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# Democracy Thrives in Israel

**A new report ranks the Jewish state as one of the world's strongest, most equitable democracies—despite baseless falsehoods about its oppression of Palestinians**

*While enemies accuse Israel of apartheid, genocide, and rights violations, they offer little convincing evidence. To the contrary, Israel has a superb record of civil liberties, elections, rule of law and equal opportunity at all levels of society, ranking it the world's 23rd most successful democracy.*

## What are the facts?

Israel receives outsized condemnation for its alleged treatment of Arab-Israeli citizens, as well as Palestinian Arabs living in surrounding disputed territories. In stark contrast to such poorly supported accusations, the new “Democracy Index 2021” by EIU—the Economist Intelligence Unit—ranks Israel as one of the most thriving democracies in the world, scoring it higher than the United States, Spain, Italy and some 139 other nations. The index ranks countries according to its 1) electoral process and pluralism; 2) functioning of government; 3) political participation; 4) political culture; and 5) civil liberties.

**Israel's 2021 ranking shows consistent improvement in its democratic processes** compared with the first such report in 2006, when the Jewish state ranked only 47. In the current report, Israel was lauded for its inclusion of an Arab party in today's ruling government coalition.

No surprise, since Israel's robust democracy has a vibrant electoral tradition, stable governing institutions, high political participation among its citizens, a vigorous, even boisterous political culture, and broad, equal civil liberties for all its citizens.

Unfortunately, even as Israel's democracy improved in the past year, the EIU noted that democracy globally actually deteriorated. This was due to the Covid-19 pandemic, causing “an unprecedented withdrawal of civil liberties,” including “a huge extension of state power over large areas of public and personal life.”

**In contrast to Israel were Middle Eastern regimes**, the highest ranking of which was Tunisia, reaching only 75th place—and then not as a democracy, but as a “hybrid regime.” The territory of Palestine was ranked as an “authoritarian” regime in 109th place.

Like all countries in the index, Israel's performance in the EIU evaluation was based on the health and performance of democratic institutions among its citizens.

While critics often unfairly blame Israel for a lack of democratic freedoms in Judea and Samaria (“the West Bank”) and Gaza, they ignore the fact that the Oslo Accords give governance responsibilities of Palestinians in those territories almost entirely to their respective dictatorships—the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

Unfortunately, neither of these Palestinian governments holds regular elections, supports basic civil liberties—like freedoms

of speech, assembly and religion—or enforces rule of law. Neither respects women's equality, and both violently persecute members of LGBTQ and religious minorities.

Anti-Israel commentators usually neglect to acknowledge that Palestinians have been waging terrorist war against Israel's existence since the state's birth in 1948. Much of Palestinian suffering results from Israel defending itself against these unrelenting attacks, as well as obstinate Palestinian refusal to accept multiple offers of land for peace and a state of their own.

**Israel's “nation-state law” has also been unfairly attacked.** The law declares that the country exists to fulfill the Jewish people's “right to self-determination.” This criticism, however, is a red herring, attempting to discredit a statute that in no way limits Israel's democratic liberties. Note that this law does not infringe on the rights of individual Israelis, including its two million Arab citizens. Like many other nation states, it merely formalizes symbols of its people—in this case the Jewish people—such as the flag, national anthem, and holidays.

Note, too, that while the nation-state law declares Hebrew to be the national language, this is not different than in the United States, in which English is the mother tongue. Nor does Israel's nation-state law establish any official religion—unlike some seven European countries that declare state religions in their very constitutions.

**In short, Israel can be a proud nation of the Jewish people** while still cherishing and improving one of the most ethnically diverse and freest democracies on earth. In fact, some would argue that it is precisely Jewish values of compassion and justice that help fortify and help guarantee Israel's robust democracy. *No matter which slanderous accusations Israel's enemies employ, the Jewish state objectively remains one of the strongest and most successful democracies on earth, providing political freedoms and economic opportunities unmatched in the majority of the world's nations. Moreover, the suffering and plight of the Palestinians has little to do with Israel and is almost entirely the result of authoritarian governance by its terrorist dictatorial regimes and their obstinate refusal to make peace.*

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## FLAME

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