

“The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel”

**The Konrad Adenauer Program
for Jewish-Arab Cooperation**

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“The Arabs in Israel” Update Series

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A. From the Editors' Desk

We are pleased to present a special issue on "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel." In early December 2006, several position papers were published in the media concerning the civic and national status of Arabs citizens in Israel.

The first document, "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel,"¹ was drafted over the last year by a group of 40 Arab academics and intellectuals, and was published on behalf of "The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel." The second document, "An Equal Constitution for All: On a Constitution and the Collective Rights of Arab Citizens in Israel," was written by legalist Dr. Yousef Taysir Jabareen, and was published by the Mossawa Center. The third document which, although yet to be published, has become known as the "Haifa Convention," was discussed by a group of Arab academics and intellectuals.

This Update issue includes results of a public opinion poll conducted among the Arab public on the issue of the "Future Vision," position papers by Shawki Khatib and Dr. Yousef Jabareen, and selected editorials from the Arab language press, including diverse responses to the document by Arab and Jewish publicists and public figures.

This issue in the English language is an abridged version of the Hebrew-language version published on January 25, 2007.²

Comments and responses are welcome.

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Position papers reflect the opinions of their authors only.

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The Editors

¹ The "Future Vision" Document: <http://www.arab-lac.org/tasawor-mostaqbali-eng.pdf>

² Hebrew version of the Update: http://www.dayan.org/kapjac/future_vision_2007_update.pdf

B. Editorial

The Arabs in Israel – Vision and Reality / Elie Rekhess

A. Contents of the Document

“The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel” was published in December 2006 by the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, and presented by engineer Shawki Khatib in his dual capacity as the chairman of the National Committee and the chairman of the Supreme Follow-up Committee of the Arab Population in Israel. The document comprises eight sections, the greater part of which contains operative proposals for internal actions to remedy the social, economic, and cultural status of the Arab population. The document is refreshingly novel in its self-criticism and piercing self-scrutiny of the faulty conduct of the local Arab society in the areas of education (for example, the call to neutralize politicization of the system), its urging to increase women’s empowerment and its demand for anti-corruption actions.

Nonetheless, for the most part, attention has been focused on the document’s sections concerning the national-political future of the Arab minority in Israel, and specifically the section authored by Dr. As’ad Ghanem on Arab attitudes to the state. The document undermines the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and speaks of the “exploitation of democracy in the service of its Jewish nature.” According to the authors of the document, Israel is an “ethnocracy” that guarantees hegemony to the majority and marginalizes the minority. Thus, the spirit of these statements marks a call for the de-legitimization of Israel, an implicit denial of the right of the Jewish nation to self-determination and a demand to replace Israel with a bi-national state under some consensual regime that guarantees a joint division of power and mutual veto rights.

The “Future Vision” demands recognition of the Arab population as an indigenous national minority, possessing collective and historical rights that require official recognition and rectification by Israel of the wrongdoings of 1948. The document presents a demand for civic and national equality, and equality in the rights of immigration and citizenship.

Regarding the institutional-structural dimension, authors of the “Future Vision” argue in support of the necessity to grant the right of self-administration (autonomy) in the areas of education, religion and culture to the Arab minority, and ensure the development of a representative and elected national body that is particular to the Arab population.

Glaringly absent from the document is reference to the notion of coexistence or any Jewish-Arab partnership in the framework of a civic society grounded in integration and partnership.

B. Background to the publication of the document

Those who carefully follow the national-political development of the Arabs in Israel should not be surprised by the contents of the document. The “Future Vision” marks a step forward in the national consolidation of the Palestinian community in Israel.

Emphasis on the national component in the identity of the Israeli Arabs grew significantly following the implementation of the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The Arabs in Israel became aware that the budding settlement between Israel and the Palestinians would have them remain within the boundaries of the State of Israel and therefore, they felt compelled to re-conceptualize their status as a national minority within the state. The internal debates in Arab society on what was perceived to be an inherent contradiction between the Jewish nature and democratic character of the State of Israel, increased in intensity and led to the evolution of alternative models (i.e., a state of all citizens, a bi-national state). Furthermore, issues relating to the “1948 Files” (return of internal refugees – Arab citizens of Israel – to their destroyed villages, cultivation of the memory of the *Nakbah* – the Palestinian calamity of 1948, and a resolution of the Muslim endowment – *waqf* – issue) were re-opened.

These developments indicated the beginning of a process of “inward convergence” within the Green Line borders, and marked a substantial change from previous orientations. The intellectual-political elites adhered to their Israeli affiliation, introducing into it Palestinian-national content. They stressed the Palestinian foundation of their identity, which they anchored in their Israeli experience.

