

"dreamers" who march to the tune of backward societies.

The American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition and Kol Koreh ("The Summoning Voice", our Israeli counterpart) share the vision of Israel expressed so eloquently in the section of the Israeli Declaration of Independence quoted above. This Declaration meant to keep Israel Jewish in vision and momentum and democratic in political structure and law. Unfortunately the Declaration was never legally adopted. The freedom of the individual is threatened because a bare majority may legislate in any area of life. The transformation of religious dogma into civil laws changes the complexion of our democratic state.

Our strong tradition of civil liberties is evident, particularly in the protection of free speech and assembly. However there are crucial civil liberties problems which have to become part of the public agenda if Israel is to stay Jewish and democratic:

- No one may begin publication of a newspaper or magazine without government license.
- Civil marriage and divorce are not officially recognized. There are no secular domestic courts. Matters such as marriage, divorce, and custody come under the jurisdiction of religious courts, in which decisions are made according to halacha (orthodox law) and women (along with "children, slaves and idiots") are not permitted to testify.
- The religious commandment that work stop on the sabbath is enforced by law. Most factories, theatres, and coffee houses are required to close on Friday night and Saturday. Public transportation is banned.
- Television programs and plays unacceptable to the orthodox hierarchy are censored by government appointed committees.
- Orthodox yeshiva students are excused from universal military service, but there is no general right of conscientious objection.
- Service in the armed forces is the precondition for child welfare payments to large families, government backed mortgages, and university scholarships. Israel's 600,000 Arab citizens (with the exception of Druses and Bedouins) are refused permission to serve in the armed forces and are denied these "entitlements"--but the precondition is waived for orthodox Jews upon request. This double standard creates two classes of citizenship and increases tensions between Jews and Arabs in Israel.