



יוזמות קרן אברהם
مبادرات صندوق ابراهيم

The Abraham Fund Initiatives

Arab Local Authorities' Preparedness for Emergencies

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Building a Shared Future for Israel's Jewish & Arab Citizens

The Abraham Fund Initiatives is a Jewish-Arab nonprofit organization for social change dedicated to promoting social inclusion and equality between the Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel in order to create a prosperous, secure, and just society. The organization seeks to realize the promise stated in Israel's Declaration of Independence to "ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex" and to grant Jews and Arabs "full and equal citizenship." The organization works to advance these goals through policy advocacy based on innovative social models, broad-based initiatives, and outreach activities.

The Abraham Fund Initiatives employs approximately 30 Jewish and Arab staff members and is directed jointly by Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu and Mohammad Darawshe.

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Preface

During the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006, dozens of missiles were fired at the North of Israel killing 44 civilians, 19 of whom were Arabs. After the war, several reports by the State Comptroller found that local authorities in Northern Israel had not been sufficiently prepared for the threat of missile attacks, and that the situation in the Arab local authorities was particularly grave. The Comptroller found that over 70 percent of Arab residents in the North did not have access to shelters and protection during the war and noted that this was due to neglect on the part of both the central and local government. During the fire in the Carmel Forests in 2010 and the floods in Baqa al-Gharbiya and Taybeh in 2013, residents of Arab communities were again forced to cope with a severe lack of basic emergency and rescue services and with grave shortcomings in emergency infrastructures.

The study presented here seeks to provide an updated portrait of emergency preparedness in the Arab local authorities regarding both security and civilian related situations. The study examined 24 Arab local authorities from around Israel reflecting the diversity of Arab communities in terms of size and demographics. The principal finding that emerges from the study is that most of the Arab local authorities examined do not consider themselves prepared for an emergency.

The study found that Arab local authorities have very limited access to basic emergency services such as fire-fighting stations and emergency medical services. Moreover, it emerged that the shelters and protected structures within educational institutions in the Arab local authorities examined are sufficient for a mere one-third of the students. All the Arab local authorities face a severe shortage of protected public buildings. Most of the authorities examined now have emergency equipment storerooms, but these are not properly equipped. Regarding specific organizational infrastructures for emergencies, it was found that approximately half of the Arab local authorities do not have a local emergency procedure and one-third do not have an emergency headquarters nor a situation or control room. The findings regarding emergency staff show that most of the Arab local authorities examined now have a security officer, which was not the case in the past. However, approximately half of these officers lack any professional background in the emergency field and many

of them encounter difficulties in managing emergency preparedness in the local authority. It is important to note that all the local authorities we examined now have functional and well-deployed siren systems – a significant improvement over the situation in the past.

An analysis of the prevailing policies of governmental bodies in recent years shows that despite governmental and other reports highlighting the need for a comprehensive and specific plan to improve emergency preparedness in Arab local authorities, to date no such plan has been formulated. Moreover, the expansion of the activities of governmental bodies in the field has been sporadic and has failed to close the gap between Arab and Jewish local authorities created over the years with the necessary speed. Furthermore, governmental action fails to take into account the unique character of the Arab local authorities and Arab society.

The study examines the specific obstacles facing Arab local authorities in the field of emergency preparedness and presents numerous practical recommendations for improving the situation. The recommendations are intended for the different bodies responsible for emergency preparedness, including the Home Front Defense Ministry, the Home Front Command, the Interior Ministry, the Ministries of Education, Health, and Welfare, the Arab local authorities and civil society organizations.

We hope this document will provide a foundation for broad-based and comprehensive action by the government, the Arab local authorities, and civil society organizations and will encourage them to close the existing gaps in the preparedness of Arab local authorities in Israel to cope with emergencies.

Sincerely,

Mohammad Darawshe



Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu



Co-Executive Directors, The Abraham Fund Initiatives

Executive Summary

This study seeks to present an up-to-date picture of the extent to which Arab local authorities are prepared for emergency situations. The study was based on an in-depth review of the legal foundation for emergency preparedness and emergency activities, as well as the organizational structure of Israel's emergency system. Both are examined in comparison to two prominent European models. The study presents the findings of numerous government reports, academic studies, and investigations relating to emergency preparedness in Israel in general and in the Arab local authorities in particular.

The study focused on two key issues: (1) The extent to which Arab local authorities are prepared for various emergency situations; (2) Factors influencing the preparedness of Arab local authorities for the different types of emergencies.

The study was based on a thorough mapping of the emergency preparedness of Arab local authorities and how they responded to emergencies. The mapping was conducted toward the end of 2012 in a sample of 24 Arab local authorities from around Israel reflecting the diversity of Arab communities in terms of size and demographics (Muslims, Druze and Christians). The mapping included semi-structured interviews with 145 interviewees representing three significant groups of stakeholders in the field of emergency preparedness: (1) Elected public officials and senior employees within the local authorities; (2) Senior officials in governmental bodies; (3) Directors of civil society organizations.

