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Important Contributions: Women and the Flourishing of Israel

Women have played an integral part in the founding and flourishing of the state of Israel. Regardless of religion or ethnicity, all women in Israel enjoy equal rights, protections under the law and opportunities to succeed and contribute to society. From the election of Golda Meir as prime minister in 1969 to the role of Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni today, women have long held important academic posts, leadership positions in government and served alongside their male counterparts in the defense of the state.

- Israel's Declaration of Independence guarantees legal and political equality without discrimination based on sex. In 1951, the Knesset passed the Women's Equal Rights Law, and in the 1970s and 1980s, the Knesset enacted additional legislation to bolster anti-discrimination laws.
- In 1969, Israel became the third country in modern history to elect a woman as the head of government. Golda Meir served as the fourth Prime Minister of Israel and is known as one of Israel's founding "fathers" because of her tireless efforts on behalf of the Jewish State.
- Today, women hold three of the top political and judicial positions in Israel. Tzipi Livni serves as foreign minister, Dalia Itzik serves as speaker of the Knesset and Justice Dorit Beinisch serves as the president, or chief justice, of the Supreme Court.
- Livni is the second female to hold the foreign ministry portfolio (after Golda Meir.) In this capacity, she heads the Israeli delegation in one key track of the current Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.
- Since Israel's independence in 1948, 78 women have served in the Knesset. Today, there are 17 (14%) women serving in the Knesset, many of whom chair important committees and hold key ministerial positions.
- Since the founding of Israel, women have served in important roles in the defense of the state. Today, women in Israel serve in all branches of the military, including combat and border patrol units. In June 2001, the Israeli Air Force graduated its first female fighter pilot, Lt. Roni Zuckerman.
- While many of Israel's neighbors suffer from a high illiteracy rate among women and struggle to balance gender equality and cultural norms, Israel has achieved educational parity for men and women. Israel ranks seventh in the Western world in the percentage

of women studying in institutions of higher learning. 57% of all academic degrees are earned by women, and 46% of today's doctoral students are women.

Additional Resources:

Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs information about Gender Equality

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Facts+about+Israel-+The+State/A+Free+People+in+Our+Land-+Gender+Equality.htm>

The Israel Project: Women's Rights in Israel

<http://www.theisraelproject.org/site/c.hsJPK0PIJpH/b.672581/?sid=139148000&audid=3498204>

Statement on the Advancement of Women at the 59th UN General Assembly (Oct. 2004)

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/women.html>

For more information about Golda Meir

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/State/Golda+Meir.htm> and
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/meir.html>

For more information about Tzipi Livni

http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2003/2/Tzipi+Livni.htm

For more information about Dalia Itzik

http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2002/11/Dalia%20Itzik