Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
MDC The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies
INSS המכון למחקרי ביטחון לאומי THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

Bayan بيان ביאן
The Arabs in Israel הערבים בישראל

Editors: Itamar Radai and Arik Rudnitzky

Issue no. 5, June 2015

Table of Contents

From the Editors' Desk 2

Arik Rudnitzky/ An Analysis of the 20th Knesset Election Results in the Arab Sector 3

Introduction 3
Election Results 3
The Joint List and its Impact on Voting Behavior in the Arab Public 9
Arab Voting in the Mixed Cities 11
Summary 13

Aziz Haidar / The Joint List in the 2015 Elections: Establishment, Platform, and Challenges 14

The establishment of the List 14
The parties' reasons for establishing the Joint List 15
The Joint List's platform 15
Undisguised external involvement 17
Challenges and Achievements 17

Abd al-Wahhab Habaib / The Joint List: Strategy or Election Tactic? 18

Shlomi Daskal / A Leader With A Vision? Ayman Odeh and the Arab Political Landscape in Israel 21

The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation
Tel.: 03-6409991 Fax:03-6406046 E-mail: arabpol@post.tau.ac.il

From the Editors' Desk

Three months have elapsed since the 20th Knesset elections. This issue of ***Bayan*** is devoted to analyses of voting and election results in the Arab public and their implications for Arab politics in Israel. The time that elapsed since the elections allows us to delve deeper into the final election results reported by the Central Elections Committee, and also allows us to offer a preliminary assessment of the post-election activities of the Joint List and its leader Ayman Odeh.

This issue includes four articles. Arik Rudnitzky offers an analysis of Arab voting in the recent Knesset elections. Articles by Aziz Haidar and Abed al-Wahhab Habaib evaluate the Joint List's first steps in the new Knesset. Concluding this issue is Shlomi Daskal's article on Ayman Odeh, head of the Joint List.

Bayan is published by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University, in partnership with the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) Research Program on the Arabs in Israel, which is funded by the Philadelphia-based Neubauer Family Foundation.

We invite our readers to contact us, through the following channels:

- The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation:

  Dr. Itamar Radai (Academic Director)
  Tel.: 03-6406438
  Fax: 03-6406046
  E-mail: itamar.radai@nyu.edu

  Arik Rudnitzky (Project Manager)
  Tel. 03-6409991
  Email: arabpol@post.tau.ac.il

- Moshe Dayan Center website : www.dayan.org.

© All rights reserved to the Konrad Adenauer Program of Jewish-Arab Cooperation, Tel Aviv University, 2015. Material may be photocopied for non-commercial use and quoted when properly cited, including source, editors, and place of publication. Reproduction of the publication is prohibited without permission from the editors.

The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation (KAP) was established in 2004 by the German Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University as part of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. KAP is an expansion of the Program on Arab Politics in Israel established by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University in 1995. The purpose of KAP is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel through conferences, public lectures and workshops, as well as research studies, publications and documentation.

We extend our thanks to Ms. Renee Hochman for translating and editing the material in English, and Mr. Ben Mendales of the Moshe Dayan Center for his most valuable work on this issue.

Bayan is published in Hebrew and English.

The Editors

Arik Rudnitzky* / An Analysis of the 20th Knesset Election Results in the Arab Sector

Introduction

The review below offers an analysis of the results of the recent 20th Knesset elections in Arab and Druze localities and of the voting behavior of Arab voters in mixed cities. The analysis is based on the final election results published on March 24, 2015 by the Central Knesset Election Committee.[1]

The Joint List ran in the elections as a groping of the major political parties that have represented the Arab public in recent years – Hadash (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), Ta'al (AMC, Arab Movement for Change), Balad (NDA, National Democratic Assembly), and Ra'am (UAL, United Arab List) – and blurred the conventional distinctions between them. Therefore, in contrast to previous elections, this time it was impossible to examine internal political trends in the Arab public as a function of the relative power each party received. However, the unification of these parties in a single grouping allows us to trace the behavior of Arab voters as a national-political collective. It is now also possible, for the first time, to track the political behavior of Arab residents in the mixed Jewish-Arab cities. In Arab and Druze localities, the Joint List's achievements in the recent elections were compared to the sum achievements of its constituent parties in the previous elections. This review therefore focuses more on Arab voting behavior and less on the results of the parties that represent the Arab public in the Knesset.

Election Results

Arab politics in Israel attained several notable achievements in the recent elections. First and foremost, the number of Arab and Druze candidates who were elected to serve in the Israeli parliament —16 — is the largest number elected since the first Knesset elections were held in 1949. Twelve MKs are members of the Joint List (which won 13 seats, including 1 Jewish MK), and each of the remaining four MKs represents a different Jewish-Zionist party: The Zionist Camp and Meretz, on the left, and Likud and Yisrael Beytenu, on the right. Moreover, the Joint List, which is the main political body that represents the Arab public in the Knesset, became the third largest parliamentary faction, only behind Likud (with 30 seats) and the Zionist Camp (with 24). Another notable achievement is the turnout in Arab and Druze localities (63.5%), which was the highest since the 1999 elections (see Figure 1).

The vast majority of Arab voters (82.4%) cast their ballot for the Joint List, while a negligible proportion (less than 1%) voted for either the Hope for Change List or the Arab List, even though the latter dropped out of the race one and a half weeks before Election Day. In contrast, Arab voting for Jewish-Zionist parties reached its lowest level ever, 16.8% (see Table 1). This seems to be the culmination of Arab voters' gradual separation from the Jewish-Zionist parties, a process that began in the 1996 elections, when voters had one vote for a party and another vote for a prime ministerial candidate. After the dual election system was cancelled in 2001, the

* **Mr. Arik Rudnitzky** is a doctoral student. He serves as Project Manager of the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation.

[1] For the final Knesset election results, see the website of the Central 20th Knesset Election Committee http://www.votes20.gov.il

gradual abandonment of Jewish-Zionist parties became especially pronounced, due to the fracture between the establishment and the Arab public following the October 2000 events: support for the Jewish-Zionist parties dropped from 52.3% in 1992 to 18.1% in 2009. Support rose slightly in the previous elections (2013) and reached 22.8%, but dropped once more to 16.8% (see Figure 2).

