

Behind the Headlines: Israelis Support Democracy

On October 23rd, 2012 Israeli newspaper Haaretz published an article by Gideon Levy with a sensational headline: “most Israelis support [an] apartheid regime in Israel.” This is an example of the effort to demonize Israel by taking grains of fact and distorting them. In this case, the results of a poll by an Israeli organization called Dialogue were manipulated to make the false claim that Israelis support apartheid. **In reality this survey proved the opposite: that Israeli Jews strongly oppose the establishment of an apartheid regime in Israel.**

Participants in the poll were asked the question, “**If Israel were to annex the territory of Judea and Samaria**, do you believe 2.5 million Palestinians ought to be granted right to vote in the Knesset?” Most answered “no” and Haaretz used this as the basis for its headline. But shortly after it was published, numerous outlets examined Levy’s article and found its central claims to be false, forcing Haaretz to publish a correction.¹

Most Israeli Jews do not want Israel to annex Judea and Samaria. This fact is confirmed by the same survey Levy cites in his article. Therefore, the question about giving the Palestinians voting rights refers to a hypothetical situation which Israelis do not want to create.²

What the survey really indicates is that Israeli Jews are committed to living in a Jewish and democratic state. They oppose giving millions of Palestinians voting rights in Israel because this would mean the end of the Jewish state. They oppose annexation because they do not want Israel to become undemocratic.³

Most Israeli Jews disagree with the apartheid libel. According to Levy’s article, 58% of Israeli Jews, “already [believe] Israel practices apartheid against Arabs.”⁴ There are numerous problems with this claim. The word “apartheid” was not defined in the survey and the survey conductors admitted that the definition may not have been clear to interviewees.⁵

The survey reflects Jewish Israeli views on discrimination in their society, not apartheid. According to the survey, 31% of Israelis believe there is no apartheid in Israel, 39% believe there is “apartheid in some areas,” and 19% believe there is “apartheid in many areas”. But by definition, there is no such thing as “apartheid in some areas,” or “many areas.” There is either an apartheid regime or no apartheid regime.⁶ Therefore, interviewees almost certainly took “apartheid” to mean “discrimination”.⁷

The survey revealed that Jewish Israelis have many positive attitudes towards Arabs and Palestinians. According to the survey, most interviewees have no problem living in the same apartment building with Arab families and sending their children to schools with Arab children. In addition, a large majority want Israeli Arabs to continue to participate in the democratic process.⁸

The survey also revealed that some Israeli Jews do have discriminatory attitudes toward Israeli-Arabs in some areas. **This is why countless Israelis in the government and NGO sector are working to end discrimination and help Israel’s minorities.**

¹ Gideon Levy, "Survey: Most Israeli Jews wouldn't give Palestinians vote if West Bank was annexed," *Haaretz*, October 23, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/survey-most-israeli-jews-wouldn-t-give-palestinians-vote-if-west-bank-was-annexed.premium-1.471644?block=true>

² Yehuda Ben Meir, "Most of us don't want apartheid," *Haaretz*, October 28, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/most-of-us-don-t-want-apartheid.premium-1.472660>

³ Yehuda Ben Meir, "Most of us don't want apartheid," *Haaretz*, October 28, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/most-of-us-don-t-want-apartheid.premium-1.472660>

⁴ Gideon Levy, "Survey: Most Israeli Jews wouldn't give Palestinians vote if West Bank was annexed," *Haaretz*, October 23, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/survey-most-israeli-jews-wouldn-t-give-palestinians-vote-if-west-bank-was-annexed.premium-1.471644?block=true>

⁵ Gideon Levy, "Survey: Most Israeli Jews wouldn't give Palestinians vote if West Bank was annexed," *Haaretz*, October 23, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/survey-most-israeli-jews-wouldn-t-give-palestinians-vote-if-west-bank-was-annexed.premium-1.471644?block=true>

⁶ Yehuda Ben Meir, "Most of us don't want apartheid," *Haaretz*, October 28, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/most-of-us-don-t-want-apartheid.premium-1.472660>; Yishai Goldflam, "Haaretz's Apartheid Campaign Against Israel," *CAMERA*, October 25, 2012, at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=2&x_outlet=55&x_article=2311

⁷ Yehuda Ben Meir, "Most of us don't want apartheid," *Haaretz*, October 28, 2012, at <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/most-of-us-don-t-want-apartheid.premium-1.472660>; Yishai Goldflam, "Haaretz's Apartheid Campaign Against Israel," *CAMERA*, October 25, 2012, at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=2&x_outlet=55&x_article=2311

⁸ Yishai Goldflam, "Haaretz's Apartheid Campaign Against Israel," *CAMERA*, October 25, 2012, at http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=2&x_outlet=55&x_article=2311