

# Bayan بیان ביאן The Arabs in Israel הערבים בישראל

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## From the Editors' Desk

We are glad to publish the first issue of **Bayan** – a quarterly on contemporary Arab affairs in Israel, published by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, which operates at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, in Tel Aviv University. The Konrad Adenauer Program was established in 2004 by the Moshe Dayan Center and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung of Germany, and functions as an extension of the Program of the Study of Arab Politics in Israel, which was established at Tel Aviv University in 1996 by the Moshe Dayan Center and the Adenauer Foundation. The goal of the Adenauer Program is to enhance the knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. One way the Program uses to achieve this goal is to provide a platform for original research on current-event issues at the center of the national-political, social, and religious agenda of the Arab public in Israel, and on issues relating to the nature of the relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

**Bayan** (بيان, in English statement, declaration, or announcement) the name of this quarterly, reflects this goal. Through this publication, we intend to create a platform for articles that will make a statement on current events related to Arab society in Israel and make these available to our readership in a succinct, academic, accessible format. We thereby hope to enrich the knowledge of the general public, and provide access to issues that involve Arab society, to which the general public is not typically exposed (at least in depth).

The current issue contains two articles. The first article by Iyad Zahalka focuses on the development of local Muslim law for the Muslim community in Israel. The second article by Yusri Khaizran discusses the effects of the Arab Spring on Christian Arabs in Israel.

Our first issue concludes with a review of the various issues on the local Arab electronic media, prepared by Brian Miculitzki.

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The editorials reflect the opinions of their authors only.

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### **The Editors**

## Iyad Zahalka / Development of Local Islamic Jurisprudence in Israel

In Israel, the majority of Muslims are Sunnis who have an orientation to the *shafi'i* school, except in cities where the *hanafi* school is prevalent. The *hanafi* school of jurisprudence is customarily applied in the Shari'a Courts in Israel, originating from an order of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, and was adopted into Ottoman legislation, was later incorporated into mandatory law and subsequently into Israeli law. Since the founding of the State of Israel, the Muslims in Israel have not developed a uniform religious Islamic consciousness or intentionally developed religious custom grounded consistently in a single legal school, despite the fact that these Muslims ostensibly elect to follow the *shafi'i* or *hanafi* schools. The Muslims' religious views were received as traditions handed down from one generation to another, based on the religious education of each generation. For several decades, Islamic jurisprudence in Israel shows no signs of development.

This situation is the result of several factors: the departure of the religious elite from Israel after the events of the war of 1948, the detachment of the Muslims in Israel from their Islamic environment, a lack of access to the jurists in Islamic countries, a lack of access to religious Islamic education in Muslim countries, a lack of institutions of religious Islamic education in Israel, and few individuals with advanced religious education. It has been argued that Islamic law did not develop in Israel also because sections of the Muslim public, such as members of the southern faction of the Islamic Movement, accepted the Mufti of Jerusalem as the jurisprudential authority. Because of all these factors, the younger generation was unable to study Islamic religion in Israel, and this inhibited the local evolution of Islamic law.

Religious awakening among Israel's Muslim minority increased toward the late 1980s, concurrently with the Islamic movement's success in municipal elections. It was specifically the absence of a consolidated, uniform religious worldview at the time that enabled the public to demonstrate religious flexibility by accepting the different approaches and views of publically active groups and individuals, such as the Shari'a Courts' obligation to rule according to the *hanafi* school. As a result, the public could accept legal innovations, and especially innovations in *shari'a* court rulings, without reservation.

### **The Shari'a Courts**

In the early 1990s, customary law in the Shari'a Courts in Israel underwent a reform grounded in the desire to address the challenges facing the country's Muslim public. The reforms and the innovations in *shari'a* law touched upon all the matters under the jurisdiction of the Shari'a Courts, especially matters of personal status and the endowments. Innovations were introduced through selective *ijtihad*, or in other words, adoption of laws from other schools and other scholars of jurisprudence, as the needs and conditions of Muslim society in Israel require. These changes and innovations conformed to the principles and rules of Islamic jurisprudence, without exceeding the boundaries of *usul al-fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence) of Islamic law.

In practice, the reform was effected through two primary tools: (1) legal manifests issued with the consent of the *qadis*, designed to present legal positions on public interest issues, in order to amend the law on a specific issue; (2) rulings of the courts of appeals, which gained status as binding precedents for future court decision making. While the reform was effectively limited by the boundaries of classic Islamic jurisprudence, the innovations in the Shari'a Courts rulings represented a departure from to what was considered customary law on local matters previously applied by the local Shari'a Courts in Israel.

