

Arabs in Israel: Between Integration and Alienation

Ephraim Lavie

The disturbances of October 2000 and the conclusions of the Or Commission, the official commission of inquiry established in the wake of those events, prompted a new understanding among decision makers in Israel on the strategic importance of the status of the Arab minority in Israel.¹ Israel has publicly acknowledged its policy of discrimination against Arabs, in effect since the establishment of the state, and admitted that full equality according to the law for this sector, as individuals and as a group, is in Israel's national interest and ensures social stability and economic prosperity.

For at least some of Israel's governments, the Or Commission report (September 2003) has served as a roadmap of sorts on how to promote civil equality for Arabs in Israel and how to cope with both the gaps in social standing and the community's sense of discrimination. In recent years several government decisions were taken and various initiatives were launched to serve this purpose:² the Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druze, and Circassian Sectors was established, designed to encourage investment and sub-contracted employment in various fields such as hi-tech and communications among minority populations; a joint government-private sector investment fund was launched for investing in minority businesses; a multi-year government aid program to assist Arab towns and villages has been approved;³ some government ministries have implemented affirmative action programs,⁴ and fields such as welfare, education, the interior, finance, and infrastructures have all noted progress

on this level. Minister of Minority Affairs Avishay Braverman, backed by the prime minister, is laboring for equal opportunity and development of capabilities in the Arab society in the areas of economics and education, based on the understanding that herein lies major potential for growth in Israel.⁵

It seems, therefore, that in recent years the Arab community in Israel has earned the attention of the Israeli government. Nonetheless, to date only limited progress has been made in civil equality for the Arab minority, in part because of the budgetary, bureaucratic, and political hurdles that make it difficult to implement official policy and the Or Commission recommendations, and thereby effect a real change in the situation.⁶ There are also significant legal issues at stake that have yet to be clarified in terms of the status of Arabs in Israel. In addition, there are socio-political elements within the Arab community delaying its development, such as the traditional local politics and the status of women in Arab society.⁷ Thus, the general picture is one in which the Arabs in Israel are still in many ways a social group that is marginalized, discriminated-against, and lacking civil equality. The group suffers from institutionalized discrimination manifested in legislation;⁸ unequal distribution of resources and budgets;⁹ a lower level of employment in public service positions;¹⁰ and unequal settlement policies,¹¹ as well as non-institutionalized social discrimination. The latter stems from the conflict between the two societies and is manifested in everyday discrimination, such as rejections in job searches,¹² opposition to Arabs living in Jewish cities, prohibitions on Arabs entering places of recreation, and use of racist language toward Arab citizens. The rights of the Arabs in Israel as a national-ethnic minority are limited, and they are not officially recognized as a national minority worthy of collective rights. The gap between them and the Jewish population is widening, even if their socioeconomic situation has improved.¹³

Additional elements affecting Jewish-Arab relations are connected to developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the question of the collective Arab identity in Israel. The PLO's ignoring of the issue of the Arabs in Israel in the peace process, its organizational and ideological decline resulting from the failed political conception, the PLO's conduct in matters pertaining to self-rule, and the years of the second intifada –

along with the events of October 2000 – have shaken Arab society in Israel and aroused questions about the fate of the Palestinian people. The “Vision” documents (2006-2007), drafted by Arab intellectuals and published under the aegis of official institutions, were to serve as the basis for both clarification within the Arab community about its future and a possible dialogue on the issue with official state institutions and its Jewish population.

This essay evaluates the socialization processes underway and the possibilities for integration of Arabs in Israeli society as a minority with equal rights, and assesses the extent to which these processes influence Arab collective identity and the attitude to the state. These are weighed against politically inspired solutions to the Arab situation – both the national Palestinian and the religious Islamic. The assessment suggests that following many years of cultural and social interaction, Arabs in Israel have adapted to the majority group in which they live. Recognition on Israel’s part of the centrality and importance of these processes of socialization and the formulation of long term policies towards its Arab citizens may thus strengthen their sense of belonging to the state without impinging on their cultural and community identities. Such policies would serve Israel’s national interests, whether or not a political settlement with the PLO is achieved.

Socialization Processes and Palestinization as Elements of Influence

History shows that relations between the Arab community and the state with its Jewish majority are dynamic and affected by policies that generate either progress or regression in the welfare and economic status of the Arab community, and by the rate of the community’s integration into society as a whole and its acquisition of civil rights. Over the years the standard of living of Arabs in Israel has risen, albeit slowly; furthermore, there have been improvements in education, higher education, and employment.¹⁴ Although most Arabs in Israel (65 percent) are still employed in fields such as construction, agriculture, and unskilled labor,¹⁵ Arab citizens have entered fields in finance, education, health services, culture, theater, film, television, and sports. At times they have represented Israel on the

international arena in these and other fields. Even though they are still underrepresented in the public sector, an increasing number of Arabs are employed in government ministries, and the business sector is gradually internalizing the importance of investing in Arab society.¹⁶

The proximity and close contact between Jews and Arabs inherent in the Israeli reality plays a critical role in the social relations that go beyond the state's institutional apparatus. In joint places of employment and in the public sphere, there are many kinds of cooperation between Jew and Arab. The integration of Arabs in work settings alongside Jews often creates a situation where professional values become the norm and dictate the relations between them. Trust between Jews and Arabs is built when they work together, cooperate in their professional duties, and help one another, without regard to differences of religion and nationality. This phenomenon is especially prominent in Israeli hospitals, where the day-to-day routine represents a model that fosters cohesion and collaboration, notwithstanding the national and religious divisions and tensions.

