

# Home For Whom?:

## How the 2018 Nation-State Law (re)Produces Unequal Citizenship in Israel

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### I: Introduction

“Israel is not a state of all its citizens. According to the basic nationality law we passed, Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people” - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2019)

**Research Question:** How does the 2018 Nation-State Bill (re)produce an unequal citizenship status for Arab-Israelis?

**Argument:** The maintenance of unequal citizenship and the inferior status of non-Jewish Israelis in Israel is produced and upheld through the Nation-State law via the symbiotic:

- 1) codified devaluation of non-Jewish Israeli citizenship;
- 2) prioritization of diaspora Jews outside of Israel

**Puzzle:** The 2018 Nation-State Law codifies Israel as a Jewish (rather than democratic state) and produces a **privileged symbolic citizenship for Jews outside of Israel**, which works to reinforce the devaluation of non-Jewish citizens.

### II: Literature Review

#### A) Tiered Citizenship in Israel:

*Can Israel be both Jewish and democratic?*

This question has haunted Israeli society and dominated scholarship on the topic since the state was formed in 1940. Under the framework of a ‘Jewish and democratic’ state, the non-Jewish citizen of Israel presents a threat, representing a hybrid identity that constantly undermines the possibility and stability of a Jewish nation state. This dilemma has resulted in blurred boundaries of citizenship amongst Israeli citizens regarding who is an insider and who is an outsider within the state.

#### B) Citizenship Implications of Israel’s 2018 Nation-State Law:

Much of the scholarship on the law itself takes up the question of what the law means for non-Jewish Israelis without examine the law’s invocation of the Jewish diaspora. The law threatens democratic rights and values within a constitutionally mandated framework, and gives preference to Jewish citizens over non-Jewish citizens of Israel.



Hannah Arendt (1961)

### III: Theoretical Frameworks

Hannah Arendt

“The real goal of the Jews in Palestine is the building up of a Jewish homeland. This goal must never be sacrificed to the pseudo-sovereignty of a Jewish state” (1948)

Judith Butler

“How do the political claims that emerge from the condition of diaspora continue to inform and disrupt ideas of the nation and the national?” (2012)

### IV: Analysis

Section 6 of the Nation State Law (below) is often overlooked in legal analyses and interpretations of the bill’s production of unequal citizenship status for non-Jewish Israelis, however, it is critical to thoroughly examine the drastic diaspora citizenship implications of this bill to understand the specific maintenance of hierarchical citizenship in Israel.

The Israeli state uses the Jewish diaspora as a critical tool in the codification and implementation of hierarchical citizenship within the state to favor Jewish citizens over non-Jewish citizens.

