

Israel is using the country's legal system to segregate and penalise its Palestinian citizens and prohibit Arab dissent

Two cases brought before Israeli courts last week revealed the attitude of the establishment towards Palestinian Arab citizens of the state. One shows how Palestinian citizens are treated as victims of police brutality, and the second shows how they are regularly victimised because of their opposition to injustice.

Criminalising dissent is not unique to Israel. Many oppressive states, such as apartheid South Africa, have used it to de-legitimise parties, ideas and activities disliked by ruling elites and security apparatuses. Furthermore, persecution on grounds of "security" creates an immediate divide between Arab and Jewish citizens. In 2007, the head of Shabak, the Israeli general security agency, stated that struggles against the Jewishness of the state, even if lawful and democratic, would be deemed subversive. The current right-wing government is seeking to condition citizenship on loyalty to Zionist ideology, a demand unparalleled in any democracy and contrary to the most basic of human rights. With this kind of attitude, it is no wonder that young Arab men and women inside Israel are victimised because of their noble aspirations to equality and freedom.

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