

Passover: Time to Bring Freedom, Equality to Israel's Palestinians

We must seek equality among all Israelis and we must accept the principle that both peoples living here have the same right to the same rights.

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Let's face our [national crisis](#) head-on. Israel is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Our diversity spreads across religions and religious beliefs from atheists to ultra-Orthodox haredim, where there is also great diversity, ethnicity, language, culture, socioeconomic strata and more. From this diversity it has never been more difficult to create a sense of peoplehood and unity among Israelis – groups of people who together as a nation defines themselves and their citizens.

Being Israeli is perhaps the single common thread between all of us in this country, not including the occupied territories. Among Israeli Jews, the common thread is very weak, if not completely torn by the deep conflicts between those who see themselves first and foremost as Israelis and those who see themselves first and foremost as Jews.

Not all Israelis are Jewish by birth or conviction. Twenty-one percent of us are Palestinian Arabs, most of whom are Muslims by faith and conviction, and others are Christians and Druze. The thread of Israeli identity that should bind Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis barely exists and the little that did exist has been torn by the lack of equality, racism, hatred, fear and incitement.

The [Jewish nation-state law](#) was the knife that fatally cut the thread of a common identity in this country. Since then (2018) it has only gotten worse.

[Iran is not Israel's primary existential threat](#). Untamed nationalism is the primary existential threat that faces us. Nationalism is not the same as patriotism. I am referring to chauvinism, which is nationalism on steroids. Chauvinism is a perversion of nationalism and it is in no way patriotism. Israeli chauvinism promotes the idea that inclusion and diversity represent

weakness and that the only way to succeed and survive is through blind allegiance to the supremacy of one race or people over all others. Nothing should be less Israeli.

Embracing our diversity should be the source of our national and civic strength. We, the people of Israel, should mean all the people of Israel with all of the wonderful inspiring diversity. I have always imagined an Israel where we celebrate the diversity of our society and not fear and hate it. But we have become a society that incites against those who are different from us and against those who don't agree with us.

What does Israel need to become a shining example of a society embracing diversity?

IN ORDER for Israel to become a shining example of a society that embraces diversity, we must enshrine within our laws the most basic principles of freedom: Freedom of religion and from religion, freedom of expression, freedom from the tyranny of government and of the majority, freedom for minorities, freedom of the press, freedom to organize politically and freedom to demonstrate. We must all be equal before the law and in the practice of all in our society.

There should not even be a sense that there are those who are privileged and those who are discriminated against. We must remove all forms of discrimination from our laws and our practices. We must insist that our government representatives work for the benefit and equality of all of our citizens. We must insist on ourselves that we recognize the common basis of our existence here in this country is our citizenship and that should come before those elements of our identities that divide us.

We need to embrace common decency and reject those who incite against any segment of our population. Israel can only survive and prosper if we become a society of acceptance and celebration of our diversity. That is what enriches us as a county and inspires excellence, achievement and initiative. The sum of our parts are so much greater than their individual value. We must refuse to tolerate racism and incitement against others from our politicians, the media and the loud voices on social media. Those who incite should be ostracized and condemned.

Lastly, whatever the outcome of future relations between the two peoples striving for a territorial expression of their identity in this land, we must reject the idea that one people can rule over the other. Military law and control that removes any form of freedom and liberation to the millions of Palestinians living between the river and the sea cannot be accepted from a country striving for its own legitimation amongst the community of nations.

We must seek [equality among all Israelis](#) and we must accept the principle that both peoples living here have the same right to the same rights. If we accept these principles, we will find the ability to live in peace among the citizens of Israel and between Israel and all of our neighbors.

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This article was originally published on [The Jerusalem Post](#).

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