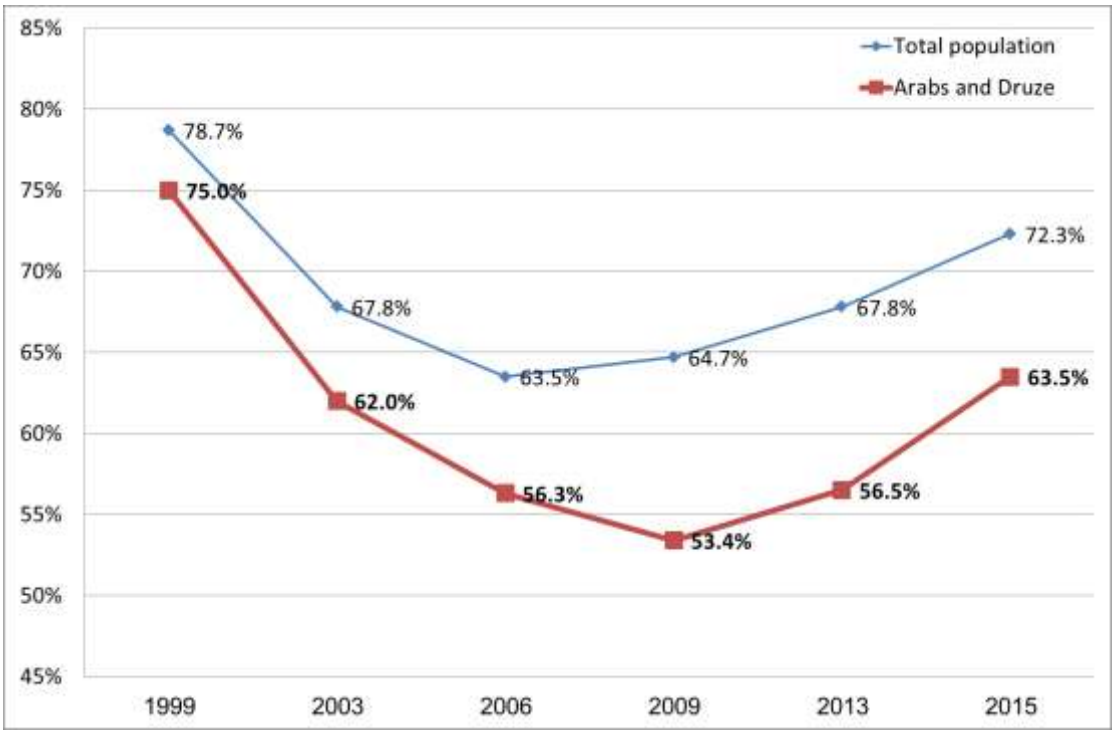

Figure 1: Voting in Knesset Elections 1999-2015

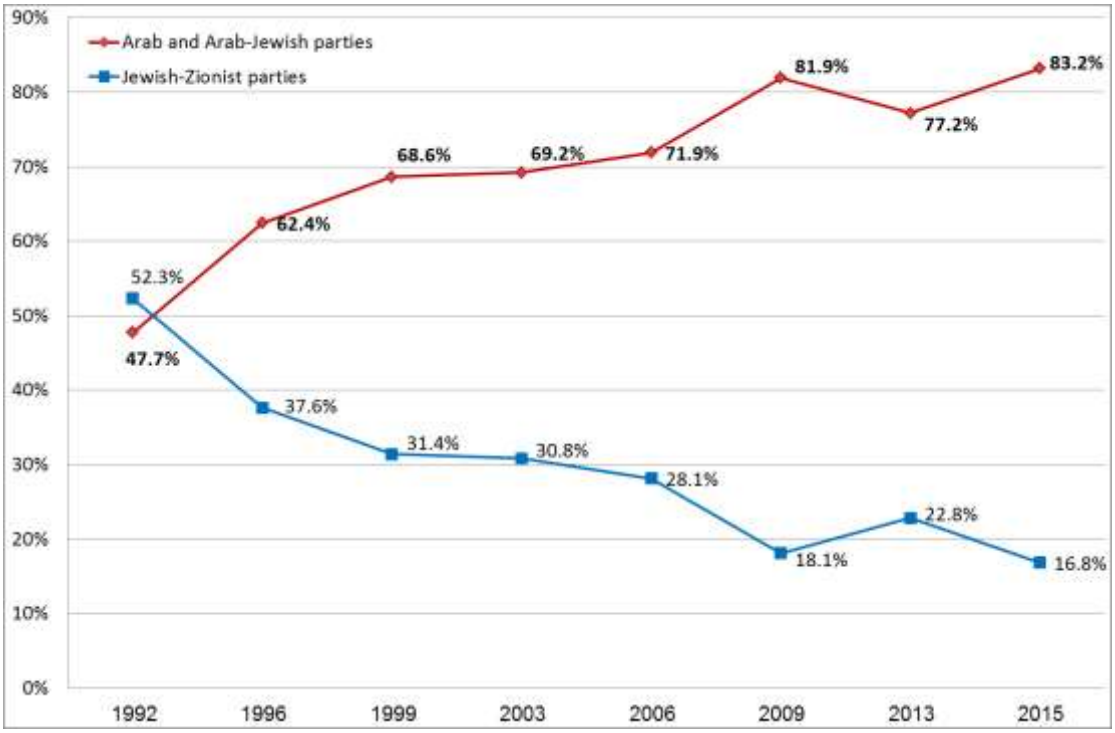

Figure 2: Distribution of Voting in Arab and Druze Localities 1992-2015

Table 1: Voting Patterns in Arab and Druze Localities in the 2015 Elections[2]

		Electoral support	No. of votes
Arab parties	Joint List	82.4%	387,810
	Arab List	0.6%	2,758
	Hope for Change	0.2%	1,147
	Total	**83.2%**	**391,715**
Jewish and Zionist Parties	Zionist Camp	4.9%	22,841
	Meretz	2.6%	12,439
	Kulanu	2.3%	11,036
	Yisrael Beytenu	2.3%	10,855
	Shas	1.6%	7,358
	Likud	1.5%	6,871
	Yesh Atid	0.7%	3,214
	Habayit Hayehudi	0.2%	759
	Others	0.7%	3,539
	Total	**16.8%**	**78,942**

The Arab public does not constitute a single political bloc. Looking at voting patterns in Arab and Druze localities by geographic location and religiosity reveals the internal political differences in Arab society (see Table 2). For example, support for the Joint List was highest in the Arab localities in the Triangle (central) region (94%), with high support recorded in the Negev (87%), the Arab localities in the Jerusalem Corridor region (83%), and in the north (77%). The reverse picture emerged in the Druze and Circassian localities in the north, where more than 80% of the voters supported Jewish-Zionist parties.

Significant differences between geographic areas are also evident in turnout figures: Turnout was highest in the Triangle region and the north (between 65% and 70%), and was lowest in the Bedouin localities in the Negev (47%).

[2] Data in this table were processed based on data taken from the website of the Central 20th Knesset Election Committee. The data in this table do not include votes cast by Arab residents of mixed cities.

Table 2: Voting Patterns in Arab and Druze Localities by Geographic Region and Party[3]

Geographic region		Total	North					Jerusalem[4]
			General[5]	Bedouin[6]	Druze[7]	Christian[8]	Circassian[9]	
VEP (Voter eligible population)		747,658	471,401	45,075	75,699	10,863	3,242	6,110
Actual voters		474,844	307,251	24,524	42,631	7,167	1,607	3,690
Total valid votes		470,657	304,517	24,218	42,009	7,098	1,576	3,626
Turnout		63.5%	65.2%	54.4%	56.3%	66.0%	49.6%	60.4%
Arab parties	Joint List	82.4%	77.2%	76.3%	18.8%	69.7%	12.1%	83.0%
	Arab List	0.6%	0.5%	1.5%	0.3%	0.4%	1.1%	1.4%
	Hope for Change	0.2%	0.3%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
	Total	**83.2%**	**78.0%**	**79.6%**	**19.1%**	**70.1%**	**13.2%**	**84.5%**
Zionist and Jewish parties	Zionist Camp	4.9%	6.5%	8.9%	21.8%	10.3%	51.5%	7.2%
	Meretz	2.6%	2.4%	1.9%	2.2%	9.7%	7.8%	1.6%
	Kulanu	2.3%	3.3%	2.1%	17.9%	2.1%	13.0%	0.7%
	Yisrael Beytenu	2.3%	3.5%	0.3%	16.6%	2.9%	0.1%	0.2%
	Shas	1.6%	2.2%	2.0%	7.5%	2.4%	0.3%	1.5%
	Likud	1.5%	2.0%	2.0%	6.6%	1.3%	4.1%	1.9%
	Yesh Atid	0.7%	0.9%	2.1%	3.6%	0.2%	8.2%	0.5%
	Habayit Hayehudi	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%
	Others[10]	0.8%	1.0%	0.7%	3.9%	0.8%	1.5%	1.4%
	Total	**16.8%**	**22.0%**	**20.4%**	**80.9%**	**29.9%**	**86.8%**	**15.5%**

