



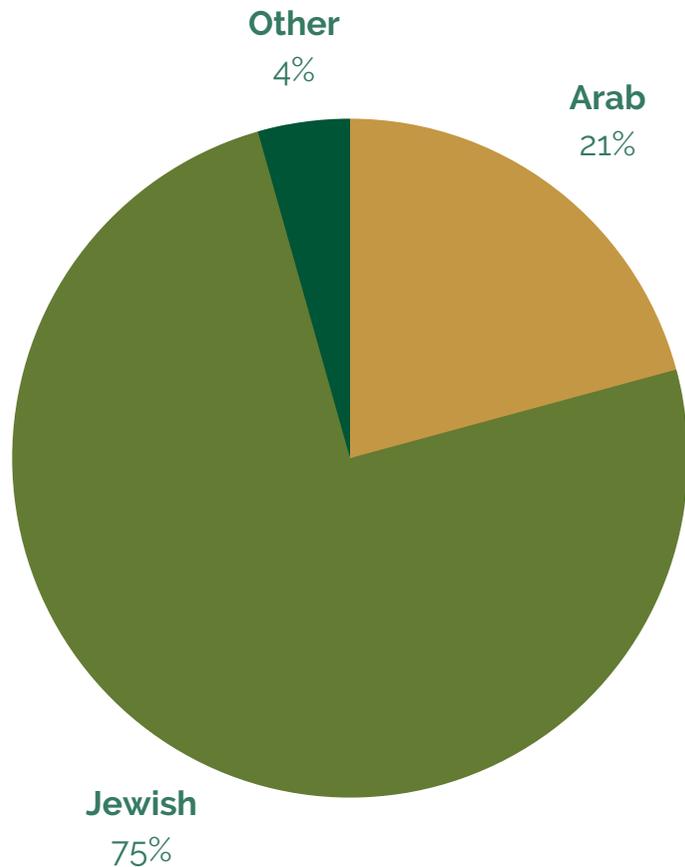
ISRAEL AND ITS ARAB PALESTINIAN CITIZENS

THE MOSSAWA CENTER



مركز مساواة
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Mossawa Center

POPULATION OF ISRAEL



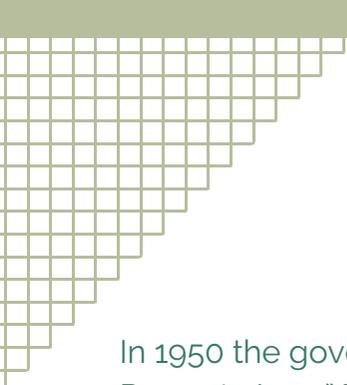
The Arab Palestinian minority constitutes one-fifth of the population of Israel. Although this group generally identifies as Arab and/or Palestinian, they hold Israeli citizenship. Thus, they are not to be confused with Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territories or Syrian Arabs in the occupied Golan Heights. With an estimated 4.43 million Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Palestinian Arab community in Israel makes up roughly a third of the Palestinians living in historical Palestine.

THE NAKBA

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 resulted in **the expulsion of around 750,000 Palestinians from their land, roughly 85% of the Palestinian population.** It also shook the lives of those who remained in what had just become Israel. In 1948 alone, Israeli and Zionist forces **razed over 500 villages** and **cleared over ten urban neighborhoods of their Arab inhabitants.** As a result of such actions, over **1/3 of Arab citizens in Israel are internally displaced today.** Despite their repeated pleas to return to their ancestral homelands, the state of Israel refuses to allow its citizens to reclaim their land. Instead, the state has established Jewish settlements in their. On what was once the village of Kabri, for example, the state established "Kibbutz Kabri," just one year after it destroyed the Arab village from which the kibbutz took its name. Since then, the state has established five other Jewish settlements in the area, all the while, refusing the Kabri villagers, many of whom live just kilometers away, the right to return.



