

Arab Politics in Israel and the 19th Knesset Elections

Arabs in Israel Update | Editor: Arik Rudnitzky |

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The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies



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From the Editor's Desk

We are pleased to publish the third and final issue of the Elections 2013 Update series. This issue summarizes the results of the country's 19th Knesset elections, with a focus on voting by Israel's Arab and Druze citizens .

The recent elections, which were held on January 22, 2013, reflected far-reaching changes in Israel's political map, manifested in the emergence of new political forces, among other things. These changes foreshadowed the tempests that raged in the Arab political system in Israel on the eve of Election Day and continued until the polls were closed, far from the public eye. Superficially, nothing was new in Arab politics in Israel: voting turnout remained almost unchanged from the previous elections (56.5% in 2012 and 53.4% in 2009) and the three major parties (Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada, Hadash, and Balad) retained their parliamentary standing. Yet, although Election Day is behind us, the Arab MKs are well aware that they can no longer ignore the demands for a fundamental change in Arab politics in Israel. The Arab public at large criticized the Arab parties' victory celebrations and their pride in their electoral achievement. The parties were urged to reduce their distance from the public and become more attentive to the public's wishes and opinions, not only during elections. Above all, the public called on the parties to perform a critical self-assessment of the state of Arab politics in Israel in view of the low turnout of the Arab public, which continues to remain below the national average .

What lessons have the Arab political parties learned from the Arab public's conduct in the recent election campaign? Can the newly elected Arab MKs perform their roles effectively in view of the composition of the new Knesset? Will the three major Arab parties establish a joint parliamentary faction to improve their effectiveness in addressing the current challenges? The current Update issue is devoted to these questions, and others, which have emerged in the Arab public in the aftermath of the 19th Knesset elections .

The first section of this issue includes opinion editorials analyzing the election results in the Arab public in Israel. These are followed by key issues related to the election results, and their impact on Arab politics in Israel. We also devote significant space to items and features published in Arabic language media (press and Internet websites) stored in the computerized data archive of the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, translated into English. The final section of this issue is devoted to an analysis of voting patterns of Arab and Druze citizens in the recent elections.

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The Editor

Editorials

Arik Rudnitzky / Arab Politics and the 19th Knesset Elections: Summary and Assessment

At 8 PM on Election Day, Arabic-language websites in Israel flashed the headline “Arab Parties in Danger!” coinciding with reports of especially low voter turnout (approximately 30%) in the Arab street. Talk of an election boycott in the Arab sector, which had, in the two months preceding the elections, hung ominously over the heads of the three major Arab parties in the Knesset—Ra’am-Ta’al-Mada, Hadash, and Balad—seemed to have become a tangible danger. The Arab parties feared a significant loss of their power in the next Knesset due to the poor turnout in the Arab sector and the relatively high turnout in the Jewish sector, where voters almost exclusively vote for Jewish-Zionist parties. Almost immediately, Arabic-language websites reported unique cooperation between members of Knesset (MKs) and activists of the three major Arab parties, who joined forces for a common cause: to prevent the parties’ defeat by encouraging Arab voters to go to the voting booths and vote for one of the Arab parties .

The parties’ joint efforts bore fruit. The next morning it was reported that voter turnout in Arab and Druze towns and villages had reached 56.5%, a three-point increase from the previous elections in 2009. Ultimately, the portentous projections, which predicted repeatedly in the three months preceding the elections that voter abstention would increase, were not realized: The three major Arab parties maintained their standing.

Ra’am-Ta’al-Mada consolidated its status as the largest Arab party in the Arab street, after gaining the support of one-third of the country’s Arab voters (excluding those living in mixed cities). The party maintained its dominant position in the Bedouin settlements in the Negev, receiving 62% of the votes there, and in the Triangle (central) region, especially in the southern section of the Triangle, where the party received 49% of the votes. The united list once more won four seats in the Knesset and was effectively a hair’s breadth away from winning a fifth seat. Hadash maintained its position as the leading party in the Arab localities in the Galilee in Northern Israel, winning considerable support in Nazareth (49%), Yafia (38%), and Shefar’am (32%) as well as in Umm El-Fahm, the largest Arab city in the Triangle (50%). As in the previous elections, Hadash attracted significant support in the mixed Jewish-Arab cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa as well as in Upper Nazareth, another mixed locality in the Galilee. Balad solidified its status as the Arab sector’s third largest party, and maintained its three-seat achievement from the previous elections. The party maintained its power in the Triangle region, attracting 30% of the votes there, and had considerable success in the mixed cities of Akko and Haifa, as well as in major Arab cities in the Galilee, including Nazareth (27.5%), Shefar’am (27%), and Tamra (26%). A new center of support for the party emerged in the Bedouin localities in the Negev, where the party won 26% of the votes, more than tripling its support there since the previous elections. All in all, nationwide support for Balad in Arab localities did not lag far behind the support for Hadash .

On the face of it, nothing new had happened in Arab politics in Israel: the three major Arab parties will once again be represented by 11 MKs, and the majority of the party

members who served in the previous Knesset will continue to do so. Nonetheless, the fragility of their situation has not gone unnoticed by the Arab parties, which are aware of the turbulence raging beneath the surface and the voices calling for change in the Arab political system in Israel. The parties are well aware that public criticism in last month's elections was not directed to the government's attitude toward its Arab citizens; throughout the elections campaign, public criticism targeted the performance of the parties representing the Arab public. This public, which hoped that the Arab parties would learn the lessons of the Arab Spring revolutions that swept through neighboring Arab states in the last two years, expected its elected representatives to devise new ways of addressing the circumstances of Arab citizens. Specifically, the public was hoping for a joint Arab list that would transcend internal disputes to convey a message of unity; would revitalize the ranks and introduce new candidates in realistic slots; and would engage in a practical, concrete manner with the everyday issues that concern Israel's Arab citizens, more than in other, albeit important, national issues. The clearest manifestation of this new spirit was the founding of the new Hope for Change list. Although the list withdrew from the elections at the last minute, when it became clear that it had no chance of passing the election threshold, its campaign highlighted the party's willingness to join in any government coalition on the condition that the coalition address the urgent concerns of the Arab public, especially rising violence on the streets, poverty, and economic hardship .

