

Mossawa's constitution paper demands equal partnership for Arab community

Israel has no constitution, but not for lack of trying. Since 1948, different interest groups within Israeli society have argued about the definition and very structure of the State of Israel. The Arab community, led by the Mossawa Center and the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, has entered the fray, insisting that the rights, legal status and position of the Arab minority be an integral part of any constitution.

The Mossawa Center recently published a position paper that critiques the current draft constitution of the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee for implicitly privileging the legal status of Jewish citizens by not addressing the rights of the Arab minority. Following the publication of the Mossawa paper, the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel published their own manifesto outlining "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel." The public distribution of these two documents, which together clearly articulate the position of the Arab minority in Israel, created a wave of passionate debate within the Hebrew and English press.

The paper, authored by Dr. Yousef Jabareen, analyzes the current proposal of the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee in the Knesset and the proposal's shortcomings vis-à-vis the Arab community in Israel. Dr. Jabareen is legal consultant for the Mossawa Center and lecturer at Tel Aviv and Haifa Universities.

In the paper, Jabareen proposes specific measures that protect the collective rights of the Arab community. The document outlines ten specific conditions that would guarantee the participation and rights of the Arab minority within the very fabric of the Israeli state. Mossawa demands equality and fair representation within the governmental, civil, religious and symbolic structures of



Dr. Yousef Jabareen at Mossawa's Legal Status Conference.

the state. (See the following page for a detailed description of Mossawa's demands.)

The establishment of the State of Israel began not with a constitution, but with a "Declaration of Independence" explicitly establishing the land of Mandate-Palestine as a state for the Jewish people. After failing to agree to a constitution for the state, the Knesset and Supreme Court have relied on the Basic Laws to dictate the legal structure and functioning of the state. However, these laws are framed by the assertion that the State of Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, thereby excluding at least 20% of their citizenry.

Since the establishment of the state, a unified constitution remains a controversial topic and a subject of intense national debate. From 1950 to the present, the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee in the Knesset has been charged with developing a constitution. Such a document would draw out of the Basic Laws, and when combined, would act as a constitution.

The Arab minority in Israel has been working diligently to ensure that constitutional law will guarantee the civil and equal rights of Arabs as a distinct minority. As Jabareen asserts, "Equality for all should be the foundation for any constitutional arrangements."

INSIDE



Days of Mossawa Festival, pg. 4



Roundtable on the war, pg. 10



Discrimination at Arcaffe, pg. 14



Arab children for peace, pg. 12

Mossawa's demands for a constitution that ensures equality and partnership

1. The Arab minority must be recognized as a “national minority” and an “indigenous population” whose distinct collective identity should be protected. through historic, linguistic, religious and cultural rights.
2. Arab-Palestinians in Israel must be guaranteed full equality of rights on the civil-individual and national-collective basis.
3. Arabic must be granted equal status to Hebrew in all areas of the public sector including governmental documents, educational materials, naming of road signs and buildings, recognition of cultural icons, etc.
4. The Arab-Palestinian minority be granted the right to self-government of the Arabic educational, culture and religious institutions, similar to the current status of the Hebrew culture, Orthodox education system and Christian and Jewish religious institutions.
5. The Arab-Palestinian minority be assured full democratic participation and representation in the governmental administration, decision-making bodies and the judiciary systems.
6. Special allocation of the financial and public resources is ensured on a collective basis to address the extended discrimination and socio-economic gaps that have been created during years of discrimination in public resource allocation.
7. Appropriate expression of the Arab community in the state's system of symbols be granted, opening a door for due expression of the presence of Arab citizens of Israel and their place in the state.
8. Equality and fairness in immigration and citizenship should be guaranteed to all citizens.
9. The state must recognize the historic rights of the Arab-Palestinian minority to its homeland. The state must respect the rights of 25% of Arab citizens that became internal refugees in their country after 1948. The status of this population should be arranged through processes of reconciliation and negotiation, as well as guaranteeing the ownership of Arab citizens in the Negev over their lands.
10. The state recognize the Arab-Palestinian minority's special relationship to the Arab region and protect the rights of the Arab citizens to develop their culture, familial and religious relationships with other Palestinians and other Arabs in the region.



Audience members at the Mossawa's legal conference in December 2006.

Legal Status Conference provides insight into minority dynamics

The legal status of the Arab minority is often subject to the direction the political winds are blowing over the Middle East. For nearly 60 years, 20% of Israel's citizenry has been ambiguously defined within Israel's legal system. This year's Third Annual Legal Status Conference on the Arab Community was the accumulation of a communal effort to carve out a clear legal framework for the collective rights of Israel's largest minority.

What began as an idea among a small group of Arab intellectuals and leaders developed into an organized community agenda. The Third Annual Legal Status Conference convened to discuss the results of three years of concerted efforts by the Mossawa Center to write a clear position paper for the Arab minority within an Israeli constitution.

Legal experts and lawyers gathered at the conference to debate the points within this paper. Supreme Court Justice Salim Jubran presided as the keynote speaker for the event. He explained the role of the Court in protecting the human and civil rights of Israel's citizens.

"The reason why the court intervenes so often in such matters stems from the lack of, or the absence of a constitution. ... We have 14 Basic Laws. When we aggregate them together what we lack is the human rights law and the law of civilian rights," said Jubran.

Panel discussions at the conference honed in on rights and constitutional law, attempting to define what it would mean for the Arab minority to have collective rights and the implications of defining the Arab community as a "national minority."

"I'm talking about the official recognition of the Arab minority as a 'national minority,' being a group of indigenous people who were here before the foundation of the State of Israel. That is why a constitution that wants to be accepted by the Arab community has to recognize this fact, and I think that this has a formative effect in the life of the Arab community," stated Yousef Jabareen, law lecturer at Tel Aviv and Haifa Universities.

