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Calling Israel an “Apartheid State” Doesn’t Make it True

The Lie

- Israel is an apartheid state.

The Truth

- Israel, where Arab citizens enjoy full and equal rights, is clearly not an apartheid state.

Background

- The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid defines apartheid as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group... over any other racial group... and systematically oppressing them.”
- Accusations of Israel being an “apartheid state” emerged after 1967, following Israel’s defensive victory in the Six Day War.
- Critics allege discrimination against Palestinians, often pointing to Israel’s use of border policies and checkpoints between Israel and Palestinian-controlled areas (Judea, Samaria, and Gaza).
- Palestinians are a separate population from Arab citizens of Israel, who are mostly Muslim, with a notable Christian minority, and who hold Israeli citizenship.

Truth Explained:

- Palestinians, who regard themselves as citizens of a separate political entity, are subject to border checks and security regulations when entering Israel for work or travel. They vote in Palestinian elections and, as non-citizens, do not vote in Israeli elections. ([Palestinian Central Elections Commission](#))
- Palestinians crossing into Israel for work or visits face border checks due to security imperatives, not racial discrimination, stemming from ongoing Palestinian terrorism, including 723 suicide bombings from 1993–2008 that killed over 1,000 Israelis. ([UN Watch](#))
- Israel provides Palestinian-controlled areas with water, electricity, and other resources. ([NGO Monitor](#)), ([EU](#))
- Meanwhile, Arab citizens of Israel (~21% of the population, about 2.1 million in 2023) have full legal rights: they can vote, run for office, and access public services. ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#))
- Arab parties hold roughly 10–15 Knesset seats, and Arab citizens serve in senior roles, including Supreme Court judges and municipal leadership. ([Washington Institute](#)), ([Times of Israel](#))
- In 2021, Israel launched a \$9 billion, five-year plan to improve employment, healthcare, education, and infrastructure in Arab communities. ([Council on Foreign Relations](#))
- In addition to enjoying full civil rights, Arab Israelis are exempt from compulsory military service. ([IDF](#))
- About 93% of Israel’s land is publicly owned and managed by the Israel Land Authority (ILA), which leases land to all citizens regardless of ethnicity. Private ownership makes up roughly 7%, divided between Jews and Arabs, and in some cases, the ILA offers Israeli Arabs more favorable terms for residential land than Israeli Jews. ([Middle East Forum](#))
- Arab citizens receive equal access to education and welfare services. ([Taub Center](#))
- Poverty rates among Arab households are not unique to the group; Jewish ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) households have higher poverty rates. ([Bank of Israel](#))
- Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and peace offers such as Camp David 2000 (91–95% of the West Bank) show no intent for permanent racial domination, though Israel conditions measures against entities like Hamas that reject its existence. ([Yale Law School](#))
- Druze Arabs serve voluntarily in the IDF and attain high ranks, showing Israeli policy is based on citizenship and security, not race—unlike apartheid’s systemic racial exclusion. ([New York Times](#))

Quotes:

- “How is Israel an apartheid state if I am on [Israel’s biggest TV show in Israel], singing in Hebrew and Arabic? I’m Israeli, and we love each other.” — Arab singer Valerie Hamaty
- “You have one side that has a democratically elected government that allows pluralism in the Knesset: Arabs and Jews. In Gaza, they are one size-fits-all. Hamas...was voted into power, and the stated doctrine of Hamas is no morally different than Nazism. It’s not an exaggeration. It’s not about land. It’s not about winning hearts or souls. It’s about killing Jews.” — Charlie Kirk

Takeaway:

Israel grants full civil and political rights to Arab citizens, provides equal access to public services and land, and implements security measures based on national defense rather than race—evidence that claims of Israeli apartheid are factually incorrect.