Against this backdrop of the public criticism of the Arab parties, the slight increase in Arab voting for Jewish-Zionist parties compared to the previous elections is understandable. The fact that the ruling party, right-wing Likud-Beytenu, became the leading Jewish party among Arab voters instead of Labor, and the fact that Shas—a religious Jewish party and traditional member in government coalitions—doubled its support among Arab voters, proves that certain groups in the Arab public want to see results “here and now” and, in their despair of the Arab parties, turned to whatever parties they felt could “deliver the goods .”

As noted above, only the last-minute response of Arab voters saved the three Arab parties. How was this possible? The answer lies in Arab voting patterns and the relative weight of Arab votes in the total valid votes. Not only did the vast majority of Arab voters give their vote to one of the three major Arab parties, which together won 77% of the total valid votes in Arab localities, but very few Arab votes were wasted on lists that failed to pass the election threshold. Only 1.6% of the valid votes in Arab localities went to support lists that failed to pass the election threshold, in contrast to the national average of 7.1%. Therefore, in the final division of votes into Knesset seats, Arab voters accounted for an even greater share of the effective (“unwasted”) votes. Consequently, even a last-minute response by the voting Arab public was sufficient to rescue the Arab parties .

Today, armed with a new sense of purpose, the three major Arab parties representing the Arab public in the Knesset have much work ahead of them: They must invest in efforts to rebuild the Arab public's faith in parliamentary politics while defending, albeit against all odds, their public's interests against a Knesset dominated by right-wing parties that systematically promote legislation emphasizing Israel's Jewish-Zionist nature. The Arab MKs are now motivated to play an important role in parliamentary politics, yet the question arises whether Arab politics can be effective in the current Knesset, which seeks to emphasize the Jewish character of the state of Israel. Only time will tell.

As'ad Ghanem* / Politics in Crisis

Politics and elections are not ends unto themselves—they are the means for generating change for the benefit of communities, citizens, and the nation itself, and their goal is to create prosperity for citizens and realize the interests of the general public. The path toward this goal may be punctuated by periods of despair and discouragement as well as of euphoria. It is the role of political leaders to minimize the bouts of despondency and extend the periods of elation .

Palestinians in Israel have known many challenging times, as well as more than a few days of glory and jubilation, yet today we are witnessing one of the ugliest and most deplorable hours of Palestinian politics in Israel. The recent election campaign and its results mark a record low in the ongoing decline of Palestinian politics in Israel. This process of deterioration is one of many elements that attest to the major crisis that Palestinian society in Israel is currently experiencing, a crisis centered on the lack of a collective political vision to guide the parties' actions and the absence of a national-political framework for joint action .

The recent election campaign revealed the sordid state of Palestinian politics in Israel: a political structure with little depth, removed from the everyday lives of ordinary people; tired slogans on banners hanging over streets and rooftops; and political parties with no work plan, targets, or goals attainable through participation in the elections and in the new Knesset after the elections. Appeals to Arab voters used slogans such as “Block the right wing” or “Arabs vote for Arabs” without offering any serious platform or public debate on the issues at hand—in effect, urging voters to “vote for us not for what we are but for the injury that others inflict upon us.” This observation is highlighted when we compare the current situation to that of Palestinian politics in Israel headed by Hadash in the 1970s and 1980s, or to the activities of the Islamic Movement headed by Ra’ed Salah, and when we compare the Arab parties and their goals to the recently established Jewish parties such as Yesh Atid and Hatnua, headed by Yair Lapid and Tsipi Livni, respectively, or, in even a more striking comparison, to the action plans of the veteran Jewish parties .

As for the dry facts, the turnout of Arab citizens was slightly above 50%: Ra’am gained some strength, Hadash weakened somewhat, the Zionist parties retained their level of support, and Balad—which was in a panic four weeks before the elections—retained its strength thanks to the Election Day media campaign designed to promote voting; obviously it was also thanks to the voter solicitation appeals made from every possible platform, including the mosques. The Palestinian public in Israel once again took pity on its politicians and gave them yet another chance, although it is doubtful whether the politicians can or will use this opportunity wisely; it is similarly doubtful whether the Arab public will take pity on them next time unless the Arab political system in Israel undergoes a genuine transformation .

Anyone following the 19th Knesset election campaign in Arab society could not help but notice the public’s intense aversion to politics and the politicians. Polls indicated an extremely low degree of trust in the Arab parties and their leaders. As party activists hung banners, the silent majority merely snickered and continued its

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business. The disinterest in politics in general, and in the Knesset elections in particular, is neither a product of chance or of fate. It is the direct result of the last two decades of political activity—political activity that debilitated rather than strengthened the Palestinian minority, divided rather than contributed to its consolidation, undermined consociational national organizations such as the Supreme Follow-Up Committee of Arab Affairs and the Land Protection Committee, prevented the development of a strong stratum of ex-parliamentary leaders, and caused people to lose hope that change was possible. The political system in Israel—the national Israeli system in general, and the Palestinian system in particular—has proven that it is incapable of resolving the problems of society or responding to the expectations and aspirations of the general public .