"The law itself that recognizes such autonomy within the Jewish community does not recognize something equal within the Arab community," continued Jabareen.



From left, Head of Local Councils Shawki Khatib, Supreme Court Justice Salim Jubran and Mossawa Center Director Jafar Farah.

Having acknowledged the demands of the Arab community as made in the constitution paper, Professor Mordechai Kremnitzer suggested that the Arab minority may need to compromise on some of the demands and address the fact that although the Jewish community is the majority in Israel, it remains a minority in the region and therefore feels under constant threat. According to Kremnitzer, agreement will only be reached when all parties understand the histories and perspectives of both communities.

The Third Annual Legal Status Conference was deemed a success by those involved and resulted in extensive media coverage regarding the collective rights demanded by the Arab community. Although it was the final installment in a series of conferences on this subject, it marked the beginning of serious deliberations on this issue between the Jewish and Arab communities in Israel.

"As far as the Arab minority is concerned, Israel will have to decide in its constitution what is the character of this state and what is the nature of the relationship with or the attitude toward the Arab minority in Israel. This issue is one of the most important reasons that Israel has failed to enact a constitution," declared Shadi Shaweri, advocate and Mossawa Center board member.

Days of Mossawa Festival empowers Arab civil society



From left to right: Students listen to a discussion at the conference on developing media in Arab schools, Professor Fadl Mansour, Sheikh Kamal Khatib and Dr. Hanna Atala at the religious debate, singer Amal Murqas performs at the opening ceremony.

For the second consecutive year, the multifaceted work of the Mossawa Center concentrated into one energizing week of study days, conferences and roundtables at the Second Annual Days of Mossawa Festival in Nazareth.

The festival brought together multiple actors from Arab civil society and provided an open space for dialogue between Arab NGOs, lawyers, intellectuals, journalists, religious leaders and the general public.

Taking place alongside the Nazareth International Film Festival at El Sana Cinematheque, the Days of Mossawa Festival brought the achievements and concerns of the Arab community in Israel to light.

Through NGO and media conferences, an inter-religious debate and the Third Annual Conference on the Legal Status of the Arab Citizens of Israel, the festival highlighted the Mossawa Center's capacity building capabilities within the Arab community.

The NGO conference offered attendees an opportunity to learn more about funding opportunities from governmental ministries and international foundations. A representative from the European Union delegation gave a presentation on funding instruments available to NGOs and initiatives within Israel. Because there are relatively minimal funding opportunities from the Israeli government for Arab organizations, Arab civil society must look elsewhere for project funding. These projects are often implemented to provide basic services to the Arab community that the government is unwilling or unable to make available.

During the media conference, journalists and Israeli government authorities met to discuss the causes and effects of deficiencies in local Arab media and schools,

and the need for Arab programming on Israeli television. The hope is that an empowered Arab media and the inclusion of Arabic programming on Israeli television will provide visibility and more positive representations of the Arab community to a wider Israeli audience.

In response to the violent confrontations that terrorized Mghar village in 2005, the Mossawa Center also hosted an inter-religious debate between religious leaders from the Muslim, Druze and Christian communities within the Arab minority. The purpose of the debate was to open lines of communication between the religious communities in order to address how religious tension ultimately undermines the struggle for acceptance and equal rights for the Arab community as a whole within the Israeli state.

More than 3000 participated in the festival's activities and film screenings. Thirty-five movies were screened at Nazareth's International Film Festival, sponsored by Al Sana Cinematheque. *Arus El Galil* ("Bride of the Galilee"), a documentary about the pain of one Arab woman following the bombing of her village, was shown on Monday in conjunction with a debate on the role and status of Arab women. The film was one of the festival's most highly attended screenings and won the tribute prize at the festival. Other festival winners included *Rwanda: Through Us Humanity* for best international picture, *Le Grand Voyage* for best feature and *October's Cry* for best local film.

Although the festival ended December 1, debate surrounding issues raised at the festival has continued on issues such as the constitution and inter-religious roles. The Center looks forward to holding another successful festival in 2007.

Tear Down This Wall:

The Mossawa Center challenges today's youth through an international exchange

As part of a Mossawa-hosted Euromed international exchange program, youth from Europe and the Middle East congregated to experience firsthand the majority-minority barriers dividing contemporary Israel.

The 13-day exchange presented intellectual, physical and emotional challenges for the thirty youth from E2000 in the United Kingdom, Peace Generation in Belgium, Jordanian Youth Exchange in Jordan and the Mossawa Center and Mizrahi (Jews from Arab and Muslim lands from the Middle East) Democratic Rainbow in Israel. During their visit, the youth stayed with and built a fence for the Bedouin community of the unrecognized village of Beir Hadag.

A day in the desert working in the harsh conditions of an unrecognized village, without the luxury of electricity or water, brought into sharp relief the oppression faced by the Bedouin community.

The emotional impact of the exchange climaxed in Jerusalem, where the youth witnessed the wall's implications for the Palestinian and Jewish people. Sitting together in a circle on the slopes of Mt. Scopus, the youth confronted their own barriers regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and debated issues faced by the Palestinian Arab and Jewish communities.

The youth exchange also gave a voice to the Arab minority in Israel, a group systematically ignored in the ongoing conflict in the region. The exchange program presented a rare opportunity for European and Jewish youth to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues faced by the Arab minority.

Since March, the British youth have visited Arabs in Israel and the Jordanians have traveled to Europe and Israel. The exchange realized its goal of bringing together diverse youth in order to tear down walls created by stereotypes, misconceptions and ignorance, and build bridges across the majority-minority divide in Israel.

