

# Bayan بیان ביאן The Arabs in Israel הערבים בישראל

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## From the Editors' Desk

We are pleased to present a new issue of *Bayan*, a quarterly on the Arab society in Israel. *Bayan* is published by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University, in conjunction with the Program for the Study of Arabs in Israel, which is supported by the Neubauer Family Foundation of Philadelphia and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

This issue of *Bayan*, which is devoted to a discussion of the Arab public's preparations for the elections, appears three weeks before the 20<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections, which are scheduled to be held on March 17, 2015.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 835,000 eligible Arab and Druze voters constitute 15% of all the eligible voters currently residing in Israel.<sup>1</sup> Based on figures from official sources, this group includes 760,000 eligible voters who live in Arab and Druze settlements, while the remaining 75,000 live in mixed cities and other localities throughout Israel. This group does not include the approximately 165,000 Arab residents (age 18 or over) in East Jerusalem, who are not eligible to vote in the parliamentary elections.<sup>2</sup>

A much discussed topic on the Arab street is the formation of the Joint List by the major Arab political parties that have represented the Arab public in the Knesset over the past two decades: *Hadash* (DFPE – Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), *Balad* (NDA – National Democratic Assembly), *Ra'am* (UAL – United Arab List), and *Ta'al* (AMC – Arab Movement for Change). Today, after these parties have closed ranks in a concession to public opinion, all eyes are on the upcoming Election Day, to see whether the Joint List will in fact significantly increase Arab election turnout. Public opinion polls conducted in the past month predict that the Joint List will win 12 to 13 seats in the Knesset, although List leaders confidently predict that if Arab voting reaches 70%, the List may even win 15 seats. According to this optimistic forecast, the Joint List could become the third-largest faction in the next Knesset. Whether this prediction is realized or not, the Joint List's rhetoric conveys strong confidence in the abilities of the Arab Knesset members to present, for the first time in history, a genuine alternative to the dominant right-wing camp in the Knesset, or at least to become an important political factor that cannot be ignored.

The current issue includes three editorials that analyze the reasons behind the establishment of the Joint List, and its possible ramifications for the Arab public's voting behavior on Election Day. The editorials reflect the opinions of their authors only. Concluding this issue is a section that contains background information on Knesset voting patterns of Arab and Druze citizens in the past two decades.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of our friend and colleague Nadia Hilou, who recently died after a difficult illness.

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<sup>1</sup> Gustavo Shifris, "5.3 million eligible voters live in Israel today," *Central Bureau of Statistics website*, February 9, 2015. [http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/hodaot2015n/24\\_15\\_029b.pdf](http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/hodaot2015n/24_15_029b.pdf) [in Hebrew]

<sup>2</sup> Calculations are based on figures from the following sources: Ministry of the Interior website ([www.moin.gov.il](http://www.moin.gov.il)), the Central Bureau of Statistics website ([www.cbs.gov.il](http://www.cbs.gov.il)), and the Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS) ([www.jiis.org.il/?cmd=statistic.489](http://www.jiis.org.il/?cmd=statistic.489)).

Nadia was a special person, a path breaker, a social worker, a public figure, and a member of the 17<sup>th</sup> Knesset representing the Labor party who made a significant contribution to Jewish-Arab cooperation and rapprochement. More recently, Nadia worked as a researcher and key partner of the Arab Public Research Program at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), where, as always, she made a unique, invaluable contribution to the Institute's work in general, and to greater mutual understanding and accord between Arabs and Jews. Nadia was also a faithful friend of the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, and her article "Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel: Quo Vadis?" was published in issue no. 2 of Bayan in September 2014.

We will cherish our memory of Nadia always.

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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

**Bayan** is published simultaneously in Hebrew and English.

**The Editors**

## **Nohad Ali\* / Are We All Mohammeds or Ahmeds? – The Birth Pangs of the Joint Arab List and Arab Public Opinion**

### **Introduction**

Since the establishment of the Israeli Knesset, and since the Arabs began to vote in national elections—initially in droves, but currently, one half of the Arab public—the Knesset has been used by that sector primarily as a platform for protest, outcry, and expressing opinions. From the early “satellite parties,” to the later parties now in existence, the Arab lists were never included in any government coalition. They had limited impact on legislative processes and played negligible roles in Knesset committees—due not to the quality of their representatives but to the organizational structure of the Knesset. The Arab public’s confidence in Israeli government agencies, including the Knesset and the government, is particularly low: 79% of the Arab public has little or no confidence in the Knesset and 82% has little or no confidence in the government. Even the Arab parties that are represented in the Knesset, including Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), which is defined as a Jewish-Arab party, garnered little public confidence; 67% of the Arab public has little or no confidence in them.<sup>3</sup>

