



مركز مساواة  
Mossawa Center  
מרכז מוסאווה

# The Palestinian Arab Minority and the 2009 Israeli Elections

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## **About the Mossawa Center**

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

Our other English publications include:

- ❖ *Akka, City on the Front* – 2009
- ❖ *An Equal Constitution for All? On a Constitution and Collective Rights for the Arab Citizens in Israel* – 2007
- ❖ *Contact Guide to the Arab Community in Israel* – 2008
- ❖ *Racism in Israel* – 2008
- ❖ *The Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel: Status, Opportunities and Challenges for an Israeli-Palestinian Peace* – 2006
- ❖ Newsletter on Mossawa Center activities, accomplishments, and events

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## **I. Introduction and background to the second edition of this paper**

This paper outlines the political map of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel prior to the 2009 elections, which were held February 10, 2009. This revised position paper, updated following the results of the election, now includes an analysis of the election campaign and the implications of the election results for the future of the Arab community and for the peace process.

The 2009 Israeli elections occurred at a critical time. First they were held in the shadow of the war on Gaza, a conflict that has accelerated a deepening and continuing crisis in relations between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel. In addition, the elections occurred at a decisive time in international relations, with the arrival of a new American administration ushering in the possibility for developments in the peace process.

This paper begins with a historical overview of Arab political participation in Israel, including a detailed examination of voting trends before 2009, with a special emphasis on elections since 1999. It will then highlight the growing phenomenon of racist incitement against the Arab community and Arab MKs and political leaders in particular, as well as discuss the Central Election Committee's ban of the two Arab political parties, the United Arab List and the National Democratic Assembly (Balad), which was later repealed by the Supreme Court.

The paper then analyzes the run-up to the 2009 election in light of the crisis in Gaza and the deepening tensions in Israel as a result of the war, and the wider implications of the election for the Middle East peace process.

The paper also includes an overview of the platforms of the main political parties who competed in the 2009 election, and scored at least 1% of the total vote, as these parties impact the Arab minority in Israel and current prospects for peace (*see Annex A*), and includes a list of Arab candidates who stood for election in 2009 and another list of those candidates who were elected to the 18<sup>th</sup> Knesset (*see Annex B*), as well as a list of all contacts in all Arab political organizations (*see Annex C*).

### ***Mossawa Center 2009 Israeli election roundtable event in Tel Aviv***

This paper was first publicly presented prior to the elections at the Mossawa Center roundtable titled "The 2009 Israeli Elections: Implications for the Arab Community, the Crisis in Gaza, and the Peace Process," at the Sokolov House in Tel Aviv on January 29, 2009. At the event, Arab political and civil society leaders discussed the concerns of the Arab community inside Israel in the run up to the 2009 elections with an audience of 40 members of Israel's international diplomatic community.

Jafar Farah, director of the Mossawa Center, presented this paper's analysis of the steady decline of voter turnout among the Arab minority since 1999 and the increasing popularity of boycott as a viable political tool as a result of feelings of disenfranchisement and overall political frustration. Farah blamed extreme right incitement and Israel's settlers for exploiting the confusion of Israel's political left to complicate Middle East peace, and suggested unchecked political incitement could increase the threat of civil war.

MK Ibrahim Sarsur, head of the Islamic Movement and the United Arab List, called on the international community "to save the Jewish and Arab peoples of the region," highlighting the fact that the whole Arab Islamic world extended a hand of peace to Israel via 2002's

Saudi Peace Initiative. The initiative however, was rejected by Olmert's government, which instead expanded settlements and started two wars. The "racist mentality against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims is dangerous for Jews and the peoples of the region," Sarsur stated.

United Arab List MK Ahmad Tibi called on the international community to boycott any incoming government coalition that would include fascist elements such as Yisrael Beiteinu and its leader Avigdor Lieberman, and drew parallels to the international reactions to the rise of extreme right European nationalists such as Jean-Marie Le Pen in France and Austria's Jorg Haider. Tibi made clear that the recent surge in popularity of extreme right parties like Yisrael Beiteinu and the National Union party is of serious concern to the Arab community and proponents of the peace process, and indicates a further polarization of Israel's electorate. MK Tibi told seminar participants that the Arab community would defy recent trends to delegitimize and marginalize the Arab community, this time through turning out to vote in the election and negating any remnant of support for Zionist parties.

Professor Ramzi Suleiman, currently a lecturer and psychology researcher and former department chair of psychology at the University of Haifa said "the lack of understanding of the Jews against the Arabs stems from the fact that no real process of reconciliation and forgiveness is taking place in the public debate in Israel." Suleiman called on the international community to press Israel to end the occupation of the territories of 1967 and the discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel.

Aida Touma Suleiman, director of the NGO Women Against Violence, and the fifth candidate on the Hadash party list, said she was "happy to be the only alternative Jewish-Arab party fighting fascism in Israel." She called upon the international community to intervene actively in promoting peace in the Middle East.

The war in Gaza, coupled with the elections in Israel, has called into question the international community's current focus on the Middle East, for example through the current postponement of the upgrading in EU-Israel relations. The Mossawa Center reiterated the unique position of the Arab Palestinian minority inside Israel in facilitating peace as citizens in the state of Israel with Arab linguistic and cultural ties, and the fact that internal tensions and instability inside Israel have the potential to derail any peace process and disrupt regional stability. Peace must therefore be cemented at the grassroots level, between the Arab and Jewish communities in order to support any foundation for a wider, sustainable peace.

*(Press release on the event available at: <http://www.mossawa.org/files/files/File/Press%20Releases/2009/PR%20%20Roundtable%20Arab%20Participation%20in%202009%20Elections.pdf>)*

## **II. An overview of the political participation of the Arab minority in Israel**

### ***Arab citizens and affiliated parties***

The current Arab political parties in Israel generally divide along three main ideological movements or streams: the communist, the nationalist and the Islamic. While joint Jewish-Arab parties have historically represented the communist movement, independent Arab parties represent both the nationalist and the Islamic streams. Both the national and Islamic ideological have parallel groups which do not recognize the state's intuitions and oppose participation in the Israeli election.

With their increase in popularity, both the nationalist and Islamic parties have experienced state harassment and intimidation since their inception. This type of treatment is reminiscent of the harassment endured in the past by the Communist party. Arab citizens also lend their support to left-wing Zionist parties, particularly Labor and Meretz.

State repression of the Palestinian Arab community in the years immediately following the establishment of the State of Israel undermined any collective efforts at political mobilization. The 1948 War forced the emigration of most of the political leaders and intellectuals, damaging the overall political infrastructure of the Arab community, including the foundations of social organizations and political movements. As the remaining population started to rebuild these institutions, the military's strict regulations curbed the formation of new political parties.

From 1948 through 1966, the Palestinian Arab community was governed by a military administration that severely repressed speech, association, travel and political organizing. Throughout this era, Palestinian Arab politics in Israel was controlled through Arab lists that were appointed and sponsored by Mapai, an early left-wing political party in Israel, until its merger with the Labor party in 1968, at which point the Palestinian Arabs were represented by the Jewish-Arab Communist Party, Maki.<sup>1</sup> Mapai developed these lists on the basis of family leadership and patronage. In exchange for political appointments, the Arab lists were responsible for raising Arab support for Mapai through successful voter mobilization. However, the elected Arab MKs served largely as token figures with minimal political power and lacked the clout to effectively advocate on behalf of the Palestinian Arab community.

The military administration prevented the formation of any truly Arab political party. This policy is exemplified through the case of Al-Ard movement. Founded in 1961, Al-Ard, which means "the land" in Arabic, was the first Arab nationalist movement in Israel which called for equal rights for all citizens, an end of ethnicity-based discrimination and the recognition of the UN partition plan. In 1965, the Israeli High Court disqualified Al-Ard from running on the grounds that it rejected the Jewish nature of the state and identified with Arab states, those defined by Israel as enemy states.<sup>2</sup>

Thus from the establishment of the state until long after the end of military rule, the Communist Party (first called Maki, and until 1977 called Rakah) was the only legal party that consistently represented the Palestinian Arab community in Israel. The Jewish and

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish Virtual Library (2005) '*Parties: Mapai*', accessed on <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/partytoc.html>, last visited May 10, 2005

<sup>2</sup> *Yardor v. Elections Committee for the 6th Knesset*, 19(3) P.D. 365.

Palestinian Arab members of the party actively opposed military rule and endured persistent harassment by security forces. In 1977, the Communist Party, along with independent groups in the Jewish and Arab communities, created Hadash, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE). Hadash, which advocates for the recognition of the Palestinian Arab population as a national minority with equal national and civil rights, was the main political force in the Arab community during the 1970s, and continues to maintain steady support from the community.

In the late 1970s the political leadership of the Arab community created series of national institutions that function as social and political leadership of the Arab community, including the National Committee of Heads of Arab Local Councils, the National Union of Arab Students, and the High Follow-up Committee for Arab Citizens. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Labor Party and other leftist parties began to include Arab citizens in their parties, increasing their influence in the Arab population. However, since Land Day in 1976 and the rise in independent Arab political parties in the 1980s and 1990s, the Palestinian Arab community in Israel has begun to shift its political support from Zionist parties, or even joint Arab-Jewish parties like Hadash, to independent Arab political parties.<sup>3</sup>

Palestinian Arab university students in Israel have been increasingly instrumental in raising the political consciousness in the Arab community. University campuses have provided an ideal backdrop to inspire debate and forge confident Arab leadership. The majority of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel that went on to become Members of Knesset and leaders of civil society were active participants in the university student movement. Nearly all current members of the Knesset have held key roles in the Palestinian Arab student union.

The National Democratic Assembly (Balad), established in 1996 by Azmi Bishara, represents national stream. Balad aims to continue the nationalist tradition that was first established by Al-Ard, by seeking to ensure Israel is “a state for all its citizens.”<sup>4</sup> Bishara, who served as member of Knesset from 1996 until 2007, faced continual challenges to his legitimacy as political leader as well as attempts to disqualify his party.

In 1996 the Islamic Movement split into two factions. The southern branch, headed by Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur, participates in local council and Knesset parliamentary elections as a way to ensure Islamic representation and engagement with the political system. The northern branch, headed by Sheikh Ra’ed Salah, rejects participation in national elections.<sup>5</sup> The southern movement, running as part of the United Arab List (UAL), gained five seats in the 1999 and two in the 2003 Knesset elections.<sup>6</sup> In the 2006 elections, the Islamic Movement continued to gain in popularity, gaining four seats in a joint list called Ta’al (the Hebrew acronym for “Arab Movement for Renewal”), the party founded by Ahmed Tibi. In Israel, Ta’al’s increasing political popularity has led to state harassment. Ta’al cooperation with the Islamic movement has been presented as an alternative to Balad’s purely nationalist stance

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<sup>3</sup> The first Land Day, which occurred March 30 1976, was a landmark event in Arab relations in Israel. Following a day-long general strike and massive protests in the Arab community against land appropriations in the Galilee, six demonstrators were killed by police, 260 people arrested, and 69 people (including 38 Israeli soldiers) were injured.

<sup>4</sup> (2008) ‘*Parliamentary groups in the Knesset: National Democratic Assembly*’ (Balad), accessed on [http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionPage\\_eng.asp?PG=103](http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionPage_eng.asp?PG=103)

<sup>5</sup> Mossawa Center (2005) ‘*Interview with Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur, Islamic Movement*’, in Kafr Kasseem, Israel.

<sup>6</sup> (2006) ‘*Parliamentary groups in the Knesset: United Arab List*’, accessed on [http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionPage\\_eng.asp?PG=106](http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionPage_eng.asp?PG=106)

and as combination of National and Islamic ideology. (see “*Political Delegitimization and the 2003 elections*” section).

### ***Arab women’s representation***

Palestinian Arab women in Israel continue to be severely marginalized and underrepresented in the political arena. Currently there is only one Arab woman serving Israel’s 120-member parliament, though Arabs with Israeli citizenship make up approximately 20% percent of the nation’s population.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, the first Palestinian Arab woman, Hussniya Jabara, of the left Zionist Meretz (now Yachad) list, was elected to serve in the Knesset. In the 2006 election, Nadia Hilo, a member of the Labor Party and an Arab citizen of Israel, became the second Arab woman to serve in the Knesset.<sup>8</sup>

Female representation on local councils fares only slightly better. Three Arab women were elected to local Arab councils during 2003 local elections. In the 2008 local council elections, just two women were elected, and in 2009 there are still no Arab women mayors. In light of this Balad allocated its third seat to a woman candidate and Hadash allocated its fifth seat to a woman. The Arab women’s seat in the Labor party is not a realistically winnable place.

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<sup>7</sup> Gazzar, B. (2006) ‘*Israeli Women Push to Change Knesset Politics*’, Women’s e-News, accessed on <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=2675>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

### **III. Voting trends of Arab citizens of Israel**

#### ***Historical overview***

In the early years of the state, even after the end of military rule and party lists, the Arab electorate primarily supported Jewish parties, particularly left-of-center parties, such as Labor and Meretz, which called for social and political equality and a just and comprehensive regional peace.<sup>9</sup> Even as late as 1992, Jewish parties still received approximately 53% of the Arab vote. However, a history of broken promises by Zionist leaders and discriminatory legislation supported by Zionist parties has driven a wedge between Palestinian Arab citizens and Zionist politics. The Palestinian Arab community transferred its support to Arab political parties who received over 60% of the Arab vote in 1996, and about 70% of the Arab vote in 1999 (see Table 1). This trend of transferring votes to Arab parties increased in both 2003 and 2006.

In the 1999 elections, three Arab political parties vied for seats (Balad, UAL and Hadash). Also in 1999, MK Azmi Bishara (Balad) ran for prime minister, but pulled out of the race in order to consolidate support for the One Israel-Labor Party candidate Ehud Barak. Subsequently, 400,000 Arab votes went to Barak, who won the race for PM by a margin of 350,000 votes. However, in a move perceived as political betrayal by the Arab community, Barak bypassed Arab parties in forming his government coalition and opted to include right-wing Orthodox Jewish parties such as Shas, known for its unfavorable views towards the Arab community and that had opposed him in the elections. Still at this time, there has never been an Arab party included in a government coalition, a fact that has perpetuated the marginalization and frustration felt by Arab MKs, and is reflected in the downturn in voter turnout across the whole Arab community.

In the lead-up to the last prime minister elections in 2001, the Arab community organized an election boycott. The boycott was organized in protest of the unfulfilled promises by Prime Minister Barak, the events of October 2000 in which state security forces killed 13 Arab citizens, and was fuelled by the ongoing al-Aqsa intifada. All Arab political parties supported the boycott of the February 2001 prime ministerial election, leading to a mere 18% turnout rate amongst the Arab community, a historic low.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, a 2002 survey of political attitudes of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel conducted by the Institute for Peace Research revealed a continuing trend of loss of confidence in the Israeli democratic system and a feeling among Arabs that they have no ability to influence it.<sup>11</sup> About 83% of Palestinian Arab respondents to a 2001 survey conducted by the same institute expressed that they are dissatisfied with their ability to influence the government.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, only 7.2% of Palestinian Arab citizens polled indicated that the Knesset expresses their interest in the state, compared with 26.4% who believed Arab members of Knesset represent their concerns. Notably, 33.4% of respondents were cited as saying that “no one represents their interests in the state of Israel.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jewish Virtual Library (2005) ‘Parties: Meretz (now Yachad)’, accessed on <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Politics/partytoc.html>

<sup>10</sup> The American Jewish Committee (2003) ‘Israel/Middle East Briefing’, Appendix 4: Voter Turnout accessed on <http://www.ajc.org/Israel/IsraelMideastBriefingsDetail.asp?did=208&pid=1593#appendix4>.

