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## In the shadow of the 1967 war: Israel and the Palestinians

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### ABSTRACT

The 1967 war in the Middle East has had major ramifications on the entire region including Israel. This article focuses on three of the major longstanding ramifications namely the change in the demographic balance between Jews and Palestinians west of the Jordan River, the challenge that the military regime imposed on the Palestinians in the newly occupied Palestinian territories poses regarding the nature of the Israeli regime as a whole and the reconnecting of Palestinians, citizens of Israel, with their fellow Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This article demonstrates how Israeli policies towards Palestinians impacted on the disposition of the Palestinian community inside Israel and how the coming together of Israeli policies, changes in Palestinian struggle for independence and social transformations inside the Palestinian community in Israel have led to different adaptation strategies among the Palestinians to face their in-between reality.

The 1967 war in the Middle East has had major ramifications on the entire region including Israel. Three of the major longstanding ramifications are the change in the demographic balance between Jews and Palestinians west of the Jordan River, the challenge that the military regime imposed on the Palestinians in the newly occupied Palestinian territories (OPTs) poses regarding the nature of the Israeli regime as a whole and the reconnecting of Palestinians, citizens of Israel, with their fellow Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as the entire Arab world. This article focuses on the interrelationship between these ramifications with the aim of demonstrating how Israeli policies towards Palestinians, aiming to balance between the need to deal with the new demographic reality while protecting the democratic characteristics of the Israeli regime, have greatly impacted on the disposition of the Palestinian community inside Israel (PCI).

Israeli policies towards Palestinians including the settlements, the different legal statuses and degrees of access to benefits between citizens and non-citizens consolidate the Israeli hegemony over Palestinians. Such policies combined with deep social changes among Palestinian citizens of the state, especially the rise of an educated middle class, have motivated Palestinians in Israel to exercise their status as Israeli citizens and to use the Israeli democratic procedures for the benefit of both Palestinian communities, inside and beyond the green line. This political move demonstrates the appeal of the double oppositional

consciousness among Palestinians inside Israel.<sup>1</sup> This double oppositional consciousness is a mixture of a 'love and hate' relationship with the Palestinian identity, history and culture on the one hand and with Israeli civic and economic reality on the other. This complex relationship with both sides of the double oppositional consciousness has led to the rise of three broad political trends among the Palestinian citizens of Israel, which will be discussed later in this article.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that Israel has, since 1967, managed to portray its occupation of millions of Palestinians and their lack of basic human rights as a temporary measure, thereby making an illusory distinction between the state and the occupation, as if both roles were not intertwined with deep implications on the nature of the Israeli regime itself. This distinction came, among other things, to assert the Israeli strategy that the status and treatment of Palestinians across the green line is fundamentally different—an argument that offers a different political solution for each of these communities. During the last few decades, however, Israel has constructed an undemocratic one-state reality, spanning the entirety of mandatory Palestine. This confronts Israel with a quite complex set of challenges and choices. The most fundamental of these for Israeli Jews is whether the one-state reality is democratic or apartheid. At present, the one-state reality is not democratic, since millions of Palestinians have now lived under Israeli military rule without civil or national rights for the past five decades.

The expansion of Jewish settlements, encroaching into Palestinian towns and cities, the growing influence of the settler movement on the major right-wing political bloc that dominates Israeli politics and the Jewish majority's complete distrust of Palestinians and their leadership all indicate an intention of Israeli Jews to assert total control over all Palestinians living west of the Jordan River. These dynamics deepen the internal Jewish struggle as to the meaning of Jewish self-determination, whether within the Green Line or beyond it. They also underline the observation that no matter where Palestinians live, and regardless of their legal or administrative conditions, they are targeted by Israel as enemies of the Jewish sovereignty. The recent developments inside Israel, especially the legislation of tens of laws that target the status and the manoeuvring space of Palestinian citizens, reflect the growing affinity between the reality of Palestinians living under occupation and Palestinians with citizenship status. The hollowing out of Palestinian citizenship from major components of its substantial meaning has major ramifications on the political thinking and behaviour of the PCI, especially in regard to their relationship with Palestinians living in the areas occupied since 1967. Palestinian citizens of Israel are undergoing major changes and face major dilemmas concerning Israeli–Palestinian relations and the Israeli control of Palestinian areas on which they expect a Palestinian state to be established.

The following section addresses the consequences of the Israeli policies, while the subsequent section deals with the social processes taking place within the Palestinian society in Israel, drawing attention to the rise of an educated middle class and its political meaning. The last section of the article follows the political engagement of the Palestinians in Israel in order to explore the main ideological trends among them. The article concludes with a discussion of the strategic consensus emerging among Palestinians in Israel, which stands in contrast with the ideological wars among them.

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<sup>1</sup>Amal Jamal, *Arab Civil Society in Israel: New Elites, Social Capital and Challenging Power Structures*. 2017, Hakibbutz Hameuchad (in Hebrew).

