

## The Changing Map of the Middle East



Tahrir Square, Egypt 2011

The recent wave of democratic uprisings in the Middle East are changing the political map of the entire region as civilians take to the streets to challenge the old regimes. These revolutions, which should not have been unexpected by anyone monitoring the developments in the region over the past decades, nevertheless took many experts by surprise. The question now becomes: what will the New Middle East look like?

We are now entering a long period of transformation that will require careful negotiation. The millions in the streets of Cairo, Tunis and beyond demanded their voices be heard, and the result of this transformation process must be nations of active citizens. Negotiators must reevaluate the systems of wealth-sharing, increase the socio-economic participation of the entire population, and take into account the needs of the many ethnic and religious groups in diverse societies.

At the same time that the people in the streets are demanding new leadership, the old generation of leaders is attempting to exert its influence in the negotiations. It is imperative that these negotiations between representatives of the current regimes, youth leaders, the military, and secular and Islamic political parties create new political systems based on human rights values and norms. The systems must include power-sharing arrangements between the different parties, women's rights must be protected and promoted from the start, and the needs of refugees and the disabled taken into account. The way to achieve this new reality is through civil negotiation processes supported by robust civil societies. Neglecting the demands being made by ethnic, religious, and nationalist groups across the region could lead to civil wars, as in the case of Sudan where war resulted in the division of the country. In the past, such demands have been largely ignored

by the old regimes. In the new Middle East, protecting the rights of groups like the Kurds, Sahrawis, Amazigh (Berbers), and Copts will lead to self-determination and have a major impact on countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Libya, and those created with heavy international involvement over the last century.

This new reality will redesign the region, including Israel and Palestine. The so-called peace process has been frozen for months as a result of the Israeli government's policies, but it is time now for both sides to make strategic decisions. The Jewish Israeli citizens must decide if they want to live peacefully with their Palestinian and Arab neighbors in a one or two-state solution, and the Palestinians must negotiate Palestinian democracy and end the suffering of their people.

Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel, a community that can help both sides promote justice and democracy, have been marginalized by all regional and international actors thus far. The non-violent strategies that have been used by this community since the establishment of Israel in 1948 combined with their unique position of accessibility to all actors in the region make their role more important than ever in ending the occupation and building real and lasting peace. Rather than use this community's potential for peace building, however, extremists in the Israeli Knesset and public leaders are attempting to incite it to violence. Violence between the Jewish majority and Arab minority will further complicate the reality of the region and the international community must take a more active role in protecting minority rights in Israel and preventing the deepening of the rift between these two communities.

# Anti-Democratic Legislation Threatens Freedom of Speech and Association, Discrimination in Housing and Intervention in Family Life

Human rights organizations in Israel have been under public and legislative attack for the past two years from extreme right-wing NGOs that are leading public smear campaigns and Knesset legislation that aims to limit freedom of speech and association. The approval of discriminatory bills by the current Knesset shows a deep crisis in values in the Israeli political leadership.

Several racist bills have already been passed in the first three months of 2011 and more are expected to follow. These legislative measures are wholly unnecessary as the Israeli government already limits and influences the operations and existence of NGOs in Israel through the Registrar of Association, which is responsible for registering NGOs, collecting content and funding reports, and conducting investigations.

## Law to legalize discrimination in housing:

This bill that was approved in March 2011 will allow communities to reject applicants for houses and lands if the admission committee feels that the applicants don't "fit" socially into the community. The law applies to communities of up to 400 families, all of which have been built on public-allocated land. The Knesset debate on the law indicated that its aim is to make it legal to bar Arab citizens from communities in the Galilee and the Naqab (Negev). Knesset members who promoted the bill declared that it will prevent implementation of the March, 2000 Supreme Court decision in the Qadan case, where the Court ruled that discrimination against Arab citizens illegal in the community of Katzir. Human Rights organizations opposed the bill, asserting that the law will deepen housing discrimination against Arabs and other groups such as single women, Russians, Mizrahi

(Middle Eastern Jews), Ethiopians, and the disabled.

