



MOSSAWA News

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Mossawa is Working to Include the Voice of the Arab Minority in the Current Peace Negotiations

The Arab minority in Israel represents 20% of the population, and yet during the current and previous peace negotiations, the Arab minority has not been included in the talks and the political agenda of the negotiations, which has left them marginalized from a possible peace agreement. This is a mistake on the part of the negotiators. Not only should the situation of Arab citizens of Israel be taken in to account during negotiations, but the Arab community in Israel is also in a very unique position to assist in both official and unofficial forms of peace talks. The Arab minority in Israel has experience and familiarity with the languages and cultures of both sides, as well as the fears and aspirations of both sides. This wealth of knowledge and understanding should be used for its potential in dialogue and peace making and not be allowed to go to waste.

Mossawa has been working hard

since the beginning of the most recent round of negotiations to bring the voices of the Arab minority to the negotiating table. We presented a paper on the importance of including the Arab minority



in negotiations to EU Parliament President Martin Schulz, during his visit in February to the region. The paper was also presented to other officials with influence on ne-

gotiations.

Mossawa also organized a delegation of representatives from all the ethnic groups in Israel to travel to the USA on a speaking tour. The delegation included; representatives of the Arab minority, as well as members of the Reform, Russian, Mizrahi (eastern decent), and Ethiopian Jewish communities. They will travel to the United States to speak to the American public as well as strategic individuals and organizations to request their help in pressuring Secretary Kerry, as well as all those involved in negotia-

tions, to include the voices of the Arab minority and ethnic groups in the negotiations for peace, and to safe guard the social, political, and collective rights of all citizens. The tour is also challenging the notion that separation and segregation are the only way forward for peace, by bringing together a diverse group for the goal of promoting peace and a shared future.

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The Mossawa Center Legal Status Conference:

An alternative platform in the debate about the future of the Arab community

The lack of a unified voice for the Palestinian community living in Israel has often been pointed to as a major road block in their struggle for civil and political rights. Nationally, there are different political parties and different concerns geographically. Locally, people are divided by family and by religion. This fragmentation within Arab society has weakened its voice and its ability to work collectively against the discrimination it faces from Israeli society and the Israeli government. It has also weakened its capacity to advocate for the community in the international arena. The international community often overlooks the Arab community in Israel or does not fully understand the gravity of their situation. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the voice of the Arab community in Israel is strong and clear when addressing the Israeli government and international actors.

In an effort to bring the Arab community together to discuss the most relevant and pressing issues, and also bring some of these issues to the attention of the international community, the Mossawa Center hosted its annual legal status conference in Nazareth in September 2013. The conference included a diverse array of speakers and participants, ranging from the heads of political parties to esteemed professors and legal experts and included members of both the Arab and Jewish community. The conference opened with a keynote address on the legal status of the Arab community in light of the proposed political solutions. This was followed by three interactive panels entitled: Legal and Public Instruments in the Fight against Discrimination and Racism, New Legislation on Land, Planning, and Construction – The Negev Case, The Political Influences on the Judicial System, and The Impact of the Regional Crisis on the Shared Future Vision of the Arab Community.

The discussions at the conference raised many questions relating to the



state of the Arab community in Israel and actions that should be taken for the future. There was discussion on many topics including citizenship, unity, land rights, culture, the judicial system, a one-state or two-state solution, and language. Several participants brought up the question of why there isn't a unified Arab party in Israel and panelists proceeded to debate the merit of unity versus diversity in political parties. There was also debate over whether accepting a two-state solution as a "realistic" solution was equal to simply taking what Israel gives out of fear of getting worse later. There

was also much conversation on the topic of language and how Palestinians can maintain the Arabic language while living in a Hebrew-speaking country. In the panel on the judicial system, the courts were brought up as an obstacle to justice and the suggestion of training for both judges and lawyers was given to better prepare both parties for the legal issues facing the Arab community. The conference ended on a positive note with many participants speaking of future plans and actions to be taken based on the topics covered in the panels and the keynote address.



The Socio-Economic Department at Mossawa will monitor the State Budget allocation of 1.8 billion Shekels

For the next two years the socioeconomic department at the Mossawa Center will monitor the State Budget allocation of 1.8 billion shekels every year for Arab communities. The Mossawa Center is a leading Arab organization focused on the impact of the state budget that was approved in late July 2013. The budget was approved together with dozens of economic legislative changes that have been approved. The latest budget that was approved is for 2013 and 2014.

During the hearings on the budget and the Arrangements Law, the Mossawa Center demanded the cancelation of the health tax imposed on Housewives and managed together with other social organizations to repeal the decree. The Center also demanded the prevention of cuts in child allowances to avert the deepening of poverty among children and families living below the poverty line. The Center demanded that the Finance Ministry refrain from cutting grants to municipal authorities, these grants help disadvantaged authorities to provide basic services. The Center for Local Authorities signed an agreement with the government that prevented the cutting of balance grants. Arab authorities, who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder are supposed to get a billion shekels to help with regular budgets and rehabilitation programs for especially distressed communities. Balance grants for local authorities: a billion shekels should help weakened Arab authorities deal with deficits created by the discrimination in employment, construction and industry.

