



Arab Politics in Israel and the 19th Knesset Elections

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From the Editor's Desk

We are pleased to present the second issue in the 2013 Elections Update series on Arab politics in Israel and the 19th Knesset elections which will be held later this week, on January 22.

There have been several developments since the first issue in this series went to press. First, the Central Election Committee disqualified MK Hanin Zoabi of Balad from running in the upcoming elections. Ultimately, the High Court of Justice unanimously overturned the Committee's decision, paving the way for Zoabi's participation in the elections once again. The ruling also removed the threat that Balad would call for an election boycott.

In the Arab street, the development that dominated the entire election campaign was a series of relentless efforts by Arab party representatives to ignite election furor that would spur Arab voting on Election Day. While routine public opinion polls of all (Jewish and Arab) eligible voters in Israel predict that all three major parties – Hadash, Balad, and Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada – will undoubtedly pass the election threshold, an early December survey of eligible Arab voters offered no favorable forecasts for these parties: 50% of the respondents stated that they had no intention of voting on Election Day, and 28% stressed that they had no intention of voting if the three parties fail to unite.¹

Ultimately, the parties failed to join forces as a united list. The parties' representatives seemingly appreciate the significance of this critical hour, and the election campaigns of all three major Arab parties are focusing almost exclusively on efforts to increase anticipated Arab turnout. Apparently all three decided to downplay their rivalry and take an active stand against the calls for an election boycott and against the general political indifference of the Arab street that hangs over their heads like the sword of Damocles.

At the same time, the Jewish-Zionist parties, and especially the left-wing parties, Labor and Meretz, as well as the religious Jewish party, Shas, are exerting unprecedented efforts to regain the foothold in the Arab public that they almost entirely lost in the previous elections. These efforts pose another challenge for the Arab parties in the current election campaign: Will the major Arab parties maintain their power in the next Knesset? Will the upcoming elections signal a positive turning point in the political participation of the Arab public? Will Arab voters and the Zionist parties reconnect?

The current issue explores these questions, and sheds light on the key issues of the political campaign in the Arab public on the eve of the Knesset elections. These issues are discussed in two op-eds, followed by excerpts of items and features that appeared in the Arabic media (press and websites), translated here into English. The current issue concludes with various background statistics, based on data collected and stored in the computerized data archive of the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation.

¹ See: Jack Khoury, "Poll: Half of Israeli Arabs don't intend to vote in January elections," **Haaretz**, December 10, 2012. The report is available at the following link:
<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/poll-half-of-israeli-arabs-don-t-intend-to-vote-in-january-elections.premium-1.483725>

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The Editor

Editorial

Elie Rekhess* / The End to Parliamentary Politics in Arab Society?

In this Knesset election campaign, as in all recent campaigns, the Israeli political scene witnessed its regular ritual: intense efforts were exerted in an attempt to unite the ranks and set up a joint Arab party bloc that could realize the electoral potential of the Arabs in Israel and prevent a loss of votes due to internal dissension. As in the past, current attempts failed miserably, and ended in a whimper. In addition, the Jewish public is once again witnessing the Jewish right-wing's efforts to have the Arab parties and MKs disqualified by the Central Elections Committee; once again, the Supreme Court has intervened and reversed the Committee's decision to disqualify them. On the face of this election campaign, there is nothing new under the sun.

But this is not exactly true. The 19th Knesset elections are, in fact, a distinct, and possibly critical, milestone in the continued withdrawal of Israeli Arabs from parliamentary politics in Israel. Voting turnout is a reliable index of this trend: In the previous elections (in 2009), only 53.4% of all eligible Arab voters cast a vote (compared to 64.7% of all eligible Jewish voters). The decline in turnout is clear: In 1996, 77% exercised their right to vote; in 2003, 62% did so; and in 2006, 56.3% voted. Observers estimate that this trend will accelerate in the upcoming elections; one survey predicted voter turnout of no more than 36%.

It seems that the Arab public has lost its faith in Knesset elections. Such despair has translated into increasing Arab withdrawal from Israeli politics. The reasons are obvious, and most of them were also valid in the past. First, abstention expresses the public's deep abhorrence toward the Arab parties for remaining internally divided for decades. In the upcoming elections, there will be five Arab lists, one of which is composed of three factions. The parties once again refused to rise above their narrow personal interests and considerations, despite the trifling ideological differences between them. Inert and obsolete, the parties have become repugnant to young voters who yearn for change.

Second, the Arab parties in the Knesset have proven their inability to promote change through parliamentary politics. While the politicians are proud of their legislative achievements and their defense of Arab rights, their continued exclusion from the center of decision-making – the government coalitions – limit their impact on the current situation, which, Wadi' Awawda says, is why they continue to put on circus shows and set off fireworks in the Knesset. The third reason for abstention and an election boycott is the growing strength of the Jewish religious-national right wing and the collapse of the Zionist left wing. The current Knesset outlined the general direction: anti-Arab legislation that borders on blatant racism (the Naqba Law, the amendment to the Citizenship Law, the Admissions Committee Law). Why would anyone want to sit in a Knesset that represents encroaching de-legitimization of the

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very presence of Arabs in Israel? Ideology, the fourth reason for boycotting the elections, is related to the previous reason. An election boycott has been the longstanding policy of the Sons of the Village and the dogmatic faction of the Islamic Movement: The Zionist-Jewish parliament – whose very existence is considered illegitimate – has nothing to offer to the Arabs in Israel.

Other factors that promote election boycotts and voting abstention include the desire to cast a protest vote against the stalemate in the negotiations with the Palestinians, the need to express resentment against the financial crisis, and political laziness. So, then, why do the Arab parties continue to fight for a seat in the Knesset? The explanations they offer are unconvincing: We thwart discriminatory laws, legislate laws that protect the rights of the Arab minority, lay bare the truth about the right-wing, protect Palestinian interests, and expose the ugly underside of Israel's so-called democracy.

The forecasts that predict a continued drop in Arab turnout may turn out to be correct. To date there is no indication of any public consciousness-raising activity designed to reverse this trend, although the Arab parties will undoubtedly do everything possible to bring voters to the polls. In contrast to the apparent public apathy, the political and ideological discourse in Arab society that has emerged in recent years reveals a keen debate over the validity of the "1948 Paradigm", which has served as the foundation of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel since the establishment of Israel. The keystone of this model was the right to vote and be elected to the Knesset.

This new thinking features in the works of intellectuals, academics, and scholars who propose alternative models to the relationship pattern that was established in 1948. The Future Vision Documents, which were published in late 2006 and 2007, offer a detailed portent of what the future may hold. The revolutionary ideas contained in these documents, and specifically their challenge to Israel's definition as a Jewish-Zionist state, served as a basis for further ideological elaboration. For example, Hunayda Ghanem added the dimension of liminality to the debate, defining the status of Arabs in Israel as standing "at the threshold", trapped between two clashing existential planes that create a transient perception of reality. The definition of Arabs in Israel as "a native minority with collective rights" has attracted extensive study and has inspired growing support for a single bi-national state as an alternative model to the 1948 Paradigm. Arab spokespersons frequently emphasize what they view as an inherent, irreconcilable contradiction between the Jewish nature of the state and its democratic nature. The popularity of the bi-national concept also grew as the two-state solution was pushed to the margins of the debate: After all, the two-state solution leaves the Arabs in Israel in the lurch.