<sup>11</sup> Atrash, A. and Ozacky-Lazar, S. (2002) ‘A Survey of Political and National Attitudes of the Arabs in Israel’, Institute for Peace Research

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

By the 2003 elections, the number of Arab parties had grown to seven, reflecting the community's increased diversity in political ideologies and needs. Yet, Arab parties that split from the three primary parties failed to garner the required number of minimum votes for parliamentary seats. Arab voters preferred the familiar communist/socialist stream represented by Hadash, the nationalist agenda of Balad and the Islamic-National Coalition represented by the United Arab List-Ta'al.

In the 2003 parliamentary elections, voter turnout was only 62% among Palestinian Arab citizens.<sup>14</sup> The Northern Islamic Movement and the secular-nationalist Sons of the Village (SOV) party incorporated into their platform the call for a boycott of the 2003 elections. Each party cited ideological grounds for the call not to vote: the Northern Islamic Movement, led by Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, promoted pan-Islamic arguments, and SOV advocated abstaining from voting through a pan-Arab nationalist ideology.

The lowest participation rates for the 2003 elections were in the unrecognized villages of the Naqab (Negev). The Mossawa Center reported to the Central Election Committee that 10 Arab localities in the Naqab, which recorded a 0.0% participation rate, had had their voting centers moved from their localities without notice. Disappointment and feelings of disenfranchisement were especially felt in 2003 among the thousands of Arabs citizens whose votes were lost with the National Progressive Unity List, which earned less than the 1.5% of all votes needed to win a seat. The Israeli election threshold or "passing percentage quota" stifled Arab representation in the Knesset.

The 2006 parliamentary elections resulted in the lowest voter turnout by the Palestinian Arab community for a parliamentary election since the establishment of the state, with one exception.<sup>15</sup> Only 56% of Palestinian Arab citizens voted in the 2006 parliamentary elections, which was 7% lower than the general voter turnout (63%). The estimated turnout from the Arab community for the 2009 elections, as estimated before the outbreak of the war in Gaza was just 45%.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 1: Voting preferences among Arab citizens in parliamentary elections**

Party	1992	1996	1999	2003	2006
Balad	0.00%	0.00%	16.8%	21.4%	20.2%
Hadash (DFPE)	23.2%	37.0%*	21.29%	28.8%	24.3%
Labor	20.3%	16.6%	7.43%	6.3%	12.8%
Likud	19.3%	5.2%	4.84%	2.3%	0.9%
Meretz (Yachad)	9.7%	10.5%	5.02%	4.2%	2.8%
United Arab List (UAL)	15.20%	25.4%**	30.55%	18.6%	27.4%
National Progressive Unity List Other***	12.30%	5.30%	Ran w/ UAL 14.07%	7.4% 8.4%	---
National Arab Party	--	--	--	--	---
Kadima	--	--	--	--	6.8%
<b>Voter Participation</b>	69.7%	77%	75%	62%	56%

\* Including Balad

\*\* Including the Islamic Movement

\*\*\*Including Daam, Shas, Israel Ba'aliya

<sup>14</sup> *Supra*. MADA, pp. 62.

<sup>15</sup> In 1981 the Arab community's voter turnout rate was 59.7 percent. MADA, *supra* note 3, at 62. Notably, the 2003 election also marked the lowest overall voter turnout, amongst Jewish and Arab citizens

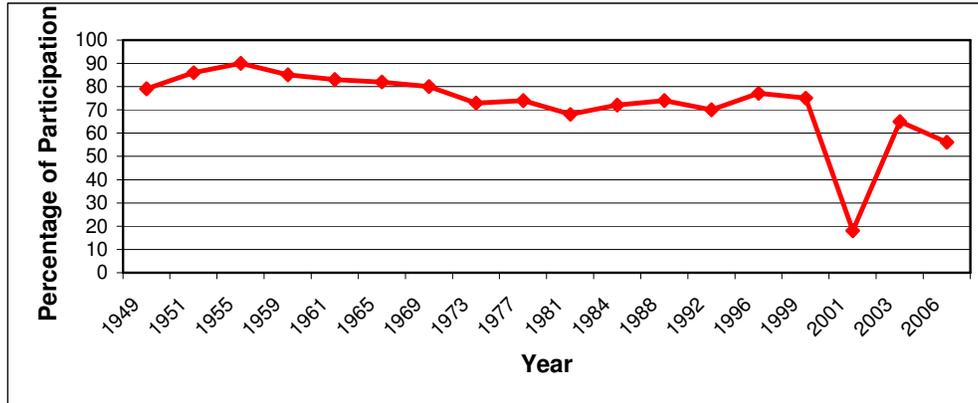
<sup>16</sup> (2008) 'Voting among Israeli Arabs estimated to reach all-time low' accessed on

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/spages/1045779.html>

#### IV. Declining political participation among Arab Citizens in Israel

The data in Graph 1 illustrates a trend in Arab voter turnout and political participation within parliamentary elections — one in which turnout has steadily declined as a result of feelings of disenfranchisement and overall political frustration.

**Graph 1: The Participation of Arab Voters in National Elections, 1949-2006**



The qualifying threshold for representation within the Israeli Knesset has changed since 2003, and currently stands at 2% of all total votes. The threshold was 1% before the 13th Knesset in 1992, but was increased to 1.5% after the 1992 election. This 1.5% threshold lasted until 2003, when the 16th Knesset further raised the threshold to 2%.<sup>17</sup>

The increased threshold is an attempt to limit minority representation within the Knesset. Although varying in ideologies, Arabs are now forced to consolidate their political, economic and social objectives in order to ensure their representation in the parliament. This has important ramifications for an already sizeable, underrepresented Arab minority. As 14% of the total voter population within Israel, changes to the election threshold in Israeli law severely reduce the opportunity to raise discussion about the discrimination of Arab citizens.

Not only are Palestinian Arabs forced to consolidate their views, their diminishing representation in the Knesset creates a situation where their voices are stifled and unheard. This is particularly pertinent on issues of major importance to the Arab community, such as social, political and economic equality; women’s rights; the allocation of public funds and resources; discrimination within Israeli society; and the future direction of Israel’s economic system.

Discussions on raising the election threshold have unfortunately been pushed to the periphery of Arab politics. The Arab community has generally acquiesced to the threshold in order to ensure the future existence of their parties, despite the fact that the increasing threshold has been perceived as a measure to restrict minority participation. Different ideological positions have thus been forcibly consolidated so as to ensure representation in the future of Israeli politics.

<sup>17</sup> (2006) ‘The Electoral System in Israel’ accessed on 27/03/2006  
[http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng\\_mimshal\\_beh.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_beh.htm)

Forcing the consolidation and estrangement of Arab parties within Israeli politics has instigated further polarization of Arabs and Jews. Political and economic objectives of Jewish political parties are thus placed at a higher priority on the Israeli agenda while Arab objectives are often put aside. At worst, such political estrangement could escalate the already tense atmosphere, and spark future political confrontation in the region.

### ***The coalition to boycott the 2006 elections***

Boycotting elections in Israel has become a viable political tool among Arab citizens. The Popular Committee for the Boycott of Knesset Elections coalition was started by leftist political elites in the Arab community, a group of independent participants including university academics and members of “Sons of the Village,” who believe in establishing an Arab political parliament as an alternative to the Jewish political center of the Knesset.<sup>18</sup> According to the coalition’s principles, boycotting the election should be a national goal for Arabs. The coalition called for the boycott of the 2006 elections and for direct elections for an Arab Parliament. Main opponents of the coalition’s program were the parties running for elections to the Knesset.

Immediately after the end of the war in Gaza the Islamic movement led a public campaign to call for the Knesset election boycott. The secular movements of Abna Elbalad also plan to boycott the election.

### ***The 2006 parliamentary elections***

Regional events preceding the 2006 Israeli election included the August 2005 unilateral Israeli disengagement from Gaza, and the election of the Hamas government in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in January 2006. The Israeli election brought to the fore the newly formed Kadima party, led by Ariel Sharon, which placed first, garnering 29 seats. Kadima’s unilateral strategy supported Israel’s separation from the West Bank, but the Convergence Plan<sup>19</sup> was to remain vague. Labor, Shas and the new Pensioner’s Party (Gil) joined Kadima to form a coalition, with the addition in October 2006 of the right-wing extremist Israel Beitenu (Israel Our Home) party, led by Avigdor Lieberman, who has repeatedly incited against the Arabs in Israel and called for the transfer of the community.<sup>20</sup>

Overall the election represented a strengthening of the large far-right and Jewish fundamentalist parties (Shas, NRP, and Yahadut HaTorah), and led to a further decline of the Israeli Zionist Left, namely the continued weakening (since 1999) of the Meretz party.

Four Arab parties participated in the 2006 parliamentary elections. After a number of Arab parties failed to garner enough votes for parliamentary seats in 2003, the number of active parties decreased from seven in 2003 to four in 2006. In addition, there was a recognition by

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<sup>18</sup> Stern, Y. (2006) ‘*Coming up: An Arab-Israeli Parliament*’, accessed on <http://www.israel-palaestina.de/Artikel/arab-israeli-parliament.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> This concept describes the objectives and components of the mid-2006 political plan of the Israeli government to unilaterally withdraw from territory in the West Bank. Similarly to the Disengagement Plan of Ariel Sharon’s Likud government, the Convergence Plan is based on unilateral steps which Israel intends to undertake in the West Bank with the purpose of decreasing Israeli control over the Palestinian population. Nonetheless, the Convergence Plan is significantly different from the Disengagement Plan, most blatantly in its strengthening and inclusion of three major Jewish settlement blocs beyond the Green Line

<sup>20</sup> Hadad, K. (2008) ‘*Report on Racism 2008*’, Unpublished: available on request from the Mossawa Center pp.37

the Arab community that an increased voter threshold meant that parties needed to consolidate in order to acquire even a few seats within parliament.

The new threshold increased the importance of forming a cohesive united Arab party that would guarantee the proper representation of the Arab public in the Knesset. However due to ideological divisions, aspirations of consolidation were not realized. As a result of the change, only four Arab parties participated in the elections. These parties were National Arab Party, Hadash, United Arab List (UAL) and Balad (National Democratic Assembly). Despite the change, the total number of Arab MKs on Arab lists and in Zionist parties did increase from 11 to 13, as well as one Jewish MK representing an Arab party. Support for Arab parties and the joint Jewish-Arab party grew to 72% in 2006, up from 69% in 2003, marking a further shift away from left-Zionist parties.

The breakdown of the results is as follows: 13 Arab Knesset members and 1 Jewish Knesset member representing an Arab-Jewish party. 9 of these Arabs were from Arab parties, 3 were from the Labor party (including one Arab woman), one was from Kadima, and one Jewish MK from the Hadash party also represented the Arab community.

The issue of women’s participation in the 2006 elections underscored the gap between awareness of the needs of Arab women and their actual incorporation into the political arena. In 2006 the Arab parties devoted large sections of their platforms to the status of women, although few women competed for winnable positions on the Arab party lists. Balad allocated its third seat for women and Hadash allocated its fifth seat.

**Table 2: Knesset members representing the Arab community by political party<sup>21</sup>**

Party	1999	2003	2006
Hadash	3	3	3
United Arab List	5	2	4
Balad	2	3	3
Labor	2	0 (1 replacement candidate)	3 (1 replacement candidate)
Meretz (Yachad)	1	0	0
Kadima	--	--	1
Likud	1	2	0
National Progressive Unity	0 (w/UAL)	0 (20,0571 votes)*	0
Daam	0 (2,151 votes)*	--	0
National Arab Party	--	--	0
National Democratic Assembly	--	--	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>

\* Number of votes fell short of the qualifying threshold for a Knesset seat.

<sup>21</sup> See table 3 for the 2009 update

## **V. Racist incitement against Arab political leaders between 2006 and 2009**

The Mossawa Center's 2007 report titled *The Limits of Freedom of Expression of the Arab MKs* provides a number of incidents concerning the attitude of the Knesset and the State authorities to Arab MKs.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1999 and 2007, nine Arab MKs were summoned for interrogations by the state for various reasons (e.g. demonstrations and public statements). During the same period, there were no investigations opened against Jewish MKs who had incited against the Arab population, and no action was taken against them. Seven of the Arab MKs summoned required medical attention due to injuries they sustained at the hands of policemen and soldiers in 11 different incidents at demonstrations. It should also be noted that in three cases, the police were forced to cancel indictments against the Arab MKs, after the latter presented video evidence proving their innocence. Consequently, even after the MKs proved their innocence, no official apology to the Arab MKs was issued by any of the entities involved.

Below are a few recorded incidents of incitement by Jewish MKs against Arab MKs that have occurred between the 2006 Knesset elections and the election in 2009. What these examples make clear is that incitement against Arab MKs and the Arab community as a whole is an ongoing phenomenon. Political leaders who incite against the Arab population remain unchallenged, further legitimizing racism in the national psyche. The ongoing expression of racist sentiments by political leaders occurs alongside the growing right-wing in Israeli politics, endangering the existence of future majority-minority relations in the state. A clear example of this was the recent election Central Election Committee ban against the two Arab political parties (*see the following section*).

Incitement and overt racism from Israel's political leaders have both implicitly and explicitly encouraged racism and even violence from right-wing and religious sections of Israeli society. Particularly, incitement emanates from former settlement populations that were evacuated during Israel's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, and have now settled in mixed towns and cities such as Acre and Jaffa. It is often these groups of citizens that incite tensions between Arab and Jewish residents, such as the violence that was witnessed in October 2008 in Acre.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Yisrael Beiteinu MK Avigdor Lieberman incitement against Arab citizens and MKs***

MK Avigdor Lieberman is mentioned throughout this report because his hawkish right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party has been instrumental in spearheading a campaign against the Arab parties and MKs and fostering racism towards the community as a whole. His party, a breakaway faction of the Likud, increased its number of seats in the Knesset in 2009 to a total of 15 (up from 11 in 2006)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The Mossawa Center report (2007) '*The Limits of Freedom of Expression of the Arab MKs*' outlines the conflict between Arab elected representatives and law enforcement entities between the years 1999 and 2007 – available on request from the Mossawa Center.

<sup>23</sup> The Mossawa Center (2009) '*Akka: City on the Front*', accessed on <http://www.mossawacenter.org/default.php?lng=3&pg=1&dp=2&fl=3>

<sup>24</sup> (2009) '*Likud leading election polls with 29 seats, in wake of Gaza operation*' accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1056541.html>

In a speech in the Knesset on May 4, 2006, Lieberman called for the execution of Arab Balad MKs who visited Syria in 2006 — MKs Azmi Bashara, Jamal Zahalka and Wassel Taha. Lieberman said, "... the fate of the collaborators in the Knesset should be identical to that of the Nazi collaborators." He added, "At the end of World War II, not only were the criminals executed but also those who collaborated with them. I hope that will be the fate of the collaborators in this house." In response, Ahmed Tibi demanded "a criminal investigation be initiated against Lieberman for violating the law against incitement and racism." Lieberman was cleared of racism charges by the Israeli deputy state prosecutor, while admitting that the office objected to the content of his statement. Tibi strongly objected to Lieberman's ministerial appointment, describing him as "a racist and a fascist." Labor minister Ophir Pines-Paz, who resigned over Lieberman's appointment, echoed Tibi's remarks, saying that Lieberman was "tainted by racist declarations and declarations that harm the democratic character of Israel."<sup>25</sup>

Another incident occurred in January 2008, when MK Lieberman announced his party would be leaving the Olmert Kadima government, in which he had served as Minister for Strategic Threats and Deputy Prime Minister, in protest against the start of negotiations on the core issues of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Lieberman took the opportunity to accuse the Arab leadership in Israel of extremism and fundamentalism. He focused on United Arab List MKs Mohammad Barakeh and Ahmed Tibi. During the press conference of the announcement, Lieberman said:

*The present negotiations with the Palestinians will not lead us anywhere. Whoever thinks that the reason for the dispute is land and settlements is deluding himself and others. ... Our problem is not Judea and Samaria, but the extreme fundamentalist leadership that is in the Knesset. ... Our problem is Ahmed Tibi and Barakeh — they are more dangerous than Khaled Mash'al and Nassrallah. They work from the inside; they operate methodically to destroy the State of Israel as a Jewish State.*<sup>26</sup>

MK Lieberman has also been at the forefront of the movement to ban the Arab parties from Israeli politics. Recently, following the Central Election Committee's vote to ban the Arab parties Balad and UAL, Lieberman equated the Arab parties with terrorists. He was quoted as saying "We will take care of you like we take care of every terrorist; we will take care of you just like Hamas took care of you."<sup>27</sup>

In January 2009, during Israel's war in Gaza, Lieberman argued that Israel "must continue to fight Hamas just like the United States did with the Japanese in World War II. Then, too, the occupation of the country was unnecessary."<sup>28</sup> This statement was interpreted as a reference to the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party is currently the third largest party in the Knesset.

