

# ISRAELI DEMOCRACY PAVILION



THE ISRAEL  
DEMOCRACY  
INSTITUTE

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## Welcome to The Democracy Pavilion



We are currently celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of Israel.

The State of Israel was erected on the foundations of the autonomous institutions set up by the Jewish pioneers and the settlements they built, and on the basis of the broad international recognition of the Jewish people's right to their own nation-state in the Land of Israel.

The Declaration of Independence, composed while the Jews of Eretz Israel

were under bloody attack, transcended the time and place of its creation, with words that defined Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Its promise that Israel would guarantee equality and freedom to all its citizens, and its call for partnership with its Arab residents and peace with the neighboring Arab states, remain valid today.

In its seventy years, Israel has faced many difficult challenges, while registering impressive achievements. The events that have shaped our society are a testament both to the fragility of Israeli democracy and to its strength. Uniquely, Israeli democracy draws both on the universal democratic heritage of freedom and equality, and on the Jewish humanistic tradition that evokes such values as "love your fellow as yourself." Among other sources, it is our dual Jewish

and democratic heritage that has produced an "Israeliness" that combines perseverance, power, creativity, daring, cheek, compassion, and fraternity.

As we mark this seventieth anniversary, we must remind ourselves that it is up to each and every one of us, the citizens of Israel, to protect our democracy and ensure that it does not turn into a hollow shell, with democratic institutions and processes for appearances only. Only a genuine, substantive democracy—one with a deep commitment to the principles of equality and freedom, respect for human dignity, and tolerance of others—will be able to cope with the tensions within Israeli society, with the challenges at home and abroad, with the threats posed by terrorism, war, poverty, and hatred.

Democracy and all of its institutions, including the Knesset and the Supreme Court, whose role is to enable the realization of democratic principles, are the glue that holds us together in a society that is greater than the sum of its parts. If we protect our democracy it will protect us; if we safeguard our democracy, it will enable us to prosper as free and equal citizens in a Jewish nation-state.

I hope that the experience of the Democracy Pavilion will bolster our faith in the fortitude of our democracy, while reinforcing our commitment to ensuring its future. May we continue to draw on the strengths of our Jewish and democratic legacy to confront the challenges that lie ahead.

**Yohanan Plesner** | President, the Israel Democracy Institute





1973 The Agranat Commission

In 1973, shortly after the end of the Yom Kippur War, a State Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Supreme Court president Shimon Agranat, was appointed to examine the military and political decisions that led to what was referred to as the *mehdal*—the “fiasco.” The Commission concluded that the senior military commanders bore personal responsibility for lapses in judgment that led to near disaster, and should be sacked. But the commission absolved the political leaders—in particular Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan—of direct personal responsibility, while hinting that they might be held accountable under the rubric of “ministerial responsibility.” The public storm that followed the report’s publication led to Meir’s resignation and Dayan’s exclusion from the new Government headed by Yitzhak Rabin. In addition to its personal recommendations, the Agranat Commission recommended a clearer division of authority among the Government, the Defense Minister, and the Chief of Staff. This and other recommendations for reform contributed to better civil-military relations in Israel.

1967 The Six Day War and the Settlement Project

On May 14, 1967, Egyptian armed forces moved into the Sinai Peninsula, which had been demilitarized since the 1956 Suez War, threatening an imminent attack on Israel. On June 5, after tense weeks during which international diplomatic efforts to avert hostilities went nowhere, the IDF launched a pre-emptive strike on Egyptian airfields. Over the course of the next six days, Israel gained control of territory that tripled its size. The war’s outcome fundamentally altered the alignments of Israeli politics and opened an ideological chasm, which persists to this day, between advocates of the Whole Land of Israel and those in favor of partition of the land under the slogans “land for peace” or “two states for two peoples.” The former see Israeli control of the territories conquered in 1967, and encouragement of the settlement project there, as expressions of the Jewish people’s historic right to the land, as well as a security imperative. Those who would evacuate settlements believe that territorial compromise is essential for achieving peace, and for preserving both the Jewish character of the State and its democratic nature.