Choosing the kind of political action to take is a major issue in the new worldview that is emerging among the Arab elites. In light of the disappointment with parliamentary politics, described above, talk of an alternative political system, one that is exclusively for the Arabs, increasingly features in discussions and debates. One idea is to establish a parliament that represents Arab interests, which will be elected directly by Israel's Arab citizens. Another view calls for the establishment of a new Follow-Up Committee, to be elected by a broad public base. In view of the implications of the Arab Spring, As'ad Ghanem recently proposed the development of a "democratic national forum" and election of a new, legitimate leadership in general national elections. The new organ would be known as the Supreme National Council.

Thus, the emerging trend is developing in two distinct directions: The appeal of the Arab parties and the Knesset is diminishing, while interest in filling the void by establishing alternative political organizations of a separatist nature is growing. Such organizations would serve as a key element in reconceptualizing the Arabs in Israel as a national minority. The Arab parties failed to develop a genuine understanding of the significance of the Arab Spring. They have yet to master the language of the social media that has captivated millions of young adults in the Arab world—and in Israel. These youngsters yearn for a change “here and now”. But this does not mean that the fate of the Arab parties is sealed. Several parties still have bands of faithful voters who will ensure their continued representation in the Knesset.

The evident drop in Arab turnout is not a good omen. It opens up the field for separatist organizations, and signals the decline of the 1948 model. This is a disconcerting situation that should move the Zionist parties to dust themselves off and courageously propose a credible alternative to the hundreds of thousands of Arab voters who do not wish to separate from the state, but instead desire genuine, effective integration. The Non-Partisan Convention for Equality between Jews and Arabs, initiated by the Jewish-Arab Center for Economic Development, is a welcome step in this direction and deserves special encouragement, as it signals a ray of sunlight at the end of a dark tunnel. The fact that Likud rejected this initiative out of hand is distressing and a cause for consternation.

Mohanad Mustafa* / The Islamic Movement and Abstention from Voting in the Knesset Elections

The ex-parliamentary faction of the Islamic Movement is considered to be the major political force behind the movement for abstention from voting in Knesset elections. The Islamic Movement, which split in 1996 following a decision to participate in the 14th Knesset elections, has become increasingly active in the boycott movement, particularly in the past decade.

It is possible to distinguish between three evolutionary periods in the Islamic Movement's position on Knesset elections. In the first period, from the late 1980s to 1996, the Islamic Movement was united; while it refrained from participating in the Knesset elections, the Movement made no call to boycott the elections. On the contrary, it urged the Arab lists running for election to unite in order to consolidate their electoral power. That the Movement itself refrained from running under its own list was explained by a lack of the organizational and grassroots maturity necessary to operate in the national [political] arena. This period was characterized by the Movement's energetic entry into local politics, as a result of which it became a rising political power in Arab society in Israel. Its power convinced several of its members to adopt a new position advocating the Islamic Movement's entry into parliamentary politics.

The second period began in 1996 (the year of the split) and continued until the 2001 elections for prime minister. In this period, the Islamic Movement's parliamentary faction ran for Knesset elections, while its ex-parliamentary faction declared an election boycott, granting its supporters complete freedom to decide their position in the elections, based on their national and religious worldview. In this period, the Movement took no active steps to prevent voting in the elections, and contented itself with an election boycott.

The third period, between 2001 and 2009, represented a turning point in the Islamic Movement's actions, although there was no significant change in its official position, which it continued to express in its customary pre-election manifestos. In this period, the Movement's ex-parliamentary faction took an active stand against Arab participation in the Knesset, in line with the [overall] Arab consensus to boycott the 2001 elections for prime minister. Since 2003, the ex-parliamentary faction, unsatisfied with an elections boycott, has actively objected to Arab participation in the Knesset elections. While this position is not featured in the Movement's official declarations, it is expressed in articles published by the leaders of the Islamic Movement, headed by Sheikh Ra'ad Salah, leader of the ex-parliamentary faction, containing a direct unequivocal call to the Arab public to boycott the elections. The Sheikh publishes a series of articles before each elections campaign, explaining the Islamic Movement's ex-parliamentary faction's opposition to participation in the Knesset election. The key argument is that the Knesset is no more than a platform for protest and offers no potential to effect a change in the situation of the Arabs in Israel. Sheikh Salah also argues that the Knesset represents the Zionist Movement that caused the Palestinian Nakba, and therefore participation in the elections legitimizes

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the establishment that represents the “Zionist Project”, whose laws discriminate against the Arabs and the Muslims in Israel and cause nothing but pain to the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories. On the eve of the 2003 elections, Sheikh Salah published a series of articles in the Movement’s newspaper, entitled “The Elections and Us”, in which he argued:

From the first day that an Arab MK joined the Knesset until today, the Arab MKs’ role in the Knesset continues to confirm the one and only conclusion, which is that the Knesset is no more than a platform for protest. I say this well aware that the Arab MKs have invested efforts in fulfilling their role successfully, but the ground on which the Knesset is based does not allow any Arab MK to fulfill his role successfully...The Knesset’s status undermines them, because the Knesset is the supreme establishment of a state that defines itself as the state of the Jewish people, which implies that it disregards our existence, and because the Knesset is the supreme establishment of a Zionist project that does not recognize us, neither as a national minority nor as citizens entitled to equal rights. Therefore, the Knesset was never the supreme establishment for us, the Palestinian-Arab minority in this country.

In the series of articles he wrote on the eve of the 2006 elections, Sheikh Salah remained firm in his convictions: “I am increasingly convinced that the Knesset mechanism is one of the expressions of the Zionist Project that is designed to serve only the Zionist Project, both on a local and on a global level...Even if several Arab MKs have made achievements, these have been extremely modest accomplishments in relation to the length of time that all the Arab MKs have been part of the Knesset mechanism.” In the 2009 elections, the Movement conducted a major campaign against Arab voting in the Knesset elections, in protest against the war in Gaza. Furthermore, in contrast to the past, the Movement’s official manifesto did not content itself with expressing its official opinion, but also offered the reasoning behind this position, as reflected in the articles written by Sheikh Salah in recent years.