The Mossawa Center has been consistently active in working with Arab youth and in promoting youth education in human rights issues and democracy.

The Mossawa Center also provides opportunities to local Arab youth to volunteer and intern with various units of the Center, helping nurture community awareness and activism among tomorrow's leaders.



Youth exchange participants build a fence and paint a community building during a visit to an unrecognized Bedouin village.

Kufur Qasem: The Open Wound



50 years after the massacre, the victims still demand justice

Oct. 29, 2006 marked the 50th anniversary of the Kufur Qasem Massacre, a tragic event where Arab civilians of Kufur Qasem were slain by the Israeli border police. To bring light to this event, the Mossawa Center launched a 2006 campaign to raise public awareness and force the government to recognize the tragedy. The Center also helped to plan a memorial event to honor those killed.

“In total, 49 villagers were slain by Israeli border police, including women and children. Family members watched as the dead were piled into trucks and driven away — powerless to stop them for fear of being shot.”

Kufur Qasem, and many of the other villages of the Triangle region, was considered by the Israeli military to be part of a strategically “weak” area during the 1956 Sinai War, which led to an increased military presence in the region at the time.

On Oct. 29, 1956, Colonel Ishkar Shadmi declared a new curfew for the area. Regardless of the fact that villagers working in the fields outside the town were not aware of the new curfew, Shadmi ordered troops to “shoot on sight” any Arab out past 5 p.m.

This was a direct violation of Rhodes Agreement signed by Israel, which protected inhabitants of the Triangle region, and has been interpreted by many as a cruel message meant to intimidate the Arab community of the Triangle to flee Israel.

In total, 49 villagers were slain by Israeli border police, including women and children. Family members watched as the dead were piled into trucks and driven away — powerless to stop them for fear of being shot. Those killed were unceremoniously buried in a mass grave.

Upon the exposure of the events of Oct. 29, the Israeli government did its best to play down the massacre, and kept the area around Kufur Qasem blockaded for days.

The guilty parties were eventually tried but served minimal to no time in prison, while Colonel Shadmi, the officer who ordered the killings, was fined just one cent.

To combat the injustices endured by the people of Kufur Qasem and the Arab community, the Mossawa Center, in partnership with the Kufur Qasem Local Council and Kufur Qasem Memorial Committee, held a press conference, lecture and memorial ceremony in the week

leading up to the 50th anniversary of the massacre.

On Oct. 17, more than 500 students from the Haifa Greek Orthodox School participated in a public lecture on the Kufur Qasem Massacre organized by the Mossawa Center.

A press conference was held on Oct. 22, and was well attended by Hebrew and Arab journalists from major news and broadcast agencies, including A-Shams and Al-Jazeera.

At the conference, speakers put forth the demands of the Arab community to the government.

These included that the government take responsibility for the massacre in Kufur Qasem, make the Kufur Qasem Massacre a mandatory part of the history curriculum in schools, uproot calls for the transfer of the Arab community by Israeli politicians and end the violence against Arab citizens by police forces.

The Mossawa Center’s campaign was successful. Following the presentation of these demands, Education Minister Yuli Tamir instructed schools to spend time learning about the massacre. Hundreds of people attended and participated in the memorial service on Oct. 29, 2006, which included speeches from several Arab Members of Knesset and testimonials from survivors of the event.

However, the lessons of Oct. 29, 1956 have yet to be completely realized. Despite the 50 years that have passed since the tragedy, the government has not officially recognized the massacre. Vice Prime Minister Avigdor Liberman and his party Yesrael Beitinu, now part of the government coalition, have again called for the transfer of the Arab community, particularly the residents of the Triangle.



Jewish Mizrahi and Arab art exhibit explores cultural ties

The Mossawa Center hosts a traveling art show featuring artwork by local Arab and Mizrahi artists



A vibrant collection of art now adorns the walls of the new Mossawa Center office in Haifa. On Dec. 19, the Mossawa Center opened its doors to the Mizrahi Jewish and Arab Palestinian art exhibit co-sponsored by Hakeshet Hademocratit Hamizrahit (Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow) and the Mossawa Center. Members from the Arab and Jewish communities came to the grand opening of this exhibit to view the work of Mizrahi and Palestinian Arab artists from Israel.

The opening also featured short speeches and introductions by Norit Hajej from Hakeshet, Nabila Espanioly, chairperson of the Mossawa Board of directors and Jafar Farah, director of the Mossawa Center.

The art works currently displayed at the Center represent a wide of array of cultural, artistic and temporal influences. Pieces range from sculpture to photography to paintings, while the art styles span the spectrum from

modernist to realist to post-modern art. The goal is to foster mutual understanding and appreciation between Jews and Arabs through a presentation of artwork that highlights the similarities between the cultures. 50 artists of Mizrahi and Palestinian origin presented their work as part of an effort to increase the visibility and appreciation of Mizrahi and Arab art in Israel.

The exhibition has visited six different cities in Israel since Jan. 2006. The exhibition was designed to address the systemic degradation of Mizrahi and Arab culture in Israeli society by promoting a cultural exchange between Mizrahi Jews, Arab citizens and Ashkenazi Jews through art. The artwork showcases Middle Eastern cultural representations by Jewish artists from Muslim and Arab states and by Palestinian Arabs who are citizens of Israel. Following this final exhibition in Haifa, the entire exhibit will be presented abroad.



