

Curbing Violence and Crime in the Arab Sector in Israel: Policy Recommendations

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The Framework

- The Israeli government must make a commitment to adopt an official policy that makes the fight against violence and organized crime in the Arab sector a leading national priority and approve an integrative, multi-year, budgeted work plan for the full implementation of this policy.
- The background to the phenomenon of the pervasive violence is complex and grounded in many factors. At their base are serious societal challenges as well as neglect and an ongoing lack of governance on the part of the state. As a result, anarchy has emerged over the years, and the governmental vacuum has been filled by criminal elements that have gradually taken over broad areas of life. On every level, it is essential to create clear change through deep, broad, multidimensional, and long-term responses.
- Suppressing organized crime and reducing violence are challenging but achievable objectives. The fight against them must be based on the law, on equality before the law, on respect for individual rights, and on recognition and consideration of the culture, norms, and rules customary in Arab society. Success is a joint interest of most of the Arab and Jewish population, founded on the recognition that this is a supreme interest of the state and Israeli society as a whole.
- The heart of the proposed plan: a concerted, determined, and coordinated effort in two integrated branches. One involves eradicating organized crime in the "hard" domain, through precise intelligence-based offensive prevention; and the second is significant reduction of violence in the public sphere and in the family, mainly through deep and ongoing systemic improvement in the "soft" social domains.
- To this end, we propose establishing a central system that will be responsible for the optimal implementation of the program, through the coordinated integration of two organs: a law enforcement and judicial organ whose main purpose is to eradicate organized crime, and a socioeconomic organ whose main purpose is to reduce violence.

- These organs will include all of the agencies directly and indirectly responsible for the fight against crime and violence. The close synergy between them and the cooperation on the ground through designated task forces are conditions for achieving the objectives and success metrics that will be determined.
- Support of the Jewish and Arab populations and the integration of civil society organizations are imperative for the success of the integrated effort.
- Minor legislative amendments should be examined that would make law enforcement easier in the "hard" domain, without violation of individual liberties.
- All activity at all levels will be carried out in full cooperation with representatives of the Arab sector.
- Optimal fulfillment of the integrated process and the ability to draw the necessary conclusions during implementation require accompanying evaluation and follow-up.

This policy paper presents the main conclusions and recommendations of a special team established at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) on how to tackle the problem of the severe violence and crime in Arab society. The insights presented here are the outgrowth of consultations with many people both within the Arab sector and with senior government figures involved in these areas. The main recommendations were presented to decision makers before the decision was formulated and adopted by the government on October 14, 2021, and at a conference held at INSS on October 19, which included the following participants: Minister of Public Security Omer Bar-Lev; Director General of the Ministry of Public Security Tomer Lotan; Deputy Police Commissioner Jamal Hakrush, head of the Seif Division at the Israel Police, which is responsible for fighting crime in the Arab community; and senior representatives of the Arab community, including Minister of Regional Cooperation Issawi Frej, MK Aida Touma-Suleiman, and MK Mansour Abbas.¹

¹ All of the speeches and conference sessions can be viewed on the website of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-u9Iiy403g> [Hebrew].

Severe Crime and Violence: General Data

Arab citizens make up about a fifth of the Israeli population but are involved in 93 percent of shooting incidents, 64 percent of murders, 61 percent of arson incidents, 56 percent of weapons offenses, and 47 percent of robberies.

From the beginning of 2021 until the end of October, more than 100 Arab citizens of Israel were murdered, compared to 113 in all of 2020, 100 in 2019, 81 in 2018, 77 in 2017, 66 in 2016, and 75 in 2015. In 2020, as in previous years, the police reported that only 20 percent of the murder incidents were solved. In 2019, 61 percent of people arrested in Israel were not Jewish. In 2020, 56 percent of those imprisoned for criminal offenses in Israel Prison Service facilities were not Jewish.

To understand the phenomenon, it is necessary to distinguish between organized crime, gang crime, and violence in the public sphere. Even if they are related, each stems from different causes and characteristics, and as such, requires different systemic treatment.

Serious organized crime includes:²

- a. Illegal possession of firearms and weapons, and their use against civilians
- b. Weapons trafficking
- c. Weapons smuggling from the Palestinian Authority into Israel
- d. Economic crime, including protection extortion and money laundering
- e. Attempts to take over local authority resources
- f. Drug trafficking

The phenomenon of violence includes:

- a. Violence within the family unit
- b. Crime and brutal behavior in the public sphere, including reckless driving
- c. Crime and rough behavior in social media, among youth and against the leaders of the Arab community

² See Combating Criminal Organizations Law, 2003 (5763), https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/law01/999_153.htm [Hebrew].