In the current elections, the Movement satisfied itself by publishing its previous elections manifesto verbatim, and made no effort to draft a new manifesto expressing the Movement’s resolute opposition to the Knesset elections. While the current manifesto explains the support for an elections boycott, based on the reasoning described above, the Movement has not adopted a proactive stance in expressing this position. This new trend, which diverges from its characteristic pattern of action between 2001 and 2009, may be explained by several factors: First, the two Islamic Movement factions continue to make efforts to unite. Negotiations over unification are scheduled to reopen after the elections, if only for appearance’s sake, since they came to naught last year. The negotiations’ failure stemmed from the decision by the Movement’s parliamentary faction to participate in the elections, among other things; for the ex-parliamentary faction, this decision marked the end of the current round of unification talks. The second factor is the Arab public’s support for an elections boycott, which increased over the past decade. The Movement’s leaders have preferred not to invest efforts in encouraging this trend, which might constitute an irreversible process for the Arabs in Israel; the leaders believe that it is better to remain silent than to agitate the internal Arab political arena with this issue. As a result, the Arab lists are dealing with this expanding trend without the Islamic

Movement taking an active stand on the matter. The third factor is the Movement's desire to demonstrate public responsibility: Perhaps it wishes to avoid being blamed if the Arab lists fail to pass the qualifying election threshold due a call to abstain from voting; or perhaps it prefers to avoid a confrontation with the Arab parties, since the abstention trend is doing the job on its own. The fourth factor lies in the ex-parliamentary faction's growing withdrawal from Israeli politics (in addition to its decision to abstain from participating in the local elections in Umm El-Fahm). Even through this trend expresses itself as a call to boycott the elections, the fact that the Movement is conducting a debate over electoral participation could itself be considered by Islamic movement activists as a participation in the political game in Israel. The Movement's contempt for the Knesset elections is reflected in its disdain even for a debate on abstaining from voting in the political arena.

Main Issues in the 2013 Elections Campaigns

The Main Question is to Vote or not to Vote

- **Op-ed: The Arab parties have dashed the hopes of Arab voters; therefore their downfall is inevitable**

Excerpts from an op-ed by CPA Ziyad Abou Habla entitled “The self-inflicted apathy of the Arab voter”: The forecasted decline of the Arab parties is unsurprising. The Arab public needed them to run on a unified ticket with new representatives and to start a dialogue that focuses on the needs of the community. This would have driven Arab voters to the polls in droves. Instead, Arab parties are running on five tickets, even more than the current three. [...] Instead of forming a unified political front to counter the growing Jewish radicalization – radicalization that will likely lead to landslide victory for right-wing parties – Arab parties focused instead on politicking, which destroyed the morale and aspirations of their voters and increased their apathy and frustration. [...] I don't expect Arab MKs to be ministers in a far-right government, but I do expect them to join forces to increase their power and create an influential caucus of at least 20 seats that will constitute an alternative to every government proposal. [...] I think the Knesset is where we must fight. But even though they are democratically elected, the multiple Arab parties make us weak and ineffective and force us to fight without a unified strategy. [...] I am not against legitimate political activity, but I do oppose the lack of responsibility displayed by some politicians who do not consider the repercussions of their actions on those who elected them. The Arab population today does not want to continue seeing Arab parties as mere ornaments of Israeli democracy, excluded by definition from a Jewish, democratic state. But without a ‘Tahrir Square’ in Israeli Arab society, and in the absence of demands from the Arab population on its leaders and elected officials, Arabs will remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy of Israeli society. (**Haaretz**, January 4, 2013)

- **Op-ed: The Arab parties' election propaganda has failed to rouse the Arab public from its political coma**

Excerpt from an op-ed by Wadea' Awawdy, publicist and editor-in-chief of the Arabic-language weekly *Hadith al-Nas*, entitled, “Parliamentary Hibernation”: “The general Arab public has rejected the arguments and explanations for the failure to establish a united ticket. [...] [The public] continues to believe that the leaders of the Arab parties are mainly party activists, not national leaders. [...] These MKs are not government ministers; they are merely members of the legislative authority. But the public expects its leaders to do more than offer a diagnosis of racism in Israel in what sounds like a broken record. The disease is known. The public is looking for people who promise to bring them relief by breaking down [obstacles] and using new tactics and alliances that will end the violations of the principles of the political game. At the same time, people expect to restore the proper balance between national issues and everyday issues. The declarations in the media aren't having any impact on citizens; they expect their politicians to demonstrate genuine interest in urgent domestic issues. [...] Anyone who has followed the election campaigns of the Arab [parties] has

noticed that they lack any reference to these urgent issues, such as the declining standards in education, employment, housing, and other areas. [...] Since the Arab parties are merely “playing around”, the public is expressing its discontent with the [Arab parties’] indifference [to these urgent issues] and has despaired of voting, as the polls prove. Even election propaganda is unable to rouse the nation from its hibernation, as a result of everything mentioned above. In contrast to previous election campaigns, the competition among the Arab parties in the current elections is currently serene, reflecting their desire to unite against the common enemy – apathy. But the absence of any debates among them on their opinions or the methods to achieve various goals is causing the street to sink even more deeply into its indifference toward the Knesset.” (**Hadith al-Nas**, December 21, 2012)

In Favor of Voting

- **MK Hanna Swaid: Raising voting turnout in the Arab public will completely alter the political balance.**

MK Hanna Swaid, running in second place on the Hadash ticket, addressed an assembly held at Hadash offices in Yafia [an Arab village in the vicinity of Nazareth], and commented on the importance of participating in the elections. [...] Swaid stated that an increase in the turnout of supporters of left-wing parties and of Arab voters could change the balance of power on the political map and completely transform the situation. [...] He added that tightening the noose around PM Netanyahu’s neck will have a significant impact on all areas. (www.bokra.net, December 22, 2012).

- **MK Ahmad Tibi: The Arab citizens should exercise their right to vote and block the power of the right wing**

MK Ahmad Tibi commenting on the results of a comprehensive survey of eligible Arab voters² conducted in early December 2012, stated, “Any person who doesn’t vote is effectively voting for the largest party [...] and it is as if he supports Likud-Beytenu. Therefore, people should think hard before taking such a step. There may be criticism [against the Arab parties] or discontent, but voting is a must, no matter what. [...] There is no equality between Jews and Arabs except with regard to elections. The Arabs should use this right to try to reduce the power of the [right wing] instead of helping it control the government. We cannot allow 50% of the Arab citizens to sit at home. The results of the survey on Syria do not surprise me; neither am I surprised by the results on social and economic issues, but what does surprise me is that 30% might be influenced if the Palestinian Authority urges them to vote. I believe that the Palestinian Authority will not influence the positions of the Arab citizens.” (www.alarab.net, December 11, 2012)

- **Former MK: Support the Arab MKs instead of criticizing them**

Excerpt from an interview with Wasel Taha, former Knesset member of Balad, commenting on the issue of Arab citizens’ participation in the Knesset elections: “We believe that the Knesset elections are a combat arena where we put forward a public

² Editor’s note: See reference to the results of the survey, footnote 1 above.