The courts also demonstrated creativity in dealing with Israeli law. The courts established a defensive legal approach that disregarded all legal norms that were inconsistent with Islamic faith, yet accepted all the legal Israeli norms that had the same spirit and meaning in Islamic law. The courts accepted these norms and filled them with Islamic content, thereby complying with state law without transgressing Islamic jurisprudence. The development of jurisprudence following the reform affected other Islamic active organizations and the methodology underlying their jurisprudential positions. The Shari'a Courts the religious authority accepted by all the streams of Muslim society in Israel, and have the support of the entire religious and civic spectrum of Muslim society.

### **Defining rules of jurisprudence in the Southern Islamic Movement**

After the split in the Islamic Movement in 1996, most Movement founders continued as leaders of the Movement's southern faction. Although the Movement devoted limited attention or resources to issues of jurisprudence, the southern faction established the Al-Hiwar College of Islamic Religious Studies in 2001 (the institution's operations remain limited) and appointed a jurisprudence committee that has no permanent active members yet convenes as necessary.

In principle, the Movement is not committed to any one school: it accepts the legal heritage of all four schools, and priority to the principles of any one school is given according to their congruence with the life circumstances of Muslims in Israel, with emphasis on the principle of leniency in view of the special circumstances of the life of the Muslim minority in Israel. The Movement adopts the centrist (*wasatiyya*) doctrine and views the Muslims in Israel as an indigenous minority that experienced distressing events, resulting in its extensive suffering and transformation from a majority to a minority in its own country. This situation requires that a special jurisprudence be developed to balance all the aspects of their lives. The Movement's methodology applies mechanisms that take into consideration the unique conditions of time and place of each Muslim minority, the Muslim minority in Israel included.

At its sixteenth convention, which was held on December 28, 2013 in Tira, the Southern Islamic Movement changed its position and announced that it would no longer accept the religious authority of the Mufti of Jerusalem. Movement members decided to establish a division for *fiqh*, defining rules of jurisprudence, and documentation of rulings. The division will develop jurisprudence for Muslims in Israel and issue rulings that take into consideration their unique circumstances.

### **The Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement and Defining Rules of Jurisprudence**

The Northern Islamic Movement established the College of Da'wah and Islamic Science of Umm Al-Fahm, which was accredited by academic institutions in the Arab and Muslim world, but not by the Israeli Commission of Higher Education. As scholars well versed in Islamic religion, graduates of the College have left their imprint on the public, and the Northern Faction has, through the graduates, become a key factor in the field of religious knowledge, addressing questions of religious law referred to it by the public. In 1996, the established a legal ruling committee and in 2002, institutionalized the field of legal rulings and established the Islamic Council for Defining Rules of Jurisprudence.

The Northern Islamic Movement announced that the Council was established to meet the religious requirement to ensure that every Muslim public has jurists who issue rulings for the public, in order to put an end to those who issue rulings without proper knowledge and mislead the public. The Council was also designed to provide urgent jurisprudential solutions in emergency situations, such as pregnancy termination decisions. The Movement believes that there is no trust between the Muslims in Israel and the legal scholars in the Islamic world, and that issuing rulings by satellite is inadequate because legal scholars in the Islamic world are not well versed in the unique features of the lives of Muslims in Israel. The Movement believes that the jurist must be well versed in society's reality, understand the public's essential needs, and distinguish between necessities (*darurah*) and hardship (*haraj*). The Movement further believes that Muslims in Israel should strive to reach a consensus on issues of jurisprudence, especially innovative issues; Muslims are also required to determine the religious dates and funds devoted to religious commandments. The Islamic Council for Jurisprudence was also established to respond to questions that are raised in local committees and institutions, including institutions of the Islamic Movement, to ensure that the Movement's actions and practices are fully compliant with *shari'a* law.

The jurisprudential practice of the Northern Faction reflects conservatism toward religious innovations. Nonetheless, Movement members admit that the Muslims in Israel live in unique conditions and circumstances, which differ from those of Muslims in the Islamic world, and therefore, rulings should match the unique challenges they face. Nonetheless, the legal rulings of the Northern Faction reflect a deep-seated commitment to the jurisprudential heritage, and consistently follow global Islamic *fiqh* schools on all aspects related to new, modern issues, as well as on a limited number of innovations.

### **Legal rulings in the Al-Qasemi Al-Khalwatiyya Sufi order**

Until the 1970s, the "Al-Qasemi Al-Khalwatiyyah" Sufi order flourished. Most people in the areas where the order operated were members, and the order leaders were considered the primary religious authorities to whom all questions and concerns were referred. Since the 1970s, in response to the growing power of other national and Islamic political streams, the order's significance declined, and the number of its followers and supporters in Israel declined. In 1990, members of the Sufi order established the College of Shari'a and Islamic Studies in Baqa al-Gharbiyyah, later

renamed the Al-Qasemi Academic College. In 1993, the College was accredited by the Council for Higher Education of Israel and was permitted to award academic degrees in the field of education. The order established a center of jurisprudence at the College, although most of its rulings are not documented. The order takes into consideration the special circumstances of Muslims in Israel and issues unique rulings for them.