Causes Underlying the Organized Crime and Violence

A combination of changing conditions and circumstances within Arab society, discriminatory state policy over the years, and difficulties in enforcing legal norms have contributed to the development of the phenomena of severe crime and violence in the Arab sector in Israel.³ Chief among these elements:

- a. Relatively low economic level: Most of the Arab population is characterized by a low economic status. The rates of poverty and unemployment in Arab communities are higher than in Jewish communities. Studies show that there is a correlation between the rise in the level of violence and crime in the Arab sector, and the phenomena of unemployment, low education level, and poverty.⁴
- b. The breakdown of the clan/family framework: The modernization process underway in Arab society in Israel has undermined the traditional social structure, including the authority of parents, educators, and clerics. Thus a social realm has developed in which individuals and groups operate outside of the rule of law, adopt criminal behavior, and clash with law and order.
- c. Disconnected youth: There has also been an increase among youth in dropout rates from educational and employment frameworks. Some take up drug and alcohol use and adopt violent, criminal, and antisocial behavior, becoming an easy target for exploitation by criminal elements.
- d. The inferior standing of women: Arab society remains patriarchal in many ways, and certain liberties are still denied to women. While recent years have seen a large jump in education and employment among women, these developments are identified as contributing to a rise in physical violence against women, including murder.
- e. The accumulation of weapons: The number of illegal weapons possessed by gangs and criminal organizations, as well as ordinary civilians for the purpose of self-defense, has increased. Tens of thousands of weapons in Arab communities are estimated stolen from IDF bases or smuggled from Palestinian Authority areas.

³ See Nitzan Rivlin, *Violence in the Arab Sector: Survey and Analysis*, Institute for Zionist Strategies, June 2020, pp. 50-72 [Hebrew].

⁴ Mossawa Center, *Poverty in the Arab Community in Israel*, December 2019, <https://din-online.info/pdf/msv3.pdf> [Hebrew].

- f. Criminal organizations: A large portion of the serious violent incidents in the Arab community occur against the backdrop of conflicts between criminal organizations. In the past few years, these elements, such as street gangs, are also trying to take control of state budgets transferred to local Arab authorities – a phenomenon that has increased since the implementation of government resolution 922.⁵

The causes of this violence, the social anarchy, and the governmental vacuum that exist in Arab communities, on the one hand, and the expansion of crime and violence on the other, are mutually reinforcing.

The phenomena of violence, murder, and serious and organized crime exact a heavy toll of the Arab population, causing terror, violating personal security, and influencing all aspects of life. The violence and crime are currently the main barrier to the socioeconomic development of the Arab population and its integration in Israel's society and economy. Beyond the direct damage to Arab society in particular, they constitute an increasing threat to internal security in Israel in general.

Government Efforts to Address the Crime and Violence

In the past year, plans have been formulated and various bodies have been established to cope with the violence and crime in the Arab sector:

- a. In early October 2021, a ministerial team on the fight against crime in Arab society was established (with representatives from the Ministries of Public Security, Justice, Finance, and Interior), headed by the Prime Minister.⁶ The Minister of Public Security was appointed acting head of the team, and the Deputy Minister was appointed government “czar” for eradicating crime and violence in the Arab community. He is supposed to implement a work plan formulated by the Ministry of Public Security and approved by the ministerial team. The plan, which was awarded a budget of 1.4 billion NIS through 2022, is meant to be executed in cooperation with the relevant ministries and bodies, including the Israel Police, the Israeli Security Agency, the National Security Council, the Attorney General, the State Attorney, the Israel Tax Authority, the Israel Money Laundering Prohibition Authority, and additional authorities. The National

⁵ The first five-year plan for the economic development of the Arab community from December 2015. See the summary of the Ministry for Social Equality's plan, from June 21, 2021, https://www.gov.il/he/departments/news/arabs_economy_progress_summary [Hebrew].

⁶ On the meeting of the ministerial team on fighting crime and violence in the Arab sector on October 3, 2021 and the decisions taken, see https://www.gov.il/he/departments/news/spoke_meeting031021 [Hebrew].

Security Council (NSC), as an arm of the Prime Minister's Office, will help in coordination, integration, and monitoring of the activities of the government ministries and various bodies. The main focus will be to reduce economic crime; concomitantly, there will be efforts to reduce illegal weapons. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice is supposed to advance laws that grant improved enforcement capabilities, including a minimum sentencing law for the possession and trafficking of weapons.