Separate questionnaires were prepared for each of these three groups as part of the research process. In the case of the elected public officials and senior local employees group, six separate questionnaires were formulated addressing: Head or deputy head of the authority; treasurer or executive director; security officer; local engineer; director of the welfare department; director of the education department.

The data were analyzed in accordance with the principles of both quantitative and qualitative research. The data analysis is presented in the 'Discussion and Conclusions' section, including discussion of the theoretical background. The study findings show that many countries around the world have changed their

perception of emergency preparedness over recent decades. This change is reflected in a transition from focusing on preparing for war to an emphasis on broader preparations suited for civilian emergencies – natural disasters, industrial disasters, and so forth. Countries with a sophisticated and efficient system for coping with emergencies have a government ministry or governmental agency that acts under the terms of a detailed and comprehensive law defining the authority and responsibility of all the relevant bodies, as well as regulations, standards, budgets and monitoring means. The perception of emergency preparedness in Israel has also changed, but discourse on the subject is still essentially security-oriented, as a result of the geopolitical conflict in which Israel has been involved for six decades. This reality influences the structure of Israel's emergency preparedness system and, in particular, is manifested in the fact that a military body – the Home Front Command – is the main agency responsible for ensuring that local authorities are prepared to cope with an emergency.

The study found that the existing law – the Civil Defense Law (1951) – has shortcomings that impede the ability of local authorities to prepare for emergencies. These shortcomings include: The absence of a statutory definition of the staff member responsible for the local emergency department; the lack of systemic mapping of the current situation as a basis for the preparation of mandatory work plans; and the absence of earmarked budgets for emergency preparedness that reflect the specific characteristics of the Arab local authorities.

The study concluded that the Arab local authorities are strongly affected by the shortcomings in the law, as well as by a protracted policy of discrimination and neglect in the field of infrastructures (including rescue and medical infrastructures) and in economic, social and educational development. Until the Second Lebanon War, Arab local authorities were not even included in governmental plans for emergencies. The study shows that in recent years there has been a significant change in government policy leading to an expansion of activities in the Arab local authorities (particularly in terms of budgetary allocations and the provision of training and exercises drills). However, these measures cannot close the gaps created over many years with the necessary speed, given the anticipated threats and taking into account the specific characteristics of the Arab local authorities.

The principal finding that emerges from the study is that most of the Arab local authorities examined do not consider themselves prepared for an emergency.

An examination of infrastructures specific for emergencies shows that Arab local authorities do not have adequate access to basic emergency services such as emergency medical services and fire-fighting stations. Moreover, the study shows that shelters and protected structures within educational institutions in the Arab local authorities examined are sufficient for a mere one-third of the students. All Arab local authorities face a severe shortage of protected public buildings. Most of the authorities examined now have emergency equipment storerooms, but these are not properly equipped. Welfare departments lack protective equipment for emergency workers and most of the engineering departments are not prepared to cope with emergency situations. It is worth noting that all the local authorities we examined now have functional and well-deployed siren systems - a significant improvement of the situation from 2006.

An examination of the special organizational infrastructure for emergencies shows that half the Arab local authorities examined do not have an emergency procedure and one-third lack an emergency headquarters and a situation or control room. Conversely, most of the local authorities now have databases about the local population, including information about special populations, and networks of emergency volunteers exist, though approximately half the volunteers have not received any relevant training.

An examination of emergency staff shows that most of the Arab local authorities surveyed now have a security officer, though approximately half of these officers do not have a professional background in the field of emergency response, and most of them are employed only on a part-time basis. It was also found that approximately half the local authorities examined have a security officer for the educational institutions, though again half of these officers do not have background in this field. All the schools in the local authorities examined now have security assistants. Most of the welfare departments have an emergency coordinator, while only one-fifth of the engineering departments have a staff member responsible for emergency situations.

The study revealed a high level of variance in terms of the level of awareness of emergency-related issues among the different officials and in the amount of time they devote to advancing these issues. The security officers showed a high level of awareness and invested considerable time in this field; other officials showed an intermediate level of awareness and investment of time; and the heads of authorities

showed a low level of awareness and invested little time. This finding is of crucial importance since the survey also showed that the attitude of the head of the authority has a profound influence on the emergency preparedness of their local authority. The study further showed that many department directors lack knowledge relating to emergencies (including knowledge of the emergency budget). Due to their heavy workloads pressure of work, they concentrate on response-oriented, reactive actions rather than proactive steps to prepare for emergencies.

The study shows that in most of the local authorities examined, the security officers encounter difficulties in leading and developing the field of emergency preparedness. There are various reasons for this: the security officers are not currently employed in standard staff positions, thus facing the constant threat of cuts; their professional status is problematic, since they are appointed by the head of the local authority, who, as noted above, does not see emergency preparedness as a priority; and, in some cases, the appointment is made for political rather than professional reasons. Lastly, it is unclear who is responsible for the professional supervision of security officers.

