



Israeli government policy toward the Arab community

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

To this end the following are the main issues facing the Arab minority in Israel.

Discriminatory Legislation

Several legislative proposals have been submitted and some approved with the aim to alienate and deepen the discrimination against the Arab community. In the last few years proposals like the citizenship Law and the Nakba Law have been approved. These types of laws limit freedom of expression and affect the daily life of thousands of families. Several Proposed legislation would also hinder the rights of Arab citizens. These include the Praver Plan, the Jewish State Law and the NGO's Law. Further, extreme right MKs are increasing their efforts to curtail the freedoms of Arab MKs and expel them from the Knesset. These attempts have culminated in the introduction of a bill which would make it much easier for Arab MKs to be expelled and if passed will set a dangerous precedent. and most recently a bill, which aims to expel Arab MKs from the Knesset. All these laws aim to create confrontations between the Arab community, the state authorities and Jewish majority. It is important for the international community to be aware of these policies so they can take action against them.

Home demolitions

The village of Al-Araqib in the Negev has been demolished over 93 times. In the Negev there are still 100,000 people living in unrecognized villages meaning they are not connected to water, electricity or sanitation services. These people are calling the government to leave them to live on their land. The government wants them to move to urbanized towns which are completely contradictory to the way of life of the Bedouin people. In May of this year the Supreme Court approved a government plan to evacuate Umm El-Hiran village to make way for a Jewish town. Those Bedouins who did move to the urbanized towns found themselves in situations of dire poverty. Women in the Bedouin community whether in recognized or unrecognized villages have one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country. It is important that these women are supported so as to improve the economic situation of all Bedouin communities. Recently demolitions in other Arab localities such as the city of Taibe have taken place. The reason cited for these demolitions is that the structures were built without a permit but approximately 45% of Arab towns and villages do not have an authorized master plan. About 40% of land is authorized by detailed plans in the jurisdiction area, a rather high percentage, which is explained by the lack of master plans that meets the needs of these Arab areas. More than 50% of Arab towns and villages have requested an expansion of their jurisdiction areas, 45% were approved but the towns and villages are still waiting for the expansions to be implemented. Approximately 30% of Arab towns and villages do not have state lands in order to build schools, community centers etc. This situation puts many in the situation of building illegally or dealing with over crowding.



Violence against Arab citizens

Since October 2000 53 Arab citizens have been killed. The most recent death was in February 2016. 36 of those cases involve police officers. In only 3 cases was the officer convicted of a crime and even in those cases they only served 6-14 months in jail. In 2003 the Or Commission which was established to investigate the events of October 2000 determined that it should be made unequivocally clear that firing live ammunition, including sniper fire and rubber coated bullets, is not a means to disperse crowds by the police. This determination has been ignored time after time by Israeli police when dealing with Arab citizens and has led to unnecessary deaths of innocent civilians. The department for police investigation in the ministry of justice rarely gives these cases the attention they deserve. Additionally, in recent years there has also been an increase of destructive attacks against Arab citizens, mostly linked to the Jewish hate group "Price Tag" the Church of Multiplication was the scene of an Arson attack in which two people were injured and the church itself was gutted. Three members of the extremist group Lehava were found guilty of a separate arson attack on the bilingual Jewish Arab school in Jerusalem. Mossawa calls on the Israeli government to conduct full investigations in to these acts of violence and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Access to Education

The shortage of classrooms in Arab society has been a problem known in the education sector for many years. The reason for the issue is simple: not enough classrooms were built in the Arab schools, despite promises made by the Ministry of Education. For example, a government decision of March 2007 called the Compulsory Education Law stipulated that by 2011, there should have been 3,200 classrooms built in Arab towns. However, at the end of 2011, the shortage of classrooms in the Arab communities was over 4502 classes approximately 30% of all classrooms in the Arab communities. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of the buildings in Arab education kindergarten classes were missing on the eve of the Compulsory Education Law mentioned above. This meant that 2,026 preschools were missing in 2012. And more astonishingly, this means that kindergarten classes operated for only 3,325 Arab children in Israel. In other words there was already a 61% shortage of classrooms for children starting their education at age 3,4, or 5.

