

Is Israel an Apartheid State?

Is Israel an apartheid state? More and more these days one hears this charge made.

Oddly, when South Africa was an apartheid state, no one accused Israel of being one. The reason the charge was never made then and shouldn't be made now is the same: There is no truth to it. To those who know something about Israel or have just visited there once, the accusation is absurd, if not obscene. Indeed, it's a libel. But many people don't know very much about Israel, so let's respond to this accusation.

First, what exactly is an apartheid state? And, does Israel -- or any one other country -- fit that definition?

Let's look at South Africa, the country that came up with this term. In South Africa from 1948 to 1994, there was an official policy that declared blacks second-class citizens in every aspect of life. Blacks couldn't vote, couldn't hold political office, were forced to reside in certain locations; couldn't marry whites; couldn't even use the same public rest rooms as whites.

Not one -- not one -- of those restrictions applies to the many Arabs living in Israel.

One and a half million Arabs live in Israel; they constitute about 20% of that country's population. Every single one of them has the same exact rights as all other Israeli citizens -- and they always have. They can vote, and they do. They can serve in the Israeli parliament, and they do. They can own property, businesses, and work in professions alongside other Israelis, and they do. They can be judges, and they are.

Here's one powerful example: it was an Arab judge -- an *Arab* judge - who sentenced the former President of Israel to jail on a rape charge. And no one batted an eyelash that an Arab judge would sentence a Jewish president to prison.

Some other examples: Reda Mansour is the youngest ambassador in Israel's history; Walid Badir is an international soccer star on Israel's national team; Rana Raslan is the former Miss Israel; Ishmael Khaldi was the deputy consul of Israel in San Francisco; Khaled abu Toameh is a major journalist with the Jerusalem Post; Ghaleb Majadele was until recently a Minister in the Israeli Government. They are all Israeli Arabs. Not one is a Jew.

And how many people outside of Israel know that all the road signs in Israel, for example, are in English, Hebrew *and* Arabic?

Not only is Israel not an apartheid state, Arabs in Israel are freer than any Arabs in the Arab world. No Arab in any Arab country has the civil rights and personal liberty that Arabs in Israel have. That's because Israel is a pluralistic liberal democracy, the only one in that part of the world.

Now you might say, "Well, okay. Palestinians who live inside Israel have all these rights, but what about the Palestinians who live in what are commonly known as the occupied territories? Aren't they treated differently?"

Well, yes, of course, they are -- because they're not citizens of Israel; they are governed by either the Palestinian Authority or Hamas. The *only* control Israel has over these people's lives

takes place when they want to enter Israel. Then they *are* subjected to long lines and strict searches because Israel has to weed out potential terrorists.

And what about the security wall that divides Israel and the West Bank? Is that an example of apartheid?

That's rather easy to respond to: Is the security fence built between the United States and Mexico an example of apartheid? Of course, not.

Israel built its security wall solely in order to keep terrorists from entering Israel and murdering its citizens. And you know what? It's worked. The wall, most of which, by the way, is an electronic fence, went up in 2002 during a time when Palestinians suicide bombers were regularly murdering Israeli civilians in buses, on streets, and in restaurants. At the moment the barrier went up terrorism went down – almost to zero.

So then, why is Israel called an apartheid state?

Because by comparing the freest, most equitable country in the Middle East to the former South Africa, those who hate Israel hope they can persuade uninformed people that Israel doesn't deserve to exist just as apartheid South Africa didn't deserve to exist.

And if you don't believe me, just ask the people who know better than anyone else, what a lie it is that Israel is an apartheid state – the one out of every five Israelis who is an Arab. Which is why they prefer to live in the Jewish state than in any Arab state.

I'm Dennis Prager.