This orientation was reinforced by the following political trends in Israeli society that gained in intensity over the past five years: the debate on the future state borders; the “disengagement” policy of Ariel Sharon and the “convergence” policy propounded by Ehud Olmert; the construction of the Security Fence and the evacuation of the Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip (“Gush Katif”); and the intention to settle evacuees from the Territories in the Galilee and the Negev. Attempts of Jewish intellectuals and politicians to shape the future image of the State of Israel, expressed in the “Kineret Convention,” and intensive discussions to draft a “Constitution by Consensus,” increased the Arabs’ sense of exclusion. Racist statements by the likes of right wing MK Avigdor Lieberman and the growing support for population and territorial transfers in the Triangle region exacerbated their sense of suffocation.

The “Future Vision” document was also the result of the frustration and disappointment of the Arab public in view of the government’s inability to resolve the growing socio-economic gaps between the Arab and Jewish populations in Israel. Much has been said about manifestations of discrimination and prejudice, and elaboration on this point is beyond the scope of this issue. The policy of exclusion and alienation on part of state agencies was obvious, among other things, in the blatant disregard of the conclusions of the Or Committee, ignoring even the minimalist interpretations of these conclusions drafted by the Lapid Committee (appointed by the government to implement the Or Commission’s recommendations). The government’s failure to act fed the Arabs’ sense of estrangement and promoted their search for alternatives. The Islamic Movement, which continues to funnel a major portion of this bitterness, grew in stature in view of its partial success in filling the void in social, cultural and economic spheres of life.

Finally, the publication of the “Future Vision” reflects internal struggles of power in the Arab society. There is no consensus in the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel over the conceptualization of the future of Arabs in Israel. The Mada Al-Carmel Institute, identified with the NDA party (National Democratic Alliance), is working on a document of its own; the Islamic Movement

expressed its reservations to the “Future Vision” document, while the final word has not yet been heard from the remaining Arab political parties.

C. Substance of the Document

The “Future Vision” document presents one of the most rigidly ideological and political platforms ever drafted by a representative Arab organization in Israel. Far-reaching ideologies had been introduced by “Al-Ard” movement in the 1950s and the radical “Sons of the Village” movement in the 1980s, but these organizations lacked a nationwide representative character.

The spirit of the present document marks a call for the de-legitimization of the State of Israel in its current form as a democratic Jewish state. It is difficult to relinquish the impression that the document enfoldes an attempt to impose the Arab Palestinian-national narrative on the Jewish majority. The commonly accepted principle of “Two States for Two Peoples” is effectively replaced by a demand to establish one-and-a-half states for Palestinians and one-half of a state for Jews.

The main problem with this document, beyond the aforementioned points, lies in its almost indivisible connection between civic and national-political elements, stipulating a reciprocal conditionality between them. In other words, the proposed pattern is based on a zero-sum-game in which civic equality cannot be realized as long as the Jewish nature of the state is not abolished. Clearly only a marginal minority in the Jewish camp would consent to this far-reaching demand.

Entrenchment of the Arab side in its position might easily lead to the deterioration of Jewish-Arab relations in the state – since it lends support to the thesis of the extreme right wing in Israel that all Arabs constitute a “fifth column” seeking to undermine the foundation of the state.

D. What next?

Since the document’s publication, and in view of the forceful responses of the Jewish public, some of which appear in this Update, the authors adopted two key approaches: entrenchment in a maximalist position, on one hand, and a call for a dialogue, accompanied by the not necessarily official clarification that the demands contained in the “Future Vision” might be viewed as an opening position in negotiations. While adhering to its formulations, Shawki Khatib, the guiding spirit behind the document, on several occasions clarified that the document has been written in an unmistakably Israeli context. “[Our] Israeli passport is not a negotiable issue,” he said and declared: “The state is an existing fact, it is the state of the Jews, but it is also the state of a million Arabs.” Others stressed that the document was merely the first draft, and its final formulation will be signed at a conference scheduled to March 2007.

Added to this is the impression created by results of a public opinion poll conducted by the Adenauer Program, the findings of which are presented in this issue. The Arab public supports several of the demands articulated in the document (right of return of “Refugees in their Homeland,” right of the Muslim Committee to administer the *waqf*, and the demand to establish a national representative entity). However, at the same time, results of the survey show that the Arab public (39.7%) selected a “state of all its citizens” as the preferred form of statehood or a democratic Jewish state in one form or another (39.4%). Only a small minority (8.4%) preferred the “consensual

democracy” option proposed in the “Future Vision” (also see Section C of the Update). Moreover, apparently 80% of the poll respondents continue to support the “Two States for Two Peoples” formula, a position which implicitly expresses acceptance of the currently existing State of Israel.