Will the formation of a joint Arab list have any impact on this deplorable situation, or will the past inevitably repeat itself? Could a large Arab list become a coalition partner, block a right-wing government, and place its Arab members as heads of important parliamentary committees? Will the list tip the election scales? Will it head the opposition bloc?

Every parliamentary election has rekindled the debate over “the Arab vote,” but the debate focuses on different issues each time.

Until the mid-1970s, the main question that occupied the public and the media was, Who would receive the votes of Israel’s Arab citizens? Would they vote for Jewish-Zionist parties, or for an Arab party (at that time, the sole option was MAKI, the Jewish-Arab Communist Party)? In the early decades after statehood, most Arabs voted for Zionist parties, “satellite parties,” or MAKI (later, Rakah – NCL, New Communist List). A change in Arab voting emerged in the 1977 Ninth Knesset elections, coinciding with the “Upheaval.” Over 50% of Arab voters cast their ballot for Rakah, which later reassumed its former name MAKI and became a key component of the DFPE. In recent years, the majority of the Arab public (77%-82%) has voted for Arab parties, including the DFPE, the National Democratic Assembly (NDA), and the United Arab List (Ra’am-Ta’al).

In the 1990s and 2000s, the main question that occupied the media and the public was whether the Arabs would vote in the elections at all. From one Knesset election to another, Arabs increasingly abstained from voting. In the first decade after statehood, 90% of the eligible Arab voters voted, but since the end of the military administration

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<sup>3</sup> Nohad Ali and As’ad Ghanem, *Research Report: Arab Vote and the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset Elections*. Presented at a conference held at the University of Haifa, 17 December 2012.

in 1966 Arab voting has declined, and today only one-half of all eligible Arab voters exercise their right to vote.

Since the mid-2000s, and especially in the last two elections, including the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections, the key question was whether the Arab parties would unite and run in the elections as a single list.

### **Birth pangs of the Joint List**

The continuing debate over a joint list of Arab parties was initially supplemented by questions regarding the anticipated voting rate and concerns that a significant proportion of the Arab public would fail to show up at the polls on Election Day. These concerns were partially based on the boycott of the 2001 direct elections for prime minister, when only 18% of the Arab public chose to cast a ballot.<sup>4</sup>

The recent increase in the parliamentary threshold requirements triggered concerns that none of the Arab parties would be able to win a seat in the Knesset without running together. It is widely believed that Arab voters, like their Jewish counterparts, have become disenchanted by political parties' ego games, and that a single list will strengthen voters' belief that their representatives are willing to transcend personal interests in order to represent and protect those of their public.

On January 23, 2015, at the conclusion of several weeks of negotiations, the DFPE, NDA, Ta'al, and the Islamic Movement (the Southern faction that participates in elections) announced that they would run as a joint list in the 20<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections. A breakthrough in the discussions was achieved when the parties' negotiating teams agreed that the Reconciliation Committee (which operated in conjunction with the parties) would decide on the contested issues and present a unity formula acceptable to all parties. The committee was established at the initiative of Mohammad Zidan, the outgoing chair of the Supreme Follow-Up Committee for Arab Affairs, and novelist Mohammad Ali Taha. While the initiative was not initially coordinated with the Committee of Heads of Arab Local Governments, Mazen Ghanaim (mayor of Sakhnin and Chair of that committee, as well as Deputy Chair of the Supreme Follow-Up Committee) subsequently joined. The initiative, whose main aim was to facilitate and even expedite the establishment of a joint list, included Arab public figures who represent the religious and sectorial heterogeneity of the Arab population (Muslims, Christians, and Druze), its geographic distribution (Galilee, Triangle, Negev, and mixed cities), and indirectly represented its political diversity as well. In addition to Taha, Ghanaim, and Zeedan, Reconciliation Committee members included historian Prof. Mustafa Kabaha, Majid Sa'abneh, Elias Jabour, Sheikh Mohammad Rammal, Sa'id Rabi, and Qadi Prof. Ahmed Natour. The committee had no women members.

