Israel’s “Nation State Law”

What is the issue?

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- Israel’s right-wing government has piloted a “Nation State” law.
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- The law is perceived as a clear attempt to legitimise the prevalent apartheid against Arabs and also undermine any peace process with Palestine.
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What is the law about?

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- The law lays down that “Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it”.
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- While there are 1.8 million Arabs within Israel (20% of the population), the law seeks to strip Arabic off the national language status it currently enjoys.
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- It has declared Jerusalem, “whole and united” as its capital, which is implicitly antithetic to any rational solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
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- It also vows to “promote and encourage” the establishment and consolidation of Jewish settlements on occupied Palestine land (in the West Bank).
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- Further, in what is rather symbolic, this law is set to become one of Israel’s powerful “Basic Laws” that will have constitutional status.
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- Hence, it can be said that, the law is the realisation of the dream of Israeli far-right groups that strongly vouched for the ethno-religious character of

Israel.
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What is the political situation within Israel?

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- The supporters of the Bill say it is aimed to boost Israel's Jewish identity and will not discriminate against minorities.
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- But strong protests by Opposition lawmakers and the Arab masses had erupted, while the bill was passed in the parliament.
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- Arab MPs have called the legislation racist and a form of apartheid aimed at creating two systems within one country.
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- In reality, within Israel and on the occupied 'West bank', the Arab community is already facing severe discrimination in opportunities are rights.
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- While the current Israeli government's anti-minority politics is no secret, the law is seen as one that legitimises and institutionalises discrimination.

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- By providing exclusive right to national self-determination only to the Jewish people and by downgrading Arabic's status, the law sends a clear message.
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- Importantly, it seems to want to undo the concept of equality that the independence declaration of Israel promised to all its inhabitants.
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What are the implications?

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- Palestinians sees eastern Jerusalem as the future capital of their nation, but the current law asserts Israeli authority over the whole of Jerusalem.

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- This assertion and the expansion of Jewish settlements within Palestine's West Bank are likely to dissuade any form of genuine peace initiative.
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- Hence, the law further erodes the credibility of Israel's professed support of an independent Palestinian state and its commitment to the two-nation theory.
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- Israel has recently passed another law that sought to place limits on Arabs living under its authority to access Israel's High Court.
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- Another law bans individual who are seeking "political action against Israeli state or prosecution of Israeli soldiers" abroad from entering school premises.
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- All these laws together allow the Israeli state to institutionalise discrimination, deepen illegal settlements in Palestinian land and stifle free speech against it.
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Source: The Hindu

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