Some prefer a “soft” rather than “hard” reading of the document. Advocates of the latter approach contend that the positions of the Arab side must be judged stringently without any attempt to mask the truth. In contrast, the first camp is aware of the nationalist challenge but does not discount the possibility that it is merely an outcry in response to a reality of alienation, rejection and exclusion, an expression of the Arabs’ sense of helplessness, and a signal to the government and to the Jewish public stating: “See how far we have come – talk to us and let’s find a way out of this complication together.” If this is true, there is still hope in sight.

According to this logic, the document’s authors will be credited with a considerable accomplishment if they compel the Jewish side end their “denial” and “repression” of the minority issue, address it in an institutionalized manner, and drive forward the construction of an equal civic society whose existence in the state is not based on the de-legitimization of one of its components. That is – if they remove the blatant threat to the Jewish nature of the State that is contained in this document.

It is impossible to disregard the unyielding wind that blows in the “Future Vision” document, but it would be an error to establish the inverse conditionality, such as a declaration that reducing the gaps would be conditional on the modification of opinions in the national sphere. On the contrary, this document creates a new dynamics that permits the government and civic society in Israel to mobilize for action to promote the status of the Arab population, thereby disproving those who argue that the democratic element in the identity of the State of Israel is limited to Jews only. The recommendations and action plans have already been prepared, and are outlined clearly in the Or Commission Report.

C. Results of the Public Opinion Poll

The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation initiated a public opinion poll to examine the opinions of the Arab public in Israel on various issues referred to in the "Future Vision" document.

The poll was conducted by telephone in late December 2006 - early January 2007 by the Yafa Institute (headed by Aas Atrash), based on a representative sample of the adult Arab population in Israel. Sample size was 511 individuals, with a maximum sampling error of 5%.

Awareness of the Future Vision document

According to the survey results, 15.7% of the participants heard of the "Future Vision" document. Of this group, 35% read the document. In other words, based on their own reports, only 5.5% of all telephone interviewees read the document.

Have you heard of this document? (N=511)	%
Yes	15.7
No	84.3

Have you read this document? (N=80)	%
Yes	35.0
No	65.0

Attitudes of the Arab public on selected issues appearing in the document

Independent of their awareness of the "Future Vision" document, all interviewees were requested to state the extent of their agreement to several demands that were mentioned in the document. In general, findings show that the majority of the Arab public largely agrees with these demands.

65.6% of the interviewees support, to a large or very large extent, the demand to establish a consensual democracy, that is: a type of bi-national state with appropriate proportionate representation for all national groups, mutual veto rights, and independent administration of each group's unique affairs. 20.7% moderately support this proposition, while 13.7% do not, or emphatically do not support this demand.

At the same time, a considerable portion of the interviewees apparently lacked a genuine understanding of the term "Consensual Democracy." This is supported by their responses to another question regarding the nature of the State of Israel, where a large proportion (40%) of interviewees expressed a preference for "A State of All its Citizens" and a similar proportion selected a "Jewish and Democratic State" of one kind or another, while only 8.4% preferred a "Consensual Democracy."

One of the national goals defined in the document is the establishment of an “elected representative national institution for the Arab Palestinian society in Israel.” The document also noted that the Supreme Follow-up Committee had already initiated steps to realize this goal. Survey results indicate that 68.5% of the interviewees strongly or very strongly support this goal, 13.9% moderately support this goal, while 17.6% do not or emphatically do not support this goal.

The “Future Vision” document discusses the attainment of national-collective equality for the Arabs in Israel. The document calls to guarantee the rights of the displaced Arab Palestinians (“refugees in their homeland”) and their return to their original residences. Findings indicate that 86.5% of the interviewees support or strongly support this demand, 6.1% moderately support this demand, while 7.4% do not support or emphatically do not support this demand.

Yet another national-collective demand noted in the document is the transfer of administration of the holy places and the affairs of the Islamic *waqf* to members of the Muslim sect. Findings show that 87.8% of the interviewees support or strongly support this demand, 7.3% moderately support this demand, while 4.9% do not or emphatically do not support this demand.

Demand	Strongly support; support	Moderately support	Do not support; emphatically do not support
Establishment of a consensual democracy	65.6%	20.7%	13.7%
Establishment of a representative, elected national body for the Palestinian society in Israel	68.5%	13.9%	17.6%
Guarantee of the rights of displaced Arab Palestinians to return to their former residences	86.5%	6.1%	7.4%
Muslim administration of the holy places and <i>waqf</i>	87.8%	7.3%	4.9%

The preferred character of the State of Israel

The document states that the exploitation of Israeli democracy in service of the Jewish nature of the state has led to the exclusion of Arabs, who are placed in opposition to the character of the state in which they live. Authors of the document proposed to resolve this conflict by instituting a consensual democracy in Israel.