- b. In late July 2021 the government approved the expansion of the powers of the Authority for the Economic Development of the Minority Sector, which operates within the framework of the Ministry for Social Equality, to advance the multi-year plans for socioeconomic development in the Arab sector. This is pursuant to the decisions of the previous government.⁷
- c. At the National Security Council an inter-ministry team was established that includes the Israel Police and other security agencies for addressing the theft of weapons from the IDF, the illegal production of weapons, and the smuggling of illegal weapons into Israeli territory.⁸
- d. In August 2021 the Seif Division was established in the Israel Police⁹ to fulfill the following main functions: serve as a designated national staff responsible for the situation assessment of crime in the Arab society as a basis for setting policy and priorities to prevent it; recruit Muslims to the Israel Police and establish additional police stations and facilities in Arab communities; and improve relations between the Israel Police and Arab society, including through social media, PR, and outreach, while dealing with local conflicts.
- e. The Special Committee for Eradicating Crime in Arab Society was established at the Knesset, and is supposed to be familiar with the details of the plans proposed by the various government ministries and to track progress in implementing the recommendations of the Committee of Directors General.¹⁰

In tandem, there are multi-year government plans for Arab society that deal with the socioeconomic causes of violence:

⁷ https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/dec169_2021

⁸ See also government decision 852 from March 1, 2021, https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/dec852_2021

⁹ https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/news/event_police110821

¹⁰ <https://m.knesset.gov.il/activity/committees/arabsectorcrime/pages/default.aspx>

- a. The plan to eradicate crime and violence – responsibility of the Ministry of Public Security
- b. The plan for socioeconomic development (923) – responsibility of the Ministry for Social Equality
- c. The plan for socioeconomic development in the Bedouin community in the Negev – responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare
- d. The plan for socioeconomic development in the Druze and Circassian sector –responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office
- e. The plan for mixed cities –responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office (in planning).

The fact that several government ministries are involved in different aspects of Arab society does not help achieve the objectives. It would have been preferable to create a mechanism that integrates the plans, if not to unify them, because the integration of the many bodies is necessary for addressing the crime and violence in the Arab community in a multidisciplinary manner. This is a significant challenge in implementing coordination, command, and control over the entire complex system. There is a reasonable concern that the decentralization of the state's efforts among the various entities, each of which has its own intricate structure, traditional ways of operating, and specific responsibility according to the law will require a period of organization and learning before reaching the necessary level of effective synchronization. Consider the struggle against organized crime in Israel, mainly Jewish, during the years 2003-2006, which overall was successful.¹¹ The State Comptroller's Report on this effort from 2016 indicated in its recommendations the need for all law enforcement authorities that work with joint forces to ensure complete cooperation between them.¹² This is an essential lesson that requires further governmental thought in order to ensure ministerial coordination over time and broad governmental cooperation among all bodies.

¹¹ See government decision 1150 from December 14, 2003: The Struggle Against Organized Crime and Criminal families in Israel, https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/des1150_2003. See also government decision 4618 from January 1, 2006: The Struggle against Severe Crime and Organized Crime and the Results, https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/2006_des4618 [Hebrew].

¹² See State Comptroller's Report on the issue, 2015, https://www.mevaker.gov.il/he/Reports/Report_537/5a370922-6321-45d5-82b6-539c79ab69d3/102-crime.pdf?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1 [Hebrew]. See especially the recommendations and conclusion, pp. 62-63.

Proposed Framework to Reduce Violence and Eradicate Organized Crime in Arab Society

The Objective

The goal is to eradicate organized crime in the shortest time possible and reduce violence in the Arab community through a series of systemic, focused, and both simultaneous and long-term actions based on multidimensional planning and in cooperation with representatives of the Arab sector. The aim is to remove the threat, increase personal security among the entire public, strengthen confidence in the state and its institutions, and enable Arab society to advance and integrate in all areas of life in society and the state.

Throughout the effort, there must be optimal synergy between the two systemic objectives: eradicating organized crime and reducing violence. The goal will only be achieved by strict multi-organizational coordination among the necessary actions in these two mutually reinforcing areas.

Operating Principles

- a. Addressing the violence and crime in the Arab sector must be based on the law, equality before the law, respect for individual rights, and recognition and consideration of Arab society's culture, rules, and norms.
- b. The plan should be implemented differentially, based on priorities set in accordance with needs and data, in all parts of the Arab sector in Israel, including in the cities with mixed Arab and Jewish populations.
- c. Representatives of Arab society and its various groups need to take part in the planning and implementation stages.
- d. Action against organized crime should be the first priority, intelligence-based, and implemented through law enforcement and judicial systems.

The Core of the Plan

A budgeted, multi-year national plan will be formulated and implemented, based on building an integrated and coordinated government system for coordinating a national effort to achieve the goals of the plan. In this framework:

- a. A government decision will be adopted for formulating and implementing a comprehensive, budgeted five-year plan for eradicating crime and reducing violence in the Arab sector.