The Reconciliation Committee announced the final list after it laboriously secured the approval of all the parties. Party representatives were obliged to surmount long-standing rivalries in order to conclude the negotiations over the list, assign candidates to slots, and determine the list's campaign platform. Up to the very last moment before the list was submitted to the Elections Committee, there were concerns that the negotiations would "blow up;" representatives of the parties comprising the Joint List even argued over the final five honorary token slots in the list.

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<sup>4</sup> The elections were held soon after the outbreak of the Intifada al-Aqsa and October 2000 events.



### **For and against the formation of a joint list**

Essayists, intellectuals, politicians, and academic scholars leveled sharp criticism at the Reconciliation Committee and the party leaders. Their main complaint was that the composition of the list was influenced by personal considerations and that it offers nothing new. Another objection concerned the serious and arguably unbridgeable ideological differences between the elements on the list — for example, between Islamists and Communists, and between secular and religious representatives. The critics concluded that formation of the list was no more than a tactical move designed to mitigate the threat of the increased parliamentary threshold requirements, and a balm to soothe Arab public opinion, which so strongly supported the concept. Champions of cultural and political diversity criticized the Joint List, arguing that, while the Jewish public has diverse voting options — right-wing, left-wing, religious, secular, and other parties — the Joint List would only reinforce the preconception, supposedly held by a significant portion of Israel's Jewish population, that all Arabs, including Christian Arabs, are the same, or "all Arabs are Mohammad." For example, after Aiman Ouda was chosen to head the Joint List, most media in Israel posted an image of MK Ahmed Tibi, who is more familiar to the Jewish public in Israel, and whose first name may be considered "catchier."<sup>5</sup>

The critics also voiced a fundamentally political concern. Would Arab voters who staunchly oppose one of the elements that make up the Joint List consequently vote for a Zionist party or abstain from voting altogether? Additionally, would the formation of a joint list and absence of competition among the Arab parties "sedate" the election campaigns, causing Arab voters to refuse to go to the polls.

Among the disgruntled are the leaders of two Arab parties that were not included in the list: Mada, the Arab Democratic Party headed by former MK Talab el-Sana, and the Arab National Party, whose chair is former MK Muhammad Kan'an. While an explanation of the reasons for these parties' exclusion is beyond the scope of this article, these leaders decided to establish an alternative Arab list for the upcoming Knesset elections, and argued that the Joint List is neither representative nor authentic. Another list, "Hope for Change," was also submitted to run in the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections, but ultimately withdrew; At the time of this writing, it has yet to be filed with the Elections Committee.

In effect, the discourse on the formation of the joint Arab list was not triggered exclusively by the increased parliamentary threshold requirements. A vigorous debate on this issue took place in 2013, during the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset election campaigns, and featured in academic conferences, and the traditional and social media. MKs Muhammed Barakeh, Jamal Zahalka, and Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur took the first steps to form a joint list immediately after the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections. The increased parliamentary threshold requirements were only a catalyst in this process.

In contrast to the opponents, whose voices surged mainly after the Joint List was announced, favorable public pressure to form a joint list was strong and compelling, virtually forcing party leaders to consent. According to the results of a poll presented at a conference at Haifa University on December 17, 2012, on the occasion of the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset Elections, a majority of 76% of the Arab public were in favor of the parties' unification, not merely the formation of a joint list.<sup>6</sup> Results also indicated that one

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<sup>5</sup> Eliezer Harlev, "Our Ahmad is named Ayman," *Ha'ayin Hashviit (The Seventh Eye)*, February 2, 2015. <http://www.the7eye.org.il/146194>

<sup>6</sup> The survey was conducted by Dr. Nohad Ali (author of this essay) and Prof. As'ad Ghanem, both from the University of Haifa.

half of potential Arab voters who are inclined to abstain from voting may change their mind if a joint list competes.