[3] This table was based on data taken from the 20th Knesset Central Election Committee website. The data in this table do not include votes by Arab residents of the mixed cities.
[4] The Jerusalem area includes Abu Gosh, Ein Neqoba, and Ein Rafa.
[5] The north includes the Arab and Druze localities in the Galilee, the Golan, the Valleys, Acco and Haifa districts (excluding the mixed cities of Acco and Haifa), and in the northern coastal region (Hof Hacarmel). This category also includes the Bedouin, Christian, and Circassian localities in the north.
[6] This category includes 19 localities in the north whose population is primary Bedouin: Ibtin, Bu'eine-Nujeidat, Bir el-Maksur, Basmat Tab'un, Dumeide, Zarzir, Khawalid, Tuba-Zangariyya, Kawkab Abu el-Heija, Kamaneh, Ka'abiyyah-Tabash-Hajajreh, Manshiyyat Zibdeh, Sawa'id (Hamariyyah), Uzayr, 'Aramshe, Arab el-Na'im, Ras Eli, Rumat Heib, Shibli - Umm el-Ghanam
[7] This category includes 12 localities whose Druze population range from 88% to 100%: Julis, Yanuah-Jatt, Sajur, Beit Jan, Yarka, Horfeish, Kisra-Samia', Ein el-Asad, Daliyyat el-Karmel and Usfiyyah; and two localities with a large Druze population (Peki'in, with 76%, and Mughar, with 58%).
[8] This category includes four localities: two (Fassuta and Me'ilyyah) whose entire population is Christian, and two with a Christian majority (Eilabun with 71% and Jish with 64%).
[9] This category includes two localities whose population is Circassian: Kfar Kama and Rehaniya.
[10] This category includes votes for Jewish parties including parties that failed to pass the election threshold, headed by Yachad ("Together", Eli Yishay's party) that received 1,724 votes (0.4% of the total votes in Arab and Druze localities).

Table 2: Voting Patterns in Arab and Druze Localities by Geographic Region and Party (cont'd)

Geographic region		Triangle			South (Bedouin)			
		Total	North[11]	South[12]	Total	Municipalities[13]	Neve Midbar and Al-Qasum regional councils[14]	Tribes and Bedouin dispersion localities[15]
VEP (Voter eligible population)		171,253	98,425	72,828	98,894	63,253	7,108	28,533
Actual voters		117,401	65,053	52,348	46,502	33,838	2,908	9,756
Total valid votes		116,616	64,600	52,016	45,898	33,376	2,882	9,640
Turnout		68.6%	66.1%	71.9%	47.0%	53.5%	40.9%	34.2%
Arab parties	Joint List	94.0%	95.2%	92.6%	87.3%	88.6%	80.2%	84.8%
	Arab List	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	1.7%	1.4%	2.9%	2.4%
	Hope for Change	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%
	Total	**94.5%**	**95.6%**	**93.2%**	**89.4%**	**90.4%**	**83.6%**	**87.5%**
Zionist and Jewish parties	Zionist Camp	1.2%	1.2%	1.4%	2.7%	2.1%	7.6%	3.2%
	Meretz	3.1%	2.1%	4.5%	2.7%	3.2%	0.9%	1.8%
	Kulanu	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	1.2%	1.2%	2.4%	1.1%
	Yisrael Beytenu	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
	Shas	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	1.1%	0.7%	1.1%	2.5%
	Likud	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%
	Yesh Atid	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%	0.5%	1.3%	0.6%
	Habayit Hayehudi	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
	Others	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	1.2%	0.8%	2.0%	2.4%
	Total	**5.5%**	**4.4%**	**6.8%**	**10.6%**	**9.6%**	**16.4%**	**12.5%**

[11] This category includes 12 localities in the northern section of the Triangle: Umm el-Fahm, Umm el-Qutuf, El-'Aryan, Baqa el-Gharbiyyah, Jatt, Basmah, Jatt, Zemer, Kufr Qara, Muqebleh, Meiser, Ma'aleh Iron, and 'Ar'arah.

[12] This category includes 6 localities in the southern section of the Triangle: Jaljuliyyah, Taybeh, Tira, Kufr Bara, Kufr Qassem, and Qalansuwah.

[13] This category includes the seven largest Bedouin townshipss in the Negev: Hura, Ksseifa, Laqiyyah, 'Ar'arah in the Negev, Rahat, Segev-Shalom, and Tel Sheva

[14] This category includes localities in the Neve Midbar and Al-Qasum regional councils (both regional councils were established in 2012 after the dissolution of Abu Basma regional council): Abu Krinat, Umm Batin, El-Sayyed, Bir Hadaj, Dreijat, Moladah, Makhoul, Qasr a-Sir, Tarabin el-Sana. In recent years these localities have been granted municipal status by the state. They were first placed under the Abu Basma regional council, which was established in 2004 and dissolved in 2012.

[15] This category includes 18 localities of the Bedouin dispersion in the Negev, many of which are tribes whose municipal status has not yet been recognized by the state ("unrecognized localities"): Abu Juwei'ed, Abu Abdun, Abu Rubay'ah, Abu Ruqayq, Atrash, Asad, A'sam, Janabib, Hawashleh, Huzayl, Masoudin el-Azazmeh, Nasasrah, Sayyed, Uqbi (Banu Uqbeh), 'Atawneh, Qabuah, Qudeirat e-Sana, and Qawa'in.

One of the notable political achievements of the Arab and Druze public in the recent elections is the increase in their parliamentary representation to 16 MKs, or 13.3% of the 120 Knesset members. In view of the fact that eligible Arab voters accounted for 15% of the total voter eligible population (12.7% in Arab and Druze localities) in recent elections,[16] the question arises whether the Arab electorate has possibly reached its full potential.

On the face of it, the answer appears to be affirmative, and this answer is supported by two factors: (a) the significant rise in election turnout of the Arab public in the recent elections; and (b) the fact that in all elections, very few Arab votes have been "wasted" on lists that ultimately fail to pass the electoral threshold.[17] In fact, the day after the recent elections, the leaders of the Joint List estimated that turnout in the Arab public had reached 70%,[18] or very close to the overall national turnout. However, a deeper look at the voting patterns in Arab localities reveals the true issue, which prevented the Arab public from realizing its full potential in these elections; the Bedouins in the Negev show a very low turnout compared to the average turnout among the Arab public at large (see Table 3). Moreover, the Bedouins share in the eligible Arab voter population is steadily increasing; in the 2009 election, eligible Bedouin voters accounted for 11.7% of all eligible voters in Arab and Druze localities, and this figure rose to 13.3% in 2015. This is due to the high natural growth rate in Bedouin localities in the Negev, which is significantly higher than the average for the Arab public in general. Every year, a greater proportion of eligible voters joins the Arab electorate from the Bedouin sector than from any other sector of Arab society.[19]

Table 3: Voting Patterns in Arab and Druze Localities 2009-2015

Year	2009		2013		2015	
Region	Election turnout	Voting for Arab parties	Election turnout	Voting for Arab parties	Election turnout	Voting for the Joint List
General	53.4%	79.1%	56.5%	77.0%	63.5%	82.4%
North	53.5%	76.7%	58.3%	72.2%	65.2%	77.2%
Triangle	59.1%	94.3%	57.6%	85.3%	69.1%	94.0%
Jerusalem	44.1%	79.5%	48.2%	68.5%	60.4%	83.0%
Negev	35.9%	85.3%	45.8%	88.8%	47.0%	87.3%

As a result of its relatively low turnout, the Bedouin electorate has consistently lowered the total voter turnout of the Arab public in Knesset elections. For example, in the 2009 elections, the total voter turnout in Arab localities was 53.4%, but without Bedouin voters, this percentage increases to 55.7%. A similar situation occurred in the 2013 elections, when the total voter turnout in the Arab public reached 56.5%, or

[16] Gustavo Shifris, *Press Release: 5.3 million eligible voters live in Israel today* (Jerusalem: The Central Bureau of Statistics, February 9, 2015).
[17] See:Arik Rudnitzky, "Arab Politics in Israel and the 19th Knesset Elections", *Tel Aviv Notes*, 7.4 (February 26, 2013)
[18] Ghazi Nablesi, "The Joint List: Arab Voting Exceeded 70%", arabs48.com, March 18, 2015 (in Arabic).
[19] See Arik Rudnitzky, *The Bedouin Society in the Negev: Social, Demographic, and Economic Features* (Neve Ilan: The Abraham Fund Initiatives, 2011).