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<sup>26</sup> Macintyre D. (2006) 'Labour minister quits over Lieberman's role' accessed on <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/labour-minister-quits-over-liebermans-role-422303.html>

<sup>27</sup> Jerusalem Post (2009) 'Lieberman: Do to Hamas what the US did to Japan' accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1231774444907&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

### ***National Religious Party MK Effi Eitam calls to expel Arabs from the political system***

MK Effi Eitam of the right-wing National Religious Party called to expel the “majority” of the Palestinian Arabs from the Occupied Palestinian Territories during a workshop at a settlement in the territories on September 10, 2006. “We must do two things to expel the absolute majority of the Arabs of Judea and Samaria from here,” Eitam said. “We cannot tolerate all these Arabs, and we cannot give up the land, because we saw what they are doing there. Perhaps some of them can stay on certain conditions, but the majority has to go. ... We must take another decision, which is to expel Israeli Arabs from the political system. That is also clear and simple. A fifth column has grown up here, a group of first-class traitors. Therefore, we cannot continue to allow such a hostile presence [Arab MKs] inside the Israeli establishment.”<sup>29</sup>

### ***Likud MK Yehiel Hazan equates Arabs to worms***

On December 13, 2007, MK Yehiel Hazan made racist statements in a speech in the Knesset: “Just like the worms, these Arabs are everywhere. ... Under the ground, on the land, by every method, these worms have been harming the Jewish people for the past hundred years, and we extend our hand in peace, as if nothing has happened.”

Hazan further elaborated by addressing his comments directly to Arab MKs: “Like the worms, that is what you represent: a people of worms digging in the sand, not a people seeking peace. They make no distinction for religion or culture, nothing.”

A formal complaint was filed against Hazan on behalf of the Mossawa Center, but he was not interrogated. Subsequently, the court convicted Hazan of fraud, after he had voted twice in the Knesset in an internal Knesset election, once in his own name and once in the name of a colleague in his faction.

### ***Likud candidate Feiglin calls for the transfer of Arab citizens and to encourage their migration from Israel***

Moshe Feiglin is the co-founder and president of the Manhigut Yehudit (Jewish Leadership) faction in the Israeli Likud party. With regards to the Arab population, Feiglin has argued that “there’s a state within a state growing here” and “we’ve got to stop fooling ourselves, look in the mirror, and deal with the problem head on.”<sup>30</sup> He said that 60% of the territory within the Green Line is controlled by Arabs, “who build where they want, take over more and more land, and we need to start explaining to them who this country belongs to.” In March 2008, the British Home Secretary banned Feiglin from entering Britain, on the grounds that his presence “would not be conducive to the public good.”<sup>31</sup> In a *New Yorker* magazine interview Feiglin is quoted as saying: “You can’t teach a monkey to speak and you can’t teach an Arab to be democratic. You’re dealing with a culture of thieves and robbers. Muhammad, their prophet, was a robber and a killer and a liar. The Arab destroys everything he touches.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A radio interview from IDF Radio (2006) Official website accessed on <http://www.israelradio.co.il/israel-media/radio-index/galatz>

<sup>30</sup> Freedman S. (2007) ‘*Feiglin’s Utopia*’, *The Guardian*, accessed on <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/aug/08/feiglinsutopia>

<sup>31</sup> Paul Jonny. (2008), ‘*Feiglin banned from entering Britain*’, *Jerusalem Post*, accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1204546432524>

<sup>32</sup> *Supra*. Freedman S. (2007)

***MK Aryeh Eldad***

Aryeh Eldad is part of the Hatikva part alignment of the National Union party, one of Israel's extreme right-wing parties. MK Eldad previously belonged to the National Union-National Religious Party (17th Knesset). He is quoted as saying he is planning to introduce a package of emergency "anti-Islamization legislation" in the next Knesset to "confront the enemy within."<sup>33</sup> The legislation would make military or civil service obligatory for both Arab and Jewish citizens, require all citizens to declare their loyalty to Israel "as a Jewish and democratic state" as a condition for voting in national elections and would also penalize illegal construction, mainly on family dwellings, a practice which is common in mixed and Arab cities where state zoning prohibits expansion. Eldad launched his campaign for the 2009 elections by organizing a show with a snake, declaring that after serving with Arabs in the Knesset he is not afraid of snakes.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gazzar, B. (2009) 'Eldad to push Anti-Islamization' Laws, accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1228728129918>

<sup>34</sup> Koshner, Eitan. (2009) 'Eldad not afraid of snakes', Jerusalem Post, accessed on [www.jersualempost.com](http://www.jersualempost.com)

## **V. The Central Election Committee: An overview of past attempts to ban Arab political parties**

The increased tolerance of incitement against Palestinian Arab citizens is paralleled by the growing number of laws and legislative drafts that seek to undermine the political legitimacy of the Palestinian Arab community. In the past few years, several new legislative changes have aimed to curb the freedom of speech and political organizations of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel. For example, Amendments 9 and 35 to Section 7a of the Basic Law: The Knesset provides that a list of candidates may not participate in elections to the Knesset if its “objects or actions” negate the existence of Israel as the State of the Jewish people, deny the democratic character of the State, incite to racism, or “support the armed struggle, of an enemy state or of a terrorist organization against the State of Israel.”<sup>35</sup>

While seemingly innocuous, these amendments, particularly the 2002 addition, which allows for banning a list that expresses either explicitly or implicitly “support for armed struggle by an enemy state or a terrorist organization against the state of Israel,” were conceived with the intent of disqualifying Arab lists of candidates and aimed at curbing the freedom of speech and political organization of the Palestinian Arab community. In 2001, the Knesset stripped the parliamentary immunity of MK Bishara to enable filing charges against him for allegedly supporting a terrorist organization. The case against Bishara was based in part on retroactive application of the 2002 amendment.<sup>36</sup>

During the 2003 parliamentary elections, petitions to the Central Elections Committee (CEC) likewise utilized these laws to disqualify MK Bishara and his Balad party, as well as MK Tibi of Ta'al. The CEC, considered a highly politicized body, disqualified these candidates and the Balad political party based on the allegation that they support the armed struggle of an enemy state or a terrorist organization against the state of Israel, primarily for comments made in support of the Palestinians' struggle against Israeli occupation. In a show of support for Arab MKs, the Arab High Follow-Up Committee, the Mossawa Center, Arab and Jewish organizations and individual activists demonstrated outside of the High Court building on the day of the hearings regarding the disqualification.

The bans damaged the remaining democratic fabric of the state, made explicit in Israel's Basic Laws and previous Supreme Court decisions, and international norms of civil liberties and freedom of expression, specifically violating Article 19 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

While the High Court reversed the decision of the CEC preceding the 2003 elections, the petitions against the candidates signified attempts to limit the freedom of speech of Palestinian Arab citizens and their political leadership. The new legislation has undermined the ability of Palestinian Arab citizens to organize politically and to challenge state policies that discriminate and harm non-Jewish citizens. Thus, even though the ruling was overturned, by enacting a ban the precedent had already been set, leaving the door open for similar racist initiatives in the future. The disqualification of the Arab parties would continue into the 2009 elections (*see Central Election Committee Ban of Balad and Ta'al*).

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<sup>35</sup> Basic Law: The Knesset (1950), amendments no. 9 and 35 of Section 7A (amended July 31, 1985, and May 2002) regarding prevention of participation of candidates lists, accessed on [http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic2\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic2_eng.htm).

<sup>36</sup> Adalah (2005) 'The State of Israel v. MK Dr. Azmi Bishara', accessed on <http://www.adalah.org/eng/bishara.php>

Governmental attempts to delegitimize the Arab leadership have not been limited to political parties. Beginning with the start of the al-Aqsa intifada, the government has also worked to discredit the Islamic leadership and crackdown on politics that challenge the government policies. In May 2003, Israeli security forces arrested the head of the Islamic Movement, Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, and 14 leaders in the movement.<sup>37</sup> Most were released within a few days, but five were charged with illegal financial activities that threaten the security of state that have been linked to counts of financial irregularities. What was originally billed as a terrorism trial about funneling money to terrorist groups in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, ended with financial irregularities in funds transferred to humanitarian organizations. As a result of a January 2005 plea bargain, Sheikh Salah was released from detention after having served a third of the 42 months he was sentenced to serve for the offences.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ittijah (2003) 'Press Release', accessed on [http://www.ittijah.org/press/pr\\_03\\_05\\_16.html](http://www.ittijah.org/press/pr_03_05_16.html). May 16, 2003

<sup>38</sup> Ettinger, Y. (2005) 'Plea deal secures Islamists' release', accessed on <http://www4.alternativenews.org/display.php?id=4294>.

## **VI. The context of the 2009 elections**

As a result of the failure of Kadima Chair Tzipi Livni — who replaced Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and refused to officially accept support from Arab MKs — to form a coalition government, general elections in Israel were called for February 10, 2009. The campaign leading up to the 2009 general election took place against the background of Israel's aerial and ground attack of the Gaza Strip that began December 27, 2008. Despite the mounting civilian casualties in the Strip and a Security Council Resolution adopted January 8 which called for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza," Israel continued its activities, linking its offensive to the larger "War on Terror." Israel eventually called for a ceasefire on January 18, 2009.

In the shadow of the massive military operation in Gaza and a mounting humanitarian disaster, the 2009 campaign also closely followed the Winograd Commission of Inquiry into the Second Lebanon War and the internal and international fallout from the war, as well as the international financial crisis that had gathered steam since October 2008. In all of this action, many essential internal issues were overshadowed during the run-up to the election, which this section aims to highlight.

### ***Events in Acre, October 2008***

The election was set against a background of internal mounting Jewish-Arab tensions within Israel. October 2008 saw some of the worst inter-community violence that has taken place in the northern city of Acre since the beginning of the second intifada in 2000.<sup>39</sup> Clashes between the Jewish and Arab communities commenced at the end of Yom Kippur on the evening of October 9 resulting in damage and destruction to more than 100 Arab and Jewish shops and properties. The conflict in Acre revealed the striking lack of real progress in remedying the enduring discrimination against the Arab minority and the persistence of incitement, harassment and systematic socio-economic discrimination in housing, education and public services, issues first officially recognized in Or Commission's report on the events of October 2000. Acre also serves as a strong example of the government's political agenda to Judaize towns and cities across Israel. For example, the conflict in Acre resulted partly from the resettlement of former Jewish settlers inside the Green Line, who established yeshivot as a base from which to incite the Arab community. This process of developing hesder-yeshivas<sup>40</sup> that attract Jewish students from the West Bank in Arab cities is being repeated in Arab Ajami, a neighborhood of Jaffa (Yafo).<sup>41</sup> The situation in Acre is an early-warning signal of a potentially explosive countrywide conflict between Arabs and Jews and further highlights the need for implementation of the Or Commission's recommendations.

### ***The war in Gaza and the Arab community inside Israel***

The war in Gaza seriously affected Arab citizens inside Israel, particularly due to the repression and increased tensions towards the Arab community within the state. One of the results of the Gaza offensive has been the mobilization of the Arab minority in Israel to demonstrate against the war and express solidarity with Palestinians under occupation. Israel

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<sup>39</sup> The Mossawa Center (2008) '*Akka: The City in the Front*', a field report and analysis of the conflict in Akka (Acre) in Northern, Israel. Hard copies on request and accessed on <http://www.mossawa.org/files/files/File/Reports/2009/Akka%2007-11-08%20Final%20edit-%20without%20family%20names.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> A hesder Yeshiva combines military service with religious studies for young Jewish men.

<sup>41</sup> Senyor, E (2008) '*Jaffa: Yeshiva to be built in heart of Arab neighbourhood*', Ynet, accessed on <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3601062,00.html> .

has responded to these demonstrations with disproportionate police force, arresting some 700 demonstrators, 70 of them still under custody of which 29 are teenagers.<sup>42</sup> Dozens more have been indicted and 236 minors were detained in custody. In addition, 42 Jewish anti-war protestors were also arrested during demonstrations.

Anti-war critics, both Arab and Jewish, have been stigmatized and their voices muted, a phenomenon which has serious implications for freedom of expression and stains the fabric of Israel's democracy.

Jewish and Arab students clashed over Israel's operation in Gaza at universities across the country. 73% of the Jewish public expressed unequivocal support of the war, which did not diminish throughout the operation despite media reports of the rapidly rising number of civilian casualties totaling over 1,300, and the utter destruction of the fabric of life in Gaza. This polarization has thrown Arab-Jewish relations inside Israel into further crisis, with the Arab community deeply opposing the war and exhibiting exasperated feelings of marginalization and paralysis. The war has pushed even the liberal factions of these communities towards believing that peaceful coexistence within the Green Line is no longer possible.

### **Central Election Committee Ban of Balad and Ta'al**

The decision taken January 12, 2009 by Israel's Central Elections Committee (CEC) to ban the Knesset's two Arab political parties, the United Arab List-Ta'al and Balad, from participating in the February 2009 elections on grounds that they do not recognize the state and call for armed conflict against it, is part of an increasing trend to undermine the political legitimacy of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel. Balad was disqualified by a vote of 26 to three, with one abstention, while 21 committee members voted in favor of disqualifying the United Arab List-Ta'al, with eight members voting against and two members abstaining. The Central Elections Committee is comprised of members of all party factions.<sup>43</sup> Yisrael Beiteinu is one of three separate parties that petitioned the Central Elections Committee over to disqualify Balad, the others being the Jewish Home party and Itay Furman, a former member of the Shinui party. This move to disenfranchise the Arab minority in Israel secured the alliance of centralists Kadima and Labor and the Yesha rabbinical council, who in praising the decision, called Arab parties a dangerous "fifth column" in the state.

Similar to what occurred in 2003, the Arab parties appealed the ban to the Supreme Court, and the court, in a unanimous decision taken January 21, overturned the ban. In response to the court's decision, MK Ahmed Tibi was quoted as saying: "We have defeated fascism, but this battle is not quite complete, discrimination has become centralized."<sup>44</sup> In fact, following the precedent set by the 2003 election ban, and the increasing incitement against Arab MKs, the CEC ban represents the deepening of racist sentiment within the Knesset.

Although the CEC decision was overturned in the Supreme Court on January 21, the ban once again sets a dangerous precedent. The whole affair, not a first in Israeli politics, highlights how racism and discrimination have become institutionalized in the state

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<sup>42</sup> Lis, J. (2009) 'Israel arrests 700 people, mostly Arabs, in protests against IDF Gaza op', accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1054763.html>

<sup>43</sup> Glickman, A. (2009) 'Arab Parties Disqualified from Elections' Israel News, accessed on <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3654866,00.html>

<sup>44</sup> (2009) 'Supreme Court Revokes Ban on Arab Parties from National Elections', accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1057497.html>

apparatus. Combating the phenomenon of racist incitement cuts to the core of the deepening tensions between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority.