In these last two decades, the Arab parties increased in number only to become political fragments lacking any pre-determined direction. Moreover, they largely grew apart from their supporting public. The majority of these parties closed their local offices after one election and re-opened them for the next. While these parties debated the issues and discussed their solutions in the media, they assumed no responsibility and took no action to resolve the problems existing in numerous fields, including local government administration, education, violence, government attempts to expropriate lands in the Galilee and the Negev, and the poor social and economic conditions in the mixed Arab-Jewish cities. These problems also worsened because the Arab parties—or at least some of them—continue to raise funds in and outside the Arab world on the pretense that the donations are needed to establish national Palestinian organizations and strengthen Palestinian society in Israel. The funds, however, have lined the pockets of a select few and were never transferred to their designated targets.

If the Arab parties wish to survive, they must give their voters answers and earnestly address the criticism directed at them. Unless a genuine change occurs before the next elections, their voters will make sure that they are removed from parliamentary life—because the public deserves a more diligent, committed, and responsible leadership to deal with the challenges facing Palestinian society in Israel today

The Arab political system in the aftermath of the 19th Knesset elections

General reactions to the elections results

- **MK Hanna Swaid: The election results are a blow to the extreme right**

Dr. Hanna Swaid, MK for Hadash, commented on the election results, saying, “I believe that the election results prove that the public in Israel is sick of extremism, especially the political policy that the extreme right wing represents. The public wants the government to address domestic issues: housing, economics, the cost of living, and other similar issues. The results of these elections can be considered a blow to Netanyahu-Lieberman; the strength of the settlers’ right-wing parties increased, but this is not indicative of Israeli society in general. Therefore we face a government that is less racist and less fascist than we had feared. Perhaps the reason for this is the participation of Arab citizens who went out to vote. [...] They prevented the formation of an extreme right-wing government. Had the Arabs abstained from voting in the elections, the outcome might have been much worse.” (www.panet.co.il, January 24, 2013)

- **MK Hanin Zoabi: The Israeli public’s vote for the right and center parties is a mark of extremism and political instability.**

MK Hanin Zoabi of Balad, on the election results: “It is reasonable to assume that the government will not be stable because a considerable share of the public in Israel voted either for right-wing or for centrist parties that have no clear statement about the key important issues. This is a dangerous situation, which is indicative of extensive extremism, racism, ambiguity regarding political policies, and instability. What is dangerous in this situation is that the key political issues relating to civil rights and Palestinian rights [...] will be relegated to the sidelines.” (www.panet.co.il, January 24, 2013)

- **MK Masud Ganaim: A right-wing government with no political vision will be formed; Yesh Atid is effectively a right-wing party.**

Masud Ganaim, MK representing the Ra’am-Ta’al-Mada list, commented on the election results: “We are facing a right-wing government that includes Likud, Yesh Atid, Habayit Hayehudi, and Kadima. This is a narrow government devoid of any political vision since it includes Habayit Hayehudi. The implication is that the government will not last very long and will not complete its term, and we will go to elections once again.” Ganaim added, “The secular image of Yesh Atid headed by Yair Lapid causes it to appear as a centralist party, but in effect it is a right-wing party that will join an extremist right-wing government with Likud and Habayit Hayehudi.” (www.panet.co.il, January 24, 2013)

Will the Arab parties form a joint Knesset faction?

- **MK Jamal Zahalka: We should form a united Arab bloc in the Knesset to counter the extreme right**

At an assembly in Kufr Qara to celebrate Balad's election achievements, Balad faction chairperson MK Jamal Zahalka urged the formation of a united Arab bloc in the 19th Knesset "in order to thwart the plans of the extreme right, which has made it its goal to continue to persecute the Arab minority and its leaders, and to prevent the minority from living with dignity on its land, the land of its fathers and grandfathers." [...] Zahalka expressed concern over the twofold increase in the power of the Israeli right wing, both in and outside the Knesset. [...] In his speech, he stated, "This situation demands that we, the country's Arab minority, form a united Arab bloc in the Knesset to oppose the extreme right, to serve the interests of the Arab public and to address their problems, and to help our Palestinian brethren put an end to the discrimination and gain independence for their state, whose capital is Jerusalem." (www.panet.co.il, January 26, 2013)

- **Former MK: The Arab parties have a national task of forming a united faction**

Excerpt from an op-ed by Wasel Taha, former MK for Balad, entitled, "Toward One Arab Faction in the Parliament": "The reappearance of the Zionist parties on the Arab streets in these elections was evident, and any person who checked the results in all the villages and cities understands this. This is a grave development that has been cultivated by the Israeli establishment for years, under the slogan 'What have the Arab MKs done for you?' As Arab parties and political leaders in our villages and cities, we must persist in action based on a systematic program to block this expanding phenomenon. In view of the election results, we members of Balad and the other Arab parties have a national mission: to take action from this day forward to form a single Arab list, free of inter-party sparring, since this national task is of supreme importance. We therefore propose the following: The party members in our villages and cities will begin, both mentally and practically, to prepare a single Arab list, and will begin working in collaboration. To put this into practice, and as the first step on this path, Balad proposes that a single parliamentary faction be formed in the current Knesset. Furthermore, we must continue to stand up to the Zionist parties in our villages and cities and to thwart their efforts through a consistent program that highlights the discrimination and unequal treatment that our public suffers in all areas of life. This should be done through energetic actions every day: we should not wait for the next elections." (*Fasl al-Maqal*, January 25, 2013)