58.0% controlling for the Bedouin electorate.[20] Against this backdrop it is easy to understand the assessments of the Joint List's leaders regarding Arab turnout in the recent elections: Excluding the Bedouin Negev, the Arab turnout in recent elections in all Arab and Druze localities, including the centers of national and political activism in the Triangle and the Galilee, was 66%. Ironically, it was the low voter turnout of Negev Bedouins that prevented the 14th Joint List's Bedouin candidate, Jum'a Azbarga of the Bedouin township Lakiya in the Negev, from becoming an MK.

Bedouin voting behavior deserves special attention in view of the fact that in the 2015 elections, growing support for the Joint List (as the representative of the Arab parties) was positively associated with a rising turnout, with the exception of in the Bedouin Negev localities, despite the fact that this area has shown the highest rates of support for Arab parties and the Joint List in recent elections.

One of the challenges facing Arab politics in Israel is the Bedouin electorate. At present, it seems that local considerations, rather than broader concerns, influence the political behavior of Negev Bedouin voters. For example, one of the possible explanations for the increase in Bedouin turnover in the 2013 elections, compared with 2009, was the fact that in 2013 three Bedouin candidates ran for elections,[21] compared to only one Bedouin candidate for a realistic slot in 2009.

The Joint List and its Impact on Voting Behavior in the Arab Public

Inarguably, the election campaign in Arab and Druze localities in the recent elections was, more than anything else, influenced by the participation of the Joint List. The List's impact on the Arab public's voting patterns is evident from the high turnout from that sector on Election Day. A comparison of the 2015 elections results with those of 2009 and 2013 illuminates the changes in these voting patterns. In 2009, voting for the Arab parties was similar to voting for the Joint List in the 2015 elections (as a percentage of the Arab VEP). Meanwhile, in the 2013 turnout among the Arab public was slightly higher, as was voting for Jewish-Zionist parties.

The 2009 election results, held a mere several weeks after the conclusion of the "Operation Cast Lead" military campaign in Gaza, were marked by a record low in Arab turnout. The elections featured campaigns held among the Arab public that called for nonvoting for Jewish-Zionist parties and the boycotting of the elections altogether. Consequently, increased voting for Arab parties in 2009 reflected "punitive" political behavior directed against the concept of Knesset elections in general, and against the Jewish-Zionist parties in particular. In 2015, although total Arab turnout increased considerably, voting for the Joint List mirrored voting for Arab parties in 2009, and reflected "positive" political behavior; a larger proportion of the VEP voted in the elections, and a larger proportion of the voters gave their vote to the Joint List (see Table 3 above).

To illustrate the direct positive association between the rising voter turnout and the increasing support for the Joint List, we examined voting patterns in the North, a region characterized by religious-sectorial and political diversity (see Table 4).

[20] Arik Rudnitzky (ed.), *Arab Politics in Israel and the 19th Knesset Elections*, Issue no. 3 (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, February 7, 2013); Efraim Lavie and Arik Runitzky (eds.), *Arab Politics in Israel and the 18th Knesset Elections*, Issue no. 3 (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, February 26, 2009).

[21] Taleb Abu Arar and Table al Sana in the fourth and fifth places on the Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada list; and Juma Azbarga is in the fourth place on Balad's list.

Table 4: Voting Patterns in Arab and Druze Localities in North Israel 2009-2015

Year	2009		2013		2015	
Population Group	Election turnout	Voting for Arab parties	Election turnout	Voting for Arab parties	Election turnout	Voting for the Joint List
General	53.5%	76.7%	58.3%	72.2%	65.2%	77.2%
Bedouin	41.4%	76.2%	46.9%	59.7%	54.4%	76.3%
Druze	53.7%	17.8%	55.9%	18.8%	56.3%	18.8%
Christian	56.9%	78.0%	60.4%	72.1%	66.4%	69.7%
Circassian	34.9%	11.4%	39.3%	15.1%	49.6%	12.1%

The figures in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that the Joint List's participation in the elections had a direct impact on the rising voter turnout in the Arab public, with the exception of voting by Negev Bedouin. Turnout increased in all Arab localities in which the Joint List received the vast majority of the votes.[22] The most dramatic rise in voting and in support for the Joint List was recorded in the Triangle and Jerusalem areas. In both areas, voting for the Joint List returned to the level the support for the Arab parties in 2009, although the turnout in these two areas increased by 12% in the 2015 elections. In the North, the increase in turnout from 2013 was more moderate (7%), although this area includes the Druze localities that primarily voted for Jewish-Zionist parties. Unlike the other Arab localities in the North, voter turnout in the Druze localities (where only 18% of the voters voted for the Arab parties and the Joint List) remained almost unchanged throughout the period from 2009 to 2013 and 2015. Excluding the Druze electorate, voter turnout in the North rose slightly to 67% in the recent elections.

The recent election campaign may indicate a turning point in the political behavior of the Arab public. While the elections in the past decade were eclipsed by the events of October 2000, and election turnout among the Arab public has shown a steady decline, the recent election results indicate that once again, for the the majority of the Arab public, the Knesset has once again become a relevant arena of nationwide political influence. This change was spurred by the participation in the elections of the Joint List, which positioned itself as a political union representing the Arab public as a united collective in Israeli politics.

These conclusions confirm the findings of election polls conducted by the Konrad Adenauer Program approximately one month before the elections, after the Joint List officially launched its campaign. Almost 80% of the respondents believed (and the vast majority of these believed without reservation) that participating in the Knesset elections would benefit the Arab public. 68% believed that the establishment of the Joint List would make the Knesset an effective political arena for the Arab public in Israel from now on.[23]

[22] The exception to this is the significant increase in the election turnout of Circassians (10%), despite the fact that only a small proportion voted for the Joint List. However, this sector comprises less than 0.5% of the Arab VEP and therefore has a negligible impact on overall Arab voting patterns

[23] Itamar Radai and Arik Rudnitzky (Eds.), *Opinion Poll in Anticipation of the 20th Knesset Elections* (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, March 15, 2015).

Arab Voting in the Mixed Cities

Prior to the 20th Knesset elections, Arab voting was typically split among several lists (Hadash, Balad, and Ra'am-Ta'al), and it was therefore difficult to track voting patterns of Arab residents of mixed Jewish-Arab cities. This is especially true because Hadash typically has many Jewish voters. The establishment of the Joint List makes it possible, for the first time, to trace the voting behavior of Arab voters in mixed cities as a collective, under the assumption that the vast majority of votes for the Joint List in these cities came from Arab voters.

Table 5 presents the achievements of the Joint List in the mixed cities in the recent elections, compared with the total achievements of its constituent parties in the 2013 election. There were several dozen votes for the Arab List and the Hope for Change lists, but they accounted for a negligible proportion (0.1%) of the votes in the mixed cities.

Table 5: A Comparative Look at the Achievements of the Joint List in Mixed Cities[24]

City	20th Knesset Elections: The Joint List		19th Knesset Elections: Ra'am–Ta'al–Mada, Hadash, Balad		Relative difference
	No. of votes	Proportion of total votes in the city	No. of votes	Proportion of total votes in the city	
Acco	6,655	25.9%	4,727	21.7%	+ 4.2%
Haifa	12,363	8.3%	10,068	7.2%	+ 1.1%
Tel-Aviv Jaffa	8,488	3.2%	8,046	3.3%	- 0.1%
Ramle	4,994	14.9%	3,781	13.7%	+ 1.2%
Lod	5,155	16.2%	4,541	16.0%	+ 0.2%
Nazareth Illit	3,599	16.3%	2,860	14.1%	+ 2.2%
Ma'alot-Tarshiha	2,298	19.9%	2,041	19.6%	+ 0.3%
Total	**43,552**	**8.1%**	**36,064**	**7.3%**	**+ 0.8%**

Table 5 indicates that the Joint List's constituent parties maintained, and even slightly increased, their power (in total) in the mixed cities. The relative increase in their total power in each of the cities of Acco, Nazareth Ilit, Ramle and Haifa is striking. In Ma'alot-Tarshiha, Lod, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the Joint List parties maintained their relative power.