**Extension of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law:** In July 2010, the Knesset approved for the tenth time an extension of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order) that prevents Palestinian citizens of Israel from acquiring residency or citizenship status for spouses from the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The law, which was first passed in 2003, directly affects the family life of over 25,000 Arab families who are forced to live apart or in fear of the threat of separation. This law violates the right to family life and is discriminatory as it prohibits family reunification on the basis of nationality.

**Law on Disclosure Requirements for Recipients of Funds from Foreign Entities:** This bill was passed in February 2011 and places stringent reporting rules on NGOs that receive funding from public sources, such as the EU or the US. Harsh penalties will be imposed on NGOs that violate the law. There are already adequate transparency laws in place, and compliance with these additional requirements will be prohibitively expensive for many small NGOs. The law does not place similar requirements on private funding from abroad, much of which funds illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**"Nakba" Law:** In March 2011, the "Nakba" bill, which was introduced by the extreme right wing party Yisrael Beiteinu, was passed by the Knesset. The Bill denies public funding to organizations that commemorate the Palestinian "Nakba" as a day of mourning. Initially, the Bill imposed harsh prison sentence for publically marking the "Nakba", but it was subsequently revised following public protest. The law infringes on the

freedom of expression and the right of Israel's Palestinian citizens to tell their own historical narrative.

## Associations Law Amendment – Exceptions to the Registration and Activity of an Association:

This bill would shut down any NGO suspected of providing information to foreign entities regarding legal proceedings abroad against senior Israeli government officials or military officers, for war crimes. This would make it very difficult for Israeli NGOs to demand accountability for human rights violations committed by Israeli officials.

## Bill Forbidding Boycott Activity:

This bill forbids Israeli citizens to initiate, encourage, or provide support or information for a boycott against the State. Violation will be considered a civil crime, non-citizens risk being denied entry in Israel for at least 10 years, and foreign governmental entities will be in turn economically boycotted. This bill infringes on rights to freedom of association and speech, and is intended to intimidate NGOs and individuals from engaging in non-violent political activity.

## Bill on Committee of Inquiry to Investigate NGO Funding:

Approved by the Knesset in January of 2011, this bill would establish two parliamentary Committees of Inquiry to investigate Israeli human rights organizations: the first investigating "the involvement of foreign bodies and states in funding activities against the state and attempting to acquire its land," and the second examining "overseas funds and states funding Israeli organizations that participate in the de-legitimization of IDF soldiers." Human rights organizations feel targeted by this bill because they are the recipients of public funds, whereas settler groups tend to be funded by individuals and private organizations. The groups already comply with the

## CONTINUE Anti-Democratic Legislation Threatens Freedom of Speech and Association, Discrimination in Housing and Intervention in Family Life

reporting requirements as mandated by the Registrar of Association.

Parallel to the government's efforts, several semi-governmental organizations are also attempting to restrict freedom of speech and association of human rights NGOs. The most active of these, NGO Monitor, has been regularly publishing erroneous reports on NGOs since 2003 that are

riddled with misleading and falsified information. More recently, other radical right-wing organizations have initiated virulent campaigns against Human Rights NGOs. One of these, student-based movement Im Tirtzu, publishes reports in which it accuses NGOs of betraying the State and delegitimizing the existence of the State and inciting against the Israeli army.

At a time when nations across the Middle East are moving toward freer and more democratic governments, Israel seems to be going in the opposite direction by instead rejecting pluralism and equality. This legislation is part of the larger effort to intimidate civil society and restrict civil rights in Israel, a dangerous trend that can lead only to further conflict.

## Negotiating a Shared Future

How should civilians negotiate their future in conflict realities? This is the big challenge that faces the "Shared Future" working group that was established in 2008 to negotiate a democratic and peaceful solution to the reality both communities face. The Shared Future initiative's primary goal is to engage Arab and Jewish civil society, academics, and politicians in a capacity-building process for conflict management.

The initiative also aims to produce a Civil Agreement to serve as a pre-constitutional arrangement that protects the human and civil rights of all citizens. In this way, it aids in management of the internal conflict and contributes to the sustainability of peaceful relations between all citizens of the state, and to an environment that supports dialogue for regional peace. Another objective is to increase the participation of Arab community in the Civil Agreement process in order ensure that the needs of the Arab minority are represented in any future constitutional arrangement.