A Palestinian woman visits the Mia'ar, one of hundreds of villages destroyed by the Israeli army after the establishment of the state of Israel. Every year former inhabitants of Mia'ar and their descendants gather in the cemetery, which is all that remains of the village, to commemorate the Nakba and to reconnect with their land.



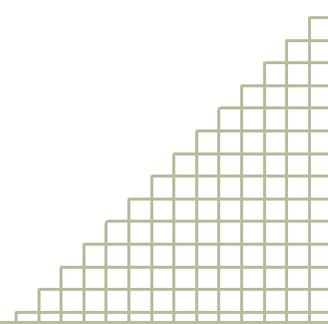
THE ABSENTEE PROPERTY LAW

In 1950 the government passed the "Absentee Property Law." The law, which did not apply to the state's Jewish citizens, gave the state the authority to expropriate any "abandoned" properties, thus barring 700,000 some Palestinian refugees and thousands of internally displaced citizens from returning to their homes. Resultantly, "95% percent of the Jewish settlements established 1948-1953 were on absentee property" and, by 1954, "more than one third of Israel's Jewish population lived on absentee property." The law allowed nearly 100,000 Jewish immigrants to settle in Palestinian homes in Jaffa, Haifa, and Acre alone.

The Custodian of Absentee Property and eventually the Development Authority sold these lands to the state and to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), thus precluding the Arab community from future ownership.

The state has yet to make reparations to its Arab citizens for this sweeping seizure of property. On the contrary, Arab Palestinian citizens own only 3.5% of the land within Israel's borders, although they constitute 20% of the population.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL HAS NOT ESTABLISHED A SINGLE ARAB SETTLEMENT WITHIN ITS BORDERS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SEVEN TOWNSHIPS IT CREATED TO CONCENTRATE THE ARAB BEDOUIN POPULATION IN THE NAQAB (NEGEV) DESERT.



UNRECOGNIZED VILLAGES

Access to land and housing remains a dilemma for many Arab Palestinian citizens in Israel. While it recognizes illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, it refuses to recognize many of the pre-existing villages within its own borders. **There are thirty-five unrecognized Bedouin Arab villages in the Naqab (Negev) Desert.** The government refuses to grant these villages, with populations ranging from the hundreds to the upper thousands, permits for their homes, fields, and places of worship, some of which pre-date the establishment of the state. **Their status as 'unrecognized' also precludes them from accessing basic services, such as water, electricity, sewage, and roads.** The state refuses to provide these services on the basis of the villages' 'illegal' status, leaving their inhabitants with no choice but to construct without permission. **Conservative estimates put the population of the unrecognized villages at 65,000. Others put the estimates at 100,000.**

The majority of Bedouins in unrecognized villages live in historical villages, i.e. villages that predate the establishment of Israel. The remaining Bedouins in unrecognized villages in the Naqab live in villages that the state forcibly displaced after 1948.

Unrecognized villages are under constant threat of demolition by state authorities.

The state justifies this inhumane treatment of the Bedouin population through citations of laws that it unilaterally created to alienate the indigenous Palestinian population from its land. It also cites the technical difficulties and expenses associated with providing services to so many "small" villages. At the same time, the state manages to provide services for small Jewish family farms and kibbutzim in the area.

In the last year the state has proposed five new housing plans in the Negev for Jewish communities. Two of these will be located on unrecognized Bedouin land. Construction of "Hiran," the Jewish settlement that will take the place of Umm al-Hiran, a displaced unrecognized village located near the locality of Hura, is already underway. The residents of Umm al-Hiran have asked to be included in the plans for Hiran, where they would be willing to live alongside their new Jewish neighbors, however, the state has rejected this idea. It has also rejected the possibility of their return to their former lands.

UMM AL-HIRAN

ON JANUARY 18, 2017, ISRAELI AUTHORITIES DEMOLISHED EIGHT HOMES AND FOUR OTHER BUILDINGS IN UMM AL-HIRAN. THE EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF SCHOOL TEACHER AND FATHER, YAQOUB ABU AL-QIA'AN, AND THE ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF POLICE OFFICER, EREZ LEVI.