position that is opposed to the position of the Israeli establishment. Our presence there [in the Knesset] is necessary. [...] Not voting is a mistake because there is a political game that we have to play and we have to try to serve our public as best as possible, despite the difficulty posed by the state's definition as a state of the Jews. [...] Instead of criticizing the Arab MKs, we must support them and help them by going to vote on Election Day — first of all, for Balad, because the Arabs are stronger with Balad, or alternatively, if you prefer, vote for the other Arab parties." (**Fasl al-Maqal**, December 7, 2012)

Against Participation in the Elections

- **The “Sons of the Village” Movement: We reject participation in the Knesset elections, because the Knesset represents a racist entity**

At the conclusion of its seventh convention, the “Sons of the Village” Movement³ published a press release, in which it also addressed the issue of participation in the Knesset elections: “Convention members stressed that they are boycotting the elections as a matter of principle, both because of their format and because of their content, and they reject voting or presenting candidacy [in the elections]: the Zionist Knesset represents the head of the racist, Zionist, colonialist entity, and the source of its legislation and legitimacy is based on recognizing Israel as a Jewish state and a state of Jews all over the world. Furthermore, convention members stressed that action should be taken against the Zionist government’s plans to expropriate Arab lands and recover what has already been appropriated, take action against the demolition of houses, effect recognition of the unrecognized villages, and take action to reinstate the internal refugees to the villages from which they were expelled.” (www.panet.co.il, December 26, 2012)

- **Op-ed: It is a national Palestinian duty to boycott the Knesset elections**

Excerpt from an op-ed by essayist Ali Zoubeidat, entitled, “The Knesset Elections and the Struggle for Identity”: “We [the supporters of an election boycott] state most simply: Our national identity stands in complete contradiction to our demands for full citizenship in the State of Israel, and it is of no consequence whether the state is called a Jewish-democratic state, a state of the Jewish people, or a state of all its citizens. Components of national identity cannot be combined or transformed into a cocktail made of contradictory ingredients that each meet narrow demands and interests [...] The Arab parties repeat [their statements] like a broken record: We are an integral part of our Palestinian nation and our Arab *Umma* but we live in special circumstances that we must consider if we are to maintain our existence and protect our future. [...] You can’t dance at two weddings at the same time. National identity is not measured in brilliant slogans and passionate speeches. Your national identity is measured in the extent of your awareness of all of its components and in your protection of its purity. We believe that the Zionist Knesset is not only the supreme representative Zionist

³ 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.

institution, but is the “cherry on top of the whip cream” of Zionist praxis. Any step that brings us closer [to the Knesset] is an offense to our national identity. Therefore boycotting the elections is a national Palestinian duty.” (**Hadith al-Nas**, December 21, 2012)

Reactions to the attempts to disqualify MK Hanin Zoabi

- **Balad’s announcement: The attempt to disqualify Zoabi is undemocratic; it is an attempt to tame the Arab MKs into submission**

Excerpt from a press release published by Balad, in response to the High Court Justice ruling overturning MK Zoabi’s disqualification from running in the Knesset elections: “MK Zoabi’s participation in the ‘Freedom Flotilla’ represented her party’s position and also expressed the conscientious imperative of all Palestinians. [...] MK Zoabi was subject to political persecution by a parliament that does not believe in democracy, is trying to tame the Arab MKs into submission, and is setting boundaries in the political game — actions that have nothing to do with democracy. [...] Balad calls to revoke the Knesset Committee’s authority to disqualify any party or person. Furthermore, Balad has emphasized that the Committee is merely a political instrument in the hands of the parliament’s majority, a tool that is being used against the Arab MKs, even to punish any MK who displeases the right-wing or the majority. [...] Balad will continue its campaign against racism, the occupation, and the blockade [on Gaza]. We will continue to protect our nation and our national and civic rights everywhere.” (www.panet.co.il, December 30, 2012).

- **Support rally for MK Hanin Zoabi: The disqualification attempt will only bolster Balad’s political struggle**

Excerpt from statements made at a Balad protest rally against the attempt to disqualify MK Hanin Zoabi’s candidacy. Wasel Taha, former Balad MK, stated, “We are the original owners of this land. We do not draw our legitimacy from these parties or from the Israeli establishment. We draw our legitimacy from our nation and from our just cause, since we represent the people facing the tyrannical government that persecutes us and exacerbates racist discrimination against us. [...] We stress: Not only do we refuse to withdraw from the political discourse, but the persecution and attempts to disqualify us have made us persist even more stubbornly in our continued political struggle.” Balad’s leader, MK Jamal Zahalka, who directed his message to the Israeli establishment, stated, “We may be disqualified but we will not be afraid. We will continue to stick to our principles, our values, and our platform. We will not abandon our principles or beliefs, not one iota. We will not be the subject of disqualification designed to force us into changing our political positions, principles, and opinions.” (**Fasl al-Maqal**, December 28, 2012).

- **Op-ed: The disqualification should have been exploited to expose the Israeli establishment in all its weakness**

Excerpts from an op-ed by Ali Zoubeidat entitled, “The disqualifier, the disqualified, and what lies between them.” Zoubeidat directed the following statement to MK Hanin Zoabi: “There is no honor or pride in being in the company of [right-wing MK] Miri Regev and her colleagues. In the polluted nest called the Israeli Knesset, they will not accept you or treat you with respect, even if you act as their collaborator. Why are you waiting for them to disqualify you? Disqualify them first, once and for all. Why are you asking them to reverse the disqualification? Haven’t you stated that your legitimacy does not depend on the Knesset? Boycotting the Knesset elections under these circumstances is a historic opportunity — which may not occur again for many years — to expose this racist institution in all its shame to the entire world, without any ‘fig leaf’ to cover its nakedness.” (**Hadith al-Nas**, December 28, 2012)

Party Preparations for Election Day

Hadash

- **Hadash leader, MK Mohammad Barakeh: Hadash has a big chance of winning a fifth seat**

Hadash leader MK Mohammad Barakeh responded to the results of polls predicting four seats for Hadash: “The polls feature in the Hebrew media do not represent the situation on the Arab street, because they use small samples of Arab voters. [...] I think that anyone who wants to check the situation on the Arab street should conduct a poll on the Arab street. We have conducted surveys that show that there is a good chance that Hadash will win a fifth seat. Of course I wish all the lists on the Arab street good luck, that we may become a larger force in the next Knesset. But the guaranteed voice, the voice of experience that has proven itself on the political issue, the social issue, and individual and general issues, is the voice of Hadash.” (www.bokra.net, January 12, 2013).

- **MK Barakeh: Without the Arab vote it is impossible to promote the peace process or stop the growth of the right-wing**

MKs Mohammad Barakeh and Dov Henin stressed that there is a chance of blocking the right-wing in the upcoming elections, provided that voting increases among Arabs and Jewish democratic forces, and supporters of the center-left camp. They stressed that this goal requires [the Arab parties] to express clear positions that are polar opposites of the position of the extreme, racist right-wing, instead of sparring among themselves [...] Barakeh attacked declarations voiced by Yair Lapid, leader of the new centrist party, “Yesh Atid” [...] and stated that it is impossible to prevent the right-wing’s return to the government without the Arab vote, just as it is impossible to make decisions about peace without the Arabs.” (www.bokra.net, January 6, 2013).