Public opinion polls on the same issues have also been conducted in anticipation of the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> Knesset Elections. The findings of these polls indicate a similar and perhaps even stronger trend. According to a survey performed by the Mada al-Carmel research institute in December 2014, 88% of the Arab public supported the formation of the Joint List.<sup>7</sup> Advocates also claimed that voting for it would not lessen the authenticity of their vote because there are no true ideological differences between the current Arab parties, and no significant differences in their electorate. Experience also shows that groupings and splits among Arab parties have not been made for ideological reasons. Supporting this contention is the fact that the Democratic Arab Party (Mada) ran in a list together with the Arab Movement for Change (Ta'al) and with the Islamic Movement; Ta'al's previous election partners were the DFPE, the NDA, and Ra'am;. In turn, the NDA started as part of the DFPE. Presumably, Arabs have no trouble voting for a joint Arab list even if it includes a Communist, a member of the Islamic Movement, or a Jew, provided that there is at least one representative on the list with whom they identify. Furthermore, experience shows that in recent years, the Arab parties in the Knesset voted similarly in 95% of the cases.

The Joint List's supporters believe that, in view of the changing political map, the list has more than a small chance of blocking the formation of a right-wing government. They feel that the same right-wing politicians who worked to raise the electoral threshold to keep the Arabs out of the legislature may discover that the joint Arab list has become the third or fourth largest in the Knesset.

To these may be added an internal factor related to Arab society in Israel, which has recently experienced conflicts and internal rifts related to religious, sectarian, political, and ideological issues. Formation of a joint list has symbolic significance; It sends to Israeli hard-liners a message of Arab cohesion, unity, reconciliation, and rapprochement.

## **Summary**

I believe that the formation of a joint Arab list is the most important political event in the Arab public since 1977. At the same time, I also view the establishment of the list as the beginning of a new, challenging, and complex process with no guarantee of success. I wish this attempt the best of luck, despite my criticism of the procedure used to form the list, the procrastination that disillusioned sections of the Arab public, the absence of representation of certain population groups, and the state of lassitude on the ground since the list's establishment, which remains incomprehensible to me. Even if this attempt fails, it is not the end of the road. I believe that in the 21st Knesset Elections, the Arab public will penalize the elements that posed an obstacle to the Joint List. Failure might be caused by two factors. The first is a poor voting turnout, either for ideological or tactical reasons. Personally, I believe that even abstention is a kind of voting. The second is a potential boycott of the Joint List or its exclusion from consideration as a coalition partner by the Zionist Camp and the left wing in Israel. It is almost certain that such a boycott would be repaid in kind in the foreseeable future.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.arabs48.com/?mod=articles&ID=1149809> [in Arabic]

## **Wadea Awawdy\* / The Joint List on the Deck of the Titanic**

As I write these lines, 35 days remain until the Knesset elections, which is not much time for the leaders of the Joint Arab List to appeal to their target audience and persuade them to give them their vote. People living in Arab society today, who are attentive to the voices in it, are apprehensive at the prospects for this unique and important experiment.

Despite the little time that remains, indifference and lethargy prevail on the Arab street. This stems not only from the absence of the traditional competition between the parties, or the upset in the balance between national Palestinian identity and civic Israeli identity, but also from misgivings about the benefits of parliamentary work as the mainstay of our political practices. Until now, the Joint List's tactical moves appear slow and cumbersome, its messages seem confused and even contradictory, and it has no real program up its sleeve.

### **A state of lassitude**

Adding to the current challenges is the longstanding and widely held negative stereotypes about Arab political party leaders who had for too long concentrated on promoting their own particular interests over those of the public, the homeland, and their party. From the melodrama of meetings designed to reach agreements, coordination, and allocations, the Arab street has formed the negative impression that the politicians are busy in dividing the spoils that haven't yet been won. The street's indifference to the Joint List is heightened by the parties' lack of responsiveness (with the exception of the DFPE) to the public's desire for new faces, for a continuation of the discourse, and for new methods. The parties' preoccupation with the exhausting negotiations to compose the Joint List, and possibly their lack of confidence in their ability to achieve their goals, undoubtedly distracted them from developing a cohesive media campaign fitting for the circumstances, or from conveying a clear, persuasive message the day after an agreement was announced.

### **Raising public consciousness**

The Joint List lost precious time and failed to make the most of the historical momentum to influence public opinion and gain public support. Opinions are formed quickly, and messages are best launched "while the iron is hot." Whoever thinks that the parties fulfilled their obligations by responding to the calls for unity, and now that the ball is in the public's court, the politicians can lay back and bask in the rays of the February sun and the promising results of public opinion polls conducted by Israeli firms, is making a grave mistake. According to a folk saying, hunting for treasure breaks your back (meaning that you must always beware of unexpected obstacles). This expression may help to describe our current situation; we can expect the path before us to be full of unexpected obstacles and snags.