Besides the shortage of classrooms, Arab schools are also lacking the resources needed to stimulate the children. For example, in 2000, the Ministry of Education set a target of placing one computer for every five students, but in 2011 there was only one computer station for every 12 children on average in Israel. When one looks at the numbers by sectors, one can see that when it came to the religious sector, there was actually one computer station for every 9 students while when it came to the Arab sector, there was one computer for every 20 students.

Furthermore, there is a shortage of services such as psychological and educational counseling in these Arab schools. Building classrooms and providing services will prove difficult given that 62.9% of the Education Ministry's payments are transferred to Jews, 22.1% to Arabs, 14.9% to mixed cities. Compulsory education, the foundation for young Arabs' educational endeavors in Israel, requires serious attention in order to prepare Arab students for higher education.

Private church schools also suffer from the discriminatory allocation of the education budget. Church schools in Israel are run by the churches, but serve students of all religions. They



fall into the category of “recognized but unofficial”, and formerly received 65% of their budgets from the state, but that figure was cut to 34 percent in 2014. The rest of the school’s budget is covered by tuition costs, which have increasingly become a costly burden to Arab families. In contrast, the Orthodox Jewish schools in Israel, which are also “recognized and unofficial” receive 100% of their budget from the state. This discrimination led to a schools strike in September 2015 until the government agreed to allocate more funds. Budget allocations are still however not equal to the funding for Jewish schools under the same category.

Socioeconomic disparity between Jewish population and Arab population in Israel

According to a report from the Israeli government appointed committee to fight poverty, the Arab minority makes up 38.9% of the total population in Israel living in poverty, even though they are only 20% of the population in total, and 60% of Arab children are living in poverty. A 2015 report by the OECD found Israel to have one of the most unequal economies in the western world. 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 1.5% of researchers in Israel are Arab researchers, fewer than 1% of the research and development institutions have Arab employees. The Israeli government has yet to fully implement its own mandate of 10% of government employees being Arab citizens by 2012. 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.

Disproportionate allocation of funds from the state budget to the Arab community

Based on an analysis of the 2014 state budget the Israeli government allocates only approximately 6% of the development budget to the needs of the Arab minority, even though they make up 20% of the total population in Israel. Even when there are funds allocated for development they are often withheld from being distributed. Currently 664 million shekels marked for development in the Arab community are awaiting approval from the Exceptions Committee. This disproportionate allocation of funds has a profoundly negative impact on the Arab communities in Israel in the sectors of; education, socio economic status, employment, and municipal planning. It has also had a detrimental impact on Arab culture organizations and institutions in Israel. Currently the Ministry of Culture allocates less than 3% of its budget to Arab culture organizations or projects. The Mossawa Center calls to stop socioeconomic discrimination against the Arab minority in Israel and hopes that the Israeli government will implement a more equitable allocation of funds. The Israeli government recently announced a decision to increase allocations to the Arab community but it has announced such decisions in the past and they are never fully implemented if at all. The government has yet to lay out how and to which sectors the funds will be allocated. Thorough and persistent follow up is required if there is a hope that even part of this government decision will be implemented.

Governmental attack on Arab culture

The newly appointed Minister of Culture, Miri Regev is worked to stop the submission of a mapping of culture needs in the Arab community to the Supreme Court and only did so when forced by the court. This mapping found that Arab villages have no arts centers, museums or



cinematheques. Additionally, important Arab cultural institutions such as the Al-Midan Theatre have lost their municipal funding. Prime Minister Netanyahu has ordered inquiry into how to shut down Palestine 48 TV station, which would serve Arab citizens. Actors and filmmaker such Mohamad Bakry, Suha Araf and Norman Issa have been threatened by government and settlers and lost funding for their projects because they are critical of the government. Mossawa calls on the Israeli government to end these discriminatory actions with violate the freedom of expression for Arab citizens.