An index of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel, directed by Professor Sami Samuha of the University of Haifa, points to a trend of growing extremism among the Arab community over the past few years (since 2003). The State of Israel is regarded with a decreasing sense of legitimacy among many Arab citizens, a trend that is liable to lead to a volatile situation in terms of the attitude of the Arab community towards the state and the Jewish majority. This phenomenon has been enhanced by factors such as the deadlocked political process with the Palestinians, the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, the lack of significant progress in the implementation of the Or Commission recommendations, the closing of the investigation of the police officers who shot Arab demonstrators in October 2000, and the publication of the "Vision" documents. However, a comparison of Arab positions of recent years with those since 1976 suggests primarily overall stability and the absence of long term deterioration. In Prof. Samuha's opinion, this refutes the common perception among the public, policymakers, and academics that Arabs are undergoing a process of radicalization and are on a collision course with the Jews and the state.

The surveys also demonstrate that the positions held by the Arab community regarding central ideological questions are more moderate

than those of its leaders. While the leadership denies the view that Israel is democratic with regard to its Arab citizens, opposes the definition of Israel as a Jewish state, and rejects specific solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that are acceptable to the Jewish public, the Arab community holds more moderate positions: 57.3 percent of Arabs in Israel feel that Israel is democratic, including with regard to its Arab citizens; 41.4 percent accept the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish democratic state;¹⁷ and 58.8 percent agree that the right of return for Palestinian refugees will be exercised only in a Palestinian state. According to Prof. Samuha, the lack of deterioration suggests that Arabs are undergoing a process of adjustment to the state and the Jewish majority, that they are committed to resolving issues democratically, and that they are striving for parity with the Jews.¹⁸

This assessment is further backed by a survey taken in February 2010 among Israeli Arab teens.¹⁹ According to the findings, about half of Arab teenagers view themselves as Israeli while the other half view themselves as Palestinian; 72 percent feel that they are a part of the state; 45 percent want to integrate into Israeli society; 75 percent accept the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish democratic country; 64 percent feel that Israel is a democracy; 55 percent trust the court system; 74 percent feel that the educational system allows them to express their culture; and 86 percent would be willing to have a Jewish friend or acquaintance of the same age and sex. A survey of Jewish teenagers revealed a disparity between views on the Arab collective and its individual members: 49.5 percent of Jewish teens feel that Arab citizens should not have identical rights to those enjoyed by Jews in the State of Israel,²⁰ and 56 percent feel that Arabs should not be elected to the Knesset.²¹ By contrast, 66 percent of Jewish teens indicated they would be willing to have an Arab friend or acquaintance, and 78 percent responded that the slogan “death to the Arabs” is racist and illegitimate. Other surveys of the last decade (conducted in 2003, 2006, and 2009) by the S. Neaman Institute indicate a rising level of trust among the Arabs in Israel towards state institutions, including the Knesset, the Supreme Court, and the universities.²²

The Israelization processes within Israel’s Arab minority have known ups and downs in terms of the level of identification with the state. They have been affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,²³ and in the

second half of the 1970s and during the 1980s an unmistakable process of Palestinization was underway, expressed primarily by solidarity with the members of their people living under occupation and sympathy for the developing Palestinian national movement led by the PLO. In 1987-92 this process grew more intense as the result of the first intifada. At the same time, however, socialization processes of the Arab population in Israel increased the level of its identification with the state, even if there were low points in this pattern. During the 1980s there was an accelerated rise in the Arabs' standard of living, and in the 1990s their legal rights improved in the wake of the constitutional revolution in the state and the development of Israel's civil society.²⁴ They were also affected by the policies of the Rabin government, which changed national priorities and allocated significant resources to improving the Arabs' socioeconomic status. In 1994-95, the Arabs formed a bloc in Rabin's minority government, allowing him a 61-seat majority in the Knesset. At the time, the Arab sector felt that it had political value and weight and was a part of the government's decision making process, and that it had the ability to affect policies that did not impact directly only on them.²⁵

In effect, there was no contradiction between the Israelization and Palestinization processes, and most of the Arab community has adopted both identities. The fact remains that Arabs in Israel have refrained from active participation in the Palestinian national struggle. While they expressed sympathy and participated in informational and propaganda activities, they did not take an active part in the violence of the first and second (al-Aqsa) intifadas. This is significant in assessing their connection and sense of belonging to the State of Israel. However, a dual sense of marginality – both to Israeli society and to the Palestinian national movement – has arisen among them. On the one hand, they sense that their Israeli citizenship is tainted, and that they lack full civil equality. They have a sense of exclusion and discrimination for many reasons, including the state symbols (the flag and the national anthem), the historical events that resulted in the establishment of the state, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the fact that they are seen by some segments of the public as a threat from within. On the other hand the PLO has not considered them a major

player in the political process with Israel, although they are an integral part of the Palestinian people.

