

# Why Some Arabs Extol Israel's Virtues

A common fallacy in the Israeli/Arab conflict is that Israel is made up of Jews and Palestine of Arabs. The second part is correct, but Israel is only 75 percent Jewish. She is 20 percent Arab.

Yes, there are 1.5 million Israeli Arabs in our nation. They are not Palestinians.

What is different about these Arabs is they possess all the rights and privileges as Israeli Jews, similar to the rights that most Western countries enjoy. Unlike in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria, they have freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom to travel. Just about the only thing that an Israeli Arab can't do that Israeli Jews can is serve in the Israeli Defense Forces—and some of them do that.

An Arab living in Haifa can go to the center of the city, hold a sign that says he thinks Prime Minister Netanyahu is stupid and then go home and enjoy his family. No one will arrest him. Ask the same Arab to move to Saudi Arabia and hold up a sign saying, "King Abdullah has the brains of a camel," and he wouldn't last 10 minutes.

Furthermore, Israeli Arab women can drive (unlike in Saudi Arabia). No one tells them what they can wear, but in many countries, women would be physically beaten by religious police for leaving the house in a T-shirt and jeans.

Israeli Arabs dress any way they like. Some dress in traditional Muslim garb. But many prefer Western clothes, and so far none of them have been arrested.

**Beaten for Hair Gel**

In Gaza, which was largely secular before it elected Hamas to rule there, teens can be beaten for using hair gel. On April 14 of this year, Ismail Halou was kidnapped by Hamas police. They pulled up to the gas station where he worked and snatched him, blindfolded him and took him to a police station.

They tied him down and beat the soles of his feet for five minutes. He cried in agony. He said it was the worst pain he had ever experienced. He couldn't walk for three days. What was his crime? *The use of hair gel*. They shaved his head and released him.

### **Israeli Arabs Don't Want to Leave**

Many years ago we hired an Israeli Arab woman to help clean our house. I was driving her home one day and asked her if she would prefer to live in a predominantly Arab country like Syria. She looked at me like I was crazy. I don't know what she thought of Jews, but I sure know that she was happy to be living in Israel and not any of the Arab nations in the Middle East.

### **Where Are the Terrorists?**

You would expect that some of these Israeli Arabs would be radicalized. It is a million times easier for an Israeli Arab to bring a bomb into a restaurant or bus than it is for a Palestinian because of the security fence. But there is something about freedom that changes a man. It appears that the overwhelming majority of radicalized Muslims come from oppressed states like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran and the like.

Yes, there are exceptions, like the Boston Marathon bombers and the butcher in England. But for the most part, Muslims who live in areas where they have human rights do not blow themselves up.

### **Freest Arabs Are Here**

After our service at Tiferet Yeshua Congregation yesterday, we took our guest speaker to a restaurant on the beach, right between Tel Aviv and Jaffa. There were hundreds of Israeli Arabs enjoying the beach, playing soccer and cooking deliciously seasoned meats *al ha'aish* (on the grill). All this, in a Jewish nation.

As I looked around, something I have said for years was confirmed: Israeli Arabs truly are the freest Arabs in the Middle East.

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