Arab community stands for peace during war in Lebanon

The escalation of the conflict between Israel and Lebanon that began in July 2006 surprised many in the region, and the Arab community of Israel was no exception. Perhaps even more surprising to the Arab community was the backlash and collective pain caused by the war. 46% of the civilian casualties in Israel were Arab citizens, yet throughout the war the Arab community was subject to harsh public criticism, racism and incitement. In most cases, Arab villages lacked bomb shelters as well as air raid sirens to warn of shelling. Following the war, funding for rebuilding damaged regions of the Galilee has not been equally allocated to Arab villages.

Contrary to the accusations made by right-wing politicians and much of the coverage of the Israeli media, the position of the majority of the Arab community in Israel during the recent war in Lebanon was and remains a position of peace. With friends and family on both sides of the border falling victim to the tragedy of the war, peace was the only answer to the conflict for the Arab community of Israel.

The war hit close to home for the Mossawa Center, literally. On August 6, rockets struck the area of Wadi Nisnas just a few blocks from Mossawa's new office building. Despite the war, Mossawa staff struggled to come in to the office to work on emergency projects to aid the Arab population and alert the international community.

This conflict and the overall escalation of violence in the Middle East served to bring the unique status of the Arab citizens in Israel and its political parties to the forefront of political discourse in Israel.

In response, the Mossawa Center held a roundtable discussion for the diplomatic community following the war. The discussion aimed to provide the international missions in Israel with an accurate understanding of not only the Arab community's pro-peace sentiment, but their strength and struggle with the injustices they faced during the conflict as well.

On September 5, the Mossawa Center hosted an engaging roundtable about the Arab perspective on the war in Lebanon for members of the local international diplomatic community at the Renaissance Hotel in Tel



MK Hanna Sweid (left) and MK Ibrahim Sarsour (at podium) at Mossawa's roundtable following the war.

Aviv with the cooperation of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Members of Knesset (MKs) Hanna Sweid of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equity and Ibrahim Sarsur of the Islamic Movement explained their respective positions on the conflict and the state of the Arab community in Israel. The Mossawa Center presented its paper on the discrimination and incitement against the Arab community before, during and after the war.

MK Sweid emphasized that “the state of Israel should really ... start comprehensive peace talks with the surrounding Arab states — with Syria regarding the Golan Heights, and with the Palestinians regarding Gaza and the West Bank,” and also criticized Israel's deterrence policy, stating that Israel cannot use power to achieve peace or to keep the status quo.



An old press building in Wadi Nisnas was struck during the recent war, just meters away from the Mossawa's new offices.

Government allocates just 10% of reconstruction budget to Arabs in North

The recent Lebanon War served to clarify the gaps in services and infrastructure between Arab and Jewish localities in the North. Following the conflict, the Israeli Prime Minister established a governmental committee to create a program to rehabilitate Northern Israel and Haifa. Most governmental ministries were asked to allocate a percentage of their annual budget for this program. According to the general manager of the Prime Minister's office, one third of the government's total rehabilitation budget was to be designated specifically for developing projects in the Arab community — an amount equivalent to 921 million NIS.

The Mossawa Center's analysis of the rehabilitation budget revealed that most of the ministries participating in this program did not clearly define the budgets they intended to allocate to rehabilitating Arab cities and villages in the North (see box), and amounts to only 402 million NIS.

This total is far less than the amount originally promised to the Arab community to fulfill its urgent needs in the North, particularly following the war. The total of 402 million NIS is about 10%. This will be allocated to 50% of the total population in the Galilee.

In order to clarify and facilitate the process of monitoring and implementing the projects for the Arab

Ministry	Field	Budget*
Trade, Industry & Employment	Upgrading & developing industrial zones	25
	Day care centers**	10
	Employing Arab academics ***	- -
Infrastructure	Sewage grants	170
Transportation	Urban roads ****	145
Housing	Developing infrastructure	52
Total		402

* In Millions NIS

** Joint budget with unspecified allocation for Arab community

*** Budget conditional according to the number of Arab academics recruited

**** Arab Community is first priority

community, the Mossawa Center has demanded that the government clearly demarcate the budgets allocated for the Arab community from each ministry in the state budget.

At a Knesset meeting in January 2007, Mossawa's economic department presented a detailed report on this issue to the Arab heads of local councils, members of Knesset and NGOs. As a result, the Knesset Finance Committee initiated a special discussion on the Mossawa report with the participation of representatives from all governmental offices.



Children at Mossawa's "Arab Children for Peace" activity day watch a magic performance.

Civil society works to replace government services during the war

Summer, the warm season of freedom schoolchildren anxiously wait all year for, was cut short this year for the children in northern Israel and Lebanon. Summer camps were cancelled and parents kept their children close and indoors. War and conflict in the grown-up world had spread to the realm of the young, putting an end to the sunlit pleasure of summer days.

Although the government and other private sources offered opportunities for the Jewish children from the North to enjoy their summer vacations with their families far from the reach of rockets in northern Israel, no alternatives were offered to their Arab counterparts, who continued to endure the barrage of rockets, often without the safety of bomb shelters or air raid sirens. In fact, 18 of the 39 civilian killed in Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War were Arab citizens, and five of these were children. To fill in the social service gaps made apparent during the war, the Mossawa Center and the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel recruited volunteer psychologists to hold therapy sessions with the Arab children in the shelters.

The Mossawa Center also decided to design an activity day for families called "Arab Children For Peace" to offer Arab children and their families an opportunity to escape the stress of the situation in the North and relieve tension and anxiety, if just for one day. The free, all-day

event was open to Arab families and children affected by the war and featured games, magicians, arts and crafts and other activities for families to enjoy together.

The Mossawa initiative was warmly welcomed by the Arab community. Mossawa worked with partners in the social welfare departments of Arab Local Councils, the NGOs Al Tufula and Women Against Violence, as well as parent's committees, in order to figure out the needs of the families and coordinate resources. May El-Rem and Tal El-Marah, water parks in the Triangle area, donated their facilities to be open exclusively to visitors from the North that day.

