

Elections 2009 Update

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Arab Politics in Israel and the 18th Knesset Elections

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TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies

קרן קונראד אדנאואר

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



A.From the Editors' Desk

We are pleased to publish a special **Update Elections 2009** issue on Arab politics in Israel on the eve of the 18th Knesset elections. This issue contains up-to-date information on the political activities of the Arab citizens of Israel in preparation of the upcoming Knesset elections, based on materials from the database of the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, which operates in conjunction with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. This issue includes editorials, information on the parties' campaign platforms, key issues in the current elections, and statistics on background issues.

Elections for the 18th Knesset will be held on February 10, 2009. According to official figures of the Central Bureau of Statistics, 14% of the country's 4.8 million eligible voters (app. 672,000) are Arabs. Four Arab and Arab-Jewish parties will compete for their votes: **Raam-Taal** (The United Arab List and the Arab Movement for Change), representing the nationalist-Islamist stream in the Arab public; **Hadash** (The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), incorporating the Israeli Communist Party, advocates Arab-Jewish co-existence; **Balad** (Democratic National Alliance), representing the secular national stream; and **Da'am** (Organization for Democratic Action), a small Jewish-Arab party that supports the rights of workers and women. In addition, the Jewish-Zionist parties, led by Labor, Kadima, and Meretz, also compete for the Arab vote.

In the Arab community, the current election campaigns are foreshadowed by external and internal events that have had a direct impact on the Arab community: Israel's military campaign in Gaza ("Cast Lead"); the decision of the Central Knesset Elections Committee to disqualify Balad and Raam-Taal from the elections; the High Court of Justice ruling revoking the disqualification and permitting these two parties to compete in the elections; the internal Arab debate on boycotting the elections; and concerns over the growing strength of Jewish right-wing extremist parties. These developments are echoed in the election campaigns of the Arab parties. This issue aims to shed light on the topics that play a role in the pre-election political bustle in the Arab community.

This issue is an abridged version of two issues that have been published in Hebrew.

1. Issue 1, published January 21, 2009, accessible at:
<http://www.dayan.org/kapjac/files/Elections2009no1.pdf>;
2. Issue 2, published February 5, 2009, accessible at:
<http://www.dayan.org/kapjac/files/Elections2009no2.pdf>.

We would like to use this opportunity to ask our readers' assistance in suggesting potential websites for Update distribution. Please contact us with any suggestions at:

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The Editors

B. Editorials

Has Anything Changed?

Elie Rekhess

There is evidence of a gradual decline in the participation rate of the Arab public in elections in recent years. Between 1996 and 2006, there was a 21% drop in election participation, from 77% to 56%, the lowest participation rate ever recorded for Arab voters in Knesset elections.

There are many different reasons for this retreat from the voting booths: disappointment with the achievements of Arab MKs; mistrust of the parliamentary political process or its effectiveness; ideological, religious or Islamist ban on participation; protest against the government establishment; a stronger orientation toward NGOs as an alternative to parliamentary politics.

The succession of events in the past three years, since elections were last held, portends a continued rise in abstention from voting. From the perspective of internal Arab politics, the first critical event, and especially notable, was the publication of four "Future Vision" documents in late 2006 and early 2007. These documents, which were the first attempt of their kind to formulate a coherent ideological conceptualization of the status of the Arab minority in Israel, proposed an ideological-political alternative to the current system. While the Future Vision documents contain no explicit ban on Knesset elections, their call to establish a consensual democracy (a bi-national state) certainly does little to encourage Arabs to cast their ballot in this year's elections.

In terms of external influences, the Lebanon War of 2006 and the Cast Lead campaign of early 2009 sharply accentuated the issue of the national identity of Arabs in Israel. The incompatibility between the Israeli-civic element of their identity and the national-Arab-Palestinian element intensified, resulting in a reinforced sense of national Arab belonging. In addition, the war in Gaza caused deep wounds that are not expected to heal quickly: The Arabs in Israel accused Israel of committing "war crimes" and "genocide" in Gaza. This adversarial further discourages Arabs in Israel from performing their civic duty of participating in the upcoming democratic election process.

