



## Israel: Don't Outlaw Family Life <sup>[1]</sup>

July 27, 2003

Tweet

0

[2]

[3]

Israeli legislators should reject a discriminatory bill being rushed through the Knesset, Human Rights Watch said <sup>[4]</sup> today. If passed, the bill would bar Palestinians married to Israelis from living with their spouses in Israel, affecting thousands of couples.

The proposed "Nationality and Entry into Israel (temporary order)" law prohibits Palestinians from residing with their Israeli spouses in Israel. The law will prevent all newly-married couples from being able to live together where they choose. It will also affect couples who have been married for years, and whose requests for residence permits are still pending.

"This bill blatantly discriminates against Israelis of Palestinian origin and their Palestinian spouses," said Hanny Megally, executive director of the Middle East and North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch. "It's scandalous that the Government has presented this bill – and it's shocking that the Knesset is rushing it through."

Article (2) of the bill says the minister of the interior "shall not grant" Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories a permit to reside or stay in Israel, nor grant them citizenship. To date, almost the only Palestinians who have obtained residence permits are those who have married Israeli citizens. The bill does not affect marriages between Israeli citizens and other foreign spouses.

According to Knesset testimony given by Israeli officials on July 18, 16,000 applications for the unification of couples in joint Israeli-Palestinian marriages were approved in the last decade. The vast majority of Israeli citizens who marry Palestinians are themselves of Palestinian origin. The bill will severely impact the family life of Israeli citizens of Palestinian origin, some twenty percent of the Israeli population.

"Israel has chosen to ratify numerous international treaties that forbid discrimination and oblige it to protect family life," said Megally. "The bill clearly violates these obligations." Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International wrote a joint letter to Israeli parliamentarian urging them to reject the draft legislation.

The bill will also severely affect Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, who do not have Israeli citizenship and must live in Jerusalem to keep their residence permits. They will either have to live separately from their spouses, or move to the Occupied Territories - and lose their right to live in Jerusalem.

The bill is due to be discussed by the Knesset Internal Affairs and Environment Committee on Tuesday, July 29, in an effort to pass the bill before the Knesset breaks for summer recess on August 3.

### Background

Palestinians have long experienced difficulties in obtaining permits to join their spouses in Israel. Such difficulties have progressively worsened over the years. Some couples who have been married for a decade or more have still not been able to unify their families. These couple are thus forced to live apart, or the Palestinian spouse has to remain in Israel without a permit and be liable to arrest and deportation at any time.

Since the beginning of violence in September 2000, the issuing of residence permits for Palestinian spouses has been effectively frozen. On May 12, 2002, the Israeli cabinet formalized and expanded this policy “in light of the security situation and because of the implication[s] of the immigration and the establishment in Israel of foreigners of Palestinian descent.” (Government Decision no. 1813)

The government subsequently submitted the draft law on Proposed Nationality and Entry into Israel (Temporary Order) Law, 5763 – 2003 to the Knesset on June 4, 2003. The bill passed its first reading in the Knesset on June 18, 2003.

**Source URL:** <http://www.hrw.org/news/2003/07/27/israel-don-t-outlaw-family-life>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.hrw.org/news/2003/07/27/israel-don-t-outlaw-family-life>

[2] <http://twitter.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2003%2F07%2F27%2Fisrael-don-t-outlaw-family-life&count=horizontal&via=&text=Israel%3A%20Don%E2%80%99t%20Outlaw%20Family%20Life&counturl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2003%2F07%2F27%2Fisrael-don-t-outlaw-family-life>

[3] [http://www.facebook.com/plugins/like.php?href=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2003%2F07%2F27%2Fisrael-don-t-outlaw-family-life&layout=button\\_count&show\\_faces=false&action=recommend&colorscheme=light&width=150&height=21&font=&locale=](http://www.facebook.com/plugins/like.php?href=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2003%2F07%2F27%2Fisrael-don-t-outlaw-family-life&layout=button_count&show_faces=false&action=recommend&colorscheme=light&width=150&height=21&font=&locale=)

[4] <http://hrw.org/press/2003/07/israelo72703-ltr.htm>

© Copyright 2012, Human Rights Watch