

## Official Israeli Discrimination Enhanced by New Law

Jewish citizens of Israel recently gained an enhanced measure of official dominance over Palestinian Israelis who represent one fifth of the state's population. Israel's parliament passed a "basic law" granting national self-determination only to Jews. The new law places religion above democracy, a practice loudly opposed when Islam is concerned.

The Netanyahu government has traditionally aligned itself with Israel's most extreme factions and seems dedicated to destroying the shrinking possibility of a two state solution. To the horror of moderate Jews in Israel and elsewhere, he has even welcomed Hungary's far-right leader Viktor Orbán, a noted fan of Nazism.

Orban's Canadian connection is none other than Stephen Harper, the former Prime Minister noted for his "Israel right or wrong" posture. As chair of the International Democratic Union (IDU), Stephen Harper had congratulated Viktor Orban, Hungary's anti-immigrant leader whose hard-right Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance openly restricts the activities of civil society organizations.

Orban's Alliance belongs to the 80 member IDU, a coalition of centre-right political organizations. Harper had often complained about what he called resurgent anti-Semitism in European nations like IDU members Hungary and Poland. Therefore, it seems odd that Harper chairs the IDU until one notes his former leadership style and political philosophy.

The new Israeli law will encourage Israeli nationalists to demand more "...privileges, subsidies and rights..." to buttress their already superior position. The Netanyahu government has decided, "...that discrimination could be justified as being in line with the national interest." Such thinking has justified a long list of atrocities from ancient times to the present.

The recent firing of cartoonist Avi Katz speaks volumes about press freedom in Israel's stratified democracy. Katz was fired by the *Jerusalem Report* for daring to present Netanyahu and his peers as the pigs from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Though the Likud Party devalues compassion, it could compensate by developing a sense of humor.

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