



Culture Rights and Spaces

Achievements of the The Mossawa Center's Culture Advocacy

*Published by the Mossawa Center- The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens of Israel
September 2015*

The Launch

On December 1, 2011, the Mossawa Center initiated a Culture Project which aimed to promote culture awareness and engagement among the Palestinian Minority within the Green Line and in the oPt. The project lasted for three years, officially concluding on April 30th, 2015, and it was able to make landmark strides in the Palestinian community in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt) despite the difficulties faced in the region, specifically the Gaza War of 2014 and the disassembling of the government.

The project staff, lead by project manager, the award-winning Palestinian author Mr. Salman Natour, was able to raise awareness of the Arab community on their cultural rights and the importance of empowering cultural organizations, in order to preserve and develop Palestinian culture in Israel and in the oPt. This accomplishment is grand, especially given the militarized division of the Palestinian people, and the constant discrimination their culture faces in Israel.



The Project was implemented in cooperation between the Mossawa Center, Al Rawad (Palestinian culture organization that is located in Aide refugee camp), and Al Mashgal– Music association located in Haifa, and with the support of the European Union.

Table of Contents

Project Accomplishments

Page 2

- Palestinian Culture Network
- Implementation of Needs Assessment for the Culture Services

Page 3

- Launching the Palestinian-Arab Culture Website
- Additional 1 million NIS to be Allocated to the Arab Culture Institutions

Page 4-5

- Israel's National Lottery Mifal HaPayis Supports Palestinian Culture
- First Arabic TV Station, Arab Museum and Arab Theater School Established
- First Workshop of 60 Cross Border Culture Representatives

Page 6

- Recognition of Palestinian Culture in Arab Region
- Over 50,000 People Participated in "The Palestinian Culture Month"

Page 7-8

- Establishment of Palestinian Writers Association
- Establishment of Librarians Association and re-opening of closed libraries in Arab localities
- Research and Production of Arab Musical Terminology Booklet

What Next?

Page 9-10

- Culture institutions challenge freedom of speech in Israel, but at what cost?

The cases of Al-Midan Theatre, Suha Araf, Mohamad Bakry and Norman Issa

Mossawa's prospective projects: Creating an Arab Film Fund and implementing Legal, Government and International Advocacy for Culture

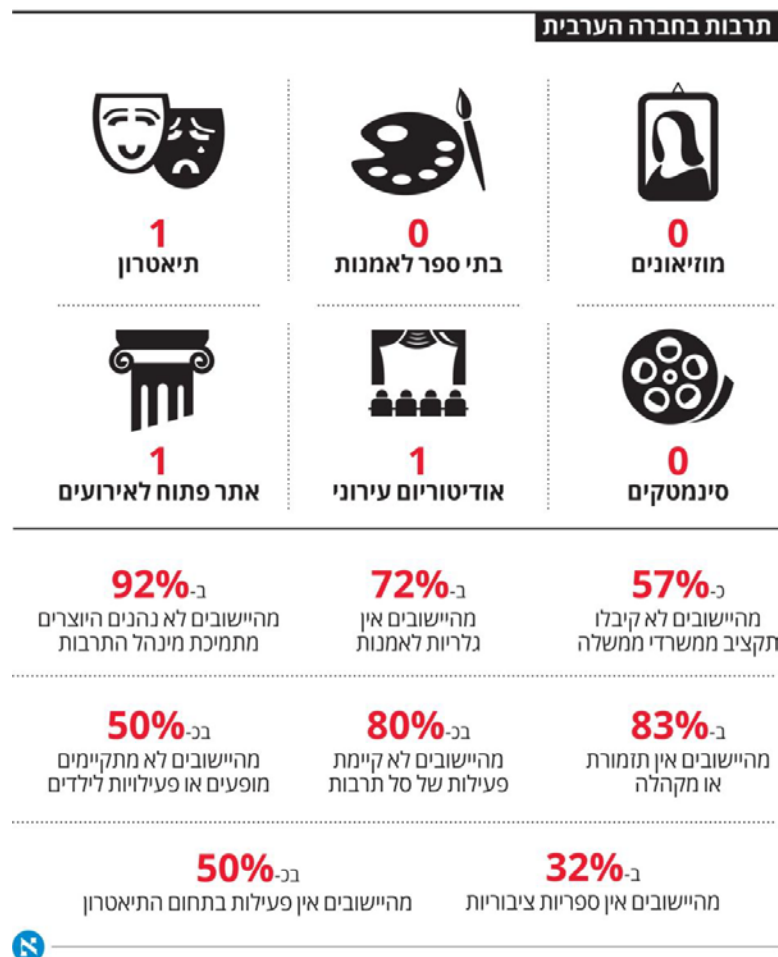
The following are the most significant accomplishments of the project:

