

Bayan بیان ביאן The Arabs in Israel הערבים בישראל

Editors: Itamar Radai and Arik Rudnitzky

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From the Editors' Desk

This issue of *Bayan* contains two essays. The first by Inbal Tal, deals with the way the Islamic movement in Israel utilizes virtual social networks as part of its activities among Muslim women in Israel. The second essay is an edited version of a lecture delivered by Elie Rekhess in a conference held in March 2016 celebrating twenty years to the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation.

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The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation (KAP) was established in 2004 by the German Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University as part of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. KAP is an expansion of the Program on Arab Politics in Israel established by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University in 1995. The purpose of KAP is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel through conferences, public lectures and workshops, as well as research studies, publications and documentation.

We extend our thanks to Ms. Renee Hochman for translating and editing the material in English, and Mr. Ben Mendales of the Moshe Dayan Center for his most valuable work on this issue.

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The Editors

Inbal Tal* / Gender aspects of the virtual enclave of the Islamic Movement in Israel

Over the past decade, Internet and social network usage has grown to the point where for all intents and purposes they have begun to function as a public sphere. In Israel, both branches of the Islamic Movement have joined this trend; since the early 2000s, they have steadily expanded their use of online media. For the Islamic Movement, online media serve as effective platforms that help it shape the public agenda, disseminate its ideology, and inculcate the public with its Islamic vision.

To promote this trend, both branches of the Islamic Movement established official websites, for the benefit of its public of religiously observant supporters.¹ These websites display Islamic content alongside Palestinian nationalist content,² and include diverse visual materials, such as caricatures and video clips. The branches also upload films to YouTube. The websites offer links to the official websites of the branches' institutions, their Twitter accounts, and the Facebook pages affiliated with them. For example, according to January 2016 figures, the Facebook page of the Northern branch has 48,846 "likes."³

The websites themselves cover a variety of content categories, including unique links devoted to women's issues. One link, labeled "Family and Society," (*Al-Usra wa-l-mujtama'*), appears alongside a link posted in 2013, which is labeled, "For You" (*li-Ajlek*). The latter contains a record of the activities of the Northern Branch's women's associations.⁴ The number of websites affiliated with the Movement has grown steadily, as has the number of websites affiliated with its women's institutions (especially those of the Northern branch), such as the website of the women's monthly magazine *Eshkraka* (Sunrise), launched in 2002.⁵ Online coverage of

* Dr. Inbal Tal is a research fellow at the Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University. Her book "Spreading the Movement's Message: Women's Activism in the Islamic movement in Israel" was published in January 2016 by the Dayan Center in conjunction with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

¹ In 2001, the Northern branch established a website affiliated with it, at www.pls48.net. In 2004, the Southern branch established an official website, initially at www.islammov.net. In 2009, the website's URL was changed to www.aqsa-mubarak.org. This article focuses mainly on the websites affiliated with the Northern branch. For more on the online activities of the Islamic Movement in Israel, see Inbal Tal, "Spreading the Movement's Message", 164-172.

² On the national Palestinian context, see, for example, a poster displayed on the Northern branch's website accompanied by the following caption: "La 'awda 'an haqq al-'awda, ya Abu Mazen" (Abu Mazen, you cannot renege on your [commitment to] the right of return). <http://www.pls48.net/?mod=articles&ID=1152670> (June 26, 2015).

³ <http://www.facebook.com/pls48> (January 3, 2016). See Figure 2 for the number of Likes on the Northern branch's Facebook page on that date. The online activities of the Northern branch are clearly of a greater scope than the activities of the Southern branch. Notably, the URLs of the websites that are affiliated with the Southern branch have changed over time. The Northern branch remains active online even after the government outlawed its organization.