Finally, there has been no significant improvement in the relations between the Arab community and the establishment since the previous elections. True, PM Ehud Olmert has recognized the continued discrimination of the Arab population, on several public occasions in the last year, and has frequently spoken of the need for a change. Still, there is a difference between words and actions. In practice, little has changed.

The combined effect of these developments is the growing polarization in Jewish-Arab relations. In recent years, mutual alienation and distrust have grown substantially. The eruption of violence in Acco in early October of last year is the latest indication of the fragility of these relations, and of their volatility.

The radical Jewish right-wing grows stronger as Avigdor Lieberman's anti-Arab propaganda gathers steam. At the same time, Balad and Raam-Taal have been temporarily disqualified by the Central Election Committee. Together with the aggressive and emotional response of Arab MKs to the war in Gaza and to

government policy, these developments promises to feed the vicious cycle in which Arab-Jewish relations are trapped: As the Ouroboros of Greek symbolism, the head swallows the tail in desperate symbiosis.

The Arab parties, whose future is paradoxically contingent on Voters' participation in Knesset elections, are investing supreme efforts to ensure that their voters cast a ballot. Their zeal is understandable: Once again, the Arab parties failed to form a united Arab bloc that might have won enough votes to meet minimum representation requirements with relative ease, and to establish a substantial Arab presence in the Knesset. As a result, the parties and lists are now fighting individually for their political future, by demonstrating their loyalty to the Palestinian-Arab cause (or "national-Islamist" cause in the case of Raam-Taal), forcefully rejecting the Zionist worldview, harshly criticizing government policy, and conducting a campaign aimed to punish the Zionist parties competing for the Arab vote.

In view of the current situation, there is little chance that their attempt will succeed, although the Arab parties may manage to transform the upcoming elections into a mass protest of the Arab public. If, as surveys predict, the participation rate of Arabs in the elections does indeed continue to drop, representation of Arabs in the Knesset will also shrink, and the public debate on alternatives to parliamentary politics can be expected to focus intensely on three potential levels: developing the concept of an all-Arab parliament, reinforcing civil society organizations, and increasing support for the Islamist stream that advocates the establishment of independent institutions.

The 2009 Elections and the Arab Community: Between Participation and Abstention

Ephraim Lavie

Many scholars who study Arab society and politics in Israel believe that the voting rate of Arabs will continue to be low in the upcoming 18th Knesset elections. According to numerous polls, approximately one-half of all eligible Arab voters will abstain. A gradual drop in voting rates can be seen as a universal development that also characterizes the Jewish population in Israel, whose main cause is the public's alienation from political parties that inadequately serve its interests. Still, the drop in the participation rate of Arab voters in Knesset elections is indicative of their alienation from the State itself, and is detrimental to Israel's representational democracy.

The Arab community's diminishing interest in the elections is augmented by the fact that the Arab MKS representing Arab parties are not generally included in major decision making or policy determination. The Arab parties have never been members of a government coalition. Inclusion of Arab representatives in Zionist party lists, and even the appointment of the first Arab minister in the current government, have merely served to prove the marginal impact of Arabs on government policy: participation of Arabs in electoral politics has so far created no change in the status or the conditions of Arab society in Israel. Many attribute this ineffectiveness to the fragmentation of Arab political power; others attribute it to the quasi-tribal competition that prioritizes narrow affiliations over national interests.

Adding to the fragmentation of Arab politics and the public disappointment of the Arab parties, the Arab public is currently inclined to boycott the 18th Knesset elections in response to the war in Gaza. Ex-parliamentary political organizations, including the Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement and the Sons of the Village, have accentuated their call to the Arab public to abstain from voting. The tendency to refrain from voting grows stronger in view of the failure of Zionist and Arab parties to create a situation in which Arab participation in Knesset elections is both effective and valuable. The Zionist parties have relegated their Arab candidates to relatively low spots on their lists, and supported the Central Election Committee's decision to disqualify Balad and Raam-Taal. The public interpreted the disqualification as an ideological decision to de-legitimize Arab political participation in Knesset elections.

