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# opinion דעות

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## No Pride

### We didn't ask, Halutz tells

#### Recent gay bashing proves that relatively tolerant Tel Aviv is hardly the consensus

Yoav Sivan

"There are two genders – men and women, actually there is another one which you are not allowed to mention," Lt. General Dan Halutz said in a public speech, coolly referring to gays and lesbians.



Yoav Sivan Private Photo

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His clumsy slip of the tongue, by no means his worst act of public relations recently, has secured him a place in the ever-growing camp of opponents to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in Israel.

The statement itself is hardly interesting; even its derogatory lingo is banal and outdated. Nevertheless, it does have a double context which is worthwhile examining.

Halutz' lack of sensitivity and inadequate sense of public morality, which was well demonstrated when he got rid of his stocks at the outbreak of the war, are only shadowed by his poor performance as chief commander of the war. The statement in question, however, only contributes to his public image as a man who fails to think before he speaks.

The statement can be added to the pile of assaults on the Israeli LGBT community over the past few months. Perhaps this is a cumbersome attempt by Halutz to pave his way back into the heart of the Israeli consensus. Or maybe, it truly reveals what he thinks about the Israeli national consensus.

### Gay issues

#### Marzel declares 'holy war' against parade / Ynet

Compromise reached between gay rights groups, police, Jerusalem Municipality, and State Prosecution to hold gay parade on November 10. Extreme rightist threatens to thwart event

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### Gay bashing for presidential dream?

True enough, Halutz is not the only supposedly mainstream public figure, at least by position if not by reputation, to be recently engaged in gay bashing. A few days ago, during a visit to the home of Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Vice Premier Shimon Peres of Kadima joined the petition against the Jerusalem Pride Parade.

Another leading politician who signed the petition was minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer, the former chair of the Labor Party. Peres, whose advocacy of peace has awarded him the prestigious Nobel Prize, did not see any problem in his act: He readily dismissed the LGBT community's claim for legitimacy in the capital, thus willingly dividing Israel once again between gays and straights.

Perhaps Shimon Peres believes the way to promote his candidacy for the presidency is by gay bashing.

### European example

However, Peres, known for his vast international contacts, should take example from Finnish President Tarja Halonen. Halonen, in office since 2000, served in the beginning of the 1980s as chairwoman of SETA, the main LGBT rights organization in Finland.

Back then, even in progressive Scandinavia, gay rights were hardly mainstream. Halonen is happily married and is not gay. However, for her LGBT rights are a basic component of human rights and an indivisible part of the campaign to promote them.

By publicly endorsing gay rights, Halonen showed courageous leadership which only strengthened her candidacy for the highest position. Her strife for equality for everybody regardless of sexual identity gained her respect among her own people.

This week's European politics should teach another lesson, this time aimed at Uri Lupoliansky. Although heralded sometimes as a tolerant political leader before assuming his position as mayor of Jerusalem, he has proved obstinate to persistent attempts by the Jerusalem Open House to vocalize the place of the LGBT community in the capital of Israel.

Mr. Luplianski should take the example of another capital and another European politician. Last Sunday, Klaus Wowereit won his second term as mayor of Berlin. Mr. Wowereit is openly gay, yet he is one of Germany's leading political figures, and his name has even been mentioned as a possible candidate for the chancellorship.

Liberal Berlin and the gay-friendly Social Democratic Party of Germany have been more than willing to endorse and cheer up a candidate who declared prior to running for office that "being gay is a good thing."

Comparative politics should be treated with extra care, especially when Middle East and Europe are at stake. And regretfully there are other rather advanced countries, at least economically, that could learn a lesson or two from us.

But the recent gay bashing proves that relatively tolerant Tel Aviv is hardly the consensus. The vocal opposition to Jerusalem Pride only proves that political demands cannot be restricted to the liberal bubble of Tel Aviv but should also be proudly carried out in Israel's biggest city and the seat of its Parliament.

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