⁴ <http://www.pls48.net/foryou/?mod=cat&ID=11> (April 30, 2014). See, for example, a feature on a campaign in which the women's association "Muslim Women for Al-Aqsa" participated: Muslimat min ajl Al-Aqsa tushariku fi hamlat 'Ila qurana na'udu' (Muslim Women's Association for Al-Aqsa Participated in the "To Our Villages We Will Return" Campaign). <http://pls48.net/foryou/?mod=articles&ID=1166> (April 30, 2014).

⁵ For example, the URL of *Eshkraka* magazine, which is affiliated with the Northern branch, is <http://eshkraka.com>, and the URL of Sanadli-Silah al-Usra wa-Binaa al-Mujtama', the women's institution that is identified with the Northern branch, is <http://www.sanad-osra.com/full.php?id=879> (June 28, 2015). 9,902 Likes were recorded on Sanad's Facebook page in November 2015. Other websites that are affiliated with the Northern branch institutions include the website of the Islamic College of Umm el-Fahm (<http://www.islamic-college.org>), the Al-Aqsa Institution for Endowments and Heritage website (<http://www.iaqsa.com>), the website of the Center of Modern Research

categories targeting women and the family has also increased to cater to the needs of the numerous observant women who visit these websites. Moreover, the Movement's media offer an alternative to other websites that target women and frequently urge women to throw off the shackles of tradition that limit their freedom and prevent them from realizing their desires in all areas of life. These unique links that target women on the branches' websites, *Eshraka's* website, or the website of Sanad, direct readers to posts on various topics, including panegyrics of women who played a prominent role in the history of Islam. For example, in 2010, the Northern Branch website published a post venerating Amna bint Wahhab, mother of the Prophet Muhammad.⁶ Other features were designed to motivate the Movement's female activists in Israel through frequent coverage of the actions of women whom modern Islamic movements typically consider to be sources of inspiration. These features clearly illustrate the impact of Muslim Brotherhood rhetoric on the Islamic Movement's discourse in Israel. Unsurprisingly, many articles are devoted to the dissemination and inculcation of the Islamic cause among women,⁷ including online fatwas that uniquely target them. These *fatawa* clearly reflect a dualistic approach to the adoption of Islamic values and to modern innovations and to the challenges of modern life in non-Islamic environment.⁸ Notably, some features and talkbacks express new voices and opinions that are prevalent among women, which call for a reconciliation of patriarchal Islamic ethos and contemporary developments that frequently challenge accepted patriarchal norms and exacerbate the already considerable generation gap. The online rhetoric and sentiments expressed by women in the public sphere is inescapable. Aware of these developments, Movement leaders are taking steps to channel them in what they believe to be 'acceptable' directions.

(<http://www.center-cs.net>), the website of Heraa (an institution for the rote learning of the Quran; <http://www.heraa.net>), the website of the student's association *Egraa* (<http://eqraa.com>), the website of the Islamic Fatwa Council (www.fatawah.com), and the website of the Northern branch's newsletter, *Sawt-al-Haqq wa-l-Hurriyyah* (<http://www.aqsai.com>).

⁶ <http://www.pls48.net/default.asp?ID=28182> (July 29, 2010).

⁷ <http://www.pls48.net/Web/Pages/Details.aspx?ID=284> (August 20, 2008). See also the feature entitled *Istisharat da'wiyyah: Zawji am al-da'wah?* (Counseling on Da'wah: My Husband or Da'wah?), in which the author seeks advice on her dilemma of devoting time to Da'wah or to her husband.

⁸ <http://www.fatawah.com/Fatawah/386.aspx> (December 16, 2012). The *fatawa* that the Islamic Movement has published in the past decade include specific *fatawa* for women. The website of *Al-Majlis Al-Islami li-l-Ifta*, which is affiliated with the Northern branch, contains a unique link to *fatawa* relevant specifically for women in various fields. See for example, the *fatwa* that was published on the above website concerning the law on marriage ceremonies performed on websites. Also see Inbal Tal, "Appoint Your Own Mufti: Fatwas by the Islamic Movement in Israel – The Female Angle," *Hamizrah Hehadash*, 53 (2014), 109-126.