The Arab parties rallied together to persuade the Arab community to participate in the elections, in order to form a strong Arab bloc able to withstand pressures from Israel's growing extreme right-wing. The Arab parties employ diverse methods to raise national consciousness and enhance the Arab community's identification with and support for the parties. For example, the Arab parties rejected the Islamic Movement Northern Faction's demand to refrain from using the war as a topic in election campaigns, claiming that it is their obligation to express a political opinion on the war. The Arab parties also stress that the major Zionist parties adopted a security-oriented agenda following the war in Gaza and abandoned issues of importance to the Arab public such as resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the socio-economic crisis. The Arab parties speak of the growing danger of manifestations of racism, hatred and incitement against Arabs in broad sectors of the Jewish majority;

They caution that most Jewish and Zionist parties view the Arabs as a demographic threat and therefore seek to exclude them from Israeli politics, promote legislation to ensure the Jewish character of the state, and restrict the civic national rights of its Arab citizens. The Arab parties hope that Arab voters will continue the trend manifested in recent local government elections and will refrain from voting for the representatives of the major Zionist parties (Kadima, Likud, and Labor).

C.Key Issues in the Elections Campaign

1. Attitudes and Political Activities of Arab and Arab-Jewish Parties

Hadash – The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality

- MK Hanna Sweid: “The solution requires the establishment of two states, but first Palestine, because Israel already exists and has borders; Palestine first because it has a right to live [...] We will not be appeased or agree to less than a sustainable Palestinian state, on all the 1967 areas, despite all the transfer plans that will return like a boomerang to haunt their authors.” (*Kull al-Arab*, January 16, 2009).
- Aida Toma-Suliman, number five on the Hadash list: “Hadash stresses the need to remain [here] and to entrench our existence in our homeland, of which we have no other. We speak about a future we wish to build for the younger generations, in order to ingrain their nationality and their [decision to] remain in their homeland, under conditions that enable human development, as other societies, despite the policy of racism discrimination.” (January 31, 2009, www.aljabha.org).

Raam-Taal – The United Arab List and the Arab Movement for Change

- MK Talab El-Sana: “The party [Mada, The Democratic Arab Party] places at the head of its priorities the liberation of Arabs from the mentality of [living under] a military government, liberating our political ideas from the Zionists, emphasizing our Arab-ness and our Palestinian affiliation, and eliminating patronization of the Arab sector by the Zionist parties” (*Panorama*, December 15, 2008)
- MK Ahmad Tibi: “The next phase demands of us great responsibility to compete in these elections with forcefulness, determination, and resolution, and to maintain Arab representation in the Knesset so that we can work in the interests of our Arab public, first of all to exercise its rights, and second, to oppose the extreme right that is expected to increase its strength in the coming elections (*Panorama*, January 2, 2009).

Balad – Democratic National Alliance

- Hanin Zuabi, number 3 on the Balad list: “Balad’s concept directly contradicts Zionism, not only the political and legal system in Israel – even if the latter approved Balad’s concept – and also [contradicts] the Jewish-Arab concept, which a priori accepts the State-defined rules of the political game that are the very rules of Zionism itself. Zionism allows you to oppose discrimination and oppression, on the condition that you don’t oppose the Zionist definition of the State and its status as a state that is exclusively for Jews.” (*Kull al-Arab*, January 23, 2009)
- MK Jamal Zahalka, party chairman: “Our platform constitutes a genuine threat to racism and racists [...] Balad came out stronger from the disqualification affair and [the attempt to prevent] its participation in the elections. Popular support for Balad has grown because it was Balad that turned into a target because of its ideas and demands for full equality, under [the banner of] a “state for all its citizens.” That is what angers the establishment, which sees Balad’s platform as a serious challenge.” (January 24, 2009, www.tajamoa.org)