Almost 700 people from the towns of Deir Elasad, Nazareth, Haifa, Mghrar, Tarshiha, Majd Elkrom, Be'ene, Akka, Hseneya, Kamane and Arab Nai'em were bussed to the Triangle for the event on Aug. 17.

Mossawa Center volunteers, partner organizations and community members led dancing, singing, swimming games and art projects. Each child was given an educational activity pack donated by Al Tufula to take home with them to the North.

During the day children and families were able to enjoy their time outside without the fear of sirens and rockets. When the time came to climb back onto the buses, the smiles on children's faces proved that perhaps the summer had not been completely lost.

Mossawa strengthens international voice of the Arab minority in Israel

On June 19, 2006, the European Parliament's Committee of Foreign Affairs-Subcommittee on Human Rights invited the Mossawa Center to the hearing on Human Rights in the Neighborhood Action Plans of Israel and Egypt in order to discuss the status of human rights in Israel.

Jafar Farah, director of the Mossawa Center, presented human rights issues of paramount concern to the Arab community in Israel, alongside representatives from Adalah and B'Tselem.

Farah addressed the killing of 32 Arab citizens by the Israeli Security Forces and police in the last five years, hate speech and incitement directed at the Palestinian Arab minority, especially hate speech propagated by Members of the Knesset, house demolitions and the unrecognized villages in the Naqab (Negev), the denial of citizenship to spouses of Arab citizens and socioeconomic discrimination against Arab citizens in Israel in the governmental budget, as well as in the educational, occupational and governmental spheres.

“The Mossawa Center demands greater involvement of the EU in protecting human rights in accordance with the Association agreement signed by both the EU and Israel. Fighting racism and state violence,

ending discrimination and implementation of the official Or Commission report should be incorporated in any cooperation,” Farah says.

The Mossawa Center's international advocacy staff is committed to finding pragmatic, yet innovative ways to transmit the voice of the Arab community to the international stage.

Current efforts include development of an international NGO located in Brussels and consisting of individuals passionate about improving the status of the Arab minority in Israel. The NGO will centralize European-based advocacy efforts and have more immediate access to the European Union. The Mossawa Center is also in the midst of developing an

international conference that will present the Arab perspective on the history and challenges of democracy in the region. As an initiative emanating from within the region, the goal is to provide a platform for Arab civil society leaders and academics — those who have initiated the movements and seen them at the ground level — to present their perspectives on democracy and development to the European community, and to pave the way for a new era of equitable dialogue.



A visiting delegation of European parliament members takes a tour of Wadi Nisnas with Mossawa staff.



Check out our website's new look

The Mossawa Center has launched its redesigned website!

Visit www.mossawacenter.org to find the most up to date information on Mossawa's activities, Mossawa's coverage in the news and photos. Press releases and relevant publications about the status of the Arab community in Israel are also available for download.



Above and below: Protestors demonstrate in front of the Tel Aviv Arcaffe branch in June 2006.

Racism brews at Arcaffe





Student Nasim Kanazee stands in front of one of the branches of Arcaffee he was denied employment.

Nasim Kanazee, only 20 years old, has already experienced discrimination in the labor market. A nursing student at Tel Aviv University and activist at the Mossawa Center, Kanazee applied for a job at the Arcaffee chain in Tel Aviv, Ramat Aviv and Herzlyia on June 6, 2006. At all three locations, Kanazee was rejected immediately. One hour later, Galai Tzahal Radio correspondent David Glik introduced himself as a student and applied for the same job at the same three branches, using the same CV as Kanazee, which indicated that he had not served in the Israeli army. Although many employers discriminate against candidates who did not serve in the army, Glik was accepted immediately for the position at all three branches, indicating racism in Arcaffee's hiring policies. All job interviews of Nassim and Glik were recorded and later broadcast on the radio.

Following this discovery, the Mossawa Center submitted a complaint against Arcaffee to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, accusing Arcaffee of discriminatory hiring policies against Arabs.

At a protest organized by the Mossawa Center in front of one of Arcaffee's branches, more than 50 demonstrators, both Jews and Arabs, called for a boycott of the Arcaffee chain in light of its possible policy of employment discrimination.

MK Mohamed Baraki requested that the Welfare Committee in the Knesset investigate the issue. The Mossawa Center systematically follows up and

documents racist actions and behavior against Arab citizens, including discrimination in the workplace.

Although the Mossawa Center receives numerous cases of discrimination against Arab employees, in most situations, outright discrimination is difficult to prove. This time, with the help of the radio, the Mossawa Center succeeded in pinpointing an undeniable case of discrimination.

The Arcaffee case is just one example of the obstacles the Arab community faces in its struggle for equal opportunity employment. According to the 2006 annual report of the National Insurance Institute, over 50% of Arab families live below the poverty line, compared to just 14% of the Jewish community.

Discrimination exists in both the public and private sectors. For example, only 5.6% of employees in government offices are Arab. These statistics show how large the gap between the two communities has become in finding fair and equal employment in both the private and public sectors. Since its establishment, the Mossawa Center has worked to reduce these gaps by calling for fair governmental budget allocation and working toward creating conditions for more employment opportunities for the Arab community.

The Arcaffee case has still not been resolved — the Department of Preventing Discrimination in Employment, under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor has not yet finished its investigation.



The El-Carmel Center, located in the neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas in Haifa, received a major renovation in the summer of 2006.