A National Minority Pondering its Future

The political process that began in the early 1990s between Israel and the PLO made it clear to the Arabs in Israel that an end to the conflict on the basis of a two-state solution would leave them out of the picture, at least regarding definition of their identity and the resolution of critical problems such as internal refugees and restitution for confiscation of land. They came to understand that the negotiations between the sides were intended to handle the issues of 1967 and not of 1948, which had nothing to do with them except for Israel's demand of the PLO to recognize the Jewish character of the state. Indeed, this is the only element today that links the attempt to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the attempt to redefine the relationship between Israel's majority and minority. For the PLO this question is of secondary significance, but it makes it more difficult for the Arabs in Israel to identify with the state and be integrated as equal citizens. Defining Israel as a Jewish state is seen by them as designed to exclude them from the Jewish majority and impose discriminatory legislation on them, making their sense of belonging to the state even more difficult.²⁶

The political process has also made it clear to Israel's Arabs that the PLO does not represent them, and that when a political settlement is reached they are liable to find themselves excluded both by the State of Israel and the Palestinian state.²⁷ Public leaders and senior intellectuals face a double dilemma, which has worsened since the 2006 Hamas victory in the PA general elections: one, how is it possible to define the status and collective identity of the Arabs as a national minority in Israel and resolve critical problems; two, how is it possible to stem both the rise of the fundamentalist Islamic movement (the northern faction) in its attempt to take advantage of the PLO's decline and Hamas's drive to rise to the helm of the Palestinian national movement.

As a result, and in light of ineffective political activism by the Arabs as a sector with rights and aspirations in Israel,²⁸ the last decade has seen the beginning of a process that is essentially a heightened search for a solution to the status of Israel's Arabs. In 1999-2001, the Israel Democracy

Institute hosted discussions between Jews and Arabs in order to draft an accord that would contribute to coexistence in Israel, but the inability to reach a consensus brought the discussions to the public sphere.²⁹ Between December 2006 and May 2007, four position papers were published. These papers, called the “Vision” documents, were written by an influential group from within the Israeli Arab public and concerned the future status of this sector.³⁰

While the four documents support the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by means of the two-state solution, they deal primarily with the demand for a constitutional transformation of Israel’s current form of government. They propose the structure of a bi-national, bi-lingual, and bi-cultural state that on the one hand revokes all laws giving preferential treatment to Jews, such as the Law of Return, Law of the Jewish National Fund, and the Law of the Jewish Agency, and on the other hand, recognizes the status of the Arabs as a group with its own national, religious, and cultural character. As such, Arabs in Israel would have the rights of natives to resources and land, have authority for autonomous management of educational and cultural systems, and be partners in government decisions concerning distribution of the state’s resources. This proposed change reflects the Arab desire that the sector be regarded as an indigenous minority whose rights to land and the homeland antedate the establishment of the state, and not regarded merely as a minority living among a Jewish majority.

The documents stress the Palestinian national identity of Arabs in Israel, but it is clear that the authors consider the State of Israel as the preferred political and state framework. They do not link the future of the Arabs in Israel to progress in the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians or to relations with a future Palestinian state. The documents are a form of collective demand put by the intellectual elite to the state and the Jewish public that they must consider the views of the Arab community in determining its future status. The papers propose a sort of “permanent settlement” for Arab citizens of the state, unconnected to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The publication of the documents is evidence that the political process has encouraged the Arab intellectual elite to become a player capable of

challenging the Israeli and Palestinian political agendas. The members of this elite used political and democratic means, including civil organizations, to become agents of change and advance two principal goals: one, to effect a change in the government structure and the definition of Israel as a Jewish democratic state, in order to revoke the dual sense of marginality among Palestinian Arabs;³¹ two, to convey to the PLO that it ought not to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and resolution of the refugee issue does not lie with the PLO only, as it also affects internal refugees.³² However after the first debate stirred by the documents, interest in them waned, and today there is little consideration of them among the Jewish or Arab publics.

Islamization of the Israeli Arab Community

The Islamic movement in Israel, established in 1972 as part of the return to Islam that has swept through the Middle East, has deepened the Islamic religious identity of the Arab community in Israel, which – as a Muslim minority in a Jewish state – has struggled with the question of identity since 1948. Over the years the movement has succeeded in reviving the Islamic religious heritage of pre-1948 Palestine and in nurturing the symbols of Islamic identity connected to the Palestinians' collective memory. Today, the radical northern faction (which split from the movement in 1996) promotes Islamic separatist tendencies and is developing ideas for the establishment of an independent Muslim community (*al-mujtama'a al-'aitzami*) that would sustain and manage itself independently of the state and the Jewish majority.³³

The uncertainty over the collective status of the Arabs in Israel, especially in light of the state's emphasis on its Jewish identity, contributes to the allure of the Islamic movement. In the eyes of most of the Arab public, the fact that Israel has not taken concrete steps towards civil equality for Arabs since the founding of the state and procrastinates in implementing recommendations by official commissions indicates that the issue is less urgent than Israel's self-definition as a Jewish state. Religion thus becomes an alternative framework for identity and compensates in part for this uncertainty. In order to earn even more legitimacy from the public, the Islamic movement added the national component to its religious orientation.³⁴ Today, unlike the tenuous connection between the national

stream of Arabs in Israel and its parallel in the PA, the connection between the Islamic movement in Israel and the Hamas-led Islamic stream in the territories is growing stronger. Thus, Islamic ideology competes with the platforms of the Arab political parties and with the ideas formulated by the non-religious intellectual elite expressed in the “Vision” documents.