Over the past few years, various activities were implemented to realize these goals. For the purpose of engaging a wider audience, The Mossawa Center called upon dozens of experts and activists from various NGOs, together with politicians, journalists, writers, and lawyers, to participate in multi-layer discussions on fundamental issues concerning the



Shared Future, Lead Group Meeting, December 21, 2011, Tel-Aviv

present and future of the state, with Arab-Jewish relations as a focal point. Among the key issues discussed were: the state borders, minority-majority relations, the character and symbols of the state, gender equality and the relationship between religion and the state.

To ensure maximum participation from all of the many ethnic and religious communities in Israel, the initiative established a "lead group" of 30 representatives of Arab and Jewish NGOs from different social backgrounds and geographical areas in the country. In addition to expanding the activities of the initiative, the purposes of creating the leadership group was to create channels of communication between different marginalized ethnic groups

and to facilitate crisis management in case of aggravation of tension and the outbreak of violence, such as occurred several times in recent years, most notably in Acre in 2008.

This initiative is unique in that it depends on horizontal and bottom-up approaches of peace-building, with dialogue as a basic instrument to begin the process of transformation of relations. It considers all social and ethnic groups as equals, with no preconditions, and seeks to bring the needs of marginalized groups into the public sphere. Unlike similar projects that have been attempted in the past, the Shared Future project was initiated by the Palestinian Arab minority to ensure their effective participation in the social and political life of the country and the region.

## Haifa hosts the Palestinian National Orchestra

The Mossawa Center, in partnership with the Beit Al-Musica conservatory in Shfa'amer and in association with the Edward Said National Institute of Music, organized a concert of the Palestinian National Orchestra in Haifa as part of its first tour in January 2011. The event took place following the notable success of the Palestinian National Youth Orchestra concert held in Haifa in 2008.

tour was symbolic of solidifying the identity of the Palestinian people and their hope for a better future. For these reasons the first tour started in Jerusalem and ended in Haifa.

To allow for the participation of the Palestinians citizens of Israel in this historic event and to enable them to connect with Palestinian culture and fellow Palestinians, the

Mossawa Center and Beit Al-Musica decided to bring the orchestra to Haifa and conducted the necessary arrangements to make this possible. This was no easy task, as it required the issuance of special permits from the Israeli army for the musicians to be allowed to enter Israel. As a result of permit concerns, the concert organizers were unable to advertise the concert until all the musicians were issued permits. Although this situation resulted in the event being advertised only a short period before it occurred, the concert in Haifa was sold out and many people had to sit on the stairs or stand in the aisles.

The community's response demonstrates the Palestinians' strong connection to their culture and their commitment to nonviolence and peaceful methods of self-expression. The performance itself was a fusion of the classical works of Beethoven, the traditional Arabic music of Mohammad Elkasabjy, and the works of world-famous contemporary Palestinian composer Sharbel Dalal.

The event made headlines in the Israeli and international media, and reactions ranged from a perception of the event as a much-anticipated ray of hope from the region to expressions of surprise at the engagement of Palestinians in cultural pursuits. Regardless of these reactions, the concert marked another step toward a better and brighter future.



The orchestra is comprised of 50 professional Palestinian musicians from the Palestinian territories and the Diaspora. These musicians are setting a positive example for their communities by engaging in the arts despite the fact that they are living under occupation.

Several well-known Palestinian musicians from across the globe were invited to join this tour as well as several musicians from the National Youth Orchestra, which has achieved outstanding success locally and internationally. The concert was conducted by the visiting Swiss maestro Baldur Brönnimann and included the appearance of the Palestinian-Japanese soprano Mariam Tamari.

The formation of the Palestinian National Orchestra was one of the main goals of the Edward Said Institute. In order to make the dream a reality, the institute first established the youth orchestra. The youth group is intended to be the future core of the National Orchestra, whose first



## Two Economic Realities

The Arab community in Israel is systematically discriminated against in allocation of public funds across government ministries, a situation which has effectively created two economic realities in Israel: one that enabled Israel to join the OECD and the other, along with some Israeli officials such as the director of the Israeli Bank, that has been heavily criticized by the OECD.