Mossawa and CEGAS prepare to open El-Carmel to the public

Tucked away on a side street of the bustling Arab neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas, the classic limestone architecture and verdant courtyard of the Mossawa Center's new office building are quite a change from the organization's previous modern high-rise office space. El-Carmel, the name of the mountains surrounding Haifa, will be the name of this new human rights, educational, cultural and community center located in this historical neighborhood of Haifa.

As a joint project implemented by the Committee for Educational Guidance for Arab Students (CEGAS) and the Mossawa Center, El-Carmel Center is the result of significant efforts on the part of both organizations. It has been a long-term dream of both groups to own a building that would be able to both host programs and provide facilities and resources for the community in Haifa. The building was purchased in 2003, and for the last three years the organizations have invested and fundraised for its renovation and development.

“Without the community support, we wouldn’t implement this dream,” said Advocate Mtanes Sha’er, who invested private funds in the project. According to Sha’er, a private lawyer and board member of CEGAS,

“Since 1993 CEGAS spent more than \$350,000 to rent a building that hosted more than 350 university students and 5,000 pupils. This new Center will generate income and support higher education for thousands of youth and students all over the country.”

In the coming year, CEGAS will prioritize fundraising for the creation of student dormitories on the top floor of the building that will eventually host more than 30 male and female students and make available seminar rooms for public use.

The building was built in 1915 by the Mansour family and has since then been used as office space by the British Council, the Iraqi Oil Company and the Paz Oil Company. For the last 20 years however, the building had been vacant and had deteriorated into a haven for drug users and criminals, until it was purchased by Mossawa and CEGAS.

The renovation process was complicated since the organizations decided to preserve and restore the exquisite but severely damaged original architecture of the building. The internal and external arches were replaced, as the previous owners of the building had destroyed the originals, while the mid-level roof was cleared of sand and debris to ensure the integrity of the building.

The Wadi Nisnas neighborhood is the biggest and the poorest Arab neighborhood in Haifa, and the organizations hope that the location of the Center will have a positive impact on the cultural and educational situation of the area.

The cooperation between the two NGOs will enable them to use the facilities for their respective needs. As a human rights organization, Mossawa will create a human rights library, civil rights center and an open space for activism and volunteerism. CEGAS plans to include an academic resource library, computer center, educational center, vocational guidance and higher education information unit and student dormitories.



Top and middle: The El-Carmel Center under construction.
Above: The finished building facade.

Palestinians do not have the right to love

Does love conquer all? For approximately 21,298 Palestinian Arab families in Israel, to love, to live and to marry remains a constant struggle ordained by Israeli law.

The state's Nationality and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order) or "Citizenship law," has been in effect since 2003, despite efforts by numerous human rights organizations (including the UN Human Rights Committee, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Mossawa Center, Adalah) to have the law annulled each of the four times it was up for extension.

The Nationality and Entry into Israel Law explicitly states that any citizen who marries an individual from "the Region" — defined as the West Bank and Gaza Strip — will not be given citizenship for his or her spouse or their children.

In reality, this means that a married couple will be forced to live separately unless they are able to fight for temporary permission to live together.

Even if a spouse is given permission, he or she must continually attempt to renew the permit and is not allowed basic social services, such as health insurance and social welfare. Here is one citizen's story whose name has been changed to protect the couple's privacy:

On what should have been a happy day shared with friends and family, only Leila's mother was able to accompany Leila to her wedding ... At the end of their wedding day, the new bride had no choice but to leave her husband to return to Jenin.

Samir has been a Palestinian citizen of the state of Israel since birth. In between his studies in Canada and Germany, he worked in Jenin, a city in the West Bank, to collect data for his research on the refugee camp there. While there, he met and fell in love with Leila, a Palestinian woman.

They were aware of Israel's ban on granting residents of the Occupied Territories Israeli citizenship, but their commitment to each other outweighed

any struggle or law they would undoubtedly face.

On what should have been a happy day shared with friends and family, only Leila's mother was able to accompany Leila to her wedding — they managed to

“What crime have I committed that police are coming to my door? Yes, I married a person who is considered ‘forbidden’.”

receive one-day permits to travel to Israel by claiming that she wanted to visit her ill mother-in-law.

At the end of their wedding day, the new bride had no choice but to leave her husband to return to Jenin.

During their seven-month fight with the Ministry of Interior to acquire a one-year, renewable permit for her to remain in Israel, Samir describes the struggle, humiliation and sleepless nights they faced as a newly married couple. On the few nights that Leila did stay with Samir illegally, they lay awake all night in fear of the police knocking on the door.

He remembers asking himself in the night, “What crime have I committed that police are coming to my door? Yes, I married a person who is considered ‘forbidden’.”

Twice a week, Samir spent hours in the Ministry of Interior processing the application and subsequent paperwork required to obtain permission for his wife to gain no other legal rights but to sleep in the same home as her husband.

Samir and Leila finally were successful in their application for a one-year temporary visit permit. Samir credits their success to his unwavering tenacity at the Ministry and the advocacy of the Mossawa Center, who wrote a letter on their behalf. The Mossawa Center continues to lobby within the Knesset and advocate on behalf of those affected by this citizenship law.

Frustration and worry continue to haunt Samir and Leila’s marriage despite their success. Every six months, Leila must reapply for permission, which could be denied at any time. If denied, she would have to move back to Jenin.

Leila is allowed to see her family in the West Bank, but Samir is forbidden by military order to accompany her. She is also denied health care and employment in the state of Israel. The law puts stress on their marriage as well — “She might be complaining about my shirt, but sometimes I know that really she is just depressed or angry about our situation,” Samir says.

