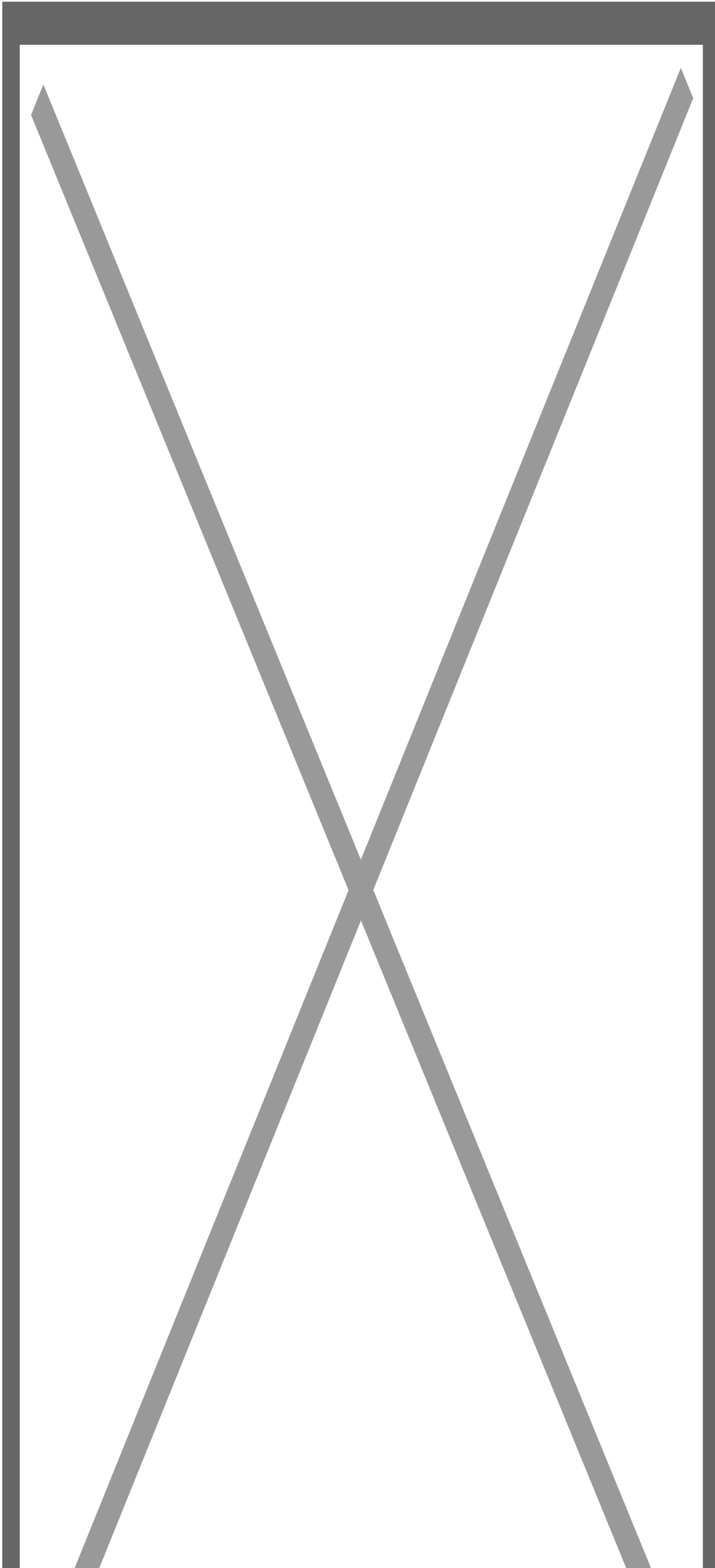


AI says Israel is an “Apartheid State” – Silence.

## **Description**

by Tom Fowdy

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Earlier this week, Amnesty International released [a report](#) branding Israel an “apartheid state” and accusing it of a “crime against humanity” in its treatment of Palestinians. Despite the gravity of these findings, and the report’s wide circulation on social media, the political and media response to it was, predictably, muted.

Indeed, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison [dismissed](#) the report, merely remarking that “no country is perfect,” while the US State Department openly [attacked](#) it in their daily press briefing.

The BBC, which has run regular coverage of human rights issues in China, and makes a point in astroturfing any report Amnesty publishes on Beijing – including publishing one article [branding](#) the Xinjiang region a “dystopian hellscape” – also conveniently omitted the Israel news from the front page of its website. It was [criticised](#) by some on social media for not featuring it on its flagship TV news programme (instead including a piece on the puzzle, Wordle).

In a nutshell, a country was accused of crimes against humanity in an extensive report, and the US and its allies simply ignored it. The same people making a lot of noise over the Chinese region of Xinjiang were somehow unavailable for comment.