***The Middle East Peace Process***

The internal confrontation in Israel between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian Arab minority, as seen in Akka in October 2008, remains largely ignored on international levels. The Arab community has a key role to play in supporting domestic and regional peace, and is group that must be utilized for its ability to stabilize a Middle East peace process. For example, that the Oslo Accords were supported and provided with political momentum by the existing six Arab MKs during Prime Minister Rabin's term is ignored by the media and other political forces who have upheld a tradition of excluding Arab parties from government coalitions.

The emotional fallout from the solidarity between Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians inside Gaza has created resentment and frustration from the Arab community towards the state of Israel. These feelings could have the effect of shifting the community away from dialogue and engagement with their neighbors within Israel, resulting in further hostility or even violence. Such a shift inside Israel would undermine any progress towards peace.

## VII. The 2009 Elections: An Analysis

The election results have plunged Israel into political turmoil and confusion. This section analyzes the results of the 2009 election in relation to the Arab minority inside Israel, looking back on the election campaign trail as well as the incitement during the election day itself. The implications of these results are examined in the context of the peace process, and the Arab community's role in the next era of the process.

### **2009 election campaign and Election Day**

The 2009 election campaign was completely overshadowed by the war on Gaza, which abated less than two weeks before election day. A campaign that began by focusing on good governance, economics and leadership quickly became consumed by security and military concerns. Early surveys forecasted that Binyamin Netanyahu and his Likud party would be the sure frontrunner and form the government. As the race developed, all three main parties — Labor, Likud and Kadima — competed to gain credit and prestige from their role in the Gaza incursion, disavowing responsibility for the mounting death toll and the humanitarian crisis, while the race tightened between Likud and Kadima. Netanyahu and the Likud capitalized on Israeli security fears to further steer an election win based on right-wing values as opposed to territorial concessions for peace.

Tzipi Livni began the race by trying to capitalize on war achievements based on the popularity of the Gaza offensive, while the same time trying to maintain her “centrist” party image, related to ambiguous plans for the peace process. In a last-minute attempt to gain more votes, Livni tried to sway female voters by appealing to feminism, referring to how she would be Israel's first female prime minister in 30 years, and utilizing slogans such as, “The time has come for women to be first.”<sup>45</sup>

The Gaza war highlighted the large turn to the right and the overarching military agenda held by Israeli society as a whole, brought into frightening focus by Avigdor Lieberman's campaign platform “No loyalty, no citizenship,”<sup>46</sup> and Yisrael Beitenu's rise in mandates (from 11 to 15). His campaign, which garnered the majority of its support from the Russian community and young voters, was based largely on incitement against the Arab community.<sup>47</sup>

As was uncovered towards the end of the election race, Lieberman has been implicated in a number of illegal ventures. He is suspected of being part of Kach, the racist party outlawed by Israel as a political party in 1984 and declared a terrorist organization in 1994.<sup>48</sup> Lieberman is also suspected of illicit business dealings in Russia, and offences related to campaign funding in 1998 and 1999. Finally, there is suspicion that he was involved in taking bribes while serving as a cabinet minister from 2001 to 2004. Additionally in 2001, Lieberman had his parliamentary immunity lifted and faced trial over the beating of several children whom he believed had hit his son.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Fisher-Ilan, A. (2009) ‘Israel's Livni woos female voters ahead of poles’, accessed on <http://www.newsdaily.com/stories/tre51722t-us-israel-election-women/>

<sup>46</sup> Selig, A. (2009) ‘Lieberman followers debate how to enforce loyalty’, assessed on [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)

<sup>47</sup> Feldman, Y. (2009) ‘Lieberman's anti-Arab ideology wins over Israel's teens’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1061910.html>

<sup>48</sup> Galili, L. (2009) ‘Elections 2009 / Haaretz exclusive: Avigdor Lieberman said to be ex-member of banned radical Kach movement’, assessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1061172.html>

<sup>49</sup> Reeves, P. (2001) ‘Cabinet Job for Ally Lieberman Despite Child Beating Allegations’, The Independent, assessed on <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/cabinet-job-for-ally-lieberman-despite-childbeating-allegations-694977.html>

The combination of all three of these trends — the turn to the right, the appeal to militancy, and Lieberman’s rise on a platform of racist incitement through illegal and corrupt ventures — point to a deepening crisis of values in Israeli democracy, where militarization has overtaken the civil agenda, corruption has tainted good governance and racism and discrimination have challenged the basis of equality.

This crisis has both internal and external dimensions. With regards to the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, this crisis of values is manifested in the fact that 73% of Israeli Jews supported the Gaza war. Inside Israel, this crisis of values has manifested itself in Israeli society’s intolerance to diversity and multiculturalism. Moderate voices against the war have been silenced, highlighted through the arrests of over 700 Arab citizens of Israel, and over 40 Jewish peace activists who joined in speaking out against the atrocities in Gaza.

### ***Incitement and Jewish-Arab tensions leading up to election***

The days leading up to the election witnessed a wave of right-wing incitement against the Arab community, and a number of near-crisis events as tensions mounted between the Arab and Jewish communities. The on-going incitement and political de-legitimization has implications for mixed Arab-Jewish cities, such as Acre, Yafo, Lod and Ramle, which will be the first to experience confrontation as tensions continue to mount. The first of these events was Lieberman’s decision to hold a campaign rally at Haifa’s municipal theater two days before the election. In response to Lieberman’s visit, the Mossawa Center and several other Jewish and Arab human rights organizations held a joint protest. Protestors held signs saying “Let’s talk in Russian about loyalty” and “What has Lieberman done for Russian citizens?” and chanted, “We refuse to be enemies.”

The event enflamed tensions between Arabs and Jews and Lieberman supporters at the event aggressively confronted protestors. Haifa’s Deputy Mayor, Yulia Shtraim, a member of Yisrael Beitenu, personally denied entrance to two Arab reporters from Channel 10 News and the Israeli Broadcasting Authority purely because of their ethnicity.<sup>50</sup> Although the event ended peacefully, two demonstrators were arrested for refusing to leave the demonstration.

On the day of the elections, tension flared in the northern Arab city of Umm al-Fahm, after the Central Elections Committee granted Baruch Marzel, an extreme right-wing activist and former Kach member, permission to man a voting poll booth.<sup>51</sup> The decision incensed the city’s population, and Arab community leaders announced in the early morning that Marzel would not be allowed enter. Crowds gathered at the gate of the city, and it was only at the last minute that the Northern District Police Commander forbade Marzel’s entrance to Umm al-Fahm. Subsequently, another extreme right-wing Knesset Member, Aryeh Eldad of the National Union party, attempted to take his place, but as a result of the already heightened tensions in the city, he had to be escorted out by police.<sup>52</sup>

These two events testify the growing trend of right-wing incitement and provocation of the Arab community, and the increased tensions between the two communities. This trend was

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<sup>50</sup> Galili, L. (2009) ‘Arab reporters banned from campaign meet of Lieberman’s far-right party’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1062998.html>

<sup>51</sup> Zarchin, T. (2009) ‘Elections Committee rejects bid to ban far-rightist from Arab city poll’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1062214.html>

<sup>52</sup> Stern, Y. and Ashkenazi, E. (2009) ‘Right-wing MK whisked out of pole in Arab city after violent protests’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1063070.html>

exhibited clearly and frighteningly in the Arab-Jewish city of Acre in October 2008, and there is a real possibility of this type of provocation and incitement spreading to other mixed cities, including Jaffa.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Election Results**

In 2009, 34 different parties ran for election, with just 12 parties passing the qualifying threshold. Theoretically, Israel has only 5.3 million eligible voters, including citizens voting abroad. This indicates a high degree of fragmentation within society as a whole. The national voter turnout was 65.2%, higher than 2006's record low participation of 63.2%.

In total, the election results were as follows: Israel Beiteinu won 15 mandates, Labor 13, Shas 11, United Arab List four, United Torah Judaism five, National Union four, Hadash four, Meretz three, Bayit Hayehudi three, and Balad three.

In light of this reality, the results of the 2009 elections failed to deliver political certainty or a decisive outcome. Kadima unexpectedly trumped Likud by a single mandate with 28-27 seats, and Israel Beitenu claimed victory for advancing to become third largest party in the Knesset and securing more than 12% of the national vote with the election of 15 MKs (up from 11 in 2006). This combination will complicate efforts for coalition building in the coming weeks. It was difficult for President Shimon Peres to appoint a new leader among Livni and Netanyahu, each of who claim competing legitimacy to become prime minister. Livni is leader of the largest party in the Knesset, but Netanyahu commands the ideological loyalty of the majority right wing bloc which could amount to over 61 seats, enough to lead a government coalition.<sup>54</sup>

On Friday February 20, following almost two weeks of failed attempts by Kadima headed by Livni to form a coalition, President Shimon Peres designated Netanyahu with the role of building the next government, a task for which he has 28 days. This has led to a situation where Likud has sought to create a broad based coalition which would include Kadima and Labour, with a rotation for Prime Minister shared between Likud and Kadima. However, following meetings with both parties, such a coalition appears unlikely as both Labour and Kadima prefer to sit in the opposition. Whatever the formation of the future ruling coalition, the Arab parties, which have a total of 11 seats, will not be asked to join in any government formation. As has historically been the case in Israel, Arab parties remain marginalized outside the central government nucleus, even in times of great national need for unity.<sup>55</sup>

The other option would be a narrow coalition government, composed of extreme right wing and religious parties. Options for such a coalition include Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu, Shas, the National Religious Party, and the National Union.<sup>56</sup> In the 2009 elections to the 18th Knesset, the National Union ran as an alliance of four parties: Moledet, Hatikva, Eretz Yisrael Shelanu, and some members of Tkuma (which had previously split). The Union holds four seats. A prominent supporter of the Union is settler leader Baruch Marzel, a former Kach member. The party demands a halt to the evacuation of settlements and concession to any

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<sup>53</sup> Ben-Simhon, K. (2008) 'God's Little Acre', accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1041621.html>

<sup>54</sup> If Livni fails to become Prime Minister, this will be the first time a majority party fails to deliver the government leader in Israel's history.

<sup>55</sup> As was the case with the election of Labor governments in 1993 (Yitzhak Rabin), and 1999 (Ehud Barak).

<sup>56</sup> The party is comprised of four smaller parties : Moledet, Hatikva, Eretz Yisrael Shelanu, and some of Tkuma. This party includes right-wing extremist parties, and seeks to initiate an "anti-Islamization" law, it also includes Kach supports, such as Baruch Marzel

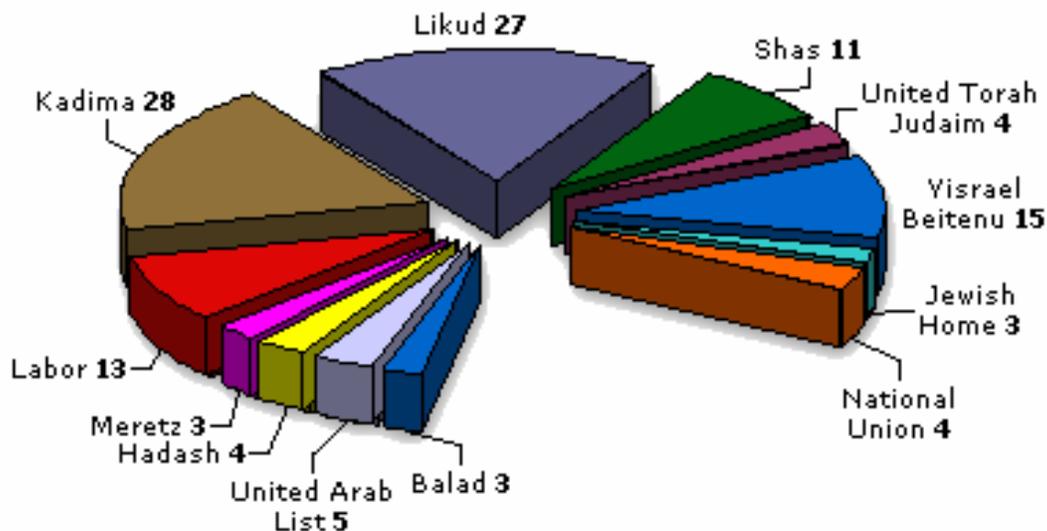
part of the Israel, and it says it will support Netanyahu only if he raises the child allowances and the budgets of religious and ultra-Orthodox educational institutions. The National Union's position is highlighted by the following statement, made by MK Yaakov Katz: "If we have the slightest doubt that as a result of our recommendation Bibi will be sitting in the next government with (Kadima Chairwoman) Tzipi Livni and negotiating Annapolis [to create] another Arab country between the sea and the Jordan River, giving away parts of the Land of Israel and dealing improperly with the outposts, the chances we'll recommend him are close to nothing."<sup>57</sup>

The party views all the agreements and commitments to the PA signed by the State of Israel as null and void, as well as the peace agreements with all of its neighbors.<sup>58</sup> First it would intensify tensions between ethnic groups in Israel, threatening specifically the rights of the Arab minority. Second, it would induce a situation of paralysis, ruling out any possibility for genuine developments in the peace process.

As this position paper goes to print, the most likely coalition appears to be close to a narrow right-wing government, headed by Likud with the inclusion of Yisrael Beitenu and Shas. In this coalition, Lieberman has demanded and received the central ministerial position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position which will assist him in forwarding his policies, including his "loyalty oath". In addition, it seems Lieberman will also have his demands met regarding the other portfolios he has requested: Foreign Affairs, Public Security, Tourism, National Infrastructures and Justice, which it is reserved for the incumbent minister, Daniel Friedmann.

Graph 2: Courtesy of the Jerusalem Post<sup>59</sup>

### 2009 election results (over 99% of the votes)



<sup>57</sup> Nahshoni, K. (2009) 'National Union says may not support Netanyahu', accessed on <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3670678,00.html>

<sup>58</sup> National Union Official website (2009) accessed on <http://www.leumi.org.il/english/>

<sup>59</sup> Hoffman, G. (2009) 'Kadima wins, but rightist bloc biggest', accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1233304741384&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

### ***An analysis of Israel's shift to the right***

Political commentators and pollsters have overwhelmingly suggested that Israelis shifted back to the right out of dissatisfaction over the failure of peace talks with the Palestinians and a lingering sense that the Gaza war ended too soon, without crushing Hamas militants or ending their rocket fire into southern Israel.

As mentioned above, Yisrael Beiteinu secured 12% of national vote amounting to 15 seats. This result was produced by an expansion of the party's traditional base of immigrants (predominantly Russians and their descendants), and a significant portion of votes from the settlement communities (for example the party secured 31% in the West Bank settlement of Ariel and 15% in the territory's biggest settlement bloc of Ma'aleh Adumim). In mixed Arab-Jewish cities of Beer Sheva, Tiberias and Haifa, the party respectively secured 25%, 16% and 16%, exemplifying the crisis in majority-minority relations.

### ***The continued appeal of the center***

Parallel to this dominant right-wing shift, there remains support for the center, exemplified through the continued existence of Kadima. It appears right-wing rhetoric was successful in both destabilising and confusing the left, with traditional leftist votes transferring their votes to centralist Kadima as the only viable alternative, fleeing to Kadima in the hope of thwarting a Netanyahu victory. For example Kibbutzim, a traditional and secure stranglehold of Labour and Meretz, split their vote 31% Kadima to 31% Labor with a notable decline of Meretz to 18%. Additionally the negative and smear campaigning of Kadima helped sway left-wing voters away from Labor and Meretz to Tzipi's Kadima.<sup>60</sup>

### ***The decline of the Zionist left***

Although there was no clear winner, the losers of the 2009 elections are obvious. Labor sank, for the first time in its history to fourth position, personifying the dramatic relegation of the Israeli left to the opposition or even to political irrelevance. Labor received just 10% of the total vote (just 15% in liberal Tel Aviv) with a return of just 13 members to the Knesset, and Meretz just 3%.

