

LAW OF RETURN NOT RACIST!

Israel's Law of Return has been denounced in some quarters as 'racist'. Here are some of the reasons why it is decidedly not:

- * The Law is based on religion as well as on descent. All those of the Jewish faith, including converts to Judaism, are entitled to citizenship regardless of race.

- * Many other countries, including China, Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Spain, Jordan, Japan, Germany and Greece have similar laws facilitating immigration by individuals with ethnic ties. For example, after 1945 Germany admitted millions of ethnic Germans from Eastern and Central Europe while Russia has done likewise with large numbers of ethnic Russians following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

- * Jews constitute over 80% of the Israeli population, and have a democratic right to adopt measures that assist their co-religionists.

- * The Law of Return is as much a religious as a national ideal and should be regarded as a mechanism to make a reality a millennia-old Jewish spiritual yearnings to live in the land of Israel, the Holy Land.

- * The Law of Return has operated to a great extent as a humanitarian measure. It was largely inspired by the need to provide a homeland for millions of homeless Jews after WWII and since then has frequently been used to rescue Jews in distress everywhere in the world.

- * Dismissing these achievements with the argument that Jews from Arab countries, not to mention black Jews from Ethiopia, were of the same religious faith as their European counterparts does not hold water. The fact that most blacks in apartheid South Africa were Christians did not prevent white fellow Christians from oppressing and exploiting them. Nor has a common Islamic faith shielded black Muslims in Darfur from being savagely persecuted by their Arab Muslim counterparts.