Calls for a post-election reckoning

- **Editorial: The Arab MKs should draw nearer to the public, and not only during elections**

From an editorial published by *Kull Al-Arab* weekly: “The parliamentary elections have not brought any indication of change for the Arab citizens. Although Netanyahu’s strength diminished, he will be the one to form the next government, with Lieberman at his side. [...] Turnout remained low. These are facts that we should address using methods that we have not used before. The Arab MKs should reach out to people, listen to their concerns and their problems. [...] It is inconceivable that MKs chase after people’s votes in the month preceding the elections, and then leave them alone, only to have these people chase after the MKs for the next four years. It’s time to change the parliamentary agenda of our Arab MKs. [...] Furthermore, the election boycott should be discussed by the Supreme Follow-up Committee, in consultation with experts in this field. The issue should be studied deeply and professionally, so that we can decide whether an election boycott is effective or not, and hope that a discussion on this issue will lead to a final decision, whether negative or positive, so that this issue will not crop up in every election campaign. [...] Finally, we appeal to all the Arabs who voted for a non-Arab party, and to them we say that they will be responsible for the establishment of an extremist government and a government that will bring disaster to Arab citizens. Anyone who voted for a Jewish party voted against himself, against his family, against his neighbors, and against his nation, and he should reconsider his actions. He should understand that there is nothing honorable about voting for a Jewish party, and such a vote does him no good; on the contrary, it shames him and causes harm to his people.” (*Kull Al-Arab*, January 25, 2013)

- **Former MK: We must conduct a self-assessment immediately and not wait for the next elections**

Issam Makhoul, former MK for Hadash, responding to a question on the drop in Hadash’s strength in the elections, stated, “These elections revealed the crisis affecting the political activities of the Arab parties. We should not wait until the next elections to ask people to participate in the elections. We must initiate a genuine self-assessment of our political practices.” (*Hadith al-Nas*, January 25, 2013)

Responses from election boycott advocates

- **Sheikh Kamal Khatib: The Arab MKs, who berated the boycotters, need to examine their own actions**

From an op-ed entitled “Don’t Force Us to Reveal the Truth,” by Sheikh Kamal Khatib, deputy head of the ex-parliamentary faction of the Islamic Movement: “What stand out, and are even infuriating, are the declarations made by the Arab party leaders. They were angry at the ‘internal’ Palestinians [Arab citizens of Israel][...] and one even said, ‘The people who boycotted the elections and didn’t vote should conduct a self-reckoning.’ Someone else stated, ‘Whoever didn’t vote should look at himself in the mirror and blame himself.’ [...] To all the people who demand that all the people who didn’t vote should conduct a self-reckoning of their ‘crime’ [...], I

say: Had you believed in yourselves and in your ability to convince the voters of your opinions, plans, and policies, I believe that they would have gone out to vote and there would have been no need to use megaphones to recruit people and urge them [to vote]. [...] Did you yourselves look into the mirror, and ask yourselves the reason for the indifference and rejection of your calls? [...] The worst thing that all the Arab parties did was to castigate all the boycotters and those who didn't vote, and they almost accused them of treason and a lack of patriotism. [...] It would have been better if you [the Arab MKs] re-examined yourselves and stood in front of a three-dimensional mirror to get a good look at yourselves. I am sure that you would have held your tongues and not have blamed others.” (www.pls48.net, February 1, 2013)

- **The Sons of the Village Movement: The election boycott became a political statement that could not be ignored**

From a press release by the Sons of the Village Movement¹ in Sakhnin, an Arab city in Northern Israel: “We admire you for your prominent political stand, which was reflected in the number of people who boycotted the elections for the Zionist Knesset, on whose podium the state of this entity was established at the expense of the catastrophe of our Palestinian people. [...] These numbers have many implications that deserve our attention: Boycotting the elections has become a political stand that cannot be concealed, and this frightens all the political parties in the Knesset including the public figures who are active in public and political action. For this reason, all the parties united and set up a ‘war room’ in order to counter this position, to prevent it from becoming an official political statement. [...] The Arab League’s intervention in the affairs of the ‘internal’ Palestinians [Arab citizens of Israel] and its attempt to induce the [Arab] public to vote in the elections for the Zionist Knesset, are blatant and contemptible interference. Furthermore, the head of the Supreme Follow-up Committee should express his position by personally voting at the booths, instead of looking down at us formidably, urging everyone to vote in the elections. He forgot that one-half of his countrymen don’t vote and it was more appropriate that he remain neutral. [...] Several [Arab] heads of local government stated, ‘We will vote. Abstaining from voting is the result of the Arab-Palestinian public’s lack of political consciousness.’ Now, at the conclusion of the Zionist elections, they should apologize to one-half of their countrymen whom they had accused of lacking political consciousness and maturity.” (www.alarab.net, January 24, 2013)

Criticism against the elections boycott

- **MK Tibi: Had the turnout in the Arab public been greater, it would have been possible to topple the right.**

MK Ahmad Tibi, chairperson of the Arab Movement for Change (Ta’al), on the election results: “Had voting turnout in the Arab public been 10% higher, we would have succeeded in toppling the right and removing Netanyahu and Lieberman from

¹ **Editor’s note:** The “Sons of the Village” Movement (Arabic: *Abnaa’ al-Balad*) is a relatively small, extra-parliamentary nationalist-secular movement, which since its inception in the early 1970s adopted a radical platform. It does not recognize the State of Israel and calls to boycott Knesset elections. It also supports the establishment of a single secular state shared by Arabs and Jews over the entire territory of Mandatory Palestine.