## Israeli policies of demographic fragmentation and political engineering

Israel's approach to its conflict with Palestinians has become hegemonic principally because it has fragmented the Palestinian people into multiple discrete sectors, each of which is forced to conduct negotiations and struggle in isolation from the others.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish state, which covered 78 per cent of mandatory Palestine, dispersed Palestinians throughout the region as refugees, where many remain today. At present, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza must accept harsh Israeli conditions—amounting to acquiescence in a demilitarized and non-contiguous mini-state—if they are to achieve some kind of sovereignty. Palestinians living inside Israel must acquiesce in their status as second-class citizens in the state of the Jewish people, if they are to retain access to what has become Jewish land. Israel's strategy to impose its will has been to block the development of any common Palestinian struggle while expressing disingenuous intentions to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict, thereby preventing Palestinians from acquiring any political, diplomatic or military power to counter the asymmetrical power relations between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestinians, for their part, have resisted this imposed fragmentation. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) struggled greatly to gain recognition as the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians. In so doing, it was forced to compromise its comprehensive and inclusive disposition towards Palestinians and lower its political ambitions. This shift began in 1974, when the PLO, which had previously called for full liberation and independence for the entirety of mandatory Palestine, began to assert sovereignty on areas occupied by Israel in 1967.<sup>3</sup> This implied that Palestinians must accept the political reality established on the ground in 1948, leaving those who remained inside the Jewish state to fend for themselves. The 1993 Oslo Accord, which became the reference point for subsequent efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict, carved the post-1948 reality into the legal and diplomatic consciousness of the international community and, by extension, into that of Palestinian diplomatic institutions.<sup>4</sup> But Israel's policies towards the territories occupied in 1967 led to growing recognition among Palestinians that any sovereignty they might acquire in those territories would be emptied of substantive content. These policies are myriad and include, especially, the ceaseless expansion of Jewish-Israeli settlements in the West Bank; the rise of extreme nationalistic political forces in Israel, which seek to violently reconfigure the demographic and topographic realities on the ground; the isolation and siege of the Gaza Strip, and proposals to reduce the number of Palestinians inside Israel through land swaps, including 'the Triangle,' an area of Israel where more than 300,000 Palestinians have been living as second-class citizens since 1949.<sup>5</sup>

The increasingly entrenched one-state reality makes Palestinian citizens of Israel a more salient constituency in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as a whole. This has been especially true in the last two decades, which have seen growing recognition by Palestinians that their community in Israel has become a strong political player that could have a significant impact

<sup>2</sup>Yazid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997; Alain Gresh, *The PLO: the Struggle Within: Towards an Independent Palestinian State*, London: Zed Books, 1985.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Moshe Maoz (ed.) *The PLO and Israel: from Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964–1994*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

<sup>5</sup>Yair Bäuml, *A Blue and White Shadow: the Israeli Establishment's Policy and Actions Among Its Arab Citizens: the Formative Years: 1958–1968*. Haifa: Pardes, 2007 (in Hebrew); Elia Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.

on future Israeli–Palestinian relations. This recognition is warranted, given these Palestinians’ Israeli citizenship and thus their status (albeit limited) as an in-group member. Palestinian citizens of Israel live in better economic and social conditions than their brethren under occupation. They possess more freedoms and can participate in the political game through elections, as well as choose their representatives to the Israeli Knesset (parliament). Nonetheless, they feel targeted by the dominant Jewish nationalistic majority, with the encouragement and incitement of leading ministers and officials. Aggressive nationalistic legislation, offensive administrative regulations, and blunt economic discrimination validate the common sentiment among Palestinian citizens of Israel that the Israeli state and the Jewish majority within it seek not only to guarantee exclusive Jewish hegemony over state resources, but to subordinate all Palestinians—citizens or not—to Jewish hegemony.

Two major Israeli policy lines are especially important for making this argument clear. The first has to do with the growing spatial narrowing and ghettoization of areas on which Palestinians live in the OPTs as well as inside the green line. The second has to do with the hollowing out of Palestinian citizenship in Israel of any substantial meaning through legal and political means.

### The spatial dimension

Since the beginning of Jewish immigration to Palestine, segregation between Jews and Palestinians has been effectuated by delineating time by means of physical and cultural barriers.<sup>6</sup> These barriers augmented the flow of Jewish temporal and spatial presence while diminishing that of Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> This process required initial geographic segregation between Jews and Arabs so as to preserve the Judaization of the land. The engine of Israeli planning has, accordingly, replanted national physical space from the Arab-Palestinian onto the Jewish time-frame and thus produced a physical and temporal hierarchy to separate the two peoples.<sup>8</sup> The first expression of these practices was the occupation of space by a clear settlement policy, which aimed at locating Jewish immigrants in separate residential areas, retaining their affinity with biblical time. The 283 Jewish cities and agricultural towns that were established before 1948 were located near Arab cities and towns on lands that were acquired by the Jewish national institutions before 1948. After 1948, an intensive process of settlement was fostered, based on historical and strategic grounds, and this led to the establishment of over 800 settlements of various forms, i.e. kibbutzim, moshavim, settlements, towns and cities.<sup>9</sup> Not only were all of these settlements purely Jewish, but many of them were located in evacuated Arab areas that were presumed to have Jewish past. The naming policies of today reflect Israel’s intended strategy to remould space in accordance with ancient biblical time.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel’s Control of a National Minority*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980.

<sup>7</sup>Amal Jamal (2016) Conflicting Temporalities and Transformative Temporariness in Israel/Palestine—*Constellations* vol. 23, no. 3: 365–377.

<sup>8</sup>Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

<sup>9</sup>Erez Tsfadia, ‘Are They Really Separate? Military and Society in View of Territorial Ideology and Practice,’ in *An Army that has a State? New Approaches to Civil Security Relations in Israel* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008) 45–66.

<sup>10</sup>Leah Mazor, ‘Between the Bible and Zionism: The Tribal Conception of Space reflected in the Names of Towns of the First Decade of the State,’ *Katedra*, 110 (2007), 101–122.

A sophisticated planning and construction policy ensured a Jewish spatial hegemony in tandem with contiguous living spaces, dotted minimally with Arab enclaves that Jews could skirt.<sup>11</sup> Separate planning jurisdictions and subsequent highway construction guaranteed Jewish continuity of territory, solidifying the fragmentation of Arab regions.<sup>12</sup> Highways, built mainly on Arab open spaces, connected Jewish metropolitan areas with outlying Jewish towns. It cannot be ignored that Arab citizens benefit from the road infrastructure as a facilitator of time flow, but neither can one ignore the fact that Arabs win time in exchange for space, since most of these roads are built either on Arab confiscated lands or on the outskirts of Arab villages, limiting their future development.<sup>13</sup> The bypass road policy adopted most fully in the OPTs is a telling illustration of the complex relationship between space and time flow, which are indicative of the 'one-state' condition prevalent since 1967.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, focusing on the occupation of 1967 and Israeli policies in these areas underestimates the affinity between the Judaization of areas densely populated by Palestinians in the Galilee, the Triangle and the Negev and settlement policies near Nablus and Hebron. The waves of establishing Jewish settlements in the Galilee have major ramifications on the Palestinian community and its future development. The land-confiscation policies and population deportation in the Negev area, in addition to the planning and zoning policies in the Triangle and the Galilee, belong to the same family of colonization that we witness in the OPTs. Despite the different legal and judicial mechanisms applied, the intentions and end results of these policies in the Galilee and the western half of the West Bank are similar, namely the de-Palestinization of the land on the one hand and its Judaization on the other. The victims of such policies are Palestinians, and the separation between citizens and non-citizens is part and parcel of the fragmentation and control technologies that facilitate Jewish superiority and Palestinian inferiority. The fallacy established by occupation scholarship stems from its vertical epistemological perspective.<sup>15</sup> This epistemology differentiates between two assumed spheres of ontological realities, undermining an alternative horizontal model whereby two hierarchical layers of human existence are being constructed: one normal and continuous for Jews, and one fragmented and abnormal for Palestinians—no matter where they live west of the Jordan River.