The Arab political parties and the “Vision” documents reflect a desire to work within the Israeli political framework, coupled with the demand to change it. Opposition to this orientation, along with the continued decline of the PLO, has propelled the northern faction to position itself as an Islamic alternative to the Palestinian national movement.³⁵ The faction’s leadership looks askance at the tenor of the “Vision” documents – acceptance of the State of Israel and regulation of the status of the Arabs as a national minority on the fringes of Jewish society in a non-Muslim, heretical state on land that is part of consecrated Muslim territory.³⁶ It also sees the documents as secular in nature and in their calls for internal reform in Arab society. The question of defending Jerusalem and the annual mass events under the banner “al-Aqsa in danger” serve the faction in raising support among both Arabs in Israel and the territories to foment the struggle against Israel and the occupation.

Conclusion

In spite of the socialization of Arabs in Israel and the general recognition of their right to equality under the law, in many ways they are still an excluded social group lacking full civil equality. Their rights as a national ethnic minority are limited and the gap between them and Jewish society is growing, despite improvements in their socioeconomic status. Notwithstanding the awareness that changing the current reality is in the state’s best interests, budgetary, bureaucratic, and political hurdles continue to make it difficult to implement declared policies and prevent practical progress towards full integration of Arabs into the state. In the eyes of most of the Arab public, the fact that over time numerous concrete steps have not been taken to overcome these hurdles indicates that the problem is inherently one of values and is linked instead to the state’s ethnocentrism, given its Jewish majority and its definition as a Jewish state.

One of the results of the socialization processes and their civilian integration is that today there is no unanimity among Arabs in Israel on how they define their status in the state or how they would choose to determine their future status. The political process between Israel and the PLO encouraged the intellectual elite to clarify Israeli Arab identity and examine the civil status of the Arab community in Israel; the Islamic movement and Arab activists in Jewish political parties reject – for opposing reasons – the “Vision” documents; others seek to establish a new social movement that calls for boycotting the Knesset elections. By contrast, the majority of Arabs in Israel prefer not to give up Israeli citizenship in return for any alternative because this citizenship, it seems, offers more hope and better options than the alternatives.

The discussion in the Arab public about defining its status in Israel in the spirit of the “Vision” documents is not over. Lacking leadership of significant stature to lead the internal discussion in Arab society, the documents did not fulfill their mission, and in a certain sense achieved the opposite of what they had set out to do. On the one hand, the Jewish majority saw the documents as expressing radical positions and an intention to erase the Jewish character of Israel; on the other hand, the documents neither blocked the path of the Islamic movement nor led to the desired change. In the years since the documents were published, the northern faction of the Islamic movement has preserved its political standing among the Arab public.

Arabs in Israel appear today to be advancing in opposite directions, questioning their future and status in Israel without knowing where they are going, irrespective of the potential establishment of a Palestinian state. The decline of the PLO and the Palestinian national leadership in the territories, and the inability of Arab leaders to advance a vision jointly with the state and the Jewish public demonstrate the absence of a clear collective identity and generate an attraction to an alternative identity. In this context religion and the Islamic movement are an increasingly natural, legitimate alternative and even present as a successor to the Palestinian national movement.

Uncertainty about their future and their status in the state is also shared by Christians, Druze, and Bedouins. These sectors are gradually distancing

themselves from identification with the state and are pursuing alternate identity frameworks. The Christians have started to turn to nationalist parties such as Balad and Hadash. The Druze community is to a certain extent undergoing a process of Arabization in the nationalistic sense, and among the younger members of the community there is a growing phenomenon of not serving in the IDF. The Bedouin society is undergoing a process of Islamization.

These developments are seen by the Jewish public in Israel as a distinct radicalization of Arab society, marked by ever-deepening nationalism and religiosity. Certain Jewish political circles have proposed seeing the Arabs in Israel as “conditional citizens,” unworthy of equal rights and worthy rather of the ongoing discrimination against them.³⁷ Among their ideas: the proposal to swap populated areas;³⁸ the legislative initiatives to condition the right to vote on an oath of allegiance to the state as a Jewish state (the “loyalty law”)³⁹; and limits on the observance of the Naqba (the “Naqba law”).⁴⁰ These proposals and initiatives, advanced by Yisrael Beiteinu and other elements, deepen the sense of anger and alienation towards the government and the state. They promote a smaller sense of belonging, encourage the Arab community to embrace Palestinian nationalistic ideas, and enhance its desire for autonomy. The results of these processes are mutual feelings of fear⁴¹ and alienation, and estimations that the situation between the Jews and the Arabs in the State of Israel is a zero-sum game.⁴²

In light of these trends, Israel’s national interests obligate it to formulate practical policies that are not affected by budgetary, bureaucratic, and political hurdles, that would deepen the civilian integration of the Arabs in Israel, and that would encourage institutionalization of majority-minority relations on the basis of understandings achieved through a dialogue between the state and representatives of the Arab public. Such joint understandings are likely to lead to the establishment of a constitutional status for Arab citizens of Israel as an ethnic minority entitled to integrate into the leadership and enjoy full equality and appropriate representation in civil service and in institutions connected with public government activity. This would reduce the measure of inequality in Israeli society and likely contribute towards the Arabs’ self-determination as equal citizens, deepen

processes of Israeli civil identification, reduce the appeal of the Islamic movement, and moderate the separatist trend.

