



In its 2009 International Religious Freedoms Report, the U.S. State Department accuses Israel of “governmental and legal discrimination against non-Jews and non-Orthodox streams of Judaism.” The JewishIsrael organization, in its review of the document, calls it a “protracted denunciation against Israel’s Jewish character.”

The State Department report, released last week, analyzes religious freedoms in many countries of the world, and its section on Israel is entitled Israel and the Occupied Territories; the text explains that “Occupied Territories” includes “areas subject to the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority.”

JewishIsrael is an interactive internet portal that “provides a platform for ongoing monitoring and pro-active responses to aggressive missionary campaigns now targeting Jews for conversion in the Jewish State.”

“A disproportionate amount of the [State Department] report,” JewishIsrael notes, “is dedicated to depicting Torah traditions and Orthodox Judaism as oppressive, and to reporting on Israel’s ‘growing’ but ‘harassed’ community of apostate Jews and Christian missionaries.”

The report emphasizes, “Proselytizing is legal in the country and missionaries of all religious groups are allowed to proselytize all citizens.” It then criticizes Israeli “society” by reporting, “Society’s attitudes toward missionary activities and conversion generally were negative. Most Jews were opposed to missionary activity directed at Jews and some were hostile to Jewish converts to Christianity.” Though this sentence merely describes the natural attitude of Jews living in the Jewish State after centuries of religious persecution, the implication is one of criticism.

The report notes that 56 percent of the public describes itself as traditional or religious, and that most of the remainder also “observe some Jewish traditions.” Despite this, it also includes the following statements of criticism:

- “The Government implements some policies based on Orthodox Jewish interpretations of religious law which thereby discriminates against citizens adhering to other religious groups.”
- “The Orthodox Jewish establishment also determines who is buried in Jewish state cemeteries, limiting this right to individuals considered Jewish by Orthodox standards.”
- “Jews in most professions were prohibited from working on the Sabbath unless granted a special permit by the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor.”

- “In order to marry in government-recognized ceremonies, Jews had to undergo marriage counseling administered by the Orthodox religious authorities.”
- “The Interior Ministry distinguishes between Jews and non-Jews on identification cards by printing the birth date of Jews in Hebrew letters according to the Jewish calendar while listing that of others according to the Gregorian calendar.”

[More...](#)

[Full Report...](#)