

Recognition and Accommodation of Minority Religious Holidays Act, 2026

To:

The Honorable Yariv Levin
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, Minister of Interior and Minister of Religious Services
Government of Israel

From:

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Subject: Submission of Draft Bill: Recognition and Accommodation of Minority Religious Holidays Act

Summary:

We respectfully submit for your consideration a proposed draft bill to formally recognize minority religious holidays and ensure reasonable accommodation in both public and private sectors. The draft is grounded in Israeli Basic Laws, supported by Supreme Court jurisprudence, and informed by international best practices.

Table of Contents

1. Cover Page
2. Executive Summary
3. Draft Bill: Recognition and Accommodation of Minority Religious Holidays Act, 2026
 - o Section 1 – Definitions
 - o Section 2 – Recognition of Religious Holidays
 - o Section 3 – Right to Religious Leave
 - o Section 4 – Duty of Reasonable Accommodation
 - o Section 5 – Non-Discrimination
 - o Section 6 – Implementation and Oversight
 - o Section 7 – Interpretation
4. Footnotes and References
 - o Israeli Basic Laws
 - o Supreme Court (Bagatz) Cases
 - o Comparative International Examples

Executive Summary

Israel is home to a diverse population, with minority religious communities observing festivals such as Christmas, Easter, and Ramadan. Currently, there is no comprehensive legislative framework guaranteeing recognition and accommodation of these holidays in workplaces, schools, or public institutions.

This draft bill seeks to fill that gap by:

- Formally recognizing minority religious holidays;
- Granting employees and students the right to leave or flexible arrangements on these holidays;
- Requiring both public and private institutions to make reasonable accommodations;
- Providing protections against discrimination;
- Aligning with Israeli Basic Laws and Supreme Court precedents (*Bagatz 955/94, Bagatz 3216/99, Bagatz 593/09*);
- Incorporating best practices from democracies such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Draft Bill: Recognition and Accommodation of Minority Religious Holidays Act, 2026

Purpose:

To ensure the recognition and reasonable accommodation of religious holidays observed by minority religious communities in Israel, consistent with the State of Israel's Basic Laws, democratic values, and Supreme Court precedents.

Citations:

- **Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty**, 1992
- **Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation**, 1994
- Relevant Supreme Court rulings:
 - *Bagatz 955/94, Kol Ha'am v. Minister of Education*: freedom of religion and equality in educational contexts
 - *Bagatz 3216/99, Mizrahi Bank v. Employee*: reasonable accommodation and non-discrimination in employment
 - *Bagatz 593/09, Arab Local Authorities v. Ministry of Interior*: minority rights and cultural protection

Section 1 – Definitions

1. “Minority religious community” – a religious community recognized under Israeli law whose members observe religious holidays other than the official state holidays.
2. “Religious holiday” – a day of religious significance observed by a minority religious community.
3. “Employer” – any public or private sector employer, including government ministries, municipalities, public educational institutions, and private organizations.
4. “Employee or student” – any individual subject to employment or educational obligations under Israeli law.

Section 2 – Recognition of Religious Holidays

1. The State of Israel shall formally recognize the principal religious holidays of minority religious communities.
2. Recognition shall entail respect and reasonable accommodation by employers and public institutions, consistent with democratic values and human dignity.

Section 3 – Right to Religious Leave

1. Employees and students shall be entitled to take leave on recognized minority religious holidays without penalty, loss of pay, or academic disadvantage.
2. Leave may be arranged through flexible mechanisms, including:
 - a. Designated religious leave days
 - b. Alternative scheduling of work, exams, or deadlines
 - c. Other mutually agreed-upon accommodations
3. Employers and educational institutions shall seek to implement accommodations in a manner that balances operational feasibility with individual rights, following principles articulated in *Bagatz 3216/99*.

Section 4 – Duty of Reasonable Accommodation

1. All employers, whether public or private, shall make reasonable accommodations to enable the observance of minority religious holidays.
2. Accommodation measures may include:
 - a. Adjusted work schedules
 - b. Alternative examination or academic schedules
 - c. Flexible attendance or participation requirements
3. Employers and institutions are not required to implement accommodations that would impose disproportionate hardship, in accordance with *Bagatz 955/94* and *Bagatz 593/09*.

Section 5 – Non-Discrimination

1. No individual shall be subjected to discrimination, adverse treatment, or disadvantage due to observance of a recognized minority religious holiday.
2. Protections apply in employment, education, and access to public services, consistent with the principles of equality under **Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty**.
3. Complaint mechanisms shall be made available for violations of this Section, including appeals to labor courts, administrative tribunals, or the Supreme Court.

Section 6 – Implementation and Oversight

1. Relevant ministries shall issue detailed guidelines for implementation in both public and private sectors.
2. Awareness and training programs shall be conducted for employers, educational administrators, and public officials.
3. Ministries shall periodically review compliance and publish reports evaluating effectiveness.
4. The Minister of Justice, in consultation with the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, shall oversee enforcement of this Act.

Section 7 – Interpretation

This Act shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with:

- Israel's Basic Laws
- Democratic principles
- Supreme Court rulings on religious freedom, minority rights, and reasonable accommodation
- International norms and comparative practices from democratic states (e.g., Canada, United Kingdom, United States)

Footnotes and References

Basic Laws:

1. **Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty**, 5752-1992
2. **Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation**, 5754-1994

Supreme Court (Bagatz) Cases:

1. *Bagatz 955/94, Kol Ha'am v. Minister of Education* – affirmed the right to freedom of religion and equality in education.
2. *Bagatz 3216/99, Mizrahi Bank v. Employee* – recognized reasonable accommodation in employment to avoid discrimination.
3. *Bagatz 593/09, Arab Local Authorities v. Ministry of Interior* – underscored protection of minority rights and cultural practices.

Comparative Practices:

1. Canada: Religious leave and accommodation policies under the Canadian Human Rights Act.
2. United Kingdom: Equality Act 2010 – requires reasonable accommodation for religious observance.

United States: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – mandates reasonable accommodation for religious practices in employment unless undue hardship occurs