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Israel/OT: Knesset's approval of discriminatory law unacceptable

Amnesty International condemns the extension by the Israeli Knesset of a law (Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law) which denies thousands of Israeli Arab citizens the right to live as a family.

"Israel invokes spurious 'security' justifications for a law which institutionalizes racial discrimination and violates international law," said Amnesty International.

The Knesset's decision came despite calls by Amnesty International in a report published 13 July 2004 to repeal the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law on family unification. The law, initially passed for a one-year-period last year, was extended for six months on Wednesday. It bars Israelis married to Palestinians from the Occupied Territories from living with their spouses in Israel, and forces families to either live apart or leave the country altogether.

"The Israeli authorities must repeal this law once and for all, and must put an end to discrimination based on ethnicity or nationality," said Amnesty International.

The Israeli government justifies the barring of family unification on "security" grounds, and argues that the law is aimed at reducing the potential threat of attacks in Israel by Palestinians. However, in promoting the law, Israeli ministers and officials repeatedly described Palestinian citizens of Israel (Israeli Arabs) as a "demographic threat" and a threat to the Jewish character of the state. This law is part of a long standing policy aimed at restricting the number of Palestinian citizens and residents of Israel East Jerusalem, and must be seen in the context of other existing laws and practices which discriminate against Palestinians and Israeli Arabs.

Torn Apart: Families split by discriminatory policies --please see --
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde150632004>

Public Document

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