

A FEW THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT ISRAEL

Some people are calling on American businesses and consumers to boycott goods and services made, grown and produced in Israel. This may seem odd, especially since Israel is a loyal and important ally of America's. We share the same democratic values and have common roots with the people of Israel. America and Israel have long helped one another in the diplomatic arena and in the fight against terrorism. Israel's developments in the fields of medicine, science and technology have improved the lives of so many Americans.

People who want to harm Israel claim that Israel does not give full rights to its Arab citizens or has an "apartheid"-like system. They also claim that Israel is out to hurt its Palestinian-Arab neighbors or is blocking peace efforts. None of these allegations are true.

Efforts to discriminate against Israel seem especially wrong when you consider:

- ◆ More than one million Arabs live in Israel. They have the same education, housing, commerce and other civil rights and human rights as any other Israeli citizen. Israeli Arabs have the same voting rights, Israel's internationally respected hospitals and medical centers have Arab doctors and nurses working hand-in-hand with Jewish doctors and nurses, and both treat Arab and Jewish patients.
- ◆ 12 Israeli Arabs serve in Israel's parliament (the Knesset). Arabs have active political parties, including some which are unabashedly anti-Israel, and operate without fear of government reprisals. Christian-Arab Salim Joubran serves as a judge on Israel's Supreme Court. Previously Abdel Rahman Zuabi, a Muslim-Arab, served on Israel's highest court.
- ◆ Israeli Arabs serve in Israel's diplomatic ranks and a former deputy consul in Philadelphia is an Israeli Druze.
- ◆ Official Israeli road signs are in Arabic as well as Hebrew.
- ◆ Israel has given authority over Judaism's holiest site – The Temple Mount in Jerusalem – to Muslim religious authorities.
- ◆ Gays and Lesbians from throughout the Middle East, including the territories controlled by Palestinian-Arabs, flee the persecution of their areas to seek a haven in Israel, which does not discriminate against homosexuals.
- ◆ More than 1,000 Darfur refugees from war-torn Sudan made their way to Israel. Israel is giving citizenship or residency status to hundreds. If Israel was as is described by anti-Israel propagandists, would these people seek refuge there?

"My perspective is unique, both as the vice consul for Israel in San Francisco, and as a Bedouin and the highest-ranking Muslim representing the Israel in the United States. I was born into a Bedouin tribe in Northern Israel, one of 11 children, and began life as shepherd living in our family tent. I went on to serve in the Israeli border police, and later earned a master's degree in political science from Tel Aviv University before joining the Israel Foreign Ministry.

"I am a proud Israeli – along with many other non-Jewish Israelis such as Druze, Bahai, Bedouin, Christians and Muslims, who live in one of the most culturally diversified societies and the only true democracy in the Middle East. Like America, Israeli society is far from perfect, but let us deal honestly. By any yardstick you choose – educational opportunity, economic development, women and gay's rights, freedom of speech and assembly, legislative representation – Israel's minorities fare far better than any other country in the Middle East." – Ishmael Khalidi (San Francisco Chronicle, March 4, 2009)

(In Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Libya and other Arab nations, Palestinians are prohibited from becoming citizens and in some cases cannot own property. In Israel, the opposite is true.)

Instead of a "boycott" we encourage you to buy products from and support Israel, the role model of the Middle East.