1952 The Reparations Agreement with Germany

In the early 1950s, the Israeli Government decided to conduct secret negotiations with the government of West Germany about the payment of reparations—individual and collective—for the unspeakable suffering experienced by Jews during the Holocaust. A fierce public storm erupted after the negotiations were revealed. In January 1952, at a mass demonstration against the Government, Menachem Begin, the head of the opposition Herut party, delivered an inflammatory speech, denouncing the reparations as blood money and calling for civil disobedience. When the rally was over, the crowd set out for the Knesset building. Even though it was guarded by a phalanx of police, stones were hurled at the building. Dozens of police officers were hurt, some of the building’s windows were shattered, and several Knesset members were injured as well.

הסורים פתחו בהתקפה על שאר-ישוב בהשתתפות חי"ר, שריון וארטילריה

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למחר, ג'נין ושייך ג'אראח - בידי צה"ל בסני הושלם כיבוש אום כתאך, אחת מנקודות ההיערכות המרכזיות של הצבא המצרי

היום הראשון: צה"ל נחל ניצחון מזהיר

שבויים רבים בידי צה"ל \* שלל רב ובתוכו טנקים - בידינו \* הצבא הכניב בידינו שייח' זויד, אל-ערש, חאן יוניס ודיר אל בלח \* צור-באחר וארמון הנציב בידינו. הצבא הכניב בידינו שייח' זויד, אל-ערש, חאן יוניס ודיר אל בלח \* צור-באחר וארמון הנציב בידינו.

היום השני: המערך היבשתי מתמוטט הכוחות המצריים בסניי נכשלים. סגד לעסוק המצריים נכשלים. סגד לעסוק המצריים נכשלים.

העיתון הנוכחי ביותר במדינה

העיתון הנוכחי ביותר במדינה. הכנסת תצביע בצהרית על השידומים מחוזות בירושלים גם הביתר - מדינת דוב קטן לתומכי המדינה הבנויה שמיט משערים 60 יציצו בעד, 50 נגד ורשה יימנעו.

נכסתיים מיביל דעת - הקהל על השידומים 79.66 אחוזים נגד המדינה עם גרמניה, 19.55 בעד.

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1977

## The Electoral Reversal

After almost three decades of rule by Mapai (and its successor, the Labor Party/Alignment), the Likud party, led by Menachem Begin, staged a historic upset in the 1977 elections. The peaceful transition of power between parties that were vehemently opposed to one another was a major test of Israeli democracy, and by all standards it passed with flying colors, setting an important precedent for the future.



# ברוך הבא הנשיא סאדאת مرحبًا بالسّادات

1977

## President Sadat of Egypt Comes to Israel

In November 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made a historic three-day visit to Israel, during which he spoke from the Knesset rostrum: “We accept to live with you in permanent peace based on justice. We do not want to encircle you or be encircled ourselves by destructive missiles ready for launching, nor by the shells of grudges and hatred.” Sadat’s visit opened a new chapter in the history of the conflict between Israel and its neighbors. Sadat’s official visit to Israel, the first by an Arab leader, was a turning point in a process that led to the conclusion of a peace treaty between the two countries in 1979, and the evacuation and return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1983.

1988

## The Disqualification of Meir Kahane

The disqualification of electoral lists is one of the sharpest manifestations of the tension between the right of every citizen to run for political office and the need to defend other fundamental rights against those who would subvert them. In 1984, the Central Elections Commission rejected the Kach list, headed by Meir Kahane, on account of its racist platform. However, the High Court of Justice overruled the Commission on the grounds that it had exceeded its statutory authority. As a result, Kahane ran and won a seat in the Knesset. Four years later, after the Knesset had amended the “Basic Law: The Knesset” to bar racist parties, Kahane was disqualified again; this time the Court upheld the Commission’s decision. In 2002, the law was amended again to permit the disqualification of parties or individual candidates who support armed struggle against the State of Israel. Since then, there have been several attempts to invoke this clause and bar Arab lists and candidates from running for the Knesset, but all of them have been overturned by the Court.