### The hollowing out of citizenship

Recent developments in Israeli politics clearly demonstrate that the Jewish majority in Israel seeks to redefine the meaning of Arab citizenship, hollowing it of any substantial meaning, delegitimize Arab representation in the Israeli parliament and narrow the political field in which Arab leadership can play.<sup>16</sup> This can be best demonstrated by law-making processes in which basic and regular laws were amended twice in order to exclude or even render

<sup>11</sup>Oren Yiftachel, *Planning a Mixed Region in Israel: The Political Geography of Arab-Jewish Relations in the Galilee* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992); Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth: The Ethnography of Exclusion in Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup>Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land* (London: Verso, 2007).

<sup>13</sup>Dan Rabinowitz and Itai Vardi, *Motivating Forces: Cross Israel Road and the Privatization of Infrastructural Facilities in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hamiochad, 2010).

<sup>14</sup>Weizman, 2007.

<sup>15</sup>Jamal, Amal, '1967 Bypassing 1948: A Critique of Israeli Critical Studies of Occupation'. *Critical Inquiry* (forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup>Doron Navot and Yoav Peled, 'Towards a constitutional counter-revolution in Israel?' *Constellations*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2009), pp. 429–444.

illegal any attempt to challenge—legally—the Jewish character of the state. The first time took place in the first Sharon government 2001–2003, the second during the second, and the third and fourth during the Netanyahu government, 2009–2017.

On May 15, 2002, the Israeli Knesset changed article 7(a) of the Basic Law: The Knesset (Amendment No. 35)—2002, Political Parties Law (Amendment No. 13)—2002, Knesset and Prime Minister Elections Law (Amendment No. 46)—2002.<sup>17</sup> These changes have led to continuous attempts by the Jewish national parties to block the participation of national and religious Arab parties from participating in the elections through constitutional and legal disqualification charges, the last of which took place against the United Arab List and the National Democratic Assembly towards the January 2013 elections. These attempts, which have not succeeded so far as a result of the intervention of the Israeli High Court, mark the efforts made by the Jewish majority in the Knesset to set the boundaries of legitimate participation in the political game in Israel.

To this, one should add the 2003 ‘amendment’ of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, which made it almost impossible for Palestinian citizens of Israel to get permits for their Palestinian spouses and children from the OPTs to enter and reside in Israel for purposes of family unification.<sup>18</sup> In 2007, the law was amended again to prohibit spouses from ‘enemy states’—Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq—to enter Israel as part of family unification, in order to avoid charges that the law was racist since it is directed solely and specifically against Palestinians.<sup>19</sup> These amendments, which were declared by the Israeli High Court as constitutional, stand in sharp contrast with the laws providing for any person of Jewish descent to obtain automatic and rapid citizenship. In thousands of cases, people with loose and unproven Jewish ancestry received automatic citizenship in Israel, reflecting the racial discrimination embedded in the Israeli citizenship law, aiming to cope with what has become known in Israel as the ‘demographic threat.’

The ‘war’ waged against the Arab-Palestinian presence in Israel does not stop at the gates of demography. It has always involved the cultural and symbolic existence of Palestinians in the Jewish state. These efforts have taken many avenues, one of which could be demonstrated through what has come to be known as the ‘Nakba law,’ which allows the Minister of Education to withhold funds from official organizations that commemorate the Palestinian tragedy of 1948.<sup>20</sup> This law is a part and parcel of the grand policy of ‘epistemic violence’ against Palestinian history, memory and consciousness. This type of violence is practised through the repression of Palestinian manifestation in the Israeli public sphere and the colonization of all realms of knowledge about Palestine and the Palestinians, as manifested in formal school books, literary and art policies, and even gastronomy.<sup>21</sup>

Constitutional and legal instruments are utilized to narrow spaces of freedom for Arab-Palestinians. Israeli state institutions and policies are not ‘colour-blind’ when it comes to issues of civil justice as well as citizenship. Israel is a nationalizing state. It creates a range of burdens, barriers, stigmatizations and exclusions against the Arab indigenous minority for

<sup>17</sup>Amal Jamal, *Arab Minority Nationalism in Israel: The Politics of Indigeneity*. London: Routledge, 2011.

<sup>18</sup>Daphne Barak-Erez, ‘Israel: Citizenship and immigration law in the vise of security, nationality, and human rights’, I-CON, Volume 6, Number 1, 2008, pp. 184–192.

<sup>19</sup>ibid.

<sup>20</sup><https://www.acri.org.il/en/2011/05/15/%E2%80%9Cthe-nakba-law%E2%80%9D-and-its-implications/> (Last visited 26.5.2017).

<sup>21</sup>Daniel Bar Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2013.



being Palestinian. It is true that the Arab participation in the Knesset creates the impression that Arabs are genuine participants in the Israeli moral community and participants in the definition of the moral order that dominates Israeli public culture. This participation is part of a concealed coercion in which Arab participation is marginal if not devoid of any meaning, especially when it comes to defining the moral order in Israel or the rules according to which the deliberations about such an order take place. The best example to illustrate this point is the recent Basic Law: Referendum, which passed with a vast majority of 64 MKs in March 2014, aiming at guaranteeing a Jewish majority in any decision made in the Knesset concerning territorial compromises.