Balad

- **Former MK: Genuine democracy is a “state of all its citizens”, and this concept has the establishment worried**

Excerpt from an interview with Wasel Taha, former Balad MK: “Maki [the Israeli Communist Party], or Hadash, is considered an Israeli left-wing party even though most of its voters are [Israeli] Palestinian Arabs. Ultimately, it is based on Israeli ideology. This is the point of contention between us [Balad] and Hadash. Our political program is clear. It is a program that calls to transform the State of Israel into a state of all its citizens, if they seek genuine democracy. We consider the current democracy as a democracy limited to Jews. The establishment knows that this voice is a cause for concern. It is the voice expressed by the people, including young, educated people, and that is why they are trying to silence us.” When questioned whether the Arab parties will agree to relax the tensions between them in the eleventh hour, after earlier attempts to form a joint Arab list failed, Taha stated, “We have no agreement to suspend our disagreements, but we are concerned that the disputes between the [Arab] parties may harm the interests of the Arab public that supports a hiatus. Discord keeps our public away from the ballots. We have appealed to all the Arab parties and discussed this issue with them, and agreed not to let our debates reach the level of hostility and confrontation as in the past.” Referring to the calls to boycott the elections, Taha stated, “I ask the boycotters: What is your goal in boycotting the elections? The political leadership in Israel is obligated to take care of the things that are important to the public, and to protect it. The parliament is the arena of this struggle. It is not the only one, but it is a combat arena and we must be there. Through it, we can have our voice heard more clearly than if we were outside the parliament.” **(Fasl al-Maqal, December 28, 2012)**

- **Balad candidate: The everyday issues cannot be separated from the national issues**

Excerpt from an interview with Jumah Azbarga, Negev resident and fourth on Balad’s list: “We intend to present the Negev issue in international legal forums, since this issue will not be resolved through any government program. I am one of those who believe in internationalizing the issue of the Negev and the other Arab cities and villages, because we are a national minority and refuse to have our features eliminated or assimilated into Israeli society. Another important issue is the establishment of elected institutions to handle the everyday issues, especially the issues of land and housing. We will invest in the Arab individual so that he can maintain his national identity and be ready to cope with the government’s dangerous plans, especially the Prawer Plan,⁴ which threatens to expropriate more than 800 dunams.” In response to the argument heard in the Arab public, calling the Arab parties to forget about politics

⁴ Editor's note: The “Prawer Plan” features in a report drafted by an official team headed by Mr. Ehud Prawer of the Prime Minister’s Office. The report recommended the relocation of some 30,000 Bedouin residents of unrecognized villages in the Negev to existing Bedouin townships, and payment of appropriate financial compensation to the relocated residents. In September 2011, the Israeli government announced its resolution to adopt the report’s recommendations. The Negev Bedouin gave the Prawer Plan a frosty reception.

and take care of the issues that affect individuals, Azbarga stated, “It is not possible to separate the everyday issues from politics, for a simple reason: the government’s conduct toward us results from purely political reasons. Therefore, such a separation is not possible. On the contrary, this emphasizes what we have always said: The everyday issues and the national issues are absolutely interrelated.” (www.arabs48.com, December 22, 2012).

Ra’am-Ta’al-Mada

- **Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur: Attempts at disqualification attest to anxiety about Arab presence in parliament**

Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur, chairperson of the Ra’am-Ta’al-Mada list, argued that “the motions filed by the Zionist parties designed to prevent the Arab parties’ participation in the Knesset elections are unequivocal proof of the importance of the Arab presence inside the Knesset. These motions also serve as an index of the anxiety of the Zionist parties and their MKs, who would prefer the immediate removal of Arabs from this important arena.” Sarsur added, “Had the Arab presence not played an important, influential role in the parliament, we would not have seen this vicious attack from all sides of the political spectrum in Israel.” [...] Sarsur summarized by stating that the time has come to stop calling for an election boycott for ideological reasons, because on the one hand, these calls are formulated in a vague manner that highlights their weakness, and on the other hand, these calls are dividing the Arab national struggle instead of uniting it. (www.bokra.net, December 20, 2012).

Da’am – The Democratic Action Organization

- **Da’am Chairperson: The Arab parties are neglecting the social issues; Da’am will take care of these problems**

Excerpts from an interview with Asma Agbariah-Zahalka, leader of Da’am: “In 2009, we talked about social justice. It was our vision, but it wasn’t relevant to the public’s consciousness at the time, and this was also reflected at the polls. Yet the protest of summer 2011 brought a change. As long as people here were not really suffering, they were not looking for solutions. But when the shock waves started in Europe and the Arab world, they arrived in Israel too. A lot of people got the courage to speak out; each one’s private problem became a collective issue of social justice. [...] I appeal to the 50% of the Arab population that is tired by the political options the Arab parties offer. Arab parties advocate a nationalist discourse, dealing only with the national question, neglecting the socioeconomic questions and the hardships suffered by the Arab public. Gaza and Tel Aviv amount to one issue. The political has to go along with the social. There is 50% poverty in the Arab street; 80% of women in the Arab sector don’t work. That is a catastrophe. Is this a people that can think about freeing Palestine? This is a people that must first free itself. And the point is not expressed by anyone. No political party does real work in the field, organizing the public and fighting against contracted jobs. I go to Knesset committee meetings and don’t see any Arab representatives there, even when the issues dealt with are of great concern to the Arab public, such as on-the-job safety. What is this concern for the Nakba [the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948] all day long? They forget that today in every house

there is a Nakba. When a woman doesn't have work, that's a Nakba. A young man who works through a contractor and doesn't get his rights is a Nakba. And without denying the importance of the Nakba, what about today's Nakba? You have to change the reality of today; you can't change past history." (**Haaretz**, January 5, 2013)

Hope for Change

- **Party candidate: It's time to act differently in the Knesset and stop being passive**

