



PALESTINIAN CITIZENS IN ISRAEL

Approximately 1.3 million Palestinians are citizens in Israel (20% of Israel's total population). The Palestinians in Israel are descendants of the people who were living in the area of Palestine which became part of the State of Israel when the State was declared in 1948. Sometimes referred to as 'Arabs in Israel', they mainly live in villages and cities in Galilee, in the Negev Desert and in cities such as Haifa, Akka, Lydda, Ramla and Jaffa. The majority of Palestinian citizens are Sunni Muslims; about 10% are Christian and 10% are members of the Druze community.

Various areas of Israeli law discriminate against these Palestinians. Some examples are presented below:

Unequal funding for Arab education

The Israeli government operates separate school systems, one for Jewish children and one for Palestinian Arab children, who make up nearly one in four of Israel's 1.6 million schoolchildren. The funding disparities between the two systems are enormous: Palestinian Arab students receive substantially less funding than Jewish students, and they attend schools with larger classes and fewer teachers than Jewish children. Furthermore curriculum is routinely biased in favour of Jewish customs and norms at the expense of Arab culture.

Unequal funding for Arab towns

Only a fraction of government budgets allocate funds for the maintenance and building of infrastructure in Palestinian towns in Israel.

Unrecognised Arab Villages Denied Basic Services or Destroyed

About 100,000 people live in "unrecognised villages", mostly in the Negev and in the North, which officially do not exist. This means that even the most basic services are not made available to their inhabitants, such as running water, health services, sanitation, electricity, safe roads, adequate education facilities or postal and other communication services.

Right of return for Jews only

The Law of Return provides automatic Israeli citizenship for Jewish immigrants, whereas Palestinian refugees who were born and raised in what is now Israel are denied even the right to return home.

Denial of family unification for Arabs

In 2003, the Israeli Knesset enacted legislation that denies any possibility of formal residency status for Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza who are married to Israeli citizens or residents.

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Plans to "Judaize" the Arab areas of the Galilee

In September, 2001, the Israeli Government's Northern District Committee for Planning and Building issued a plan to "Judaize" the Galilee region. The plan restricts the development of industrial, commercial and development areas in Arab villages, and places industrial, commercial and tourism facilities in or near Jewish areas.

Restricted access to jobs for Arabs

Service in the Israeli army is a prerequisite for the best private and public sector jobs in Israel. Most non-Jews other than Druze are not allowed to serve in the army so these jobs are not often available to Palestinian citizens of Israel. Arabs are thus denied the benefits that come from these jobs and from army service. However, religious Jews who do not serve in the army face no such discrimination and receive all benefits and opportunities accrued to those in army service.



Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, Haneen Zoubi was a participant on the aid flotilla trying to break the siege of Gaza that was violently intercepted by Israel. When she subsequently tried to address the Israeli parliament on the matter she was jostled and jeered by fellow parliamentarians.

Failure to Protect Arab Citizens During Wartime

Almost all Arab towns and villages in the northern part of Israel lack public bomb shelters, even though they have been constructed with varying degrees of adequacy in most Jewish communities. Similarly, the civil defence authorities failed to ensure that Arab communities had air raid sirens to warn inhabitants of incoming fire, though these are present in Jewish towns. During the war, civil defence officials issued emergency instructions to families about how to protect themselves- on the radio and television, and in brochures - only in Hebrew, though Arabic is one of Israel's two official languages.

Israeli Flag Discriminates

The flag of Israel displays the religious symbol of Judaism, though one fifth of its citizens are Christian or Muslim. Their religious symbols are not displayed on the flag or on public buildings.

No Constitutional Protection for Minorities

Israel has no constitution to protect the rights of the 24.5% of its citizens who are non-Jewish. It openly declares itself "a state of the Jewish people" though a quarter of all Israelis are non-Jewish. Many of their families lived there for generations before Israel was established.

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Information in this factsheet was obtained from the following sources

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