Israeli representative politics are based on ethnic majoritarianism that translates into automatic Jewish majority for important decisions or disputes. Most of the crucial decisions are made in institutions, representative or administrative, in which there is Jewish hegemony. As a result, Arabs are excluded from real and effective participation in determining the political agenda and from defining the possible choices within it. Arab participation in the Israeli Knesset obscures deep moral and ideological disagreements that do not always find their way into the public sphere for serious discussion and determination. To the contrary, the majority tacitly presents Arab participation in electoral politics as an acceptance of the structure of the public order and the ideological ethos that legitimizes it. The presence of Arabs in the Israeli Knesset obscures the deep moral disagreements between Arabs and Jews in regard to the conception of justice that stands behind the whole Israeli system, especially in regard to the legitimacy of Palestinian presence in the land of Palestine.

The representative institutions of the Israeli political system view themselves as major mechanisms in promoting the interests of the Jewish majority in the state. This fact is best manifested in the thousands of laws enacted by the Knesset. The latter's sovereignty does not derive from its representing the Israeli public only. There is a widely accepted underlying assumption among the Jewish majority that the Knesset is an articulation of the sovereignty of the entire Jewish people worldwide. It therefore expresses the aspirations of Jews living in the US, Canada, Australia, Russia, France, the U.K. and elsewhere. This concept deprives the notion of civic sovereignty of any meaning and replaces it with an ethnic sovereignty that extends far beyond state borders. This trans-ethnic sovereignty renders the meaning of citizenship empty and replaces it with kinship as the main logic of sovereign power. It is no wonder that Jewish communities, especially wealthy Jews, feel that they can intervene and influence policies of the Israeli government, as if the state belongs to them, as much as—and even more than—some of its citizens.

The rising ethnic majoritarian character of the Israeli political system and its promotion of exclusive Jewish hegemony, while setting limitations on its representativeness in regard to the Arab-Palestinian citizens, demonstrate an intrinsically embedded Zionist bias. Jews have an automatic majority in all fields of policy, while Arab-Palestinians are subordinated to priorities that view them as threat. As a result, their well-being is jeopardized by their mere participation in a system that undermines their presence instead of empowering them as integral and equal partners. The mere participation of Arab citizens in the Israeli democratic game—the mere practice of freedom—renders them subjugated to a mechanism that renders their presence devoid of substantive meaning. The practice of freedom becomes imprisonment in a system of power that hollows out their citizenship and delegitimizes any attempt to exercise their power.

Notwithstanding these policies, Palestinian citizens of Israel have several options for resisting available to them. They can surrender, which is unlikely to happen; resort to violence,



which is not effective; protect the limited privileges afforded to them by the status quo; or pursue diplomatic means in order to delegitimize Israel and increase international pressure on the state to force it to withdraw from Palestinian areas occupied in 1967 and to ensure substantive Palestinian citizenship in Israel.

Before we engage with this issue, it is important to reflect on the most salient social developments among Palestinians in Israel, which have impacted on their political consciousness and behaviour.

### The rise of educated Arab middle class and its political ramifications

Since 1948's *Nakba* [catastrophe], which demolished the political, financial and cultural Palestinian elite in the territories that became the State of Israel, the number of educated people, intellectuals and professionals has been constantly on the rise.<sup>22</sup> The Palestinian leadership in Israel went through several extreme transformations, but only some of them will be presented here. During the first few decades after the establishment of the State of Israel, the state of Arab leadership was a direct result of the *Nakba*. The vast majority of the political, financial and cultural Palestinian elite vanished in 1948 from the territories that had become the State of Israel.<sup>23</sup> Any leader who was involved in some way in opposing the Zionist movement was deported, and those who remained were located outside the Israeli borders. The Israeli security forces gathered information about any influential figure, marking them as targets.<sup>24</sup> Second- and third-rate leaders who stayed in Israel had to submit to the new rules dictated by the State.<sup>25</sup> The military regime imposed on the Arab population after the war posed heavy limitations on the freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of assembly of the Arab public, and practically prevented any real political mobility.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, as part of their efforts to enhance their control over Arab society, the Israeli authorities started nurturing young and ambitious members of the big clans that remained in Israel (in many cases, these were clans that had previously been marginalized in Palestinian society), who were willing to cooperate with the State in exchange for Knesset seats or other power positions.<sup>27</sup> These people were the members of the Arab political parties affiliated with the dominant Jewish Mapai Party (which would later become the Labor Party) in the Knesset elections up until the late 1970s.

Hence, most of the members of the post-1948 Arab leadership were traditional leaders, who based their power on religious and family ties, held a utilitarian worldview and submitted to the State's dictate without posing any challenge. Most of the leaders of these Arab parties did not even have a basic level of formal education.<sup>28</sup> Many of them had only graduated from elementary school. Some were members of big clans in their villages, others

<sup>22</sup>Amal Jamal, Samah Bsoul, *The Palestinian Nakba in the Israeli Public Sphere: Formations of Denial and Responsibility*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2017. (In Arabic).

<sup>23</sup>Ahmad Saadi & Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.) *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

<sup>24</sup>Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2006).

<sup>25</sup>Lustick, 1980.

<sup>26</sup>Bäumel, 2007.

<sup>27</sup>Lustick, 1980.

<sup>28</sup>Amal Jamal, 'Arab Leadership in Israel: Ascendance and Fragmentation', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXXV, no. 2 (2006), pp. 6–22.

managed to raise the support of big clans, which offered them the social backup needed in order to compete against their opponents, and yet others blindly obeyed the State's dictates and provided services that other leaders could not or would not provide, such as paving roads, connecting houses to the grid or the water supply network and so on.

