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Burial Policy in Israel: Between Public Service Provision and Real-Estate Commercialization

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Abstract

This study examines burial policy in Israel and its social, economic, and cultural implications for accessibility and equality in public services. The findings indicate that, although Israel's burial policy is formally defined as public, universal, and equitable, in practice it generates pronounced structural gaps between different population groups. Access to "adequate" burial regarding location, type, and density is increasingly dependent on a family's financial capacity, while economically disadvantaged groups, residents of peripheral areas, and communities with distinct religious or cultural preferences face limited options and must navigate trade-offs in values and planning. The gap between the principle of equality and actual practice reflects a process of depoliticization of burial issues, in which the responsibility for service provision is effectively shifted onto the individual and their family. Policy analysis shows that government logic in the burial sector is reactive and fragmented, relying on ad hoc solutions that respond to immediate pressures, such as land scarcity or demographic growth, without being grounded in a long-term vision. Partial reforms fail to reduce inequality and sometimes replicate new spatial disparities. In light of these findings, it is recommended to develop a comprehensive national strategy, strengthen coordination among state agencies, ensure transparency and consumer protection, promote innovative burial alternatives, increase state involvement, and implement culturally sensitive regulation. Implementing these recommendations would help make burial services more equitable, accessible, and dignified, while reinforcing public trust in government policy.

Keywords: Burial Crisis; Real Estate; Funeral Service Providers; Public Policy; Welfare Policy; Israeli Society