- b. Government bodies will be established to ensure the optimal and coordinated implementation of the plan.
- c. The police will make full use of existing powers, such as the Combating Criminal Organizations Law (2003).
- d. Legal allowances and suitable legislation will be prepared in order to enable effective action on the ground.
- e. Improved intelligence capability will be developed for information gathering and research, adapted to the needs and objectives of the plan.
- f. The police presence for deterrence and service in Arab communities will be expanded and strengthened.
- g. The plan will be coordinated and synchronized with existing and future five-year plans for socioeconomic development in the Arab sector.

Systemic Prioritization and Resource Allocation

Priority will be given to an offensive effort focused on the heads of organized economic crime and disclosure of their stockpiles of weapons. This priority must be reflected in the allocation of time and resources, at least until there is a clear change in trends according to predetermined metrics. The concerted effort should see results within months after completing the necessary prior preparation.

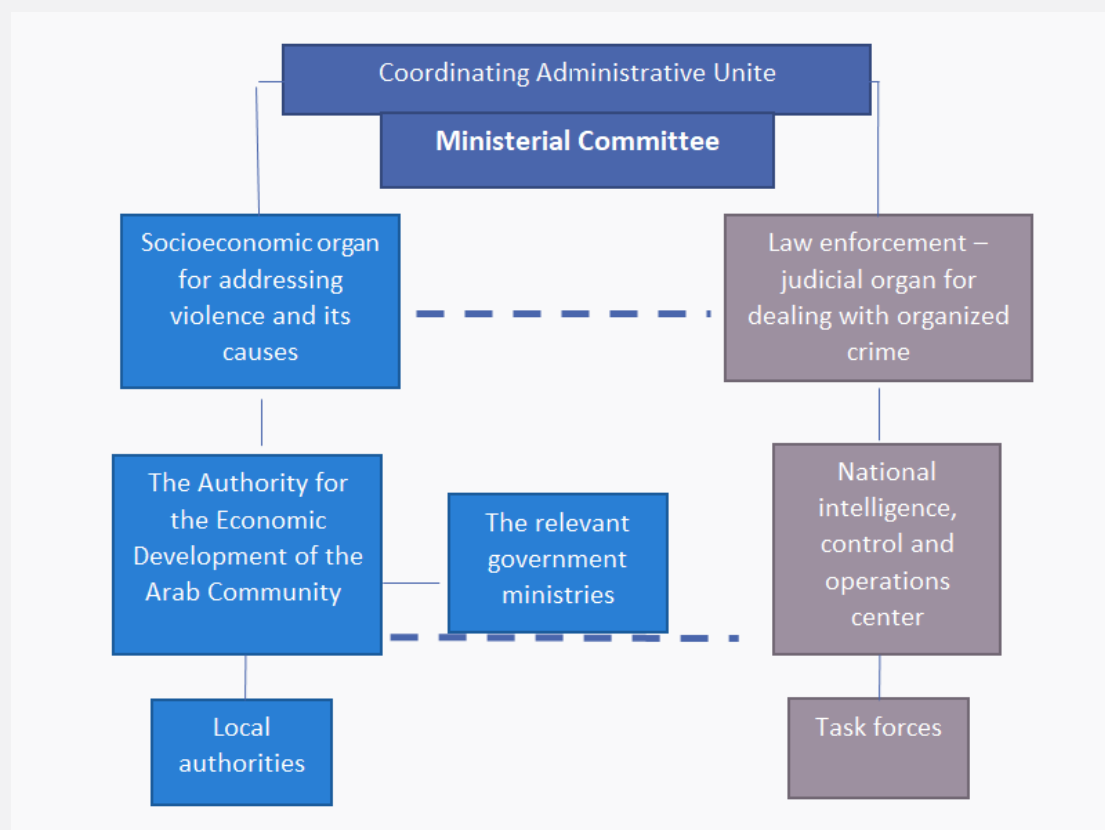
Accordingly, the integrated intelligence-operational activity will receive priority in the allocation of necessary resources, with an emphasis on advanced technological-digital systems and improved forensic capabilities. These will be operated based on the recruitment and training of the staffs participating in this effort.

A secondary effort involves widespread attention to gangs perpetrating violence in the public sphere. This effort should increase as the main effort bears fruit and brings about quantifiable results on the ground. To this end, resources will be allocated to establish new police stations in Arab populated areas, recruit and train additional police officers (preferably Arab¹³) for work in the field, with the orientation of providing available service to the public. The trend should be development of tools for the long term, including community tools, in close cooperation with the Arab population.

¹³ Today only 2 percent of those serving in the Israel Police are Muslims. See the INSS conference, *ibid.*

Framework Components

1. Establishing the national organizational structure



A ministerial committee should be established to plan policy for effectively addressing all of the phenomena related to organized crime and violence in the Arab sector. The committee will be chaired by the Prime Minister, and the acting chair will be the Minister of Public Security.