Figure 1. Image from the website of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel.



Figure 2. The Facebook page of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, January 2016

Despite the Movement's isolationist ideology, the Islamic Movement leaders' desire to remain abreast of these new developments and other societal changes and to extend their reach to new target audiences has promoted new tactics (especially by the leaders of the Northern Branch). In practice, online media have become recruitment tools that enable the Movement to expound its vision to new audiences. In 2009, the Northern branch established the Al-Rahma (Mercy) website, which expressly targeted new converts to Islam from within Israel. These include former Jewish-Israelis, Christians, immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and foreign non-immigrant workers. The content on this website have been tailored to each of these groups, and appears in Arabic, Hebrew, Russian, and English. The website clearly functions as a manual of instruction for new converts to Islam, and also includes features specifically addressed at female converts.⁹

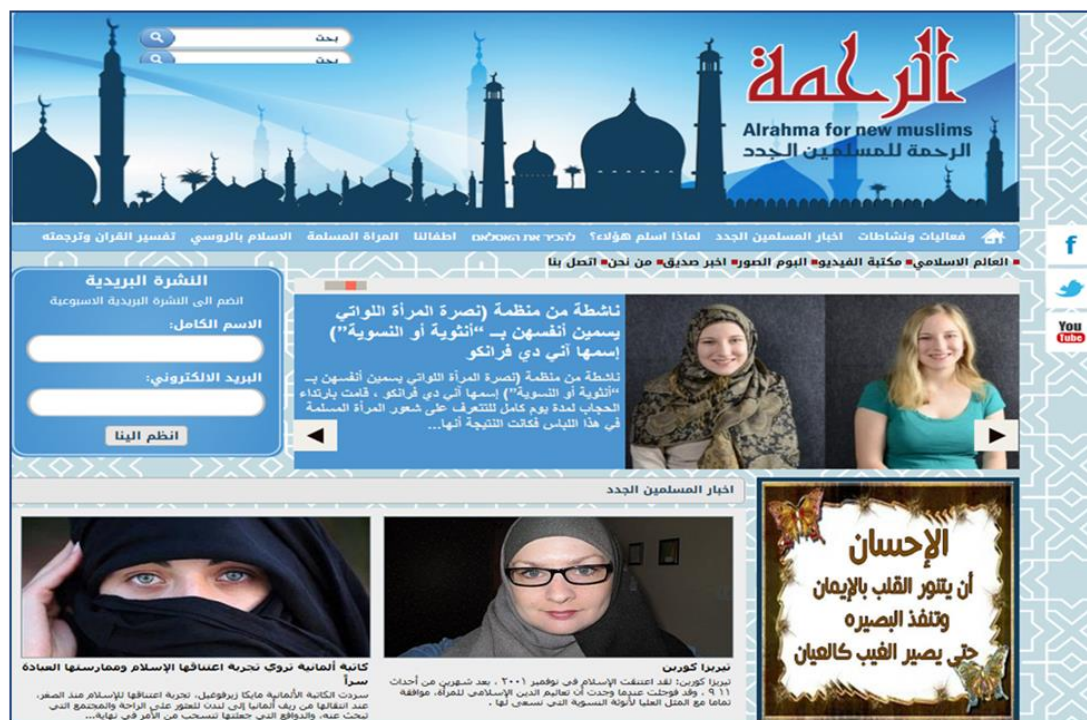


Figure 3. Al- Rahma website, affiliated with the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement

The Movement seems to be using these online channels and the communicative potential of the Internet to build a bridge to the Islamic world and establish a “virtual Islamic enclave” that is affiliated with the Movement and is used to disseminate the Movement's ideology and expand its ranks by attracting female followers as well. The Movement's virtual enclave strengthens a sense of social cohesion among its visitors, emphasizes the Movement's isolationist approach, and regulates its supporters' behavior. Its main strength is the offering of a digital space designed specifically for the Movement's religiously observant supporters, and which provides an alternative to other Arab media in Israel.

