Apartheid in Action: Israeli Parliament Blocks Vote on "Equal Rights for All"

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Featured image: Yuli-Yoel Edelstein and Benjamin Netanyahu (Source: Liberation News)

Israeli leaders and their supporters in the U.S. never tire of proclaiming Israel to be the "only democracy in the Middle East," while vehemently denying that it is an apartheid state.

But on June 5, the leadership of the Knesset (parliament) voted to not allow even the discussion of a bill calling for equal rights and status for the "Arab and Jewish nationalities" inside the 1948 borders of the Israeli state.

The bill, titled, "State of All Its Citizens," was introduced by three members of the Balad party, Jamal Zahalka, Haneen Zoabi and Jouma Azbarga. Balad is one of the parties representing the approximately 1.5 million Palestinians living inside Israel.

Speaker of the parliament, Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, an immigrant to Israel from Ukraine, called the bill "absurd," and explained why the indigenous Palestinian population must not, from his point of view, be accorded equal rights:

> "We cannot allow a proposal whose goal is to gnaw away at the foundations the State of Israel is built upon to be on the Knesset's agenda."

Most of Edelstein's colleagues were in full agreement. Knesset Legal Adviser Eyad Yinon, stated:

> "As a matter of principle and in its details, it's hard not to see this proposal as seeking to negate the State of Israel's existence as a state of the Jewish people."

The admissions that a law calling for equal rights for all would "negate" or "gnaw away at the foundations" of Israel are very revealing, reconfirming the racism and exclusivism that has always characterized Zionism, the ideological foundation upon which the state of Israel was constructed.

While the bill would have been overwhelmingly defeated had it come to the Knesset floor, that was an eventuality that Israeli political leaders sought to head-off at all costs. Such a vote would have struck a devastating blow at the much-promoted fiction that Israel is both a democratic and Jewish state.

The contortions needed to maintain this position are illustrated by a June 4 headline in the right-wing Jerusalem Post: "Knesset Refuses to Put Bill Rejecting Jewish, Democratic Israel to a Vote." In other words, in order to maintain Israel's "democratic" character," voting on – or even discussing – such issues as equal rights must be avoided

The corporate mass media in the U.S. "solved" the problem of how to cover this story by simply ignoring it.

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