### **Summary**

After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Muslims in Israel did not develop a sense of religious consciousness or custom grounded in one of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence despite their ostensible affiliation with the *hanafi* or *shafi'i* schools. Religious awakening of Israel's Muslim minority emerged only years later, and gained intensity toward the late 1980s, concurrently with the success of the Islamic Movement in the municipal elections.

For several decades, no local Islamic jurisprudence evolved in Israel. The reasons for this were many: departure of the local elite in the wake of the 1948 events, detachment of Muslims in Israel from their Islamic environment, lack of access to Islamic jurists in Islamic countries, lack of opportunities to study in advanced institutions of Islamic religion in Muslim countries, lack of institutions of Islamic religion in Israel, and lack of local jurists with advanced religious education. All these factors hindered the development of Islamic jurisprudence in Israel. At that time, the religious views of the Muslims in Israel were considered to be religious traditions that were passed from one generation to another, based on the religious education and perceptions of each generation.

A dramatic change occurred in the religious practice and consciousness of Muslims in Israel in the early 1990s. This change was driven by the religious institutions active in this community – the Shari'a Courts, both factions of the Islamic Movement, and the Sufi order "Tariqat al-Qasemi al-Khalwatiyah al-Jami'ah." Graduates of the College of Shari'a Studies have begun to address issues of jurisprudence, in conjunction with the *qadis* of the Shari'a Courts, and together they triggered a process of renewal and development of Muslim jurisprudence in Israel.

Despite the difference in details, all the Islamic stakeholders mentioned above are contributing, consciously or unconsciously, to the development of a local Muslim jurisprudence. The development of local Muslim law is not unique to the case of Israel, and corresponding developments in Muslim law in the west in view of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat* (jurisprudence of minorities), in line with local conditions and circumstances in each place.



## **Yusri Khaizran / The Christians in Israel and the Arab Spring: From Arab Identity to Separatism?**

The Christians have always been a heterogeneous minority group in the modern Middle East, not only in its religious-theological composition, but also in terms of the diverse ideological orientations adopted by the region's intellectual and political Christian elites. Despite the heterogeneity of these Arab Christian communities, we can point to three common denominators that characterized the history of the Christians of the Arab world in the previous century. First, educated Christians and intellectuals played a fundamental role in disseminating modern ideologies in the Middle East, including nationalism, secularism, and Marxism. Specifically, Christians played a critical part in the growth of the Lebanese national movement that remained separate from the Arab-Muslim sphere, and they also were the first to conceive of the revolutionary notions of pan-Arabism and Syrian nationalism. Moreover, they played a considerable role in the establishment of the Egyptian national movement in the liberal-monarchic era. Second, Christian representation in such national movements far exceeded their proportion in the general population. Third, the Christian population is gradually dwindling due to intensive emigration from the Arab countries of the Middle East, especially from the 1970s onward.

The general trend that characterizes the Christians in the Arab world is a continuous decline in the public sphere. This trend also applies, to some extent, to the Christians in Israel.

### **Historical background**

During the Mandate Period, the Christians played a prominent role in the history of the national Palestinian movement, and continued to play a marked role in Arab society after the establishment of the State of Israel. The Christians acted as the spokespersons of the national Palestinian movement, liaised between the movement and the Mandate government, and represented the Palestinian-Arab position to the west. The collapse of urban Palestinian society after the 1948 created a vacuum in the local social-leadership, which allowed the Christians to play a major role in the political and public life of the Arab minority in Israel, especially within the communist party in its various forms. The Christians' dominance in the political arena began to weaken in the 1980s, not only due to the sharp drop in their share of the population, but also due to a combination of regional and global developments, led by the rise of the Islamic Movement, the emergence of a new generation of educated Muslims, the crumbling of sectarian equilibrium in Arab society, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Christians have maintained a significant lead over other sects in the Arab sector in education and in finance. Christians also emigrate from Israel but this is no mass emigration as there is in neighboring countries: The dwindling Christian population in Israel is due, first and foremost, to their low birth rate.