1984–1995

## Aliya: Operation Moses, Operation Solomon, and the Exodus of Soviet Jewry

In 1984 and again in 1991 the Israeli government carried out two dramatic operations to airlift thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. In parallel, the Cold War drew to a close and the Soviet Union collapsed. Starting in 1990, a tidal wave of more than one million Jews made aliya from the Soviet Union and its successor states. This was a supreme test of the country’s commitment to absorb immigrants and its ability to integrate them into the fabric of Israeli life. Aliya is the outstanding expression of the vision of the ingathering of the exiles.

1995

## The Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

The political process between Israel and the Palestinians, the Knesset's approval of the Oslo Accords, and the wave of suicide terror attacks in 1994 and 1995 produced severe polarization between Israelis on the right and Israelis on the left. Right wing opponents of the government blamed its policies for exposing Israel to terrorism and endangering the state's existence. They launched an aggressive public campaign, claiming that the Government had forfeited its legitimacy. At some of these protests, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was denounced as a "traitor." The campaign of incitement against Rabin reached a new high in the autumn of 1995, after the signing of the "Oslo 2" agreement. On November 4th, at the conclusion of a peace rally in what was then called Kings of Israel Square in Tel Aviv, Rabin was shot dead by a Jewish assassin. The assassination traumatized the nation, and served as an illustration of the danger of civil strife and the importance of unifying around core values.



1995

## The Alice Miller Case

The ruling by the High Court of Justice on Alice Miller's petition that she be allowed to apply for the Israel Air Force pilot's course is considered to be one of its most important decisions to date. It was a precedent-setting statement that discrimination against women is illegal. In advance of her conscription, Miller, a member of the academic reserve, had asked to be considered for admission to the elite pilot's course. Her request was denied on the grounds that standing orders barred women from combat roles. With assistance from the Association for Civil Rights and the Israel Women's Network, Miller petitioned the High Court. The Court ruled in her favor on the basis of the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, enacted in 1992, arguing that "human dignity" includes the right to equal treatment. The ruling paved the way for women to serve in many positions from which they had previously been barred. In 2000, the law was amended to stipulate that every woman has an equal right to serve in any position in the Israel Defense Forces, unless a concrete limitation is justified by the nature of the position.

2000

## The October 2000 Riots and the Orr Commission Report

In October 2000, some of the country's Arab citizens joined the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria in violent demonstrations to express their disappointment with the political process and anger over the visit to the Temple Mount by the then-leader of the Likud opposition, Ariel Sharon. Over a span of ten days there were violent protests in which twelve Israeli Arab citizens were killed by police gunfire. A State Commission of Inquiry, headed by Supreme Court Justice Theodore Orr, was appointed to look into these events and their causes. Its report (published in 2003) stated that the violence had erupted in part as a result

of persistent discrimination against the Arab sector and its continued neglect by successive Israeli governments. The Commission also blamed inflammatory statements by leaders of the Arab-Israeli community for fanning the flames of violence. It recommended major efforts to reduce the disparities between the Jewish and Arab sectors. The publication of the Commission's report, along with the High Court's ruling in 2000 that the policy of leasing State land exclusively to Jews was discriminatory and illegal, contributed to ongoing efforts to reduce inequality between the state's Arab and Jewish citizens.



2005

## The Disengagement

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to evacuate all the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and a handful of settlements in northern Samaria. The plan was implemented in August-September 2005, after a heated political debate. The fierce public protests against the plan raised fears of civil war. There were also concerns that soldiers affiliated with the National Religious camp would refuse to follow orders. Nevertheless, the plan was carried out smoothly and without major incidents of violence or insubordination.