⁹ <http://www.rahmaonline.com/aboutus.php> (February 8, 2015). The articles targeting women also appear in English. See for example, “Finding My Way” and “The Woman in Islam.”

Interestingly, while Islamic in nature, the websites – and especially those targeting women – bypass to some extent many of Islam's gender-based restrictions. The Movement maintains a semi-covert dialogue with observant female supporters on these platforms, in which new opinions are expressed. This reflects what may be termed a feminist-Islamist agenda seeking to bridge between the essentially patriarchal nature of Islamic doctrine and the new circumstances and developments of contemporary life. All the while, the movement is aware that any comprehensive attack on Islamic norms and values will be doomed to fail.

Last November (2015), the Israeli government outlawed the Northern branch of the Islamic Movement led by Sheikh Ra'ed Salah. The circumstances leading to this step may have an impact in many spheres, including the virtual arena. In our online age, the discourse and sentiments that emerge on the Internet, especially on the websites and the social networks affiliated with the Northern branch, and their influence on the public sphere, should not be ignored. The messages expressed through such media frequently cross the limits of acceptable speech, even in the name of democratic principles such as freedom of organization or freedom of political expression.

Unsurprisingly, under the current circumstances, the Northern branch and its leaders are taking full advantage of the digital sphere,¹⁰ as illustrated by the Northern branch's expanding presence on the Internet, especially in the past several months, and its continued efforts to promote the Islamic Movement's vision and establish a virtual Islamic enclave affiliated with its vision. Although several websites affiliated with the Northern branch closed their operations in response to the ban, the branch's official website and several websites of the institutions affiliated with it remain in operation and continue to be updated regularly.¹¹ Would a comprehensive move to block these websites have any impact on the Movement's efforts to promote its vision in the virtual sphere? Arguably, there is a chance that such a step would have the opposite effect, by fueling the growing power of the Islamic Movement and associated organizations in the virtual sphere.

¹⁰ <http://www.pls48.net/?mod=articles&ID=1204156> (December 20, 2015).
<http://www.pls48.net/?mod=articles&ID=1205316> (December 18, 2015). See the articles published on the website of the Center for Modern Research, which is affiliated with the Northern branch, entitled Madha ya'ni ikhraj Al-Haraka Al-Islamiyyah fi-l-dakhil al-Filistini 'an al-kanun (What is the meaning of the ban on the Islamic Movement in Israel?), <http://www.center-cs.net/full.php?ID=1413&title> (December 18, 2015).

¹¹ The website of the Northern branch remained active several months after the government's decision (as of May 2016), although the websites of the branch's newsletter *Sawt al-Haqq*, *Eshraka*, and other institutions affiliated with the Northern branch are no longer active.

Elie Rekhess* / Twenty Years of Cooperation between the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Moshe Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Program at the Dayan Center was born out of a casual meeting between Dr. Michael Lange, the Foundation's representative to Israel at the time, and myself, which planted the first seeds of academic collaboration with Tel Aviv University. Even then, Foundation members were aware that Jewish-Arab relations had primary importance for the future of the State of Israel.

Dr. Lange and all his successors remained faithful to the original idea. They tirelessly provided inspiration, devotedly worked to obtain the considerable funds necessary to cover the Program's budget, and in many other ways labored to support the continued existence of the Program. Although today there are several German foundations that support projects in the Arab sector of Israel, the Adenauer Foundation was the first and the only one to do so at the time. This fact alone is deserving of our deepest gratitude.

On the occasion of twenty years of collaboration between the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Dayan Center, I would like to briefly review the Program's major projects and the historical circumstances that led to their development, and conclude with a few words on the contemporary developments in Arab society in Israel today, with a view to the future.