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<sup>1</sup> Ori Stendel, *The Arabs in Israel: Between Hammer and Anvil* (Jerusalem: Academ, 1992), pp. 96-106. (in Hebrew)



From a broad historical perspective, we can list several key factors that caused a significant drop in the Christian population in the Arab Middle East: the failure of the socio-economic policies of the revolutionary regimes in the post-colonial era, the region's growing religiosity, the Second Civil War in Lebanon, the US invasion of Iraq, and the Arab Spring revolutions. Contrary to the claim by US scholar Juan Cole, that the number of Christians in the Middle is growing, the Arab Middle East is gradually becoming depopulated of Christians. According to Cole, there are 21 million Christians in the Middle East today, more than the total number of Christians on the Australian continent.<sup>2</sup> Still, by Cole's calculations, the Christian population in the Middle East also includes the Christians living in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia.

### **The Arab Spring**

The Arab Spring that erupted in Tunisia in late 2010 triggered many expectations among the Arab minority in Israel, not only due to the fall of the pro-Arab regimes: intellectuals and politicians in the Arab minority desperately hoped that the collapse of these regimes would produce democratization in Arab countries, which might provide moral support to the anti-establishment Arab discourse in Israel. Such expectations were however dashed by the governmental crises in these Arab countries. The Arab Spring revolutions exposed the fragility of modern Arab society, which was revealed in full weakness in the grisly war in Syria. The Syrian revolution sharply divided Israel's Arab community into those who identified with the regime and those who identified with the revolution, but for many Christians in Israel this revolution and the outbreak of the bloody civil war in its wake illustrated the structural weakness of the Christian minority in the Arab world and its dependence on strong, centralized government. The collapse of the central government in Iraq after the US invasion, and the events in Syria, had a devastating effect on the Christians in those two countries, prompting mass emigration. The collapse of Mubarak's regime in Egypt in 2011 also led to an unprecedented nationwide rise in violence targeting the Copts and their churches.<sup>3</sup> The Christians became easy prey for the governmental anarchy and violence that permeated the Arab arena surrounding Israel. Although Christians are not the only ones to pay the price of the anarchy and violence, that they are a numerical minority exacerbates their collective sense of victimhood. In this respect, the Syrian revolution was clearly the breaking point for many Christians, not only in Israel but in Lebanon as well.

### **The Christians**

Of all Israel's minority groups, the Christian community was most strongly affected by the Arab Spring. This impact was manifest in their collective patterns of conduct and in their political discourse. The marked rise in the number of young Christians enlisting in the IDF undoubtedly constitutes the most important effect of the Arab Spring on the Christians in Israel. Moreover, the events in Syria triggered increasing

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<sup>2</sup> Juan Cole, "Christmas 2012: The Flowering of Middle Eastern Christianity and the Challenges it Faces." December 26, 2012. See: <http://www.loonwatch.com/2012/12/christmas-2012-the-flowering-of-middle-eastern-christianity-and-the-challenges-it-faces/>

<sup>3</sup> Labib Taha, "Implications of Arab Revolutions on the Muslim-Christian Relationship." *al-Liqa*, Vol. 2-3 (2013), p. 172 (In Arabic).

public deliberations on the political and ideological orientation that the Christians in Israel should adopt in their relationship with Israel and with the Arab arena.

Since the outbreak of the revolution in Syria, Israel's Christian community has embarked on a rethinking of its collective identity, and voices that deny their Arab identity and emphasize the religious-sectarian particularism that distinguishes them from their environment are being heard. In an interview with Israeli Television Channel One, Father Gabriel Nadaf, the spiritual leader of the Christian IDF enlistment project, stated, "The Christians' roots are not only Arab, and the state should also be aware of this, it is an extremely important historical issue. The Christians here in the Middle East – their roots are Greek, Armenian, Assyrian, and also Latin."<sup>4</sup> In 2013, in his Christmas speech honoring the contribution of the Christian soldiers who serve in the IDF, Father Nadaf called young Christians to enlist in the IDF and defend Israel, and even emphasized his faith in the shared destiny of the "Christian sect" and the Jewish people, and the shared destiny of the Christian minority and the Jewish state.<sup>5</sup> Father Nadaf's statements about shared destiny recall the minorities alliance that developed between the Druze community and the State of Israel in the 1950s as a realistic option from Israel's perspective; These statements also recall the discourse in which the relationship between the Druze community and the State of Israel was grounded. Father Nadaf's activities supporting the enlistment of Christian soldiers in the IDF are not conducted in a vacuum: In August 2012, the Forum for the Enlistment of the Christian Community was founded by IDF reserves officer Shadi Halul, resident of Gush Halav whose family was a former resident of Biram village. The Forum's key goal is to encourage members of the younger generation of Christians to join the ranks of the IDF. In comparison to the previous year, in 2013 the number of Christians seeking to enlist in the IDF increased threefold, and today close to 729 young Christian men and women are in the IDF or participate in national service.<sup>6</sup>