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Construction of "Hiran," the Jewish settlement that will take the place of Umm al-Hiran, is already under way.



BUILDING AND PLANNING & THE KAMINITZ LAW

The state's deliberate unwillingness to approve master plans for Arab localities and to distribute building permits has given rise to a **housing shortage** in recognized Arab localities, as well. **Although the state of Israel has allocated lands and provided planning services for over six hundred Jewish communities since its establishment, it has not created a single Arab locality**, aside from seven townships that it created to concentrate the Bedouin Arab population in the Naqab (Negev). Meanwhile, **the Arab population has grown sixteen-fold since 1948**. Only four Arab localities (Nazareth, Taibeh, Tira, and Abu Basma) have planning and building committees. The other Arab localities must rely on regional councils, which do not have the capacity to provide adequate attention or resources for small, local development projects and often prioritize Jewish localities. This results in disproportionately high unlicensed construction in the Arab community. **Currently, over 50,000 Arab families in Israel live in houses without permits. Thus, at least 200,000 Arab citizens live under constant threat of home demolition.**

Rather than solving the issue of illegal construction at its root, **the state continues to pursue a policy that retroactively punishes Arab citizens for crimes they have no choice but to commit. In April 2017, the Kaminitz bill, which will further criminalize building violations and intensify enforcement of the law through increased home demolitions, larger fines, and heavier sentences for offenders.**



Members of the Arab community gather outside the Knesset to protest the Kaminitz bill



THE EXPULSION LAW

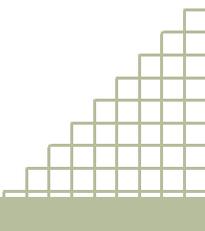
In July 2016, the Israeli Knesset passed **a law that would allow Knesset members to expel sitting lawmakers through a majority vote**. The law, which its promoters claimed would target lawmakers that incite racism and support armed struggle against the state of Israel, will allow a majority in the Knesset to silence their critics, namely Arab and progressive Jewish MKs.

THE NGO LAW

In the July, 2016, the Knesset passed the “NGO Law,” which requires all nongovernmental organizations that receive more than half of their funding from foreign governments to identify themselves as such on all publications and upon entering the Knesset. **Twenty-five of the twenty-seven NGOs impacted are human rights organizations**. Critics of the bill argued that it seeks to silence those critical of the government. In the summer of 2016, it was reported that **Arab organizations receive less than one percent of the government’s budget for civil society organizations**. Thus, without the support of the state, Arab organizations rely disproportionately on foreign funding.

THE JEWISH NATION-STATE BILL

The Jewish nation-state bill which passed its preliminary reading on Wednesday, May 10, explicitly states: “The right to the realization of national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” Not only does the bill seek to deny over twenty percent of the country’s population their right to self-determination, it also strips their language of its official status. Additionally, the bill allow segregation in building and planning on the basis of ethnicity. Moreover, the bill requires the Israeli Supreme Court to prioritize the Jewish character of the state (even over democracy) in cases of ambiguity. If passed, such a law would allow the future passage of bills that would further contravene democracy and marginalize the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel.



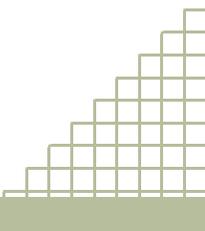


THE CITIZENSHIP LAW

The “National Entry into Israel Law,” also referred to as **the “Citizenship and Family Unification Law”** was originally passed on **July 31, 2003** as a temporary, “security” measure. The Knesset, however, has renewed it every year since then. The law, which effectively denies citizenship and residency status to spouses of Israeli citizens from the occupied Palestinian territories (in addition to several so-called “enemy states”), is expected to pass again this June. **As a result of cross-border social ties between the Palestinian Arab communities in Israel and the OPT, this law disproportionately impacts Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, dividing and imposing major financial, physical, and emotional burdens on the 24,000 Arab families that it affects in Israel and the OPT.** The Israeli Knesset is expected to pass the Citizenship Law for a fifteenth year this June. **Although passed under the auspices of security concerns, the law seeks to maintain Jewish primacy by limiting the number of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship.**