Over the next two years the Mossawa Center will relay and monitor budgets that are approved by the Knesset and designated for development in Arab communities. The following are six governmental decisions dealing with the development: Decision 1539 - Planning and Development of 13 Arab



communities in the north, Decision 3211 - Arab Bedouin in the North; Decision 3708 - Arab Bedouin in the Negev; Decision 2861 - Arab Druze North; Decision 4193 - employment and housing; Decision 4432 - Planning and building. The Center will also monitor the implementation of another program that deals with accessibility of higher education to the Arab public. The monitoring program will be in cooperation with the Heads of Arab Local Councils and various professional and social organizations.

Areas that the Mossawa Center will be monitoring are:

- Construction of classrooms:
- Employment in construction and industrial zones
- Encouragement of integration of Arab citizens in employment in the public and private sector
- Development of water and sewer systems and solutions for recycling
- Expansion of the public transport network to Arab communities
- Promoting the maintenance of hazardous inter-city roads near Arab communities
- promoting the maintenance of urban roads
- Construction of new neighborhoods and public institutions
- Promotion of planning processes
- Promoting the development of the Negev, including education, women's employment, and vocational training for young people.
- Establishment of public institutions in local authorities
- Making a higher education acces-



sibility plan for the Arab population

- Closing the gaps in local authority social services.
- Promoting the issue of disparities in disease and medical services.
- Support for Arab cultural organizations



Palestinian Culture reaching thousands of homes in the Month of Culture



lieve it is important to contribute to the strengthening of the Palestinian cultural sector as a path for economic, social, and human development and sees it as a critical tool for the advocacy of human rights. The month of activities was hosted in partnership with project partners, Al Masghal Music School in Haifa and Al Rowwad Cultural and Theatre organization in Bethlehem as well as the Council for Arab Local Authorities and a large network of Arab culture organizations in Israel.

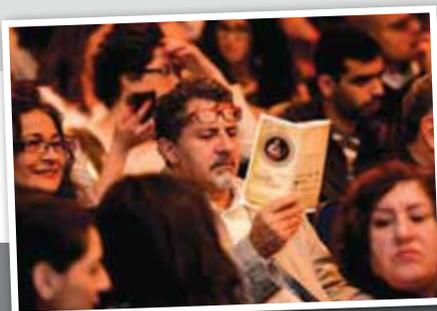
The Mossawa Center's "Investing in Palestinian Culture in Israel and the oPt" project has reached its third and last year in 2014 with the support of the European Union. Similarly to the past two years, this year the Mossawa Center hosted the annual celebration of Palestinian National Culture Day in partnership with a network of Arab culture organizations located over both sides of the Green Line. Events were hosted throughout March in over 15 localities with an outstanding array of over 60 cultural events, and reaching over 10,000 participants. Events included readings of Palestinian literature, film screenings, theatre and dance productions, musical ensembles, art exhibits, lectures and children's shows.

The main event on the 13th of March marked the official day of Palestinian National Culture Day and the birthday of one of the most important Palestinian poets, Mahmoud Darwish. The program, the premier of a production written and performed by Arab artists, was hosted in Haifa at the Kreiger Hall. It was a magical evening of Andalusian music accompanied by singers in a musical theatre production.

The Mossawa Center and our project partners be-



Andalusian Music Concert, Haifa



Makan, Music and Poetry performance, Lod



Documentary film screening, "Zahra", Arara



International Women's Day Celebration, Tira



Discriminatory Bills and Laws in the Israeli Knesset



Equality and non-discrimination, fundamental principles of a democracy, are consistently undermined by Israel in its priority to protect the Jewish nature of the state. However, the Israeli government continues to claim to be “the only democracy in the Middle East” because it strategically presents these discriminatory policies and laws as necessary for national security. Many do not realize that Israel has functioned under a proclaimed “State of Emergency” since 1948. Under this emergency status, many laws pass under the radar of the average Israeli citizen. For example, the “Citizenship Law,” which separates families with one spouse from Israel and one spouse from an “enemy state,” is considered necessary from a security perspective, and thus legal. Unfortunately, many of these laws and policies (over thirty, according to Mossawa’s legal department) have negatively impacted innocent civilians and violated Israel’s Basic Law of Human Dignity and Liberty.

“Elections Threshold” Bill

The Israeli government often points to its open, national elections as determinate proof of its democratic nature. Arab citizens are allowed to vote and take part in the parliament (“Knesset”) as are Jewish citizens. However, social dynamics have led to the situation in which no Arab political party has ever been invited to join a ruling coalition, and therefore, Arab parties have had a minimal impact on the government. This year, a bill passed which threatens the participation of Arab parties completely.

In July 2013, two amendments to the “Law of Governance” in the Basic Law passed their first reading. The most controversial amendment is a clause raising the threshold to enter the Knesset from two percent of the national votes to 3.25 percent of the national votes. This change will in affect, bar minority parties from participating in the Knesset; a majority of the current Arab parties. Despite the fact that Members of Knesset from Jewish and Arab par-

ties alike have spoken against this bill as discriminatory the bill was passed in the Knesset in March 2014.

