



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

TEN OF THOUSANDS PROTEST IN ISRAEL AGAINST APARTHEID NATION-STATE LAW



Israeli Druze and their supporters massed in Tel Aviv to protest against the nation-state law which makes them second-class citizens.

“We want equality!”

Over 50,000 protesters chanted in Tel Aviv on Saturday night at an unprecedented demonstration led by the Druze community holding colourful Druze flags alongside Israeli ones against the nation-state law and the Knesset’s refusal to include any mention of equality for minorities in it.

Israel's Druze community has strongly criticised the legislation as they are subject to compulsory service in the military or police alongside Jewish Israelis.

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Unlike Palestinian citizens of Israel, members of both the Druze and Circassian minorities are subject to Israel's mandatory draft and serve in large numbers alongside Jewish soldiers in some of the IDF's most elite units.

Dozens of present and former top IDF officers have issued open letters opposing Israel's new [nation-state law](#) and supporting the Druze and members of other minority communities that serve in the Israeli army who oppose the law.

Since the end of July, several Druze IDF officers have said they will resign their commissions in protest of the legislation, which was passed as a Basic Law on July 19.

The Druze are a religious minority in the Middle East numbering about 110,000 in northern Israel, with another 20,000 in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. There are also significant Druze minorities in Syria and Lebanon.

We don't want benefits, we want equality

Following two weeks of protests among the Druze community Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has conducted a series of meetings with the Israel's Druze leadership, trying to placate Druze anger at the new law.

In a statement on Wednesday, Netanyahu announced a "concession plan" envisioning new legislation to anchor the status of the Druze and Circassian communities in law and provide a "package of benefits" to members of minority groups who serve in the security forces. Support of Druze religious, education, and culture institutes would also be included in the legislation.

Still, the meetings and implications of new pro-Druze legislation have not eased their discontent, with a number of junior Druze military officers resigning from the Israeli army in protest.

The Druze community is not interested in benefits package, but in not feeling discriminated by the government under which they live.

This demonstrate that this legislation will institutionalise apartheid towards all non-Jewish groups in Israel, not only against the Palestinian citizens of Israel who, since always, have been treated as second-class citizens by Israeli authorities, suffering from discriminatory legislation and radically inferior access to public services and infrastructure compared with Jewish citizens.

ICSFT strongly condemns Israel's apartheid racist nation-state law and calls upon the international community – in particular the UN – to take measures in order to ensure that Israel is not capable to institutionalise apartheid once more in the world.

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