

# MEMMO

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## Israel Hosts Largest-Ever Pride Parade

On June 3, 2016, Israel hosted its annual Pride Parade in Tel Aviv—the largest ever in Israel. Over the past 50 years, Israel has emerged as a world leader in upholding the rights of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Israel's citizens and government work in concert to ensure the equality and inclusion of members of the LGBT community in all aspects of civil society.

### Israel's pride parades enjoy significant support.

- Each year, Israel hosts more than 200,000 people from all over the world for Tel Aviv Pride, the largest LGBT pride parade in the Middle East and Asia.
- Tel Aviv Pride held its inaugural parade in 1997, the first event of its kind in Israel. The event has since grown from a gathering of activists to a significant celebration of Israel's LGBT community.
- This year's theme for Tel Aviv Pride is "Women in the Community." People of diverse sexual orientations and religions attended this year's event, including many politicians from across Israel's ideological spectrum.



Israel annually hosts over 200,000 people from all over the world to take part in Tel Aviv Pride.

### For decades, Israel has pioneered LGBT rights.

- Since 1963, Israel's Supreme Court and Parliament, known as the Knesset, have secured the protection and equal treatment of the LGBT community through court cases and the passage of laws and regulations. Under civil law, Israeli same-sex couples enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples. As such, they are recognized as legal units for spousal benefits, including tax breaks, hospital visitation, inheritance rights, housing aid, and litigation.
- Israel's National LGBT Task Force, the Aguda, was founded 40 years ago to provide legal, political and social services to members of the gay and lesbian community.
- For nearly two decades, members of the gay and lesbian community have openly served in all branches of the Israel Defense Forces. Discrimination in recruitment, placement or promotion based on sexual orientation is illegal. As of 2015, the IDF recognizes the full rights of same-sex parents, regardless of marital status.
- In 1992, the Knesset legally enshrined workplace protection for members of the gay and lesbian community, amending the Equal Employment Opportunity Act to ban discrimination on the basis of

sexual orientation. Today, discrimination in recruitment, placement or promotion based on sexual orientation is illegal—and strictly enforced.

- The Gan Meir Gay Center in Tel Aviv is a municipally-funded gathering place and resource center, the first of its kind in the Middle East. The center hosts an LGBT youth movement, provides health and support services, offers cultural, athletic and recreational programs, and supplies other critical resources for the community.

### **Members of Israel's LGBT community are leaders in Israeli government and society.**

- Israel's first openly gay elected official, Michal Eden, was elected to the Tel Aviv-Jaffa city council in 1998. Uzi Even, from the left-wing Meretz party, was the first openly gay Member of Knesset when he joined in 2002. Today, officials who identify as LGBT serve throughout government.
- Support for LGBT rights in Israel transcends major party politics, from right-of-center Likud to left-wing Meretz. Upon entering the government earlier this year, Amir Ohana, from Likud, became the first openly gay, right-wing Member of Knesset. Another openly gay Member of Knesset, Itzik Shmuli, is one of the leaders of the left-of-center Zionist Union.
- Most major Israeli political parties have a gay caucus that advocates for LGBT issues and gives voice to LGBT Israelis within their respective parties. The Knesset also has its own Gay Pride Lobby, an alliance that brings together Knesset members from multiple parties to promote LGBT equality.
- Israel has a number of openly LGBT musicians and celebrities, including Dana International, who famously won Eurovision in 1998. Dana was the first transgender performer to enter or win the prestigious European singing competition.
- In May 2016, Talleen Abu Hanna became the first winner of Miss Trans Israel, the country's first transgender beauty pageant. A Catholic Israeli-Arab originally from Nazareth, Abu Hanna will go on to represent Israel in the Miss Trans Star International pageant in Barcelona in September 2016.