“Separate Representation” Bill

On February 24th 2014 the Knesset passed a bill into law, which attempts to create a division between Christian and Muslim citizens in Israel by defining Palestinian Christians in Israel as “non-Arabs.” Yariv Levin, Likud Beitenu coalition chairman declared that Christians will receive separate representation on the public advisory board of the Equal Employment Opportunity commission and justified the bill as a historic step that would connect Jews and Christians. The bill passed in the Knesset with a vote of 31 in favor and 6 against, despite the objections of the Equal Employment Opportunity commissioner Tziona Koenig-Yair who said the bill was superfluous and equivalent to having separate representation for Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews.

This is the first time the Palestinian Christian community is being differentiated from the rest of the Palestinian community. The bill emphasizes the religious divisions that Israeli government policy attempts to create in the Arab community. The Mossawa Center, along with other Arab CSO’s, came out strongly against the passing of this bill in a joint press release and they are currently working in cooperation to stop the imaginary divisions of the bill.

“Contributors to the State” Bill

The proposed bill, which will soon be presented for its first reading, would give preferences in employment (including in the public sector), salary, student housing, admission to higher education, and land allocation, to citizens who complete military or national service. This bill is similar to a previous bill which was blocked by the Minister of Justice Tzipi Livni. The Contributors to the State bill threatens to effectively violate protections for Arab citizens of Israel, whom are exempt from military service.

The Law for Fair Representation of Arab citizens (2000) acknowledged Arab under-representation in Israel’s public sector. Since 2004, the law has claimed to enforce a quota of 10% of civil service positions for Arab citizens. Unfortunately, this quota has never been met; in 2012, Arab citizens hold only 6% of public sector positions. Since almost all Arab citizens do not participate in military or national service, the Contributors to the State bill may further decrease civil service positions for Arabs and contradict the previous law on fair representation.

It should also be noted that the Ministry of Defense allocates more than 1.7 billion NIS in grants each year to military veterans. Preference for veterans in land allocation, student housing, and employment is already practiced. Although legislation designed to allow equality in employment was approved, hiring discrimination persists in many workplaces.

Praver-Begin Bill

The Praver-Begin Bill calls for the mass relocation of the Arab Bedouin community in the Negev desert to planned, “recognized” towns. If fully implemented, the Praver-Begin Plan will result in the destruction of 35 “unrecognized” Arab Bedouin villages, the forced displacement of up to 30,000 Arab Bedouin citizens of Israel, and the dispossession of their historical lands in the Negev. The plan has been met with the Arab Bedouin community’s complete rejection, along with that of the entire Arab minority and strong disapproval from the international community and human rights groups. Most recently the plan has been put on pause and has yet to pass in the Knesset after Benny Begin withdrew his support for the bill and admitted to not including the Bedouin community’s input while drafting the plan. Implementation of the plan is now in the hands of Agriculture Minister Yair Shamir. He has announced his intentions to modify the current plan and include input from the Bedouin community.



Discriminatory Bills and Laws in the Israeli Knesset

In November, two Bedouin villages, Umm Al-Hiran and Atir, were allotted as the location for a new Jewish town. This announcement was made by the government's cabinet at the site of David Ben Gurion's burial in SdeBoker. Ben Gurion was a key nationalist figure who championed the need for Jewish settlement in the Negev as Zionism's "final frontier." Demolitions of Bedouin villages from this area seem inevitable, as they have continuously occurred in other parts of the Negev. One Bedouin village, Al-Araqib, has been demolished by the Israeli government almost seventy times, with the recent demolition including the village's cemetery – showing immense disrespect for re-

ligious sites.

Discrimination in the Israeli Courts

A study in 2011 conducted by the Israeli Bar Association and Israeli Courts Administration recognized that Arabs are given jail sentences with more frequency than Jews convicted of the same offenses, and Arabs receive longer sentences than Jews who are jailed. While the problem has been recognized, steps have not been taken to change the situation.

The Case of the Killing of Natan-Zada

In August 2013, the Haifa District Court acquitted five members of the Arab

community on charges of attempted murder for the killing of Natan-Zada, an Israeli soldier who went A.W.O.L. and opened fire on a bus in ShefaAmer in 2005, killing four Arab citizens and wounding twelve. Seven remaining suspects were charged with manslaughter and other charges, all requiring the suspects to serve jail sentences varying from eight months to two years. The men claim that their involvement with the death of Natan-Zada was self-defence. There is no precedent of Jewish citizens who were accused of manslaughter in similar situations; rather, they are usually applauded by the state for protecting civilians from terrorism.

After years of advocacy from Mossawa Israel Director of Budget admits to the large gap in budget allocations for the Arab minority

On March 10th, the director of budgeting at the Ministry of Finance, Amir Levi made an announcement to Haaretz's Marker Magazine noting the gaps in budget allocations between Arabs and Jews in Israel. In this announcement, he showed that there were large gaps in resources allocated to public transportation, business property, industrial zones and education. He urged the government to take an urgent step towards closing the gap and increasing the resources allocated to the Arab community.