Jamal Khoury, candidate on the Hope for Change ticket, in an op-ed entitled, "Why Hope for Change, where are we going and what is our destiny?": "I reiterate my admiration for several Arab parties and leaders who played a pioneering role in the history of our people since the state was first established. However, the circumstances and challenges now demand that we act differently. [...] The parties and leaders were passive, as if they were saying that they were immigrants to this country and powerless [to create any change] [...] I say to them that the time has come to take action to change our destiny, it is time to unite forces and act wisely so that we can win our rights. It is time that we understood the rules of the political game that is played in Israel. We do not deny anyone's right to this homeland, and we therefore refuse to have our affiliation denied either. It is our right to unite the ranks in the interests of our nation. We are convinced that the parliament is where all the forces that operate in society are concentrated, but reaching the parliament is not an end unto itself. [...] Not only does our passive presence in the parliament lend legitimacy to Israeli democracy without demanding anything in return, but the racist laws are enacted there with full honors and respect. [...] We see our future in this country and in no other. [...] We believe that we must conduct a dialogue with Israeli society. We are not a 'fifth column', as many in the Israeli public prefer to describe us. [...] We are part of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation, but we cannot be substitutes for their leaders. [...] The conditions in our society have deteriorated significantly. We have lost our confidence, we have lost our principles and values, and the only thing remaining is the language of intimidation and threats. It is time to act together to recover the morals that have collapsed entirely, and have been replaced by the language of firearms, intimidation, and violence. [...] We in the Hope for Change party believe in education, women's rights, democracy as an ideal and a practice, and we will take steps to strengthen and establish it in our society. We believe in the role of youngsters and in their right to play a role in society, and we believe in a society that demands its right to a civil, social, economic foundation." (www.alarab.net, December 22, 2012)

Labor Party

- **MK Ben-Eliezer: Vote for the Labor Party in order to pursue the path of the Rabin administration**

The Labor Party elections convention in Kufr Kana was attended by MK Benyamin Ben-Eliezer (Fouad) and Nadia Hilou, former Labor MK and currently in the 18th spot on Labor's ticket. Ben-Eliezer stressed, "We must work together to stop the extreme right-wing government headed by Netanyahu, because if it remains in power it will lead the entire country – Arabs and Jews – to an unknown future for another four years. Therefore we must increase the Labor Party's power to complete the path embarked on by the party during the administration of former PM Yitzhak Rabin." Ben-Eliezer added, "The Labor Party headed by Rabin [...] invested billions of shekels in infrastructure and education, not only in the Jewish sector but also in all the Arab cities. When we began the peace process with the Palestinians, we all – Arabs and Jews – reaped the fruit. Therefore we must work together once again in order to continue what we started during the Rabin administration and what was suspended after his murder. We are the party that has assisted the Arab citizens more than any other party. There is no other option but to recover that strength, and this can only be done through the ballots." Nadia Hilou stated, "The Arab public will benefit from the economic and social programs of the Labor Party, presented by party chairperson Shelly Yehimovitch. Furthermore, we should not forget that the Labor Party has always been the pioneer in the peace process, and to this day remains the key player in this field. [...] As the Arab public, we must all rally to support the party because we [the Labor Party] are the only ones who can solve the problems that afflict Arab citizens in Israel." (www.bokra.net, January 12, 2013).

Meretz

- **MK Zahava Gal-On: Meretz's target in the Arab public is two seats**

Meretz launched its election campaign in Arabic: "My home is my agenda." The party set a target for itself: to obtain two seats from the Arab sector. [...] Issawi Freij, fifth place on Meretz's ticket, stated, "Today, the Arab sector needs a clear voice to represent the real problems that are happening at home. There is no doubt that Meretz will be this voice. Our message has been received clearly by the Arab sector and I anticipate great success for us." Zahava Gal-On, Meretz chairperson, stated, "Meretz's target is to gain at least two seats from the Arab sector. Today, Meretz is the only left-wing party in Israel that has promised its voters that it will not join Netanyahu's government under any circumstances. We are also the only ones who have made a commitment to Israel's Arabs to be the loud and clear voice that represents them in the Knesset, on social and civil issues and in the campaign against racism, and certainly in the campaign for peace. I urge Israel's Arabs: Don't join the company of the desperate and despondent; go and vote." (www.meretz.org.il, December 12, 2012).

- **Issawi Freij: As a national minority, we must pursue a path of cooperation with the Jewish majority**

Press release on behalf of Issawi Freij, fifth on Meretz's ticket: "I do not intend to defend or criticize this or that party, but to present the goals of our struggle and the steps necessary to achieve these goals. Even 64 years after the establishment of the State of Israel, with all the intricacies and contradictions this entails, we, the Arab minority in Israel, whole-heartedly believe in a just, comprehensive, genuine peace that includes our conationals in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian diaspora. Since our identity and political determination are unique [...] we must take an alternative course of action to achieve our hopes and realize our dreams. [...] This is a course of action that is grounded in dialogue and partnership with whoever on the other [Jewish] side is suitable for such a partnership. [...] Unification and cooperation between an enfeebled minority and a strong majority is a logical conclusion of the political games that are typically played out in our region. This does not entail surrender of principles or values, but rather, faith in our rights and just demands. We refuse to be pushed to the sidelines or to have our rights ignored, and therefore we must work hand in hand with Israel's left, with which we agree on several sensitive issues concerning our lives. Why shouldn't we collaborate to become an effective source of pressure? [...] As a national minority, we share our future with the Jewish nation in Israel, whether we like it or not, and the same thing applies to them — whether they like it or not. We are here to stay. It is our destiny to live together. [...] We have suffered, and continue to suffer, from political persecution and from an extreme right-wing leadership that persecutes anyone outside its own ranks. The question is, how can we achieve our goals in light of such a policy? [...] I am proposing this partnership from a position of strength, not from a position of weakness; a partnership based on the assumption that we are part of this land and therefore should be part of the government. [...] My decision to participate in the Knesset elections stems from my desire to create change from within. We are part of life in this country and I am well aware of the value and the significance of our presence, and of the need to create a better future for ourselves and for our children. I support a partnership with whoever accepts me without forcing me to abandon my values and my principles." (**Sinara**, December 7, 2012).

Shas

- **Election assembly in Abu Sinan: "Shas will win, Inshallah"**

Shas held a convention in the Arab village of Abu Sinan in the Galilee. At the event, Shas leader Aryeh Deri insisted that he "feels at home here," and called for a joint Jewish-Arab fight for equality. "You will have someone to turn to, and will have our respect," he promised the Muslims, Christians, Bedouins and Druze, who packed the auditorium. Interior Minister Eli Yishai, who also attended the convention, stated, "Inshallah, God willing, we will hold our victory party right here." About 1,000 local authority heads, activists, sheikhs and other guests attended the convention. MK David Azoulai, chairman of the party's minority affairs division, was pleased. According to his figures, Shas had the votes of 8,000 Druze, Christians and Bedouins in the last elections. This time, he believes, this number will be doubled. (**Yediot Aharonot**, January 3, 2013)

- **Aryeh Deri: Shas is the only party that takes care of everyone, with no difference, and that includes the Arab public**

Aryeh Deri, who recently appeared at election assemblies, argues that Shas has assisted, and will continue to assist, the Arab sector. At an assembly of Shas activists held in Haifa, dozens of Arabs from the Arab village of Kufr Manda attended and even carried signs depicting Deri's picture. [...] Deri didn't disappoint his Arab supporters at the rally, and addressed them, urging the Arab public to consider Shas as their political home. "You vote for the Arab parties; these are usually parties that support the Palestinian Authority and don't take care of the Arab public in Israel. Shas is the only party that also cares for the Arab public, regardless of race or ethnicity," he said. [...] MK David Azoulay, in charge of the party's activities in the Arab sector, stated, "The Arab sector belongs to the country of the have-nots, and we take care of those people. They want to protect their heritage and we want to protect our heritage too. I hope we can help them as we help others." (**Uvda**, January 1, 2013).