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\* Mr. Wadea Awawdy is a journalist, author, and one of the leading essayists in Israel's Arab public.



### **Voting rates**

The political and ideological differences that divide the members of the Joint List trigger disagreement and clashes, some of which remain unofficial, and this situation may encourage voters to forego voting altogether, vote for one of the Zionist parties, or vote for one of the two Arab lists (el-Sana-Kan'an, and Zakour-al-Krennawi) that are not expected to pass the parliamentary threshold.

The Joint List's journey has become a perilous walk along a steep ridge, where gaining less than 11 Knesset seats means tumbling down the mountainside. If these fears materialize, the Joint List will become a scarecrow that right-wing politicians will use to increase voting among the Jewish public (in the 2013 elections, voting among Jews was 67.8% and voting among Arabs was a mere 57%). The Joint List is also mistaken if it believes that certain NGOs will achieve the desired results through quasi-covert campaigns that lack transparency. Their campaign is based on a Zionist message, the main point of which is that Netanyahu is bad for Israel and should be replaced by more moderate leaders with better diplomatic skills, namely Hertzog and Livni. This is the place to note that votes aimed solely at toppling Netanyahu are ineffective. This is especially true, if we recall how we fled from Netanyahu into Barak's arms, and the fatal police shootings of October 2000 on the day following the elections.

### **The important role of the Joint List**

Although Arab citizens have voted in all Knesset elections, their representation in the Israeli legislature has not had the impact on their lives that would make their citizenship genuine and complete. Moreover, Arab citizens frequently encounter racial discrimination in the work place, in school, in legal proceedings, in property matters, and in choosing a place of residence, among other areas. Nonetheless, they have made significant civic gains in certain periods, for example when the Arab parties constituted a "preventive bloc" and protected Prime Minister Rabin's government (1992-1995), in exchange for its assistance in improving public services to the Arab sector and improved responsiveness to its requests.

The Arab MKs did have the power to influence social and political issues and processes, although the results did not necessarily benefit everyone. For example, the Oslo Accords in 1993 could not have been approved without the support of the Arab MKs. Similarly, Ariel Sharon's 2005 Gaza disengagement program was similarly approved with the support and participation of the Arab MKs, due to the split in the coalition. The Arab MKs even tipped the scales in favor of Moshe Katzav against Shimon Peres in the 2000 presidential election.<sup>8</sup>

### **Practical significance and effect on morale**

The Joint List represents an initiative of great importance for Israel's Arab citizens, who represent 17% of the population, with close to 870,000 eligible voters. Its potential benefits include not only an increase in Arab parliamentary representation and the increased political maneuvering capacity of Arab MKs to secure civil rights

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<sup>8</sup> Editor's note: These elections were determined in a second round, with a majority of 63 MKs voting for Katzav, and 57 voting for Peres. Due to the secret ballot process, it is impossible to prove or refute the argument that the Arab MKs tilted the vote in Katzav's favor.

gains and other achievements. Without a doubt, if the Joint List becomes the third largest party in the Knesset, it will have the practical effect of enhancing the prestige of the “Palestinians of the interior”<sup>9</sup> as a political entity. This will enable them to capitalize on the opportunity by entering the heart of the Israeli political arena from a position of strength, and to force it to treat them more seriously, within the framework of new political rules of the game. The practical and psychological impact on Israeli Arabs’ political consciousness as a group, and their consciousness as “others” in the Israeli system will increase even more if the Joint List wins 15 seats and plays a role in sending the right-wing bloc under Netanyahu to the opposition.

### **The dignity of collective action**

Hidden in the Arabs’ participation in toppling governments are unique and significant benefits for a national minority that seeks to organize itself, to optimize the means at its disposal, and to enhance its parliamentary struggle, alongside its struggle in the field.

This unique experiment also serves as an effective model, and conveys a message from the Palestinians within Israel to their people and their nation that they are capable of consolidating the various nationalist, Islamist, and Communist streams into a single national project. Nonetheless, it is not realistic for Palestinians to rely on a Hertzog-Livni government, because the most that can be expected is that such a government will relinquish the discourse of hate. While it may adopt a new language and a new tune, it is incapable of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Realistically, instead of chasing rainbows, there is a need to wait for genuine changes that will lead to a settlement. A government headed by Hertzog-Livni will more probably manage the conflict rather than resolve it, but, in any case, its test will be in actions and not words.