תל-אביב: 300 אלף	ירושלים: 50 אלף	חיפה: 35 אלף
מחוז צפון: 35 אלף	מחוז חוף ומרכז: 16 אלף	מחוז דרום: 2,000
(כרמלי, מנהל העמק, מנהל המדע)	(חדרה, עפולה, מודיעין)	(אילת, מצפה רמון)



מי שפיקפק בנחישות המחאה החברתית קיבל אמש את  
אם כל ההפגנות: "אנחנו הישראלים החדשים", קרא  
מנהיג הסטודנטים לקול תשואות ההמונים ●



לירית ליד כי  
כר המדינה כמו  
התחשלהאמס.  
צריך היה להיות  
באמת, ציני,  
מתה הקיץ הזה,  
כדי לא לה.  
הרגש מהמראה  
המפעים, מסאנת  
האנשים, מתחת  
שה העזה שההיסטוריה  
האישית של כל אורח  
במדינה חייבת לכלול את  
האירוע הזה. אירוע שהציג  
לוח להסתייך לכולם ולה.

הוא את הגרוע מכל מה  
דיים על מרפסת של פנטהאון  
יוקרתית בכיכר תחלה שלם ברזל  
"ברית" רוחה עשירי, ילדים  
הנשיא והסוכן חילקי לימודה  
דנים למפגנים. וילך בכך שני

תחשבה היתה שערותה מהמראה  
התעלם. היא החזרה במחנה המהפכה  
מותר להיות קצת יותר צעירה  
מספר חסם - 1000 פגנים  
בר אמש, 29 שנים לאחר ההפגנה  
למחנה הוואי. ספק אם פגן הישראלי  
במספר 1000 אף פעם לא התרחש  
היה בפגנה 480 אלף, פני שותפים  
המשפחה. גנר למשקל המפגנים, מה  
שיאיו גיש וזה, קרוב לזווא, אירוע  
המראה העולמי ביותר שירדע המדינה  
כיום המדינה היא משה צעיר, כפי שהיה  
אמש לאורכו וליחצו אני יכול להקיר שהיה  
מתכוון קרחת. אבל הרחובות שנשפכים לני  
כר הסו האנשים. הרישם פנים נמשכה גם  
לאחר שפגנת נפתחה. אז מין שירד  
דמה חזרה בכיכר שריו כרמליהם, סמוך  
למפגן של ראש הממשלה, בכיכר המספרת.  
לג המראה התחיל ב-14 ביולי, עם האהל  
הראשון שם בעריות רחשיות, והשני ב-  
18 יום ההפגנה הולדת היא שהפגנת אמש  
הוא הולדת היום של רצפת הפגנים. המדינה  
שירדקו המאהלים. את תהיה עקבות שירדק

2011

## The Social Protests

The summer of 2011 was dominated by a series of demonstrations across the country. The social protests, which began on Facebook, focused on the exorbitant level of rents and the high cost of living in general. Protesters erected hundreds of tents on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, and then in other towns as well. In response, the Government appointed the Trajtenberg Committee to study the situation and propose ways to address the protesters' economic demands, especially the high cost of living in Israel, and the expanding social gaps. Some view the protests as an important turning point in the public mood: after a long period of apathy and escapism, the demonstrations expressed a renewed belief in the average citizen's ability to influence public affairs.

2013

## The Funeral of Rabbi Ovadiah Yossef

Rabbi Ovadiah Yossef's funeral, the largest in the country's history, came to be called the "Million-Man Funeral." Rabbi Yossef was the preeminent Sephardi religious authority of his generation. He had served as Chief Rabbi of Israel and was the founder and spiritual mentor of the Shas party. His death was a major blow to many. The funeral attracted mourners from all sectors of Jewish-Israeli society—including ultra-Orthodox, National Religious, and traditional Jews.

