**ISRAELI DEMOCRACY**

* Especially when it is being criticized for human rights violations, Israel supporters regularly declare that “Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.” The use of this phrase is a psychological mechanism, whose purpose is to remain blind to the suffering caused by Israeli policy.
* Israel has never passed a constitution. Such a document could be an obstacle to Israel’s denial of equal rights to the nearly 2 million non-Jewish citizens living in Israel proper. These citizens are discriminated against in nearly all areas of life. *Adalah, the Legal Center for Minority Rights in Israel* has compiled a list of over fifty discriminatory laws.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Among the earliest of these laws was the *Absentees Property Law*, which confiscated Palestinian-owned property inside Israel. Passed in 1950, this law decreed that any Arab property owner not living on his land from November 29, 1947 to September 1, 1948, forfeited his property to the State of Israel without compensation. A consequence of this law is that 40% of Palestinian land was transferred to Jewish ownership.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Immigration laws privilege Jews over Palestinians, allowing a Jewish law of return but no equivalent right for Palestinians.
* Israel’s Law of Return assumes every Jew in the world has “returned,” even if they were born in Israel and never left.  The law treats all Palestinians as “absentee” even if they are actually “present” in Israel.
* Before 1948, Palestinians owned in excess of 90% of the land in Palestine; in 1952 they owned 3%; today, they are a mostly landless people.
* Discriminatory laws include the *Nakba Law*, which mandates the withdrawal of state funding from any institution that commemorates Nakba (Catastrophe) Day, the Palestinian day of mourning. Coinciding with Israel’s day of independence, this day marks the 1948 dispossession of the Palestinian people by Jewish forces.
* The *Family Unification Law* prohibits non-citizen spouses and children of Arab Israeli citizens from entering Israel. If you are a Palestinian from outside Israel, married to or a child of an Israeli citizen, you are barred from living with your spouse or parent in Israel. This law applies to Arabs only.
* The *National Planning and Building Law* allows for the expansion of Jewish settlements while freezing the boundaries of existing Arab villages. It also re-classifies many Arab villages as “non-residential,” thereby creating “unrecognized villages.” These villages do not receive basic municipal services such as water and electricity and all buildings are under threat of demolition.
* Because they are not Jewish, Israel has launched a campaign to displace tens of thousands of Bedouins from their villages within Israel proper. Virtually all are Israeli citizens and their villages pre-date the state of Israel.
* Jewish residents living in illegal settlements in the Palestinian West Bank have full rights of citizenship; Palestinian residents of the West Bank do not. Israel’s de facto boundaries routinely adapt to the expansion of Jewish only settlements on Palestinian land.

1. <http://www.adalah.org/en/law/index>; also see http://www.itisapartheid.org/laws.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Richard Forer, *Breakthrough: Transforming Fear into Compassion – A New Perspective on the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2010, P. 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)