2. Campaign against voting for Zionist parties

- MK Talab El-Sana, head of the Arab Democratic Party (ADP) and number 3 on the Raam-Taal list, stated at an election meeting: “The Arab vote should serve the interests of Arabs, and not the interests of the Zionist parties.” (*Kull al-Arab*, December 5, 2008)
- MK Ahmad Tibi: “Our message is to go and vote – and not to vote for Zionist parties, to avoid rewarding the right-wing that wishes for a Knesset without Arabs and wants the entire country to contain no Arabs. There is no doubt that [Defense Minister Ehud] Barak has become stronger because of the war, at the expense of the killing in Gaza. [Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman Avigdor] Lieberman has become stronger on a ticket of hatred towards Israeli Arabs. Both are immoral. [...] For some, the war pushes them to vote, while for others, it makes them feel more frustration” (*Jerusalem Post*, January 28, 2009)
- MK Hanna Sweid: “Voting for Jewish and Zionist parties constitutes indirect support and encouragement of the occupation and aggression [...] History has proved that the Arab votes that went to the Zionist Jewish parties reinforce these parties at our expense, and at the expense of our nation.” (*Sinara*, January 30, 2009)

3. Concerns over growing support for right-wing parties

- MK Hanna Sweid: “We are witnessing a rise in the levels of racism and hatred toward the Arabs in broad sectors of the Jewish majority. Calling for the transfer or expulsion of the Arabs from Israel using all means, and considering them a demographic threat to the fate of the state – these have become mainstream [ideas] in Israeli political life that are shared by most Jewish and Zionist parties [...] It is important to oppose racist calls to expel the Arabs from their homeland, and to stop the dissemination of hatred on the Jewish streets toward Arabs. In this mission, there is no substitute for joint Arab-Jewish action.” (*Kull al-Arab*, January 23, 2009)
- MK Jamal Zahalka, Balad Chairman, in response to the election campaign of “Yisrael Beiteinu” based on the slogan “No loyalty – no citizenship”: “[Avigdor] Lieberman is a small-scale opportunist whose racism has stooped to the lowest level, and this evokes disgust and anger. He is an immigrant who came to Israel to generate incitement against the country’s original residents; his shamelessly racist attempts have bolstered his popularity. This is evidence that Israeli society is saturated with hostility toward the Arabs.” (January 27, 2009, www.arabs48.com).

4. Responses to High Court of Justice ruling revoking the disqualification of Arab parties

- From Hadash press release: “Today’s High Court of Justice ruling [...] confirms Hadash’s position, that the decision [of the Central Elections Committee] was an inane, racist, right-wing demonstration designed to incite against the Arab public in Israel. It was obvious that the Central Elections Committee decision was not based on legal grounds.” (January 21, 2009, www.panet.co.il)
- Wasel Taha, MK representing Balad: “In this [High Court of Justice] decision, all the incitement by Lieberman and the Zionist parties against us and against the Arabs collapsed. The ruling was a slap in the face to these parties who voted against us in the Central Elections Committee [...] I appeal to all Arab citizens to invest their efforts to dispose of the Zionist parties that committed acts of massacre in Gaza, and to support the national movement manifested in Balad (January 21, 2009, www.panet.co.il)
- Avigdor Lieberman, leader of “Yisrael Beiteinu,” sharply criticized the High Court of Justice ruling to revoke the disqualification of Balad and Raam-Taal, and to approve their participation in the upcoming elections, saying: “The High Court of Justice permitted the Arab parties to carry out the execution of the State of Israel as a democratic Jewish state. We will not give in. In the next Knesset, we will enact the Citizenship Law that will put an end to the unfaithfulness to the state by a part of the Arabs in Israel.” (January 21, 2009, www.panet.co.il)

5. The effects of the military campaign in Gaza on the election campaign

Opposition to exploiting the war for election campaign purposes

- The Islamic Movement’s northern branch launched its campaign, calling on the Arab parties to refrain from taking advantage of the “blood of the martyrs in Gaza” in order to gain votes in the upcoming elections. The movement accused a number of parties of using the fighting in Gaza to draw in voters. The campaign’s signs, posted throughout Arab villages, say, “The blood of the children of Gaza is pure and clean and must not be ridden upon to the Knesset.”