The establishment of a network of Palestinian culture organizations

In regards to raising awareness among the Arab minority, the project staff engaged in training and coordinating culture organisations in Israel and the oPt in order to advocate for Palestinian culture rights and budget allocation for Palestinian culture. This included workshops on advocacy, consultations by experts to new NGO leaders, mass-distribution of information in newsletters and other media platforms. Through this cooperation, the Palestinian Culture Network was solidified in its cooperation and as a result, a Palestinian Culture umbrella organisation was registered as an NGO to serve the culture community and enhance cooperation between Palestinians over both sides of the Green Line.

For the first time, and as result of court ruling in Mossawa appeal: Needs assessment and mapping of the culture services was implemented

In cooperation with the Heads of Arab Local Authorities and the Forum for Arab Culture Organizations, a petition was served to Israel's High Court of Justice on December 3, 2012 against the Ministry of Culture and the former Minister of Culture, Limor Livnat, for unfair allocation of budget to the Arab minority in Israel. The court demanded from the Ministry to conduct a comprehensive survey of the Arab culture needs within six to nine months and to present its findings to the court. After 2 years of delays from the Ministry, Ms.Souad Naser Makhoul was chosen to conduct the mapping, which included 42 Arab local councils, 53 Arab villages and 6 mixed cities, as well as 19 Arab culture organizations.



The legal advocacy is still ongoing due to the State attorney's office constantly requesting several extensions on the submission of the report on the grounds that the mapping was not complete. However, the Mossawa Center has received a copy of the final version of the mapping carried out by the Ministry of Culture in April 2015, making the request for extensions seem like a ploy. The survey shows large gaps in the services and support given to Arab cultural organizations, and it was presented to the Director General of the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry filed to the Supreme Court that the review was completed. The Mossawa Center's legal department asked the High Court to call for a hearing and give final judgment that would require the ministry to fund Arab culture on an equal basis.

Launching the first Palestinian-Arab culture website

<http://menassat.net/>

The project launched the Menassat website in 2014. It is an integrated platform displaying cultural events happening in both the oPt and inside Israel. This makes it possible for the Palestinian people to maintain a network against all the obstacles that exist as a result of cultural discrimination and the occupation. Menassat includes listings for visual arts, music, film/cinema and literature. It also includes a database of cultural institutions and links to relevant articles. Palestinians need more platforms like Menassat to network the community culturally. This website allows for Palestinians to connect culturally despite their separation by borders and/or refugee statuses.



The discrimination against Palestinian culture institutions have been recognized: 3% of the Ministry of Culture's budget is allocated to the Arab culture

Due to the legal advocacy referenced above, the systematic discrimination that culture institutions face in Israel and in the oPt was finally recognized by the High Court of Justice and by the Ministry of Culture- a landmark recognition that has never been made by government bodies in such a manner.

As a result of the Mossawa Center appeal, another 1 million NIS will be allocated to the Arab culture institutions

The socio-economic staff was able to launch a huge campaign towards equal and fair allocation of the state budget to Arab localities. Specifically, the project had an economist analyse the State budget for 2014-2015, the Arab minority's needs from the State budget, as well as the current budget allocation for Arab culture. With such information, the economist was able to effectively carry out different plans of action in order to help elevate and empower the Arab minority in Israel, Palestinian culture, and culture organizations. Additionally, the project economist's extensive research on the State Budget allowed him to discover that the 2013-2014 State's budget for culture, art, and research stands on 642 million NIS. This meant that only 12% from this budget is allocated to the Arab Minority, which constitutes less than 2% of the State budget for culture. This equates to less than 2% of the budget is actually allocated to 20% of the population in Israel- which is divided between 84 Arab Culture organizations. The discovery allowed the Culture Project to create a campaign conducted by the project staff along with the culture network members, and thus advocate for fair and equal allocation. The campaign is still on-going; however the project did succeed in pressuring the Ministry of Culture to add 1 million Shekel per year in 2013 and 2014 to the culture budget allocated in the Arab sector.

