



**The Mossawa Center:  
The Advocacy Center for the Arab  
Citizens of Israel**

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Arab community is excluded from state emergency response tests** 70% of Arab homes without emergency rooms and 30% of Arab schools without shelters

HAIFA Wednesday, June 3, 2009 — The Mossawa Center continues to monitor the readiness of the Arab community to respond to emergency situations. According to a Mubadarah report, the Palestinian citizens of Israel Rights organisation, 70% of Arab houses do not have bomb shelters or suitable emergency protection, and 30% of schools in the Arab community are without shelter. The report also found that 80% of Arab villages in Israel are not prepared to handle a crisis situation, including an escalated military situation, missile strikes or a natural disaster. In Israel's largest Arab city, Nazareth, there are no public shelters. In the Arava region, Mubadarah found that 99% of residents have no access to shelters.

Mossawa condemns the Interior Ministry's neglect of the community and its deliberate disregard for the needs of Arab towns and villages in case of emergency. Mossawa strongly urges the Ministry of Finance and other government ministries to implement the recommendations of the State Comptroller to extinguish the gap in emergency services between Arabs and Jews.

This week the Home Front Command and the National Emergency Authority are making efforts to prepare the Israeli public for possible attacks on the country. On Tuesday, a siren and secure room drill tested national siren systems. This was the largest ever emergency exercise Israel has undertaken.

The Arab community has generally been excluded from large-scale emergency trainings such as this. With the exception of small-scale local ambulance companies, there are no emergency

services in the majority of Arab towns and villages as the services of the Magen David Adom are not available in Arab localities. The readiness of emergency services in Arab villages is not seriously considered and this deficit in services is not addressed. This exclusion of services and infrastructure comes with a heavy price — according to Mossawa figures, 46% of civilian casualties during the Lebanon war 2006 were Arab citizens of Israel.

On a number of occasions, Education Minister Yuli Tamir failed to respond to the demand to solve the problem of shortage of shelters in Arab schools; for example, 80% of students at schools of Nazareth are without shelters.

Mossawa demands that members of the Knesset and government ministries provide details about the exclusion of Arab citizens and localities during this week's training exercises.

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*The Mossawa Center, the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works to promote equality for 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.*