We had four goals for the Program when it was established: First, we sought to promote academic research on the Arab society in Israel and specifically its politics; second, we wanted to create a database on the Arabs in Israel that would be part of the Dayan Center's archives and available for use by researchers, students, and the general public; third, it was our hope to create an open academic space wherein Jews and Arabs, researchers, professors, politicians, government officials and activists, could meet and engage in constructive discussions; fourth, we wished to provide information to Israeli decision makers on the accelerated changes that were taking place in Arab society and offer them scientific tools and data that might inform government policy making on related issues.

In all modesty, I believe that we can say that the first three goals have been accomplished with at least some degree of success.

Regarding the first goal, **promoting academic research on Israel's Arab society** — the Program has organized and hosted 12 academic conferences since its establishment. The broad range of topics discussed at these conferences include the developmental trajectory of Arab politics in Israel and its ideological streams; voting patterns of Arab and Druze citizens in parliamentary elections; the activities of political parties and their platforms and their achievements in parliamentary elections; local government elections in Arab and Druze localities; the national identity of Arab citizens of Israel and the debate over the nature of Israel as a Jewish state; and social issues such as at-risk Arab youth, violence in Arab society, and Israel's "mixed cities."

* **Prof. Elie Rekhess** is founder of the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation and was its first director. He is currently a professor of Middle Eastern History and Israel Studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

We also published the proceedings of these conferences and lectures as well as 12 anthologies containing a total of over 100 articles. There is no greater satisfaction than to see that a portion of these works continue to be relevant long after their publication.

Our second goal was to establish **a database on Arab society in Israel**. This goal was accomplished in the form of our periodical publications, among other things. Over the years, the Program published three periodicals: *Information Sheets* — which focused mainly on the results of public opinion polls conducted by the Program on election-related topics; *Update* — which focused on a variety of contemporary issues such as the status of the Bedouin community, empowerment of Arab women, status of Arab language, and the proposed citizenship law; and *Bayan*, an electronic quarterly journal on the affairs of Arab society in Israel.

The Or Lecture was one of the Program's special series. The lecture was held annually in the four years following the publication of the Or Commission Report in 2003. Lectures were delivered by Justice Theodore Or, Judge Hashem Khatib, and Professor Shimon Shamir, while Professor Ruth Gavison gave the concluding lecture in this series.

The Program also set up a **digitized document archive**. In 2000, the Program inaugurated the first retrieval system of its kind, based on over 40,000 archived pages, on the Arabs in Israel. The collected documents are organized in an online database and coded by keywords. The archive is in regular use by students, scholars, and government agencies.

The Program's third goal was to create **a space for Jewish-Arab academic engagement**. Since its establishment, the Program sought to create a new space for unmediated encounters between representatives and leaders of the Arab public and government agencies. The Arabs in Israel Forum was established in 1997 and remained active until 2002. The first guest at the June 1997 meeting was Moshe Katzav, then Minister of Tourism and the government official in charge of the Arab population portfolio. Over the years, the Forum hosted Roni Milo, Mayor of Tel Aviv-Yaffo; Yitzhak Levy and Yossi Sarid, Ministers of Education; Yossi Beilin, Minister of Justice; Avraham Burg, Speaker of the Knesset, among others. Several meetings were devoted to the plight of the Negev Bedouin in 2002 — five years before the Goldenberg Committee issued its report, and 10 years before a public outcry arose in response to the Praver Plan.

On these three planes, we saw the fruits of our labor. Efforts to accomplish the fourth goal, involving decision makers, did not achieve the desired level of success.

The Program did not restrict its activities to a narrow academic field. Instead, it believed in its power and obligation to provide scientific tools and information to help decision makers develop a state policy on the Arabs in Israel. We believed that such policy should be based on full integration of Arab citizens, the concept of shared citizenship, and the principles of liberal democracy — grounded in an obligation to maintain the Jewish and democratic nature of the State of Israel. We refrained from becoming involved in politics, and were guided by a truly non-ideological approach. We drafted position papers and advised the ministerial committee headed by Minister Matan Vilnai in 1999; we submitted background material to the Orr Commission; and we established think-tank teams, such as the team that analyzed the implications of the Future Vision Documents.