Hatnua

- **MK Tzipi Livni: Representatives of the Arab public do not express the aspirations of the moderate Arab public that wants to live in equality.**

Excerpt from an interview with Tzipi Livni, Chairperson of Hatnua ("The Movement"): "The Arab citizen should understand that I am as interested in him and his children as I am in my own children. [...] We must give more to those who have less. One of the problems of the Arab cities is that they are all in the first and second poverty clusters. I don't think that a single Jewish city is in those categories. [...] When we talk about allocating equal budgets [to Jews and Arabs], there will never be equality, but we have to give more to those who have less, or who have nothing." Later in the interview Livni addressed the effects of the national conflict on Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel: "As long as Jewish citizens feel insecure about the State of Israel's status as the national homeland of the Jewish people, they will continue to consider Arabs in Israel a threat to their existence. Personally, I do not consider Arabs in Israel a threat to my existence; instead, I view them as partners. I think that everyone deserves equality and all the opportunities in development, education, and employment. Everyone has the right to be proud of his culture and tradition, and to respect others. I know that the lack of security that Arab citizens feel is a result of the reality in which we live." Livni addressed the Arab public's mistrust of Israeli politics, stating, "It's true that I want the Arab public to vote for me, but it is first and foremost important for the Arab public to go and vote. What is disappointing is that the representatives of the Arab public are not expressing the aspirations of the moderate Arab public who wish to live here in full equality. [...] I am worried that the [Arab] public will not go to vote. My message is that Arab citizens should take responsibility for their lives, their future, and their children's future, and vote for whomever they believe will take care of the issues of the Arab public and make a difference." (**Sinara**, January 4, 2013).

Likud

- **MK Ayoub Kara: The Arab parties cannot help the Arab public, only the party in power can.**

At the first assembly held by Likud as part of its campaign in the Arab street to win votes for Likud, MK Ayoub Kara appealed to the heads of the Druze and Circassian local governments, and stated, “It has been a long time since I urged for intensive efforts in Likud’s election campaign in the Arab sector, but many rejected the idea because they were unconvinced that the Arabs would dare to vote for a Zionist party and set aside any extreme national ideas. Today, many are aware of the power of this idea, and all we have to do is continue to encourage it.” Kara added, “A public opinion poll conducted by the Center for Promotion of Democracy in the Arab sector in conjunction with Haifa University shows that shows that only 9% of the Arab sector put the Israeli-Palestinian relations on the top of their agenda. The proportion in the Jewish sector is, conceivably, the same. This clearly indicates the gap between the agenda of the Arab parties and the agenda of the Arab public in Israel. [...] As the survey shows, 47% of the Arab citizens are first and foremost worried about economic hardships, and 26% are worried about national discrimination. The question is, who can change this discriminatory reality? Can the Arab parties that support Israel’s enemies participate in the government coalition and effect a complete change in the reality of the lives of the Arab public, like the religious [Jewish] parties that manage to accomplish all of that? [...] Arab voters feel helpless after realizing that they are powerless to bring about change. [...] The call to join Likud, which will almost certainly be the party in power after the elections, means that whoever joins the party’s ranks today is effectively joining the party in power, and making their vote count.” (www.panet.co.il, December 24, 2012)

Background data: A comparative look at the parties' platforms

Comparison of the main points in the platforms of the Arab and Arab-Jewish parties

Editor's note: The following table contains a brief overview comparing the highlights of the election platforms of the five Arab and Arab-Jewish parties running for the 19th Knesset elections. This comparison is not intended to present a comprehensive description of the parties' platforms, but merely to briefly indicate the key differences between the parties on several of the main issues at the top of the political and civic agenda of the Arab society in Israel.

	Hadash	Balad	Ta'al	Da'am	Hope for Change
Defining the desired nature of the state	State of Israel that grants full equal rights to its Arab population	A state of all its citizens	–	–	–
Defining the status of the Arab minority	Recognition of the Arab-Palestinian population in Israel as a national minority that has equal national, civic, political, social, and cultural rights; recognition of the representative institutions of the Arab population in Israel; integration of the Arab population, based on its weight in the general population, in the building and planning committees and other public institutions.	Balad demands that the Arabs in Israel be recognized as a national minority, a nation with collective national rights and full equality. Above all is the principle of equality between citizens of national groups, and respect for individual and collective human rights.	Recognition of the Arab public as a national minority; maintenance of genuine equality between Arabs and Jews in all areas, based on the principle of full civic partnership.	–	Full equality for the Arab citizens of Israel; end to current state institutions' attitude toward the Arab population, with emphasis on full equality and reducing discrepancies in all areas of life: construction, technologically advanced industrial zones, infrastructure development, healthcare, welfare and social services.

(cont.)	Hadash	Balad	Ta'al	Da'am	Hope for Change
Status of Arab education	Increased budget for education in a manner that reduces differences in learning conditions and achievements, especially discrepancies between the Arab and Jewish education systems; establishment of a university in Nazareth whose language of instruction will be Arabic.	An end to the Zionist government's paternalism over Arab education, modification of the curriculum to reflect the national and cultural character of the Arab minority; establishment of an Arabic-language university.	Establishment of an Arab education system under the Ministry of Education and Culture, which reflects the identity, history, and reality of the Arab-Palestinian public in Israel.	Da'am demands a stop to the state's institutionalized discrimination against Arabs in allocating budgets for education and cultural and social services.	—
Military / Civic service	Hadash opposes mandatory civic service under the guise of a "voluntary" service. Hadash has called to cancel the conscription imposed on young Druze men.	Balad opposes military service enforced specifically on Druze, and in general opposes young Arabs volunteering for military service.	The party supports volunteering as a social value, but opposes imposition of military or civic service on young Arabs.	Da'am opposes national service because it is a condition for rights that should be granted to all citizens, whereas the state consistently discriminates against its Arab citizens.	—
Women's status in Arab society	The party's platform addresses women's rights extensively, including the rights of women in Arab society; it seeks a guarantee of equal rights and opportunities for women in employment, professional advancement, and social benefits.	Balad advocates equality between men and women in all areas of social and political activity; Balad calls for action to guarantee women's active participation in the public sphere.	—	Da'am takes action to promote women in all areas of life: politics, the economy, culture, and society. The party supports full gender equality and promotes employment of Arab women.	Enhance women's status and promote complete gender equality. The party recognizes women's rights to full equality; it considers women as a pillar of Arab society.
Religious issues	Separation of state and religion; transfer of waqf property from state institutions to the elected institutions of the Muslim sect.	Separation of state and religion.	Demand the release of Islamic waqf in Israel (and the transfer to administration by the Muslim sect).	Absolute separation between state and religion.	—