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<sup>9</sup> Editor’s note: Inside Palestinians – this term is commonly used to denote the Arab citizens of Israel in their internal Palestinian discourse and in the general Palestinian discourse.

## Manal Hreib\* / The Joint Arab List in 2015 Elections: Joint Action is a Necessity of the Times

The Joint List, announced by the Arab parties in Israel on January 23, 2014, has no historical precedent in Arab politics in Israel, even though calls for political unity in the Arab public are nothing new and have been heard for years. It has been argued that the Arab public's poor voting turnout in recent Knesset elections can be partially understood as an expression of protest and frustration over the divisions among the Arab parties and their leaders.

It is possible to point to four major factors that underlie the Arab parties' decision to run in the 2015 election as a joint list.

First, we cannot ignore the March 2014 amendment to the Knesset Election Law, which increased the parliamentary threshold from 2% to 3.25%. The amendment's official aim was to increase stable governance of Israeli governments, but the Arab and other small parties considered this a move designed to reduce their chances of passing the parliamentary threshold, and ultimately, to limit their chances of winning parliamentary representation. The new threshold does in fact significantly diminish the chances of each of the four Arab parties that are currently represented in the Knesset to individually gain seats in the upcoming elections. As a result, unification of the Arab parties, and an appreciation that such unification is critical, has been on the political agenda of the Arab public and the Arab parties in Israel since March 2014.

The second factor that influenced the establishment of the Joint List is the growing power of young educated Arabs. In the last two years, there has been a pronounced trend of steep growth in the civic involvement of young Arabs in political matters, on the Internet and in social networks. With the help of widespread use of Facebook, these young people have developed campaigns designed to influence public opinion, and have successfully led the Arab street in Israel and the Arab parties to large-scale demonstrations and protests over programs and laws on the public agenda in Israel, such as the Praver Plan or the Nationality Law.

The rapid and dynamic action of these young people has created an infrastructure of civic pressure on the Arab parties, which spurred them to run as a united list. These young Arabs made audible the voice of the Arab street in Israel, which demands unity, new faces, and political representation for women and young people. The Facebook page *Arab Muttahidun* ("United Arabs") that was set up by young Arabs immediately after the decision to advance the election date, resolutely states, "We will vote only for a united list." Within days, the page accumulated thousands of "likes" that expressed support and identification with this message, and several hundred "shares." In mid-December 2014, the Facebook page published the results of a Facebook poll, which indicated that 83% of the Arabs in Israel want a united list, and only 2% want the parties to remain as they are.

The third factor that affected the Arab parties' decision to unite is the culture of contention in the Knesset and the growing chasm that divides the right-wing parties

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\* Ms. Manal Hreib is a doctoral candidate at the Technion, a Neubauer research fellow, and a researcher in the Program for the Study of Arabs in Israel at the Institute for National Security Studies.

and the Arab parties. During the current government's administration, there was an overall sense of impending threat to the Arab parties and the Arab public in Israel, which was caused by right-wing attempts to promote laws and programs perceived by Arab citizens as detrimental to their identity and their rights as a civic, national minority in Israel. Plans such as the Praver Plan on Bedouin Settlement (the plan was ultimately shelved), the Nationality Bill, calls to change the status quo on the Temple Mount, and encouragement of Christian Arabs to enlist in the IDF evoked strong objections. Although none of these programs were realized (with the possible exception of a rise in the enlistment rate of Christian Arabs in the IDF), they nevertheless contributed to the tension, sense of threat, and hostility between the Arab public, the Arab parties, and the government's right-wing coalition members. The measures were considered a collective menace to the future of all Arab parties and the future of the Arab public, and motivated the Arab parties to act in concert to increase their political power through a unified struggle to protect the Arab national identity, and Arab civic and national rights.

