

Riots in Acre, Israel

October 20, 2008 Dialogue

Background Information

- Arab man drove by a Jewish neighborhood on Yom Kippur
 - Jews threw rocks, riots began

To what extent is this re-igniting religious conflicts? Or is it an underlying issue?

- religious insensitivity blocks some of the rationality
- religious norms that need to be respected are universal
 - Targeting someone who does not comply with these unspoken rules
 - Could be differences between religious and non-religious Israelis
- Acre not known to be very religious
- religious vs. secular traditions in Israel

What role does the Israeli state have in this situation?

- allegations that the police chief should resign because he did not protect Israelis?
- Israel--Jewish or secular state?
 - How big of a role does Judaism play in law?
- Israel has an identity crisis?
- Acre riots lead to riots/violence in Jerusalem a few days later--> escalation of situation
- lack of significant political leadership/Israelis are frustrated with this leadership vacuum
 - No one new is in power yet, so it is more difficult to take action
 - Olmert: couldn't find solution among all blocks
 - Israel doesn't know what it wants to do with the Palestinians: incorporate or purge?
- Olmert admitted that there is discrimination against the Arabs

What would happen if Arabs were to become a majority in the future?

- "demographic time bomb"
- Arab-Israelis have been discriminated against since the beginning

- hierarchy of racism/ racism against newer Jews
- need increased interactions between Israelis and Arabs with support from leaders of both sides
 - Ex. Schools and programs to spur communication/ partnerships
 - Role of youth
- racism and housing policies
 - Institutionalized--> housing permits
- in a democracy, if you are not Jewish and you do drive, a riot like this should not occur?
 - If Israelis want to, they could have a religious state with a constitution--> different kind of democracy
- need to look at countries with racial problems
 - Ex. France and its immigrants
 - Immigrants don't want to abandon their culture to become French
 - Is it a good comparison? In Israel, the Arabs are already there...
- Israel can't expect everyone to be Jewish
- Arabs treated as second-class citizens in Israel
- Law of Return: any Jews cannot become Jewish citizens
 - What about Palestinians and Arab-Israelis?
- for Jewish Israelis, Israel is a liberal democracy
- all Israelis serve in the army
 - Have a right to racially profile?
- future intifadah?
 - Fears of Jews initiating violence
 - Israeli army needs to defend one of the groups
- Will Arab-Israelis be included in a future Israeli constitution?
- Do Israelis have a right to racism against Arab-Israelis?
 - Question of Israeli existence and security and the role Arabs play
- Israelis want a Jewish state--Is this possible with a 25% non-Jewish population?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- more education as Israelis go through the military
 - Sensitivity training
 - Re-integration of military into normal, day-to-day life
- education system reform
- favoritism in the government needs to be abolished
 - Lean towards democracy in a cautious, gradual way
 - Security is paramount
- Israel should apologize to the driver
- ban driving on Yom Kippur?
 - Disguise it as something else (ex. Environmental no-car day?)
- building more interfaith organizations