the government. Unfortunately, that did not happen. To all those who called to boycott the elections, I say—are they pleased that Netanyahu remained in the government? The only reason that he remained in power was that those people preferred to stay at home.” (www.alarab.net, January 23, 2013)

- **MK Barakeh: All those who boycotted the elections in effect made it possible for Netanyahu to form a government**

MK Mohammad Barakeh, Hadash chairperson, on the election results: “We would like to thank all the voters, from all age groups and regions, both Jews and Arabs, who put their faith in us. [...] The balance of powers between the right-wing militants and extremists and the Arab and left-wing public has become more equal. All those who failed to vote gave their votes to Netanyahu, and he will form his government on the silence of those who boycotted the elections.” (www.panet.co.il, January 23, 2013)

Opinions of the political parties

Hadash

- **MK Barakeh: Hadash objects to Netanyahu's nomination as PM; Lapid will not be good for the underprivileged population groups or for the Arab public**

From an op-ed by MK Mohammad Barakeh, commenting on the election results: "Hadash's position includes three main objections to Netanyahu's nomination to form the next government: the party that forms the government should (a) promise to resume negotiations with the Palestinians; (b) undertake to stop the militant adventure against Iran; (c) adopt a socio-economic program that includes the Arab public and is based on the principles of equality and social justice. [...] In the elections, Lapid exploited the social protest for his own interests, allegedly protecting the middle class. But we know that Lapid has a capitalist economic program designed for the upper class and the so-called 'middle' classes. Therefore, his presence in the government alongside Netanyahu is dangerous because such a program is basically directed against the weaker classes and against the Arab public. [...] Lapid failed the test of democracy when he announced his refusal to set up a pact to block a coalition, because he did not want a pact with the Arabs, or as he stated in his election campaign: 'Who will I set up a pact with? With Mohammad Barakeh and Hanin Zoabi?' Lapid's declaration proves that the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree, since that was how his father² used to act." (*Hadith al-Nas*, January 25, 2013)

Balad

- **MK Zoabi: Balad's growth in power is the answer to the government's racist policy**

From an editorial by Hanin Zoabi, entitled "The answer to the growing strength of the right: The rise of Balad": "Those who voted for the right, voted to continue the same policy as before; and those who voted for the center, selected a different agenda but one that is not inconsistent with this policy. Those who voted for the centrist parties did not say 'No to racism,' 'No to settlements,' 'No to a Jewish state,' 'No to treating Palestinians as outsiders in their own homeland' even though they are citizens. At the same time, those who voted for the centrist parties did not say 'Yes to peace,' 'Yes to human rights,' or 'Yes to democracy'. [...] Just like the right-wing parties, the second largest party after Likud [Yesh Atid, headed by Yair Lapid] made sure to remind the Arabs that the party doesn't accept them at all. Just as Yechimovitz before him, Lapid is afraid to be labeled a person who supports tolerant and democratic treatment of Arabs. We must teach him that there is no cause for his fear. [...] The Arab answer to this racist policy was a rise in the power of Balad. Balad won 12,000 more votes than in the previous elections. [...] The votes at the ballots, which were a show of faith, are

² Tommy Lapid (1931-2008) served as Minister of Justice between 2003 and 2004. Lapid headed a government committee to implement the government commission of inquiry into the events of October 2000 (the "Or Commission"). The recommendations of the Lapid Committee were received coldly by the Arab public and have since been etched in Arab consciousness as an attempt by the government to empty the Or Commission's recommendations of all content and to avoid prosecuting the police officials who were responsible for the killing of 13 Arab youngsters during the October 2000 events.

yet one more layer in the development of the national movement. Balad increased its standing, and so did Ra'am-Ta'al. In contrast, Hadash, which rejected unification [of Arab lists that participated in the elections], was punished by its voter public. [...] The elections are not yet over. The government will probably not be stable. Balad carries the supreme national responsibility for strengthening the national movement, strengthening its roots, extending its ranks, and developing its methods of opposition." (www.panet.co.il, January 27, 2013)

- **Balad candidate: Balad's growing strength in the Negev indicates a serious political change**

In view of Balad's accomplishments in the Negev, Jum'a Zabraka, fourth on Balad's list, applauded Negev residents and party activists, stating, "The 11,000 votes [that Balad received] in the Negev is a magnificent result in terms of the large number of votes, and in terms of their social and political significance. That is because voting was not made on a tribal or family basis – voting was political, which indicates the beginning of a serious transformation that will leverage the national movement. We must invest in this change and reinforce the struggle of the residents of the Negev and their protection." [...] Zabraka added, "The enormous accomplishment occurred in spite of the problems we faced, and was especially due to alliance in the Negev of four representatives of Ra'am-Ta'al who sought to maintain [Ra'am-Ta'al's] hegemony in the Negev, and they used all means at their disposal to procure votes. Nonetheless, people voted for a change, since a Negev resident [Zabraka] himself was a Balad candidate in a respectable slot. I also believe that the organization was better than in the past." (*Fasl al-Maqal*, January 25, 2013)

Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada

- **The Islamic Movement: The United List Represents the Arab Public's Wishes**

Press release on behalf of the Islamic Movement in the city of Taybeh: "The 140,000 votes won by the United Arab List and its allies is a medal of honor for this list and for its leaders in the Islamic Movement. Once again, the list proved that it is the first and largest list in our Arab public, even though the candidate in the fifth place unfortunately lost his seat. Everyone should recognize the fact that this list, more than any other, represents the concerns of the street and the desires of the public." (www.panet.co.il, January 28, 2013)

- **MK Ibrahim Sarsur: The United List Won Unprecedented Support despite the Call to Boycott the Elections**

