



The only democracy in the Middle East is perhaps unique, but it's doubtful if it's the real thing. Results of a poll published in Haaretz yesterday reflect what has been known for a long time: a combination of ignorance, a basic lack of understanding and a fascist mood. An ill and dangerous wind is blowing toward a government that is threatened with collapse.

According to the poll, which was conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University, there is a clear, solid anti-democratic majority. It's a majority that wants to punish people who expose wrongdoing by the military, and it's not willing to allow human rights groups to operate freely. It's a majority in favor of punishing those who call for a boycott on Israel, and it wants heavy sanctions against journalists who reveal information about immoral acts committed by the Israel Defense Forces.

Punishing and punishing, and delighting in the silencing of the critics - that's what the people want. That's their opinion. Of all the real and manufactured dangers lurking against Israel, this is the greatest, most real and most immediate.

Take accountant Haim Yoavi-Rabinovich in the Anat Kamm case. He called for the arrest and trial of Haaretz's publisher, Amos Schocken, for blackmail and treason, no less. "Kamm is not a spy, she's a traitor," Rabinovich wrote, calling for Kamm to be punished accordingly, too. It can be assumed that in the view of people like him, an execution in a public square would not be an excessive punishment.

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