The only two movements that were not supported by the Israeli government during these early years were Al-Ard, which carried the national banner and demanded the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the UN 1947 Partition Plan, and the Israeli Communist Party.<sup>29</sup> Similar to their counterparts in the Mapai-affiliated political parties, the leaders of these two movements were also relatively young at the beginning of their career, but their level of education was higher, and they paved their own path.<sup>30</sup> The leaders of Al-Ard were mainly the decedents of Palestinian families that had been displaced and robbed of their main sources of income and social power owing to the Israeli land expropriation policy. Some of them were members of lower-middle class families, which had strong national consciousness, and viewed Israel as a pure colonial project, clashing with their ambitions and the basic interests of the Palestinian people. The leaders of Al-Ard, including Anis Kardosh, Habib Kahwaje, Jabur Jabur, Zaki al-Karmi, Naim Makhul, Sabri Jiryis, Mohamad Miari, Nadim Al-Kassem, Abdel Aziz Abu Isba'a, Tawfik Odeh, Mohamad Sruji and Sami Nasser, were more educated than the average leaders in the Arab community. They were directly connected to the pre-1948 national leadership, but with a more realistic worldview and a greater understanding of the power of the Zionist movement and its inherent clash with the basic aspirations of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation.

The Arab leaders of the Israeli Communist Party were also younger and more educated than the leaders of Mapai's Arab political parties. Mostly in their 20s, they had been part of the Palestinian Communist Party before 1948. Owing to their support of the UN Partition Plan and the support of some of them of the Jewish state in face of the Arab attacks, they were granted permission to stay, despite their critical views of the government.<sup>31</sup> The senior party leaders were mostly members of the Greek Orthodox Christian community, including Emile Habibi, Tawfik Toubi, Emile Touma, Saliba Khamis, Nimer Murkus and others.<sup>32</sup> Loyal to their Marxist–Leninist ideology, the party leaders viewed Jewish–Palestinian relations mostly in terms of a class struggle, and their criticism of the State's discriminating policy against Palestinians focused on class exploitation. Communist Arab leaders supported the establishment of a Palestinian state, demanded the return of the Palestinian refugees to their original homes and objected to the State's land expropriation policies.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, they also recognized the right of the State of Israel to exist and the legitimacy of Jewish immigration to Israel, and spoke of Jewish–Arab camaraderie in a struggle against the discriminating state's policies. The Arab leaders of the Communist Party were being persecuted for protecting Arab interests and raising particularly sensitive issues, such as the status of refugees, military regime and land expropriation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Iana Kaufman, *Arab National Communism in the Jewish State* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press 1997); the party, which was a mixed Arab–Jewish party since its establishment in the 1920s, was split in 1943 into two parties—one Arab and one Jewish—following the growing conflict between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian national movement.

<sup>30</sup>Jamal, 2006.

<sup>31</sup>Kaufman, 1997.

<sup>32</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>Jamal, 2010.

<sup>34</sup>Bäumli, 2007.

Today's Arab elites are decisively more educated, and their members come from a more diverse educational background.<sup>35</sup> Recent decades have seen the emergence of a large group of Arab intellectuals specializing in various fields and disciplines. Contemporary Arab society includes experts in various fields such as medicine, pharmaceuticals, engineering, law, social work, science, behavioural science and so on. One of the key features of this group is the fact that it is the product not exclusively of the Israeli education system but also of other educational institutions in Eastern and Western Europe, as well as in the United States. The process started with student missions to Soviet states arranged by the Communist Party, and continued with individual ventures of medical and law studies in European countries (such as Italy and Germany), and in graduate studies in the United States. The rising level of education resulted in better professional skills, while also initiating a process of cultural and political awakening, and the rise of political expectations. This rise was reflected in a growing mobility of Arab intellectuals, as well as a growing involvement in civil society issues, such as trying to infiltrate the Israeli labour market mechanisms and fight against the government's exclusionary policies in services and social integration. Another result was a rising level of education among the political leadership, which directly implicated its self-perception and behaviour patterns in the political and social realms. When discussing the national-level political leadership, we must consider the growing number of academics in Arab parties and political movements, which may explain their global worldview and their attempt to go beyond the State's boundaries and contact the Arab world around them.<sup>36</sup>

In the past, the rates of academically educated Palestinians within Israel were extremely low. According to statistical data, the numbers of Arab students and academics are constantly on the rise.<sup>37</sup> In the academic year 1956/57, there were 46 Arab students in Israel, an overall 0.6% of the entire student population. In 1979/80, there were 1,634 Arab students—about 3% of the student population. Between 1988 and 1998, the rate of Arab students had risen from 6.7% to 8.7%. In 1998/99, there were already 7,903 Arab students—7.1% of the entire student population in Israel.<sup>38</sup> According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2000/01, there were 7,200 Arab students, compared with 9,967 in 2004/05. The number of Arab college students was 2,000 in the year 1999/2000, and 4,553 in 2004/05. In 2004, the number of Arabs with 16 or more years of education was 94,486—a testimony to the fast-paced growth of the Arab academic and professional elite.<sup>39</sup> According to the CBS data, in 2007/08, the proportion of Arab students was 11.6% out of the entire population of undergraduate students in Israel. In 2008/09, they were 11.5%, in 2009/10, 11.9%, in 2010/11, 12.1%, in 2011/12, 12.5%, and in 2012/13, 12.9%. These data clearly show a rise in the rate of Arab students studying in Israeli higher education institutions, yet the rate of growth is low when compared with the overall Arab population in Israel. The numbers of students studying for graduate degrees are even lower, though also constantly on the rise. In 2007/08, 6.4% of the Master's degree students and 3.5% of the Doctoral degree students in Israel were Arabs. In 2008/09, the rates were 6.5 and 3.7, respectively; in 2009/10, 6.9% and 4%; in 2010/11, 8.2% and 4.4%;

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<sup>35</sup>Aziz Haider (ed.) *Political Aspects in the Life of Palestinians in Israel*. Jerusalem: Van Leer, 2017.

<sup>36</sup>Jamal, 2017.

<sup>37</sup>Majid Al-Haj, 'Higher Education among the Arabs in Israel: Formal Policy between Empowerment and Control', *Higher Education Policy*, 16, 2003, pp. 351–368.