MK Ibrahim Sarsur published a press release when the election results were made public. Sarsur stated, "It is an enormous honor that the majority of the Arab public renewed its faith in Ra'am-Ta'al, a list that can represent our concerns with great dedication and skill." Sarsur added, "The list won unprecedented support, despite the circumstances surrounding the elections, which included, among others, calls to boycott the elections, and demoralization that characterized specific circles in our society. Nonetheless, our public remained alert and determined, despite the pessimism

and the skepticism. The results have given us hope that our public can shape its own future. [...] Furthermore, we have religious, civic, and national responsibilities. We have not forgotten and we will never forget this. This is our responsibility toward our nation.” Sarsur congratulated Hadash and Balad for their achievements, and urged them “to extend collaboration and coordination among the Arab parties to fight against the things that are on the post-election agenda. [...] The political, social, and economic situation facing the state demands that we, the Arab parties and MKs, act in maximum collaboration in order to coordinate strategic action plans and tactics of opposition in the future; all this [is required] in view of the deep split in the Israeli political arena. An opportunity for action exists. We have an opportunity to penetrate the sealed walls of Israeli politics.” (www.alarab.net, January 23, 2013)

Meretz

- **MK Issawi Freij: It’s important to maintain collaboration between Meretz and the MKs of the Arab parties**

Issawi Freij, MK representing Meretz, commented on the election results: “In general, the election results clearly point to voters’ frustration with Netanyahu-Lieberman’s policies, but voters were not courageous enough to take a final stand. [...] Regarding the Arab public, I feel deeply disappointed by the poor turnout of Arab citizens in the elections. The current situation demands that we all vote in the elections and participate in decision-making. [...] Meretz strengthened its position among the Arabs, winning over 12,500 votes. [...] Our social issues will be at the top of my priorities.” [...] In the matter of diplomatic policy, Freij noted that Meretz accepts the Arab [peace] initiative. [...] He stated, “Our condition for joining any coalition is to reach a permanent settlement within one year, with no interim settlements, based on the ‘two states for two nations’ format, with Israel withdrawing to the 1967 borders.” [...] Freij stressed the significance of cooperation with the Arab MKs. “We [in Meretz] and the Arab MKs represent the left that protect equality and human rights. I am in a party that includes both Arabs and Jews, and is a player in the political game. I have more influence since Meretz is also accepted on the Jewish street.” (*Hadith al-Nas*, January 25, 2013)

Shas

- **Shas representative in Kufr Kana: Shas is a credible party that helps all citizens equally**

Ali Amara, Shas representative in Kufr Kana, commented on the election results in the town: “The secret to Shas’ gain of such [a high] proportion of the votes is the party’s credibility, since it helped citizens who have appealed to the party leaders for assistance. From my personal experience, the party proves that it does not distinguish between Arabs and Jews. This is a religious party that is not extreme.” (www.alarab.net, January 24, 2013)

- **From an investigative news report on Shas's success in the Bedouin towns in the Negev**

“Bedouin communities in the Negev cast more votes for Shas than for any Jewish party and in some cases even more than for any Arab party. Members of the Tarabin Bedouin tribe say they voted for Shas because of its social activity. “I see Shas as a party of moderate, religious people. They are the only ones who can help us,” said Suleiman Tarabin, a resident of the Bedouin township of Tarabin near Rahat, the largest Bedouin city in southern Israel. “We support them because they’re the only ones who care about the needier people whom the government has forgotten. The Bedouin want to strengthen Shas so it can block attempts to cut financial allocations to the poor,” he said. “We don’t want to be like Egypt, and we believe Shas, which has values, will be able to bring about a change. It’s the light at the end of our tunnel and can revive the hope of making a decent living,” he said. [...] He added: “Only Shas has taken care of the Bedouin. [Shas leader] Aryeh Deri developed the villages and always fought for us. They are religious, reliable and look after the weak people in society. We received no promises from them.” (Haaretz, January 27, 2013)

Results of the 19th Knesset Elections in the Arab and Druze Sector³

Voting patterns in Arab and Druze localities (2009 and 2013 elections)⁴

		2009	2013
Arab and Arab-Jewish Parties	Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada	32.1%	32.0%
	Hadash	27.5%	23.2%
	Balad	22.3%	21.8%
	Da'am	0.2%	0.2%
	Total	82.1%	77.2%
Jewish-Zionist Parties	Labor	4.6%	3.8%
	Kadima	3.7%	3.1%
	Hatnua ("The Movement")	–	2.0%
	Yesh Atid	–	0.7%
	Meretz	1.4%	2.9%
	Likud	2.1%	4.3%
	Yisrael Beytenu	2.3%	
	Shas	2.0%	3.7%
	Other parties	1.8%	2.3%
	Total	17.9%	22.8%

Distribution of voting for Arab and Arab-Jewish lists in the 2013 elections

	Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada	Hadash	Balad	Da'am
Arab and Druze localities	123,866 (89.5%)	89,765 (79.1%)	84,308 (86.9%)	838 (23.6%)
Mixed Cities ⁵	10,126 (7.8%)	16,513 (15.5%)	9,425 (10.5%)	973 (27.4%)
Rest of the country	3,807 (2.7%)	6,051 (5.4%)	2,406 (2.6%)	1,735 (48.9%)
Total	138,450	113,439	97,030	3,546

³ **Editor's note:** In all tables, data pertaining to 2013 elections was taken from Central Committee for the 19th Knesset Elections website: <http://www.votes-19.gov.il/nationalresults>.

⁴ Figures in the table do not include votes of Arabs in mixed Jewish-Arab cities. See below for Arab voting patterns for Arab and Arab-Jewish parties in mixed cities.