The survey explored interviewees’ attitudes toward the desired character of the State of Israel, and compare the “Future Vision” (i.e. consensual democracy) with other proposed solutions to this conflict: a state of all its citizens, a bi-national state, a Jewish democratic state that guarantees full civic rights to Arabs, and a Jewish democratic state in its current form.

Findings indicate that the majority of the Arab public preferred “a state of all its citizens” – this option was selected by 39.7% of the interviewees. 25.5% selected a “Jewish and Democratic State that guarantees full equality of rights to its Arab citizens,” 13.9% preferred a “Jewish and Democratic state in its current form,” 9.4% preferred the establishment of a bi-national state, while only 8.4% selected the consensual democracy option proposed in the “Future Vision” document.

Preferred character of the State of Israel in your opinion	%
A state of all its citizens	39.7
Jewish and democratic state that guarantees full equality of rights to its Arab citizens	25.5
Jewish and democratic state in its current form	13.9
Bi-national state	9.4
Consensual democracy	8.4
Other	2.9
NA	0.2

A breakdown of the responses by religion indicates that a higher proportion of Druze interviewees, compared to Muslims or Christians, preferred a “Jewish and democratic state in its current form” while more Christians and Muslims than Druze selected a “bi-national state.” Furthermore, the “consensual democracy” option was selected primarily by Muslim and Druze interviewees.

D. Position papers *

The 'Future Vision': In opposition to a 'Democracy by Majority' / Shawki Khatib

In early December, we published the "Future Vision for Palestinian Arabs in Israel." We had three aims in drafting the "Vision" - **first**, to conduct an internal discussion among the Arab public concerning our future; **second**, to conduct a sincere and unflinching dialogue with the Israeli public opinion; and **third**, to outline an action plan derived from the "Vision," including practical instruments for realizing the plan.

At publication we declared that "we know that this vision, which also includes our historical narrative, will generate both positive and negative responses, but honesty and openness is the only path to a fruitful dialogue." Here, too, we reiterate and emphasize that this discourse is conducted in the shadow of a serious national conflict. Nonetheless, a genuine solution to the conflict requires a large degree of understanding of the other, even in areas of emotions and morale which are important and critical elements in the fabric of the relationship between the two peoples.

The Arab population is in a difficult and delicate situation, both as part of a nation living under occupation and suffering from difficult living conditions, and by being part of the state that occupies the land of its nation. Today the reality in which Arab citizens live is a direct outcome of the bloody conflict of 1948, and the continued discrimination in all spheres of life.

True, the task is difficult and extensive in scope, and is similar to walking in a minefield where a single error can cause grave damage. Therefore it is only natural that the Vision evokes positive and negative responses, and it is important for us to hear them.

The message that the "Future Vision" wishes to convey is that, after 58 years, the state has failed: all the laws that discriminate against us, the Palestinian citizens of Israel, on the basis of our nationality, were enacted democratically (by the "democracy of the majority"). We are here to say that we wish to be partners in those spheres of life that concern us. We would like to use democratic tools to protect ourselves from the predatory nature of the "democracy of the majority."

In the forthcoming months, we will hold meetings throughout the country to continue this dialogue. The climax of this debate will be a general conference that will be held in the near future. I truly hope that, through this step, we have contributed and will continue to contribute to a rational discussion that will be translated into an action plan to promote and change of the circumstances of the Arab population in Israel.

Shawki Khatib is the Chairman of the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel and the Chairman of the Supreme Follow-up Committee of the Arab population in Israel.

* These position papers were written especially for the "Arabs in Israel" Update.

On Equality and Partnership / Yousef Taysir Jabareen

Human history teaches us that minority groups are typically exposed to continuous pressure imposed by the majority group – pressures of assimilation and cultural erosion which over time wear away the minority group's national-cultural identity and threaten its unique collective identity and the rights of its members. On this backdrop, a view developed in international discourse that minority groups require special legal protection for their social status, to enable their members to withstand the pressures imposed on them by the majority. According to this perspective, the majority, through its social and historical status as the society's hegemonic group, almost inherently holds a superior socio-political status compared to the minority, and therefore special steps guaranteeing substantive equality for the minority must be institutionalized.

The “Future Vision” document by the representatives of the Arab public is designed to point to these special steps, introduce them publicly to the Arab population, and to the Israeli public at large, and perhaps finally place them on the public agenda. This development is critical for promoting the values of equality and democracy in the state. The entire Israeli public will benefit from effectively securing these values.