<sup>38</sup>Adel Manna, *Arab Society in Israel: Populations, Society, Economy (2)*. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: The Van Leer Institute and ha-Kibutz ha-Meuhad, 2008 (in Hebrew).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

in 2011/12, 9% and 4.4%; and in 2012/13, 9.2% and 4.9%. These changes reflect a slow but significant growth in the number of Arab citizens who received higher education, developed a career and became interested in improving their chances of translating their education into a higher level of income compared with their parents. These graduates are an important human resource contributing to the creation of an educated Arab middle class, which is developing expectations for a better socio-economic reality. This group is the spearhead of a political project aimed at improving life conditions for the Arab population, in the shadow of the discriminating and excluding governmental policy in all aspects of life, and a Jewish majority that strives to limit the legitimacy of their presence in Israel's social, financial and political spheres.

Only a small group of Arab citizens have managed to get accepted as staff members in academic institutions in Israel, but those who did made significant contributions to the development of the academic discourse in issues related to the status of the Arab population in Israel, and particularly with anything related to political and human rights. Arab academic staff members, although few in number, helped in introducing the debate over the rights of Arab citizens into the academic and political agenda in Israel, as well as in various international forums. They are joined in their effort by a large group of Arab professionals, particularly lawyers and human-rights activists, who are active in NGOs in Israel and abroad.<sup>40</sup> The latter are connected to international human-rights organizations, and are well aware of the changes in global politics concerning individual and collective human rights. The Arab academics and professionals are at the forefront of the Arab public, searching for ways to promote its civil, political, financial and cultural rights. Gradually, they create the moral, legal and political foundations for the demand for full integration of the Arab citizens in policy-making processes in Israel, and particularly the realization of their right for effective representation in the institutions that dictate the future private and public spheres of Arabs in Israel.<sup>41</sup> New-generation Arab leaders demand to institutionalize the Arab public in national-level forms of representation, as an integral part of their attempt to create external protection for their public.

A look at the Arab elected officials, particularly in the Knesset, reveals vast changes within this group as well. The number of academics among this small group of elites is constantly growing, and these academics slowly but tenaciously change the political orientation of the leadership, affecting its modes of operation versus the State, and their own patterns of political mobility. Until 1981, most of the Arab Knesset members, and particularly the ones related to the Labor Party, were not educated. Out of the 70 Arab Knesset members between the years 1949 and 1984, only seven had an undergraduate degree, and 19 of them never gained official education. By comparison, since 1984 and until the 19th Knesset (elected in 2013), 80 out of the 89 Knesset members had at least an undergraduate degree, and the rate of graduate-degree recipients has been growing in recent years. Five of the Arab representative in the 19th Knesset had a PhD, one had an MA, and four had a BA degree. These data reflect an actual change in the intellectual qualities of the political leadership of the Arab-Palestinian elite, although this trend does not accurately represent local leadership in Arab municipalities.

<sup>40</sup>Amal Jamal, On the hardships of racialized temporality. in Shenhav, Y. & Yona, Y. (eds.). *Racism in Israel*. Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: The Van Leer Institute and ha-Kibutz ha-Meuah, 2008, pp. 348–380 (in Hebrew).

<sup>41</sup>Jamal, 2011.

Outside the institutional political sphere, many young Arabs with leadership skills searched for mobility paths that were not dependent on the state, and turned to NGOs. The first organizations were established in the mid-1970s, aiming to represent common interests and provide services for the Arab public in spheres neglected by the State.<sup>42</sup> According to a survey I conducted among 97 activists in 20 NGOs in the year 2010, the average age of the activists was 34; 75% of them had an academic degree; 16% studied in non-academic institutions, and 9% had no tertiary education.

When analysing the educational characteristics of 159 board members in 20 Arab national NGOs, I found that their level of education was particularly high: 2% were professors, 12% had a PhD, 19% had an MA degree, 49% had a BA, and 10% had higher education diplomas. Sixty per cent of the board members studied in higher education institutions in Israel, and 12% studied in Europe or in the United States. These data reveal the intense involvement of a significant number of intellectuals in the activity of NGOs, a field that went through a tremendous development in recent years. When I interviewed a representative sample of leaders in these NGOs, I found out that they perceived the NGOs as a field of activity that allowed them to address some of the needs of Arab society that were not met by the State, thus protesting against its policy and fighting against it. They perceived their work as civic activism, which was not dictated by the formal rules, yet was capable of affecting the situation of Arab citizens and empowering them vis-à-vis the discriminatory State institutions.

Unlike the previous generation of leaders, who were nurtured and sometimes even invented by the Israeli establishment, the younger generation had to fight to establish their status as part of the State's formal democratic institutions. This was the case for many of the prominent leaders who affect the social and political reality of Arab-Palestinian society in Israel, such as Mohammad Barakeh, Raed Salah, Azmi Bishara, Jamal Zahalka, Ahmad Tibi, Haneen Zoabi, Ayman Odeh, Aida Touma-Suleiman, Masud Ghnaim, Abdallah Abu Maaruf, Kamal Khatib, Awad Abdel Fattah, and Osama Saadi, Mansour Abbas, Emtanes Shihadeh, Ibrahim Hijazi alongside many local leaders, such as Shawki Khatib and Mohammad Zidan, former chairs of the Follow-Up Committee, the most important representative body of the Arab-Palestinian public in Israel, and Ramiz Jaraisy and Ali Sallam, former and current heads of the Nazareth Municipality.

It should be mentioned here that the prominent presence of second-generation Palestinians does not contradict the continuous development of younger generations' elites in Arab society and additional changes in Arab leadership. The technological development in the fields of communication and information over recent decades has created greater social mobility, which allows young leaders to develop reputation and influence consciousness using the new information technologies.<sup>43</sup> They are very powerful, though their power is not backed by any formal authority or an official position. Young leaders offer a significant contribution to consciousness shaping, although the organizational manifestation of their power is not yet felt. Internet activity and the use of new media for political mobility and social protest were often found to be extremely important tools. The best example is the protest against the Praver Plan, which eventually resulted in delaying its implementation. The ambivalence of influential hierarchies in this realm makes it more difficult to present clear arguments regarding changes in the Arab elites and leadership, but they will definitely have a critical impact on shaping the social and political fabric in the future.