A member of the Islamic Movement’s political bureau explained the campaign’s goal: “The campaign wants to remind that no one should take advantage of the blood in Gaza and turn it into an elections platform,” said Abed al-Hakim Mufid, adding that the movement was criticizing anyone “drawing symmetry between the blood in Gaza and votes.” He said the notion of “avenging the blood of Gazan children at the ballot boxes” was unacceptable. (www.ynetnews.com, January 27, 2009)

- Secretary General of Balad, Awad Abed Al-Fatah: “Balad did not follow the example of some of the parties that exploited the massacre [in Gaza] for propaganda purposes. We have no need for this kind of propaganda because our position on the events in the Palestinian arena is well known, clear, courageous, and based on principles, and it stems from our national vision. Only those whose position is vague and who conspire against their nation are in need of propaganda that is based on ambiguity and obscurity.” (*Kull al-Arab*, January 30, 2009)

In favor of incorporating the war into election propaganda

- Raam-Taal hopes the decision to disqualify the party, and the campaign in Gaza, will be the “combustion fuel” for the upcoming elections; They call to declare these elections as the “elections of revenge” for Gaza victims [...] From a press release issued by MK Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur, head of the list: ‘We must turn the decision to go to war and the disqualification decision into the fuel of the election campaign, to revenge the children of Gaza, take revenge on the Zionist parties and their racist policies, and fortify Arab presence in all arenas including the parliament’.” (*Haaretz*, January 15, 2009)
- Hadash Chairman MK Mohammad Barakeh said that the Arab public would like to “punish” the Zionist parties that supported the war with their ballots. “Everyone knows that part of the war’s timing is the election. We are running in the elections in part against the concept of the war,” Barakeh said. (www.ynetnews.com, January 27, 2009)
- Response of MK Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur to accusations of Balad Secretary General: “No one has the right to hurl accusations at any entity for making political use of Palestinian blood, which is the most precious for us.” (*Kull al-Arab*, January 30, 2009)

6. On the projected voting rate

- “There are concerns that the drop in Arab voting rates in the upcoming elections will be greater than ever. A new survey of 500 Arab adults in Israel conducted by Motagim Institute in early December 2008 shows that only 52% of eligible Arab votes are certain to vote in the upcoming elections. Wajih Kayyuf, Director of the Non-Profit Association for Promoting Democracy in the Arab Sector, who commissioned the survey, believes that the rate will drop even further to 45%, the lowest ever in any election in Israel, because past experience shows that actual voting rates are lower than poll results.” (*Haaretz*, December 11, 2008)
- In his editorial entitled “The Arab Public is Shooting itself in the Foot,” Faiz Abas, a well-known Arab publicist, writes: “The percentage of Arabs who will abstain from voting in the current elections and will not show up to vote, will be significantly higher than in previous elections due to the war in Gaza, and not because of the [parties’] awful election campaigns or the campaign by the Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement [calling to boycott the elections]. The main losers, if my projections are realized, will be the Arab parties. The main

winner will be Avigdor Lieberman.” (*Walla!News*, www.walla.co.il, February 1, 2009)

- Asmaa’ Agabriya-Zahalka, Chairman of Da’am: “Our greatest rival in Arab society is despair. More than 50% of the Arab public will not go to vote at all. They have lost all faith in parties and politics, and this trust is difficult to recover.” (*Haaretz*, February 3, 2009)

7. Positions on Imposing a Boycott on the Elections

Opposing elections boycott

- MK Hanna Sweid, listed second on the Hadash list: “Participation of Arab citizens in the elections is the guarantee for an opposition against the extreme right-wing [...] We are trying to warn citizens that the power of the right may increase if Arabs don’t participate in the elections, and this would ultimately have a negative impact on Arab citizens’ genuine interests [...] I believe that the elections are an opportunity to make a difference, create a change, and express a political stance. Abstaining from participation in the election process is, indirectly and unconsciously, a concession to the calls of the right-wing, who say that Arabs have no place in the political life of this country.” (*Sinara*, January 30, 2009)
- MK Shiekh Ibrahim Sarsur, Chairman of Raam-Taal: “The call to boycott the elections is extremely ill-advised, especially at this stage, considering that the Zionist parties have united behind an aggressive campaign designed to defeat Arab presence in the Knesset and outside the Knesset. I believe that whoever preaches for no Arab representation in the Knesset, is making an enormous, fatal mistake. The Zionist parties do not wish to see Arabs in the Knesset, in preparation [of action] to remove all Arab presence in Israel.” (*Sinara*, January 30, 2009)
- Disclosure of the Southern Faction of the Islamic Movement, entitled, “In Whose Interests Do You Seek to Silence the Arab Voice that Thunders and Battles in the Heart of the Parliament?”: “We participate in the Knesset elections in the interests of our righteous issues, our rights which have been appropriated, and our existence which is in danger, and in the interests of our present and the future of our sons. We do not participate in them to grant legitimacy to the regime, to [its] negation of rights and aggression against our Palestinian nation, nor to disguise the appearance of exploitation and aggression. On the contrary, Arab Members of Knesset, and especially members of Raam-Taal, are those who expose the shame of the policy of aggression of generations of Israeli governments.” (February 2, 2009, www.isalmmov.net)

