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Palestine/Israel

# A bill banning the Palestinian flag passes preliminary vote in Israeli Knesset

- IV Online magazine - 2022 - IV570 - July 2022 -

Publication date: Wednesday 6 July 2022

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**On Wednesday, June 1, the Israeli Knesset passed a preliminary reading of a bill pushed by Likud Party MK member, [Eli Cohen](#), to ban the display of “enemy flags” across Israeli state-funded institutions.**

After the first preliminary reading, the Knesset favored the bill with 63 votes for and only 16 against. The pretext for pushing the bill forward is the raising of the Palestinian flag over [Ben Gurion University in May of this year](#). The bill was primarily supported by Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennet, as well as members of the Israeli Yamina and New-Hope parties.

Although the bill notes the banning of “enemy flags,” the only flag that is explicitly noted is the Palestinian one.

During the Knesset vote, Cohen emphasized to those opposing the bill in the Arab-majority Joint List Coalition, including Palestinian MK Sami Abu Shehadeh, to “go to Gaza or Jordan.” He [said](#) that “those who see themselves as Palestinians are invited to move to Gaza or Jordan. I promise you funding for the transportation.” Prior to the vote, Cohen expressed similar anti-Palestinian sentiments, [saying](#), “Anyone...who sees themselves as Palestinian, will get any help they need from us for a one-way trip to Gaza.”

The bill comes after major international human rights organizations released the results of their years-long investigations into Israeli practices and found that Israel is committing [crimes against humanity](#), [apartheid](#), and [persecution](#).

While the bill must pass three additional Knesset votes before it becomes law, the overwhelming support of it in the Knesset has sparked concerns amongst Palestinians living in Israel and across the occupied Palestinian territory, over what it could mean for their lives and identities as Palestinians.

## The importance of the Palestinian flag

The Palestinian flag is a comparatively new symbol in Palestinian politics. It was formally adopted by the PLO only in the 1960s and was raised for the [first time at the United Nations headquarters only in 2015](#).

Following the 1967 Naksa (Arabic for “setback”) where Israel seized Sinai, the Golan Heights, Gaza, and the West Bank by military force, official Israeli policy banned the national colors of the Palestinian flag (red, white, green, black). [In the 1980s](#), Israeli law-makers banned [artwork](#) seen to hold “political significance.”

Israeli military and police went as far as to threaten Palestinian artists using the colors of the flag in their art work. Even [Poppies and watermelons](#) were seen as incitement and violations of Israeli law. While the law was revoked after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993-94, the confiscation and criminalization of the Palestinian flag and its colors remained common practice.

## What this means for Palestinians

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This bill comes in conjunction with the [Israeli flag-march](#) which took place in May. Israeli groups marched in the city of Jerusalem chanting slogans such as “[death to Arabs](#)” and “[may your village burn.](#)” the same slogans which further provoked and hyped [the mass assault against Palestinians last year](#).

MK Eli Cohen, who introduced the bill, is also a member of [Lobby for Eretz Israel](#), one of the strongest lobby groups in the Knesset. The primary goal of the group is to strengthen the Israeli state’s stronghold on the occupied West Bank and Area C and to [include the illegal Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank as sovereign Israeli areas](#).

For Palestinians, the bill is not merely an attack on their flag, but is symbolic of a continued and systemic assault on [symbols which express Palestinian identity](#). The potential consequences of the bill are especially real for Palestinians in Jerusalem and those with Israeli citizenship, whose Palestinian identity is considered a threat to Israel’s demographic concern.

The bill is seen as another attempt to erase Palestinian existence in the region. Banning the flag at state-funded institutions not only includes universities, but extends to cultural institutions, among others.

The attack on the Palestinian flag could also signal a further crackdown on Palestinian symbols in the digital sphere. During the large-scale assault on Palestinians in May of 2021, Palestinians on social media witnessed the shadow-banning, censorship, and deletion of Palestinian testimonies and documentation.

9 June 2022

Source [Mondoweiss](#).

PS:

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