SYSTEMATIC INEQUALITY

While approximately 20% of Israel's population lives below the poverty line, 53.3% of Arab families live in poverty. Thus, although they make up one fifth of the population, **the Arab population constitutes over one half of those living in poverty. Nearly 66% of Arab children live in poverty. A 2015 report by the OECD found Israel to have one of the most unequal economies of OECD countries.** Employment is a large problem in the Arab community, especially for women. Of more than 85,000 employees in high tech companies only 1,200 are Arabs. Only 2.5% of researchers in Israel are Arab. **In 2015 Arabs made up only 9.25% of government employees and there are still entire government departments and bodies that contain no Arab employees,** including for example the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, the Government Publications Office, the Department of Transportation, and the Knesset Television station.



DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

Socioeconomically, Arab students are already worse off than their Jewish counterparts. An alarming **two-thirds of Arab students come from families living below the poverty line**, as compared to one-third of students nation-wide. One could attribute this to relatively low levels of education in the Arab community. 84% of Jewish Israelis aged fifteen and over have completed elementary school, whereas, amongst Arabs of the same age, **only 37% have finished elementary school**. The Central Bureau of Statistics also demonstrates that **the percentage of the workforce with higher education degrees among the Arab population is 17%, while the number stands at 40% among Jews**. Moreover, PISA exam scores of Arab students are 20% lower than those of Jewish students, regardless of their socioeconomic background. This means that **the best Arab pupils still perform 20% worse than the best Jewish ones**. Dropout rates further demonstrate an immense gap between the education given to the Jewish population and that given to the Arab population. **Whereas only 8% of Jewish students leave high school early, the figure for Arab students is 32%**.

Rather than mitigate these inequalities through affirmative action, the state invests far less in Arab schools. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, **Jewish students receive 35-68% more funds per student than their Arab counterparts** of the same socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, for years, the Arab sector has lacked even so much as classrooms.

Discrimination against Arab students persists in higher education, as well. As of 2014, only 9% of the Arab population in Israel held bachelor's degrees, while only 8% held master's degrees. Only 4% had completed doctorates. This is largely due to unequal funding at lower-levels of education, but it also partially due to the fact that **there are no universities in Israel that offer studies in Arabic**. The few colleges that do have limited funds and resources. Many Palestinian Arab students choose to study abroad to get their degrees.

MEDIA AND THE PRESS

Although Arabs make up about one fifth of Israel's population, very few media outlets offer programs in Arabic. In fact, **Arabic content, original and dubbed, represents less than five percent of broadcasted material on Israeli channels** and, despite the law requiring a certain amount of content with Arabic subtitles, many of these programs only appear after midnight for a few hours or at other inconvenient times.

While the state dedicates about NIS one billion annually to its television stations, Channel 2 and Channel 10, **only .5% of this large budget goes to programming for the Arab minority**. Arabs, especially women, are also poorly represented in the media. **Only 2-3.5% of all experts interviewed on radio and television are Arab, while Arab women make up less than one percent of this figure.**

When the Arab population does try to establish its own networks, the Israeli state often reacts in a hostile manner, censoring prospective Arab media projects and, in turn, violating the community's right to freedom of expression. In 2015, for example, the Arab community attempted to launch the Palestine 48 Arabic language station, the first Arabic TV channel to broadcast in Israel. Citing the fact that the station would be partially funded by the Palestinian