Two samples were used to examine the Joint List's impact on Arab voting behavior in the mixed cities. The first sample included a small number of voting stations where the Joint List received the highest proportion of all valid votes in the city, and considerably higher than the Arab public's proportion of the city's population. Although Joint List voters included many Israeli Jews, it is safe to assume that in voting stations where voting for the Joint List was so strong, the voters were mainly Arab voters. To confirm the results of the first sample, we examined a second, broader sample of voting stations that included, in addition to the voting stations in the first sample, a larger number of voting stations that met the following cumulative conditions: voting for the Joint List was especially high, and the proportion of eligible

[24] Source of the data for 19th Knesset elections: Rudnitzky, *Arab Politics in Israel and the 19th Knesset Elections*.

Arab voters of all voters in the station was similar to the proportion of eligible Arab voters in the city.[25] See Table 6.

Table 6: Voting Behavior of Arab Voters in the Mixed Cities

City	Arab population in the city[26]	Voting station sample 1		Voting station sample 2		Turnout by city
		Average support for the Joint List	Average turnout	Average support for the Joint List	Average turnout	
Acco	30.8%	91.8%	59.9%	68.2%	63.0%	64.5%
Haifa	10.6%	83.6%	58.1%	71.0%	55.8%	62.2%
Tel-Aviv Jaffa	4.2%	73.0%	59.7%	57.0%	58.1%	65.3%
Ramle	22.6%	93.0%	60.0%	63.6%	61.1%	64.7%
Lod	28.7%	93.9%	47.5%	72.6%	51.8%	61.6%
Nazareth Illit	20.4%	63.3%	66.5%	41.7%	63.8%	57.8%
Ma'alot-Tarshiha	20.0%	87.6%	72.7%	–	–	66.8%

The data show that Arab voter turnout was especially high in Ma'alot-Tarshiha and in Nazareth Illit, especially in comparison to the city-wide voter turnout and in comparison to the average voter turnout in all Arab localities. In contrast, Arab voter turnout in Haifa, Acre, Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Ramle was lower than the city-wide voter turnout in these cities and also lower, although not significantly so, than the average voter turnout in all Arab localities. The lowest Arab voter turnout was recorded in Lod, considerably lower than the city-wide voter turnout, indicating a somewhat politically indifferent Arab public.

The Arab voters in Ma'alot-Tarshiha and Nazareth Illit appear to have been strongly influenced by the establishment of the Joint List, and it was this development that encouraged them to vote on Election Day. The reason is their geographic location, in proximity to the Arab localities in the Galilee, which are the center of Arab national and political activism. In contrast, Arab voters in the major mixed cities along the coast and in the plain area were more strongly influenced by their immediate urban environments, and therefore voter turnout in those cities is similar to the city-wide voter turnout.

[25] Only one sample was used in Ma'alot-Tarshiha. In five voting stations in this city, voting for the Joint List was very high, while in the remaining voting stations, average voting for the Joint List was negligible (1.9% of the total valid votes).

[26] Demographic data are correct as of February 2015. Source: Central Bureau of Statistics website: www.cbs.gov.il.

Summary

Political representation of the Arab public in the Knesset reached a historic level as a result of the recent elections. This achievement, together with the increase in Arab voter turnout compared to previous elections, reflects the high hopes that the Arab public has for its new Knesset representatives. In this respect, the recent elections constitute a turning point in the political behavior of Arab voters: the new trend indicates that, for the first time in over a decade, the Knesset has once again become a relevant arena of political activity for the Arab public.

Still, the implications of this achievement depend mainly on the future actions of the Joint List's constituent parties. The Joint List's participation in the elections undoubtedly triggered positive momentum, but the question is how this energy will be applied. The Joint List encompasses two contrasting approaches. One approach, represented by the political party Hadash, justifies parliamentary action and the joint struggle of all citizens, both Arabs and Jews. According to this approach, it is better to concentrate efforts in the parliamentary arena and fight for increased representation of Arab MKs in Knesset committees, which will in turn make the Knesset a more effective arena of political action for the Arab public. The second approach, supported by the Islamic Movement and Balad, does not prioritize parliamentary action, and considers it only one of several legitimate political means for promoting the interests of the Arab public. Sources associated with Balad, for example, would like to exploit the new momentum to reorganize the Supreme Follow-Up Committee, and turn it into the leading effective ex-parliamentary body for the Arab public.

Will the members of the Joint List be able to abandon their ideological differences in order to attain the maximum political benefits for their voters? Will the recent elections be a turning point in the political behavior of the Arab MKs as well? Only time will tell.

Aziz Haidar* / The Joint List in the 2015 Elections: Establishment, Platform, and Challenges

The establishment of the List

The creation of the Joint List through the unification of the four Arab lists in the Knesset (Hadash, Ra'am. Balad, and Ta'al) and their contention as a single list in the 20th Knesset elections was a reaction to internal and external pressure. The most salient external pressure was the raising of the electoral threshold from 2% to 3.25% under the Governance Law passed by the Knesset in March 2014.The raised electoral threshold posed a problem for all the Arab lists; it was estimated that none would be able to pass the threshold under these new circumstances. Furthermore, various outside actors exerted intense pressure, and used inducements and enticements, in an effort to topple the right-wing government and to replace it with a government more conducive to a political resolution of the Palestinian problem.

The internal pressure was the result of several notable developments in political behavior and action among the Arab population, such as:

1. The steady decline in the Arab participation in elections among those eligible to vote: the events of October 2000 exacerbated the Arab population's already existing sense of alienation from the Jewish majority. The outcome was translated into collective political behavior in the form of an Arab boycott of the direct prime ministerial elections in February 2001. Boycotting became a legitimate pattern of action in the Arab public: in the 2006 elections not only was this approach reflected in non-voting, but also by an actual boycott, based on a reasoned political agenda (Haidar, 2006). That same year, the Arab voter participation rate in the 17th Knesset elections dropped to an unprecedented level (56%). In 2009, the voting participation rate once again declined moderately to 53.4% (Hassan, 2013), and remained steady in the elections for the 19th Knesset in 2013.

   The low electoral turnout among the Arab population exerted powerful pressure on all the Arab lists in the Knesset and assumed a central place in their deliberations to join forces in the last elections.

2. An important factor that the Arab lists had to consider was the shift of efforts to civil action, as a replacement for parliamentary action. This change resulted from the fact that the Arab population experienced disappointment, not only from the Arab political leadership, but also from the political structure within which it operated. The Arab population came to realize that official parliamentary politics was not satisfying their needs, and therefore alternative channels of action were sought to meet the Arab public's economic, political, and individual needs. Amal Jamal explained this as follows: "The main efforts to achieve collective goals are taking place at the civil society level, which takes action in various areas to limit the state's maneuverability" (Jamal, 2007, p. 45).

* **Prof. Aziz Haidar** is a research fellow at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Against this backdrop, the tension between the Arab lists in the Knesset grew, heightening their disputes and bitter rivalries. This situation continued for several years, and these internal debates occasionally deteriorated into hostile language and even violence (Alhalabi, 2015).