A Budget analysis was also conducted on the Ministry of Culture's budget in the oPt. Allocation there was not the same problem as within Israel, but distribution was an issue that was raised in meeting forums with the Minister.

The Israel National Lottery, Mifal HaPays, started to support Arab culture festivals and culture institutions

The Israeli Lottery Fund is the second most important financial base for culture events and productions in the country. However they have not been too prominent in funding Palestinian events. Therefore, the project facilitated meetings between the Lottery Fund leaders and Arab Local Councils and Civil Society leaders who often produce such events. As a result, more than 2 Million NIS has been allocated to festivals, NGO's, books and events annually. Further, the lottery has developed social criteria specifically addressed to the funding allocation for marginalized communities like the Bedouin community. This will allow for more exposure of Palestinian culture events to the many diverse communities in Israel, and will thus raise awareness on Palestinian culture for the mainstream population.



The project fostered the first steps to establish the first Arab Museum, the first Arab theater school, and the first independent Arabic TV station

For the last ten years, the Mossawa Center has been lobbying the government to publish a tender for an Arabic TV station. While the last two decades have seen a rapid expansion of new networks in Israel and the Arab world, not one of the hundreds of new stations represents the views of the Arab minority in Israel. Additionally, of the 3.7 billion NIS invested in marketing in Israel, only 100 million NIS has gone to Arab media. It is hoped that the creation of Hala TV will help to close this investment gap and thus the project has been promoting this station since the Israeli Council for Cable TV and Satellite Broadcasting publically announced that the "Hala TV" group has won its bid to establish the first independent Arabic language television station in Israel. The decision was heralded by the Arab community as an important step forward in increasing the visibility of the Arab citizens of Israel. The Hala TV investment group is comprised of Arab and Jewish investors from the communications, welfare, education and human rights fields. These investors plan to promote social issues and the socio-economic and cultural development of the Arab community by investing in locally-produced content and drawing on the expertise of civil society organizations. Hala TV obtained its official license in late 2011 and began broadcasting in 2012.



As part of the project, we also promoted the establishment of the Arab Museum and the creation of the Arab Heritage Preservation Association. This gave fruit to the establishment of small Museum in Kfar Manda as part of the "Palestinian culture month in 2014". The Association was presented to the Palestinian Museum in Bier Ziet and we hope the cooperation will able them to open branches in Nazareth, Sachnin and Kfar Manda. The Museum was a core demand in the court appeal to the Culture Ministry which is ongoing and led by our legal advocacy team. Moreover, as a result of the additional funding that was allocated to the Arab Culture by the court appeal, the Museum was granted additional funding that will allow them to expand to Umm El-Fahem Gallery and Museum. Additionally, there was a special budget allocation given to the Gallery in Umm El-Fahem by the Israeli National Lottery.



Lastly, the project helped establish the Arab Theater School in 2014 in the Arabic teachers college in Haifa. We advocated the school to the Ministry of Education, resulting in the funding needed to establish the school. The founders of the school also received consulting from the project team, allowing for a good evaluation after its first year of the school and thus allowing for the school to become a prospective candidate for funding from the Ministry of Culture.



The first workshop of 60 representatives of the cross border Culture NGO's took place in Ramallah

In order to assess the question of how to strengthen Palestinian culture and unity more effectively for the future, over 60 intellectuals, artists, actors, authors, academics, journalists and representatives of cultural institutions from both the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel gathered in the Palestinian cultural capital of Ramallah for a joint workshop.