While the needs of each community differ and those differences should be reflected in the budget, an analysis of Israel's state budget for the years 2009-2010 reveals a clear discriminatory policy. In the total State Budget for Development of 35 billion NIS, the Arab minority, which comprises roughly 20% of the population of Israel and therefore should receive 20% of funds or 7 billion NIS, was in actuality given only about 500 million NIS. 160 million NIS of this went towards a Development Plan for the poorest Arab localities in Israel which allocated the money to 13 Arab local councils for housing, real estate, employment, security and law enforcement. No funds were allocated for development in education.

The effects of the discriminatory budgetary allocation are most apparent and acute in education.

Today, there is a deficit of 9,300 classrooms in Arab schools, though according to official government figures the number is only 5,900. The discrepancy in numbers is based on the fact that the Ministry of Education excludes classes for 3 and 4 year-olds when calculating the classroom deficit. In order to close this gap, the Mossawa Center calculates that the Ministry of Education must allocate a sum of 750 million NIS to Arab schools.

In contrast, reports show the preferential treatment of illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The local councils of these settlements receive a disproportionately high percentage of financial transfers from the government, and per-capita gross investment in public construction in illegal settlements in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) is more than triple the investment in public construction within the Green Line.

Some specific areas of need are: an improvement in public transportation to and within Arab cities and towns, the construction of industrial zones in Arab areas, and the inclusion of Arab towns and cities in the Ministry of Tourism's routes and plans. Discrimination in education funds and

scarce public transportation make it exceptionally challenging for poor youth to integrate into the workplace, and budget cuts by the Ministry of Interior in Arab municipalities have resulted in the dismissal of hundreds of workers. Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture's preferential treatment of Jewish farmers raises the unemployment rate in the Arab community.

In the OECD's 2010 report entitled OECD Reviews of Labor Market and Social Policies: Israel, the organization states: "Israeli society is divided. On the one hand there is the general Jewish population for whom poverty rates are low and employment rates high. On the other hand, there are Arabs (about 20% of the population) and ultra-orthodox or Haredim (about 8% of the population) who have large families, poor educational outcomes, low employment and high rates of poverty."

"A nation that has recently joined the OECD should not have two separate economies: one for its Arab citizens and one for its Jewish citizens," reiterated Jafar Farah, director of the Mossawa Center. "State institutions need to make some major changes to the state budget to reverse this dangerous trend and reduce poverty in the country."

### Appeal to the Supreme Court against the Ministry of Education and Lod Municipality

In August 2010, after exhausting all other options with the Lod Municipality and Ministry of Education, the Mossawa Center filed an appeal on behalf of the Arab Parents' Committee in Lod.

The appeal, which demanded the renovation of the gymnasium in the Neve Yerek neighborhood that burned down 13 years

ago, was filed in cooperation with the Chairman of the Parents' Committee against the Municipality and the Ministry. After filing, the Mossawa Center's attorney demanded that the Lod Municipality submit to the court a schedule for the renovation.

Despite the fact that the budget for the renovation was provided

and approved by the Lottery Institute (Pais) in advance, the Lod Municipality refused to publish the tender detailing renovation plans. The Mossawa Center was able to force it to do so by sending an appeal to the Education Committee of the Knesset and filing a complaint with the State Comptroller's office.

## Racism on the Rise

The Coalition Against Racism in Israel reports 552 racially-motivated incidents of violence, discrimination and hate speech in 2010



Public campaign: children wearing face masks calling for tolerance in Israel, March 2011

Public and private spaces in Israel are saturated with materials, expressions, messages, activities and practices that promote racial discrimination. While racism and discrimination affecting many groups and sectors of society are becoming more and more prevalent in Israel, public criticism about the issue has decreased drastically. There is a tolerance of racism and incitement by Israeli society, sometimes to the point of blatant acceptance, that must be remedied.