The decline of the Zionist left is as significant as the overwhelming shift to the right for the Arab citizens of Israel, whose status as equal citizens of Israel will continue to be threatened by the emergence of extreme right-wing blocs in the government. The leftist ideological affiliations between Arab parties and the Zionist left have now lost relevance.

### ***The Arab community and the 2009 elections***

Although early opinion polls published in December 2008 predicted a devastating 46% turnout in the Arab community, in fact 54% of the community participated in the 2009 elections, a record low, but not as low as anticipated.<sup>61</sup> This can be linked to the war in Gaza, which had the dual effect of both isolating the community into political apathy (alongside some calls to boycott and delegitimize the elections), as well as motivate others to cast a protest vote against the government's actions in Gaza. According to Jamal Zahalka, leader of

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<sup>60</sup> Sheerin, J. (2009) 'Israeli General Election 2009', accessed on [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7880487.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7880487.stm)

<sup>61</sup> Voting did drop lower in 2001, when only 18% of the Arab community participated in the elections after a successful boycott campaign in response to the Events of October 2000.

the Arab party Balad, Israel’s assault in Gaza rallied voters. “The Zionist parties all supported what happened in Gaza, so Arab voters reacted by voting for us and not the Zionist parties.”<sup>62</sup>

Additionally, the Arab political leadership used the threat of Lieberman’s profile and anti-Arab platform, as well as the CEC attempt to ban Arab parties from running, in the wider context of delegitimizing the Arab community, to actively encourage voters to trump the right-wing surge and its efforts to marginalise the community (*for the 2009 CEC decision, see page 23*).

Despite the 2% fall in overall Arab participation since the 2006 elections, the number of Arab MKs elected to the Knesset from Arab or joint Arab-Jewish parties, directly representing the community’s interest, increased by 1 mandate from 10 MK in 2006 to 11 MKs. The overall number of Arab MKs including from Zionist parties remained the same at 14, as three Arab MKs were elected on Zionist party lists (Kadima, Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu).

Given the Arab community totals 20% of the total population, there remains a clear representation gap translated into Knesset mandates, which should proportionally contain 24 Arab MKs to sufficient represent the community. This indicates a deficit of 10 MKs.

**Table 3: Knesset members representing the Arab community by political party**

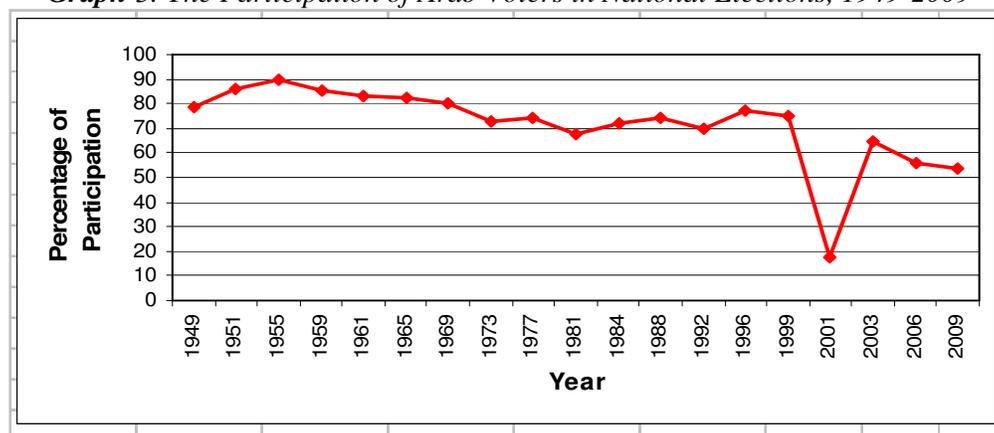
Party	1999	2003	2006	2009
Hadash	3	3	3	4
United Arab List	5	2	4	4
Balad	2	3	3	3
Labor	2	0 (1 replacement candidate)	3	0
Meretz (Yachad)	1	0	0	0
Kadima	--	--	1	1
Likud	1	2	0	1
National Progressive Unity	0 (w/UAL)	0 (20,0571 votes)*	0	0
Daam	0 (2,151 votes)*	--	0	0
National Arab Party	--	--	0	0
National Democratic Assembly	--	--	0	0
Israel Beitenu	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>

\* Number of votes fell short of the qualifying threshold for a Knesset seat.

The slight decrease in Arab participation coincides (*see Graph 3 below*) with a notable shift away from political support from Zionist parties to transferring votes to Arab or Arab-Jewish parties. The Arab parties gained a total of 304,794 votes in this election, which is an increase of 51,850 votes from the 2006.<sup>63</sup> 83% of Arabs cast their vote in favor of one of the three Arab or Arab-Jewish parties, with just 17% of the community supporting Zionist parties. This represents a significant 20.5% increase in support for Arab parties, which explains the increase in Arab MKs in the Knesset despite the fall in Arab participation.

62 McGirk, T. (2009) ‘Israel’s Election Dashes Hopes for Peace’, accessed on <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1878706,00.html?xid=feed-yahoo-full-nation-related>  
 63 252,944 Arabs voted for Arab parties in 2006.

**Graph 3: The Participation of Arab Voters in National Elections, 1949-2009**



Hadash received 29.9% of the Arab vote or 86,092 votes in the 2006 elections, which has now increased by 23,714 to 112,230 votes in 2009. Hadash contested these elections without joining any other party, demonstrating a genuine strengthening of the Arab-Jewish party. Approximately 10,000 votes from the Jewish community lent their support to Hadash, indicating a strengthening of Hadash’s Jewish support, and likely contributing to the extra mandate the party gained. The United Arab List received 22.5% of the Arab vote and about 94,786 votes in previous elections, and has now increased its support by 17,444 to 109,806 total votes in 2009. UAL is composed of three movements; the Islamic Movement, the Arab Democratic Party and the Arab Nationalist Party. Finally, Balad received 29.9% of the Arab vote and 72,066 votes in 2006 and now has increased its base by 10,692 to 82,758 total votes.

**Table 4: Total votes for Arab or Arab-Jewish parties**

Party	2003	2006	2009
Hadash	65,551	94,786	112,230
UAL-Ta'al	93,819	86,092	109,806
Balad	71,299	72,066	82,758

**Table 5: Voting preferences among Arab citizens in parliamentary elections**

Party	1992	1996	1999	2003	2006	2009
Balad	0.00%	0.00%	16.8%	21.4%	20.2%	29.9%
Hadash (DFPE)	23.2%	*37.0%	21.29%	28.8%	24.3%	30.5%
Labor	20.3%	16.6%	7.43%	6.3%	12.8%	4.3%****
Likud	19.3%	5.2%	4.84%	2.3%	0.9%	3.6%****
Meretz (Yachad)	9.7%	10.5%	5.02%	4.2%	2.8%	1.6%****
United Arab List (UAL)	15.20%	**25.4%	30.55%	18.6%	27.4%	22.5%
National Progressive Unity List Other***	12.30%	5.30%	Ran w/ UAL 14.07%	7.4% 8.4%	---	---
National Arab Party	--	--	--	--	---	---
Kadima	--	--	--	--	6.8%	4.05%****
Israel Beitenu	-	-	-	-	-	3.7%****
<b>Voter Participation</b>	69.7%	77%	75%	62%	56%	54%

\* Including Balad

\*\* Including the Islamic Movement

\*\*\* Including Daam, Shas, Israel Ba'aliya

\*\*\*\* This figure excludes those Arab votes from mixed cities and therefore is just an indication of Arab support for these parties.

In Umm al-Fahm, Hadash secured 54% of the vote, with Balad receiving 24% and UAL just 19%. In Nazareth, Hadash gained 52% of the total city vote; Balad; 23% and UAL 17%. In the largest mixed city of Haifa, the total vote for Kadima was 23% and Likud 21%. The two parties were dominant with the Arab parties receiving few votes; resulting in Hadash gaining 4%, UAL 3% and Balad 3%. In Tel Aviv-Yaffa only Hadash drew slightly more than 2% of the city’s vote and UAL scored just 1%, as a result of the fact that a large section of the Arab community there boycotted the elections. In Jerusalem, a city dominated by right and religious parties, Hadash managed just 1% of the total vote.

Israel’s Arab Bedouin community overwhelming voted for the Islamic party, which received 80%, of the vote, with just 5% awarded to Balad and 2% to Hadash.

**Table 6:** *Breakdown of Arab and Arab-Jewish parties support by community size (in the mixed cities)*

<b>2009</b>	<b>Hadash</b>	<b>Balad</b>	<b>UAL</b>
Non Jewish communities with 2,000 – 10,000 residents	24%	26%	22%
Non Jewish communities with 20,000 – 50,000 residents	27%	37%	22%
Non Jewish communities with 50,000 – 100,000 residents	52%	17%	22%

### ***Women in the 18th Knesset***

The 18th Knesset will have the highest number of women ever with 21 mandates held by women. Kadima has seven women elected to the Knesset, while Likud and Israel Beintenu both had five. Three women entered the Knesset on the Labor list, while for the first time ever an Arab woman entered the Knesset on the Balad list. Haneen Zoubi of Balad became the first Arab women MK from a non-Zionist party to be elected as MK.

However, even in the context of Livni’s aggressive campaign, which focused on the support of women and encouraging women’s representation, the gender representation imbalance in government remains significant, with the deficit particularly apparent in the Arab political leadership.

### ***The Arab minority and the 2009 elections***

The 2009 election was significant for the Arab minority on a number of levels. First, the recent Israeli offensive in Gaza had a number of implications. There was a collapse and retreat of Zionist parties almost completely from Arab voters, registering the lowest percentage of Arab votes for these parties, which include Labor, Meretz and Kadima. This phenomenon was not unexpected, as many Arab MKs, reading the mood of the population, predicted its occurrence. For example, at the Mossawa Center roundtable held the week before the election, MK Ibrahim Sarsur (United Arab List-Ta’al) commented: “I have never in my life seen such readiness within the Arab population to take revenge on the Zionist parties and to tell them a resounding ‘No’ because they brought about deterioration and the bloodbath in Gaza.”<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> January 29 Mossawa Center Roundtable (2009) ‘*The 2009 Israeli elections: Implication for the Arab community, the Crisis in Gaza, and the Peace Process*’, an event in Tel Aviv, Israel

In addition, the trend of the Arab community to boycott the elections, a phenomenon that has increased in recent years, was less predominant this election for all the reasons mentioned above.

Finally, throughout the election and increasingly discussed in its aftermath, is the position taken by many Israeli political parties, that the election threshold should be raised in order to facilitate a stronger government and aid the larger parties. The threshold now sits at 2%, raised from 1.5% in 2006, and any move to further increase the threshold would substantially damage the ability of the Arab parties to compete in elections and thus represent their constituencies.

Calls to raise the minimum threshold have been heard from at least two parties: Kadima and Yisrael Beiteinu. Both of them would like to see a significant increase, and there has been discussion of raising the threshold to as much as 5%, but if Likud ends up forming the next government, incorporating into it the small rightist parties, the threshold will only be raised a symbolic amount. However even a symbolic raise, for example from 2.5% to 3% could have a major impact on the smaller parties.<sup>65</sup>

The current proposals to raise the threshold point to a larger problem in Israeli electoral reform in general, namely, the oft-haphazard way in which it is carried out. The sudden shift in 1992 (implemented in 1996) to direct elections for the prime minister is one example of this phenomenon. The decision was revoked in 2001 because it caused even greater fragmentation in the Knesset.<sup>66</sup> Currently a number of politicians and academics are discussing electoral reform, but are in fact talking about many different and often unrelated changes, from changing the form of government, to changing the form of elections (for example a switch to geographic-based representation). Additionally, the vast majority of the current proposals would provide a distinct advantage to the big parties (Kadima, Likud and now Yisrael Beiteinu) and would negatively impact the smaller parties — specifically the three parties representatives the Arab community.

### ***Calls to boycott a government with Lieberman and the National Union***

The threat of a government coalition that includes a substantial Yisrael Beiteinu block has caused increasing concern among both the Arab minority and in the international community. Even before the election, when forecasts were predicting upwards of 19 mandates for the party (up from 11 in 2006), Arab community leaders began calling for an international boycott of any Israeli government coalition including Lieberman and the National Union party, a coalition of four smaller extremist factions.

At the Mossawa Center's roundtable, MK Ahmed Tibi, chairman of the United Arab List-Ta'al, appealed to the international community to boycott such a government, saying: "It's important that they behave toward Lieberman the way they did with [French nationalist politician Jean-Marie] Le Pen and [late Austrian politician Jorg] Haider. Otherwise, it's a double standard."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Gazzar, B. (2009) 'Arab parties have no favourite for PM', accessed on

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1233304754940>

<sup>66</sup> Shahar, I. (2009) 'Major reforms are unlikely, but electoral threshold could be raised', accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1063585.html>

<sup>67</sup> Gazzar, B. (2009) 'Arab politicians urge Lieberman boycott', accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1233050212858&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

## VIII. The international community and the peace process

Israel's election of Lieberman and the extreme-right have negative ramifications for both Israel's relations with the international community and for the peace process.

### **Relations with the US**

An extreme right-wing government spearheaded by Netanyahu with Lieberman as a centerpiece has called into question the Israeli government's future compatibility with the US and the paradigm shift occurring following the election of the Obama administration.<sup>68</sup> An ideological gulf could form between Israel and the Obama administration, which has pledged a reversal of Bush's approach to the conflict, and signaled a willingness to engage in the conflict "from day one."<sup>69</sup> This gulf will further strain both the speed and track of the peace process, such as the continuation of 2004's Roadmap and Annapolis, the terms of which are both explicitly and implicitly challenged by the party platforms of the Israeli right. This is reminiscent of the Clinton-Netanyahu tensions in the late 1990s.

It will be more difficult for the US to continue its unambiguous support of Israel if its government prominently features a blatantly anti-Arab party. A number of civil society groups have been alerted to this reality. For example, some groups within US Jewry are alarmed by the central presence of Lieberman and have significantly called for a boycott of any inclusive coalition.<sup>70</sup> However, immediately following the election, the official response from the US was to congratulate Israel on its "fine example of democracy,"<sup>71</sup> that the US will in no way undermine the internal affairs of the state and will continue to work constructively in the peace process with any future government.

### **Relations with Europe**

The reaction from European states and the EU is similar to the official stance of the US, but apprehension and skepticism from some states and MEPs<sup>72</sup> has been notable. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas visited Britain, France and Italy immediately after the elections in what has largely been seen as an attempt to rally support for a boycott of Israel's turn to the right. EU member states have expressed concern and have promised not to allow Israel to reverse the peace process. Currently the upgrade in EU-Israel relations remains frozen<sup>73</sup> since Israel's war in Gaza. This reality points to an increasing isolation of Israel in the world following the 2009 elections.

### **The Middle East Peace Process**

The sharp turn to the right in Israel, coupled with both the internal rise in racism and external disregard for humanitarian norms and human rights is reverberating throughout the Middle East. This development will make cooperation with Israel more difficult for moderate

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<sup>68</sup> The ideological collision with the new US administration was used as part Kadima's negative campaign against rival Likud. The 'Obama Effect' is a term that has been used to describe Israel's party's efforts to portray themselves as aligned with the new US administration.