The examination of the attitudes among officials offered several explanations for the low level of emergency preparedness among Arab residents: the residents' low level of awareness of the subject; their assumption that there is little chance that they will be affected during a war; their religious beliefs; their focus on everyday problems; and, in some cases, sensitivities relating to contacts between the Arab public and the military.

Regarding the civil society organizations, the study found that both general Israeli organizations which are active in this field and Arab organizations have a low level of activity on this issue in Arab local authorities. This exacerbates the difficulties Arab local authorities face in preparing for emergencies.

Discussion of the findings raises several key conclusions as well as recommendations relating to the governmental bodies, the Arab local authorities, and civil society organizations.

The following summarizes the recommendations:

- **Governmental bodies** should thoroughly examine the proposed law currently on the table before the Knesset regarding the management of emergency situations,

to include those aspects lacking today, and addressing the specific characteristics and needs of the Arab public and the Arab local authorities.

- **The Home Front Defense Ministry** should establish a joint working group including representatives from relevant government ministries, the Home Front Command, Arab local authorities, and civil society organizations. The working group should develop a comprehensive work plan aimed at closing the existing gaps in the field of emergency preparedness in the Arab local authorities.
- **The Home Front Command** should examine the current training, guidance and drill system and prepare a designated system for the Arab population in cooperation with Arab experts, representatives of the Arab local authorities, and Arab civil society organizations. It is recommended that the system focus on civilian emergency scenarios, be adapted to the language and culture of the Arab citizens, and include training and guidance for youth and young adults. The system should also include special training for the heads of local authorities, help in preparing an emergency procedure for each authority, and training the relevant local officials.
- **The Ministry of Interior** should prepare a detailed survey in order to pinpoint the needs of all the Arab local authorities in the field of emergency preparedness in order to formulate a thorough and comprehensive work plan that includes clear objectives, timetables for implementation, and earmarked budgets. Ministry of Interior should also formulate clear criteria for budgeting local authorities, including differential and distinctly-marked budgets for emergency preparedness. These criteria should take into account the socioeconomic ranking of the authorities, size, the condition of the specific emergency infrastructure, as well as the scope of annual assistance provided over the years. The ministry should also meet its undertaking to the State Comptroller to build and supply emergency equipment storerooms and implement the Comptroller's recommendations regarding protection and shelters in public institutions, as well as allocating and funding a staff position for a security officer in all the Arab local authorities.
- **The Ministry of Education** should continue to budget 75 percent of the cost of employment of a security officer for educational institutions, and to provide such a position even in small local authorities. The Ministry of Education should ensure adequate shelters and protection for all Arab school children, including those with special needs. The Ministry should develop an emergency

preparedness plan in cooperation with Arab experts (as part of the “life skills” program or as a separate program) and should run the program for all age groups. The program should include parent-child activities and the strengthening of the role of young people as leaders in the field of emergency preparedness as “emergency monitors”, as part of a “personal commitment” program, and within the youth movements.

- **The Ministry of Social Welfare** should allocate a reserved and distinctly-marked budget to the Arab local authorities for emergency preparedness. It should ensure that all workers in welfare departments who act in emergency situations have protective equipment. The Ministry should also expand the training and guidance programs for all the staff of welfare departments and for emergency volunteers in the Arab local authorities.
- **The Ministry of Health** should prepare an overall plan for closing the existing gaps in emergency medical services within the Arab local authorities. This should include the provision of Magen David Adom stations, emergency medical stations, and sheltered clinics in these authorities.

Several recommendations were directed to the Arab local authorities:

- **The Committee of Heads of Arab Local Authorities** is to position emergency preparedness as an important issue on the agenda of the Arab local authorities. Above all, it is vital to raise awareness of this issue among authority heads, municipal staff, and the general Arab public.
- **The Arab local authorities** should establish an emergency procedure for every local authority and act to inculcate the procedure. The authorities should gain greater expertise relating to emergencies; use resources to improve the field; enhance their cooperation with voluntary organizations; and allocate earmarked budgets for emergency preparedness. The heads of authorities should appoint security officers on the basis of purely professional considerations; should support the officer and help him function as well as possible; and should refrain from imposing tasks on him that do not relate to his function.
- **The civil society organizations** should expand their activities in Arab local authorities. The organizations should promote the subject of emergency preparedness among the Arab public and among decision makers, including

adaptation of these activities to meet the specific characteristics of Arab society and Arab local authorities.

We believe that improving emergency preparedness is vital for the practical reason of preventing casualties and damage to property and to the fabric of life. In addition, from a value-based perspective, all Israeli citizens – Arabs and Jews alike – have a right to egalitarian and fair services in the field of emergency preparedness . We are confident that joint action by all the stakeholders – governmental bodies, Arab local authorities, civil society organizations, and the Arab public – can improve the situation and contribute to promoting equality between Arabs and Jews in Israel.