This requires multi-year, comprehensive policy planning, to be formulated with a review of the Or Commission recommendations, an assessment of interim actions undertaken to date, allocation of the appropriate budgets, and identification and neutralization of bureaucratic and other hurdles in implementation. Among the major components of this policy would be narrowing educational gaps and supporting young people seeking higher education; reforms in land allocations, including in residential and industrial zones; Arab representation on planning commissions at the national, regional, and local levels; enlarging the municipal areas of jurisdiction of Arab settlements; completing land designation plans and other planning processes connected to residential construction; regulating the problem of Bedouin land and the unrecognized settlements; affirmative action in the public sector, government companies, and government institutions,⁴³ as well as public institutions enjoying government funding; raising the percentage of Arab women's participation in the work force; raising the salaries of Arab men and changing their occupational distribution; and promoting economic projects such as industrial zones.

Although any program to achieve equality and integration of Arabs in Israeli society entails a high financial cost, the Or Commission concluded correctly: "The budgetary consideration recedes when a demand for fulfilling basic rights is made." Long term socioeconomic considerations also require this process. Because no mass immigration from either Russia or the United States is expected, Israel's growth potential lies in the Arab and ultra-Orthodox communities. Therefore, extensive investment in the Arab population is required such that it would enjoy equal allocations of resources for education, occupation, and infrastructures (the same is true for the ultra-Orthodox, in order to spur it to enter the work force). Israel's membership in the OECD obligates it to make these investments in order to tackle the problems of inequality and poverty.

Similarly, the state must recognize the right of the Arab community to both reflect and present Israeli reality, as well as to influence public opinion. It must encourage the inclusion of Arab journalists in the media and coverage of Arab society in the Hebrew press. This change, along with

making Arabic a preferred language, may contribute to a change in the status and image of the Arab minority in the eyes of the Jewish majority. In addition, the state should take advantage of the fact that most Arabs youths (70 percent) are interested in volunteering for community service in their communities, to include Arabs in the national service administration and expand the number of positions in order to allow them to join the service.⁴⁴ Arab leaders must withdraw their opposition to service and even encourage it as a means for Arabs to integrate into the state and expand their rights.

Such a policy towards Arabs in Israel, to be formulated in conjunction with Arab society, will ensure that the definition of a “Jewish state” does not exclude the Arabs and does not constitute discrimination on the basis of nationality or religion. It would also constitute an explicit statement to Jews in the state that the era of discrimination is over and that Israel’s Arab citizens must be recognized as a legitimate party with equal rights, not only in theory but also in practice. It is important to convey to Jewish society that the exclusion of Arabs is detrimental from a national strategic point of view and that it is important, even crucial, to integrate Arabs into the state. In the long run, such a policy would bear fruit: Arabs would feel a greater sense of belonging to the state, mutual adaptation between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority would grow deeper, and a more stable and fair Israeli society would be created as a result.

The policy that should be taken must be accompanied by responsible discourse on the part of both Jewish and Arab leaderships in the state, stressing mutual respect and acceptance. Such a political and public discourse, free of racist overtones from the Jewish side – such as talk about the transfer of Arabs or limits on their political rights as citizens – and Islamic-Arab racist overtones from the Arab side, may generate a transformation of consciousness among large segments of both the Arab and Jewish populations.

Arabs in Israel: Demographic and Social Data

Table 1. Israel: Population size (end of 2008)

Population	Population size	Percentage
Jews	5,569,200	75.5
Arabs and Druze	1,487,600	20.2
Other	317,100	4.3
Total	7,373,900	100.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Israel Statistical Annual, Table 2.1

Table 2. Breakdown of Arab population by religion (end of 2008)

Religion	Population size	Percentage
Muslim	1,240,000	83.3
Christian	125,700	8.4
Druze	121,900	8.3
Total	1,487,600	100.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Israel Statistical Annual, Table 2.2

Table 3. Size of Arab population (selected years)

Year	Population size	Percentage of total population in Israel
1948	156,000	17.9
1961	252,500	11.3
1972	472,200	14.6
1983	706,100	17.1
1995	1,004,900	17.9
2001	1,227,500	18.9
2008	1,487,600	20.2

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Israel Statistical Annual, Table 2.1

Table 4. Live births, deaths, natural increase, infant mortality and fertility rates by population group and religion (per 1,000)