According to the most recent state budget analysis conducted by the socio-economic department at Mossawa, the Arab minority receives only 6.25% of state development budget

allocations despite making up 20% of the total population.

The Mossawa Center has been advocating for the increase of budget allocations to the Arab Community since its establishment in 1997. In recent months we have stepped up our advocacy efforts. A report was published and distributed to all relevant ministries on the needs of the Arab minority. The Mossawa economist prepared documents for a presentation given by the head of the Arab Authorities to Yair Lapid on the same day he visited Sakhnin and Amir Levi made his statements. The socio-economic team also initiated and presented at a meeting in the Knesset addressing the issues of the state budget and lack of allocation to the Arab minority.

Three Year “Empowering the Periphery” Project Culminates in showcase event



The culminating event of the “Empowering the Periphery” project took place on December 19th at the Lakiya community center. At the event the products of many of the economic endeavors were showcased, including embroidery, Freekeh, and the new designs in fashion. Several short movies that had been produced showing the work of the groups were also shown. Representatives from the different participating groups spoke about their work and the positive impact the project has had on their communities and themselves.

EU Ambassador-designate to Israel, Lars Faaborg-Andersen also spoke at the event about the capacity of civil society organizations to make changes for the better. In his speech Faaborg-Andersen said, “Civil society organizations have a vital role in making structural changes in societies, as they are best placed to know population’s needs in terms of development.”

Change, he said, was being promoted by the EU as evidenced by the cooperative project with Mossawa, Sidreh and Lakiya Women’s association, Filastiniyat from Ramallah and the Heinrich Boll Foundation.

Over 19 economic projects led by women and youth from the Negev and the oPt were presented at the event. The three year project was coordinated by the Mossawa Center with the support of the European Union and in cooperation with Sidreh, Lakiya Women’s association, Filastiniyat from Ramallah and the Heinrich Boll Foundation. It enabled women and youth from marginalized areas such as the Negev

and the oPt to take part in economic and advocacy skills capacity building.

The Women’s Leadership Group (West Bank) “Shalabiyeh”

Handmade embroidery is a traditional Palestinian art practiced by Palestinian women. The women’s leadership group is going one step further by transforming this tradition into a profitable business. The women embroider beautiful, modern designs on jeans, blouses, T-shirts and pants, thereby making everyday clothing into walking art. The project will provide customers with a fashion-forward garment that will combine tradition with modernity. The group plans to sell their items locally, but also has plans to expand to international markets in the future. The brand name of the clothing is Shalabiyeh, which means “pretty” in Arabic.

The Rural Women (Gaza) “Banat Baladna”

A rural group of women from Gaza have created a business of baked goods such as pizza, meat pastry, cheese pastry, and traditional sweets. They also are involved in the production of maftool (Palestinian couscous) from wheat crops. Beit Lahia, in Gaza, will be the main market for the project since there is no other pastry industry in that area. The strength of this project is centered on the affordable prices. The business improved the status of living of the women involved by giving the women a sustainable source of income.

The Bedouin Group (Gaza) “Sheep Farm”

The sheep-breeding project was the

idea of a group of Bedouin youth from Um al-Nasser village in the northern Gaza Strip. The project breeds a traditional strain of domestic sheep. The newborn male sheep will be sold after six months in Um al-Nasser village. The group will not only sell the newborn sheep, but also the sheep products such as milk and yogurt. The business will provide employment opportunities for the Bedouin youth, and reduce poverty in the village.

The Activist Group (West Bank) “Taboon”

The activist youth are exercising their right to free speech through the design and production of t-shirts with youthful and modern designs. The designs contain national, social, and modern themes that are intended to inspire youth. These designs will be presented to a focus group and to university students in order to select the most popular designs for production. Each phase of the project (the duration is four months) will have different designs according to the political, economic, and social situation. Initially, the new brand will be marketed in the lo-



ering the Periphery” vent at Lakiyah community center



cal Palestinian market. Expansion into regional and international markets will be the next phase of the project. The project will create employment opportunities for youth in the area as well as giving them a creative outlet for expressing themselves. It will also create a new Palestinian brand that can compete locally and internationally, giving young Palestinians a stronger voice in the international community.

Bloggers and Artists Groups (Gaza) “Palestinian Art”

The group created a range of art works depicting the reality of everyday life in Gaza. The exhibit includes paintings, photography, caricature, and prints and can be viewed in Gaza. An online gallery was also established in order to exhibit their work to a larger audience. Several pieces of art will be sold in Gaza in order to decorate the area (such as in restaurants, coffee shops, and internet cafes) at affordable prices. The regional and international market will be targeted in the next phase of the project. The project is creating employment opportunities for the members of the group as well as empow-



ering them socially and economically. The community is also benefiting from the availability of affordable art work and recycling resources.

The Rural Women’s group (West Bank) “Jalboun Freekeh”

To promote women’s empowerment and financial independence, the rural women’s group in Jalboun harvested their land of a local grain called “Freekeh.” Freekeh, a dried, green wheat, is a traditional ingredient in Palestinian food. In January and February of 2012, the women produced about 750 kilos of freekeh, despite the difficult weather conditions. The freekeh will be marketed mainly in the village of Jalboun, in Jenin, and in all the Palestinian territories through the wholesale and retail markets. In 2014, the women will be multiplying their harvest tenfold due to the success of the first harvest.

