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### **There is no place for an apartheid state in the African Union**

The Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, announced on 22 July - without any prior consultation with other member states - that he received credentials from Aleli Admasu, Israel's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Burundi and Chad. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserts that this means the state had been granted observer status at the African Union.

The SA BDS Coalition condemns this manoeuvre and urges our government, as well as other AU member states, to reject Israel's claim to accreditation and ensure the matter is placed on the agenda of the next session of the AU Executive Council.

According to the AU's process for accreditation of a non-African state or organisation, Mahamat should have considered the request on the basis of: the Constitutive Act of the African Union; relevant decisions of the AU organs; the known views and concerns of member states; and the supreme interest of the AU.

Mahamat's undemocratic, unilateral decision to accept the Israeli ambassador's credentials sidesteps these criteria and norms of procedure, risks undermining the stability and credibility of the AU and violates several objectives of the Constitutive Act, which commits the Union to work towards African unity and solidarity, promote peace, democratic principles, popular participation and human rights in accordance with relevant human rights instruments.

We are extremely disappointed that our government did not immediately publicly reject the Israeli claim and announce that it would lodge an objection to the AU Chair. South Africa has long supported the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination, and has consistently maintained that that Israel has no place in the AU.

Israel falsely claims that its assistance to African states in fields such as agriculture, technology and economic development is philanthropic. In reality, this is simply opportunistic leverage. Gaining observer status at the AU will enhance Israel's relationship with African states and allow it to influence their voting within the AU and at multilateral institutions such as the UN. Their objective is to muscle recipient states to support Israel at the UN and other international fora.

How can Israel's claim of wanting to make a significant contribution to Africa be taken seriously when the Israeli government openly displays its contempt for people from the continent by imprisoning and deporting thousands of African asylum seekers and tolerates (even encourages) racist attacks on Africans living in Israel. A state that treats African people

in such degrading and racist ways should not be rewarded with observer status at the African Union. Israel's latest egregious transgression is the use of its spyware, which is being deployed to snoop on African journalists, human rights activists and even on our own President! Israel hopes to use observer status at the AU to justify its apartheid policies against Palestinians in order to dilute AU criticism of Israeli actions. Would the AU have allowed the racist Pretoria regime of the past the opportunity to defend apartheid at its meetings?

Israel has acted with impunity over its decades of violations of human rights and international law. The AU should not be rewarding a serial human rights offender, aggressor, colonising and apartheid power. Instead, the AU should uphold the Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions to isolate Israeli apartheid.

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