	Live births		Mortality		Natural increase		Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)		Fertility rates	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008
Jews	18.4	20.4	7.0	6.2	11.4	14.2	5.0	2.9	2.67	2.88
Muslims	37.6	28.5	2.9	2.5	34.7	26.0	9.7	6.8	4.76	3.84
Christians	21.6	16.5	4.5	4.7	17.1	11.8	3.6	2.8	2.62	2.11
Druze	27.2	21.0	3.0	2.9	24.2	18.1	8.4	5.5	3.10	2.49

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Israel Statistical Annual, Tables 3.1, 3.13

Table 5. Age Stratification by population group and religion (percent, 2008 average)

Age	Jews	Muslims	Arab Christians	Druze
0-14	26.0	41.4	26.0	32.1
0-19	33.4	51.8	35.0	42.2
0-24	41.1	60.0	42.7	51.2
0-34	56.0	74.7	58.3	68.4
Median age (in years)	31.0	19.0	29.7	24.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Israel Statistical Annual, Table 2.10

Table 6. Poverty among families and children by population group (percent, selected years)

	1995		2007	
	Jews	Arabs	Jews	Arabs
Families	15.1	31.2	15.0	51.4
Children	18.6	40.6	23.8	62.5

Source: Data for 1995 is taken from Ramsis Gara and Refaela Cohen, "Poverty Amongst Arabs in Israel and Sources for Inequality Between Arabs and Jews," *Economic Quarterly* 4 (2001): 556-59; data for 2007 is taken from the National Insurance Institute of Israel, *2008 Annual Survey*. (Jerusalem, National Insurance Institute of Israel – Research and Planning Administration, June 2009), pp. 344, 346.

Table 7. Educational level: Median years of study by population group (selected years)

Year	1961	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008
Arabs	1.2	5.0	7.5	9.0	11.1	11.3
Jews	8.4	9.3	11.1	11.9	12.5	12.8

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Israel Statistical Annual, Table 8.64

Notes

- 1 Israel's Arab population stands at 1.5 million, representing over 20 percent of the country's total population. Arabs in Israel constitute most of the non-Jewish minority. See the demographic and social data presented at the end of the chapter.
- 2 On the decisions taken in the prime minister's commission on the Arab sector (July 2008) and on additional government decisions related to minorities in Israel, see the website of the Prime Minister's Office at <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/PM+Office/pmconference/>.
- 3 An update on current activities by government ministries on behalf of Israel's minorities may be found in "An Overview for the Public: Government Ministries Activities at the End of One Year in Office, March 31, 2009 – March 31, 2010," at <http://www.pmo.gov.il/NR/ronlyres/BAD3F87B-C14B-4357-8DEE-55CA26C3CA3C/0/gov32skira.pdf>.
- 4 Ovadia Ezra, *Justice and Equality: Affirmative Action is Needed in Red Line Series* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 2006), pp. 216-42.
- 5 Remarks by Avishay Braverman at a seminar "Government Policy Towards Arab Citizens in Israel: Theory and Practice" held by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation and the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, on November 12, 2009; see remarks by the prime minister at Tomer Avital, "State to Invest 800 Million NIS in Economic Development of Arab Population," *Calcalist*, <http://www.calcalist.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3399036,00.html>.
- 6 See Shlomo Hasson and Michael Karayanni, eds., *Barriers to Equality: The Arabs in Israel* (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2006).
- 7 Professor Ruth Gavison feels that there is no guarantee that ending discrimination will necessarily close the gaps between Arabs and Jews in Israel. Therefore, in her opinion the issue needs to be treated both at the micro and the macro levels before it is possible to advance equality between the two populations. See Ruth Gavison, *Reflections on Commissions of Inquiry and the Status of the Arab Minority in*

Israel (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation; Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2010).

- 8 Examples of institutionalized discrimination in legislation are: the Law of Return, which allows only Jews to immigrate to Israel and automatically receive citizenship; the Law of Security Service, which exempts Arabs from military service and thus prevents them from enjoying the benefits accorded to military veterans; and the Law of the Jewish Agency, whereby only Jewish population centers receive assistance with absorbing immigrants and with agricultural settlement.
- 9 An example of institutionalized discrimination in resource distribution: the Arab educational system is allotted smaller budgets than the Jewish system, and as a result there are higher dropout rates among Arab students, lower scores on high school matriculation examinations, and less eligibility for matriculation certificates. Welfare budgets allocated to the Arab community are lower than those allocated to the Jewish community, despite the higher poverty rates in the Arab community compared with the Jewish population.
- 10 A parliamentary commission of inquiry on the subject of hiring Arabs in the public sector, established in February 2008, presented findings in May 2010 to the effect that only 6 percent of civil service employees are Arab. In some government offices there are no Arab workers, while in others the level stands at 2 percent or below; there is no CEO, deputy CEO, or legal advisor in the government offices; of the 439 workers employed in the Knesset system, only six are Arab. The situation is similar in government companies such as the Israel Electric Corporation and the Israel Water Authority. See articles of May 5, 2010 in *Haaretz*, *Hamodia*, and *Jerusalem Post*; see also the commission's interim report (February-December 2008), http://www.knesset.gov.il/committees/heb/docs/arab_workers17.pdf.
- 11 Examples of institutionalized discrimination in settlement: the Jewish National Fund (JNF) sells land only to Jews and does not lease state land to non-Jews; the Israel Lands Administration has a policy of allocating land that discriminates against Arabs, whereby Arab settlements receive only 19 percent of the total land designated as agricultural despite representing 86 percent of all rural settlements.
- 12 Regarding the sense of discrimination felt by Arab job seekers in light of their minority status, see the essay by Shuki Handels, who coordinated an employer survey in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor's Research and Economic Administration: "The Sense of Discrimination of Job Seekers and Employees and What the Public Thinks on the Subject," February 2010, <http://www.moital.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/CD099D08-6BD1-4995-9656-C9DC800E60BF/0/X9841.pdf>.