### **The recruitment to the IDF and its consequences**

This sudden increase in the number of enlistees leaves no room for doubt that the underlying causes are the civil war in Syria and the growing harassment of the Christian minority in Syria. Father Nadaf confirms this conclusion and states, "In no Arab country do Christians receive the same treatment as they do here. On the contrary, in each of [those countries], Christians are repeatedly hurt by the Muslim majority. Israel is the only place where this doesn't happen. I live in this country and respect it because it protects us. There is no similar democracy in the entire Arab world."<sup>7</sup>

This argument is consistent with the discourse conducted by various government circles in Israel, which claim that Israel is not only the only democracy in the Middle East, it is moreover an island of stability in the sea of revolutions that is washing through the neighboring Arab countries. The Israeli establishment identified the

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<sup>4</sup> Amnon Ben Yamin, "The Christians' Enlistment Dilemma", Israeli Television, Channel One, Mabat, December 25, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Also see Jackie Khuri, "Christian Enlistment in the IDF Threatens to Divide Arab Society." *Haaretz*, February 9, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Yair Kraus, "The Identity Crisis of the Christian Arabs in Israel." *Maariv*, December 29, 2013.

potential embodied in Christian enlistment, not necessarily as a means for deepening the rifts in Arab society, but as a means, instead, for improving Israel's image, especially in the west.

In October 2012, the Youth and Community Wing of the Ministry of Defense, in conjunction with the Upper Nazareth municipality, organized a convention designed to encourage young Christians to enlist in the IDF and in national service.<sup>8</sup> The next year, PM Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the establishment of a joint forum of the government and Christian representatives to promote enlistment of Christians in the IDF and their integration in society.<sup>9</sup> Recently, the IDF made a landmark decision to send "voluntary draft notices" to Arab Christians of recruitment age.<sup>10</sup> The timing of these actions leaves no room for doubt regarding the impact of the Syrian crisis on the Christians in Israel: For many Christians, the civil war in Syria signals the collapse of the secular Arab state and the decline of the last bastion of the pluralistic Arab model and even the last bastion of Christianity in the Arab world.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Syria is the one Arab country that experienced no mass emigration of Christians or sectarian tension between Christians and Muslims in recent years. The Christians in Syria arguably enjoyed freedom of religion and a large degree of integration in society and public life. It is therefore unsurprising that the voices that deny the Christians' national linkage to Arabism have increased since the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions.<sup>12</sup> These voices have found an attentive ear in the Israeli government: Coalition chair MK Yariv Levin commenced energetic legislative efforts to ensure separate minimum employment criteria for Christians in governmental public service, arguing that the inclusion of Christians under the category of Arabs discriminated against the Christians, especially in the Ministry of Education.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, enlistment in the IDF is an issue that divides the Christians in Israel in an unprecedented manner, as a result of which they face an unparalleled political and identity crisis. Opponents to enlistment are typically identified as supporters of anti-establishment parties such as *Hadash* (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) and *Balad*, (National Democratic Alliance) believing that recruitment to the IDF marks the reinstatement of the state's traditional "divide and conquer" policy against the Arab minority, which was implemented with success among the Druze. They therefore view enlistment in the IDF as state attempts at Israelization and Zionization efforts designed to weaken the sense of national belonging among the younger generation in Arab society, and to divide it on sectarian or religious lines from within.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, this defensive discourse, which hides behind hollow slogans, cannot discount the critical significance of the internal dynamics that motivates hundreds of young Christians to enlist in the IDF of their own free will. Enlistment

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<sup>8</sup> Jackie Khuri, "Ministry of Defense Convention for Christian Enlistment Arouses Fury in Nazareth." *Haaretz*, October 31, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Yonatan Liss, "Netanyahu Ordered to Establish a Forum to Promote Christian Enlistment in the IDF and National Service." *Haaretz*, August 5, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> *Haaretz*, April 22, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Rupert Shortt, "Christianophobia" (London: Civitas, Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2012), p. viii.

<sup>12</sup> Johnny Mansur, "Israel is exploiting what is happening in Syria to recruit the Christians." February 27, 2014. <http://www.alarab.net/Article/595723> (In Arabic).

<sup>13</sup> For more information on his activities, see MK Yarin Levin's website on the Knesset website.