In favor of banning the elections

- Raja Agbariya, Chairman of the “Sons of the Village” movement: “Firstly, the State of Israel and its parliament – which is a Zionist parliament that contains parties, organizations, and leaders of the Zionist Movement – are those responsible for the murder and expulsion of our nation, including the recent massacre in Gaza. We decided to abstain from voting in the parliament [elections]

because we are unwilling to grant it legitimacy after all that the act that it has committed against our nation. Secondly, we call for the election of a Follow-up Committee; preparations should be conducted immediately. We can change the equation of citizenship in Israel and forcefully exercise our national and everyday rights through a political leadership elected from the Arab public. Thirdly, we agree with the Arab parties that Zionism and its parties should be eradicated from within the Arab public.” (January 30, 2009, www.panet.co.il)

- Sheikh Kamal Khatib, Deputy Director of the Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement: “The position of the Islamic Movement reflected in the Disclosure is no different from its position in 2006. The Islamic Movement did not call to boycott the elections, but rather called to Palestinians in Israel to think, and consider their faith and their national emotions when they decide to exercise the right to vote on Election Day [...] We in the Islamic Movement are convinced of the futility of parliamentary practice and we do not hide this opinion. We have always said that the results of parliamentary action are extremely limited, weak and meager, compared to the benefits that Israel gains from the presence of Arab parliamentarians in the Knesset.” (February 2, 2009, www.panet.co.il)

8. Representation of Arab Women in Politics

- Suheil Kiwan, publicist, in an editorial entitled “Balad Assumes Dignified Position on Women’s Issues”: “We are obligated to commend and praise Balad for placing a woman in the third place in its list for the Knesset [...] Any engagement in a struggle for social or political equality which marginalizes women or fails to take women into account, is a weak and depleted struggle.” (*Kull al-Arab*, December 12, 2008)
- Hanin Zuabi, number 3 on the Balad list: “Reserving [a place for a woman on the list] retains the woman’s capabilities and places her on an equal starting point to men. If we can speak of affirmative action for [male] Arabs in state institutions, why shouldn’t we speak of affirmative action for women? [...] I believe that the presence of an Arab woman who can represent the national position will incite some [social] sectors to go vote. For example, the sector of women who are struggling for women’s rights without any specific political or party line. There are many women who are uninterested in politics and I believe that such a step would evoke their interest in the elections.” (*Panorama*, December 26, 2008)

D. Background Data

1. Arab voting rate in Knesset elections: 1949-2006¹

Election year	Arab voting rate (%)	National voting rate (%)
1949 (1 st Knesset)	69.3	86.9
1951 (2 nd Knesset)	85.5	75.1
1955 (3 rd Knesset)	91.0	82.8
1959 (4 th Knesset)	88.9	81.6
1961 (5 th Knesset)	85.5	81.6
1965 (6 th Knesset)	87.8	83.0
1969 (7 th Knesset)	82.0	81.7
1973 (8 th Knesset)	80.0	78.6
1977 (9 th Knesset)	75.0	79.2
1981 (10 th Knesset)	69.7	78.5
1984 (11 th Knesset)	73.7	79.8
1988 (12 th Knesset)	73.9	79.7
1992 (13 th Knesset)	69.7	77.4
1996 (14 th Knesset)	77.0	79.3
1999 (15 th Knesset)	75.0	78.7
2001 (PM elections)	18.0	62.3
2003 (16 th Knesset)	62.0	67.8
2006 (17 th Knesset)	56.3	63.5

