

Manal Hreib and Netta Hazan* / Trends in the Arab Media and Social Networks in Israel, September-November 2014

Last summer, increasing tensions and hostility were evident in relations between Arab citizens and their Jewish counterparts, and between Arab citizens and the State of Israel. The Israeli reality consists of a basic tension between the sides that may escalate as a result of the events of last summer, as was the case with similar events in the past. During Operation Protective Edge, Arab citizens' Facebook pages were flooded with comments expressing bitterness at the "price tag" attacks and identification with the Palestinian people, along with calls to support them and come to their aid. However, in retrospect, we can see that the "Arab street" in Israel was generally restrained in its responses, indicating a reluctance to be dragged into escalation.

In the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge, the conversation on social networks about democracy and the rights of Arab citizens continued. Arab print media and social networks were marked by accusations towards prominent political figures, government institutions, and the police. Their complaints focused on racism, discrimination, persecution, and an ambivalent attitude to the rights of Arab citizens and to their distress. Statements by political figures about the Arab public, promotion of laws perceived as discriminating against Arabs, the demolition of homes and expropriation of land, and police attitudes toward Arab citizens have all led to resentment and mistrust.

The media especially discussed national service for Arab citizens and induction into the army, especially the drafting of Christians. These subjects have been the focus of discussions, mainly Facebook pages and posts over the past few months.

The conversation began after Interior Minister Gideon Saar ordered that Christians wishing to be registered as Arameans, a nationality separate from Arab nationality, be allowed to do so, and that this should be anchored in a separate listing in the population registry. Dozens of Facebook pages were flooded with opposition, while those encouraging the move were pushed to the sidelines.

Shortly after the political tensions following Operation Cast Lead began to subside, a proposal to alter the status quo regarding the Temple Mount (the al-Aqsa Mosque) reignited the flames.

The issue sparked protests and violence in East Jerusalem and increased the religious and political tension. Meanwhile, President Reuven Rivlin chose to visit Kafr Kassem and attend a memorial ceremony marking fifty-eight years since the massacre perpetrated by the IDF. The president's visit surprised many members of the Arab public, was covered sympathetically by Arab media in Israel, and encouraged advocates of Arab-Jewish coexistence.

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Below are excerpts from the press and Facebook on three topics:

1. The events at the al-Aqsa Mosque, in East Jerusalem, and in Kafr Kanna
2. The president's visit to Kafr Kassem
3. National and military service

The Events at the al-Aqsa Mosque, in East Jerusalem, and in Kafr Kanna

From the Facebook page of MK Talab Abu 'Arar (Ra'am-Ta'al), October 6, 2014

The intention to open another gate for Jewish worshippers to enter the al-Aqsa Mosque means starting a war and setting the area aflame ... I call urgently upon the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to sever relations with Israel. If there is [another] change in the current situation, the Jordanian Parliament should intervene [and decide to sever relations], just as the Knesset is intervening. The Palestinian Authority should do its part by cutting off security communication and coordination with Israel. Any change will ignite a third intifada, and there is a very good chance that this will happen.

From the Facebook page of MK Mohammad Barakeh (Hadash, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), October 15, 2014

At the entrance to the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque: Jerusalem [al-Quds] will not remain alone, al-Aqsa will not remain alone. The liberation of al-Aqsa will be carried out by defeating the occupation and declaring that Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine.

From the Facebook page of MK Basel Ghattas (Balad, National Democratic Assembly) October 16, 2014

The great challenge these days is support for Jerusalem, its citizens, and its holy places, endangered by plans for Judaization [*tahwid*] and constantly subjected to attacks by the flocks [sic] of the right-wing religious settlers, with the full support of the police and security forces ... The government of Israel is attempting forcefully establish facts on the ground and to exploit the international circumstances by playing with fire. Our people will not allow this to happen. Jerusalem, al-Aqsa, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre expect us to initiate a joint struggle of liberation from the occupation today and to support the Palestinian people in Jerusalem ... [In response to a statement by Sheikh Kamal Khatib, deputy head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement, that he is sure that the Islamic state, with Jerusalem as its capital, will be established:] The talk of Jerusalem as the capital of the Islamic caliphate sows dissension and prevents unity, especially at this time, when we must oppose Israel's program ...

