



Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People

Passed by the Israeli Knesset on July 19, 2018, this basic law bears constitutional status, which means that current and future laws and policies that violate it are considered unconstitutional. Furthermore, all future legislation and legal interpretations will have to be in accordance with this law.

The law strongly favors the Jewish majority population over the Arab-Palestinian minority and therefore contradicts the basic pledge for equality as articulated in Israel's Declaration of Independence:

The State of Israel will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions.

The Law's main shortcomings

- The law states that “the State of Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people” and nowhere does it recognize the existence of non-Jewish groups and especially the indigenous Arab-Palestinian minority.
- The law states that “the right to national self-determination within the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people” and ignores the right of the minority for self-determination as a group and for collective rights.
- By identifying Israel as a ‘Jewish State’ and ignoring its definition as a democracy, the law prioritizes the ‘Jewishness’ of the state over its democratic character.
- The law fails to include the value of Equality.
- The law states that “the State’s language is Hebrew” and “the Arabic language has a special status in the state,” downgrading Arabic from its previous status as an official language equal to Hebrew.
- The law states that “The State views the development of Jewish settlement as a national priority and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation” therefore explicitly discriminating against the housing rights of non-Jews. It also legalizes and legitimizes Jewish-only neighborhoods and encourages the creation of more settlements in the West Bank.