

FACTS ABOUT ISRAEL AND THE TERRITORIES

This fact sheet outlines the contrast between South Africa's old apartheid system -- a politically and legally internally consistent system of exploitation of the black population by the white population -- with the situation in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank -- an amalgam of historical and contemporary complexities and a painful cycle of right and wrong and violence on both sides, with one reality in the territories and another in Israel, which is home to the Middle East's only democracy, a democracy that enfranchises its citizens of all religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Israel's Arab population has faced challenges as a minority group; and like in many democracies improvement needs to be made to increase equality among all citizens. It is important to note that the Arab citizens of Israel have full legal rights in Israel, unlike their Jewish counterparts that lived in Arab countries. Jews living for centuries in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, etc., were treated as Dhimmi (a legal category of inferior status) and were eventually forced out after the creation of Israel. These nearly 1 million Jewish refugees were mostly absorbed by Israel.

Apartheid South Africa	Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under apartheid, black South Africans could not vote and were not citizens of the country in which they formed the overwhelming majority of the population • In apartheid South Africa, "Blacks" and "Coloreds" could not vote and had no representation in the South African parliament • Laws dictated where Blacks could live, work, and travel • The government murdered blacks who protested against its policies • South African blacks were not allowed to attend school or universities • The blacks in apartheid South Africa did not seek the destruction of South Africa, only the apartheid regime • Blacks in apartheid South Africa had separate beaches, buses, hospitals, schools and universities 	<p><u>Israeli Arabs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jews are a majority, but the Arab minority are full citizens who enjoy equal rights and are represented in all the branches of government • Arabs in Israel have equal voting rights It is one of the few places in the Middle East where Arab women may vote • Arabs are represented in the Knesset, and have served in the Cabinet, high-level foreign ministry posts (e.g., Ambassador to Finland) and on the Supreme Court • Israel allows Israeli Arabs freedom of movement, assembly and speech • Jews and Arabs use the same hospitals, Jewish and Arab babies are born in the same delivery rooms, Jews and Arabs eat in the same restaurants, and Jews and Arabs travel in the same buses, trains and taxis without being segregated <p><u>Palestinians in the territories:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The security requirements of the nation, and a violent insurrection in the territories, forced Israel to impose restrictions on Arab residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that are not necessary inside Israel's pre-1967 borders • The Palestinians in the territories, typically, dispute Israel's right to exist whereas blacks did not seek the destruction of South Africa, only the apartheid regime • Palestinians from the territories are allowed to work in Israel and receive similar pay and benefits to their Jewish counterparts • Palestinians are allowed to attend schools and universities

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Other Facts:

- Israeli law does not differentiate between Israeli citizens based on ethnicity. Israeli Arabs have the same rights as all other Israelis, whether they are Jews, Christians, Druze, etc.
- The Deputy Consul General of Israel based in San Francisco is Ismail Khalidi, an Israeli Arab diplomat (and he cleared the highest of security levels)
- The Deputy Consul General of Israel is an Ethiopian woman who does not feel discriminated against
- The Consul General of Israel in Atlanta is Ambassador Reda Mansour, an Arab who is very proud to serve Israel as a non-Jew
- Many Arab citizens of Israel enjoy more civil rights as citizens of the democratic State of Israel as compared to Arab citizens living in Arab countries
- Arabic, just like Hebrew, is an official language of Israel
- Israeli law prohibits discrimination in employment. According to the State Department, all Israeli workers “may join and establish labor organizations freely.”
- Israeli prisons are among the most closely scrutinized in the world. The government has allowed representatives of the Red Cross and others to inspect the prisons regularly. The death sentence has been applied only once, in the case of Adolf Eichmann. No Arab has ever received the death penalty even after the most heinous acts of terrorism.
 - In the Arab world, authorities frequently arrest people and throw them in jail without due process. No lawyers, human rights organizations or independent media can protest.
- 79.5% of Israeli land is owned directly by the ILA (Israel Land Administration) and is available for lease to both Jews and Arabs, sometimes on beneficial terms to Arabs under Israeli affirmative action programs
- Israel, a majority-rule democracy like the U.S., gives equal rights and protections to all of its citizens. It grants full rights and protections to all Arab inhabitants inside of Israel, a reality best exemplified by Israel’s Arab members of parliament. Israeli citizens struggle with prejudices amongst its many minorities, just as all multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracies do, but Israel’s laws try to eradicate – not endorse – prejudices.
- The Palestinian Authority, not the Israeli government, governs the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Like many Arab nations, the PA does not offer equal rights and protections to its inhabitants.
- Palestinians, residents of the West Bank and Gaza, are not Israeli citizens. Palestinians have their own government, the Palestinian Authority.

“Despite all their criticism, when asked what government they admire most, more than 80 percent of Palestinians consistently choose Israel because they can see up close the thriving democracy in Israel, and the rights the Arab citizens enjoy there. By contrast, Palestinians place Arab regimes far down the list, and their own Palestinian Authority at the bottom, with only 20 percent saying they admired the corrupt Arafat regime in 2003.”

-- James Bennet, *New York Times*, April 2, 2003

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