

Racist Israeli Policies Target Ethiopian Jews

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Global Research, May 05, 2015

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Longstanding Israeli policy is notoriously racist - worse than South African apartheid according to observers familiar with both systems. Palestinians face ruthless persecution in a nation affording rights to privileged Jews alone. They have virtually none whatever.

Ethiopian Jews fare no better - unwanted because they're black. Citizenship doesn't matter. Persecuting them is standard Israeli practice.

Last week a video emerged showing police beating an Ethiopian IDF member.

On Sunday, thousands of Ethiopian Israelis protested mostly peacefully - against what happened and widespread discrimination.

Hundreds of Israeli social activists and concerned Knesset members joined Sunday's rally. It came three days after an earlier one protesting police beating an Ethiopian Israeli soldier.

Police reacted as expected - viciously with stun grenades, water cannon fire, pepper spray and beatings.

Scattered protester violence was in response to policy brutality - mostly scuffles, throwing stones and plastic water bottles.

Numerous injuries and arrests followed. Participants chanted "Violent police officers belong in jail." "For blacks and whites, racism is the devil." "Police state." "No to racism."

They held signs saying "A violent policeman must be put in prison." "We demand equal rights."

Not in Israel notorious for ruthlessly denying them. One protester spoke for others saying:

"Being black, I have to protest today. I never experienced police violence against me personally, but it is aimed at my community which I have to support."

Protesters want social inequality addressed. They want violent police charged, tried, convicted and imprisoned for criminality too serious to ignore.

Netanyahu lied saying police abuse cases "will be looked into." Whitewash is standard Israeli policy.

Over 135,000 Ethiopian Jews live in Israel. They're treated like second-class citizens or worse.

Their fundamental rights are denied. They face high unemployment, rotten jobs when available, poverty wages and discriminatory mistreatment.

A midday Monday rally is planned. Police warned if "public safety" is threatened, they'll "be forced to disperse the demonstration using means" of crowd control - code language for unrestrained brutality.

Nineteen Sunday protesters face charges of rioting and assaulting police. Innocence is no defense. Guilt by accusation is longstanding Israeli policy. Police brutality doesn't matter.

One protester said the following:

"We have long been the punching bag and scapegoat for everything in this country. People say that they're with us, that they brought us here."

"They didn't bring us here. We came because of Zionism, not like others who came for economic benefits."

"When you're a Zionist, you believe with a full heart that this is your country."

"Our forefathers lived here, and we also have the right to live here. But what is going on now is simply a catastrophe."

"It is racism for the sake of racism. You look for a job today, and even if you're the best around, there's a price. Your color carries a price."

"But we will not stay silent any longer. We are not our parents' generation, who kept quiet, kept their heads down and said 'amen' to everything."

"That period is over. We are a new generation fighting for our rights."

"We are the first to volunteer for the elite units in the military. I personally know many in the community who've already fought in three wars."

"And the state - what it does it tell them to do? Pardon the expression, but it tells them to go stick it you know where."

A 19-year-old protesting IDF soldier said:

"There are too many instances of racism against our community. We kept quiet and kept quiet, and because of that, people who were victims of police violence ended up killing themselves."

"The boy who was beaten up last week, you can see on the video that he didn't do anything. He was beaten up for nothing, and it's really enraging."

"What we're doing now has nothing to do with what's going on in Baltimore. They have their issues. We have ours. But we understand them. We both suffer from racism."

"There, it's more extreme. People were murdered by police. Here they just got beaten up. Who knows? Maybe somebody was killed by police here, and we

don't even know about it."

"In any event, we will not be silent any longer. It can't be that our blood is only good for fighting wars."

Another protesting black soldier said "I almost lost my life for the country, and this is how they treat me."

An Ethiopian protester told Israeli bystanders: "See, our blood is just like yours."

Another said "I feel like we're strangers, like we're not Jews. We fight all these wars, but this is the real war" - for long denied justice.

Things quieted down Sunday around midnight.

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