<sup>69</sup> ABC News (2009) 'Obama Vows to tackle Middle East 'on day one'', accessed on <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/12/2463359.htm?section=justin>

<sup>70</sup> Mozgovaya, N. (2009) 'U.S. Jewish academics call for coalition without Lieberman', accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1065117.html>

<sup>71</sup> Mozgovaya, N. (2009) 'White House: Obama to push peace process, regardless of Israel leader', accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1063413.html>

<sup>72</sup> Members of European Parliament

<sup>73</sup> i.e. 1) the upgrade of the Action Plan; 2) the proposed protocol (addendum) to the Association Agreement allowing Israel's participation in EU community programs

neighbors like Egypt and Jordan; it would make reconciliation with Israel impossible for Syria and Saudi Arabia.<sup>74</sup> The US's softening stance and diplomatic shift towards Syria also clashes with the internal dynamics within Israel. In addition, the indirect talks begun under Olmert between Israel and Syria, a key actor in regional stability, are unlikely to continue with a Netanyahu administration, and have negligible chances of evolving into direct negotiations. Netanyahu has refused to consider conceding the Golan Heights in any peace deal. Relations between Turkey, a key peace broker, could also be hindered by an extreme-right coalition, following Turkey's very public condemnation of Operation Cast Lead. Finally, Netanyahu's tough rhetoric towards Iran, an issue featuring high on Likud's agenda, raises fears of a potentially catastrophic confrontation.

As mentioned, Israel's surge to the right indicates societal apathy with the ongoing peace process. Counter-peace policies and anti-concession policies such as retaining a united Jerusalem, land withdrawals and the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and the undermining of President Abbas' authority by resuming direct control of the OPT, indicate a reversal of the peace process.

In addition, the possibility of regime change in Gaza has been popularly legitimized with the election of Likud and the right-wing. This signals a head-on collision with minimal Palestinian conditions for peace and the Quartet's vision, pitting Likud against the by now universally accepted paradigm of a two-state solution.

Reactions to the election also differ between Fatah and Hamas. Fatah expressed concern about settlement expansion and the policies of Likud, remaining highly sceptical of its "economic peace" rhetoric, perceived widely as a tactic of procrastination instead of as a way to advance a genuine political agreement, but has stated it will work with any government committed to peace. Hamas believes the current stagnation and status quo in the occupation will continue under any new government as long as there is no fundamental shift in the Quartet's approach to the peace process, which would inevitably acknowledge Hamas as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Both the external conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and the increasing internal conflict between Jews and Arabs in Israel can directly and incrementally affect one another. A radical right-wing government inclusive of fascist elements, elected on an anti-Arab platform will inevitably cause tensions between the majority-minority populations inside Israel. As aforementioned, internal tension and instability inside Israel can derail any peace process and complicate regional stability. It is essential for peace to be consolidated at grassroots level, between Israel's majority-minority communities, to provide a foundation for wider, more sustainable peace. As citizens of Israel and as part of the wider Palestinian people, Arab citizens are uniquely positioned to contribute to a just, sustainable human rights-based resolution to the conflict between Israel, the Palestinians and the wider Arab world.<sup>75</sup> The potential of the Arab community's unique position in conflict resolution will be diluted and undermined by a hostile right-wing government, inflaming internal tensions and further compromising regional dynamics.

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<sup>74</sup> Klien, J. (2009) '*Israel's Angry Elections*', accessed on <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1878891,00.html>

<sup>75</sup> The Mossawa Center (2006) '*The Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel: Status, Opportunities and Challenges for an Israeli-Palestinian Peace*' accessed on [http://www.mossawacenter.org/files/files/File/The%20Palestinian%20Arab%20Citizens%20of%20Israel\\_Status...2006.pdf](http://www.mossawacenter.org/files/files/File/The%20Palestinian%20Arab%20Citizens%20of%20Israel_Status...2006.pdf) pp

## IX. Israel's new government coalition and cabinet

### **Coalition composition 2009**

On March 31 2009, the Knesset approved Netanyahu's return as prime minister as head of a national unity coalition government with 69 MKs lending their support to the new government, 45 voting against, and five Labor MKs abstaining.<sup>76</sup> The presence of widespread dissension (54% of Israel's public are dissatisfied with the new government<sup>77</sup>) regarding the coalition is indicative of uncertainty for both the stability and the life-span of the new government. Likud is joined by Israeli Beitenu, Shas and Labor in the coalition, exemplifying the change to the extreme nationalist-religious right from the previous center government. The conspicuous presence of the traditionally left-of-center Labor will likely lead to future conflict in the inner-workings of the coalition. Labor leader Ehud Barak narrowly won his party's endorsement to join a government whose leader is not committed to a two-state solution, and whose Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, expresses extreme anti-Arab views. While Barak insisted that the presence of his party would put a brake on the more belligerent instincts of some of the government's coalition partners,<sup>78</sup> there was a fierce debate whether Labor should legitimize the coalition at all. After long negotiations, the delegates at a special congress voted to support Barak by 680 votes to 507. The coalition debate has split Labor and weakened its leaders. Around half of its left-leaning members reject a partnership with the right. No one knows how strong party discipline will remain when it comes to controversial Knesset votes.

Labor's entry into this government undermines both the credibility and cohesion of the Israeli left. Labor, by opting to serve in the coalition will lose the opportunity to rebuild the Left, most traditionally associated with the peace camp. Labor's inclusion in this cabinet exemplifies Israel's crisis of the Left.

### **Coalition members**

Likud: 27 seats, 15 ministers

Yisrael Beiteinu: 15 seats, 5 ministers

Labour: 13 seats, 5 ministers

Shas: 11 seats, 4 ministers

Jewish Home: 3 seats, 1 minister

United Torah Judaism: 5 seats

### **The cabinet**

The new government yields the largest cabinet in Israel's history with 30 ministers and eight deputy ministers. This has led to criticism from the opposition and the public regarding the cost and inefficiency of the cabinet<sup>79</sup>. Likud dominates the cabinet with 15 ministers, securing the areas of justice, finance and education with three ministers without portfolio. Each of the principal coalition partners was awarded five cabinet positions. There are just two female ministers, holding relatively low profile posts — Immigrant Absorption Minister and

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76 Ynet (2009) 'Knesset greenlights new government', available at <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3695338,00.html>

77 Verter, Y. (2009) 'Haaretz poll: 54% of public dissatisfied with new government', available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1075358.html>

78 Karon, T (2009) Israel's New Coalition Won't Make Obama's Job Easier <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1887644,00.html>

79 IsraelNN.com (2009) 'Bar-On: Bloated Cabinet to Cost \$2 billion a Year', available at <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/Flash.aspx/163015>

Culture and Sports Minister. As historically been the case, once again, there is no representation of the Arab community close to the center of power in the cabinet, despite Arab citizens composing 19% of the total population and 14% of the voting population.

### **Key portfolios**

As noted above, the posts in the Netanyahu's narrow far-right coalition government are numerous and varied, with a number of positions resurrected from the past.

### **Foreign Minister**

The most controversial portfolio in the government was given to Avigdor Lieberman, who will receive the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Alongside Lieberman's steady incitement against the Arab minority and his recent statement rejecting the Annapolis process — saying Israel would not be bound by the internationally-recognized process, and would instead backtrack to the 2003 Road Map, he has also directly spoken out against facilitating regional third parties.<sup>80</sup> For example, during a special Knesset plenary session in October 2008, Lieberman said of Egyptian President Mubarak: "If he wants to talks to us, he should come here, and if he doesn't want to come, he can go to hell."<sup>81</sup>

### **Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Development of the Negev and Galilee**

Within this large cabinet, there are a number of new portfolios, such as the secret service position, and two portfolios created from one — telecommunications in addition to the previously existing post of communications. In addition, there are also a number of recently revived ministerial positions that require examination. First, in a controversial move by Netanyahu, a previous foreign minister, Silvan Shalom, has been named Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galilee as well as Vice Prime Minister, and included of the "kitchen cabinet," meaning he will be privy to high level discussion on matters of security and international affairs. While the portfolio of Minister for the Galilee and the Negev is relatively new, having been created in 2005, it is part of a larger historic government plan for Galilee development. The Ministry has maintained the unequal development of the region through programs designed to benefit Jewish districts and to draw professionals and academics to the region. This can be seen as the larger historical process of Judaization of the area, which began in the early 1970s.<sup>82</sup>

### **Minister of Minority Affairs**

Perhaps the most interesting portfolio to be resurrected in the 18<sup>th</sup> Knesset is the office of Ministry of Minority Affairs, which will be held by Labor MK Avishay Braverman, former Head of Ben Gurion University in Be'er Sheva. Originally established in 1948 by the provisional Israeli government, this ministry was eliminated in 1949, eclipsed by the military government that would control the Arab minority from 1949 to 1966. For the short period in which it operated, the ministry, then run by Bechor Shalom Sheetrit, was an institution that attempted to promote integration and equality. It was largely hamstrung, however, by the

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<sup>80</sup> Sagpal, S. (2009) '3<sup>rd</sup> Round: Israel not Lieberman bound by Annapolis Agreement', TopNews., available at <http://www.topnews.in/3rd-roundup-lieberman-israel-not-bound-annapolis-process-2146280> , accessed April 4<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>81</sup> Silverstein, R. (2008). 'Avigdor Lieberman Tells Mabararak to Go to Hell', Tikun Olam (online magazine), available at [http://www.richardsilverstein.com/tikun\\_olam/2008/11/01/avigdor-lieberman-tells-mubarak-to-go-to-hell/](http://www.richardsilverstein.com/tikun_olam/2008/11/01/avigdor-lieberman-tells-mubarak-to-go-to-hell/), accessed April 4<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>82</sup> Vice President's Office e-newsletter (2006) 'Change-Generating programs in the Negev and Galilee', <http://www.jewishagency.org/NR/rdonlyres/A0D1B083-E38B-4B33-BA17-85C7F1D126A9/25240/negevgalilee.doc> , accessed April 4 2008.

increasingly broad powers of the government and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who vetoed Sheerit's proposal for an Arab advisory council in the ministry.<sup>83</sup>

Following disagreements with the Ministry of Religions and the military government, the Ministry of Minority Affairs was officially closed in 1949. Following its closure, Arab-related matters were handled by an advisor on Arab affairs in the Prime Minister's Office.<sup>84</sup>

This position, in the form of the portfolio for Israeli Arab Affairs, was again established in 1999 when Moshe Katsav, the former president of Israel, was appointed to the position. However, the position was again abolished by the next government in July of the same year.

The current resurrection of the position raises a number of questions. First, although most Arab activist and human rights groups speak highly of Braverman as someone who has conducted outreach to the Bedouin community in the Negev and worked to promote Arab professors, there is criticism and doubt about the need for such a position. Jafar Farah, the director of the Mossawa Center, has questioned whether the portfolio would meet the same fate it did in 1949. According to Farah, "The question is whether he will be limited by extreme right-wing people [in the government] who are inciting against the Arab community."<sup>85</sup>

In addition, Mossawa and other human rights groups consider the mere existence of such a position "a step backwards."<sup>86</sup> The existence of a special ministry to allocate services further reinforces the widespread institutional discrimination that exists in the Israeli government and society. Such a ministry is a clear reminder that equality is not guaranteed in Israel.

### **Interior Minister**

Shas MK Eli Yishai remains deputy Prime Minister but has been designated Minister of the Interior for the second time — in 2001 Yishai was Minister of the Interior in Sharon's national unity government. In 2002, Yishai came under fire from Arab Knesset members after he revoked the citizenship of an Arab citizen who was allegedly involved in terrorist activities.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Dowty, A. (1988) *The Jewish State: A Century Later*, California: University of California Press.

<sup>84</sup> Korn, A. (2008) *Good Intentions: The short history of the Minority Affairs Ministry*, found in The annuals of Eretz Yisrael and the Yishuv, Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>85</sup> Gazzar, B. (2009) 'New minorities minister capable, but need for post questioned', The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1238562884548>,

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* Gazzar, B.

<sup>87</sup> IsraelNationalNews.com (2002) 'Yishai Says He Will Also Revoke Citizenship Of Jews', available at <http://www.allbusiness.com/middle-east/israel/262862-1.html>

### **Complete list of new cabinet and ministers**

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
  
- Vice Premier and Minister for Strategic Affairs Moshe Yaalon
- Vice Premier, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Development of the Negev and Galilee Silvan Shalom
  
- Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak
- Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman
- Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Eli Yishai
  
- Agriculture Minister Shalom Simhon
- Communication Minister Moshe Kahlon
- Culture and Sports Minister Limor Livnat
- Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar
- Environmental Protection Minister Gilad Erdan
- Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz
- Housing and Construction Minister Ariel Atias
- Immigrant Absorption Minister Sofa Landver
- Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer
- Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch
- Justice Minister Prof. Yaakov Ne'eman
- Minister of Government Services to the Public Michael Eitan
- Minister of Information and Diaspora Yuli Edelstein
- Minister of Intelligence Services Dan Meridor
- Minister of Minority Affairs Avishay Braverman
- Minister of Religious Affairs Yakov Margi
- National Infrastructure Minister Uzi Landau
- Science and Technology Minister Daniel Hershkowitz
- Social Affairs Minister Isaac Herzog
- Tourism Minister Stas Misezhnikov
- Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz
- Minister Benny Begin
- Minister Meshulam Nahari
- Minister Yossi Peled

### **The opposition**

The opposition is dominated largely by Tzipi Livni's Kadima party, which, following its failure to form a coalition despite winning 28 seats in the February election, was relegated to the official opposition. Livni refused Netanyahu's February 27 offer to join his far-right coalition government. It is reported that Livni rejected a broad-based coalition because Netanyahu would not agree to commit himself to a Palestinian state or agree to a rotating the prime minister position.

Kadima will sit alongside an emaciated Meretz party, which received just three seats in the election, and the three Arab parties, which include Balad, United Arab List (Ta'al) and Hadash. Interestingly, the one far right party that did not enter Netanyahu's coalition was the National Union (Ha'echud Ha'Leumi), which is a coalition of four smaller extremist parties including Moledet, Hatikva, Eretz Yisrael Shelanu and Tkuma.

The address Livni delivered at the swearing in ceremony for the government was cutting, but mainly related to the economic burden posed by such a large cabinet. She is quoted as describing the government as “filled with ministers of nothing, deputy ministers of nothings, and all sorts of other ridiculous titles,” arguing that ultimately “the public will have to carry the enormous weight of a bloated cabinet.”<sup>88</sup>

### ***International reaction to the new government and cabinet***

The international community’s reaction towards the new cabinet is generally apprehensive and skeptical, particularly in relation to the peace process.