After having discussed the issues that Palestinian Culture institutions and activists face, the representatives decided to submit a request to the president, the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Culture to increase the ministerial budget and establish a fund for Palestinian cultural projects, thus building the foundation for a common platform for cultural networks and concepts, creative workshops as well as partnerships between individual artists and cultural institutions. The meeting also allowed for an exchange between cultural institutions

on a regular basis, joint publishing of works, creating a legal body that supports individual artists and cultural institutions, consolidating the inter-Palestinian relations, establishing the yearly announcement of a "Palestinian City of Culture", funding for the translation of Palestinian literature, collecting all the books that have been stolen since 1948, reactivating the High Council of Palestinian culture and launching the establishment of a Palestinian month of culture. These were decided to be the first steps towards preserving and empowering Palestinian culture and ensure unity despite the political challenges.

The Palestinian culture was recognized in the Arab Region and Salman Natour was awarded as one of the best Arab theater writers

The project which was led by the Palestinian writer Salman Natour supported the author's nomination to gain international recognition. The end result was the honouring of Author Salman Natour at an official ceremony presided over by Sheikh Dr. Sultan Al Qasimi, the Sheikh of Sherpa, at the Arab Theatre Festival in Shareqa, UAE.

Salman Natour along with a variety of other authors and playwrights from Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Libya, Jordan, accepted awards in honor of their work and contributions to Arab theatre. Salman Natour has had six plays produced in Palestinian theaters in Nazareth, Jaffa, Jerusalem and Ramallah. Three of these plays include, "Mawal" directed by Radi Shehadeh, "Forced Landing" directed by Mazen Ghattas and, "Memory" directed by Adeb Jahshan. These plays have been performed at festivals and in theaters in a majority of Arab countries, as well as in Europe and Latin America.



Mainstreaming culture productions and access to communities -More than 50,000 thousand people participated in culture events all over the country "THE Palestinian culture month" branding culture

Cultural rights for the Palestinian community in Israel and the oPt were also promoted through the practise of culture in the action's seminars and Palestinian Culture Month (March of Culture). Awareness regarding the importance of culture and preserving this culture was raised as a result of the action's activities-this incline is evident in the extensive attendance to the events of March of Culture throughout the years of the project, as well as the attendance to the seminars and lectures conducted within the project. Regional cooperation was established between Palestinian culture organizations in Israel and the oPt, despite of all the difficult circumstances forced onto the Palestinian people on both sides of the Green line, including hostilities at checkpoint crossings.

Arab writers association was established and accepted as part of the Palestinian Writers Union

The Arab Writers Association was reestablished by the project in order to preserve guilds that stimulate the culture environment in Palestinian social circles. The project manager and writer Salman Natour mediated between writers and coordinated a general assembly of the writers that elected new leadership for the association. The fragmentation between writers in the past has led to the dissolution of 3 Arab writers associations that acted in the late eighties; therefore the project aimed to solve the issues of fragmentation among the writers and thus unite them in order to strengthen the overall drive of culture in Palestinian society. The unique status and respect of Mr. Natour led to regional recognition of the Association by Palestinian Writers Union. We are honored to say that the Writers Associations has since been invited to regional conferences in different Arab countries, and a cooperation agreement has been signed with the Arab Writers Association and other associations in the region.



The Librarians association was established to help re-open the closed down libraries in the Arab localities

The Librarians association was established to share information and resources which can expose the Arab public to creative writing and reading. Lack of funding and discrimination by the Ministry of Education led to the closure of many libraries in the Arab local councils and thus resulting in low level of reading among the Arab population. In light of this crisis, the project organized several capacity-building events and workshops with Palestinian librarians. The project support and consultation led to organizational development of the association and publicity which allowed for 8 of the libraries to re-open. Additionally, local councils applied for funding to build new libraries', and they allocated public resources for activities. This field of culture (writing, reading, and the publishing of new books) was backed up by the librarians and is essential to fostering an enlightenment era within the Palestinian communities in Israel, the oPt and around the world.



Research for the production and distribution of booklet on Arabic musical terminology

The occupation and oppression of Palestinian culture in Israel and the oPt, in addition to the effects of globalization throughout the world, has led to the decrease of the use of Arabic terms in music classes, performance and discussion. This loss of vocabulary has impacted the artistic community, particularly musicians and music students. The project, therefore, aimed to garner attention to Arabic musical words which also helped to ignite interest in classical Arabic instruments. The project staff, with the help of Al Mashghal, mainstreamed the use of Arabic musical terminology by researching and producing a book to distribute to students, teachers and Arabic music enthusiasts that outlined the significance of Arab terminology and its history in music. Copies were printed and distributed throughout Palestinian communities, music school and conservatories in Israel, and in the oPt.



