



The Nation-State Law – FAQ

Does the Reform movement support the idea that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people?

Of course! The Reform movement in Israel and in the Diaspora is completely committed to the Zionist ideal and to the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. For many years we have presented the position that the State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, where it realizes its right to self-determination – and at the same time it is the democratic state of its citizens and residents, without distinction of religion, race, and sex.

In the spirit of Israel's Declaration of Independence, we believe that the State of Israel should ensure complete equality of rights for all its citizens and recognize the presence of religious and national minorities that form part of Israeli society, alongside the Jewish majority. We fervently support nurturing the bond and mutual liability between the State of Israel and Jewish communities in the Diaspora, while at the same time nurturing coexistence among all the citizens of Israel.

So why is the Nation-State Law so alarming and dangerous?

The Nation-State Law is an alarming and dangerous law because it dramatically weakens the delicate balance between the Jewish element of the State of Israel and its democratic element. The law does not mention even once the democratic character and values of Israel, nor the existence of a large and important Arab minority and other minorities. It includes various sections that violate important democratic principles. The law is worded clumsily and lacks the checks and balances found in other Basic Laws. Moreover, the law depicts the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora in an unbalanced, patronizing, and arrogant manner.

It is vital to remember that this is an important and central Basic Law addressing the most fundamental components of Israel's identity. The law will have a decisive impact on the way the Supreme Court interprets the scope of human rights under Israeli law. Regrettably, the current government is seeking – for short-term political reasons – to adopt a proposed law that will be a source of trouble for generations to come due to its far-reaching impact on Israeli society.

This position was expressed clearly in the letter sent by State President Mr. Reuven Rivlin to the Knesset Speaker. The President warned of the dangers inherent in the Nation-State Law. The law is vigorously opposed by all the opposition factions in the Knesset, as well as by MK Benny Begin, a member of the Likud, who has noted his decisive opposition to the law in its current format, describing it as racist!

What are the main examples of the alarming and dangerous aspects of the law?



The proposed law damages the official status of the Arabic language in Israel, which will be transformed from an official language to one with a “special status.” Only Hebrew will be defined as the “national language.” Earlier versions stating that Arabic speakers are entitled to linguistic access to state services have not been included in the current version. This is a pointless declarative move that is intended solely to demonstrate alienation and hostility toward non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

The proposed law allows for the establishment of segregated communities on the basis of religion or nationality. In other words – it allows for the establishment of communities for Jews only. This is an instance of gross discrimination that has no parallel in the constitution of any democratic state. It is important to note that the amendment of the Admissions Committee Law adopted in 2011 states that it is not permissible to refuse to accept a candidate on improper grounds such as religion or nationality. The Nation-State Law will permit such discrimination, which is contrary to the most fundamental principles of any democratic system.

The proposed law damages the status of the non-Orthodox Jewish streams. It does so by establishing that the strengthening of the affinity between Israel and Diaspora Jewry will take place solely in the Diaspora, and not in Israel itself. In other words, the law grants legislative approval to the state’s degrading treatment of Reform and Conservative Jews within Israel, and establishes that the state will only work outside Israel to strengthen its bond with Diaspora Jewry.

Is there an alternative to the law in terms of recognizing the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people?

Certainly! Israel’s Jewish character and its essence as the nation-state of the Jewish people are clearly established in Israeli law. Apart from the clear definition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state in the Basic Laws, and the constitutional enshrinement of the Declaration of Independence, these principles are also clearly reflected in the Law of Return, the emblems of the state, the definition of Shabbat and the festivals as official holidays, and many other acts of legislation. In this sense the Nation-State Law is completely superfluous and is a classic example of a situation when “more is less.”

What is the timetable for the legislative process and what can we do about it?

The coming days will be critical for the future of this law. The government and coalition parties are planning to complete the legislative process before the Knesset begins its summer recess this coming Wednesday! The main tool we have for blocking – or at least stalling – the legislative actions is to encourage substantial public protest in Israel, and also in the Jewish communities in the Diaspora. The following are some actions we can take:

- Join the protest demonstration on Saturday evening (meeting at 8:00 PM in Rabin Square)



- Join the additional protests that will be held over the course of the week.
- Share posts on social media.
- Write replies/reactions to items on websites and social media.
- Send emails to Members of Knesset from the coalition who are known to have strong democratic positions (MKs from the Kulanu faction, key Members of Knesset in the Likud and in other factions).
- Get our friends and acquaintances involved in the struggle.

If you have any questions/comments/suggestions – please write to us at:
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