The Unionist Group (West Bank) “Community Empowerment”

According to the needs assessment of the group, unemployment is considered the number one issue for youth in the community in the West Bank. In 2011, West Bank youth aged 20-24 had the highest unemployment rate at 32.9%. The group chose to work towards decreasing unemployment; this was done through advocacy and media trainings at the local level, teaching women and youth of marginalized communities to interact with the state in regard to employment issues. These trainings empowered participants to engage state actors that before seemed inaccessible and unresponsive without the correct advocacy tools.

The Jerusalem, Media, and Blogger Groups (West Bank) “Online Media”

These three groups agreed on an intersecting project; a YouTube channel in coordination with an online radio and media agency, in order to exhibit initiatives taken by local youth. One of their featured stories focused on a children’s festival in Nabi Samuel which aimed to advocate for freedom of movement for the residents of the village.

The Media Group (Gaza) “Shot media”

The Media Youth group agreed on utilizing their talents and skills by selling media services such as documentary film making, reporting, photography, etc. These services will be provided to reflect youth issues and interests. This project will give the youth in Gaza tools with which they can use to raise their voices and influence the media, which is currently dominated by the political parties. This project is creating employment opportunities for the group members as well as others.

Unionist Youth (West Bank) Jafra Honey Production

After analyzing the local needs of the community, including the need to reduce the cost of expense items, the Unionist youth group decided to create a bee farm. Delicious, healthy and a natural sweetener, Jafra Honey Production located in Asirah Al-Qiblih village near Nablus, brings you fresh honey. The honey is available in local markets or direct from Jafra.





Three Year “Empowering the Periphery” Project Culminates in showcase event at Lakiyah community center

Bedouin Youth Group 1 (Negev) Photo Studio

Located in the Bedouin village of Lakiya in the South of Israel, this photo studio will give the many groups that visit Lakiya the opportunity to dress in traditional Bedouin clothing and receive a photo as a memento to remember their visit to the Negev.

Bedouin Youth Group 2 (Negev): Fashion Design Studio “Al Badyi”

Local seamstresses work with youth studying fashion design to produce a clothing range for the modern Bedouin woman. The fashion studio turned traditional Bedouin embroidery into a local brand in order to give young women the opportunity design garments and at the same time, promote their traditional folkloric art. The clothes are available for the visitors to the Lakiya village, who have the opportunity to purchase clothing incorporating traditional design on modern clothing.

Women Group 1 and Youth Group 3 (Negev): Lakiya Gymnasium

Often overlooked in light of the political and economic pressures on the Bedouin community is the need to maintain their health. As part of their economic initiative, the Women group 1 joined forces with the Youth group 3 to open a gymnasium for the first time in Lakiya village, complete with exercise equipment and a personal trainer to assist the local community to improve their health and get fit with a complete personalized training program to include weight training, and aerobics training. Services will include individual training and class training groups.

Bedouin Youth Group 4 (Negev): Internet Café

Critically lacking in the Lakiya villages and surrounding Bedouin communities, was a technology service provider. To answer this need, the Lakiya Internet Café provides computer and internet



services for the students in the village, and those from surrounding unrecognized villages, with black and white, or colored printing, photocopy machines, fax machines, internet access, and translation services for document.

Women’s Group (Negev): Sewing and Design Course

With the intention to assist other women to become financially independent, the Women’s Group established a Sewing and Design Center offering courses for the local women. The Center holds courses in sewing including new and advanced design skills, basic sewing, advanced sewing, embroidery, and tailoring.

Palestinian Victims of Price Tag Attacks are Left with the Destruction and the Bill

The “Price Tag” movement, carried out by right-wing ideological settlers, commits acts of violence and destruction against Palestinians and left-wing Israelis in “revenge” for actions by the Israeli government and army against settlement construction. A freeze in settlement building or the dismantling of a settlement is seen as an act of aggression. Usually, the Price Tag settlers take out their anger on neighboring Palestinians in the West Bank. This has resulted in the burning of mosques, cars, racist graffiti, etc. Since 2011, the Price Tag movement began attacking Palestinians inside the Green Line as well. Despite the recent creation of an Israeli police unit specifically designated to pursue perpetrators of these attacks, Price Tag attacks have not decreased.

The Palestinian citizens of Israel whom are victims of these crimes have had little success in getting financial reimbursement from the Israeli government for the damage caused by Price Tag

attacks. Compensation from the state is only available for victims of “terror attacks.” The Israeli government has decided to classify perpetrators of Price Tag attacks as members of an illegal organization rather than terrorists. This distinction makes the Palestinian victims ineligible for financial reimbursement.

In June 2013, the tires of 28 cars in the Palestinian village of Abu Ghosh were slashed and hate slogans such as “Arabs Out” was painted on nearby homes. For one family, four cars were damaged with repairs costing up to 5,000 NIS (1,400 USD). Only families with comprehensive insurance will be reimbursed for their repair costs; the others will have to pay out of pocket.