Drained of its symbolic and moral authority by such disputes, the Supreme Follow-Up Committee grew incapable of taking any effective action. The discord also made it impossible to reach broad agreement on the nature of shared national events such as the annual Land Day on March 30th, or the Return March (**Masirat al-'Awda**) that is held on Israel's Independence Day.[27]

These conditions were all clear evidence of the fragility of the dominant Arab elites and their failure to develop constructive channels of communication among themselves. Joining forces in the 20th Knesset elections put an end to the inability to work together, at least temporarily.

The parties' reasons for establishing the Joint List

Despite the external and internal conditions and pressures, that led to the establishment of the Joint List, the four member parties attempted to attribute to the partnership greater political and national significance beyond the pragmatic goal of their own survival.

The introduction to the Joint List's platform contains various predictable explanations, such as, "The List is the answer to racism, an expression of political responsibility, a ringing slap to the face of the Right, an answer to the fascist attack and to racist and anti-democratic programs and laws, especially the Nationality and Jewish State laws, and a democratic alternative to the 'National Camp' and the 'Zionist Camp.'"

During the election campaign, however, List activists used reasoning that was inconsistent with these official explanations. Frequently repeated was the argument that, "the very presence of the party leaders on a single stage, something that shouldn't be taken for granted, represents an achievement of deep significance" (Khalil Elias, Facebook, February 14, 2015).

The Joint List's platform

The Joint List's platform[28] added nothing new to the platforms of its constituent parties. Yet, as the partners themselves clarified, the List was not a unification of parties but rather a partnership under a single list. The platform expresses pragmatic agreements reached with the aim of attaining joint civic political goals, yet the basic disagreements remained.

In the section of the platform concerning the political sphere it is stated that, "the Joint List is struggling to achieve a just peace in the region based on UN resolutions, an end to the occupation of all the territories conquered in 1967, the dismantling of all the Jewish settlements and the racist separation wall, release of political prisoners, establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state along the June 4, 1967 borders whose capital is East Jerusalem, and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem that guarantees the right of return according to UN Resolution 194."

[27] See for example: http://www.bokra.net, March 13, 2012.

[28] See the platform of the Joint List: http://hadash.org.il.

In the section concerning the domestic sphere, which examines the status of Arab citizens of Israel, it is stated that, "the Joint List is fighting for full equality, national and civil, for the Arab-Palestinian public in Israel in its existence as an indigenous minority with collective and individual rights. The Joint List demands that the Arab public be recognized as a national minority that has a right of self-administration in the areas of culture, education, and religion, that reflects its belonging to the Arab-Palestinian people and Arab nation."

The List clearly chose the citizenship discourse — a discourse of recognition, access, and participation in public life in Israel — alongside Palestinian identity and indigenousness; in the political sphere, it politically supports a discourse based on 1967 and not "opening the 1948 files" – in other words, it supports a two-state solution rather than a single state from Jordan to the Sea.

As noted earlier, the fundamental differences among the constituent parties remained, and the representatives of the various parties expressed contrary opinions when campaigning before the elections, sometimes even contradicting the List's agreed-upon platform. This was especially marked in Balad's campaign, which called for autonomy rather than "self-administration," [29] as stated by the leaders of the Islamist movement in a elections convention in the Negev[30]. In practice, most of the activities of the List's members were conducted separately by each party.

Since the partnership was forced upon the political system through the raising of the electoral threshold, it is yet premature to argue that the List represents a fundamental change in the practices and actions of the Arab political parties and their representatives. This is clearly evident from the parties' activities during the election campaigns as well as thereafter. In any case, the process that led to the partnership came across to the Arab public as an open battle for the existence of each party and for a position on the list, and did not appear to be about enhancing their collective political power. As a result, the Arab public was not surprised by the conduct of the parties and of their activists.

On the other hand, the List partners did emphasize the differences between them: "Each element in the List maintains its ideological identity, and all the partners work together according to fundamental principles and the agreed-upon platform."[31]

Although the Arab public expressed strong criticism, especially about the fact that the partnership expressed the parties' desire for survival, and disapproved of their reluctance to invite scholars, civil society activists, and heads of local governments to join their ranks,[32] List members relied on the fact that the Arab public arena is the exclusive domain of either the List or the Arab parties. They knew that, at any rate, the vast majority of Arab voters would only give their votes to an Arab party, and this fact worked in the Joint List's favor. Activists of the Joint List conducted an aggressive, personal campaign against the Arab candidates in non-Arab parties with unprecedented vitriol and violence.

[29] See statement by Awad Abed al-Fattah to Palestinian Ma'an news agency: "The Joint List – for Autonomy in Israel," February 25, 2015, http://www.maannews.net.

[31] See the platform of the Joint List: http://hadash.org.il.

[32] These three groups represent social forces in Arab society that have grown in recent decades. Their members are members of the first and second generations of the Arab middle-class to have emerged in Israel. These three groups supported and encouraged the List, and were the source of the most prominent activists who campaigned for the Joint List.

Undisguised external involvement

The Joint List won extensive assistance and support from more than a few outside parties, each for its own reasons. The fact that these parties operated openly was conspicuous. Among these groups included Palestinian and Arab leaders, such as the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority,[33] the Arab League, Druze leaders in Lebanon,[34] and Arab writers and artists from all over the world.

Challenges and Achievements

The Joint List has overcome its first challenge – the challenge of non-voting and election boycotting. The List pursued a discourse of identity and argued that its establishment is a historic event, and at the same time conducted a fierce attack against the boycotters and the propaganda of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement, which championed a boycott of the elections.

The List's second challenge is the ability of its constituent members to continue to work in a joint framework even after the elections, despite the personal and ideological differences between them. For all practical purposes, the List has failed on this point; although it has not dissolved, no joint action is evident in the field. Even so, the general election results and the relative weakness of the governing coalition, which might lead to early elections, will contribute to the List's survival.

Finally, it appears that the List is incapable of realizing its parliamentary potential and to act in the Knesset towards improving the status of Israel's Arab citizens. Until now, there has been no indication of any change in the List's practices or causes, and there is room for concern that the very fact that the Arab MKs belong to a single list will make it easier to exclude them from Knesset activities and from the centers of decision making.

References

Alhalabi, Marzouk, "The Joint List: The Key Stone," *Ha'Oketz*, January 27, 2015, www.haokets.org.

Jamal, Amal, "Sovereignty and Leadership: A Sociological Look at the Arab Leadership in Israel," in Elie Rekess (ed.), *The Arab Minority and the 17th Knesset Elections*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2007, pp. 40-48.

Haidar, Aziz, "Election Boycotting by the Arab Public: A Perspective of a Decade (1996-2006), in Elie Rekhess (ed.), *The Arab Minority and the 17th Knesset Elections*. Tel Aviv University: Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, 2007, pp. 89-92.

Hasan, Jehan, *The Decline in Voting Among the Arabs in Israel in View of Criticism and Disappointment with their Representatives*. Master's thesis, Haifa University, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Political Science, 2013.

[33] Elior Levi, "Abu Mazen to the Joint List: God is with You," *Ynet*, March 4, 2015. http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4633399,00.html

[34] *Panet*, March 13, 2015.

Abd al-Wahhab Habaib* / The Joint List: Strategy or Election Tactic?

Much has been said about the Joint List's achievements in the recent elections, which increased the representation of the Arab parties and Hadash by two seats. Many have discussed the factors that led to the creation of the List, first and foremost among them being the increase in the electoral threshold to 3.25%, while raising doubts about the level of unity among its component parties. It is for this reason that I would like to examine whether the Arab public's representatives chose to create the List as an ambitious strategy or whether this was merely an attempt to secure their parties' political survival. If this was indeed an ambitious strategy on the part of the Arab public's representatives, then how will they be able to implement it?