Alongside the committee, a designated administrative unit will operate as a national organizational framework that brings together representatives of all the law enforcement and socioeconomic development agencies. The head of the unit will be appointed by the government and will serve as the national coordinator of all aspects of the struggle against crime and violence. Its main mission: creating and ensuring the optimal coordination of the activities of all government ministries, in order to ensure integrated and effective work of all of the systems coping with crime and violence.

The administrative unit will prepare the materials and recommendations for the purpose of decision making in the ministerial committee, including formulating a policy framework, aims, and priorities, and coordinated individual and integrated work plans. The division will operate with the comprehensive perspective

necessary for addressing all of the components of the phenomena of violence and crime on a national basis.

The administrative unit will comprise senior representatives (directors/deputies) of all of the relevant governmental agencies for the integrated effort of effectively dealing with crime and violence in the Arab sector: the Ministries of Public Security, Interior, Finance, Justice, Economy, Education, Welfare, and Social Equality, as well as the Israel Police, the State Attorney, the Authority for the Development of the Arab Community, the Israel Tax Authority, the Money Laundering Prohibition Authority, the IDF, the Israeli Security Agency, and representatives of the Arab sector.

2. Establishment of Operational Organs

Two operational organs that are subordinate to the administrative unit will be established: the law enforcement and judicial organs, and the socioeconomic organ. Each will be tasked with implementing work plans in its field via a national control center and designated task forces to execute the plans on the ground, in cooperation with local authorities and representatives of the Arab population. There is special importance to a parallel, integrated, and coordinated effort between the two organs, while ensuring maximum synergy and full and continuous cooperation at the staff level and in the field. The administration will ensure this through and ongoing follow-up.

A. The law enforcement and judicial organ

Purpose: Eradicate severe organized crime in the Arab community, based on an integrated, targeted intelligence and operational-offensive effort

Operational concept

- i. Establishment of a designated intelligence-based system in Lahav 433 (crime-fighting umbrella organization within the Israel Police)
- ii. Joint work with law enforcement bodies on the ground, integrated with all parties (including the Israeli Security Agency)
- iii. Coordination with the Seif Division at the Israel Police in operating designated task forces
- iv. More severe punishment based on existing legislation (Combating Criminal Organizations Law, 2003) and updated legislation

Roles

- i. Identification and mapping of organizations and people involved in crime for a focused, ongoing struggle, leading to their prosecution
- ii. Ongoing comprehensive offensive effort based on precise and high-quality intelligence to address economic crime and the possession and use of illegal weapons, while increasing punishment for weapons crimes
- iii. Struggle against economic crime through the development of banking services, including the provision of loans and mortgages in a way that suits the needs of the Arab sector
- iv. Systematic approach to the smuggling of weapons from Palestinian Authority territories and the theft of weapons from IDF bases
- v. Prevention of threats against members of local government by criminal elements
- vi. Preparation of legislative amendments that address criminal behavior in Arab society
- vii. Aims and metrics for success in eradicating crime

Participants will include: the Deputy State Attorney (criminal prosecution), fixed senior representatives of the State Attorney's Office, the Israel Police, the Israeli Security Agency, representatives of the Israel Tax Authority, the Israel Securities Authority, the Israel Money Laundering Prohibition Authority, and the Israel Prison Service. Senior representatives of the relevant government ministries – Internal Security, Finance, Justice, Employment – will also participate in the committee.

The current legal situation, including the Combating Criminal Organizations Law (2003), which gave the law enforcement agencies the authority to undermine the economic capabilities of criminal organizations, enables the Israel Police to fight against criminal organizations in general and organized crime in particular, in a comprehensive and effective manner.

National intelligence, control and operations center for the service of the law enforcement and judicial organ

Purpose: Create a complete, accurate, and continuous situation assessment, setting objectives and identifying targets for focused preventive-offensive actions, alongside systematic recommendations for decision makers.

Operational concept

- i. Emphasis on economic crime: undermining of illegal financial activity, in cooperation with relevant law enforcement agencies
- ii. Supply of information from all intelligence sources, including national agencies
- iii. Close coordination with the Seif Division and other Israel Police units
- iv. The work will take place based on legal permits that enable gathering the necessary information for enforcement, using advanced means

The integrated intelligence center will mainly serve the law enforcement and judicial complex. It will be supplied with information according to the directions of the administrative division and the heads of the complexes, and with the appropriate legal permits. The information sources will be all of the state's open source and classified information systems, especially advanced SIGINT and designated forensics labs. The information received from the various sources will enable formulating "intelligence articles," as a summary of intelligence for an operation, which will include initial evidence and provide a solid intelligence basis for investigative actions against organized crime elements.