Authority, **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for its shut down before the station even launched. He claimed that it was a foreign entity and had no right to broadcast in Israel.** About a month later, the Public Security Minister, Gilad Erdan, signed an order shutting down the station. Despite the nonexistent legal basis for this move, Palestine 48 was forced to close. The Arab community persisted, however, and created a new station, called Musawa TV, to take its place. On June 23, Minister Erdan ordered Musawa TV to cease operations, as well. Although the station broadcasted content related to the lives of Arab citizens of Israel, produced in Nazareth and other Arab localities in Israel, Minister Erdan claimed that he acted to protect Israeli sovereignty, framing Musawa TV as an external threat to the state and the nation. In practice, his order further silenced a minority which was already nearly invisible in Israeli media

The government's undemocratic orders against Palestine 48 and Musawa TV are not isolated incidents, but, rather, representative of the state's larger campaign to restrict freedom of speech in the Arab community in Israel.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INCITEMENT ON THE INTERNET

In recent decades, the internet has become a cornerstone of education and democratic discourse both in Israel and around the world. However, it also provides a platform for what has come to be known as “fake news” and racial incitement. In the past, the Mossawa Center, through the findings of the Coalition Against Racism, has reported on racism against Arab citizens of Israel. Such incidents were particularly common during the particularly tense summer of 2014, when the Israeli military launched “Operation Protective Edge” or the 2014 Gaza war. Fifty percent of the discussions on the internet concerning the war called for the revocation of citizenship and economic boycott of Arab citizens of Israel. A more recent study, published by 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media and conducted by VIGO Social Intelligence, revealed that **60,000 Israelis wrote at least one racist or hateful post towards Arabs or Palestinians throughout the course of 2016. With a total of 675,000 posts, this was more than double the number of similar posts in 2015.** The report noted a correlation between racists posts and controversial events, such as Elor Azaria’s murder of an immobile, wounded

the West Bank. The report also notes **the role of politicians in encouraging such provocative speech.** For example, **when politicians, such as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan, and Education Minister Naftali Bennett, wrongfully accused Palestinians of having started the November 2016 wildfires, the study found a rise in racist posts.**

Despite widespread racism against Arabs on social media, **the state has charged few to no Israeli Jews for incitement on the internet.** In contrast, **the Israeli state has opened over two hundred criminal files against Arab activists for incitement on social media.** In fact, according to Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, **“70 percent of the 175,000 recorded posts in Israel that specifically incited violence on social networks between June 2015 and May 2016 were actually made by right-wing Israeli Jews against Arabs and left-wing Jews.”** The ambiguity of the term “incitement,” however, allows the state to administer the law selectively, that is by applying it to Arab citizens who oppose the state’s policies.

POLITICAL REPRESSION

Arab political participation is constantly under threat. Israel's electoral system is based on nation-wide proportional representation, meaning that the number of seats each political party list receives in the Knesset is proportional to the number of voters who voted for it. In March 2014, the Knesset passed the Governance Bill, which raised the minimum threshold required in order for a party to receive a seat from 2% to 3.25%. According to this system, the voters vote for a party list and not for a particular person on the list. **Approximately half of the political parties that the 2014 Governance Bill would eliminate are Arab.**

Furthermore, by requiring political parties to recognize the Jewish character of the state, the state of Israel greatly limits the voices of Arab citizens. Arab elected officials are also frequently subjected to ridicule by their colleagues in the Knesset, particularly during times of "war." Despite laws criminalizing hate speech and incitement to violence, Members of the Knesset frequently use hate speech against Arab MKs and Arab citizen voters. Public statements of discrimination and incitement were rampant throughout the 2014 war on Gaza. For example, MK Miri Regev responded to Arab MK

Haneen Zoabi's statements, in which she made a distinction between terrorists and frustrated individuals with no political recourse who resort to kidnapping, by calling her a "traitor" and a "Trojan horse" and telling her in Arabic to "Go to Gaza." Although this type of incitement by Jewish MKs goes unchecked by the Israeli legal system, the Knesset Ethics Committee did not hesitate to suspend MK Zoabi from plenary sessions for six months for her statements. In July 2016, the Knesset passed a new bill, often referred to as the "Expulsion Law," allowing the legislature to expel its own members. This undemocratic bill serves as a tool to restrict the political rights of the Arab community.