2015

## The Tribes of Israel Speech

In a landmark speech to the nation, President Reuven Rivlin warned that demographic trends and deepening social divides were causing Israeli society to disintegrate into four separate tribes: the ultra-Orthodox, the Arabs, the National Religious, and secular Jews. Rivlin called on Israelis to build a unified society on the basis of equality, respect for human dignity, and a shared sense of responsibility.



Select passages from the Declaration of Independence  
followed by quotes from eminent Jewish and Israeli leaders



# THE LAND OF ISRAEL WAS THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

*"There is one place in the world to  
which we never flee or immigrate, but to  
which we come home: the Land of Israel"*

Hanna Szenes

*"My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west—  
How can I find savor in food? How shall it be sweet to me?  
How shall I render my vows and my bonds, while yet  
Zion lies beneath the fetter of Edom, and I in Arab chains?"*

R. Judah Halevy (trans. Nina Salaman)



# EQUAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

It will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture

"If we had a Jewish majority in the country, the first thing we would do here is to establish a situation of total, absolute, and complete equality of rights, with no exceptions whatsoever: whether Jew or Arab, [...] there is no difference before the law."

Ze'ev Jabotinsky

## THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER

It will be faithful to the principles of the United Nations Charter

"I believe, too, that there is nothing in our movement that allows room for the assumption that we ostensibly desire foolishly to be arrogant or to separate ourselves in a hostile manner from the rest of civilized humanity. On the contrary, we have always clearly emphasized that we see our future existence as based on the unity of all peoples and that we want to work towards this unity. It follows that the Zionist idea does not reject the humane concepts of love for all humankind; it includes them."

Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl

# FREEDOM, JUSTICE, AND PEACE

It will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel

"We will set this on our hearts and purge ourselves of the demon of denunciation and division, as well as the hatred of the Torah and its laws, and clothe ourselves in the attribute of supreme and faithful love that the Torah enjoined us to display for all our brethren who are among us, as is written: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." (Lev. 19:18). And with this same attribute we will also love the stranger in our midst, as is written: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: "I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:34)."

Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel

# OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC RIGHT

By virtue of our natural and historic right ... [we] hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel

"The Jewish nation is not only a national and political unit; it embodies a spiritual-ethical will and has carried a historical vision ever since it appeared on the stage of history."

David Ben-Gurion

## THE INGATHERING OF THE EXILES

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles

"Each and every one of us who had the privilege of being present at this event...cannot avoid sensing the unity of the Jewish people and the indestructible link between the reborn State of Israel and the People of Israel."

Golda Meir

# FULL AND EQUAL CITIZENSHIP

We appeal—in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months—to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship

"Fate has decreed that the two peoples live here together. That being the case, we must transform this decree into constructive, fruitful, and productive coexistence."

Yitzhak Navon

"It is possible for us to live together and coexist, despite everything, despite all the history."

Emile Habibi

# THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

...until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State, in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly

"The day will come that our people elects a government that will keep the first promise that was made to the people when the state was born; namely, the election of a constituent assembly whose principal task, in every country that has been reborn, is to grant the people a constitution that guarantees the liberty of the citizen and the liberty of the entire people."

Menachem Begin



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The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) is an independent center of research and action dedicated to strengthening the foundations of Israeli democracy. IDI works to bolster the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. A non-partisan think-and-do tank, the institute harnesses rigorous applied research to influence policy, legislation and public opinion. The institute partners with political leaders, policymakers, and representatives of civil society to improve the functioning of the government and its institutions, confront security threats while preserving civil liberties, and foster solidarity within Israeli society.

The State of Israel recognized the positive impact of IDI's research and recommendations by bestowing upon the Institute its most prestigious award, the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

[www.idi.org.il](http://www.idi.org.il)





THE DEMOCRACY PAVILION

**שער הדמוקרטיה הישראלית**

**بوابة الديمقراطية الاسرائيلية**