The center will be made up of professional representatives of the Israel Police and the other associates, each in its area of expertise. Other representatives will come from the various law enforcement and intelligence agencies and be permanently assigned to this purpose. As needed, representatives of additional national agencies will be invited, for the purpose of backup and depth.

Legal permits will be determined, to enable the investigative bodies to gather information and the law enforcement and judicial bodies to use the information. The representatives of all of the bodies in the center's staff will have direct access to the databases of their host bodies, and they will share their information with the rest of the staff. This will be subject to the law and subject

to the possibility of members of the staff receiving and transferring information from the databases they are permitted to use.

It is recommended to create five task forces:

- a. Task force on economic crime¹⁴
- b. Task force on the seizure of weapons
- c. Task force on protection extortion and threats
- d. Task force on dealing with criminal organizations
- e. Task force on protecting public figures and heads of local governments

Generic model of task force structure

The task force is an integrated national-operative body that is composed of representatives of all the law enforcement systems involved in the force's area of responsibility. For the purpose of the effective functioning of the task forces, relevant professional content experts will be loaned from the various bodies or specially recruited for the effort.

Here is an example of the structure of a task force for seizure of weapons. Representatives of the following bodies will participate in the force:

- a. Intelligence: HUMINT, open source, SIGINT, technology, cyber, research
- b. Police: forensic lab
- c. Israeli Security Agency: preventing the smuggling of weapons from the West Bank
- d. IDF: marking weapons, protecting weapons complexes, preventing theft of weapons from IDF facilities, activity in the West Bank to locate weapons production centers
- e. Tax authority: marking targets for economic investigations on weapons, recruiting criminal and economic analysts
- f. Ministry of Justice: consultation and legislation – criminal, State Attorney's Office – criminal, fast-tracking of judicial proceedings

¹⁴ Two new such units were recently established, and there is an inclination to establish two more soon to enhance the effort against organized Arab crime. See INSS conference, *ibid.*

g. Crossing Points Authority in the Ministry of Defense

B. The socioeconomic organ

Purpose: Develop in-depth socioeconomic growth processes in the Arab sector meant to reduce the influence of the perpetrators of violence and crime, with the help of national and local civilian systems and in close cooperation with local governments and Arab civil society.

Much has been done on this issue in the past few years, as part of the first five-year plan (922). Based on the lessons learned from the plan and its adaptation to changing needs, it is necessary to formulate and implement an up-to-date multi-year plan on the national level. In these areas – which interface with welfare, education, community, and employment – it is increasingly essential to fully cooperate with the representatives of the Arab sector in formulating and implementing the plans, including the forum of heads of welfare departments, the mayors' committee, and civil society organizations. The Authority for Economic Development in the Arab Community should coordinate the work of the socioeconomic complex, in cooperation with local authorities and civil society bodies, all in close coordination with the law enforcement and judicial complex.

There is special importance in adapting the second five-year plan (923) so that its main objectives include civilian measures for reducing violence and crime in the Arab sector. In this framework, the new five-year plan should be given concrete objectives, first and foremost: reducing the number of disconnected youth; expanding employment, especially among women; strengthening the governance of local governments; expanding the City Without Violence program; making credit, including mortgages, more accessible to Arab citizens.

In the economic sphere, plans for improving the economic situation of Arabs in Israel must be formulated, including through encouraging the demand for work and the transition from welfare to employment, professional training, and employment guidance, encouraging the employment of women, and expanding employment opportunities of academics in their professions.

In education, advanced curriculums should be developed and implemented on preventing violence, based on strengthening a sense of belonging to society, human rights, tolerance, and multiculturalism. In addition, it is important to instill that along with its being an institution of learning at a high professional level, school is a place for educating toward values and preparing students for life. Special plans should be formulated for disconnected youth, starting from the stage of middle school, and programs for professional training and encouraging

integration in the labor market must be developed. In addition, it is essential to invest in the development and expansion of informal education.

Additional focused areas to address in the framework of the socioeconomic organ:

- a. Resolution of the issue of unrecognized Bedouin settlements in the Negev, which exist in a difficult reality and are fertile ground for increased crime and violence
- b. Progress toward resolving the crises of housing and construction without permits, which are a major cause of serious violence and conflicts between families
- c. Strengthened governance capability by local authorities, with powers and responsibility in law enforcement: enacting bylaws and engaging local police, municipal supervision, and local prosecution
- d. Solutions for advancing action plans in society, infrastructure, and maintenance in a way that reduces the direct transfer of government budgets to local authorities, which exposes them to criminal extortion
- e. Strengthening of the shared Arab-Jewish fabric of life in cities with mixed populations, including East Jerusalem

Bodies participating in the socioeconomic organ

Participants in this organ will include senior representatives of relevant government ministries (Finance, Education, Welfare, Housing, Economy, Employment, and others), representatives of the Israel Police, representatives of local authorities, and representatives of Arab society.