In 2006, the Nationality and Entry into Israel Law was upheld by the Supreme Court in Israel. Ultimately, the law disproportionately affects Arab citizens in Israel. Yet, if a Jewish settler in the West Bank (i.e. the Occupied Territories) would have no trouble marrying someone from the other side of the Green Line.

Supreme Court Justice Heshin, who wrote the majority opinion, claimed that Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza may pose a potential security risk, and the ability to marry and obtain citizenship for “foreigners” is not a guaranteed right.

To date, any child born in Israel from to a parent from the West Bank or Gaza must leave the state by the age of 12.

Based on a military decision, any Palestinian man under 35 and any Palestinian woman under 25 will be denied entrance to visit families.

Knowing these odds, if all else fails does Samir have another plan? “I don’t want to think about a Plan B,” Samir says.

In Jan. 2007, the Knesset passed a Temporary Law to extend the Citizenship Law for another three months. The High Court of Justice is scheduled to make a ruling on the Law in March ’07.

First Arab democratic school resists Haifa Municipality pressure to close

When it comes to education, states are eager to develop the capacities of their future citizens, while parents want to increase their children's potential to lead fuller lives. Yet despite the fact that the state and the citizenry ostensibly share common goals in terms of improving the education system, interests collide when, in the eyes of the state, not all educations, and not all citizens, are equal.

In Israel, this has led to a situation wherein the interests of Arab parents are systematically trampled, and their children who ultimately pay the price.

Arab schools have fewer classrooms, a higher level of unqualified teachers and an insufficient level of educational and guidance counselling due to personnel deficiencies. Supplemental facilities, such as libraries, as well as science and computer labs, are also absent from many Arab schools.

While Arab parents are permitted to register their children in the Hebrew-speaking education system, the fact that the curriculum covered in these schools does not adequately address Arab history, language or identity leads most Arab parents to ultimately send their children to schools within the Arabic-speaking system.

The Hiwar Democratic School was originally established as a public school, dedicated to teaching Arab schoolchildren history, geography, literature and language from multiple perspectives — its curriculum presented the Palestinian narrative as well as the official state narrative.

The Hiwar School was founded on the principle that education should be liberal, and that parents, children and administrators should work together to create a school curriculum which would lead to the development of independent, critically-minded students.

In 2003, the Hiwar Association filed a Supreme Court claim on behalf of the school, requesting that it be granted public school status in “partnership” with the Ministry of Education and the municipality.

The partnership would require the school to teach curriculum mandated by the government in addition to curriculum that parents deemed helpful for promotion of democracy and dialogue.

This partnership functioned until early 2006, when the Haifa Municipality offered the school a building badly in need of repair. Administrators of the school described the building as dangerous to the point of non-compliance with safety

guidelines set by the Ministry of Education.

Additionally, the Haifa Municipality removed control of the school from the Hiwar Association and fired the school's principal, effectively ending the partnership between the municipality and the parents of Hiwar. In response, the Hiwar Democratic School declared a strike, and in a show of solidarity the Mossawa Center and Committee for Education and Guidance of Arab Students (CEGAS) offered their office building for the Hiwar School's temporary use.

From September until November, the Hiwar School held classes alongside CEGAS and Mossawa operations while searching for a more permanent home. While initially charges were levied against the Hiwar parents, they were recently dropped on the basis that illegal procedures had been carried out by the Haifa municipality in connection with the case.

Currently, the Hiwar School is renting their own building. However because the municipality has deemed Hiwar an “illegal” school, it remains under constant threat of closure.



Hiwar students pose for a picture in front of the Mossawa building.

International community invests in Jeser El-Zarka's capacities



Members of Jeser El-Zarka's local council and Mossawa staff meet with international representatives.

In his closing address at this year's conference on Israeli local government in Tel Aviv, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert pledged that the new Israeli government would tackle the disparity between predominantly Arab and predominantly Jewish local authorities, a tacit recognition that Israel has a lot more to do to live up to the principles of equal treatment enunciated in its declaration of independence.

The Arab minority in Israel is significantly under-represented in employment in the civil service and public utilities and, with some significant exceptions like Haifa and Tel Aviv universities, in the field of higher education. Per capita government spending on Arab children is significantly lower than children in the Jewish community, and industrial zoning policies limit economic opportunity. A gulf of misunderstanding separates the communities, though tentative moves are being made to promote teaching the Arabic language in Jewish schools, with 400 classes starting in the Galilee region.

The situation was vividly brought to life to Simon Milton and me when attending the local government conference in Tel Aviv. We visited an Arab township of 11,000 people, Jeser El-Zarka, adjacent to the prosperous tourism centre of Caesarea. Here, in a place which itself has considerable tourism potential with a fine beach area, a small, if currently very primitive fishing village and archaeological interests linked to Caesarea, there is a community where 20% of young people are unemployed and 70% of the population is under 40 years of age. There is very little employment available within the town and many residents, including children, work in Haifa. Access to the town is indirect — it cannot be reached from the main highway — and the town itself is cut off from

Caesarea by a large planted mound.

As with many municipalities that are both Arab and Jewish, the Council is running a significant deficit, struggling to collect property taxes and denied central Government grants until it improves its performance in that respect. The town has a new secondary school and three primary schools and a good pupil-teacher ratio, one of the paradoxes being that teachers in Arab schools are relatively well-qualified because of limited opportunities elsewhere in the economy. There is an opportunity for the international community, and for UK local government and national government, to contribute to the overall peace process by helping Israel's Palestinian citizens secure a greater stake in Israeli society.