The Joint List defined for itself objectives that reflected the current elections cycle, as well as long-term goals. Their immediate aims included marketing the Joint List as a new electoral list; increasing the Arab public's voter participation rate, which would benefit the Joint List and transform it into the third largest faction in the Knesset. [35]

One may find the Joint List's long-term goals in its election platform, especially in the second clause. The platform calls for a struggle to obtain civil and national equality for Arabs in Israel, to end land expropriation and the demolition of houses; to recognize heretofore unrecognized Arab localities; to fight the mandatory conscription of Arab youths for military or civilian service; to end the violence and rampant anarchy involving firearms in the Arab sector; to combat racism; to promote workers' rights and women's equality; and to campaign for the status of the Arabic language and culture, to name a few of these goals.[36]

There are indications that the Joint List has achieved its immediate goals: the majority of the Arab public voted for it, and voter turnout in this population group increased from 56.5% in the 19th Knesset elections, to 66% in the 20th Knesset elections.[37] The increase is considered a significant achievement primarily given the Arab public's low turnout in the four preceding Knesset elections: 62% in 2003, 56.3% in 2006; 53.4% in 2009, and 56.5% in 2013.[38]

We now turn to the objectives that the List defined in its electoral platform. Some of these are internal, while others are external; the internal goals are related to the Arab population, its status is Israel, as well as its relationship with the Jewish population and with state authorities. In contrast, the external goals are connected to the List's position on the Palestinian issue and world peace. It is only possible to measure the List's success in achieving these goals over time, and thus two months are insufficient for us to draw conclusions about whether the decision to establish the Joint List was an effective one.

Clearly, the Joint List will be confronted with obstacles and dilemmas that will present challenges, and even may threaten its future as a political framework for

---

* **Mr. Abed al-Wahhab Habaib** is a doctoral student at the School of History, Tel Aviv University.

[35] 'Aaid Kayyal, "The Joint List's 'A Nation's Will' Campaign: Has it achieved its goals?" April 2, 2015. http://www.panet.co.il/article/976969 [in Arabic]

[36] See the Joint List's platform at: http://hadash.org.il

[37] Tali Heruti-Sober, "Enormous Achievement, Great Disappointment," *Ha'aretz: TheMarker*, March 21, 2015, http://www.themarker.com/news/1.2594765.

[38] Arik Rudnitzky, *The Arab Citizens of Israel at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (Tel Aviv: INSS, 2014), p. 27.

multiple parties. Before it was established, there were multiple disagreements among the Joint List's constituent parties, clashed on several issues, and the very fact that the List contended in the elections proves that it has managed to overcome its internal differences. A small number of writers have already judged the List harshly, and argued that it is not united in its positions, that disputes among its constituent parties were always resolved in the last minute before a split.[39] Others condemned it as a paralyzed list incapable of fulfilling the expectations of the Arab public in Israel. There were those that cited the List's rejection of the Arab League's invitation to meet with its members, as an example of such paralysis.[40] Others discounted the List's electoral achievements, because of its inability to influence proceedings in the Knesset or the Government; for them the Joint List's success is merely an achievement for Israeli politics.[41]

In my opinion, we must examine the Joint List in greater depth. In light of the fact that a new Government is typically granted one hundred days of grace, I recommend that an opposition faction, which represents a minority in the state, be granted a few months of grace. Until now, the members of the Joint List have managed to 'dance between the raindrops' and have avoided falling into traps that would cause its split. At the same time, I do not underestimate the List. If its members will focus on the urgent issues of the Arab public — especially the demolition of homes, unrecognized villages, and violence — they will gain the support and trust of the Arab public.

Joint List members have already begun to act, through campaigns and protests, against the demolition of homes in the Arab sector. Some have participated in demonstrations and rallies, and visited protest tents. The head of the Joint List, advocate Ayman Odeh, even participated in a march from the unrecognized villages in the Negev to Jerusalem. In my opinion, these actions were reactive, and not proactive. The new MKs, especially those from Hadash, are known for their philanthropic activities with NGOs and associations operating in various fields. I therefore expect that their accumulated experience in this area will contribute to these member's political activities particularly, and those of the Joint List members in general. The more Joint List members initiate action that addresses the problems in Arab society, the more popular they will become among their constituents. Still, popularity on its own is insufficient to effect change in Arab society: new patterns of action must be developed in order to mobilize the Arab public to act on behalf of their community. In my view, one of the patterns that can contribute to the strengthening of the Joint List's hold on the Arab public is to incorporate parties and movements - parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, political and social – in discussions and in the implementation of decisions. I am talking about tangible activism that will be manifested in the field.

The Joint List's success will be measured by its ability to lead the Arab public in the areas that concern them, but not necessarily in the parliamentary sphere. If List members will coordinate their efforts, and focus on the civil, social, and national issues that concern the Arab public, without taking away from their complexity they will nevertheless pave the way to finding their solution. The fact that the component parties of the Joint List share a common position on these issues will make it easier for them to work together, and stave off the threat of a potential split. This threat is

[39] Ofra Idelman, "The New Arab List: Joint, not United," *Ha'aretz*, January 30, 2015, http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/elections/thestaff/.premium-1.2552644

[40] Mordechai Keidar, "This is How the Joint List Became a Paralyzed List," April 29, 2015, http://mida.org.il.

[41] Ibrahim Abu Jaber, "The elections – mere accounting!" *Panorama*, 9 April 2015 (in Arabic): http://www.panet.co.il/article/982474

likely to become stronger if List members prefer to address only the Arab public's ideological concerns. If ideology becomes more salient, each party will close itself off inside its own beliefs, which would likely divide the Joint List. However, a split into two factions would not necessarily be a catastrophe for the Arab public's representatives if they continue to collaborate on issues that are important to the Arab public. It might even be better for the Joint List to split into two rather than continue its existence as a single list hampered by incessant disputes and disagreement. It could then be possible to regard with admiration the declaration made by members of the Joint List prior to the elections, that the merger was only a tactical move to overcome the electoral threshold.

In conclusion, it is clear that the members of the Joint List must now set aside their jubilation over their historic victory, together with their disappointment over the new political map. Instead, they must roll up their sleeves and work for the public's benefit. They must decide whether they established the List merely as a tactic to pass the election threshold, or as a strategy in the interests of the voting public. If they adopt the strategic approach, they must address the issues that concern the entire Arab public and develop new patterns of action in their relationship with voters. They must display new patterns of initiative and leadership, and abandon old patterns of reaction and passivity — patterns which will include all the elements of Arab society in Israel.

Shlomi Daskal* / A Leader With A Vision? Ayman Odeh and the Arab Political Landscape in Israel

The vision of unifying all the Arab parties and running them as a single Arab list in the Knesset elections is not a new one in Israeli politics. In Israel, the idea has been discussed for years – whether hopefully or with trepidation — that all the Arab political forces might join a party that would attract enough votes to obtain parliamentary representation that would mirror the Arab sector's share of the total population (20%), or at least mirror the Arab voters' share in the national electorate (15%). Although there have been various groupings between Arab parties in the past, such as the union between Hadash and Balad or between Ra'am and Mada in the 14th Knesset elections (1996), between Hadash and Ta'al in the 16th Knesset elections (2003), or between Ra'am and Ta'al in the 17th Knesset elections (2009), most of these were ad-hoc alliances that largely failed to survive or realize the vision of a super-party. Each time the call was made to connect between all political bodies in Arab society, the typical response was to point to the differences in ideologies and world-views between the parties that contraindicated such an association; and argued that it is impossible to bring Communists, Arab nationalists, and Islamists under one roof simply because they are all Arabs. Prior to the 19th Knesset elections, the demand to unite the parties was raised again with greater intensity. This time, it was led by the Arab-language media; among these, the regional radio station *A-Shams* and the newspaper Kol al-Arab played a prominent role. Their contention was that they represented the prevailing mood of Arab society, which demands unity between the parties and the resolution of ideological differences in order to build a political action plan for the Arab minority in Israel. By doing so, the media tried to fill a lacuna in Arab society, which stemmed from several reasons including political divisions and the fact that the Arab leadership lacked vision and imagination. Nonetheless, these efforts also failed.[42]

