

JVP Information Sheet: Israel's Segregated Buses

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Issue Summary

Since West Bank Palestinians obtain work permits through a thorough Israeli security vetting system, there is no legitimate reason to force them to use separate buses from Jews. Israel's recent decision to force Palestinians off of Israeli buses is the latest example of heightened prejudice and differential treatment toward non-Jews living under Israeli control.

Background

In October 2014, Israel's Defense Minister, Moshe Ya'alon, announced plans to prevent West Bank Palestinian workers from riding the same buses as Jewish settlers when returning to the West Bank from Israel.ⁱ

Ya'alon's plan would force Palestinians who work within the Green Line to enter and leave through the same checkpoint, which would keep them from interacting with Jewish Israeli settlers. This move comes three years after a directive from IDF Major General Nitzan Alon, which eliminated separate transportation systems for Palestinians and Jews in the West Bank. The IDF claims that there is no legitimate security concern that would justify segregating Jews from Palestinians with Israeli issued work

permits on buses.

Settlers have protested the IDF's decision to allow Palestinians and Jews to ride together, citing both concerns about crowding and claiming that Palestinians would sexually harass Jewish women. At a rally protesting integrated buses, settler leader Benny Katzover was quoted in the Times of Israel for saying: "What parent would allow his daughter to travel on a bus full of Arabs?"ⁱⁱ

Justice Minister Tzipi Livni responded to reports of the new plans for segregated buses in Haaretz: "...I understood that this was the result of pressure by settlers who don't want to travel with Arabs on the bus. I read the transcripts of what was said in that Knesset committee. It's intolerable, the claims that they [the settlers] need their own buses, because one [Palestinian] didn't get up for a woman or an elderly person, and another wasn't nice to them. This is apartheid!"ⁱⁱⁱ

Although settlers claim that Palestinians harass them, there have been documented instances of anti-Palestinian harassment and violence on Israeli buses, such as a recent exchange during which Israeli passengers tried to search a Palestinian citizen of Israel.^{iv}

Israel's Attorney General is now investigating the Defense Minister's plans.^v

ⁱ <http://www.timesofisrael.com/yaalon-said-to-effectively-separate-jewish-arab-bus-riders-in-wb/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.timesofisrael.com/at-west-bank-rally-settlers-demand-palestinian-free-buses/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/1.623770>

^{iv} <http://mondoweiss.net/2014/11/exchange-embedded-israeli>

^v <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4585241,00.html>