

Israel: The Only Democracy in the Middle East

Since its foundation in 1948, Israel has upheld a democratic system and democratic values through its parliamentary democracy. The Jewish state guarantees full and equal freedoms to all its citizens regardless of religion, nationality, sexuality, or any other factor. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and US-designated terror group Hamas discriminate against and murder civilians under the exact same criteria.

The following is a breakdown of Israeli democracy compared to the Palestinian-Arab governments:

Women's Rights

- **Israel**
 - As of 2016, 29 women serve in Israel's parliament, and some also hold key ministerial and judicial positions.ⁱ
 - In 1969, Israel became the third country in the world to elect a female head of state, Golda Meir.ⁱⁱ
 - In 2013, more women than men received PhD degrees in Israel, the first time this has happened in any country in history.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - Israel integrates women into the military more than any other country in the world. The IDF consists of a higher percentage of women than any other country. Women are eligible for roughly 90 percent of military jobs.^{iv}
- **PA/Hamas**
 - The amount of honor killings against women have risen in the past decade under Hamas and doubled under the PA.^v
 - Hamas presents a façade to the international community. There is no official law requiring women to wear headscarves; however, in accordance with radical Islamic law, if a woman does not wear the headscarf or dress "conservatively," she faces harsh consequences.^{vi}
 - At least 51 percent of married women are abused by their husbands, but less than one percent of them stated they would seek help.^{vii}

Arab Rights

- **Israel**
 - Israel's declaration of Independence grants Israeli Arabs full rights. Regarding Israel's Arab citizens, it says, "...the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions." Israeli law today states that **"There shall be no violation of the life, body, or dignity of any person."**^{viii}

- As of 2015, the Israeli-Arab party is the third largest party in the Israeli parliament. Israeli-Arabs serve in numerous other parties as well, while also serving as ambassadors and other top positions in the government.^{ix}
- In 2003, Salim Joubran became the first Arab to serve on Israel's Supreme Court. **He is still serving today.**^x

- **PA/Hamas**

- Both the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas deny Palestinian-Arabs the right to free speech and free press. Both regimes run corrupt dictatorships that imprison journalists and steal money from the people.
- Before the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Arabs from Gaza worked in Israel. Now, Hamas forbids anyone from working in Israel, and few have received new jobs.^{xi} As of 2015, the unemployment rate in Gaza is 43%, the highest in the world.^{xii}

LGBTQ Rights

- **Israel**

- The Jewish State is the only country in the Middle East that protects LGBTQ individuals from persecution.
- A 2011 online poll ranked Israel as the world's best LGBTQ travel destination. The Tel Aviv Gay Pride Parade consistently ranks as one of the most exciting LGBTQ events in the world.^{xiii}
- By 1992, the Israeli Knesset outlawed discrimination in the workforce on the basis of sexual orientation, **which is still not outlawed in some US states.**^{xiv}
- **In 1993, the Israeli military rescinded the last of its laws discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation.** In 1993, the US instituted "Don't Ask Don't Tell," a homophobic military restriction only repealed in 2010.^{xv}
- In 1998, Michal Eden became Israel's first openly lesbian elected official.

- ^{xvi}**PA/Hamas**

- It is illegal to be gay under the PA and Hamas. Many LGBTQ individuals flee to Israel to find a safe-haven because they could be killed under Palestinian-Arab leadership for being gay.
- Many LGBTQ Palestinian-Arabs flee to Israel for safety.^{xvii}

Freedoms

- **Israel**

- Freedom House ranks Israel as "free." On a scale from one (most free) to seven (least free), Israel's lowest score is a two, mostly due to security reasons.^{xviii}

- **PA/Hamas**

- Both PA territories in Judea and Samaria and Gaza are regarded as not free.
 - Judea and Samaria's (PA territories) highest Freedom House rating is a five. Palestinian-Arab PA citizens (not Israeli citizens) in Judea and Samaria have access to Israeli courts and jobs.^{xix}
 - Gaza's highest Freedom House rating is a six.^{xx}

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- ⁱ New York Times, *Women's Rights in Israel*, January 19, 2012
- ⁱⁱ "Here's When The Rest Of The World Elected Their First Female Leaders," *The Huffington Post*, April 20, 2015.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "More Doctorates to Women than Men in Israeli Universities in 2013," *Universities News*, June 8, 2013
- ^{iv} "Women in Israel: In the Israel Defense Forces," *Jewish Virtual Library*
- ^v "PA 'Honor Killings' Up 100% in 2013," *Israel National News*, February 26, 2014.
- ^{vi} "International Women's Day in Gaza: Nothing to Celebrate," *Israel Defense Forces*, March 8, 2013.
- ^{vii} "Women in Gaza: How Life Changed," *The Guardian*, July 30, 2012.
- ^{viii} Discover the Networks: A Guide to the Political Left, *Human Rights in Arab Countries*.
- ^{ix} "The 20th Knesset by the numbers: More Arabs and women, fewer Orthodox members," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 18, 2015.
- ^x C-Span: Video Library, *Salim Joubran*
- ^{xi} "Women in Gaza: How Life Changed," *The Guardian*, July 30, 2012.
- ^{xii} "Gaza Economy on the Verge of Collapse, Youth Unemployment Highest in the Region at 60 Percent," *World Bank*, May 21, 2015.
- ^{xiii} "LGBT Rights in Israel & The Middle East," *StandWithUs*,
- ^{xiv} "Israel: The Facts,," *Anti-Defamation League*
- ^{xv} "A history of 'don't ask, don't tell'," *The Washington Post*, November 30, 2010.
- ^{xvi} "Between Sodom and Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel," *Columbia University Press*, 2000.
- ^{xvii} "Palestinian gays flee to Israel," *BBC*, October 22, 2003.
- ^{xviii} "Freedom in the World: Israel," *Freedom House*, 2015.
- ^{xix} "Freedom in the World: West Bank," *Freedom House*, 2015.
- ^{xx} "Freedom in the World: Gaza Strip," *Freedom House*, 2015.