<sup>14</sup> See Mral Qatina, "Via Dolorosa: Recruitment Christians to the Occupation Army." *Al-Akhbar*, No. 2240, March 7, 2014 (in Arabic); Muhammad al-Abd Allah, "Recruitment of Arab Christians, the Timing and the Goals." *Al-Akhbar*, No. 2039, September 2, 2013 (In Arabic).

reflects a growing sense of alienation from the Arab sphere, as well as a magical fear of the effects of the Arab Spring revolutions on the Christian minorities. Withdrawal by Christians into sectarian or religious identities is consistent with the growing religiosity that has become the most prominent mark of regional-Arab politics in recent years.<sup>15</sup> There is no doubt that such withdrawal is a cumulative counter-response to the decline in their public and political status in the Arab sphere. In Lebanon, the Christians lost their privileged status, and their share in the population significantly diminished after the second civil war there. In Nasserite Egypt, the Copts disappeared from the political arena due to the revolutionary nationalism and nationalization policies. During Sadat's rule, Christian Copts emigrated en masse in response to the Islamization that surged through Egyptian society. Although the Christians were not the sole victims of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, they rapidly became the target of choice of the jihadist organizations, prompting approximately one million Iraqi Christians to leave the country after the invasion. The fate of the Christians in Syria was no different from that of their Iraqi brethren: The revolution triggered an unprecedented wave of Christian emigration that increased since the eruption of the Syrian revolution three years ago.<sup>16</sup>

### **Summary**

The Arab Middle East is emptying of Christians, many of whom are convinced that their continued existence in the region is tenuous without the support of a powerful ally. A large portion of the Christians in Lebanon made a pact with the Hezbollah and the Ba'ath regime that was fighting for its existence; by the same logic of power, Israel's strength and internal stability provide a genuine guarantee for the continued existence of Christians in Israel. It is therefore on this backdrop that enlistment in the IDF should be viewed. While increasing disruption of inter-communal equilibria in Arab society and Druze harassment of their Christian neighbors in recent decades motivated many Christians were motivated to enlist in the IDF as a means of bolstering their status,<sup>17</sup> the sharp rise in the number of Christian enlistees last year and the establishment of official community organizations that promote this trend openly and actively emerged only in the wake of the revolution in Syria and the outbreak of civil war there.

The Arab Spring raised expectations of democratization and liberalization in the Arab sphere, but at the time of writing, not only did the Arab Spring lead to the collapse of regimes, it is also leading to the collapse of states. The anarchic Islamist changes that fueled the Arab Spring revolutions enhanced Christians' sense of exclusion and alienation and triggered significant doubts about their continued existence in the Middle East. For decades, Christians have attempted to reinterpret the region using modern tools, in the search for potential niches for integration, but today their very existence in the region is at stake. This dilemma lays at the basis of the crisis

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<sup>15</sup> Asher Susser, *The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World* (Brandies University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2010), p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> Rupert Shortt, "Christianophobia," p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> See summary of the report prepared by the Arab Emergency Center, *Kull al-Arab*, May 28, 2010. According to this report, the proportion of Arab towns that suffered from sectarian or clan-related violence was 39%.

experienced by Israel's Christian minority: Their enlistment in the IDF is an integral part of this crisis.

## Brian Miculitzki / An Overview of the Electronic Media

### Responses to the territorial exchange plan

- **MK Mohammad Barakeh:** “The only appropriate place for a population exchange plan is the garbage can of history”

“...We are of this place and we cannot be equated with the settlers who are where they are by virtue of the force of the Occupation and robbery [of the land]... This project challenges the legitimacy of our existence on the lands of our homeland... As a citizen of the state, as an Arab-Palestinian citizen of Israel, I would like to state that this proposal is entirely wrong... even for its very suggestion... because it is fundamentally racist, and its purpose is to reduce the number of Arab residents and at the same time increase the number of Jewish residents...”

“The other point in principle because of which we reject this racist project is the very comparison between us, the Arab citizens, and the settlers. The Arab citizens live on their land in their homeland... This is the place where they were born and where they will remain eternally... Today we are witnesses to an attempt to equate ourselves and the settlers who are where they are by the force of the Occupation and from a desire to undermine any attempt to reach a diplomatic solution based on two states [for two nations]. I am stating here clearly: The Arab citizens are not part of a colonialist project on their land. Colonialism is reflected in the settlers who have been in the occupied territories since 1967.”

(Source: *Al-Sonara* weekly website, [www.sonara.net](http://www.sonara.net), January 8, 2014)

- **Territorial Exchange and “National Security” / ‘Abd al-Hakim Mufid**

‘Abd al-Hakim Mufid, a journalist affiliated with the Islamic movement: “...We refuse to accept the idea of territorial exchange, not because we do not wish to connect to our people...”

“We refuse to accept this idea because it is a colonialist idea that presents the Occupation as a domestic issue whose ultimate purpose is not the establishment of a state but is another station on the way to the expulsion of the Arabs [from Israeli territory].”

“Perhaps the most dangerous thing in the long term is granting legitimacy to the “slow transfer” process in various locations where Arabs live, including the Negev and the Galilee, among other places.”