- 13 On the subject of the alienated citizenship of Arabs in Israel, see Yochanan Peres and Eliezer Ben-Raphael, *Cleavages in Israeli Society* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), pp. 52-94; also see Ali Hayder, ed., *The Equality Index Between Jewish and Arab Citizens of Israel: The 2008 Sikuy Report*, Sikuy NGO, Jerusalem, 2009; "The State of Human Rights in Israel 2009," Association for Civil Rights in Israel, <http://www.acri.org.il/pdf/tmunat2009.pdf>; and "2010 Racism Report," Mossawa Center for Arab Citizens' Rights in Israel, <http://www.mossawacenter.org/default.php?lng=1&dp=2&fl=13&pg=2>.
- 14 In the past decade there has been a 150 percent increase in Arab men and women earning BA degrees. The low rate of employment of Arab women, about 20 percent, stems from a lack of accessible workplaces, public transportation, and child care. The rate of participation of Arab female academics in the job market is 68 percent (compared with 81 percent of Jewish female academics).
- 15 See Merav Arlozorov, "Arabs are Employed – Only in Agriculture and Construction," *Haaretz*, April 13, 2010.
- 16 See Hemi Peres, "Corrective Initiative," *Globes*, April 19, 2010; Kobi Hoberman, "The Economic Integration Engine as Part of a New Policy Proposal to Develop Engines for Integrating Arab Citizens in Israel," in Uri Gofer, ed., *The Economic Value of Integration and Equality between Arabs and Jews in Israel*, Abraham Fund Initiatives, September 2008, pp. 25-43.
- 17 Most of the Arab population opposes the Zionist nature of the state, while accepting its Jewish character.
- 18 See 2008 data regarding index of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel presented by Prof. Sami Samuha at a University of Haifa conference on May 18, 2009.
- 19 See survey by Maagar Mohot of February 2010 prepared for the Center for Citizen Empowerment and the School of Education at Tel Aviv University in conjunction with a daylong seminar on the topic "Israeli Teens of Today – The Reality of Tomorrow": <http://www.news1.co.il/uploadFiles/706295192241669.ppt#747>, slide 1. See Or Kashti's article on the subject in *Haaretz*, March 11, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasite/spages/1155708.html>.
- 20 There was a direct correlation between the level of religious observance and the position expressed: the percentage of religious teens who indicated that Arabs should not have the same rights as Jews was about twice as large as the percentage of secular teens – 82 versus 39 percent.
- 21 The religious factor also appears in the question of should Arabs be allowed to run for the Knesset: 82 percent of the religious teens, versus 47 percent of secular teens, answered in the negative.

- 22 The surveys were conducted in conjunction with Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Yasmin Akalai of Tel Aviv University. See Motti Basok, "50 Percent of Israelis are Proud of the Economy," *Haaretz*, April 1, 2010.
- 23 When Israel granted citizenship to all Arabs within its borders at the time of its establishment, Arab identification with Israel was unmistakable, even though until 1966 they were not seen by the state as a legitimate sector. In that period, Arab nations and the PLO (since its inception in 1964) viewed these Arabs as collaborators with Israel in theory and practice for having accepted Israeli citizenship. The claim against them was that concern for their personal welfare had taken precedence over national solidarity.
- 24 The constitutional revolution in Israel was a process that started in 1992 when two human rights laws were passed: Basic Law – Human Dignity and Liberty, and Basic Law – Freedom of Occupation.
- 25 When Binyamin Netanyahu was elected prime minister in 1996, he offered coalition negotiations to the Arab parties. The latter rejected the offer, not because they did not want to be part of the ruling coalition but because they preferred to be part of a coalition that was more convenient for them politically, i.e., a left-leaning government. In the 1999 Knesset elections, Ehud Barak promised to integrate the Arabs into his coalition, but after they voted for him and ensured his victory he reneged on his promise and established a Jewish majority in the Knesset. This resulted in the general sense of disappointment that reached new heights on the eve of the October 2000 events.
- 26 At Fatah's sixth conference in Bethlehem in the summer of 2009, the movement rejected Israel's demand to recognize it as a Jewish state, explaining that doing so would harm the status of their brothers in Israel.
- 27 Matti Steinberg, "The Implications of the Establishment of a Palestinian State on the Relations Between it and the Palestinians in Israel," *The Two-State Solution: Jews and Arabs in Israel*, Netanya Academic College, the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue, January 2010, pp. 15-17.
- 28 See Amal Jamal, "Ineffective Under-representation of Arab Citizens of Israel," in *Obstacles to Equality for Arabs in Israel*, eds. Shlomo Hasson and Michael Karayanni (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, September 2006), pp. 125-40.
- 29 See the book based on the discussions: Uzi Benziman, ed., *Whose Land is it? A Quest for a Jewish-Arab Compact in Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2006).
- 30 The four position papers are: "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel" written by Arab intellectuals and academics and published in the name of the National Committee of the Heads of Arab Local Authorities in Israel; an