The fourth factor influencing the establishment of the Joint List was the collapse of Arab representation and party leadership in the municipal elections of 2013. The city of Nazareth is a prime example; candidate Ali Salam and his independent list "Nasrati" ("My Nazareth") defeated incumbent mayor Ramiz Jaraisy of the NDPE, a party that had been in office for 28 years. Salam also defeated MK Hanin Zoabi of the NDA who ran against him and won only 10% of the votes. Thus, Arab citizens sent a clear, determined message to party leaders: the Arab public does not trust the current parties to manage local matters. This message featured repeatedly on social networks and the media in relation to veteran politicians. Several were forced to resign, triggering a genuine revolution in the DFPE. New, young leaders emerged and forced MKs Mohammad Barakeh, Afou Agbaria, and Issam Makhoul to withdraw from the party's list for the 20<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections. The party presented voters with several new faces including Aida Toma-Suleiman and Aiman Ouda, the 40-year-old DFPE secretary general who heads the Joint List.

Reviewing the factors described above, it seems that the formation of a joint list was inevitable. In contrast to prevailing public opinion in Israel, raising the parliamentary threshold requirements was not the sole or main reason for the formation of the Joint List, it was merely a catalyst in developments that were already in motion.

## Background Data: Voting Patterns of the Arab Public in Israel

### ***Knesset Election Turnout 1996-2013<sup>10</sup>***

	1996	1999	2003	2006	2009	2013
General population	79.3%	78.7%	67.8%	63.5%	64.7%	67.8%
Arabs and Druze	77.0%	75.0%	62.0%	56.3%	53.4%	56.5%

### ***Election Turnout in Arab and Druze Localities 2003-2013<sup>11</sup>***

List	2003	2006	2009	2013
Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada*	20.0%	27.4%	32.1%	32.0%
Hadash**	28.3%	24.3%	27.5%	23.2%
Balad	20.9%	20.2%	22.3%	21.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69.2%</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>81.9%</b>	<b>77.0%</b>
Labor	8.8%	12.8%	4.6%	3.8%
Meretz	4.8%	2.8%	1.4%	2.9%
Kadima	—	6.8%	3.7%	3.1%
Likud	4.1%	0.9%	2.1%	4.3%****
Shas	3.6%	2.9%	2.0%	3.7%
Hatnu'a	—	—	—	2.0%
Yesh Atid	—	—	—	0.7%
Other***	9.5%	1.9%	4.3%	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.8%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>23.0%</b>

\* A joint list of Ta'al and Ra'am-Mada has run in the elections since 2006.

\*\* In the 2003 elections, Hadash also include Ta'al.

\*\*\* Other – also includes lists that failed to pass the parliamentary threshold, including Da'am (Democratic Action Organization), a Jewish-Hebrew list that has regularly stood for elections since 1996 but has never passed the parliamentary threshold.

\*\*\*\* In the 2013 elections, Likud and Yisrael Beytenu formed a joint list, Likud- Beytenu.

<sup>10</sup> Source: 2014 Statistical Yearbook of Israel, No. 65 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014), Table 10.1; Arik Rudnitzky (ed.), *Arab politics in Israel and the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections*, Issue No. 3 (Tel Aviv University: Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, February 7, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> The data do not include Arab and Druze voters in the mixed Jewish-Arab cities. Source of data: Rudnitzky, *ibid*.



**Breakdown of voting for the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset elections (2013) by geographic area**<sup>12</sup>

Galilee and North					
Region		Total	Druze localities	Triangle	Negev
<b>Voting turnover</b>		58.3%	55.9%	57.6%	45.8%
<b>Arab and Arab-Jewish lists</b>	Ra'am-Ta'al-Mada	24.9%	2.3%	39.5%	61.6%
	Hadash	23.2%	12.4%	22.9%	2.2%
	Balad	21.8%	4.1%	22.9%	26.0%
	Da'am	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>90.0%</b>
<b>Jewish and Zionist lists</b>	Likud – Beytenu	6.2%	23.2%	0.3%	0.7%
	Labor	4.3%	8.2%	3.7%	1.2%
	Shas	4.5%	12.5%	1.6%	3.3%
	Kadima	4.4%	17.8%	0.7%	0.1%
	Meretz	2.1%	2.1%	6.3%	0.7%
	Hatnu'a	2.8%	8.8%	0.3%	1.0%
	Yesh Atid	1.0%	3.6%	0.1%	0.3%
	Other lists	2.3%	4.9%	1.4%	2.7%
<b>Total</b>		<b>27.6%</b>	<b>81.1%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>

<sup>12</sup> Source of data: *ibid.*