(Source: [www.pls48.net](http://www.pls48.net), January 15, 2014)



- **Avigdor Lieberman's statements about annexing the Triangle region to Palestine pose a threat to Israel in initiating the 'Partition Plan portfolio'**

**MK Afou Agbaria**

“Our link to our land and our homeland is not only a geographic link – it is a social, political, and economic link... To all those who argue that the Arabs do not want to accept Avigdor Lieberman's proposal because they live in the state, under an Israeli regime, at a high standard of living, we say: The Arabs have rejected this proposal because they are the ones who built up this country from the foundation. This is our homeland and we have no other homeland... Lieberman was born in Moldavia, and now he says that Israel is his homeland. Who knows, maybe in ten years, he will say that New York is his homeland [...].”

“The question arises: Why would anyone want to expel a mere two hundred thousand Arab residents... after all, there are more than one and a half million Arabs living in Israel! My answer to this is that, for there to remain an Arab minority in the Jewish state, we must return to the partition borders that were defined in 1947, and in this way, a small minority of Arabs will remain within Israel, and the demographic balance and the majority in the state will be under no danger [...].”

“First and foremost, full withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories [since 1967] is required, and a free, independent, not occupied Palestinian state should be established. Then, if the Palestinians want to discuss territorial exchanges... the issue would be relevant for negotiations between the future Palestine state and the State of Israel.”

(Source: *Al-Sonara* weekly website, [www.sonara.net](http://www.sonara.net), January 10, 2014)

- **Excerpts from an op-ed titled “The illusion created by the Kerry-Netanyahu-Lieberman trio”, by Ra'id Salah**

Sheikh Ra'id Salah, head of the extra-parliamentary faction of the Islamic movement in Israel, related to the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and especially to the territorial exchange plan proposed by Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman:

“1. Our link to our land is not only a link to stones and soil; We have a historical and cultural link to this land, and have individual and group memories related to it... We have a right to this land forever and ever... and no man has the right to take it away from us or propose that it be exchanged with another land.”

“2. Based on the link noted above, each of us has an individual right to the land, a right in respect of which I can build my house on this land or sow seeds in it... Moreover, we have a collective right to this land. [...].”

“3. Furthermore, I have a right to this land by the fact that it has been *waqf* [religious endowment] land throughout Arab-Palestinian-Muslim history. All the lands are *waqf* lands... And therefore I have an eternal right to them, in Umm al-Fahm, in Nazareth, in Zefat, in Akko, in Haifa, in Jaffa, in Lod... and in Be'er Sheva and elsewhere. [...].”

“7. In view of the all the arguments noted above, this trio must understand that my right to my land, to my home, and to my society is an eternal right and it is my duty to adhere to this right... and any attempt to disregard it is entirely invalid and constitutes

an attempt to commit a second *Nakbah* [the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948] against us.”

(Source: [www.pls48.net](http://www.pls48.net), January 11, 2014)

### **A Bi-National State**

- **Excerpts from an op-ed titled “A state of the Israeli people?”, by Radi Karayani**

“The Israeli leadership is evading all attempt to discuss the right of the Palestinian people to determine its fate, and the attempts to deal with it... [The leadership] allows [the Palestinian people] to do so in a restricted manner, under the umbrella of the Great State of Israel, in order to generate confusion and conflict... and perhaps even a civil war [*fitnah*]. [...]”

“Benjamin Netanyahu is trying – through the negotiations – to forcefully take the Palestinian people’s right for self-determination. Furthermore, he is trying to gain recognition for [the idea] that only the Jewish people have a right to its own nation state. A nation’s right for self-determination is not related to majority-minority issues: It is a right that no nation can take from another. [...]”

“The interests and the rights of the national Palestinian Arab minority in Israel are an integral part of the issue of recognition of the State of Israel... Recognition of the state as a “Jewish state” has a colonialist character and implies persecution and oppression of the Arab minority...”

“The Zionist leadership needs no trumpets or drums: It must recognize that the state is a “democratic state” that contains two nations, a state with a Jewish majority and an Arab minority. In this way it will be possible for the two nations of this country to reach a mutual understanding and begin building the state of the Israeli nation!”

(Source: Democratic Front for Peace and Equality party’s website, [www.aljabha.org](http://www.aljabha.org), August 28, 2013)

- **Excerpts from an interview with ‘Awad ‘Abd al-Fattah, Secretary General of *Balad* (National Democratic Alliance) party: “It’s time for the Palestinians in Israel to rise up against the Oslo Plan”**

Q: Is there a model that the Palestinian national movement should adopt?