Pressing the Olmert government to live up to its pledges, assisting capacity building within Arab local governments in Israel and helping communities access international funds from the EU, UNESCO and other sources, can all play a part in helping to build a coalition of the disadvantaged between Arab municipalities and poor Jewish ones. Hopefully, as in other difficult areas like the Balkans and Southern Africa, the goodwill and experience of UK local government can make a contribution. We hope to receive delegations from the ULAI (the Israeli counterpart of the LGA) and from the Arab municipal sector to explore how matters might be progressed.

Sir Jeremy Beecham is chairman of the British Labor Party National Executive Committee and a senior figure in the Local Government Association (LGA). Sir Beecham visited Jeser El-Zarka with the Mossawa Center in May 2006.

Mossawa advocates for Arab women to combat 82% unemployment rate

82 percent of Arab women in Israel are unemployed, a percentage nearly triple the figure for Israel's Jewish women, according to Mossawa Center research. This systematic unemployment contributes heavily to the fact that nearly one-third of Arab families and nearly two-thirds of Arab children in Israel currently live below the poverty line.

While these figures in and of themselves are cause for alarm, effects of the high level of unemployment among Arab women in Israel reverberate far beyond the Arab community. In fact, the country as a whole is damaged.

According to research conducted this year by Mossawa Center economist Amin Fares, integrating Arab women into the workforce would effectively raise overall income levels in Israel by 30 percent. This would lead to an overall economic influx of a whopping 6.2 billion NIS. What, then, prohibits this demographic sector from contributing to the national economy?

In the past, many have laid blame for the situation on alleged "cultural differences" between Arabs and Jews with regard to women's empowerment. Yet according to economist Amin Fares, "comprehensive research shows that most Arab families support the idea that their daughters will make use of their professional skills and education."

Furthermore, the fact that women compose just over half of the Arab citizens who study in Israel's university system seems to invalidate the suggestion that differences in attitudes towards women's employment are responsible for the gap in employment levels. The problem is not chiefly

cultural, but structural; therefore putting the tools in place to solve these inequities is the only effective means of addressing the present disparity.

If the state were to create and implement a plan to rectify the current level of institutionalized discrimination, thereby addressing a violation of the human rights of the Arab female citizens of the state, it would also provide an economic boost to the country as a whole.

In light of this, Mossawa sent a letter to both the Knesset and the government in early March that proposed funds be specifically allocated to vocational and employment training

programs for women in the Arab community.

This would include the institution of professional guidance bureaus and vocational centers, development of industrial parks near Arab towns and a greater investment in the education system in accordance with the market's demands. In addition, Mossawa addressed the issue of availability of public transportation for women of the Arab minority. According to a report recently published by Kayan, an Arab feminist organization, during the majority of daylight hours each week most Arab cities and villages do not have access to public transportation.

The Mossawa Center therefore demanded development of public transportation accessible to these areas. According to a spokesperson for the transportation ministry, in early March transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz set up a committee headed by Dr. Faisal Aseiza, to look into the accessibility of transportation. That committee



Mossawa's ad in Ha'aretz, emphasized the impact of women on the economy in Israel.

is scheduled to present its findings this summer. Mossawa's letter was met positively by several members of the Knesset, who expressed interest in working with Mossawa and other advocacy organizations in order to promote the Arab women employment program proposed by the Center. Advocacy extends beyond the government sector.

In order to raise awareness in the larger civil society, Mossawa coupled the letter to Knesset with a dual ad campaign. An ad in Hebrew language newspapers called attention to the loss that economic discrimination against Arab women causes to the national economy. A parallel ad in Arabic language newspapers addressed the rights of women within the Arab community. In the past two years alone, the practice of honor killing has claimed the lives of at least nine women in Israel.

In memory of Atif Halid Amash, Hanida Ayawi, Reem Abu Ganim, Noel Hasan, Maryam Abu Habza, Nahaya Badeer, Senna Masrati, Reem Al Qasim and Hamuda Abu Ganim, the Mossawa Center published an advertisement in several widely-circulated Arab newspapers which condemned the practice of honor killing

and asserted that community inaction when faced with such a crime amounts to complicity, urging action to counter such injustices. This year, Mossawa's ad was not alone. Notably, six women's organizations within the Islamic Movement collaborated to publish their own women's rights advertisement, also widely circulated in the Arabic press, representing an important step forward. These are indications of a growing movement promoting women's representation within the leadership and decision-making bodies of the Arab community in Israel, a movement of which Mossawa is proud to be a part.

In recent years the Mossawa Center has been a key member of a coalition led by the organization Women Against Violence, which attempted to comprehensively bring to the table issues effecting Arab women in Israel. Among other campaigns, the coalition led a sustained effort to increase female participation in Israeli politics. This year saw significant progress as for the first time a woman, Women Against Violence's Director Ayda Touma Sliman, was nominated to the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens by the Hadash party.

About the Mossawa Center

مركز مساواة
Mossawa Center



The Mossawa Center, is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works to promote the rights of the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel. Established in 1997, the Mossawa Center strives to improve the social, economic and political status of the Arab citizens of Israel, while preserving their national and cultural rights as Palestinians.

The following recent publications are available for download on Mossawa's website (www.mossawacenter.org):

- *The Arab Citizens of Israel and the 2006 War in Lebanon: Reflections and Realities*
- *Constitution Based on Equality for All?: On the Constitution and the Collective Rights of Arab Citizens in Israel*
- *2007 Budget Analysis*
- *The Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel: Status, Opportunities and Challenges for an Israeli-Palestinian Peace*

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Fatina Nasralla
Mohamad Rabah**

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We at the Mossawa Center, are aware that individuals like you-believers in equality and human rights - are the foundation of sustainable efforts towards positive change. We invite you to support our ongoing efforts towards equality for the Arab citizens in Israel. Please complete the form below (or online) to receive news updates, publications or to make a contribution and mail directly to:

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