To this end, organizations and individuals committed to promoting and preserving human rights in Israel have redoubled their efforts in recent years. In 2003, the Mossawa Center founded the Coalition Against Racism

in Israel (CAR), which brings together 26 civil society organizations working with different ethnic and religious groups including Arabs, Russians, Ethiopians, Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jews, Reform Jews, refugees and migrant workers to work towards a vision of a country without racism and discrimination. The Coalition is acting in response to activities, materials and expressions of discrimination, persecution, humiliation, contempt, hatred, hostility, or violence against any person or population group on the basis of race, ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, or nationality. In the last two years, Israel has witnessed one of the worst periods in terms of racist incidents, discriminatory legislation and incitement to racism.

These have come from public figures in government and the religious establishment, and are directed against the Arab Palestinian minority as well as other marginalized groups. Though the CAR was established in 2003, its work is today more necessary than ever, as the current anti-democratic, extreme right-wing government constantly targets the Arab Palestinian minority which it considers a "demographic threat."

In the face of these changing circumstances, the CAR saw the urgent need to reorganize itself to maximize its impact. It recruited new partners and organized a series of meetings with the existing partners to renew their commitment to the Coalition.

## Racism in Numbers

The 2011 Racism Report documents **552** racist incidents that occurred over the past year. This is almost double the number recorded the previous year, when **287** were documented. The incidents are recorded in various forms (news articles, legal documents, photographs, etc.) in the report, and links to media reports on the incidents provided where available.

Since 2010, the Racism Report has been published by the Coalition Against Racism (CAR). The 2011 Report details the following:

- **46** Arab citizens have been killed since October 2000, with only two cases involving Israeli police officers ending in conviction.
- **28** incidents of violence against Arab citizens committed by security



Racism report press conference March 22, 2011

forces were recorded, which is almost double the number of incidents in the previous year, when only 15 incidents were recorded.

- **86** incidents of racism by Jewish citizens against Arab citizens, a number of these incidents were also directed at the Jewish sector.

- The report indicates an increase of **400%** in reporting racist incidents and discrimination between the various Jewish ethnic groups in Israel. **110** cases were documented and complaints were filed to the courts by civil society organizations

- **87** incidents of discrimination in services by private and public institutions were documented. According to the organizations that compiled the report, this number does not reflect the actual number of incidents that occurred.

- **73** incidents of de-legitimizing the Arab leadership compared to 19 incidents recorded in the previous year; the de-legitimization has expanded from political leadership to include civil society organizations.

- **97** incidents of incitement to violence against Arab citizens, compared to **26** incidents recorded in the previous year.

- **32** incidents of racial incitement were recorded in the Russian media,

which were directed against other ethnic groups, as well as against U.S. President Barack Obama.

- The Knesset has continued to discuss **24** discriminatory and racist bills, some of which are in advanced stages of the legislative process and some of which have already been passed.

- **21** racist incidents in football stadiums were documented, which is a decrease in the number recorded in the previous year. This reduction is due to the steps taken by the football union in order to keep the Israeli football team in European Football League, which forbids all forms of discrimination. However, the Beitar Jerusalem team continues to lead with the highest involvement in racist incidents.

- **72** racist incidents against refugees and migrants were recorded, compared to **11** incidents in the previous year. The authors of the report believe that the increase was the result of statements made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior.

- An increase was recorded also in incidents of religious discrimination: **26** cases compared to 9 in the previous year.

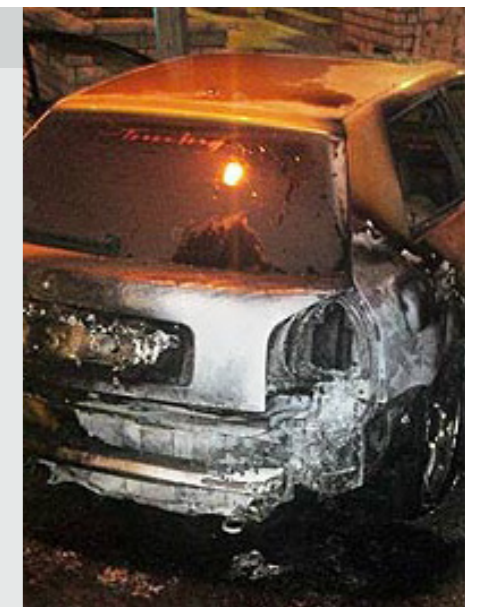
### Incitement and Attacks on Arab Students in Safed

Over the past several months, the campaign of incitement and racism against Arab students of Safed College escalated dramatically. Some of the most severe incidents were the burning of cars of Arab students and the City Rabbi's decree against renting homes and apartments to Arab students.