Kul al-Arab, Nazareth, October 17, 2014

On the day of the call to Jerusalem [a day of protests declared by the Supreme Monitoring Committee], clashes between police and group defending al-Aqsa, along with arrests

By Muna 'Armush

'A'ida Su'luk, a resident of Lod, stated that "we came here in order to defend the al-Aqsa Mosque because Israel is attempting to take it over. We have decided to continue our struggle here even if this costs us our lives. We are not afraid of laws or of the inhumane attitude of the police. On the contrary, every time they impose restrictions and prevent us from entering the mosque, they bolster our strength and our courage." She further noted that "after we stood here to demonstrate, the police permitted us to enter al-Aqsa, and we won't leave until all worshippers—men, women, and children—are allowed to enter. This is our right, and we will not allow anyone to deny us our rights."

Hadash chairman MK Mohammad Barakeh spoke at a protest held near the Lions' Gate in Jerusalem: "The Israeli government of fire wishes to set Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque ablaze, and we, as part of our people and of this place, wish to emphasize that Jerusalem, the al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will not remain alone." He added that "we [Arab citizens of Israel] are here because of a duty and as compensation for the fact that our people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are not permitted to visit their city."

From the Facebook page of MK Ahmad Tibi (Ra'am-Ta'al), October 19 and 20, 2014

The repeated outbursts of Jewish extremists at the al-Aqsa Mosque with the pretext of the Jewish holidays and the coverage of the violent occupation police [...] are seeking primarily to change the status quo [...] We must not let the Israeli occupation succeed in its plan, which is catastrophic in all senses. In addition to the barricades at the al-Aqsa Mosque and the direct struggle against all attempts to break into the mosque [...], we must mobilize all the diplomatic and political tools of the Arab states and start a PR campaign in the West ...

From the Facebook page of MK Mas'ud Ghana'im (Ra'am-Ta'al), October 20, 2014

The draft bill for division [of areas for prayer between Jews and Muslims] legitimizes the entrance of Jews to the al-Aqsa Mosque plaza [the Temple Mount] in the name of freedom of belief for Muslims and Jews??? There is no limit to Israel's gall.

From the Facebook page of MK Talab Abu 'Arar (Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada), October 20, 2014

The draft bill to divide the al-Aqsa Mosque is a declaration of war against Islam and the Muslims.

From the Facebook page of MK Issawi Frej (Meretz), October 23, 2014

Jerusalem is burning, and the government is only inciting and adding fuel to the fire. There is no way to justify attacks on civilians, and particularly children [a reference to the terrorist attacks in Jerusalem], but we must understand that Jerusalem needs things to calm down and not to heat up. Settlement in the heart of Muslim neighborhoods with government support, abuse and neglect, and populism and incitement on both sides immerse Jerusalem in violence and hatred. The Netanyahu government has turned provocation and belligerence into a policy, and all residents of Jerusalem are paying the price.

***Kul al-Arab*, October 7, 2014**

Yesterday, Thursday, dozens of women demonstrated in East Jerusalem opposite the Lions' Gate and the Chain Gate of the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque, protesting denial of entry to the mosque to pray [...] Fatina Dhiab, a woman of East Jerusalem noted that "every day, we are attacked with sticks and bombs, all because we wish to enter the al-Aqsa Mosque. This is aggressive behavior that we cannot accept, and we want to pray. It is our right to enter the al-Aqsa Mosque, to pray there, and to worship God there, and no one has the right to deny us freedom of worship." One of the demonstrators asked, "By what right are Muslims prevented from entering the al-Aqsa Mosque? We are not terrorists and we are not carrying weapons. The only thing we want is to enter and pray."

***Kul al-Arab*, November 8, 2014**

The crime in Kafr Kanna [the police killing of Khayr al-Din Hamdan] is the implementation of orders by [Internal Security Minister Yitzhak] Aharonovitch. Arab MKs of all political stripes have claimed that the incident in Kafr Kanna was fulfillment of instructions given by Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch, several days ago in occupied Jerusalem, when he called for the immediate murder of any Arab who is a threat [sic].

From the Facebook page of *al-Hirak al-Shababi Fil-Dakhil al-Filastini*,¹ November 9, 2014

The Kuffiyeh Intifada

Our students in Arab schools and student councils: Tomorrow express your opposition to the nefarious racist policies of the Israeli establishment and to the cheapening of Arab blood in our homeland, and your identification with the blood of the martyr Khayr Hamdan from Kafr Kanna. Tomorrow we will all go to school in Palestinian kuffiyehs² and we'll organize rallies in order to get the message out to the masses of our people. Our blood is not cheap and Jerusalem is our capital.