Through this campaign, and many others, the Culture Project was able to empower a sustainable Palestinian culture community through the creation of a supportive political and institutional environment in Israel and the opt. Additionally, after the completion of the project's actions, the capacities of the Palestinian population increased and developed, allowing Palestinian culture organizations in Israel and the oPt to concentrate on producing cultural content, and thus ensuring their sustainability.

The end of the action, and the achievement of all the specific objectives, signifies that we are one step closer to achieving the overall objective of the action; to empower a sustainable Palestinian culture community through the creation of a supportive political and institutional environment in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). Palestinian culture community was influenced as a result of the extensive efforts to elevate its position and improve its conditions in both Israel and the oPt.

Palestinian culture organizations are now fulfilling their organisation's goal and are available for the production of cultural content. As a result of their productions, Palestinian culture is now under the spotlight and has drawn the attention and care of the Palestinian population - people are more aware of the importance of culture, cultural rights, and the implications of cultural discrimination. Palestinian culture organizations benefited from the action, just as the Palestinian population in Israel and the oPt did.

What next?

Culture institutions challenge Freedom of speech in Israel but at what cost? The cases of Al-Midan Theatre, SuhaAraf, Mohamad Bakry and Norman Issa

There are many culture institutions and activists in Israel that are striving to achieve their freedom of expression. However, because the state of Israel has polarized the expression of Palestinian culture as if it were an act of terror, such culture institutions and activist are often ostracized for expressing anything correlated to Palestinian culture. Examples include:

- The revocation of funds for the film "Villa Touma" directed by SuhaArraf; SuhaAraf made her film "Villa Touma" and tagged it as "made in Palestine. Because of this the Minister of Culture Limore Livnat deemed the film unacceptable and asked Araf to return \$360,000 dollars that the Israeli Film Fund awarded her to make the film. **The lack of an Arab Film Fund allows this kind of silencing to happen.**
- Minister Regev's threatened to stop funding the Arab children's theater in Jaffa after the actor Norman Issa refused to take part in a show that would have been located in a settlement, and thus endorsing the occupation. Such non-violent political expressions should never be shunned by any "democratic" country.
- The Haifa municipality and the Ministry of Culture decided to suspend the funding of the Al Midan Theatre due to listing Bashar Murkus' play "A Parallel Time," on its summer schedule. The play is about the story of Walid Daka, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who was convicted of involvement in the abduction and murder of Israeli soldier Moshe Tamam in 1984 and sentenced to life in prison. The Ministry of Education also decided to remove the play from the list of performances made available to Israeli schools. The writer of the play, Bashar Murkus, says he finds little shock to the censorship given the undemocratic nature of the state of Israel.

We need to empower and support these institutions and activists by creating more platforms and resources that can sustain the survival of these important actors.

Some examples of programs that can help sustain the mainstreaming of the Palestinian Culture include:

Arab Film Fund: Given the amount of discrimination Palestinian film artists are facing as of late, the Mossawa Center will aim on establishing the first ever Arab Film Fund to help artists cultivate creativity and thus not have to be shut down due to the state's censorship and its control over their funds.

Legal Advocacy for Culture: Mossawa Lawyers, Sameh Iraqi, Jawad Qassem, are currently building their case to the High Court of Justice, regarding the systematic discrimination that the Arab communities face under the Ministry of Culture. They will double their efforts in the next year by organizing hearing dates and pushing the court case forward, eventually towards its conclusion. This continuation of the culture project is essential, as the Mossawa Center has been leading a legal advocacy campaign that has been making land-mark strides for the Arab minority community in Israel. As mentioned before, the lawyers have a hearing on October 26, 2015 where they will file a legal request calling on the Ministry of Culture to finally submit the survey on the culture needs assessment of Arab localities. They will also request that the court prohibit the Ministry of Culture from filing any more request for postponements, and thus place legal pressure on the Ministry to take action. If the Ministry of Culture continues its inaction after the October hearing, the Mossawa Lawyers are prepared to submit the survey themselves, since the Mossawa Center has already received a final copy. This will all take place in parallel of the other two actions, with the whole project lasting three months.

