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Norman Finkelstein, Benny Morris and *Peace not Apartheid*

Brandeis University's Radical Student Alliance has invited anti-Israel activist Norman Finkelstein to speak on campus, a university newspaper [reported](#).

The precise topic of the lecture was not described in the article; but when the DePaul University assistant professor last spoke—at Stanford University on Jan. 25, 2007—he added to his typical Israel-bashing diatribe a defense of Jimmy Carter's book, *Peace not Apartheid*.

It seems somewhat appropriate that, in the wake of [widespread condemnation](#) of Carter's [numerous misrepresentations](#), the former president has found a supporter in Finkelstein. Like Carter, Finkelstein has repeatedly been criticized for extreme [dishonesty](#) in his "scholarship."

For example, Peter Novick, a University of Chicago professor whom Finkelstein has cited as an inspiration, wrote in London's *Jewish Chronicle* that Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* is characterized by "false accusations," "egregious misrepresentations," "absurd claims" and "repeated mis-statements" ("A charge into darkness that sheds no light," July 28, 2000).

"No facts alleged by Finkelstein should be assumed to be really facts, no quotation in his book should be assumed to be accurate, without taking the time to carefully compare his claims with the sources he cites," Novick later warned. (*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, Feb. 7, 2001)

It is little surprise then that Finkelstein's defense of Carter—specifically, his citing of Israeli historian Benny Morris in order to support Carter's accusation of Israeli apartheid— is itself specious.

At Stanford, Finkelstein mentioned Morris while arguing that the premise of Carter's book is not controversial, but rather widely accepted. The DePaul professor was more explicit in a Dec. 28, 2006 piece he wrote for the extremist anti-Israel Web site CounterPunch.org, where he cites Morris in support of the following assertion:

No aspect of Carter's book has evoked more outrage than its identification of Israeli

policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory with apartheid. Michael Kinsley in the Washington Post called it "foolish and unfair," the Boston Globe editorialized that it was "irresponsibly provocative," while the New York Times reported that Jewish groups condemned it as "dangerous and anti-Semitic."

In fact the comparison is a commonplace among informed commentators.

Finkelstein then names Morris twice in the paragraphs that follow, suggesting that the Israeli historian is one of those "informed commentators" who agrees with Carter's apartheid comparison.

What does Benny Morris actually believe? When CAMERA asked him about Finkelstein's remarks, he replied:

Norman Finkelstein is a notorious distorter of facts and of my work, not a serious or honest historian.

Israel is not an apartheid state — rather the opposite, it is easily the most democratic and politically egalitarian state in the Middle East, in which Arabs Israelis enjoy far more freedom, better social services, etc. than in all the Arab states surrounding it. Indeed, Arab representatives in the Knesset, who continuously call for dismantling the Jewish state, support the Hezbollah, etc., enjoy more freedom than many Western democracies give their internal Oppositions. (The U.S. would prosecute and jail Congressmen calling for the overthrow of the U.S. Govt. or the demise of the U.S.) The best comparison would be the treatment of Japanese Americans by the US Govt ... and the British Govt. [incarceration] of German emigres in Britain WWII ... Israel's Arabs by and large identify with Israel's enemies, the Palestinians. But Israel hasn't jailed or curtailed their freedoms en masse (since 1966 [when Israel lifted its state of martial law]).

[*Morris later added:* "Israel ... has not jailed tens of thousands of Arabs indiscriminately out fear that they might support the Arab states warring with Israel; it did not do so in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 or 1982 — despite the Israeli Arabs' support for the enemy Arab states."]

As to the occupied territories, Israeli policy is fueled by security considerations (whether one agrees with them or not, or with all the specific measures adopted at any given time) rather than racism (though, to be sure, there are Israelis who are motivated by racism in their attitude and actions towards Arabs) — and indeed the Arab population suffers as a result. But Gaza's and the West Bank's population (Arabs) are not Israeli citizens and cannot expect to benefit from the same rights as Israeli citizens so long as the occupation or semi-occupation (more accurately) continues, which itself is a function of the continued state of war between the Hamas-led Palestinians (and their Syrian and other Arab allies) and Israel.