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Lieberman again fuels incitement against Arab political leadership and further complicates Middle East reality

Thursday August 6th 2009 - Israeli Foreign Minister and head of the extremist right wing Yisrael Beiteinu Party, and speculated former member of the terrorist Kach Movement, Avigdor Lieberman, stated Wednesday that Arab member of Knesset Ahmad Tibi, head of the United Arab List is more dangerous to Israel than the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, and the Islamic Jihad and Israel's "main problem isn't the Palestinians but Ahmed Tibi and others like him".

This is Lieberman's most recent attack against the political legitimacy of Arab MKs, adding to a catalogue of racial incitement targeted at Arabs from high profile leaders with the intent of further undermining the legitimacy of the Arab community in Israel.

Lieberman's statement was in response to Tibi calling for the future Palestinian state to be free of Israeli settlers. Lieberman's comment was made during a visit to Ghajar village, the contentious village straddling Israel's de facto border in the north with Lebanon, which Lieberman visited with the purpose of coming closer to a permanent solution to the future status of the village, where residents have Israeli citizenship.

It has been speculated that Lieberman intends to propose to the security cabinet that a fence should be built in Ghajar, dividing the village. Mossawa expresses deep concern that any physical separation of the community will have severe socioeconomic and family implications for these Arab citizens of Israel, as seen in divided communities of 1967 across the Green Line.

The Mossawa Center identifies a reoccurring and alarming correlation between racial, religious and homophobic incitement espoused at the highest political levels and violence within and between communities in Israel, for example the recent Haredim violence in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Har Homa and the August 1st attacks against the Gay community in Tel Aviv.

Mossawa urges the government and international community to recognize the violent implications of political incitement which has lead to the increasing marginalization of the Arab community since 1948.

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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.