In another incident in April, four cars in the village of Akbara were set on fire, and graffiti on a nearby wall read, “Don’t touch our (Jewish) girls – Price Tag.” The fire department was called to put out the blazing cars and a week later the car owners received a bill for 1,500

NIS (417 USD) from the fire department. When Osama Halil, one of the car owners, questioned the fire department about the bill, he was told the bill would be split between the owners of all four cars, but that he would still have to pay his share.

The Mossawa Center via the Coalition Against Racism took part in a discussion in the Knesset with representatives from police and security forces in Israel. Currently compensation to victims of “Price Tag” attacks only occurs in cases of bodily harm. As such, Mossawa with the Coalition Against Racism are working with the Israeli Economy Minister to change the law currently in place to include compensation for property damage as well. A letter was sent to the minister in the beginning of February 2014 requesting a broadening of the current law. If the minister makes no action in three weeks or refuses to change the law the request will be taken to the Israeli Supreme Court.

Protests Increase Against Israeli Government's Praver-Begin Plan

On November 30th, 2013, dozens of demonstrations were organized throughout Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, and internationally, in a "Day of Rage" against the Israeli Praver-Begin Plan, which threatens to displace over 30,000 Bedouin citizens of Israel from their homes in the Negev desert. For months, demonstrations, vigils, and other non-violent actions have been carried out in attempts to increase Israeli and international awareness of this potentially volatile policy. For instance, in July, after the bill passed its first reading in Knesset, protests broke out in Beer Sheva, Haifa, Jerusalem, Ramallah, etc, with hundreds of participants each. Only in November, after clashes with the police led to the brutality of peaceful protesters, did the issue finally break through to the mainstream Israeli media.

The central protest took place in the Bedouin town of Hura, where over 1,000 Arab and Jewish demonstrators protested against the plan. The peaceful demonstration was met with armored and mounted riot police, who used rubber bullets, tear gas, and water canons to corral the protesters into one small area. 26 protesters were arrested, including minors. Demonstrations also took place in Haifa, Jerusalem, Yaffa, Ramallah, and Gaza. In Haifa, 27 protesters were arrested without provocation and were openly beaten by the police. They were released two days later; with some kept on house arrest.

Haifa municipality member and project coordinator at the Mossawa Center, Areen Abdi, stated:

"The demonstration (in Haifa) presented a clear message against the Praver Plan. It is our duty to have our voice heard in our struggle and protest against this plan. The main problem was the violence of the police against the demonstrators. The plan is not only a threat to residents of the Naqab but it is also a threat and effects residents of



the Triangle, the Galilee, and Haifa. Although there were a few undisciplined protesters, it does not justify the brutal treatment of the protesters and detainees by the police. The court did not extend their detention and this proves the invalidity of the police allegations." According to their testimonies in court, many of the protesters were beaten after their arrests while being held in po-



lice headquarters. One detainee from Haifa recalled how a policeman held him down by pressing his knee to his neck while punching him in his face. The signs of his assault were visually apparent. The Mossawa Center condemns the unnecessary force used by Israeli police and security forces in these demonstrations. Police brutality and arrests against peaceful, legal protesters is a violation of human rights and the basic freedom of expression.

The Mossawa Center expects that violence against civilians will only increase

if the Praver Plan is fully implemented by the Israeli government. Signs of its implementation have already been seen with the announced plans to uproot Um Al-Hiran and Atir in order to build a Jewish neighborhood and demolitions happening regularly throughout the Negev. The Arab community in Israel sees the Praver Plan as a continuation of land confiscation which has



been ongoing since the creation of the state, but it is especially relevant because of the size of the lands targeted to be absorbed and the amount of citizens who have the potential to be displaced. The Center fears that the community will not be able to withstand such a blow without more large-scale protests, which will only lead to more violence by the police.

The Center calls on the international community to appeal to their respective governments in order to ensure that the Israeli government refuses the Praver Plan's implementation.

Unrecognized Neighborhood in Haifa: Far from the Negev

Wadi Siyah is an “unrecognized” neighborhood in the center of Haifa. Unrecognized means that the residents do not have legal ownership of the land in the eyes of the state. Therefore, the area is denied basic services such as water, electricity, and trash collection (exceptions have been made in recent years after the municipality demeaned it a “humanitarian effort”). Many assume that such situations only exist for the Bedouin Arabs in Israel’s south, but unrecognized areas can be found throughout the country. In the case of Wadi Siyah, as in many unrecognized areas, the residents have held land ownership for generations, dating back to before the creation of Israel. For example, Mustafa Mahmoud Abbas is a 70-year-old man who was born in a cave on his family’s property in Wadi Siyah.

Even though the residents of Wadi Siyah pay taxes and are full citizens of the state on paper, they have been subject to multiple lawsuits intended

to harass and encourage them to leave their ancestral homes. In 2013 the planning department of Haifa’s city council decided that the neighborhood should be evacuated. The municipality claims that they want to demolish the houses in the neighborhood in order to create a tourist area on a nature reserve. The Mossawa Center and the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, along with five Arab landowners, filed a petition to prevent the municipality’s plan to evacuate the area.