Racial incitement

The most recent elections in Israel saw an increase in racist and inciting rhetoric from many politicians in order to gain votes. One of the most egregious of these statements came from Prime Minister Netanyahu himself. Out of fear of losing his power in the government he made short video telling the Israeli people that “The Arabs are coming out in to vote in droves” This statement was meant to scare Jewish Israeli voters in to going out to vote and voting for Likud so that they might be protected from the “droves” of Arab voters. Many world leaders and activists expressed concern at this obviously racist attitude towards 20% of Israeli voters. President Obama came out against Netanyahu’s statement calling it "cynical" and "divisive." Political and Religious leaders are using racial incitement and the legal system neglects these statements that have led to direct use of violence by police officers and citizens.

Outlawing Islamic Institutions

Since 2000, and under the global pretext of the War on Terror, the Israeli Government has increased its authority to declare that particular associations and organizations are “terror” organizations. Until 2000, Israel declared 55 organizations to be a “terrorist organization” and/or “unlawful association,” whereas between 2001 and June/2015 the number reached 320 declarations. In November 2015 the Israeli government declared the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement illegal and shut down 17 of its organizations and charities located in localities and cities across Israel. In its practice, the Israeli Government relies on two legislations: 1) The Defense (Emergency) Regulations (1945) and 2) the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (1948). Both legislations are draconian in nature, encompass several unconstitutional components, and are meant to apply to situations of armed conflict. Nevertheless, the power given to the Minister of Security to declare that an organization is a “terrorist organization” or an “unlawful association” has been used widely in recent years.

Further, the ability to subject these decisions to judicial scrutiny and to have a fair trial is rather limited. First, the decisions are usually based on intelligence information that is kept confidential and the concerned organizations are unable to review or to respond to any of the findings or the allegations brought in this information. Second, the law itself limits this ability in terms of the burden of proof and evidentiary weight. For example, according to article 8 of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance, “If the Government, by notice in the Official Gazette, declares that a particular body of persons is a terrorist organization, the notice shall serve, in any legal proceeding, as proof that that body of persons is a terrorist organization, unless the contrary is proved.” In addition, alongside the authority given to the Minister of Security to declare that particular associations are “terrorist organization” and “unlawful association,” the law authorizes



the Police Commissioner to close the offices of such organizations and associations. The properties of such organizations are subject to sequestration.

Incidents of racism against Arab citizens

From March 2015-March 2016 incidents of racism have almost doubled from 237 to 465. 311 of which were directed at the Arab community. This includes racist actions coming from elected representatives, state institutions, academic institutions, businesses, organizations, the media and members of the general population. One example of such actions against the Arab citizens is the continued racial profiling at Ben Gurion airport. Several lawsuits are currently pending against the airport for racial profiling leading to degrading and humiliating treatment of Arab citizens attempting to travel into or from the airport. Another example is the many attempts of extreme right MKs to curtail the freedoms of Arab MKs and expel them from the Knesset. These attempts have culminated in the introduction of a bill which would make it much easier for Arab MKs to be expelled and if passed will set a dangerous precedent.

Recommendations

The Mossawa Center would once again like to thank you for making time to learn about the issues affecting the Arab minority in Israel. The Mossawa Center makes the following recommendations for action to improve the status of the Arab minority in Israel.

- Take a public stance against racial incitement from political officials.
- Urge Israeli officials to stop home demolitions and immediately recognize all current Bedouin villages as well as providing all basic services they are entitled to as citizens of the State of Israel.
- Insist that the Israeli government fully investigate cases of police violence against Arab citizens especially when they result in death.
- Hold the Israeli government accountable to its recently announced decision to increase funds allocated to the Arab community
- Ensure inclusion of Arab citizens in projects associated with Horizon 2020.
- Urge the Israeli government to ensure freedom of expression and culture for Arab citizens
- Use lateral agreements between Israel and the European Union to ensure protection of minority rights and that Israeli officials will increase investment in Arab communities through increasing the allocation of funds to those communities from the state budget and ending economically discriminatory policies.