

DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS? MINORITY RIGHTS



This month the **Knesset** marked **50 years** since it moved to its current location in *Givat Ram* in Jerusalem with a celebratory **'Democracy Week'**. Radio station *Galei Tzahal*, took a survey on the state of Israel's democracy to mark the week, **but failed to survey any Arab-Israelis**.

This sparked a debate in Israel regarding **the state of Israel's democracy as regards minority rights**.

Minority Rights in Israel

Israel's **Declaration of Independence** ensures "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex". **Arab-Israelis currently make up 1/5 of the population**. As a national minority in Israel, Arab citizens are accorded both *individual rights* and *collective rights*.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS:

Each individual — regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation — is afforded equal **OPPORTUNITY**, **PROTECTION** and **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION** etc.

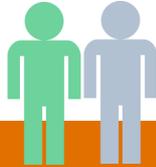
COLLECTIVE RIGHTS:

A minority group is entitled to fair **REPRESENTATION**, **INCLUSION** and **VISIBILITY** in the public sphere.

Despite the formal protections, gaps are well documented:

86.9% of Arabs Israelis think **Arabs are discriminated against as compared to Jews***

54.1% of Jewish Israelis agree*



1 in 2 Arab Israelis live **below the poverty line****



56.6%

of Jewish Israelis are **opposed to including Arab parties & ministers in the gov't***

In 2014 the **'Nation-State'** Bill proposed the **removal of Arabic** as one of Israel's official national languages



Recent Developments:

THE ARAB ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In January 2016 the Israeli gov't proposed a **£2.7 billion** plan for the social and economic development of Israel's Arab citizens.

PROS

- Commitment to **adjust public budgeting mechanisms** to redress imbalance of allocations

- **Affirmative action** to be taken to compensate for past discrimination

CONS

- Budgetary discrimination against **Arab high schools** not improved
- Plan doesn't address the financial distress of **Arab local municipalities**

Projected effect of the plan in reducing the socio-economic gap between Jewish and Arab citizens:



Ron Gerlitz, Co-Director of *Sikkuy*:
Likely to close 1/3 of the gaps



MK Ayman Odeh (Arab Joint List):
Likely to close 1/6 of the gaps

THE NEW CIVICS TEXTBOOK

A controversial draft for the new civics textbook for Israel's schools has been criticised for failing to foster social cohesion and inclusive citizenship:

- An **exclusively Jewish narrative** is used — e.g. the 'Human Dignity' section only cites Jewish sources
- **False & dangerous claims** — e.g. in 2015 the majority of terror attacks were committed by Arab-Israelis
- It's suggested that the **assassination of PM Rabin** was not a result of incitement

In response there has been significant protest:



MK Stav Shaffir (Zionist Union) strongly criticised the new edition

High school students, supported by NIF grantee *Zazim*, launched a petition against the textbook—signed by more than **1,400**



→ Education Minister Bennett has stated that **much of the divisive material in the draft will not be included in the final version**.

* 2015, Israel Democracy Index <http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/idi-press/publications/english-books/the-israeli-democracy-index-2015/>

** 2013, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies <http://taubcenter.org.il/poverty-and-inequality-over-time-in-israel-and-i-the-oecd/>