¹ "The Youth Movement in the Palestinian Interior" (a Palestinian name for pre-1967 Israel), an organization involved in nationalist activity and demonstrations in the past year.

² Black-and-white checkered kuffiyehs, which are associated with Yasser Arafat and Fatah and considered a Palestinian national symbol.

From the Facebook page of *al-Hirak al-Shababi Fil-Dakhill al-Filastini*, November 10, 2014

What happened today in Arab schools [in response to our call yesterday] is a decisive response to Israeli policy, which wishes to distort [the national] identity of our students, as well as a response to all those who advocate military service and ethnic division. The next generation will completely destroy the plans for Israelization.

The President's Visit to Kafr Kassem

***Kul al-Arab*, October 26, 2014**

A senior political source from Kafr Kassem told *Kul al-Arab* that “when the discussion began about a visit by the President to Kafr Kassem there were difference opinions, and someone said, ‘if the President does not recognize the massacre, it is better for him not to come’ ... Hana ‘Amer, who was wounded in the massacre, noted that she ‘hoped to be invited to the President’s visit and to sit in the front row in order to speak to him and demand recognition of the massacre and an apology on behalf of the State of Israel. The time has come to deal with us like any Jewish person who was wounded in terrorist attacks [and to recognize us as victims of hostile actions.] We are all waiting for the President to surprise us; we want to hear from him what we have been waiting for a long time.’”

From the Facebook page of MK Issawi Frej (Meretz) on the President’s visit to Kafr Kassem, October 26, 2014

In today’s tense times, the President’s visit to Kafr Kassem is a step that requires public courage, and [President] Rivlin has again proven that he has that courage. Many politicians today lack his determination to lead the public and not to follow it, competing among themselves with inflammatory, populist statements ... The visit by President Rivlin, the first Israeli president who has come to mark the massacre, is important and welcome, but the state still has not succeeded in recognizing this criminal incident and marking it as a state event that should be taught and from which we should learn. The murderers in Kafr Kassem were not extremists or terrorists; they were Israeli soldiers who murdered innocent Israeli citizens. The recognition and request for forgiveness are a necessary step on the road to a future of partnership and coexistence.

National and Military Service

From the Facebook page of Baladna (“Our Land”), the Association for Arab Youth

The national-civil service project, with the official Israeli name, is considered a complex issue and a burning matter that has preoccupied Palestinian society within the Green Line for many years. It is considered one of the subjects of the conflict between the Palestinian national forces and the Israeli establishment over Arab identity, the Arab presence, and the nature of relations between the Arabs, the original inhabitants and citizens, and the [Israeli] establishment. Israel’s policy attempts to dictate the nature of this relationship, particularly the security services’ projects, including the Israeli national-civilian service project.

From the Facebook page “We Oppose National Service, and You?”

National Service is Your Path to the Army

Nassim ‘Atef Shala’ta, twenty-two years old, began by enlisting to national service in one of the schools in the village of ‘Araba al-Batuf and later, served in the occupation army [sic] and the military police. As a soldier, he found himself protecting settlements in the West Bank and ultimately, he was arrested three days ago [by the military police].

From the Facebook page of “Drafting of Arab Christians Will Not Pass,” October 30, 2014

If that’s the case, what’s the story? Israel’s Minister of the Interior awoke one morning and decided that Christians in Palestine are not Arabs, and therefore, you are not Arabs. Well, then what are we? You are Arameans. And so, one morning last September, more than 130,000 people, Palestinian Christians, woke up within the occupied territories of 1948 [sic] and found themselves excluded from Arabism in favor of Aramean nationality.³

Panorama Newspaper, November 7, 2014

Manal Moussa from Deir al-Asad [in the Galilee], who competed on Arab Idol [broadcast in Lebanon], responds to her critics:⁴ “You should be ashamed of yourselves ... I have not served in the army, nor has my father ... In my entire life I have never seen my father’s tears except during the war [last summer] in Gaza ... Where were all those people when we were arrested in Kishon prison [after their return from Lebanon, for suspicion of illegally travelling to an enemy state] and we went from interrogation to interrogation?”

³ This is a reference to inclusion of Aramean nationality in the list of nationalities recognized by the Interior Ministry for identity card purposes.

⁴ Critics claimed that Manal Moussa served in the IDF and that her father is a military man, after her pictures and those of her Arab Idol competitor, Haytham Khalaila from Majd al-Krum in the Galilee, were published with former Druze MK Ayoub Kara, who is a reserve major and a disabled IDF veteran.