

Confronting the Apartheid Canard in Israel

There has been a great deal of fuss about U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's comments implying that Israel risks becoming an "apartheid state" if a deal is not reached with the Palestinian Authority.

While the comments sparked outraged comments from Israeli government ministers, such as Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, the question needs to be asked honestly: "Does Israel risk becoming an apartheid state if it fails to address the question of noncitizen status for the Arab residents of the disputed regions of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank)?"

While there is no doubt that Israel recaptured these areas in a defensive war in 1967, the very indecisive way in which repeated Israelis governments have failed to address the "apartheid genie" has opened the door to these charges, however unjustified. As long as the issue is ignored, the charges will only intensify.

Undoubtedly, the issue will fester for now, at least until Israel either surrenders the areas or declares its sovereignty over the land of Israel from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. Nonetheless, despite the new unity pact between Hamas and Fatah in the Palestinian Authority, there are but a few voices in the Knesset calling for an Israeli declaration of sovereignty over Judea and Samaria, and if so, only over Area C, where most of the Israel communities are located.

Even so, those individuals continue to ignore the difficult issue of possible citizenship for the Arab residents of these areas. To declare sovereignty without offering citizenship to the Arab residents indeed adds fuel to the accusations of apartheid. However, to grant unconditional citizenship would

be the epitome of national suicide, in effect giving legitimacy to those who are hostile to our very existence in our historic homeland.

The solution to this dilemma can be found in my peace proposal, which is a unilateral plan entitled "Peace for Peace." According to this plan, full Israeli sovereignty would immediately be declared over all of the areas in our possession, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. Simultaneously, a "path to loyal citizenship" would be offered to all the residents of Judea and Samaria, which would include the following mandatory steps by all applicants:

1. Completion of a two- to three-year course in Zionist/biblical history and civics.
2. Commitment to perform two to three years of appropriate national service like all Israeli citizens.
3. An oath of loyalty with hand on Tanach—the Hebrew Bible—to the Jewish state of Israel.

Those who complete these obligations successfully would be welcomed as full citizens of Israel. Those who refuse would be given a stipend with a mandatory six-month time frame to relocate to a different country.

The "apartheid state" charge would be proven false by this generous offer. Every country has the right to set an appropriate standard by which it screens and perhaps accepts new citizens, and this would be no exception, and the door to full rights and responsibilities would be open to those who are worthy. This is quite standard in the civilized world.

Especially in a sensitive situation like ours, in which the Arab residents have often been hostile toward the state of Israel, it is the utmost in responsible caution to require that all potential citizens prove their sincerity in that quest. I strongly recommend that Israel's leaders end the

vacillating, ambiguous posture and boldly adopt this creative plan that will both insure Israel's survival and its moral stature.

David Rubin is former mayor of Shiloh, Israel. He is founder and president of Shiloh Israel Children's Fund and the author of several books, including Peace for Peace and The Islamic Tsunami. He can be found at or at .