The organ will be composed of the following designated task forces:

- a. Task force on violence in the family unit
- b. Task force on phenomena of hooliganism in the public sphere
- c. Task force on disconnected youth
- d. Task force on economic development
- e. Task force on issues of employment and housing

- f. Task force on the topic of advancing formal education at the various levels and informal education
- g. Task force on developing civil society and encouraging volunteering
- h. Task force on strengthening local governments

Principal roles of the civilian task forces

The civilian task forces will serve as multi-dimensional frameworks that connect state systems with local authorities and civil society. They will be operated at the national level under the guidance of the socioeconomic complex and will function together with the heads of local councils, law enforcement agencies, welfare and employment bodies, clerics, educators, directors of public nonprofit associations, and community centers, as well as volunteers, under the responsibility of local authorities.

Branches of civilian task forces will be set up in Arab communities to handle in-depth social and economic issues and improve the quality of life and social security. The work will be done according to an orderly plan centered on the involvement of the central government by means of the local teams, which will operate in groups/clusters of local Arab authorities in cooperation with representatives of the Arab sector.

C. Special issues for examination

Role of the Israeli Security Agency

The question of including the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) in the effort to eradicate the violence in the Arab sector is part of the discussion about the means that should be used in enforcement. There is a debate about this within the Arab sector, among the public, in the media, and among decision makers. Unlike the outgoing director of the ISA, the incoming director of the ISA has expressed a willingness in principle to include the organization in the fight against crime while "finding the right balance."

On the one hand, there are convincing arguments for including the ISA in the effort. Many Arab citizens claim that in any case the ISA is deeply involved in what happens in the Arab sector. Moreover, the ISA already assists the police in its professional capabilities in a series of fields, especially in order to prevent the flow of weapons into Arab society. There are also those who maintain that the criminal sphere should be treated as a potential security threat. In any case, the broad agreement and the public calls from some senior figures in the Arab

sector to include the ISA in the fight against violence and crime speak for themselves and grant legitimacy to such a step.

In contrast, the opposition to including the ISA in activity against organized crime in the Arab community is inherent in the ISA Law (2002), which determines the organization's areas of responsibility – maintaining the country's security, the rules of the democratic regime and its institutions, threats of terrorism, espionage, subversion, sabotage, and exposure of state secrets – which do not include dealing with criminal offenses within the State of Israel.¹⁵ While article 7b (6) states that the ISA is also supposed to engage in "activity in another area that the government has determined...that is intended to protect and advance national interests that are vital to the state's national security," the criminal sphere, especially vis-à-vis a defined sector within the Israeli population, is not defined as such.

Given the urgency to eradicate severe crime, the broad proliferation of weapons in the hands of the Arab population, and the potential for its use in incidents of a nationalistic character, it is right to conduct regulated and limited intelligence cooperation between the ISA and the law enforcement bodies involved in the effort in question. This should be done even if it requires amending legislation, which would enable cooperation in defined fields. It is suggested that the ISA engage only in gathering intelligence on criminal organizations, based on needs and noting the vital information that will be determined by the investigative bodies of the police. In addition, intelligence gathering tools used by the ISA or their products should be placed at the disposal of the police. This also determines what the ISA will not engage in, especially in the fields of domestic violence and violence in the public sphere. In any case, the boundaries of ISA involvement should be defined clearly early on, and these need to be supervised by the Knesset committee on the secret services.

Priorities in Resource Allocation

Another question is where the main effort should be directed in the enforcement complex, and as a result where the additional budget should be invested. In this context, what follows are three basic recommendations:

- a. Eradicating organized crime must be the top priority until it is suppressed or at least until there are clear signs of a significant and continued reduction in it over time. This is also in relation to the general violence that

¹⁵ Israeli Security Agency Law, 5762 – 2002.
<https://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/%D7%90%D7%95%D7%93%D7%95%D7%AA/shabak-law.pdf> [Hebrew].

is rampant in the Arab community. In this framework, clear priorities should be set, in which two areas should receive clear priority in law enforcement efforts: economic crime and protection extortion; and elimination of weapons stockpiles among criminal organizations. This will have considerable deterrent and cognitive significance, which should also help reduce the proliferation of general violence.