As I noted, this goal was not fully accomplished. We learned that our politicians clung to a different agenda, and most were motivated mainly by extraneous factors.

Reality caused a rude awakening. In the late 1990s, Israel was rocked by events of unprecedented force related to Jewish-Arab relations. I experienced a deep sense of personal and professional frustration and helplessness in view of the government's disinterest, for which we eventually forced to pay a terrible price. In September 1998, three years after the Program's establishment, riots broke out in the Triangle over government plans to expropriate lands. As the head of the Program at the time, I was interviewed by Maariv and among other things, stated, "The situation is extremely tense and explosive. The relations between Jews and Arabs have suffered serious damage ... we need a comprehensive, thorough, and systematic dialogue between the leadership of the Arab public and government authorities."

Exactly two years later, the October Events occurred, and their aftermath is known to all.

A View to the present and the future

Over the years, we monitored and studied political trends and developments in the Arab population. Several trends became known as "Palestinization" or "radicalization," and implied an intensification of the national-Palestinian element of the identity of Arabs in Israel, at the expense of their sense of belonging to the Israeli milieu. Internal and external factors combined over time to exacerbate the Arabs' growing sense of alienation: the decline of a diplomatic horizon for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, multiple rounds of violent confrontations and wars, and growing Islamization of the conflict. Internal factors included increasing resentment toward the state for the widening socio-economic gaps between population groups, increasing exclusion of Arab citizens from centers of power in Israeli society, and the rising strength of nationalist-religious right-wing elements in Israeli society, reflected in anti-Arab legislation and manifestations of racism, among other things.

In these circumstances, the government made little headway. Admittedly, several initiatives were designed to trigger change. For example, the Economic Development Authority was established and in 2001 approved a four billion shekel program to promote the Arab and Druze sectors, but these plans quickly dissipated. I am not exaggerating when I say that there was no genuine change in the state's attitude toward its Arab citizens.

On the ideological level, there is a steady drift toward greater ideological fervor in Arab society, and especially among its elites. The Future Vision Documents remain relevant as Arabs aspire to attain the status of a national minority with collective rights, and to "open the 1948 files." Once again, voices are calling for the right of return for Arabs in Israel; there is growing de-legitimization of Israel's status as a Jewish homeland and growing support for the concept of a bi-national state. Moreover, Arabs more strongly identify with the Palestinian cause, following the lead of its academic elite (for example, a November 2015 conference in Bir Zeit was entitled "The Arabs of 1948 and the National Palestinian Project – Roles and Status"). Considerable efforts are directed at "internationalizing" the issue of Arabs in Israel as a part of the national Palestinian platform, and the international community is increasingly responsive to such aspirations. Indeed, UN and US government officials have joined the traditional European supporters of such aims.

Islamization of the Muslims in Israel has taken root. The campaign over al-Aqsa has become the glue that binds the Arab population. ISIS is growing increasingly popular with the young population (according to recent statistics, 35 Arabs have been charged with colluding with ISIS, 40 left the country to join ISIS, and 100 are actively

supporting ISIS within Israel), although the vast majority of Arabs in Israel object to this movement.

In November 2015, the Northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel was banned, in a step that the government had refrained from taking for over 40 years, and which may mark a turning point in the relationship between the government and the Arab population.

At the political level, the impotence of Arab politics in Israel had persisted up to the recent elections due to continual Arab exclusion at the hands of the Jewish majority in general and specifically exclusion from national centers of decision making, and due to the pernicious effects of internal divisions and fragmentation. The recent elections completely changed this situation. The ranks united to establish the Joint List and were motivated not necessarily by their unity of opinions but by the perceived necessity to counter the recent increase in the election threshold.¹² And yet, Arab politics still appears to be treading water. Although the first blossoms of a new leadership are evident, the members of Ayman Odeh's generation are caught in a stranglehold of the close-to-impossible constraints placed on conducting Arab politics in a Jewish state. Nonetheless, they face an urgent need to live up to their voters' expectations.