Without wishing to address the specific merits of what Amnesty is claiming regarding Israel, there is a wider issue worth looking at here. And that is understanding how the comparative reactions to Israel- and China-related issues mark a firm demonstration of the way that the rhetoric of human rights is opportunistically and manipulatively weaponized in Western political and media discourse as a means to advance foreign policy objectives.

Quite simply, there is a noticeable and deliberate inconsistency in the level of attention and urgency given to certain issues, which shows how human rights are used as a stick to shape public opinion as opposed to being a genuine concern.

This is part of a process known as ‘manufacturing consent’, whereby atrocity-based propaganda is used to build emotional and political opposition to target countries for geopolitical reasons, but is never utilised sincerely and consistently. The reactions to Amnesty’s Israel report, relative to China’s treatment over Xinjiang, serve as an important case study in demonstrating this insincerity.

Western liberal ideology is able to manipulate so readily through the assumptions it peddles to its own populations concerning its own identity. In the West, nations consider themselves to possess an ultimate state of political enlightenment and that their values constitute an absolute political and moral truth. Within this context, these values and ‘liberal democracy’ can never be used in a bad faith, insincere, or opportunistic way.

This thinking is derived from the legacy of Christianity, where one side has the truth, and acts with pure intent, and the other does not. This shapes the Western view of the world as a binary clash between good and evil, and instils the belief that the West has a divine right to project its values onto others.

This viewpoint, however, negates the reality that people are at heart motivated by self-interest, and that it is characteristic of human social behaviour to use value sentiments to advance their own interests.

Human rights are undeniably important. However, it is wrong to assume that they exist on a higher

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plane than the material world we live in, and that all moralistic rhetoric is holistically distinct from people's financial and political interests.

While Western politicians understand this, Western populations, generally, do not, which means many genuinely believe their governments espouse the rhetoric of human rights in a moralistic, benevolent mission to save other people.

It is for this reason that World War I and World War II have been popularly understood not as hegemonic struggles between conflicting empires, but righteous battles between good and evil fought purely out of altruism and for the sake of freedom. This explains why human rights are often used deceptively and selectively to drive an agenda.

The public see the relentless focus by the Western media on issues such as Xinjiang – with certain 'experts' regularly presented to provide commentary – and do not recognise that it is a deliberate manipulation campaign to incite hatred against China. Instead, they believe that it is an objective set of facts being presented to them by concerned, impartial media on an issue of moral alarm and importance, and there is no agenda but to help the people involved. In other words, the public are made to care about issues that the media want them to care about.

This is why Xinjiang has been relentlessly focused on by the Western media, with references to ['genocide'](#) and ['crimes against humanity'](#), but similar accusations are not consistently applied in coverage elsewhere, because it is deliberately selective. When the BBC, for one, runs a story concerning Israel, do you ever see a line to the effect of 'Israel is accused of committing crimes against humanity' or 'there are concerns about human rights abuses in Israel'?

This moralistic sense of self-superiority and the selective discourse of 'concern' make it very difficult for one to argue against the narrative being presented, because in the Western mindset, what is deemed to be morally true is also considered to be empirically true. While the West is assumed to always act in good faith in making such accusations, the opposite is true of those who counter them. They are accused of acting in bad faith.

The West can opportunistically push a human rights issue to build support for a war, sanctions, or something else, and anyone who challenges this is deprived of their own agency. Hence, there can be no legitimate objections to coverage of Xinjiang, because anyone who flags inconsistencies or concerns 'must be paid by the Communist Party of China' or be a 'state actor'. Hence the weaponization of human rights becomes an irrefutable dogma in which questioning the motivations behind it places you on par with those committing the crime itself.

The reactions to the latest Amnesty report have served as an important example in showing how human rights have become a political weapon. If you are an activist against China, such as the NBA's Enes Kanter Freedom, you will be given a [platform](#) by Western mainstream media and maximum publicity. While he no doubt sincerely believes in his own cause, he is being weaponized as a tool of public manipulation. As another example, consider how Donald Trump, during the campaign of ['maximum pressure'](#) against North Korea, began using [defectors](#), as well as the [parents](#) of Otto Warmbier – who died after being held in captivity in the county – in his publicity campaign. But the moment his policy changed and he decided to negotiate with Kim Jong-un, these people disappeared and we have rarely heard from them since.

But if you are an activist against Israel, or are campaigning against reported Indian human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, or are opposing the brutal war in Yemen, you will probably find that the Western mainstream media ignores you.

It's abundantly clear that it doesn't matter how grave the crimes you are warning the world about are, what really matters is the politics. The highlighting of abuses in one part of the world that are ignored elsewhere should set the alarm bells ringing for any critical thinker.