- b. In this framework, the integrated intelligence activity proposed above should receive budgetary and organizational priority, including in the areas of development, acquisition, and installation of the most advanced technological means, with an emphasis on SIGINT systems and forensic capabilities. Likewise, the recruitment and training of professional investigators for the particular necessary tasks should be a priority.
- c. Consequently, it is suggested that other fields receive less priority, at least temporarily. These fields include: an expanded police presence in Arab communities; recruiting and training police officers (preferably Arab) for field missions with a service-community orientation, which are not directly connected to the intelligence effort regarding the criminal organizations; and establishing police stations in the Arab sphere. After the clear and visible implementation of the highest priority fields, there will be room and a need for raising the priority of the police presence on the ground. In these important areas, the orientation should be developing long term tools, mainly community-social-service tools, closely integrated with in-depth actions carried out by the socioeconomic complex.

Cities with Jewish and Arab Populations

About 10 percent of Israel's Arab citizens live in cities with Jewish and Arab populations,¹⁶ not including East Jerusalem. There is a rise in the number of Arab families moving to cities defined as Jewish (about 6 percent in the past five years). Violence and organized crime are present in varying degrees in these cities too,¹⁷ and in times of crisis, as occurred in May 2021, a significant portion of the violent clashes between Jews and Arabs took place in these cities. Until recently, these mixed cities, with their unique social fabric, did not receive special government attention as part of the various five-year plans for the Arab community. Following the events of May 2021, the head of the Authority for the Economic Advancement of the Arab Community raised the need to build a designated plan for the mixed cities that would be separate from the five-year

¹⁶ See Nasreen Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., "Mixed but Separate Cities," Israel Democracy Institute, June 7, 2021, <https://www.idi.org.il/articles/34645> [Hebrew].

¹⁷ See Knesset, Research and Information Center (May 2021), "Arabs in Mixed Cities – Overview."

plan being planned for the entire Arab community. Government decision 292 from August 1, 2021 determined in general that "the plan can address the needs of the Arab population in mixed settlements, as they are defined by the Central Bureau of Statistics."¹⁸ It seems that this intention is meant to be fulfilled soon.

Whether the plan for these cities is separate or integrated, there is an urgent need to carry out a plan to reduce the crime in mixed cities that will also relate to the 923 five-year plan. A separate issue is the application of the five-year plans on violence and crime to East Jerusalem as well. Even if East Jerusalem, as a unique issue, does not receive a similar plan to what is intended for the mixed cities, current or future plans regarding it, such as Government Plan 3790 from 2018,¹⁹ should at least include suitable treatment of the issue of violence and crime in the city.

Conclusion

Violence and organized crime in the Arab community are not only "the problem of the Arab sector." They have a negative impact on all of Israeli society: on personal and general security, and on the complex relations between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority.

There is increasing recognition today among decision makers and the general public that the state must take responsibility and act quickly to solve the problem, including by allocating the necessary resources. In tandem, the fight against violence and crime in the Arab community might also offer a window to convert the social crisis into an opportunity to reduce gaps and advance equality between the communities.

Adopting and implementing policy in this spirit has far-reaching significance when it comes to relations between Jews and Arabs. If the message is instilled that the state sees its Arab citizens as a community with equal rights that merits systemic advancement in all of the areas in which there has been neglect for decades, this would be a significant contribution to the internal stability and the growth of a functioning multi-community Israeli society with a shared civic identity.

¹⁸ It seems that the new five-year plan contains echoes of the coalition agreement with the United Arab List in the lead-up to the establishment of the current government, regarding the special allocation of 350 million shekels to mixed cities. See Five-year Plan for the Arab Sector, Government Decision 292 from August 1, 2021. https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/dec292_2021 [Hebrew].

¹⁹ See Government Decision 3790 from May 13, 2018: "Reducing Socioeconomic Gaps and Economic Development in East Jerusalem." https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/government_decision_3790 [Hebrew]

Striving for this objective requires multi-dimensional strategic planning and its rigorous translation into the integrated and coordinated activity of many bodies in the field. In this framework, several principles can spur achievements in this challenging and vital issue:

- a. The state should recruit all of the relevant systems for a continued, effective fight against violence and crime. Therefore, the effort must be led by a special ministerial committee on this issue.
- b. Determined system-wide, integrated activity is necessary, based on the optimal synchronization of the areas of police and judicial enforcement with the areas of socioeconomic service.
- c. A national structure should be established based on the existing ministries and bodies that will be responsible for implementing all components of the policy, in coordination between the two branches. Only optimal coordination between them in planning and on the ground will ensure the necessary achievement: both reducing crime and violence and also socioeconomic growth in the Arab community.
- d. The full enlistment of representatives of the Arab population on the national and local level is of great importance to the joint effort. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen the governance capabilities of local governments.
- e. Cooperation with the heads and representatives of the Arab community on the national and local level, in all fields, is a necessary basis for success. The fight against crime must be waged together and out of a joint understanding of the complexity of the challenge and a full recognition of what is happening on the ground.
- f. All of the actions in the proposed framework should be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation processes carried out with the help of an external body.