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<sup>42</sup>Jamal, 2017.

<sup>43</sup>ibid.

The major political meaning of this sociological process is the rise of expectations vis-à-vis the state and the availability of tools to deal with discrimination on the one hand and the pragmatic nature of the middle class on the other. Let us turn now to the major political trends in the Arab-Palestinian community in order to provide a better understanding of how sociological developments are translated in the political arena.

### **New trends in the political participation of the PCI**

Palestinians living under occupation have shown, and to a great extent still show, much understanding as to the special conditions in which Palestinians inside Israel live. Most have not expected Palestinians citizens of Israel to join in any violent struggle against the occupation. Nonetheless, Palestinian-Israelis are expected to lobby for Palestinian aspirations for statehood inside the Israeli political system, and for that to happen they must fully integrate into it. These expectations have thus far not materialized, since the rising nationalistic trends in Jewish-Israeli society have blocked Palestinians' attempts to engage with them politically. In turn, this blockage has led to rising calls from Palestinians to boycott Knesset elections, reducing their electoral impact still further.

Palestinian citizens of Israel have participated in Israeli elections since 1951. This participation has been based on the hope that they might influence governmental policies to deliver effective, positive changes in Palestinian prospects. The disappointment of an increasing number of Arab citizens and the rise of an oppositional ideological consciousness among nationalist and religious Palestinian citizens have led to a continuous and steady decrease in the percentage of Palestinians participating in these elections. Whereas over 80 per cent of Arab citizens participated in the elections before the 1980s and delegated a rising number of Arab members of parliament to the Knesset, the decades since have witnessed a growing number of Palestinian citizens boycotting the elections and seeking alternatives to the formal political system. Election participation by Palestinian citizens declined from 79.3 per cent in 1996 to 63.5 per cent in 2015, while more than 80 per cent of Palestinian citizens boycotted the special election in 2001. As a result, Ehud Barak was replaced as prime minister by Ariel Sharon.

This steady decline in participation is an expression of growing Palestinian disillusionment in the capacity of the Israeli political system to represent them. The long-term decline was slightly affected by the establishment of the Joint Arab List, which united all the Arab parties ahead of the 2015 election (when the participation was around 63.5%). The reversal of the decline in participation between 2009 and 2015 marks an important trend but one that is likely to continue only if the Joint List manages to demonstrate political efficacy or if future elections take place in the wake of a major clash between the state of Israel and Palestinians in Gaza, as occurred in the 2013 and 2015 elections. The Gaza conflicts of 2012 and 2014 led to rising national sentiments among Israel's Palestinian citizens, which translated into a higher turnout for Arab parties as an act of protest.

Many Palestinian leaders in Israel call on members of their community to utilize every structural opportunity to advance their interests. Notwithstanding its limitations, the Knesset does provide some resources to Arab parties—resources that may in turn provide Palestinian society with venues to articulate their needs and desires in a sanctioned Israeli forum. Others reject such participation, on the grounds that it legitimizes the Israeli system and enables Israel to assert its 'democratic' character without yielding any real influence for Palestinian



citizens on Israel's discriminatory policies. If the Joint Arab List does not manage to significantly effect Israeli policy—and this is the most likely scenario, given its dwindling legitimacy in the eyes of most Jewish parties and the unwillingness of the latter to integrate it into their decision-making processes—the influence of the latter camp will grow, and the percentage of Palestinian citizens participating in Israeli elections will decrease further. If this happens, an increasing number of Palestinian citizens will seek alternative means to express their dissent and protest against their secondary status in the Jewish state.

One might generalize that Palestinian citizens of Israel prefer to avoid totalizing, 'either/or' diagnoses of existing Palestinian reality and strategies for improving it. Palestinians in Israel are demonstrating much political maturity, managing to avoid falling into the traps set by the Jewish far-right, which views them as enemies and seeks to push them into a direct clash with the state. They tend to pursue a 'selective' strategy, remaining committed to their Palestinian nationality while simultaneously struggling for the full individual and collective rights of citizenship. This approach represents the most effective utilization of the structures of opportunities available to them. Through this selective engagement, the Palestinian minority in Israel seeks to overcome its 'double marginality,' imposed on it by Israelis and occupied Palestinians alike, and to utilize its double consciousness to promote the best reality possible for all parties, including itself. In other words, the Palestinian community in Israel does not aspire to be a bridge for peace, claiming the role of the United Nations—but it views itself as among the victims of Zionism. Instead, it seeks to use what influence it has to end the suffering of millions of fellow Palestinians living under brutal occupation. This community also demonstrates that it is deeply concerned with the struggle of its Palestinian brethren under occupation, and seeks to play its own distinct role in equalizing the current asymmetric power relations, which enable Jews to continue solidifying their hegemony over the entire Palestinian homeland.

The double consciousness of Palestinians in Israel is deeply related to the rise of the Arab middle class, which is both nationally conscious and has accrued great economic wealth in recent years. Growing prosperity—despite the fact that around 50 per cent of the Palestinian community in Israel still lives under poverty line—has raised this group's expectations and demands, but also its fears that existing gains might be lost. This class resents Jewish discrimination but elects nevertheless to participate in the Israeli economy in an effort to raise Palestinians' standard of living. It seeks to integrate with the Jewish-Israeli population and expects to be given a chance, not only on the economic but also on the political level. This same class anticipates that the state and the Jewish majority will permit it to translate its growing economic power into political influence, without having to entirely submit to perpetual Jewish hegemony. It also believes it can achieve this delicate balance without disengaging from the national Palestinian question, especially in the form of opposition to Israeli policies in the occupied territories.<sup>44</sup>