⁵ Akko, Haifa, Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, Lod, Ramle, Upper Nazareth (Nazareth Elite), and Ma'alot-Tarshiha are defined by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics as Jewish-Arab mixed cities.

Voting in Arab and Druze localities, 2013 Elections⁶

Geographical region	Nationwide	Northern Region				Jerusalem Region ⁷	
		General ⁸	Bedouins ⁹	Druze ¹⁰	Christians ¹¹		
Eligible voters	694,694	443,808	39,610	71,866	10,376	5,670	
Actual votes	392,406	258,806	18,582	40,167	6,269	2,718	
Valid votes	386,923	255,295	18,202	39,439	6,193	2,591	
Voting rate	56.5%	58.3%	46.9%	55.9%	60.4%	48.2%	
Arab and Arab-Jewish parties	Raa'm-Ta'al-Mada	32.0%	24.9%	31.6%	2.3%	4.5%	28.7%
	Hadash	23.2%	26.7%	7.3%	12.4%	40.5%	5.9%
	Balad	21.8%	20.6%	20.8%	4.1%	27.1%	33.9%
	Da'am	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
	Total	77.2%	72.4%	59.9%	18.9%	72.2%	68.8%
Jewish-Zionist parties	Labor	3.8%	4.3%	8.0%	8.2%	5.6%	8.0%
	Meretz	2.9%	2.1%	1.8%	2.1%	7.6%	3.8%
	Kadima	3.1%	4.4%	5.4%	17.8%	1.3%	0.3%
	Hatnua	2.0%	2.8%	7.0%	8.8%	1.9%	1.4%
	Yesh Atid	0.7%	1.0%	1.9%	3.6%	0.7%	0.8%
	Likud-Beytenu	4.3%	6.2%	4.8%	23.2%	5.6%	3.5%
	HaBayit HaYehudi	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	3.1%	0.3%	0.4%
	Shas	3.7%	4.5%	7.4%	12.5%	2.9%	10.5%
	Others ¹²	1.8%	1.6%	3.1%	1.8%	1.9%	2.5%
	Total	22.8%	27.6%	40.1%	81.1%	27.8%	31.2%

⁶ Figures in the table do not include votes of Arabs in mixed cities.

⁷ The Jerusalem region includes the following towns: Abu Ghosh, Ein Naquba, Ein Rafa.

⁸ The Northern region includes the Arab and Druze localities in the Galilee, the Golan Heights, the valleys, and Akko and Haifa districts (excluding Akko and Haifa), and the Carmel Coast area. This category also includes the Bedouin, Circassian, and Christian localities in the north.

⁹ This category includes 19 localities in the north whose population is largely Bedouin: Ibtin, Bu'eine-Nujeidat, Bir el-Maksur, Basmat Tab'un, Dumeide, Zarzir, Khawalid, Tuba-Zangariyya, Kawkab Abu el-Heija, Kamaneh, Ka'abiyah-Tabash-Hajajreh, Manshiyyat Zibdeh, Sawa'id (Hamariyyah), Uzayr, 'Aramshe, Arab el-Na'im, Ras Eli, Rumat Heib, Shibli - Umm el-Ghanam.

¹⁰ This category includes the following 14 localities: Three Druze localities in the Golan Heights (Majdal Shams, Buq'ata, Mas'adeh); Nine localities in which Druze account for between 88% and 100% of the population (Julis, Yanuah-Jatt, Sajur, Beit Jan, Yarka, Horfeish, Kisra-Samia', Ein el-Asad, Daliyyat el-Karmel and Usfiyyah); and two localities with a large Druze population (Peki'in, with 76%, and Mughar, with 58%).

¹¹ This category includes four localities: two (Fassuta and Me'ilyyah) whose population is Christian, and two with a large Christian population: Eilabun (71%) and Jish (64%).

¹² This category includes votes for Jewish parties that failed to pass the electoral threshold, or parties that passed the electoral threshold yet won limited support from Arab and Druze localities, such as Degel Hatorah.

(cont.)

Geographical region		Triangle Region (Central Israel)			Southern Region (Bedouins)			
		Total	North ¹³	South ¹⁴	Total	Townships ¹⁵	Abu Basma regional council settlements ¹⁶	Tribes ¹⁷
Eligible voters		157,187	89,796	67,391	88,059	56,605	3,771	27,683
Actual votes		90,557	47,758	42,799	40,325	30,105	1,803	8,417
Valid votes		89,403	47,130	42,273	39,634	29,624	1,767	8,243
Voting rate		57.6%	53.2%	63.5%	45.8%	53.2%	47.8%	30.4%
Arab and Arab-Jewish parties	Raa'm-Ta'al-Mada	39.5%	31.0%	48.8%	61.6%	59.4%	66.8%	68.3%
	Hadash	22.9%	26.2%	19.3%	2.2%	2.7%	0.5%	0.8%
	Balad	22.9%	30.1%	14.8%	26.0%	29.5%	10.8%	17.0%
	Da'am	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%
	Total	85.6%	87.8%	83.0%	90.0%	91.7%	78.4%	86.4%
Jewish-Zionist parties	Labor	3.7%	4.4%	2.9%	1.2%	1.2%	4.2%	1.0%
	Meretz	6.3%	2.4%	10.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.3%	0.7%
	Kadima	0.7%	1.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
	Hatnua	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%	1.0%	0.4%	1.0%
	Yesh Atid	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%
	Likud-Beytenu	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%
	HaBayit HaYehudi	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%
	Shas	1.6%	2.1%	0.9%	3.3%	1.9%	12.5%	6.3%
	Others	1.3%	1.5%	1.4%	3.4%	1.7%	2.1%	2.8%
	Total	14.4%	12.2%	17.0%	10.0%	8.3%	21.6%	13.6%

¹³ This category includes nine localities in the northern Triangle region: Umm el-Fahm, Umm el-Qutuf, Baqa el-Gharbiyyah, Jatt, Basmah, Zemer, Kufr Qara, Meiser, Ma'aleh Iron, and 'Ar'arah.