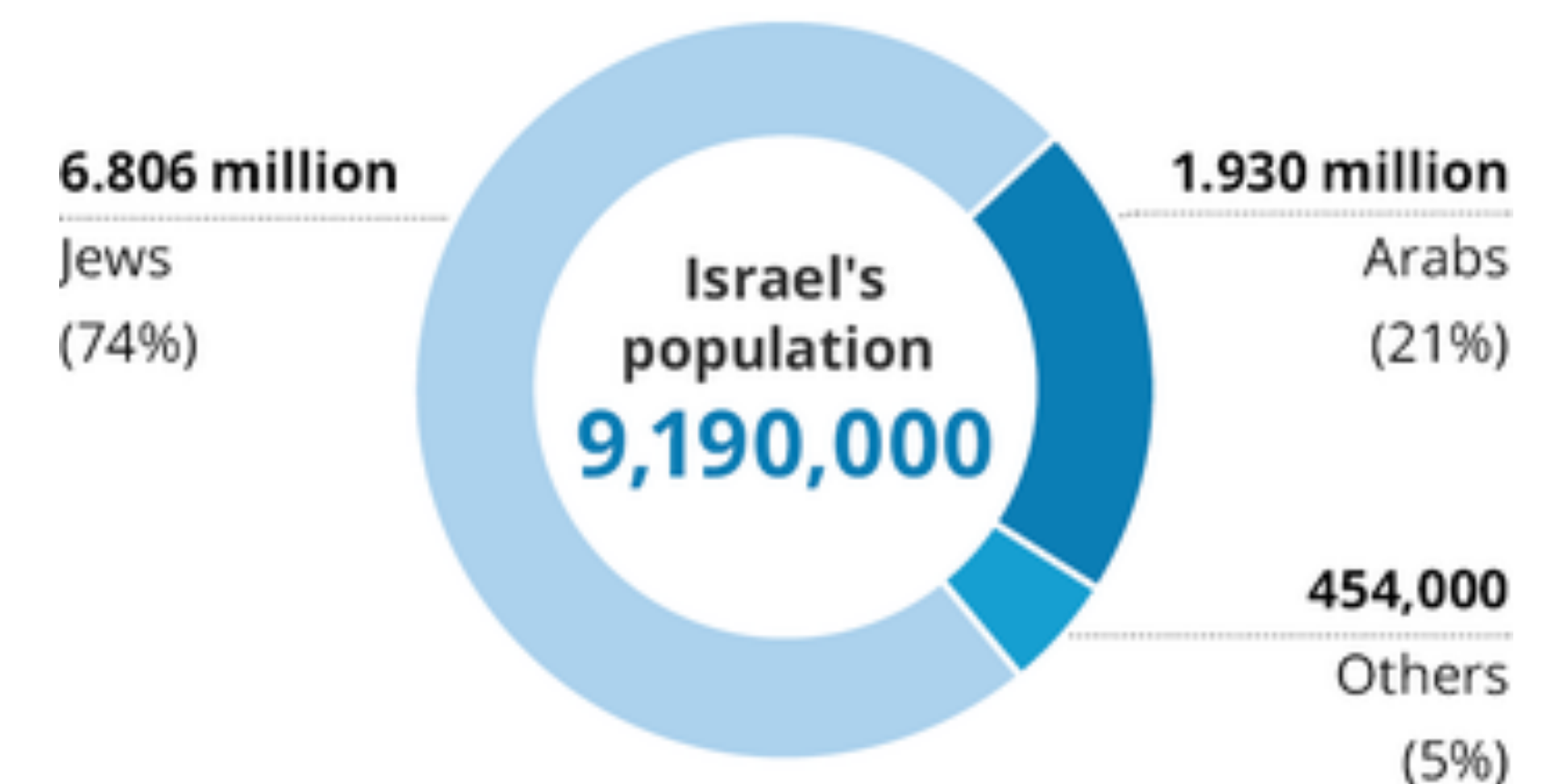
The Connection with the Jewish People

6. (a) The State shall strive to ensure the safety of members of the Jewish People and of its citizens, who are in trouble and in captivity, due to their Jewishness or due to their citizenship.
- (b) The State shall act, in the Diaspora, to preserve the ties between the State and members of the Jewish People.
- (c) The State shall act to preserve the cultural, historical and religious heritage of the Jewish People among Jews in the Diaspora.



Members of the Arab List Party tearing the Nation State Law into pieces in protest of its passage

Israel's population at 72  
Central Bureau of Statistics data



Israel's ethno-religious demographics (2020)

### V: Conclusion

Unequal citizenship is produced through the law's:

- Demotion of Arabic from an official state language and designation of Israel as homeland to the Jewish people in which Jews have the exclusive right to self determination
- **Invocation of privileged symbolic citizenship for diaspora Jews through the prioritization of Jewish people as inherently potential citizens of Israel**

*In order to understand and resist the production of unequal citizenship in Israel, it is critical to examine how citizenship claims are extended to Jewish people outside the state in order to further the devaluation of minority citizens within the state.*



Protest against the 2018 Nation State Law (Tel Aviv)