At the foundation of these special steps noted in the Vision document, are the collective rights to which the Arab minority is entitled and which are designed to guarantee proper individual and collective legal protection for the Arab minority. These rights are a condition for equality for all in the state. At the foundation of these rights is the basic democratic principle of full, equal partnership of Arab citizens in the state's public resources, as individuals and as a group. These public resources belong to all the citizens of the state and therefore, their fair and equal distribution must be guaranteed. A genuine sharing of public resources should apply to all state resources, including material resources (land and budgets), political resources (effective proper representation in decision making forums), and symbolic resources (flag, emblem and anthem). The latter are emotionally-charged public resources and therefore they have a special impact on the status of the minority community; as a result, principles of partnership and equity concerning the symbolic system of the state should also be carefully addressed. A genuine partnership should also be reflected in matters of language, culture and education in Israel, including the language in which the state addresses its citizens (in government offices and public signs), and its system of elementary and higher education. This partnership is the cornerstone in building an equal, just society, and is the basis for an inclusive constitution toward which we should strive. Only a substantive and comprehensive partnership can pave the way toward genuine equality: a broad collaborative partnership rather than a narrow, formal partnership.

Needless to say, the exercise of these rights requires the reconstruction of the state's political and social institutions, such as to guarantee a sense of belonging for the Arab minority and equal opportunities for all.

The Vision document also evolved in the shadow of significant efforts in recent years to enact a constitution – a consensual constitution, as its initiators declare. But the aspiration for a democratic constitution based on the genuine social consent of the state's citizens, requires, first of all, a full and true partnership of all the state's citizens in the process of drafting the constitution. Note: the aspiration for a

democratic constitution in Israel requires a public debate that transcends the current power differences between the Jewish majority and Arab minority, so that these will not be reflected in the constitution formation process. Needless to say, until now, there has been no real inclusion of the Arab minority in any proceeding to establish constitutional arrangements.

Today, the collective interests of the Arab citizens in Israel are represented by an entity that is something of an organizational umbrella for the entire Arab public – the Supreme Follow-up Committee of the Arab Population. The Supreme Follow-up Committee is the natural public address to turn to when conducting a serious dialogue with the Arab minority on establishing its status in a future constitutional arrangement. Although such a dialogue has not yet been conducted, the Future Vision document establishes the foundation for such a dialogue and introduces real content into it.

Dr. Yousef Taysir Jabareen is a legalist and the author of the legal section of the Future Vision document, as well as the author of "An Equal Constitution for All," published by "Mossawa" - The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel

E. Responses of the Arab Public

In defense of the “Future Vision” document

Dr. Asad Ghanem, Head of the Department of Government and Political Thought of Haifa University, and a key member of the team that drafted the “Future Vision” document, interpreted the major arguments of the document as minimal demands of the Arab minority in Israel (in a position paper written for *Haaretz*, December 19, 2006):

“This is the first group of documents drafted by figures from all ends of the political spectrum of Palestinians in Israel: supporters of DFPE (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), NDA (National Democratic Alliance), the Islamic Movement, the “Sons of the Village” [radical] movement, and supporters of the Zionist parties. This document represents the claims of the Palestinians in Israel in the most realistic manner. [...] The document presents a demand for integration, equality and equity, inside rather than beyond the framework of Israel. This is not a demand to abolish the existence of Israel nor is it a demand for an arrangement that is different that what is currently accepted by the majority of Jews and Palestinians – two states, Israel and Palestine.”

“In this document, the Palestinians in Israel raised a set of demands that are logical for a minority group, by any familiar international standards. These are “minimal demands” of an indigenous minority. [...] Who determined that the Jewish state would be accompanied by exploitation, expropriation, racist civic laws, and discrimination on all levels? [...] If this is the Jewish State, then we oppose the State being Jewish [...] Today, there is no option open to us other than opposition to the Jewish character of Israel.”

In a second article published on www.alarab.co.il (December 22, 2006), a website identified with the *Kul al-Arab* weekly published in Nazareth, Ghanem explained that the “Future Vision” document is a representative document for all intents and purposes, and he called the heads of the Arab parties to be grateful for it:

“Mr. Shawki Khatib, in his representative capacity, has initiated and brought forth a relevant vision to public debate by representatives, politicians, members of society and intellectuals. That is why this is a representative document that no one has the right to undermine. [...] Over all the years, the political parties and their representatives have taken their role and their public lightly, and have failed to work together as a collective leadership or accomplish such a modest thing [...] Their failure and their helplessness should not lead to more helplessness or incapacity to take initiative and act in other areas. It is only proper that party leaders express their gratitude to those who initiated and worked to accomplish such a thing.”