A: Yes, the struggle against the apartheid in South Africa. First, our demands must be based on equality and the principles of separation and segregation... second, the movement [against apartheid] in South Africa did not adhere to a single mode of action, but exploited any mode of action that was useful (peace, military action, or popular action)

[...]

The movement in South Africa was characterized by cohesion among the forces and its goal was clear to everyone... We [the national Palestinian movement] have lost our consistency and the “clarity” of our strategic goal... The Palestinian elite began with a

demand for a “temporary state” (*al-dawla al-marhaliyya*) and ended with a demand for 22% of the area of Palestine and accepting Israel as a Jewish state.

Q: Do you see any proof that the Palestinian leadership has adhered to the solution of a bi-national state?

[...]

A: The dispute between the various groups of Palestinians centers on the bi-national state solution... The most important goal now is to unite all the factions of the Palestinian nation under a single idea, unite the various groups – for example, the Palestinian in Israeli territories and the refugees – under a single program of struggle.

Q: In your opinion, are there other ways to unite the ranks of the Palestinian leadership in Israel?

A: The main way will be through an Arab Follow-Up Committee which will be elected in direct elections... This Committee will effectively be the Palestinian parliament in the territory of Israel, and will allow us, as a minority, to gain a national platform outside the Knesset.

(Source: [www.arabs48.com](http://www.arabs48.com), January 2, 2013)

- **A conference entitled “Beyond the two-state solution” – ‘Abd al-Fattah: “A bi-national state is a human alternative to the Jewish ghetto”**

At a conference organized by the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, ‘Awad ‘Abd al-Fattah noted that life in a single state, whether a bi-national state or a state that will be established on the basis of individual citizenship (or, in other words, a state of all its citizens) or any other type of confederation, will be the only human alternative to the Jewish ghetto that was founded by the Zionist Movement in the heart of an Arab region...

‘Abd al-Fattah noted, “Today there are already two Jewish states.” In his opening remarks, he argued that the two-state solution was realized long ago: “There’s a Jewish state inside the territory of the 1948 lands and there’s a Jewish state in the West Bank and Jerusalem, which is the Settlers’ state...”

Concluding, he stated, “There is no just solution in the foreseeable future... especially due to the extreme nature of Israel’s position.”

(Source: [www.arabs48.com](http://www.arabs48.com), May 3, 2013)

### **The Christian Arabs in Israel**

- **MK Zoabi was sent away from a debate at a Knesset committee after denouncing the call for Christian Arab enlistment in the IDF**

...MK Hanin Zoabi [*Balad* party] attacked the representative of the Forum of Christian IDF Soldiers and noted that there is not one shred of dignity in his being a representative of this forum and that he represents himself alone. At the meeting, Zoabi “thanked” MK Yariv Levin [Likud party] for once again initiating the debate on Arab identity and rights. She stressed that the Christian and Muslim Arabs will not be

easily “purchased” as long as there is no recognition of their rights, which stem from their historical identity and their roots in the region.

MK Jamal Zahalka [head of *Balad* party in the Knesset] noted, “The Forum represents only the Likud and the extreme right. Participants of this forum have abandoned their nation and have joined its persecutors. Instead of defending their people, they have effectively partnered with the racists...” MK Zahalka rejected the Forum, which he argues represents no one.

(Source: [www.arabs48.com](http://www.arabs48.com), February 5, 2014)

- **Excerpts from an op-ed entitled “Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Common Fate”, by Head of the Catholic community in Haifa, Agabious Abu S’aada.**

“Past experience has shown that Christians and Muslims are the product of a single melting pot that is the Arab culture, where each party maintained its distinctive religious character, and its traditions and customs...”

“In all Arab countries, good relations ensue between senior Christian and Muslim clerics. These senior clerics thwart any incident that might adversely affect the relationship between Muslims and Christians. Muslims’ trust is enhanced by their shared life and destiny with Christian Arabs, and by the fact that Christian Arabs constitute a bridge between them and the west, which can be beneficial for Muslims in Arab countries...”

“Christian Arabs suffer from the same problems as do Muslim Arabs. This suffering, whatever its cause, motivates Christian-Muslim cooperation, which protects the existence of the Christian Arabs within the overall social fabric. [...] The Christian-Muslim dialogue has become a necessity in view of their shared life and destiny, and in view of the events and developments in the region. The problems are the same, as we live in the same homeland...”

“We must strive relentlessly to create a new man with a new perspective, a new mentality, and a new culture based on acceptance of the other and the other’s distinct features... The clergy must teach their followers how to collaborate with Islam, and the clerics in the mosques must teach their followers how to collaborate with Christianity.”

(Source: Hadash party web site, [www.aljabha.org](http://www.aljabha.org), February 10, 2014)