The college failed to take any action to remedy these incidents, despite its obligation to protect the safety and security of its students. Following the college's failure to fulfill this obligation, the Mossawa Center contacted the Council for

Higher Education and the Ministry of Education, demanding the cancellation of the plan to establish a Medical School in Safed and to consider locating the school in Nazareth instead, at which point the Safed College Board and the Municipality of Safed condemned the burning of the cars. The response was inadequate and minimal to address the root of the problem.

The Coalition Against Racism in Israel has prioritized the issue of incitement and specifically addresses this incident as part of its anti-racism agenda.



Arab student's car burnt in an act of racism in Safed, March 2011

## The Negev Bedouin: Israel's "Unrecognized" People

While the world is watching democratic uprisings sweep the Middle East, the fragile stability within Israel is threatened daily by events in the southern Negev desert. The Negev Arab Bedouin, citizens of the state of Israel, are being forced out of their homes and off of their lands and into government-created townships rife with poverty and lacking jobs and infrastructure.



*Bedouin women weaving traditional carpet*

Since July 27, 2010, the village of Al Araqib has been demolished over twenty times by the Israeli authorities. The village is being cleared and the ground made ready for a Jewish National Fund forest, funded in part by the American evangelical television channel "GOD-TV." Each time the village is destroyed, the villagers return and rebuild their makeshift dwellings. Following the most recent demolitions, however, the rubble has been cleared and rebuilding rendered nearly impossible. These demolitions also saw excessive use

of violence by the police against the women and children of the village attempting to protect their homes while the men were detained in the village's cemetery. Dozens were injured when the police fired tear gas canisters and sponge-tipped bullets on the peaceful demonstrators, resulting in the hospitalization of four women and two children. One activist described seeing a woman beaten almost to unconsciousness by the police.

Like Al Araqib, dozens of the other Bedouin villages in the Negev are considered "unrecognized" and their residents live in fear of similar demolitions. According to the government, the Bedouin are intruders on state land, and though they have been offered compensation to move to the towns they have refused and the demolitions are a last resort.

At the heart of the issue is land ownership. During the 1948 War, 80-85% of the Negev Bedouin were expelled or fled from the country. Over the next few years the 11,000 people that had remained were forcibly relocated to an area in the north-eastern Negev called the siyag (enclosure or fence), known for low agricultural fertility. The 1953 Land Acquisition Law turned this temporary evacuation into a permanent situation, and expropriated the land of all persons who were not residing upon or cultivating their land on 1 April 1952, meaning that the Negev Bedouin who had been forcibly removed from their land prior to this date lost their rights to land even though many possessed documented proof of ownership.

These laws and actions, combined with the land registration systems under Ottoman and British rule, make it difficult for the Bedouin to regain legal rights to their land. The village of Al Araqib is clearly residing on its ancestral site; visitors can see the

cemetery bearing Turi tribe names stretching back generations and the village leaders have documented deeds from Ottoman period. Other villages are on the land they were moved to by the government; the same government that now insists they are illegal squatters.

The problem is not lack of space. The land the Bedouin currently reside on makes up only 2% of the total land of the Negev desert. At the same time that homes are being demolished in the villages that have never been connected to the power grid, individual Jewish farmers are being granted large tracts of land and provided with services like water and electricity. Many of these farms were created illegally without permits, but were retroactively legalized by the Knesset in 2010.