Another partner in the working group that drafted the “Future Vision” document is **Hussam Abu Baker**. In a position paper written for *Haaretz* (December 28, 2006), Abu Baker explained that the document expresses the desire of the Arab citizens for their citizenship and their desire to be liberated from the patronage of the Jewish majority:

“The Future Vision charges the concept of ‘a joint life’ with genuine meaning, although it is not based on the view, prevalent among the Jewish majority, that the desired meaning of this concept is the assimilation of the minority into the hegemonic majority. We [the authors of the document] view this concept as an option for the existence of the Palestinian minority as a meaningful group of citizens with distinct national and cultural attributes, as part of Israel society. [...] The Jewish public should see this document as an invitation to a significant, focused public debate among equals, a debate that requires more than a small degree of tolerance and ideological pluralism. I believe that this is possible.”

Yet another publicist who supports the document is **Attorney Rafiq Jabareen**, a resident of Umm al-Fahm. In a lengthy position paper published in the *Kul al-Arab* weekly (January 19, 2007), Jabareen presented an unassailable argument for every point of internal criticism hurled against the document:

“In view of the attacks of the extreme right in Israel on our Arab public, and their attempt to deny its citizenship, and in view of the call [of the right] to conduct a transfer to the northern Triangle, especially to Umm al-Fahm, it was necessary to draft the Vision, now more than ever. The purposes for which the Vision was drafted were and remain just: an internal discussion by our public in the matter of its future orientation, through a discussion of its current situation and the obstacles to its progress; and an appeal to Jewish public opinion and official institutions.”

“It is natural that a debate ensued in the Arab and Hebrew press following the publication of the document. This attests to the essentiality and success of the document. The document is evidence of the courage of its leader [Shawki Khatib, Chairman of the Supreme Follow-up Committee], because many believe that the document is a ‘headache’ and will cause trouble for them. The nationalists are not pleased with it because they consider it to be a document that reflects ‘Israelization.’ The various groups of Jews are not pleased with it, and they consider the document as [reflecting] ‘non-recognition of Israel’. [...] We live in Israel and cannot ignore this fact. [...] The demand to recognize us as a national minority and grant [us] cultural and religious autonomy is the biggest obstacle to Israelization.”

Political and public criticism against the contents of the document

The Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement, represented in the Supreme Follow-up Committee and considered one of the largest popular organizations in the Arab population that is not represented in the Knesset, published a letter on December 17, 2006, on the website of *Panorama* weekly (www.panet.co.il) addressed to Shawki Khatib, the Committee’s chairman. The letter denounced the publication of the “Future Vision” document, and the fact that the document had not been officially endorsed by the Supreme Follow-up Committee:

“We, of the Islamic Movement, condemn the publication of such a document on behalf of the Nationwide Committee, without referring to the Follow-up Committee. [...] Therefore, we believe that this document represents only its authors and the

parties who participated in its preparation. [...] We believe that an action such as this is a dangerous circumvention of the Follow-up Committee and one which impairs and diminishes its functions.”

In the political sphere, criticism of the document was voiced by the Arab parties. One aspect of this criticism focused on the fact that the document made hardly any reference to the Palestinian issue. Another point of criticism concerned the inconsistent political position expressed in the document, and the fact that it represents neither the position of the Arab public in entirety, nor the positions of the Arab parties.

MK Jamal Zahalka, NDA (National Democratic Alliance) parliamentary group chairman (*Fasl al-Maqal*, December 12, 2006): “What is infuriating about the document is its disregard of the Palestinian issue [...] It contains only one small, fragmented statement on the issue of Palestine on page 3: 'We will fight to achieve a just, comprehensive and everlasting peace in the region, and a solution to the refugee problem in a just and accepted manner, and we will also fight for the establishment of an independent state of Palestine.' No [mention of] occupation, 67 borders, Jerusalem, Right of Return, Golan, Fence, settlements, or international resolutions. What's going on here? Did the occupation end and the refugees return without anyone informing us about it?"

“This document is neither coherent nor cohesive, from a logical or political point of view. It does not represent a uniform political position, and it contains diverse and contradicting positions and opinions. Each section contains diverse political and moral approaches and it appears to be a collection of different visions rather than a single comprehensive, consolidated vision.”

MK Ahmad Tibi, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and MK for the UAL-AMC (United Arab List & Arab Movement for Change) party (*The Jerusalem Report*, 22.01.07): “The Future Vision document does not represent the overall position of the Arab community. It was prepared by academics and individuals, not parties. We didn't ask for autonomy or a bi-national system.”