A more serious attempt was made to establish a super-party in preparation for the 20th Knesset elections. This time, a group of intellectuals, public opinion leaders, and key figures from the Third Sector, who became known as the "Reconciliation Committee," rose to the challenge. We all know now that this committee succeeded in its task; and the new list even recorded an impressive achievement by becoming the third largest faction in the Knesset. The Joint List recorded an impressive achievement on a personal level as well: during the election campaign, the head of the Joint List, Ayman Odeh, stood out in comparison to other figures on the Israeli political scene. Odeh, who had been unknown to most of the Jewish public until then, was quickly crowned the surprise of the elections, and a refreshing novelty in the political landscape, and even was touted as "the only one with a vision."[43]

Ayman Odeh is not a new figure to the Arab political arena in Israel. Already as a youth, he was active in the ranks of Hadash, and in 2006 was elected as the party's general secretary. In this position, he has been identified as one of the leading champions on two issues: the cause of the unrecognized Bedouin villages in southern Israel, and the resistance to efforts to impose mandatory national service on Arab citizens (Odeh headed the sub-committee on the opposition to national service,

---

* **Mr. Shlomi Daskal** is a scholar of communications and media in Israel's Arab society. His study on A-Shams Radio is soon to be published by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI).

[42] Shlomi Daskal, "The National Unity," *Ha'Ayin HaShvi'it (The Seventh Eye)*, January 26, 2013, http://www.the7eye.org.il/36380

[43] See for example Roee Chicki Arad, "My romance with Ayman Odeh," *Ha'aretz*, March 13, 2015.

working under the Supreme Follow-Up Committee of the Arab Public in Israel). It seems that Odeh's efforts focus on political action that challenges the state, but it would be misguided to reduce his political ideology to this area. He is not a "counter-society" advocate, nor is he a separatist or an Arab nationalist. A review of his publications and statements over the years points to two other issues close to his heart: one is the strengthening of Hadash, which is defined as a Jewish-Arab party; and the second, which to some degree stems from the first, is to pave the way for a dialogue with Israel's Jewish majority.

One of Odeh's most important publications is his essay, "Letter to the Youth," in which he reviews the political history of the Israeli Communist Party (MAKI) and its subsequent evolution into Hadash. The timing of this document's publication is no less important that its contents; the Letter was published in 2001, shortly after the events of October 2000, and during the Second Intifada. At that time, the ideas and political messages promoted by Hadash (such as Jewish-Arab partnership in Israel, use of democratic means of struggle in order to achieve political aims, and a non-violent struggle to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel) seemed to have become a dead letter and their ideas obsolete. And yet, even in that period, Odeh chose to publish a document that offered an ideological foundation for forging a Palestinian national identity within Israel, and as a part of it, without relinquishing the political and national principles of Israel's Arab public.[44]

This ideological line also guided him over the years in his position on the Supreme Follow-Up Committee of the Arab Public in Israel, and has that occasionally led him into confrontations with those that reject the integration of the Arab public into the state. Sheikh Ra'ad Salah, leader of the Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement, and one of the primary opponents of Israelization, accused Odeh of adopting a strategic program that would essentially prevent the Supreme Follow-Up Committee from becoming an umbrella institution for Arab society in Israel. In contrast to Odeh, Sheikh Salah's efforts are directed at building a course of action that would "circumvent" the Knesset, and transform the Supreme Follow-Up Committee into the supreme political institution for Arab society, in a position superior to the political parties. [45] Odeh justifies his stance by arguing that focusing on the Supreme Follow-Up Committee is akin to "preaching to the choir," rather than speaking to the Jewish majority, but when Arab MKs address the Knesset, they speak on behalf of their people to Israeli society as a whole. Odeh expressed his position clearly in his speech at the official ceremony announcing the establishment of the Joint List. On that occasion, he noted two points: one, the organization of the new list is a response to popular will ("Will of the People" was the Joint List's official campaign slogan), implying that the Arab public in Israel is the source of legitimacy for establishing the Joint List, and the indirect source of legitimacy for participating in Knesset elections. Second, participation in Israeli elections does not imply a renunciation of Palestinian identity. In other words, Odeh presents an Arab entity with a dual identity – a civic Israeli identity and a national Palestinian identity. He apologizes for neither; in his view, these identities are complementary to one another, rather than mutually exclusive.[46]

[44] Ayman Odeh, *Letter to the Youth* (Haifa: Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, 2001).

[45] Taha Mohammad, "Sheikh Ra'id Salah in an extensive interview: Hadash is moving to undermine the Supreme Follow-Up Committee and wishes it to be an 'action coordination' committee," *pls48 website*, December 12, 2014, http://pls48.net/?mod=articles&ID=1191652

[46] On complementary national identities, see, for example, Khalil Rinawi, *Arab Society in Israel: An Ambivalent Agenda* (College of Management Academic Studies, 2003).

Odeh also suggests that Arab society in Israel adopt a new discourse in its interactions with the country's Jewish society. He made this suggestion, following a debate held on Channel Two a short time before the elections. In the debate, Odeh faced Avigdor Lieberman, leader of Yisrael Beytenu, who accused him of being a "traitor and fifth column." Odeh's restrained and calculated response won him many points among the Jewish public, but he was subsequently criticized by his own base of supporters for his failure to attack Lieberman. In response, Odeh explained that, in moments such as these, one should change one's usual mode of thought and behave with wisdom and sophistication rather emotionally, because the violent and incoherent discourse of the past has not yet produced any positive results for Arab society.[47]

These days, an interesting question is being raised. Will the Joint List survive, and continue to work in the Knesset as a single faction? The intellectual, Mohammad Ali Taha, one of the members of the Reconciliation Committee, has argued that the association is a strategic move on behalf of Arab society, rather than a temporary grouping, and that "the fate of any party that secedes from the List will be akin to the fate of a fish out of water." According to Taha, the committee itself has no plans of dissolving, and will oversee this political unification and act as the final authority in the event of disputes or disagreement.[48] Still, the cracks in the united front became visible immediately after the elections, when the vast majority of MKs from the new faction refused to join a march organized by Odeh from the unrecognized Bedouin villages to Jerusalem on the eve of the new Knesset's swearing-in ceremony. In an interview with Radio A-Shams on the day of the march, Basel Ghattas, a leading Balad figure, stated that the Joint List is not Odeh's private enterprise and that, "List members are entitled to take independent action as long as they do not harm the overarching objectives."[49]

The Joint List's ability to survive under Odeh's leadership, as well as Odeh's ability to implement his ideas, are dependent on several factors. These include the willingness of the List's constituent parties to set aside their personal and party egos, Ayman Odeh's ability to overcome the political differences between the parties; the support that Odeh and his vision receives from Hadash, Odeh's home party; civil society organizations' support for the faction and its actions; and, of course, the Jewish majority's willingness to address the challenge of dual identity that Odeh presents, without hastily labeling him as a Palestinian-Arab nationalist.

[47] On the criticism and Odeh's response, see election clips of the Joint List at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nagvb2sDat0. Similar statements were made in the past by radio broadcaster Jalal Ayub, Odeh's cousin. In this matter, see Shlomi Daskal, "Know Your Reply," *Ha'ayin Ha'shvi'it*, December 30, 2013, http://www.the7eye.org.il/91106.

[48] Interview with Mohammad Ali Taha, "A New Day," *Radio A-Shams*, March 19, 2015.

[49] In an article on Balad's website, Ghattas also discussed the party's circles of action and the freedom of action of its members. Basel Ghattas, "The Joint List: Between the Longed-for and the Possible," *arabs48 website*, March 27, 2015, http://www.arab48.com/?mod=articles&ID=1154849.