Medical racism: Israel hospital director complains that too many African babies are being born

Submitted by Ali Abunimah on Thu, 04/25/2013 - 19:22

It's a "problem" that too many babies are being born to parents from Africa, a leading Israeli medical official has told lawmakers at the Israeli parliament.

Israel's Maariv reported yesterday the official's comments in Hebrew:

"In Tel Aviv, today, there live approximately 80 thousand infiltrators from Africa, who constitute about 15 percent of the city's population. In the last year about 700 babies were born to Eritrean and Sudanese mothers, and we currently have an average of about two births a day," thus reported today Professor Gaby Barabash, director of the Ichilov Medical Center, in a hearing the Knesset held by the lobby for returning the infiltrators.

"The problem is that they closed down the fence, but they did not close down the natural growth, and the number of Eritreans born here rises from year to year," said Barabash.

Barabash's use of the term "infiltrators" as a general term for Africans marks his comments as part of the long-standing campaign of racist incitement by Israeli leaders and officials that has resulted in horrifying demonstrations and pogroms targeting Africans in Israel, many of whom arrive as refugees.

In December, David Sheen profiled Israel's "racist ringleaders," the political leaders and public figures most responsible for racist incitement.

Barabash's comments are also in keeping with the general outlook in Israel where it is socially acceptable to define the births of non-Jewish babies as undesirable or as a "demographic threat" to the so-called "Jewish and democratic state."
Even more disturbing, Barabash played on common racist tropes of Africans and people of color as bearers of diseases, recognizable from racist discourses in other places and times, including traditional European anti-Semitic rhetoric:

Professor Barabash reported high percentages of intrauterine deaths, and also contagious viral diseases among the delivering mothers: tuberculosis, malaria, and AIDS. The African population constitutes one third of the new cases of AIDS carriers [sic] diagnosed in Israel, and half of the cases of malaria carriers.

All of this testimony was taken at a parliamentary hearing organized by members who voice vocal support for mass expulsions of Africans and for the construction of a desert prison camp to hold them.

Recently, women of Ethiopian origin have accused Israeli officials of forcing them to take long-term contraceptives; allegations that came to light following an investigation into the precipitous drop in births to Ethiopian women in Israel in recent years.

A long tradition of Israeli baby-hatred

Barabash’s shocking comments also recall those made by Dr. Yitzhak Ravid, a senior researcher at the Israeli government’s Armaments Development Authority at the Herzliya Conference in 2003, who called for Israel to “implement a stringent policy of family planning in relation to its Muslim population.”

Ravid added: "the delivery rooms in Soroka Hospital in Beersheba,” an area with a large Bedouin population, “have turned into a factory for the production of a backward population” (“Herzliya conference sees verbal attacks on Israeli Arabs,” Haaretz, 18 December 2003).

Palestine’s indigenous Bedouin population has long been the target of Israeli forced removal from their lands and other racist practices.

And as David Hirst wrote of Prime Minister Golda Meir in his classic book The Gun and the Olive Branch, “The Palestinians’ birth-rate was so much higher than the Jews’ that her sleep was often disturbed, she would say, at the thought of how many Arab babies had been born in the night.”

With thanks to Dena Shunra for translation and analysis.

racism Africans in Israel demographic threat Gaby Barabash Israeli Knesset Yitzhak Ravid

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**Israel needs more diversity**
Submitted by anon (not verified) on Fri, 04/26/2013 - 01:36

I think there’s a resurgence of anti-gentileism because at this point in time Israel has not yet learned how to be multicultural, and I think we’re gonna be part of the throes of that transformation, which must take place. Israel has not yet learned how to be multicultural. Israel is not going to be the monolithic societies that they once were in the last century. Non-Jews are going to be at the center of that. It’s a huge transformation for Israel to make. They are now going into a multicultural mode, and Non-Jews will be resented because of our leading role. But without that leading role, and without that transformation, Israel will not survive.

**Until when?**
Submitted by Joel (not verified) on Fri, 04/26/2013 - 09:41

The babies don't have any idea with the racism or whatever they call it. It's just devastating to hear this kind of news.

**medical racism**
Submitted by Mila Williams (not verified) on Fri, 04/26/2013 - 12:29

That's horrible for the to complain about babies being born! WE ARE PUT on this earth to produce, and for them to put birth control in the Ethiopians so they will not have any babies is ridiculous! They’re not GOD! Teach them to be responsible if they can't take care of the babies. Just don't get them to stop having babies! TOTALLY PREJUDICE!
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