In the public sphere, criticism of the document was voiced by Arab journalists and publicists who argued that the aims cited by the document's authors were overly vague and unattainable. Criticism was also directed at the authors for unduly presuming to represent the entire Arab public.

Mahmud Abu Rajab, editor of *al-Akhbar* weekly published in Nazareth (www.el-akhbar.net): “[The ‘Future Vision’ document contains] general and vague aims which are difficult to attain, and are merely slogans that are similar to political slogans. [...] I believe that we need a simple future vision that is clearer, easier to understand and far more removed from unattainable slogans or aspirations.”

Ali Zubaydat, publicist and resident of Sakhnin (<http://sakhnin2005.blogspot.com>, December 19, 2007): “Who granted them [the authors of the 'Future Vision' document] the right to speak in the name of us all? Did you ask anyone other than yourselves before you published this worthless piece of paper? [...] This state is not and cannot possibly be our state. Throughout history, the state rejected us as citizens,

and that is its right, because it exists against our wishes. On our part, we must reject it as our state and that is our right.”

F. Responses of the Jewish Public

Support for the document

Several public figures and Jewish academic welcomed the publication of the “Future Vision.” They explained their support by stating that the publication of the document offered an opportunity for the Jewish majority to “take up the gauntlet” and begin a process of reconciliation with the Arab minority living in the State of Israel.

Journalist **Meron Benvenisti** (“Threats of the Future Vision”, *Haaretz*, December 16, 2006): “The challenge of the ‘Vision of the Future’ is not new in its contents but rather in the identity of those who are presenting it: no longer marginal intellectuals, but rather the Palestinian-Israeli establishment itself – the Supreme Follow-Up Committee and the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel. It turns out that the Palestinian-Israeli collective’s process of crystallization has reached the point of maturity. Its leaders have succeeded in formulating an agreed-upon position demanding collective equal rights, and this inevitably must lead to a process of questioning the Jewish hegemony over the entire public space. From the moment the demon is allowed out of the bottle, there’s no returning it, and the emergence of consensual democracy that creates a new balance of collective rights is only a matter of time.”

Prof. Oren Yiftachel, professor of political geography, Ben Gurion University (“Take Slovakia for Example,” *Haaretz*, December 21, 2006): “The document articulates, for the first time, the demands of the Arab-Palestinian community in Israel in a manner that challenges most of the foundational premises of the Jewish state. It does not accept the historical Zionist narrative or the magical formula of a ‘Jewish democratic state.’ It presents the destructive results of the Jewish settlement of the country for the Palestinian nation in general, and specifically for the Palestinian minority in Israel, and painfully describes in detail the results of long-standing discrimination, including a self critique of the weakness of the Arab-Palestinian society in Israel. Most important – the Vision presents a program for a democratic struggle and peaceful co-existence, despite the arduous, persistent yoke of the occupation of the territories.”

Shalom (Shuli) Dichter, co-director of “Sikkuy” – the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel (*The Jerusalem Report*, January 22, 2007): “I’m taking this document as a call for dialogue. They want a state that is not defined a Jewish one so that they can integrate [themselves]. So long as it is defined as |

Jewish, they can't. They are saying, 'We are here. Stop ignoring us.' This is great progress."

Censure of the document for rejecting the legitimacy of the State of Israel

Most responses by the Jewish public are characterized by sharp criticism against the document's contents, most of which focused on the absence of any reference to the right of the Jewish nation to self-determination. Another argument raised by the document's opponents is that the document authors apparently divested themselves of the vision of "Two States for Two Peoples" and replaced it with a vision of a "bi-national state."

Yossef (Tommy) Lapid, former Minister of Justice for the Shinuy party ("A State within a State," *Maariv*, December 6, 2006): "The Arab public representatives' demand to change the character of Israel from a "Jewish State" to a "state of all its citizens" is a transparent attempt to drain all content from Zionism. [...] This will not work, because if we relinquish the nature of Israel as a Jewish state, then there is nothing left for us here."

Dr. Alexander Jacobson, a senior lecturer in the Department of History, Hebrew University in Jerusalem ("How many of these does the world really have?" *Haaretz*, December 12, 2006): "The bi-national experiments of the 20th century ended in resounding failure. Cyprus, which was founded as a bi-national state, broke up quickly and very violently [...] Czechoslovakia split into two nation-states when democracy returned. [...] The bi-national idea in the West is thus far from a success story. Now there are calls to realize this idea in the Middle East. [...] It is obvious that this idea represents explicit abandonment of the principle of 'two states for two peoples' – a principle whose application requires two separate nation-states, one Jewish-Israel and the other Palestinian-Arab."