¹⁴ This category includes six localities in the southern Triangle region: Jaljuliyyah, Taybeh, Tira, Kufr Bara, Kufr Qassem, and Qalansuwah.

¹⁵ This category includes the seven permanent Bedouin settlements in the Negev: Hura, Ksseifa, Laqiyyah, 'Ar'arah in the Negev, Rahat, Segev-Shalom, and Tel Sheva.

¹⁶ This category includes the following localities: Abu Krinat, Umm Batin, El-Sayyed, Bir Hadaj, Dreijat, Makhoul, Qasr a-Sir, Tarabin el-Sana. These localities were awarded official municipal status by the state in recent years, and are under the administration of the Abu Basma Regional Council, which was established in 2004.

¹⁷ This category includes 19 localities of the Bedouin Dispersion in the Negev, most of which are tribes that have not yet been granted official municipal status by the state (and are known as "Unrecognized Villages"): Abu Juwei'ed, Abu Abdun, Abu Krinat, Abu Rubay'ah, Abu Ruqayq, Atrash, Asad, A'sam, Janabib, Hawashleh, Huzayl, Masoudin el-Azazmeh, Nasasrah, Sayyed, Uqbi (Banu Uqbeh), Atawneh, Qabuah, Qudeirat e-Sana, and Qawa'in.

Votes for Arab and Arab-Jewish parties —2006, 2009, 2013¹⁸

Party	2006 Elections		2009 Elections		2013 Elections	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Raa'm-Ta'al-Mada	94,786	4	113,954	4	138,450	4
Hadash	86,092	3	112,130	4	113,439	4
Balad	72,066	3	83,739	3	97,030	3
Da'am	3,692	–	2,645	–	3,546	–
Total		10		11		11

Arab and Druze Knesset representation, 2003–2013¹⁹

	2003 16 th Knesset	2006 17 th Knesset	2009 18 th Knesset	2013 19 th Knesset
Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada ²⁰	2	4	4	4
Hadash	3 ²¹	2 (+1 Jewish MK)	3 (+1 Jewish MK)	3 (+1 Jewish MK)
Balad	3	3	3	3
Labor	2	3	2 ²²	–
Kadima	–	1	2 ²³	–
Likud	2	1	1	–
Meretz	–	–	–	1
Yisrael Beytenu	–	–	1	1 ²⁴
Total	12	14	16	12

¹⁸ Source of 2006 and 2009 data: Ephraim Lavie and Arik Rudnitzky (editors), *Elections 2009 Update*, special issue 2 (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, March 12, 2009).

¹⁹ Source: Knesset website. <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Pages/default.aspx>.

²⁰ Ra'am (unification of the Arab Democratic Party and the southern faction of the Islamic Movement) only, until 2003 elections. From 2006 elections and onward, a joint list of Ra'am and Ta'al (Arab Movement for Change).

²¹ In 2003 elections: an alliance between Hadash and Ta'al.

²² Two MKs representing Labor served a partial term. The total also includes an MK representing the Aztmaut ("Independence") faction, which split off from Labor in the course of the 18th Knesset.

²³ One of the MKs representing Kadima served a partial term.

²⁴ The MK in the joint Likud-Beytenu list is a member of Yisrael Beytenu.

Election achievements of Arab and Arab-Jewish parties in mixed cities

	Akko	Haifa	Tel-Aviv – Jaffa	Ramle	Lod	Nazareth Elite	Ma'alot- Tarshiha	Total
Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada	1,670	718	2,849	2,076	2,246	127	440	10,126
Hadash	1,617	6,637	4,069	986	573	1,986	645	16,513
Balad	1,440	2,713	1,128	719	1,722	747	956	9,425
Da'am	31	128	709	32	33	29	11	973
Total	4,758	10,196	8,755	3,813	4,574	2,889	2,052	37,037
Share of total city votes	21.8%	7.3%	3.6%	13.8%	16.1%	14.2%	19.7%	7.5%

Achievements of the Jewish-Zionist parties (selected localities)

Party	Locality	Votes	Share of total votes in the locality
Labor	Baqa el-Gharbiyyah	1,244	19.1%
	Beit Jan	954	22.6%
	Jaljulyyyah	727	20.7%
	Kufr Manda	560	8.1%
	Daliyyat el-Carmel	526	8.3%
Meretz	Kufr Qassem	3,254	34.8%
	Nein	492	62.9%
	Nazareth	417	1.5%
	Tira	352	4.0%
	Daliyyat el-Carmel	323	5.1%
Kadima	Daliyyat el-Carmel	2,299	47.4%
	Usfiyyah	1,388	36.1%
	Eir el-Asad	825	17.2%
	Shefar'am	490	3.8%
	Julis	447	17.9%
Likud-Beytenu	Shefar'am	1,591	12.3%
	Yarka	1,277	21.7%
	Kisra-Samia'	1,144	33.6%
	Yanuah-Jatt	923	42.7%
	Peki'in	842	35.3%
Shas	Yarka	1,469	25.0%
	Mughar	955	19.3%
	Kufr Manda	816	11.8%
	Beit Jan	649	15.4%
	Ma'ale Iron	525	13.3%