



WHY IS THERE A CRIME EXPLOSION AMONG ARAB ISRAELIS?

**A MASSIVE STRING OF
HOMICIDES HAS BEGUN
TARGETING POLITICIANS**

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Closer Look / By Yossi Krausz



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causing the current problems?

I think what we saw last year was that the police had a hands-on attitude. You felt that it was burning in the bones of the government agencies, including the police. We had an official plan, announced by then-Prime Minister Bennett, to combat crime and violence in the Arab sector. We had the minister of internal security, Omar Bar-Lev, having direct calls with Dr. Mansour Abbas and other leading figures in the Arab sector. The entire system was directed to reduce it.

We don't see that right now. We see a lack of control. And that's something we've been seeing in the entire Israeli landscape for the last eight or nine months, not just in the Arab sector.

But the Arab sector is the backyard of mainstream Israeli society. When you lose control in your main street, the backyard is left open for other factors to fill the vacuum.

Right now they're bringing in the Shin Bet to discuss crime. Is that a good way to deal with it?

I don't think that the salvation of the Arab sector is in the hands of the Shin Bet. I think that this is lip service. It is a measure of despair. Excuse me: Where are the police? Are the police totally incapable of dealing with this?

How far back does the problem of failing to deal with this go?

It has been at least a decade-long process. In 2013 and 2014, we had approximately 60 casualties per year. During the former government, the rate was twice as high. And under the current government, it is almost four times as high.

I think that this is a result of the criminal gangs taking over the public sphere. If you don't have a clear policy, the result is a no-policy policy. And in such a situation, there is no way that things will stay the same, and that means they will get worse.

Are the attacks on politicians new?

This is certainly new. During the last elections, there were some violent incidents on political grounds, but they did not reach the level of assassinations of political figures.

Municipal elections are just two to three months from now, and criminal gangs may be taking over the political landscape.

What needs to be done to change this?

On the structural level, the police suffer from a lack of personnel.

On the cultural level, we need to stop treating the Arab sector as if we accept a culture of revenge and killing. A case in Taiba has to be treated the same as a case in Tel Aviv.

Does the Israeli police have a problem of not having enough Arab officers?

Most Arab officers are Druze, with the rest Christians and Muslims, while the composition of the community is 85 percent Muslim and the rest Christian and Druze, so there is an over-representation of Druze among police.

But it doesn't really matter, because if you're a police officer, you're a police officer. The problem is with personnel in general. There are not enough incentives for serving police officers and for potential police officers. It is a funding problem.

Is there anything else you think people should understand about this?

I think it will take at least ten years to put things back on course after this past year, and we still have three more years of this government. I don't know what new policy will emerge. But it will definitely take years to bring back the confidence of Arab citizens in the state authorities and especially in the police.



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Why is this increase in crime happening?

There are two phenomena.

For years, there has been a surge of violent crime, including organized crime, in the Arab sector in Israel that was not really controlled by the law enforcement organizations. This had to do with the socioeconomic situation in the Arab communities that has been becoming worse.

So we had this phenomenon, which grew to about 100 instances of murder in the Arab communities per year. This has been quite constant, with an interesting decline in 2022, of about 15 percent.

But this year, we had a major surge of crime in the Arab community, and we have already had almost 160 people murdered, mostly by criminal organizations and their affiliates. The numbers are growing and the frequency is growing.

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