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Israel MP's 'Jewish Rule Only' Comments Show a Democratic One State Solution is Impossible

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Full Text:

An Israeli MP has insisted that his nation should "be run only by Jews" in comments that undermine both Israel's claims to espouse democracy and proposals of a just "one state solution."

Often hailed by its supporters as "the only democracy in the Middle East," Israel's unfair treatment of its non-Jewish residents reflects a very different reality.

Their big claim to fame is that they're the only democracy in the Middle East

-- gilamonster (@Ygilamnstr) January 24, 2018

While extreme - Days of Palestine blasted him as "racist" in their headline - Miki Zohar's words do not seem amiss amid institutional discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Racist Israeli MK: State of Israel must 'be run only by Jews' <https://t.co/lb4MoH5am6> pic.twitter.com/c24kn1GaUn

-- Days of Palestine (@DaysofPalestine) January 23, 2018

"I insist that this state, the State of Israel, be run only by Jews," he said, as reported by Arutz Sheva . "Arabs are invited to live here quietly without engaging in terror."

In fact, at a time when support for a resolution to the conflict which would see the territories united in a single binational state, his views suggest such ambitions are unlikely to succeed.

If a member of Israel's ruling party can get away with saying that "Arab-Israelis" should be "quiet" and not hope for representation, what hope is there for establishing a state which unites Palestinians and Jewish Israelis on equal terms?

And it is apt to say "get away with," as Zohar was responding to questions raised about his suitability to be Knesset House Committee Chair over similar previous remarks. The fact the representative of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud continued unabashed, and will undoubtedly take up the role, reflects a tacit support for his sentiments from most of Israel's parliament.

Zohar had told Haaretz last October that Palestinians "[do not] have the right to national identity" because they do "not own the land of this country." He added: "I'm sorry to say this, but they have one conspicuous liability: They weren't born Jews".

In March last year, meanwhile, he said that "the two-state solution is dead," adding that way forward would see "the Arabs" denied "full citizenship," because that would give them voting rights.

Here's what Likud MK Miki Zohar told me today about the 1-state solution and voting rights for #palestinians on #TheSpinRoom on @i24NEWS_EN pic.twitter.com/vXMRvYS4JV

-- Ami Kaufman (@AmiKaufman) March 5, 2017

Ironically, Zohar has insisted that he will "preserve [Israel's] democracy." But that so-called democracy is not one that respects the rights of its non-Jewish, Palestinian residents.

Responding to his March remarks, an article in Mondoweiss said that "he is expressing openly what Israel has gotten away with for decades now: governing a people who are not granted the right to vote for their government." That is certainly the case.

As Yara Hawari wrote for the Independent in 2015, "there is an entire body of Israeli laws designed to discriminate against" Palestinian citizens of Israel. They are detailed across four pages on the website of NGO Adalah , which advocates for Arab rights in Israel.

Added to that, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank have absolutely no say in who governs Israel under the status quo, despite being subject to Israeli restrictions on almost all elements of their lives.

Following U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital last month, commentators have increasingly pondered a single, binational state as a solution. Trump's move had seemed to eat away at any possibility of a Palestinian capital in the East of the city under a two-state solution.

Among those voices was the main Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, who had said that it was time to "struggle for one state with equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine, from the river to the sea."

But the reality is that Israel's government is, quietly and unchallenged, ensuring the entrenchment of single state of its own design, and one which leaves no room for Palestinian rights.

In the wake of Trump's move on Jerusalem, an emboldened Israeli parliament passed through an amendment making any future division of the city much more difficult. Meanwhile, a guiding body for Likud voted unanimously to apply Israeli law to illegal West Bank settlements.

Outrageous as it might seem, Zohar's vision of an Israel "run only by Jews" in this context seems very close to the truth. Conversely, suggestions that a state which respected Palestinians and Jewish Israelis on equal terms might be achievable seem increasingly far-fetched.

Palestinian-Israeli Teen Footballer Under Fire for Representing Israel

Israel Calls Kerry Recording a 'Distortion of Facts' but the Evidence Begg to Differ

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