#### ***The United States***

The new government seems likely to collide with the Obama administration. Following Lieberman’s speech rejecting Annapolis, the White House quickly reiterated the United States’ commitment to the two-state solution.<sup>89</sup> However, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton telephoned newly-appointed Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman on April 3 and agreed to meet and cooperate as soon as possible.<sup>90</sup>

American Jews have indicated a feeling of isolation from Israel as a result of the new government. JStreet, a pro-Israel lobby in the US, has launched a campaign expressing the organization’s concern over the appointment of Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman to head Israel’s Foreign Ministry and his party’s strong representation in the Knesset.<sup>91</sup> When told about Lieberman’s campaign slogan requiring Arab citizens of Israel to sign loyalty oaths and his threats against Arab Members of Knesset, American Jews opposed these positions by a 69 to 31 margin. Some 75% of US Jews support decreased financial aid to Israel should Israel fail to make progress with the Palestinians.<sup>92</sup> One in three believes their own connection to Israel will be diminished, if Lieberman assumes a senior position in the Israeli cabinet.<sup>93</sup>

The new government’s emphasis on the Iranian threat has divided US opinion, which is split between the need to confront a nuclear Iran and Israel’s potential to undermine US diplomatic engagement with Iran. Netanyahu and Lieberman’s election rhetoric have fuelled this apprehension.<sup>94</sup> It is feared that the Iranian issue will remove Palestinian independence and potential Israeli peace treaties with the Arab world from US focus.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ha’aretz (2009) ‘*New Government is Bad for Israel*’, available at <http://haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1075233.html>, accessed April 2<sup>nd</sup>

<sup>89</sup> (2009) ‘*Israel will pay heavy price for Lieberman’s mistakes*’, available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1076223.html>

<sup>90</sup> Sofer, R. (2009) ‘*Clinton congratulates Lieberman on new post*’, available at <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3696145,00.html>

<sup>91</sup> Mozgoivaya, N. (2009) ‘*U.S. pro-Israel lobby wages anti-Lieberman campaign*’ available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1076043.html>

<sup>92</sup> Benhorin, Y. (2009) ‘*Third of American Jews: Lieberman weakens our bond with Israel*’, available at <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3691102,00.html>

<sup>93</sup> Fingerhut, E. (2009) ‘*New J Street poll: American Jews want U.S. engagement in peace process*’, available at <http://blogs.jta.org/politics/article/2009/03/23/1003915/new-j-street-poll-american-jews-want-us-engagement-in-peace-process>

<sup>94</sup> Oren, A. (2009) ‘*U.S. green light for Israeli attack on Iran will have to wait*’ available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1076056.html>

<sup>95</sup> Atallah, A. (2009) ‘*Israel’s Awful New Government*’, available at [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4790](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4790)

The status of the Arab minority is perhaps the most complicated for the Obama administration to address, as it is a domestic issue for Israel. How Israel treats the Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship has direct consequences for Israel's "security," for the peace process and for the region. After three years of sanctions and the isolation of Hamas for its refusal to publicly endorse a two-state solution and accept Israel's right to exist by the United States, the US now must deal with an Israeli government with the same policy towards Palestine.<sup>96</sup>

### ***The EU***

Javier Solana, head of common foreign and security policy of the European Union, reiterated that ties between the EU and Israel depend on the Israeli government's commitment to a two-state solution in the peace process with Palestinians. Solana stated, "we will be ready to do business as usual, normally with a government in Israel that is prepared to continue talking and working for a two-state solution. If that is not the case, the situation would be different."<sup>97</sup> Czech Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra said he expects a rough start with the new government.

At a closed-door dinner of European Union diplomats held March 27 in the Czech Republic, several senior officials said Israel must be required to present an explicit commitment accepting the principle of "two states for two peoples." If not, the process of upgrading Israel-EU relations should be frozen.<sup>98</sup> At least 10 diplomats from Israeli embassies in Europe arrived at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem at the end of March, painting a difficult picture of the level of trust felt in Europe towards the Netanyahu government, particularly on diplomatic matters.

### ***The Palestinian Authority***

The arrival of the new government is likely to undermine the position of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas' popularity has declined steadily to the point where it may no longer be possible to win a Palestinian election next year. Abbas has been involved in talks to create a unity government with Hamas, which remains the ruling party in his legislature. Abbas' influence is declining even within his own Fatah movement, many of whose members believe he achieved nothing for the Palestinians in his decade of patient negotiations under Washington's tutelage. Abbas has said he won't negotiate with Netanyahu unless the Likud leader embraces a two-state solution.

On April 5, Abbas laid down his conditions for renewing stalled peace negotiations with Israel. The new Israeli government "would have to accept the creation of a Palestinian state, stop construction in West Bank Israeli settlements and remove army roadblocks crippling life in the West Bank so that we can resume dialogue in order to reach a political solution".<sup>99</sup>

### ***Syria and the Arab region***

Syrian President Bashar Assad urged Arab leaders convened in Qatar for a regional summit on March 30, to reject the 2002 Saudi peace initiative, as Israel had demonstrated that it is not a "real partner" to peace, and that "The real aim of Israel's recently elected government is

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<sup>96</sup> (2009) 'Arab League: Lieberman changes Israel's tone, not policy', available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1076025.html>

<sup>97</sup> (2009) 'EU: Ties with Israel depend on its commitment to peace process', available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1071437.html>

<sup>98</sup> Ravid, B. (2009) 'New government may face EU sanctions over two-state solution', available at <http://news.haaretz.co.il/hasen/spages/1075557.html>

<sup>99</sup> Haaretz Service and The Associated Press (2009) 'Abbas lays down terms for peace talks with Netanyahu', available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1076521.html>

against peace and that the composition of the incoming cabinet is a clear, unsurprising message.”<sup>100</sup>

Amr Moussa, secretary general of the Arab League said the appointment of Avigdor Lieberman as foreign minister “changed Israel's tone rather than its policy toward the Palestinians and the peace process.”<sup>101</sup> Moussa noted at a news conference at Arab League headquarters in Cairo that the previous government headed by Ehud Olmert had not abided by agreements on settlement building in the West Bank and had ignored an Arab peace initiative.

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<sup>100</sup> (2009) ‘*Assad: Israel's new government is against peace*’, available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1074919.html>

<sup>101</sup> *Supra*. (2009) ‘*Arab League: Lieberman changes Israel's tone, not policy*’, available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1076025.html>

## **Annex A**

### **Party Platforms 2009**

The following is an overview of each of the main political parties running in the upcoming election, and includes their core platform and key points of focus. The overview begins with the three Arab parties (Hadash,<sup>102</sup> UAL and Balad), the larger center and center-left parties (Kadima and Labor), those parties of the right including religious parties (Likud, Shas, NRP, and Israel Beitenu) and finally the single-issue parties.

#### **A. Hadash (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality or DFPE)<sup>103</sup>**

The two defining principals of Hadash (also known as the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality or DFPE), the Jewish-Arab Communist party formed in 1977, is its socialist mandate, and the need for the recognition of the Palestinian Arab community inside Israel as a protected minority. Despite Hadash's Jewish-Arab character, it draws its support mostly from the Arab minority in Israel. As the only Jewish-Arab party, Hadash also rejects the Jewish character of the state, separating it from Meretz or other left of center Zionist parties. Following the 2006 election, Hadash had three seats in the Knesset and was the only one of the three Arab parties not to be banned from the 2009 general election by the CEC's January 12 decision to ban of Balad and Ta'al). In the past Hadash has played an essential role as a political block, blocking the Israeli right during the Rabin government, and supporting the Oslo peace process.

#### **Main points of Hadash's political platform:**

##### **i. Peace process**

Hadash supports the total evacuation of all Israeli settlements from all Palestinian territories occupies since the June War of 1967 (i.e. the entire West Bank and East Jerusalem); the advancement of the two-state solution with a sovereign, independent Palestinian state to be established in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem living side by side with Israel in peace and security. Hadash advocates for Jerusalem to be a shared capital of the two states, with an agreement that will ensure cooperation and free access to holy places and free movement between the two parts of the city, with East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital and West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Hadash also supports a just solution to the Palestinian refugee question based on UN resolutions, supporting the right of refugees to choose between return and receiving compensation. Hadash wants a total Israeli military disengagement from all Occupied Palestinian Territories and the dismantlement of the separation wall. The party also supports greater freedom of movement within the territories, the release of all Palestinian political prisoners and the deferring of more control to the Palestinian Authority.

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<sup>102</sup> Hadash, the Communist party, is a joint Arab-Jewish party. The first two slots on its list are held by Arab MK's, while the third is held by a Jewish MK (Dov Chenin).

<sup>103</sup> Hadash (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://hadash2009.org.il/>

**ii. The Arab minority**

Hadash sees the discrimination of the Arab population as both a fundamental breach of the democratic foundation of the state and a barrier to sustainable peace in the country. Hadash advocates for recognition of the Arab community as a national minority; cessation of land expropriations and the demolition of houses; the enactment of a Basic Laws: Human Rights; combating ethnic discrimination and the creation of affirmative action plans (i.e. positive discrimination where needed). Hadash advocates for the fair and equal allocation of the state budget and equity and justice in all sectors of the state including employment, education and health services.

Hadash pledges to guarantee equality for women in every sphere including the enactment of a Basic Law: Equality for Women; guarantee work for unemployed women; fully enforce laws against domestic violence; increase women's representation. Hadash places the problems of social marginalization and poverty high on its agenda, with tax reforms and nationalization of key industries to be introduced. Hadash is well known for its' emphasis on environmental issues. Hadash has refused to unite with other Arab parties (in order to form one solid voting block) because of the perceived wide ideological gap between parties, but this remains an issue of contention.

## **B. National Democratic Assembly (Balad)<sup>104</sup>**

Balad is a progressive Arab nationalist political party, formed in 1996, which emphasizes the need for genuine and full democracy in Israel and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, particularly for the Arab community inside Israel that forms its main political base.

### **Main points of Balad's political platform:**

#### **i. Peace process**

The party supports creation of two states based on pre-1967 borders, with the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem as constituting the future Palestinian state, and the implementation of UN Resolution 194 regarding the right of return to Palestinian refugees.

#### **ii. The Arab minority**

Balad advocates for an alternative to the Jewish-democratic rhetoric of the Zionist and religious parties, and recognizes the self-determination of the Jews in Israel, but advocates for this to be inclusive of all the citizens of Israel.

Balad promotes the legislation of a constitution which will entrench the protection of democracy, political pluralism, social justice, equality, human and civil rights, freedom of religion, expression and belief without coercion, as well as the annulment of every form of discrimination, with special concern for women's equality. Balad demands the Palestinian Arab minority to be awarded the status of a national minority as stipulated in UN declarations. This status would entail receiving the rights to autonomy in education, culture and media. Balad has been a vocal opponent of every state budget since the party's inception on the basis that it discriminates against the Arab population of Israel.

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<sup>104</sup> Balad (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.balad.org>

### **C. United Arab List – Ta'al (joined with the Southern Islamic Movement)<sup>105</sup>**

The United Arab List party formed ahead of the 14th Knesset elections. The United Arab List ran independently in the elections for the 15th and 16th Knesset. Ahead of the elections for the 17th Knesset in 2006, the party merged with Ta'al, headed by Ahmed Tibi.

#### **Main points of UAL's political platform:**

##### **i. Peace process**

The party calls for end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the evacuation of all settlements and of the Golan Heights. UAL calls for an end to the expropriation of Palestinian land and the razing of homes, and an end to plans for boosting Jerusalem's Jewish character. It also supports guaranteeing the right of return to Palestinian refugees in accordance with international decisions and the Palestinian consensus, and seeks the release of Palestinian and Arab prisoners by Israel. The party is a coalition of Islamic and nationalist entities.

##### **ii. The Arab minority**

The party advocates for Arabs citizens to receive recognition as a national minority and the rights that accompany this recognition. It backs the formulation of a constitution that would recognize Arab citizens as a national minority. It also rejects the recruitment of Arab citizens to the IDF and wants equal representation to Arabs in state institutions. The UAL calls to amend the racist Law of Return and promises to improve the status of women in all areas of life, specifically: end discrimination, establish day-care centers, prevent violence against women and promote family unification legislation (for example, the repeal of 2003's Citizenship Law).

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<sup>105</sup> United Arab List (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.islammov.com/>

## **D. Kadima**<sup>106</sup>

Ariel Sharon formed the centrist Kadima party in 2005, when he broke away from Likud (along with a large number of incumbent MKs) over conflict resulting from his proposed Gaza disengagement plan. Two months before elections, Sharon suffered a massive stroke, and leadership of the party was taken over by Ehud Olmert, who won the March 2006 elections with 29 seats. Olmert has caused controversy and party embarrassment while facing corruption charges which led to his resignation in 2008. Currently, foreign minister Tzipi Livni heads the party. Kadima aims to be a wide based centralist party attempting to unit all members of the majority community around the goal of furthering the Jewish and democratic state.

### **Main points of Kadima's political platform:**

#### **i. Peace process**

Kadima declares acceptance a two-state solution based on the internationally sponsored Road Map, determining national borders according to the principles that would include the maximum number of Jewish settlers from the West Bank, an emphasis on retaining the settlement blocks necessary to ensure Israel's security, and making no concessions on Jerusalem which is to remain as the undivided capital of Israel. In addition, the party is committed to the completion of the separation wall. On the issue of refugees, Kadima proposes that the future Palestinian state is the solution, and provides no further solution to combat the refugee problem outlined in UN resolution 194.

#### **ii. Economics**

The party is committed to a neo-liberal strategy, including continued privatization of government assets, and opening up Israel to international markets.

#### **iii. Arab population**

Kadima's platform stresses the ongoing social and economic gaps between Arabs and Jews, but does not elaborate on the causes for those gaps. Steps recommended include undertaking a study of the comparison of education levels among Jewish and Arab populations; policy development aimed towards Arab entrepreneurship; promoting the development of tourism and reduction of roadblocks for Arabs entering the Job market; and promoting development of Arab towns. In December 2008 party leader and Israel's foreign minister Livni stated that upon creation of a Palestinian state, the national solution for Palestinians inside Israel "lies elsewhere"<sup>107</sup> and that all claims for justice would then be redundant and that Arab citizens must recognize that Israel is a Jewish state. Kadima is also committed to producing a revised Israeli constitution, in which it will enshrine the ethnic character of the state as Jewish and democratic, marginalizing Arab citizens of Israel as a national minority.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Kadima Party (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.kadima.org.il/>

<sup>107</sup> Selgi, A. (2008) '*FM takes heat over Israeli Arab remark*', accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1228728156919&pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull>

<sup>108</sup> Goldstein, N. (2006) '*A Constitution for Israel*', the New York Times, accessed on <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E01E2D81330F937A35757C0A9609C8B63>

**iv. Crisis in Gaza**

Kadima has been at the forefront of the Gaza invasion. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has been quoted as saying that Israel intends to “change the reality in and around Gaza” which entails weakening Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On the issue of humanitarian aid, Kadima has also been stanch in its denial — Livni was quoted in Ha’aretz as saying “there is no humanitarian crisis in the Strip, and therefore there is no need for a humanitarian truce.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ravid, B. (2009) ‘*Livni: Cease-fire in Gaza would grant Hamas legitimacy*’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1051909.html>

## **E. Likud**<sup>110</sup>

Likud has in the past espoused hawkish policies towards the Palestinians, including opposition to Palestinian statehood and support of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, historically, the party has also carried out the first peace agreements with Arab states. For instance, in 1979, Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed the Camp David Accords with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, which returned the Sinai Peninsula (occupied by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967) to Egypt in return for peace between the two countries. In 2005, Ariel Sharon defied the recent tendencies of Likud and abandoned the ‘Greater Israel’<sup>111</sup> policy of seeking to settle the West Bank and Gaza. Though re-elected Prime Minister on a platform of no unilateral withdrawals, Sharon carried out the controversial Israeli unilateral disengagement plan 2005, militarily withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and demolishing the Israeli settlements there, as well as four settlements in the northern West Bank. Likud MKs were largely opposed to the move and Sharon broke away from the party, forming Kadima, in order to push through the disengagement plan. In 2009, the party has moved to reduce its far-right composition, perhaps to appease the incoming US administration and to attract floating center-right votes. Moshe Feiglin, a prominent rightwing element of the party, is now considered a potential liability in this election, and was been downgraded from the 20<sup>th</sup> to 36<sup>th</sup> slot on Likud’s list.<sup>112</sup>

### **Main points of Likud’s political platform:**

#### **i. Peace Process**

Proponents of a swift peace agreement are wary of Binyamin Netanyahu’s stance on the occupied territories, including the Golan Heights, which he has argued is essential to remain under Israeli control for security of the state. It appears unlikely that Netanyahu would develop the current government’s indirect talks with Syria in Turkey and develop these into direct negotiations.

Likud’s platform includes an “economic peace” with the Palestinians espousing change from ‘the bottom up’ in order to condition the political situation.

Likud has expressed a willingness to negotiate peace with a Palestinian leadership “not compromised by terror,” but adamantly refuses to negotiate with Hamas and any member of the Hamas-led PA. Likud has promised to continue peace negotiations with the Palestinians but has stated ambiguously that those negotiations would not be started from where they left off under the current government. Likud is not in favor of a Palestinian state but concedes its inevitability is likely.