Having said that, and notwithstanding the many commonalities among Palestinians in Israel, this group is nonetheless split over their future visions and strategies. Broadly speaking, three different approaches have gained support in the community. All three strategies are driven and articulated primarily by the rising Palestinian middle classes. The first is based on seeking the best measures possible to enable the community to reconcile its Palestinian-ness and Israeli-ness. This camp sees itself as realistic, arguing that international, regional

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<sup>44</sup>Honaida Ghanim, *Reinventing the Nation: Palestinian Intellectuals in Israel*. Jerusalem: Magness, 2009 (in Hebrew).



and local constraints require a pragmatic strategy that accounts for political realities without sacrificing principles. It maintains that the coercive power of the state, the determination of the Jewish majority to expand and violently defend its hegemony, and the international realities of a Trump presidency and an Arab world in disarray all set sharp limits on what can be achieved in the present situation. The Palestinian minority must deploy its resources strategically, pursuing quiet popular and civic resistance while promoting better communication with state agencies in order to increase access to state resources, as part of their rights as citizens. This camp enjoys the support of at least one-third of the Palestinian community in Israel, manifested politically in the Hadash party as well as a small number of voters for Zionist parties. It also maintains some presence among supporters of Balad and even the Islamic movement. As regards the broader Israeli–Palestinian conflict, supporters of this camp argue that there is widespread international support for the two-state solution; that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza live under a brutal occupation that must be abolished, and that Palestinians in Israel have acquired rights and gains that should not be jeopardized. The disintegration of many Arab states and the upheavals that took place in several of them have weakened partners that were once viewed as strategic assets of the Palestinian people. Palestinians must therefore choose realistic, rational policies that recognize their weakness and lack of leverage vis-à-vis Israel. This pragmatic camp also understands that Palestinian elites in the West Bank and Gaza are not united and that the Israeli state will employ any means to suppress them, especially when they demonstrate their sympathy for Palestinian resistance against the occupation. This group argues that Palestinians have recognized the legitimate right of Jews for self-determination and cannot ignore the fact that, whatever one thinks about how the Israeli state was established, there are today more than six million Jews in Israel, and this population is not going anywhere. Therefore, they conclude, Palestinians should seek compromises with Israel, while insisting on partition and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In this regard, they advocate for a realistic and just solution of the Palestinian refugee problem, whose implementation is compatible with the right of Jews to self-determination, but blame the Israeli government for blocking any serious and genuine solution of the conflict. Therefore, this camp argues against the formal definition of Israel as Jewish state and sharply criticizes the discriminatory policies that have been grounded in this definition.

The second camp more firmly situates Palestinian citizens of Israel within the broader Palestinian reality, beginning with the centrality of Palestinian national identity and the search for just solutions of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. It argues that all Palestinians have paid the price of Zionism and the establishment of the state of Israel. Furthermore, it maintains that the Israeli state does not fundamentally differentiate between Palestinians when it comes to its colonization and settlement policies and in its brutal coercion and discrimination against Palestinians. The expansion of settlements in areas occupied in 1967 have rendered partition unrealistic; continued talk of a two-state solution serves merely as a diplomatic tool for Jewish nationalist leaders to reduce the reputational costs of their rejectionism. The rise of the settler movement and demographic changes within Israel point toward a one-state condition that will persist for the foreseeable future. This camp, which attracts the support of over 20 per cent of the community and finds institutional home in the Balad party and the Abna'a Al-Balad Movement (Sons of the Village), criticizes the 'pragmatic' approach of the Palestinian Authority, which, it maintains, facilitates the occupation and contributes to the fragmentation of the Palestinian people. Politically, this

group believes Palestinians should reject the Jewish character of the Israeli state and assist Palestinians under occupation to struggle not just for national independence but for comprehensive liberation, utilizing all means legitimated by international law, including boycott. Many members of this group envisage a democratic one-state solution for Israel/Palestine.

Finally, there is the Islamic camp. It is ambiguous about its ultimate political aspirations and is sub-divided into two groups. The first argues that, as a minority in a non-Muslim state, Muslims in Israel should seek to exploit all opportunities available to promote the well-being of Muslim citizens, including representation in official Israeli institutions. The second is more dogmatic and less open to engagement with Israeli social and political institutions. It views the conflict as a religious one and asserts that only religious beliefs, values and practices offer any hope for resolving it. This group is affiliated with the more conservative and dogmatic elements of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and seeks first and foremost to transform the values and behaviour of the Muslim community in Israel. It supports the movement for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel, without announcing its position bluntly. These two groups together win the support of over 50 per cent of the Palestinian community in Israel.

## Conclusion

All political forces in the PCI share the belief that the Jewish majority is radicalizing. They agree that it should not be given any excuses to use force against the Palestinian community. This results in a broad strategic consensus, notwithstanding the underlying political and ideological differences. Most opt for those tactics that are least vulnerable to persecution, such as establishing civil society organizations to resist governmental policies and protect the safety of their members by legal means and international advocacy. As a result, as long as the state's policies do not precipitate a major crisis, whether in the occupied territories or inside Israel, the Palestinian minority will maintain its current approach: combining daily civic resistance to state policies of discrimination (for instance, countering the Judaization policies of Arab areas by building houses beyond state-permitted housing zones and buying houses in Jewish towns) with efforts to improve community relations with state agencies to achieve better understanding and empathy and greater material resources to improve communal well-being.

This strategy makes use of the tools made available—with growing reluctance—by the Israeli political system. It is complemented by efforts to strengthen social, economic and cultural ties with Palestinians in the West Bank and the diaspora, as well as with the wider Arab world. This strategy is pursued in different ways, including shopping in Palestinian cities, intermarriages and interacting with political activists in the Arab world. This 'bonding and bridging' strategy seeks to maximize the resources available to Palestinians in Israel to endure and challenge the state's policies of Israelization, subjugation and economic and cultural neglect. Balancing in this way between Israeli and Palestinian societies reflects a quality rooted in the double consciousness of the Palestinian community in Israel, and its ability to transform this duality from a weakness into a major source of strength.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.