

## Israel's Democracy: Hanging in the Balance

30 September 2022

You may be forgiven for not following the current Israeli election cycle what with our local upheavals and tensions, the war in Ukraine and financial instability dominating our news.

However as Jewish South Africans we are, as a community, associated with Israel. So to get you up to speed JDI has produced a primer on some of the issues facing Israeli voters.

**The election is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022.** [Israel Policy Forum published a helpful resource](#), outlining the various parties, factions and their political orientation. Although the two-state solution – or in fact any solution - towards a negotiated settlement with Palestinians is not being seriously raised in the current political discourse, the position of each party to a two-state solution is noted.

A disturbing development in this election is the acceptance of openly racist and homophobic political party platforms. Current polling suggests the **Religious Zionist Party** - which promotes a toxic mix of Jewish Supremacist and homophobic positions - could attain important cabinet seats in any potential Netanyahu led governing coalition.

**An important question for our SA Jewish community and indeed all Diaspora communities, is how to react to this trend.**

The South African Jewish community benefits from the citizenship rights enshrined in our Constitution. We are legally protected from ethnic, religious and many other forms of discrimination. **This is increasingly not the case in Israel.**

There is an ongoing public spat between our SA Jewish Community and the ruling ANC around existing discriminatory policies within Israel-Palestine. Our community's proposition that Israel is a functioning democracy ensuring equal rights for all citizens is **inherently problematic**. This assertion will surely come under **more scrutiny** if and when Religious Zionism leadership become part of the Israeli cabinet.

How will we explain our support for Israel when, in addition to the New Citizenship Law and the Occupation, the Israeli Government includes leadership calling for deporting Arabs who aren't loyal to Israel, annexing the West Bank and exercising full Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount, where the Al-Aqsa Mosque is located?

The **normalisation of Jewish Supremacism, homophobia and intolerance**; the **exclusion** of Progressive and other not "Orthodox" streams of Judaism are all, we hope, anathema to the values our South African Jewish Community hold dear.

The Jewish Democratic Initiative **calls on all SA Jews** – and particularly the Board of Deputies and the Zionist Fed - to **explicitly and publicly reject and condemn Religious Zionism and its vile politics.**



Ignoring the reality of this deepening racist trend can associate our community with its promoters and supporters. **We are obligated to specifically and forcefully reject their agenda.**

As Michael Koplow of the Israel Policy Forum has written: **“Just because Israel has normalized, justified, or brushed away this extremism does not mean that we should too.”**