Discrimination is evident not only in allocation of land but in compensation of land nationalized by the state. For example, in 1996, Bedouin citizens were given 1,000 USD per dunam in compensation for evacuating land they owned, while



*Bedouin child in an unrecognized village*



*Al-Araqib home demolition 2010*

a nearby kibbutz was compensated 17,000 USD per dunam for land it was leasing from the state. To date, the Bedouin have submitted over 3,200 land claims covering 990,000 dunams, but almost none of those claims have been settled. Since 2004, the Israel Land Authority has been filing counter land claims against those made by Bedouins, and in every case where a ruling has been handed down by the court, it has ordered the land to be registered as state land.

In December 2008, the Goldberg Commission was appointed by the government to find a solution for the claims. The Commission, which did not include female Bedouin or representatives of the unrecognized

villages, recommended that the state recognize all villages with a "critical mass" of permanent residents and that do not interfere with other state plans. In practice, this would only mean recognition of only a few of the dozens of unrecognized villages. The Commission also called for the establishment of several claims committees to deal with Bedouin ownership claims and provide financial compensation for expropriated land.

In May 2009, the government established the Praver Committee to outline a plan to implement the Goldberg Commission's recommendations, but as yet there has been little action and the Bedouin community is not optimistic.

In the face of all this hardship, the resilience of the Bedouin community is astonishing, and the group of supporters and advocates that have come together from the Jewish, Arab and international communities is inspiring. It is our hope that their efforts will convince the government to reverse this dangerous trend and protect the human rights of its citizens. Tensions within Israel are complicating the Middle East situation, and an end to discrimination against the Bedouin is one important step towards a peaceful solution.

To this end, the Mossawa Center and partner organizations in the Negev and the occupied Palestinian territories have developed a regional program with the support of the European Union, to empower women and youth in the two regions. The program, which was initiated in January of this year in partnership with The Association for the Improvement of Women's Status, Sidreh, Heinrich Boll Stiftung and Filastiniyat, aims to improve the status of the entire community through the empowerment of its most marginalized members. Educating women and youth about human rights and economic development will empower them to advocate for the rights of the Bedouin as a community, and later to build and promote independent projects with the goal of improving their socio-economic status.



*Arab Parliamentarians protesting with Bedouin community outside Be'er Sheva courthouse, Feb. 24, 2011*

## Human Rights Education in the Arab Community

I started my professional journey at the Mossawa Center in 2002, two years after its establishment. Over the years, I held several different positions including office manager, coordinator of the socio-economic unit and deputy director. One of the most challenging roles I undertook was that of coordinator of the program "Education for Human Rights in the Arab Community," especially because it began in the same year (2009) that I gave birth to my first child, my son Yamen.

As parents, we want the best for our children, and we try to internalize the values we want them to learn to become better members of society. However, the Palestinian community in general and the Palestinian youth specifically face huge challenges to the preservation of their identity as their citizenship is constantly questioned through discriminatory legislation, and outright racism from the Jewish majority in Israel. Since its establishment, the Mossawa Center has seen the need to strengthen democratic values and knowledge of the principles of human rights within the Palestinian community, and so in 2009 we designed the "Education for Human Rights in Arab community" project. The project targets four groups: teachers, women, high school students and university students, and each group contains 30-40 participants from different areas of the country.

As a preparatory step, the project's



Adella Biadi-Shlon (center) with participants from teachers' workshop

staff wrote several publications in Arabic in the first year. The publications were designed as guides on several topics: Racism and the Right to Action; Equality; Freedom of Expression and Association; Students' Rights to Expression and Association; Conflict Resolution and Internal Conflicts and Economic Development Tools in the Arab Community.

During the second year of the project we began working separately with each group, using the publications and providing participants with tools about community activism. Participants were also encouraged to initiate their own community awareness projects and activities in their villages.

We are now in the third year of the project, and we have broken the

groups down further to units of 10-12 participants in order to work in more depth with them on community activism and social change.

During these three years the groups have become active on the local level, initiating their own public activities, designing media campaigns against violence and contributing in other ways to their communities. In addition to developing their awareness of their rights as citizens, these groups are being mobilized to make a change in the Palestinian community and to believe that another world is possible!