¹ Source: Elie Rekhess, "The Arab Minority in Israel and the 17th Knesset Elections: The Beginning of a New Era?" in E. Rekhess (ed.). *The Arab Minority in Israel and the 17th Knesset Elections* (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, 2007), p. 65. and The Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2008* (no. 59), Table 10.1. Source of voting rates in special PM elections (2001): Salim Brake, "The Arab Political System: Unification, Separation, and Participation," in E. Rekhess (ed.). *The Arab Minority in Israel and the 17th Knesset Elections* (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, 2007), p. 24; and Website of the Central 18th Knesset Elections Committee:
<http://www.bechirot.gov.il/elections18/heb/history/PercentVotes.aspx>

2. Arab and Arab-Jewish Parties: Key Platforms and Candidates

A review of the top candidates tells about much about each party. The Islamic Movement clearly dominates **Raam-Taal**. The Movement's candidates are guaranteed three of the top five spots, and five of the top ten spots. These seats were reserved on the basis of an agreement between the party's three constituent elements: The Islamic Movement, Taal (Arab Movement for Change), and Mada (Arab Democratic Party). Two of the top five candidates (Talab El-Sana, and Talab Abu Arar) represent the Negev Bedouin whose support for the Islamic Movement has increased considerably in recent years. Although El-Sana represents Mada rather than the Islamic Movement, his candidacy can be interpreted as an attempt to increase Negev Bedouin voting for the party. Only one woman is listed among the top ten candidates, and even then, in an unrealistic position: In ninth place, she is unlikely to win a seat in the Knesset.

Balad's policy on women's representation is to reserve every third position to a woman. As a result, Hanin Zuabi is third on the party's list. If Balad wins three mandates, which is a realistic possibility according to some surveys, Zuabi will become the first women elected to the Knesset as a representative of an Arab party. Fourth place on Balad's list is held by Abas Zakur (under a rotation agreement). Zakur withdrew from Raam-Taal to found a new party, "The Arab Sector." The inclusion of Zakur, a former Islamic Movement member, in Balad's list, which advocates the establishment of a secular state, illustrates the pragmatism and flexibility of Arab politics.

Hadash retained its traditional order of candidates in the realistic spots in its list, with a Muslim in first place, a Christian in second place, and a Jew in third place. Still, the party stresses that the order of these candidates was determined by the primaries, independent of their ethnic or religion affinity, and claims that no places were reserved in advance for any specific candidate. Three women (two of whom are Arabs) appear among the party's top ten candidates, but the first woman appears in fifth place which is not a realistic spot according to polls. Three Jews (one of whom, a woman) also appear among the party's top ten.

Da'am is the smallest party and is not expected to cross the representation threshold; it is prominently headed by a woman.

Raam-Taal

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur | (Islamic Movement) |
| 2. Dr. Ahmed Tibi | (Taal) |
| 3. Talab El-Sana | (Mada) |
| 4. Sheikh Masoud Ghanayem | (Islamic Movement) |
| 5. Talab Abu Arar | (Islamic Movement) |

Election Platform

1. Raam-Taal calls to end the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian state whose capital is Jerusalem, and calls to evacuate all Israeli settlements from occupied Palestinian territory. The party also calls for Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights.
2. The party calls to amend the Right of Return Law to guarantee the right of return to Palestinian refugees, and supports the release of Palestinian and Arab prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons.
3. The party calls for the recognition of Arab Israelis as a national minority eligible for rights in all areas of life, including equal representation in state institutions. The party will take steps to ensure the independence of the Shariah [Islamic Law] courts, and will allocate budgets to Christians, Muslims, and Druze, to maintain their sites of religious worship and religion institutions.
4. The party calls to improve the status of women in all areas and to reduce the differences in the education system.