Prof. Shimon Shamir, former member of the Or Commission, the State Commission of Inquiry into the events of October 2000 ("An Open Letter to the Authors of the Future Vision," *Al-Sinara*, January 5, 2007): "'Accepting the other' is a condition for any improvement in our relationship and the rectification of wrongs. We, the members of the Or Commission, recognized this. [...] Our statements [in the Or Commission Report] clearly expressed a deep, honest desire to understand Arab society in Israel, to perceive it as it perceives itself, and to make a contribution in 'accepting others.' This approach, as is well-known, is not shared by all Jews in the state, but it is being adopted by an increasing number of people, with the hope that the other side will respond to it, and it may turn into a reciprocal acceptance of Jews and Arabs."

"Your Vision document impairs this hope. You begin the document with your own definition of the State of Israel: 'Israel is the outcome of colonialist action initiated by the Jewish-Zionist elites in Europe and the west, and was established with the

assistance of colonialist countries.’ [...] It is difficult to shake off the feeling that the purpose of your one-sided definition is to strip away the identity of the Jews of this land. In your document, the Arabs of this land appear as a nation, while the Jews [appear] as a religious or ethnic group. In no place have you recognized the self-determination of the Jews as a nation.”

“Therefore, not only does your document fail to create a foundation for dialogue, it evokes a sense of threat for Jewish readers, even those who are sympathetic to your cause. Readers may contemplate - if they define the State of Israel as the product of colonialism, they are also insinuating that the apologetic process of de-colonialism in the world will come and put an end to it. It should therefore not be surprising that more vehement responses in the Hebrew press define the document as a ‘declaration of war’.”

“The only way to achieve your rights passes through the Jewish society. Salvation will not come from outside. You will make progress in achieving the equality that is your due, only to the extent that the Jewish citizens and their institutions recognize that equality is not merely just but also essential. Unfortunately, the document you composed does not promote this process but reverses it.”

Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, President of the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, and former MK for Meretz (“And the Left is Silent,” *Maariv*, January 5, 2007): “What does the Vision document of the Follow-up Committee contain? ‘Israel is the result of a colonialist action initiated by Jewish-Zionist elites in Europe and the West.’ That is how the Supreme Follow-up Committee and the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel describe the establishment of the state [...] This is, of course, a vile lie; its language is so shameless that readers are surprised that it contains no explicit mention of the Protocols of Zion.”

“The document demands rights for the Palestinian minority that have no foundation in international law – and demands to put an end to Israel as a Jewish state. [...] Just as they [the authors of the ‘Future Vision’ document] abandoned the idea of ‘Two States for Two Peoples’ overnight, that may similarly cease to resign themselves to our existence here. [...] This ‘Vision’ delays even further the day on which equal rights will exist between Jews and Arabs in Israel.”

“The document discusses the establishment of a ‘joint government of both peoples’ in Israel. But the document does not say one word about the nature of the government under which the Arab-Palestinian nation will live as part of the ‘Arab, Islamic and human cultural space.’ Which Islam do they mean? Where are the rights of women guaranteed in the Muslim Palestinian nation? What will be their fate? Discrimination? [...] There is not a single word in the ‘Vision’ about human rights, democracy, workers’ rights, labor unions, or freedom of expression.”

Dr. Arye Carmon, President of the Israel Democracy Institute (“Appeal to the Arabs of Israel”, *Yediot Acharonot*, January 3, 2007): “We, the associates of the Israel Democracy Institute and members of the Institute’s executive committee, identify intentions of separatism on the part of the document’s authors, along with an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Jewish nation’s right to self-determination. This approach subverts the aspiration to create a joint foundation of mutual respect and good will. It will be an obstacle to the legitimate demands of the Arab public, such as

participation in the government, appointment to senior executive positions, and increased autonomy in the field of education. The call to change the national character of the state of Israel, and its association to the legitimate and just demand for civic equality, undermines the joint aim of co-existence in a Jewish and democratic State of Israel and threatens any practical chance of promoting equality.”

“The document of the Follow-up Committee apparently stems from despair of the ‘Jewish and Democratic’ model. The proposal it contains attests to their mistrust of this model’s ability to create a change in the State’s attitude toward its non-Jewish citizens. We, Arabs and Jews, who believe in the necessity and the potential for integrating the Arab minority in our joint state, must mark the war against despair as a joint, attainable cause. On this backdrop, we call the Arab public and its leaders to work together with allies in the Jewish public to develop a model of a relationship that encourages integration and promotes the collaborative construction of a civic society.”