Ms Adella Biadi-Shlon is a Deputy Director and Program Manager at the Mossawa Center



Human Rights training for high school students

## International recognition of the Unique Challenges Facing the Arab Community

Over the past year, the Mossawa Center has made considerable progress in its international advocacy efforts. The staff continued building its network with international actors within Israel through meetings and events with embassies, international NGOs and foundations, and expanded its global network through trips abroad. Some of the highlights of the last year in international advocacy have been:

### The Elders' call for improvements in the status of the Arab community:

A delegation of the Elders Association, including former presidents Jimmy Carter and Mary Robinson, and former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi visited Israel and Palestine in October to promote regional peace. In Israel they met with leaders of the Arab community, and after listening to the concerns, they declared the need to address these concerns and improve the situation of the community.

### The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

Commissioner Navi Pillay visited Israel and the oPt in February of 2011, and met with human rights NGOs. She released a statement following this meeting in which she expressed deep concern over the treatment of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and more specifically over the discriminatory legislation, attacks on human rights organizations, and home demolitions.

### The Minister for the Middle East of the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Visit to Nazareth:

Minister Alistair Burt visited Nazareth in January and met with political and civil society leaders to discuss UK-Israel relations. The concerns of the Arab minority were raised with members of Israel's government, and the need to adhere to international human rights standards, specifically those detailed in the EU-Israel Action Plan, was highlighted.



Arab Leaders With The Elders

### A Hearing in the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights:

This EMHRN initiated hearing was held to discuss the protection of Human Rights defenders and the challenges facing the Arab community in Israel. Following the hearing and the Mossawa Center's advocacy in Brussels regarding draft bills in the Knesset targeting NGOs, a plenary session was held in the European Parliament to discuss one particular bill dealing with reporting procedures for NGOs that receive funding from foreign governments or government institutions.

### Raising Awareness on Land Issues in the Negev:

The Mossawa Center organized and conducted two tours of Arab Bedouin villages in the Negev, one for the Ambassador and staff of the South African Embassy, and another, in which representatives of nine other embassies participated, including the Ambassador of Belgium. Later in the year, the Center organized a seminar for diplomats on the subject of the unrecognized Bedouin villages. In addition, Mossawa staff attended a conference with Amnesty International UK and local NGOs on putting land and housing rights

for the Bedouin community as one of issues with priority by Amnesty.

### Meetings with Faith Leaders:

The Mossawa Center staff met with leaders from the U.S. coalition Churches for Middle East Peace, as well as with delegations of faith leaders touring the region with Project Engage. The latter two delegations were from Hispanic and evangelical church communities in the United States.

### British trade unions representatives and UK Jewish Taskforce:

A delegation from UNISON, Britain and Europe's largest public sector union (with over 1.3 million members), visited the Center's offices in Haifa to discuss labor issues in the Arab community as well as discrimination in employment of Arab citizens, the union's partnerships with Israeli labor unions and the lack of representation of Arab workers in these unions. Mossawa also met with the UK Jewish Taskforce on issues of concern.

### Advocacy Tours Abroad:

In 2010, the Center conducted a tour to Washington, DC to expand its U.S. advocacy efforts, and another to Geneva to attend a Forum on the economic participation of minorities held by the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

## Tribute to Ms. Gill Dye and Reverend Shehade Shehade

The Mossawa Center would like to pay special tribute to Gill Dye, co-founder and director of the Elijah Trust, for her avid support of and solidarity with the Arab community and the Mossawa Center over the past ten years. Gill's interest and commitment to us as both an organization and as the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel was always strong and evident in her concern for us.

Gill and the Elijah Trust are not just friends, but allies for justice and

peace in our region. We wish to pass on our sincerest condolences over her passing to Gill's family, our colleagues at the Elijah Trust.

The Mossawa Center wishes to convey its condolences to the family of Reverend Shehade Shehade.

Rev. Shehade was an important and active member of the Arab community. In his efforts to protect the rights of the community, he served as the Secretary of the Committee of Defense

of Lands of the Arab community and Head of the Department of Peace Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. During his time as the local minister in Haifa, Rev. Shehade and his family were active in the Center's activities, providing invaluable guidance and support. We are sorry for his passing and his memory will continue on in our efforts to achieve the rights of the Arab community.

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



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■ European Union

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

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



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