Sadly after the two year legal battle against the Haifa Municipality’s gentrification plans of the historical neighborhood of Wadi Siyah, the Mossawa Center’s legal team went to court on the 16th of February 2014 for the final court hearing concerning the future of the residents of the neighborhood. At the conclusion of the hearing, the judge rejected the residents’ petition, presented by the Mossawa Center and gave permission for the municipi-



it is from the Electric Intifada website and was taken by Patrick Strickland

ality to continue the evacuation of residents over the next decade. Despite the court’s rejection of the appeal of the residents, the legal unit at the Mossawa Center will continue to advocate for the rights of the residents of Wadi Siyah to their historical homes and residency.

Jafar Farah, Director of Mossawa, talks with residents and international volunteers at Wadi el Siyah.

Local Arab Residents Oppose the Plans for Gentrification of the Wadi Nisnas Neighborhood

In a general trend towards gentrification and displacement of Arab residents, the Municipality of Haifa has made plans to demolish several historic buildings in Arab neighborhoods in Haifa without consultation or consent of local residents. A part of this trend is the recent demolition plan by the Municipality of Haifa to tear down historic buildings belonging to Arab residents in the neighborhood Wadi Nisnas. The Mossawa Center’s legal staff has taken a strong position against the municipality’s actions and in partnership with Haifa’s residents, is in the process of trying to reverse this policy.

The Mossawa Center’s legal staff took part in discussions with Haifa’s municipal Office of Urban

Planning with the goal of putting a halt to the city’s plan to demolish several buildings in the Arab neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas. The plan is a part of the city’s plan to broaden the streets of Haifa to make the area more accommodating to tourists. Unfortunately this plan will have a highly destructive impact on the lives of the longtime residents of the neighborhood. The demolition plans will affect a local church, school and public spaces as well as causing major transportation problems for locals. Local residents were not consulted during the planning stages and it came as a shock to many. The Mossawa Center in cooperation with residents of Wadi Nisnas and other Arab neighborhoods is taking a stand against this plan.

As a result, the Mossawa Center’s staff has conducted five meetings with the

heads of Arab Neighborhood Committees in Haifa during the last three months in order to create a plan for the activation of the local community. In addition, the Mossawa Center’s staff also met with the heads of planning at the Municipality of Haifa. As of January 29th, the Mossawa Center has sent two letters of objection to the Ministry of Interior’s District Planning and Construction Office requesting that they halt the demolition plans for the streets; Allenby, HaParsim, Saint Luke’s, and HaTzionot in Wadi Nisnas. In the letter, the Mossawa included its strong concern stating that the plan will disrupt and ultimately have a grossly negative impact on the lives of local taxpaying citizens in Haifa.

Doubled Representation of Arab Women in Local Elections



After the October 2013 round of local Israeli elections, the number of Arab women with seats on local councils increased from six to fourteen. At least ten women have full terms and four women will share a term on a rotation basis.

A coalition of NGOs who support women's rights, including the Mossawa Center, formed an umbrella organization to increase female participation in local councils. The coalition created a media campaign including five press conferences throughout Israel and arranged media interviews for female candidates. The exposure was intended to educate the Israeli public on the struggles facing Arab female politicians.

Even with increased publicity, many Arab communities in Israel still feel they are not ready to have women on their political lists or claim no women are interested. For these reasons, it is a success when women merely run on party lists as candidates. This year, a record number of Arab women (165) were on the election lists in 44 Arab local authorities.

An important victory for the Mossawa Center was the election of the first Arab woman to Haifa's local council;



Ms. Areen Abdi, the Mossawa Center's Culture Network Coordinator.

In efforts to continue supporting the newly elected women councilors, the Mossawa Center is coordinating a series of trainings for the 14 women, to further empower them with tools of operation in a local council so that their election promises can become a reality. As part of the program, the Mossawa Center is

recruiting women entrepreneurs to support and coordinate efforts with the women councilors, in the hope that their community outreach and support will increase. 2014 will see the first year in a four year program to be implemented by the Mossawa Center to support women councilors. It is our aim to increase the number women participating in elections and being elected to local and national positions.

International Advocacy Update

In the past few months, the international advocacy team at the Mossawa Center has been reaching out to the international community about critical issues such as discriminatory legislation, Israeli state budget allocations, Bedouin land rights, Arab culture rights in Israel, and the raising of the vote threshold. Staff members contributed several position papers used in the decision making processes of international actors such as the UN, EU, and the US state department.

These papers pointed out systematic discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel in different sectors such as; land ownership, the judicial system, family reunification, freedom of movement, municipal planning, culture rights, and allocation of state funds. Another paper given to the US State Department was on various restrictions to religious freedom the Israeli government places on its Arab citizens, as well as institutionalized discrimination based on religion. Examples range from the disproportionate amount of power ultra-orthodox Jewish organizations have over government decisions to the use of an old Mosque in Be'erSheva as the location for a wine festival

Key staff members have also travelled to Europe to meet with advocacy and human rights organizations interested in working with the Mossawa Center.

