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## Israel: A Vibrant Democracy

For the past 60 years, Israel has been a sanctuary of democracy and pluralism in a region dominated by authoritarian regimes. Israel is the only country in the Middle East with free elections, a free press, freedom of religion, protection for minority rights and other safeguards typical of a free society. Amid constant threat, Israel constantly works to protect its citizens while upholding the values that make the Jewish state a true Western-style democracy like the United States.

- **Basic Rights** – Israel’s Declaration of Independence proclaims many of the same democratic principles that the United States adheres to, including, “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex...(and) freedom of religion conscience, language, education and culture...”
- **Independent Judiciary** - Similar to the U.S. and in stark contrast to other Middle East nations, Israel has an independent judicial system, which protects the rights of individuals and operates under the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."
- **Free Press** - Israel has a robust free press with a myriad of publications representing all views within society, while hundreds of foreign journalists are free to report on every political and diplomatic development.
- **Civil Liberties** – Civil rights are guaranteed in law, and guarded by numerous private organizations and citizen's action groups which openly challenge the government. Israel is considered to be the most advanced and tolerant country in the Middle East on matters such as the guarantee of a fair trial and the protection of minority rights. Israel is the leading nation in the region in the protection of gay rights, with strong anti-discrimination laws on the books.
- **Freedom of Religion** - The Declaration of the Independence of the State of Israel guarantees freedom of religion to the entire population. Each religious community is free, by law and in practice, to exercise its faith, to administer its own internal affairs, and to visit its holy sites.
- **Women's Rights** - Unlike any other Middle Eastern nation, Israel guarantees women equal rights and equal pay. Women are at the forefront of many aspects of Israeli society. Israel has always had at least one woman on its Supreme Court and Israel is the only country in the Middle East to elect a woman, Golda Meir, to the position of prime minister. Today, women serve as Israel’s foreign minister and Knesset speaker..

- **The Fight on Terror** - Despite facing enemies that hide bombs in ambulances and dispatch women and children to carry out terror attacks, Israel remains committed to following the rule of law. The Israeli Supreme Court has outlawed torture and has frequently acted to preserve the rights of Palestinians within the West Bank.

**Additional Resources:**

[\*\*A Free People in Our Land: Israeli Democracy and Pluralism\*\*](#)

[\*\*Index Ranks Israel As Most Democratic Country in the Middle East\*\*](#)

[\*\*Israeli Arabs in Higher Education Grows\*\*](#)

[\*\*The Status of Israeli Arabs\*\*](#)

[\*\*Immigration to Israel\*\*](#)

[\*\*Israeli Humanitarian Operations\*\*](#)

[\*\*Teaching Morality in Armed Conflict: The Israeli Defense Forces Model\*\*](#)

[\*\*Israeli: International Cooperation\*\*](#)

[\*\*The Israel Democracy Institute\*\*](#)

[\*\*LGBT Rights in Israel\*\*](#)