(cont.)	Hadash	Balad	Ta'al	Da'am	Hope for Change
Status of Arabic and Arab culture	The party's platform does not directly address this issue, but Hadash's demand for equal status of the Arabic language and Arab culture derives from its demand for full equality for the Arab population.	Arabic is the national language of the Arab citizens; its status as one of the country's official languages should be strengthened. The Arab nation is entitled to cultivate its culture freely, without any interference from state institutions; Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel have the right to self-administration in the areas of education and culture.	Maintain the Palestinian-national and cultural identity of the Arab public in Israel, and maintain national ties with the Arab <i>Umma</i> .	—	—
Jewish-Arab cooperation	Hadash is an active partner in a joint campaign, based on a joint platform, supporting norms of mutual respect, Jewish-Arab cooperation, and promise- keeping. Hadash welcomes all cooperation that promotes peace and equality.	Balad works to develop Arab-Jewish cooperation based on social equality and justice and the right of self-determination, in which it believes. Balad works to establish bi-national institutions to organize and develop such cooperation.	Ta'al supports the principle of peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Israel, based on mutual respect and recognition of the civic and political rights of the Arab minority.	Da'am proposed an alternative agenda that centers on an internal transformation of Arab society and its openness to cooperation with social left-wing activists in the Jewish street.	Strengthen cooperation between the two nations; support all those who strive for peace in Israeli society in order to create a shared life for the benefit of all. The party is willing to join any government coalition that takes action to achieve Arab society's goals in Israel.
Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	Israel withdraws from all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and dismantles all settlements; establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with a capital in East Jerusalem; recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel; the guarantee of a just solution to the refugee problem, based on UN resolutions.	End the occupation of all the Palestinian territories that were occupied in 1967 and dismantle the settlements and the Separation Fence; establish an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with a capital in East Jerusalem, alongside Israel; resolve the refugee issue according to UN resolutions.	Establish an independent Palestinian state whose capital is East Jerusalem, within 1967-borders, alongside Israel; implement a just resolution of the refugee issue according to UN resolutions.	Da'am calls for an end of the occupation, establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the June 4, 1967 borders, and a capital in East Jerusalem, including the dismantling of all Israeli settlements.	Supports negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority on the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian state and leadership, to realize the aspirations of the Palestinian people, in order to end the Arab-Israel conflict and to bring stability to the region.

Comparison of the main points in the platforms of the Jewish and Zionist parties: The status of the Arab minority

Editor's note: The following table contains a brief overview comparing the main points related to the status of the Arab minority in Israel, based on the election platforms of the Jewish-Zionist parties that are competing for the Arab vote. A complete, comprehensive comparison and analysis of the differences is beyond the scope of this issue. Instead, the table below briefly indicates the main issues on the agenda regarding the Arab minority and how these are addressed by the Jewish-Zionist parties.

Left-wing and Centrist Parties

	Labor	Meretz	Kadima	Yesh Atid	Hatnua
Defining the nature of the state	Jewish, democratic state	State of the Jewish people and of all its citizens	Jewish, democratic state	Jewish, democratic state as envisioned by Israel's prophets	Jewish, democratic state
Defining the Arab minority	Israel's Arab citizens: Arabs, Druze, and Circassians	Arab citizens, the national Arab minority	As part of the Minorities sector that comprises Arabs, Druze, and Circassians	Arabs	As part of the Minorities sector, or as an Arab minority
National Status	–	Recognition of the Arab minority as a national minority	–	–	–
Nature and scope of equality	Reduce the economic inequalities and ensure equal allocations for all citizens in all areas; Increased investment in Arab and Druze localities by government ministries.	Guarantee of full equality; recognition of the Arab minority as a minority with collective rights; recognition of the unrecognized Arab villages; fair representation of Arabs in the civil service; fight against racism and discrimination against Arabs.	The State will grant minorities equal opportunities, rights, and obligations; proper representative of minorities in public institutions, government organizations, and political parties.	The state will grant equal public services to all citizens and will allow equal opportunities to all.	All citizens have the right to live in dignity and to access equal opportunities, independent of their origin or faith; integrate minorities in the civil service up to 20% of the workforce; strengthen infrastructure in the Bedouin settlements in the Negev.
Status of Arab education	The education system will permit the various groups in society to cultivate and preserve their unique cultural and religious heritage. The education system will recognize the educational needs of the minorities in Israel.	Establish and allocate proper funding for a state Arab education system that corresponds to the funding for public and religious-public schools	–	–	–

(cont.)	Labor	Meretz	Kadima	Yesh Atid	Hatnua
Status of Arabic and Arab culture	Labor will continue to support Spoken Arabic studies in the entire education system.	Significant expansion of the use of Arabic, as an official state language, in the public sphere; expansion of Arabic language studies in the Jewish education system; establishment of a national museum to commemorate the Arab settlements before and after the establishment of the State.	Cultivate Arab culture as an integral part of Israeli culture within Israel as a multi-cultural society		
Religious rights	Freedom of religion and conscience guaranteed to all citizens; freedom of access to the holy places guaranteed to members of all religions.	Freedom of religion, faith, and culture; separation of state and religion; cancellation of the monopoly of the <i>sharia</i> courts in matters of family and personal law; transfer of the Muslim <i>waqf</i> to Muslim administration.	The state will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, and religious worship for all citizens.		
Bearing an equal burden: military / civic service	Voluntary national-civic service for the Arab and Druze sector.	—	Mandatory universal service, adapted to each sector.	Military or civic service in the Arab sector will be voluntary.	All Israeli citizens age 18 are obligated to perform military, national, or civic service.

Right-wing and Religious Parties

	Likud	Yisrael Beiteinu	Shas
Defining the nature of the state	Jewish, democratic state	Jewish, Zionist, democratic state	State of the Jewish people
Defining the Arab minority	Israel's Arab citizens; the Minorities sector; the Arab sector	As part of the Minorities sector	—
National Status	Recognition of group rights of the Arab minority: Arabic language, religious courts, Arab heritage	—	—
Nature and scope of equality	Israel's Arab citizens are equal for all intents and purposes; Affirmative action to integrate minorities in the civil service; strengthen towns and neighborhoods in the Arab sector.	Full rights are conditional on a declaration of allegiance to the state and its emblems as a Jewish state.	Respect and equal treatment of the rights of members of other religions in society.
Bearing an equal burden: military / civic service	Increase minorities' awareness of military and civic service.	Military or civic service as a condition for citizenship.	—
Status of Arab education	Eliminate differences in the education system	—	—
Status of Arabic and Arab culture	Respect for the unique status of the Arabic language. Respect for the right of minorities to maintain their heritage, religion, language, and culture; Respect for Muslim holidays and budgetary support for efforts to protect their heritage.	—	—
Religious rights	Respect for the status of the <i>sharia</i> courts.	—	The State will provide for the religious needs of members of all other religions.