Touring Delegations:

From November 10th – 19th the Mossawa Center, along with its partners, Laykia Women's Association, Sidreh and Filastiniyat sent a delegation of 10 Palestinian women and youth from the Naqab (Bedouin) and the West Bank who were hosted in Berlin by the Heinrich Boell Stiftung, as part of the Empowering the Periphery Project. The groups participated in trainings on marketing and displayed an array of final products from the different economic initiatives they have been working on at a trade fair. Products ranged from goods such as Freekeh, a traditional Palestinian grain used in many local dishes, to clothing and accessories such as jeans and wallets



that have been hand embroidered in the traditional Palestinian style. Each initiative has already begun to sell their products in their local markets and this time spent in Germany was an opportunity to expand their market and client base.

A second delegation of nine Palestinian youth from the West Bank and the Naqab (Israel's desert region) participated in a ten day advocacy tour in Berlin and Brussels in December, to speak about issues facing their local communities and share economic initiatives built during their involvement in the Mossawa Center's Empowering the Periphery Project. Three participants from the Gaza Strip intended to join the tour as well, but were unable to leave the Gaza Strip at the last moment.

The group met with a variety of actors in Berlin and Brussels including; representatives of the German Foreign Ministry, members of the European Union, European foundations, and European NGOs working on issues related to Israel. Each of the participants shared information about the economic initiatives they had developed over the past three years of the project. They also advocated on the behalf of their communities at home. This was a unique opportunity for youth from disenfranchised communities in the region to gain direct access to important policy makers and make their voices heard.

Advocacy Meetings

Mossawa Center staff met with European Parliament President Martin Schulz on February 12th 2014. At the meeting Mossawa's director presented a letter to Mr. Schultz laying out the most pressing issues facing



the Arab minority in Israel, and recommendations for the best ways in which President Schulz and the rest of the European Parliament can support the Arab community in Israel. The issues listed in the letter included; The unique position of Arab citizens of Israel in negotiations for peace, Minister Lieberman's proposal for population transfer, Prawer-Begin Bill and forced displacement of Bedouin in the Negev, the raising of vote threshold, and the socio-economic disparity caused by disproportionate allocation of funds from the state budget to the Arab community. Following the meeting, Mr Schulz made a presentation in the Israeli Parliament, posing some difficult questions for the government to answer.

In February and March, Mossawa staff also attended an event in honour of MP Hannelore Kraft, Deputy chairperson of the Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia. Meetings were also held with representatives of the US State Department and Dr. Sara Cobb, professor and director of the Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University. Topics of focus in the meetings were on the Arab minority's status and their potential role as mediators in the current negotiations. As part of the follow up to these discussions, the Mossawa Center is coordinating a tour to the USA with representatives from the Reform Jewish, Oriental Jewish, Ethiopian and Russian communities in Israel. As part of the tour, the delegation will be meeting with policy makers, think tanks and students, to discuss with them the vision of a shared future that the delegates believe in.

Youth Changing Reality: The Mossawa Center's Third Annual Volunteer Summer Camp

In an effort to raise awareness of the inequalities between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, and to also encourage local volunteerism, the Mossawa Center in cooperation with NGOs in each of the participating Arab localities, held its third annual volunteer summer camp in July 2013. One of the issues the Mossawa Cen-

and the United States. The volunteers participated in a range of volunteer activities in eight different Arab localities in Israel. One of the international volunteers wrote about his favorite day in the program:

This morning in Tamra was undoubtedly one of the best successes of the

of bringing the voice of the Arab community in Israel to the international arena. The camp was also a great opportunity for Palestinians living in the West Bank to gain cultural experiences which are usually inaccessible to them, and to enhance their sense of responsibility for improving their own and other communities.



ter is the most engaged with is the issue of disproportionate state funding to Arab communities. Currently only 6.25% of the state development budget is allocated to services to the Arab community despite the fact that Arab citizens make up 20% of the population. This discrimination in funding is easily overlooked by visiting internationals. The summer camp's aim is to give international volunteers a glimpse into the bigger picture of what life is like in Arab communities in Israel, and at the same time encourage local Palestinians living in Israel as well as the West Bank to take a more active role in improving their communities.

Youth participants this summer came from the West Bank, Israel, Europe,

camp. While we were painting walls in the streets, many people joined in and helped us. In the afternoon, we went to a local cultural event in which we saw a stand-up comedy show. For dinner, we shared a barbecue together until sunset. At night, we had the opportunity to sleep in the homes of local families'. Personally, I slept on the rooftop and that was amazing, even though it was quite hard to sleep after 5 am because of the sun!

Providing international volunteers with firsthand experiences working alongside Palestinians, and learning about Palestinian culture and history is key to the international advocacy efforts of the Mossawa Center. The stories that these volunteers will bring home with them are an invaluable part



The Mossawa Center would like to thank the ICCO & Kerk in Actie and the Open Society Institute for their support of this newsletter. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Mossawa Center and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the ICCO & Kerk in Actie and Open Society Institute.



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

The Mossawa Center. P.O. Box 4471. Haifa 31043. Israel

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