Government and International Advocacy for Culture: The Mossawa Center is planning to have 1-2 staff members coordinate and monitor meetings between Members of Knesset and Arab local leaders to build a government network of support for the Arab communities. The staff members will also be organizing meetings between culture organizations and embassies in order to publicize this project on the diplomatic front. Further, the Mossawa Center will use its international network to publicise this project to all international institutions that call for the protection of culture. The final Advocacy stage will also create Arab-Jewish action that will get public support and contribute to fight for freedom of speech and action in culture preservation, while additionally stimulating the population for the creation of associations for different culture spheres, such as a writers association, film association etc

-Organizing and Empowering existing Culture Institutions: The Mossawa Center will organize culture institutions and culture leaders who are currently facing discrimination and/or need empowerment. Some examples of those institutions are:

- The Al-Midan theatre in Haifa which is facing a suspension of its budget by the Ministry of Culture based on the screening of Bashar Murkus' play "A Parallel Time.
- The Nazareth Cinematheque which too faces financial instability. The theatre is a significant channel for Palestinian culture and has been reopened after temporarily shutting closing down due to lack of finance. This institution receives no funding from the state despite it being an essential channel for Palestinian culture.
- The Writers Association, established by the award-winning Palestinian author Mr. Salman Natour - awarded as one of the most important authors in the Arab world, honoured at an official ceremony presided over by Sheikh Dr. Sultan Al Qasimi, the Sheikh of Shajrah, at the Arab Theatre Festival in Shajrah, UAE. This Writer's Guild faces internal instability and the Mossawa Center seeks to empower it with leadership and cooperation workshops.

In order for these institutions and, others, to express their cultural capabilities, we need to organize and empower them by building their capacities. The Mossawa Center will aim to coordinate a large round table meeting with at least 120 culture leaders of Arab communities and 3-4 experts in order to train the leaders on advocacy measures when facing systemic discrimination from the state, and to train them on budget management. This event will take into account the culture needs assessment done by the Ministry of Culture, and the money that has already been allocated to the Arab localities.

Therefore, we will have both legal and financial experts there to train the culture leaders on

- 1) How to effectively manage a limited budget
- 2) How to fundraise for culture
- 2) How to combat systemic discrimination with governmental advocacy

We will also organize simulations during the roundtable event that will divide the culture leaders into groups of shared needs. For example, the leaders that feel their institution lacks a theatrical content due to censorship will be grouped together and thusly trained to advocate specifically for a theatre content and freedom of expression. Other groups will include subject matters such as: strengthening the significance of Art in the Arab minority; empowering Palestinian actors and actresses who have been ostracized due to the content of their work; and creating more culture associations that can strengthen the significance of Palestinian culture within the population. This will prepare the Arab minority culture leaders to create results-based action and thus pressure to increase the value of Palestinian culture in Israel, both within the Arab population and in legislation.

The Mossawa Center would like to thank Bread for the World and the European Union for their support in this project. 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 Bread for the world, the European Union and other funders. We would like to thank the private and public resources whose generous support makes the Mossawa Center's projects possible. The contents published in our documents and this publication express the opinions of the Mossawa Center and cannot be regarded as reflecting the position of the foundations supporting our work.



Please follow us on Twitter @themossawacenter , like our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/mossawacenter> and visit the Mossawa Center website: www.mossawa.org

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

Mailing List/ Contribution Form

Family Name: _____ First Name: _____
 Street Address: _____
 City: _____ Postal Code: _____ Country: _____
 Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please check the following that apply:

- Yes, I would like to join the Mossawa Center e-mail list
- Yes, I would like to receive the Mossawa Center Publications via post
- Yes, I would like to organize a public discussion series in my home country on the Arab citizens of Israel
- Yes, I would like to participate in media activities
- Yes, I would like to appeal to my government officials on issues related to the Arab citizens of Israel
- Yes, I would like to make a financial contribution to the sum of _____
- Check/ Money order enclosed

Signature _____ Date _____