essay called “An Equal Constitution for All?” formulated by the legal scholar Yusuf Tayasir Jabarin and published by the Mossawa Center for Arab Civil Rights in Israel; “The Democratic Constitution” published by Adala – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel; and “The Haifa Declaration,” published under the auspices of Mada al-Carmel, the Arab Center for Applied Social Research. See Sarah Ozacky-Lazar and Mustafa Kabha, *Between Vision and Reality: The Vision Papers of the Arabs in Israel, 2006-2007*, The Citizens’ Accord Forum, Jerusalem, 2008.

- 31 See Honaida Ghanim, *Reinventing the Nation: Palestinian Intellectuals in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, Series Eshkolot 2010). Ghanim states that “the threshold nature [a sense of being on the brink] of the Palestinian plight is twofold: Palestinian, as they are Israeli, and Israeli, as they are Palestinian” (p. 38). “The Palestinians in Israel are part of the Palestinian national landscape outside of the state...on the civilian level they figure on the civilian Israeli landscape...they figure in the vacuum between the two non-overlapping and at time opposing levels” (p. 37), e.g., the divide between Jewish history and Arab history.
- 32 See the lecture by Dr. Amal Jamal, “Arab Citizens in Israeli Politics,” in the course “Arab-Jewish relations in Israel,” at Tel Aviv University April 28, 2010.
- 33 The leaders of the faction recognize that they live in the State of Israel but resist ideological, political, and cultural assimilation into the Israeli experience because that experience does not represent them.
- 34 Similarly, the Hamas leadership added Palestinian national identity to its Islamic-religious identity.
- 35 After the signing of the Oslo agreements and before the split in the Islamic movement, the moderate stream supported a political compromise that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while the radical stream, although it did not reject this outright, expressed its preference for the alternative concept of instituting Islamic rule in Palestine.
- 36 So, for example, the Islamic movement rejects out of hand the willingness appearing in the Haifa Declaration to recognize “the right of the Israeli Jewish people to self-determination,” even if this is contingent on a bi-national state and consociational democracy.
- 37 So, for example, Yisrael Beiteinu proposals, including exchanges of settled land, conditioning the right to vote on sworn allegiance to the State of Israel, and restrictions on marking the Naqba, are viewed by the Arab public as incitements designed to amass political and public power and capital.
- 38 Dr. Ilan Saban explains that the law would lead to severing key ties in the lives of Arabs in Israel – family, work, social, and cultural ties between residents of the Triangle and the rest of the Arab community and overall Israeli society. From

a legal standpoint, land swaps impinge on basic rights, and therefore the idea must be consonant with the basic law of human honor and freedom. The principal legislative hurdle is the proportionality in the swaps. Remarks at the seminar "Government Policy Towards Arab Citizens of Israel."

- 39 According to Ilan Saban, this conditioning against a native born minority is unprecedented in a modern democratic state. A native born minority has the right to not be loyal to an element that infringes on it – the nationalist character of its state's citizenship – as long as the resistance is in the form of civil disobedience, and not terrorism.
- 40 Approved in the Knesset in a first reading on March 16, 2010.
- 41 For Arab fears about transfer and strengthening the Jewish character of Israel, and concerns in the Jewish population about the threat to the security of the state as the result of growing Arab nationalistic feelings and the demographic process, see Shimon Shamir's address at the Herzliya Conference in a plenum dedicated to the government's responsibility for equality and integration of the Arab sector, January 23, 2008.
- 42 Avishay Braverman, in the seminar "Government Policy Towards Arab Citizens in Israel," said that one of the problems in Jewish-Arab relations in recent years is the lack of mutual listening between the two societies, leading to ignorance and racism. He views this as a sign of failed leadership. In his opinion, the vast majority of Arabs want to be a part of the State of Israel and therefore, "either we embrace them and they become equal citizens or we press the young people into becoming our enemies. The choice is ours...this is a test for the government."
- 43 For the need to expand affirmative action programs in Israel, see Ezra, *Justice and Equality*, which explains that because of the structure of the Israeli economy and the fact that former senior personnel in the public sector usually staff senior positions in the private sector, it will not take long for Arabs promoted in the public sector to have an effect also on the private sector.
- 44 See Maagar Mohot survey of February mentioned above. On the limitation of positions in the civil national service administration, see Yoav Stern, "National Service Directorate: Only Half the Arab Applicants Can be Accepted this Summer," *Haaretz*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=1085219&contrassID=0&subContrassID=0>; and Anshel Pfeffer, "HaBayit HaYehudi Undermines the National Service Directorate," July 3, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasite/spages/1097443.html>.