Hadash

1. Muhammad Barakeh (Muslim)
2. Dr. Hanna Sweid (Christian)
3. Dr. Dov Hanin (Jew)
4. Dr. Afo Agabriya (Muslim)
5. Aida Toma-Suliman (Christian)

Election Platform

- Hadash advocates a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace in the region. The party opposes terror in any form.
- Hadash recognizes the right of the Palestinian nation to establish an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, alongside the state of Israel, based on an equitable solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees. According to Hadash, Jerusalem will be the capital of both the Israeli and the Palestinian state; Israel will evacuate East Jerusalem, which will be the capital of Palestine.
- Hadash calls for the evacuation of all settlements, Israel's withdrawal from all territories occupied since June 1967, and the establishment of peace with Syria and Lebanon based on June 4, 1967 borders, including the return of the Golan Heights to Syria.
- Hadash supports an independent and sovereign Israel that is not economically, politically, or militarily dependent on the USA.
- Hadash supports a ban on the development, testing, or use of all weapons of mass destruction. Hadash supports the eradication of all weapons for mass destruction from the Middle East (including Israel and Iran) of all kinds: nuclear, chemical and biological.

- Hadash supports the separation of religion and state, and the separation of religion and politics. Hadash proposes a democratic constitution to protect fundamental civil liberties and rights, and social rights, and to guarantee the secular nature of the state and the equality of its citizens.
- Hadash supports an economic program designed to guarantee work for the unemployed, raise unemployment benefits, and reduce housing costs. The party's program also includes reducing the military budget to one-half by cancelling all plans for further wars and by evacuating all the occupied territories under a stable and just peace agreement, accelerated development of sustainable energy sources and desalination, and reinstating all former education and higher education budgets.
- Hadash proposes to reinforce welfare policy in Israel by expanding the social rights of its citizens: the right to employment, the right to housing, the right to professional organization. Hadash also demands to cease privatization of social services, and to cancel the cuts in welfare benefits.

Balad

1. Dr. Jamal Zablaka
2. Said Nafaa
3. Hanin Zuabi
4. Abas Zakur
5. Awuni Toma

Election Platform

- Balad calls to transform Israel into a state of all its citizens by establishing full equality of rights between the state's Arab and Jewish citizens. The party calls to revoke all forms of discrimination and deprivation of Arab citizens, to instate fair representation of Arabs in government and public institutions, and to support the national culture of the Arab nation without state intervention.
- Balad is working toward a permanent and equitable solution to the Palestinian issue. The movement calls to end the occupation of all areas occupied in 1967, and to evacuate these areas from the Jews that live there. It calls to establish, alongside Israel, an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whose capital will be East Jerusalem. Balad also calls to Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights.
- Balad calls to transform the Middle East, including Israel, into a non-proliferation zone, free of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction of any kind.
- Balad supports the separation of religion and state.
- Balad aspires to a modernized, organized Arab society in Israel. Balad will take steps to improve the economic status of Arabs in Israel by developing an independent Arab economy, increasing Arab's rate of participation in the labor force, developing Arab industries and agriculture, developing tourism in Arab towns, and developing infrastructure.

- Balad strives to achieve social equity and guarantee individual social and economic rights including gender equality. The movement calls to increase women's participation in the public sphere; it opposes all forms of exploitation and deprivation which women suffer in the family, at work, and in society; and supports the campaign against violence directed at women.

Da'am

1. Asmaa' Agbariya-Zahlaka
2. Nir Nader
3. Malek Morad
4. Wafa Tiara
5. Michal Appleboim-Lahav

Election Platform

- Da'am supports peace based on Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. The party supports the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.
- Da'am supports full equality of rights for the Arab population in Israel. The party is active in the Arab community to promote social involvement, employment and workers' protection, women's empowerment, youth guidance, education and culture, and empowerment of Jewish and Arab women.
- Da'am strives to establish a Jewish-Arab democratic labor union that organizes non-union male and female workers and provides effective protection grounded in class solidarity. The party will oppose unemployment and actively support organized employment under fair conditions, and oppose importation of foreign workers employed in conditions of slavery. The party calls to end all forms of abusive employment that have become a normal part of the labor market in Israel, including temporary employment, employment of contractors' workers, and freelance employment arrangements. The party will take steps to guarantee the future of workers through pension insurance that will enable workers to live in dignity upon retirement.
- The party will be active in informal settings to organize and educate Arab youth in values such as gender equality, solidarity, and social involvement.