DISCRIMINATION IN CULTURE ALLOCATIONS

The Mossawa analysis of the 2015–2016 State Budget shows gross disregard for the Arab minority's cultural rights, specifically revealing that 40 million NIS of the Ministry of Culture's budget was allocated exclusively to Jewish institutions such as "Ben Gurion Institutes" and "Jewish Heritage Communities." There are no equivalent categories for Palestinian Arab organizations, which makes the criteria discriminatory and illegal.

In the years preceding 2016, **the entire state budget for culture amounted to NIS 642 million from which about NIS 12 million was allocated for Arab culture**, including the allocation for the Arabic Language Academy. In March 2016, the Ministry of Culture promised to double the allocation over the next five years, but even this will not close the gaps in funding between Jewish and Arab culture institutions. In recent years, **the Arab community has repeatedly been allotted less than 4% of the Ministry's funds, though the number of organizations applying for funding has more than doubled. No Arab heritage museum exists in Israel and the only existing Arab school of art receives minimal funding.** The Minister of Culture, Miri Regev, has made several controversial decisions to cut funding to cultural institutions, deliberately limiting Arab

artists' freedom of expression. Most recently, the Ministry of Culture refused to transfer two million NIS of promised government funding to the Arab al-Midan theater in Haifa. The Ministry first halted funds after the theater showed a play about a Palestinian citizen in Israel who was sentenced to life imprisonment after abducting and killing an Israeli Jewish soldier in 1984. Soon after, the Ministry halted funding to the theater, dubiously citing financial mismanagement as the reason behind the decision. **With Miri Regev herself, upon entering her position as Minister of Culture, having said that she would not "lend a hand to undermining the image of the State of Israel, Israel Defense Forces soldiers or the state's heritage as a Jewish and democratic state" and the timing of the decision, the political motivations for this decision are hardly disputable.**

The Ministry retracted its decision to withhold funds to Al-Midan, after Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, filed a petition against it and formally agreed to transfer 1.1 million shekels for 2016, in addition to the first installment for 2017. However, since then, the Ministry of Culture has effectively frozen the transfer of these funds through bureaucratic procrastination and has refused to pay the first installment for 2017, pushing the



DISCRIMINATION IN CULTURE ALLOCATIONS

theater to the brink of closure. A representative of the Ministry of Culture has claimed that the theater does not meet 2017 standards for funding. This justification, however, does not explain the Ministry's freeze on the transfer of the 2016 funds.

As the case of Al-Midan demonstrates, **funding for Arab culture is conditioned on political conformity. Generally, in democratic states, the government funds cultural projects so that the voices of artists are not limited by the whims of their audiences or the state. However, in the case of the State of Israel, where the Ministry of Culture uses the threat of withholding funds as a means of censoring artistic, cultural, and political expression, the opposite seems to be the case.**

Regev has also worked to stop the submission of a mapping of cultural needs in the Arab community and only acquiesced when forced by the court. This mapping found that **Arab villages have no arts centers, museums or cinemas.**

Actors and filmmakers such as Mohamad Bakry, Suha Araf, and Norman Issa have been threatened by the government and have lost funding for their projects because of their political stances and criticisms of the state.

The Mossawa State Budget Analysis also found that the Cinema Law allocates 60 million NIS each year for Hebrew cinema. **Five Jewish cinema foundations control the funds allocated by Israel to Israeli cinema. However, there are no Arab employees, and no Arabs involved in the evaluation committees of these foundations.** As a result, almost no Arabic films are selected for funding by the cinema foundations. The difficulty in acquiring funding from a national resource also creates problems for accessing international funding opportunities, since the vast majority of cinematic funds require co-funding from a home country.