Construction of the security fence and the “natural” expansion of Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories will likely continue under Likud, although it has stated it will not build any more new settlements<sup>113</sup>, as will the extension of a massive infrastructure of roads, water pipes, power lines and military installations that will make the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state physically impossible. Likud will oppose the dismantling of settlements. Regarding the return of refugees, Likud argues it is the responsibility of the refugee’s host

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<sup>110</sup> The Likud Party (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.netanyahu.org.il/>

<sup>111</sup> i.e. the claim that Israel has legitimate territory supremacy over all of the land between the Jordan river and the sea including the OPT.

<sup>112</sup> Haaretz (2009) ‘*Likud leading election polls with 29 seats, in wake of Gaza operation*’ accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1056541.html>

<sup>113</sup> Ravid, B. (2009) ‘*Netanyahu: Likud-led coalition wouldn’t build new settlements*’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1058760.html>

Arab countries to integrate them and their descendents into their states. In addition, the division of Jerusalem, which is perceived as a threat to both peace and security of Israel and the tearing of Jewish values, is opposed by the majority of the party.

**ii. The Arab minority**

Likud is widely perceived by the Arab community inside Israel as hostile to their interests, both by implication of their position on negotiations with occupied Palestinians and its explicit anti-Arab stance in general. After the 2006 war with Lebanon, Netanyahu warned of the ‘threat’ posed by Israel’s Arab minority, calling them Israel’s ‘Fifth column’ and the ‘additional front’<sup>114</sup>.

In addition, domestically Likud has pursued hard neo-conservative policies, including Netanyahu's cuts to child allowances (with exceptions for father's with military service) when he was finance minister in 2003. These cuts, which also great reduced income supplements for Israel's working poor, greatly affected the Arab minority and the religious Jewish communities (as these two collectives do not serve in the armed service).<sup>115</sup> When Netanyahu was finance minister in 2003, he also oversaw funding cuts to local councils which have an adverse affect on the Arab community.

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<sup>114</sup> Darawshe, M. (2009) ‘*Arab Citizens are not a fifth column*’, accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1230733157216>

<sup>115</sup> Verter, Y. (2008) ‘*Likud ultimatum to Shas: Us or Kadima government*’, accessed on <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/994531.html>

## **F. Shas<sup>116</sup>**

Shas primarily represents the political interests of Haredi, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews. Following the 2006 elections in which Shas won 12 seats, it joined Ehud Olmert's coalition government and holds four cabinet posts. Its current leader, Eli Yishai, is one of four deputy prime ministers. Shas has traditionally been able to exert disproportionate influence by taking advantage of delicate coalitions and exploiting the balance of power.

### **Main points of Shas' political platform:**

#### **i. Peace Process:**

Shas has been flexible and inconsistent in its policy regarding the Israeli-Arab conflict. However, Shas demands securing compensation for Jewish immigrants of Arab countries as a precondition to any bilateral peace deal with Arab countries. Shas opposes arrangements based on indicatives from other countries and will never consider Jerusalem to be divided in any peace agreement.

#### **ii. The Arab minority**

The Shas movement believes in the existence of the State of Israel for the Jewish people based on their interpretation of democratic values and according to 'Jewish law'. This foundation of the party implicitly brings the aspirations of the Palestinian community inside Israel into direct conflict, as 'Judaising' the state excludes non-Jewish minorities. Shas supports generous welfare payments, particularly for yeshiva students and advocates for government grants for building and expanding yeshivot, which have been encouraged in mixed community areas such as Acre and Jaffa and has been the source of much tension between communities, as seen in the Acre October conflict in 2008<sup>117</sup>. Shas MK David Azulai is responsible for the party's Arab relations.

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<sup>116</sup> Shas party (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://shas.org.il/>

<sup>117</sup> The Mossawa Center (2009) '*Akka: A City in the Front*' accessed on <http://www.mossawacenter.org/default.php?lng=3&pg=1&dp=2&fl=3>

## **G. Labor**<sup>118</sup>

Labor is a social democratic or left-of-center Zionist party. In recent years Labor has adhered to international trends with a shift from its traditional left position to the ‘center’ of the political landscape. Labor party leaders have held the top positions in Israel’s Defense Ministry since 2006, and under the leadership of first Amir Peretz and now Ehud Barak, Israel launched a major war against Lebanon and initiated a blockade on the Gaza Strip that both Israeli and international human rights organizations have characterized as collective punishment of the territory’s 1.5 million Palestinians. Labor’s relative decline in government means that now the party is now only the fifth largest group in the current government’s coalition.

### **Main points of Labor’s political platform:**

#### **i. Peace process**

On the issue of relations with the Palestinians, Labor’s platform closely resembles that of Kadima. Labor advocates the need for a return to the Roadmap for Peace and a negotiated agreement to establish a Palestinian state, based on the ‘Land for Peace’ formula within the framework of the Oslo Accords, and is committed to continuing negotiations with the PA, Syria and other Arab states. Labor has stated that it would not negotiate directly with Hamas. Labor goes farther than Kadima by stating that the final status would be near the pre-1967 borders, yet, Labor’s platform also indicates a willingness to act unilaterally, calling for completion of the separation wall, and retaining main settlement blocs but has stated that it is willing to withdraw from all others and cede parts of Jerusalem under a political agreement. This would, in fact, stray far from the pre-1967 borders and allow Israel to retain 87 % of its settler population.

#### **ii. The Arab minority**

Labor has some support among the Arab community in Israel because of the synergies between its socialist agenda and the traditional aspirations of Arabs groups. One Druze and three Arab candidates appeared on the Labor party list in 2006. Amir Peretz, the former Defense Minister and prominent union leader enjoyed some standing among Palestinian citizens of Israel. However, MK Ami Ayalon, the former head of Shin Bet, developed a statement of principles for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which would veto any Palestinian right of return and would not address central issues of equality and discrimination of Palestinians inside Israel.

The 2006 Labor party platform included a section on “The Arab citizens of Israel,” containing a general statement on the need to introduce fundamental changes in government policy, emphasizing complete equality between Arabs and Jews. However Israel’s recent operation in Gaza, as spearheaded by Labor Defense Minister Ehud Barak, could alienate the Palestinian community inside Israel from a government with a significant Labor component. The trust crisis of Labor’s Arab supporters links from Barak’s term as Prime Minister during the events of October 2000. The Labor party appointed the first Arab Minister (without portfolio) Ghaleb Majadli in 2007<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Labor-Meimad (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.avoda.org.il/14-he/Party.aspx>

<sup>119</sup> Hoffman, G. (2007) ‘*Cabinet approves first Arab minister*’, accessed on <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1167467836205&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

## **H. Meretz**<sup>120</sup>

Formed in 1992, Meretz, the largest leftwing Zionist party in Israel, has over the last 15 years seen its representation of the dovish electorate in Israel shrink from 12 MKs upon its entrance into Knesset politics in 1992, to just five MKs in the last election in 2006. The steady loss of support is related to a combination of leadership failures, a blurring of its original messages, organizational weakness and the hardening of the Israeli public on security issues since the failure of the Oslo process.

### **Main points of Meretz's platform:**

#### **i. Peace process**

Meretz advocates creating conditions that will facilitate the resumption of negotiations between the government of Israel on the one hand, and the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority and the elected representatives of the Palestinian people on the other. Along with this stance, Meretz will not condone speaking with Hamas. The party also advocates unilateral steps that will be coordinated directly or indirectly with a third party.

#### **ii. Human rights**

The party advocates for the establishment of a Human Rights Commission to supervise the civil rights situation in Israel and assist in promoting human rights. Meretz supports the abolition of emergency legislation, which has been often used to justify human rights derogations.

#### **iii. The Arab minority**

In 2006 Meretz gave the most space in its manifesto to Arab citizen issues of any other Jewish party, and significantly pledged to implement the Or Commission recommendations. Meretz states that the Arab minority in Israel must be granted collective rights that will enable it to practice and express its special culture. The party also advocates for affirmative action "to correct many years of discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel."<sup>121</sup>

Meretz also advocates putting into operation an overall plan for developing the infrastructure and the rehabilitation of Arab communities and supporting the representation of Arab Local Councils in regional and national planning councils and the recognition of the unrecognized Arab settlements.

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<sup>120</sup> Meretz (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.myparty.org.il/asp/default.aspx>

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

#### **iv. Gaza invasion**

Initially in support of a military action in Gaza and the use of military force against Hamas, the party then stressed that there was no room for a military solution to the wider conflict, but that only political solutions will bring peace. Essentially, Meretz's support was conditioned on Israel's operation being limited in scope and duration. Meretz's message was "Strike Hamas in a targeted manner and work for a new ceasefire." More than two weeks into the Gaza onslaught, Meretz revoked its support for the operation. On January 9, 2009, Meretz released a statement criticizing the security cabinet's decision to continue the operation, saying that remaining in the Gaza Strip was against Israel's interests and would result in losses on both sides and the loss of international support. Meretz concluded that the correct path lay in a brokered peace agreement obtained through the auspices of the Arab League.

## **I. Yisrael Beitenu (Israel Our Home)<sup>122</sup>**

Israel Beitenu was established in 1999 by Avigdor Lieberman a year after he resigned the post of Prime Minister Netanyahu's (Likud) bureau chief. The party won four Knesset seats in the subsequent elections and in 2000 merged with the National Union faction. Beginning in 2005, Israel Beitenu ended the merger with the National Union, and ran independently, gaining 11 seats. The party states it aims to fulfill Zionism's three basic principles: Aliyah, defending the land, and supporting settlement activity.

### **Main points of Israel Beitenu's political platform:**

#### **i. Peace Process**

Israel Beitenu proposes that Arab-majority areas in Israel be handed over to the Palestinian Authority, while Jewish settlements are officially annexed to the State of Israel. This amounts to an inherently racist policy of transfer, described by Lieberman as the "exchange of land highly populated by Arabs for land with Jewish settlements as a viable proposal for solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict."<sup>123</sup>

Overall, the Party opposes the "Land for Peace" approach and is opposed to the current peace process because it believes that territorial concessions of any kind are wrong (both for security and because of the religious connections to the land). Following the reality of the unilateral Israeli disengagement from Gaza, the party supports the complete cutting of ties with Gaza and its separation from the West Bank.

#### **ii. The Arab minority**

The Party supports the Jewish character of the state of Israel, which implicitly undermines the stance of minority groups, specifically Arab citizens of Israel. It supports the establishment of a new citizenship law that will require every Israeli citizen to pledge allegiance to the country and perform military service or an alternate to national service if they wish to receive equal benefits as citizens of Israel, such as eligibility for any state benefits. This proposed law directly targets the Arab citizens of Israel, who do not serve in the army, a majority institution that clash with their collective ideology as a national minority. In addition, the concept of land transfer of Arabs in 'the triangle', a policy advocated by the party, is a direct threat to the Arab minority, and undermines their position as rightful position as citizens of the state.

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<sup>122</sup> Yisrael Beitenu (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.beytenu.org/>

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

## **J. United Torah Judaism**<sup>124</sup>

United Torah Judaism is an ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi party that resulted from a merger between the Hassidic, non-Zionist Agudath Israel and the Degel HaTorah faction into a joint list preceding the Knesset elections in 1992. The two factions have made sure not to receive ministerial appointments in Zionist governments, but rather, only deputy ministers. The party has always made sure to demand that it head the Knesset's Finance Committee in order to exercise control over the State budget. The party's central belief is that the Jewish faith is the cohesive factor of the people in Israel; the education system in Israel must teach the Jewish faith, its principles and doctrines. To this end, the party will form, maintain and invest in yeshivot and seminaries; and will ensure the government's support and funding for these established institutions.

### **Main points of United Torah Judaism's political platform:**

#### **i. Peace process**

United Torah Judaism believes Israel is the Jewish peoples' state by divine right; although recognizing the need for regional peace, the party opposes negotiations with the Palestinians and the formation of a Palestinian state.

#### **ii. Religion**

United Torah Judaism believes in the sanctity of Shabbat and will fight against the deterioration of the secular-religious status quo, and will object to any labor or commerce on Shabbat or Jewish holy days. In addition, the party negates the existence of both the Conservative and Reform Movements, believing that they lead to assimilation.

United Torah Judaism will work to rehabilitate the rabbinical courts' authority in all matters pertaining to family law, and will fight any civil marriage initiative.

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<sup>124</sup> United Torah Judaism (2009) Official Website accessed on <http://www.porush.co.il/>

**L. Parties that competed in the 2009 elections but failed to meet the 2% electoral threshold:**

- Green Movement-Meimad
- Green Leaf party
- The Green party
- Gil Pensioners' party
- Strong Israel
- Mahapach Ba'hnuh
- Kaoch
- Leader
- Ahraiut party
- Tzabar
- Power of Money party
- Israelim party
- Or
- Tzomet
- Men's Rights party
- Israeli Renewal party
- Lazuz party
- Brit Olam party
- Lehem party
- Lev
- Green Leaf Graduates and Holocaust Survivors
- Da'am

## **Annex B: Arab MKs elected to the 18<sup>th</sup> Knesset 2009 (by party)**

### **Hadash:**

Mohammad Barakeh  
Dr. Hanna Swaid  
Dr. Dov Khenin (Jewish candidate)  
Dr. Afu Agbaria

### **UAL-Ta'al :**

Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur  
Dr. Ahmad Tibi  
Adv. Talab El-Sana  
Shiekh Msood Ganaeem

### **Balad:**

Dr. Jamal Zahalka  
Adv.Said Naffaa  
Haneen Zoubi

### **Likud:**

Ayoub Kara (23<sup>rd</sup> slot)

### **Kadima:**

Maglai Waha (21<sup>st</sup> slot)

### **Israel Beitenu:**

Hamad Amar (12<sup>th</sup> slot)

## Annex C

### **Political Parties Representing the Arab Community (both within and outside the Knesset)**

<b>Name of Party</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Phone/Fax/email</b>
The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash)	Mohammad Barakeh	Phone + 972 6408418-2 , +972 6408419-2 Fax 6408911-02 mbarakeh@knesset.gov.il
	Dr. Hanna Swaid Mobile 050-3352300	Phone +972 2-6496131/2 Fax +972 2-6496163 hswaid@knesset.gov.il
	Dov Khenin Mobile 050-9018080	Phone +972 2-6753850 Fax +972 2-6753931 dhanin@knesset.gov.il
	Dr. Afu Agbaria	Phone +972 2-6753333 aagbariya@knesset.gov.il
The National Democratic Assembly Party (Balad)	Said Naffaa Mobile 4290729-054	Phone +972 2-6408380- Fax +972 2-6408925- snaffaa@knesset.gov.il
	Dr. Jamal Zahalka Mobile:054-6656605	Phone +972 2-6753101- Fax +972 2-6753182- jzhalka@knesset.gov.il
	Haneen Zoubi	Phone +972 2-6753333 hzaaby@knesset.gov.il
United Arab List	Talab El-Sana The Arab Democratic Party	Phone +972 2675381- Fax +972 2-6496160 telsana@kneset.gov.il
	Dr. Ahmad Tibi Ra`am-Ta`al Mobile -0505408547	Phone +972 -26408335/6 Fax +972 -26496199 atibi@knesset.gov.il
	Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur The Islamic Movement	Phone +972 2-6496189 Fax +972 3-9370529 Mobile +972 52.5698520 Isarsur@Knesset.gov.il
	Shiekh Msood Ganaeem	Phone +972 2-6753333 mganeim@knesset.gov.il
Sons of the Village Party (SOV)	Sohel Salebe	Phone +972 -49587933 Fax +972 4-9587933 Mobile +972 54-4589864
	Raja Egbariah	Mobile +972 3703656-52
The Islamic Movement	Sheikh Raed Salah Chairperson	Mobile +972 2040841-50
	Sheikh Kamal Khatib Vice Chairperson	Mobile +972 7953863-50 Fax+972 6516008-4