At the socio-economic level, some disparities between Jews and Arabs have lessened, while many others have remained and increased as a result of population growth. For example, the 2015 report by Erez Kaminer of the Attorney General's Office points to a grave shortage of land, and an absence of land reserves and national outline plans, resulting in local governments' inability to plan the land uses for future development.

The 15 billion shekel five-year development plan for the Arab sector in 2016-2022 marks a significant breakthrough. The plan applies to almost every conceivable area of life of the Arab population, and paves the way for economic growth and development. The architects of this plan, Ministers Kahlon and Gamliel, together with the Arab leaders who participated in the negotiations, deserve all the praise. And yet, three stormy government meetings were needed to approve this plan amid caustic criticism. Likud ministers staunchly opposed the plan, and the Prime Minister reportedly capitulated to their demands and stipulated that the plan's performance would be subject to conditions to be supervised by Yariv Levin and Zeev Elkin, two ministers who are not known for their tolerance of the Arab population.

Our past experience is not a source of encouragement: Everyone recalls how the four-billion plan dissipated in the early 2000s, even though the Labor party headed the government at the time. Cynics add that, rather than the interests of the Arab population, the Prime Minister instead has national economic considerations at heart: stability in the Arab sector, the desire to reduce the billions of shekels lost to the economy as a result of the failure to realize the full potential of the Arab workforce (including women), and the desire to improve Israel's ranking in international indices such as OECD ranking.

So, the sensibilities of the current government administration are not promising, and give rise to the thought that we have learned nothing from the past. We are ignoring indications of socio-economic unrest, the frustration of the younger generation, political- ideological agitation, and a surge in the strength of alternative streams such as the Islamic Movement. Together, these developments are a cause for serious

¹² *Bayan* issue 6 (May 2015) was devoted to a discussion of Arab voting patterns in the 20th parliamentary elections, the implications of the newly established Joint List on Arab voters' political behavior on election day, and the actions of the political leadership on the day after the elections.

concern. Moreover, the fact that we have already experienced grave events 20, 15, and 10 years ago is especially disconcerting. Is there any point to studying history?

Nonetheless, I would like to conclude on an optimistic note. Jewish-Arab relations have not completely collapsed. Despite these difficult times, the foundations of Jewish-Arab relations demonstrate impressive resilience. This “survivability” is also the result of a counter trend that is developing concurrently with growing nationalism: the rise of a middle class in Arab society that is most interested in its socio-economic situation and integration in Israeli society. This middle class includes business owners, tradespeople, professionals with vocational training, and white-collar workers.

The growth of the Arab middle-class in Israel is evident in several areas: While the relative share of Arabs in high-tech professions remains low, their share of all high-tech employees increased threefold between 2008 and 2013, from 0.5% to 1.5%. Several professions, such as pharmacy, are almost completely “controlled” by members of the Arab community. 11% of all physicians in Israel are Arabs, including 23 chief of divisions and two hospital directors. Moreover, the members of the Arab middle class tend to assume an “Israeli” lifestyle. For example, in the area of housing, they tend to prefer high-rise buildings, and consume Israeli (not necessarily Jewish) cultural products, especially in their leisure activities.

Hope is therefore not lost, but we must yet remember that the perpetuation and exacerbation of the Jewish-Arab rift, disregard for one-fifth of the population, and denial of a problem will take a heavy toll on Israeli society. The events of the past two decades clearly illustrate this lesson.

I look forward to following the fruitful work and success of the Adenauer Foundation, the Program, the Dayan Center, and Tel Aviv University in the future.