



יוזמות קרן אברהם
مبادرات صندوق إبراهيم

The Abraham Fund Initiatives

Social Inclusion & Equality
**Governmental Responsibility
for Social Inclusion
and Jewish-Arab Equality
in Israel**

□ Position Paper ♦ December 2008 □



**Social Inclusion &
Jewish-Arab Equality in Israel**



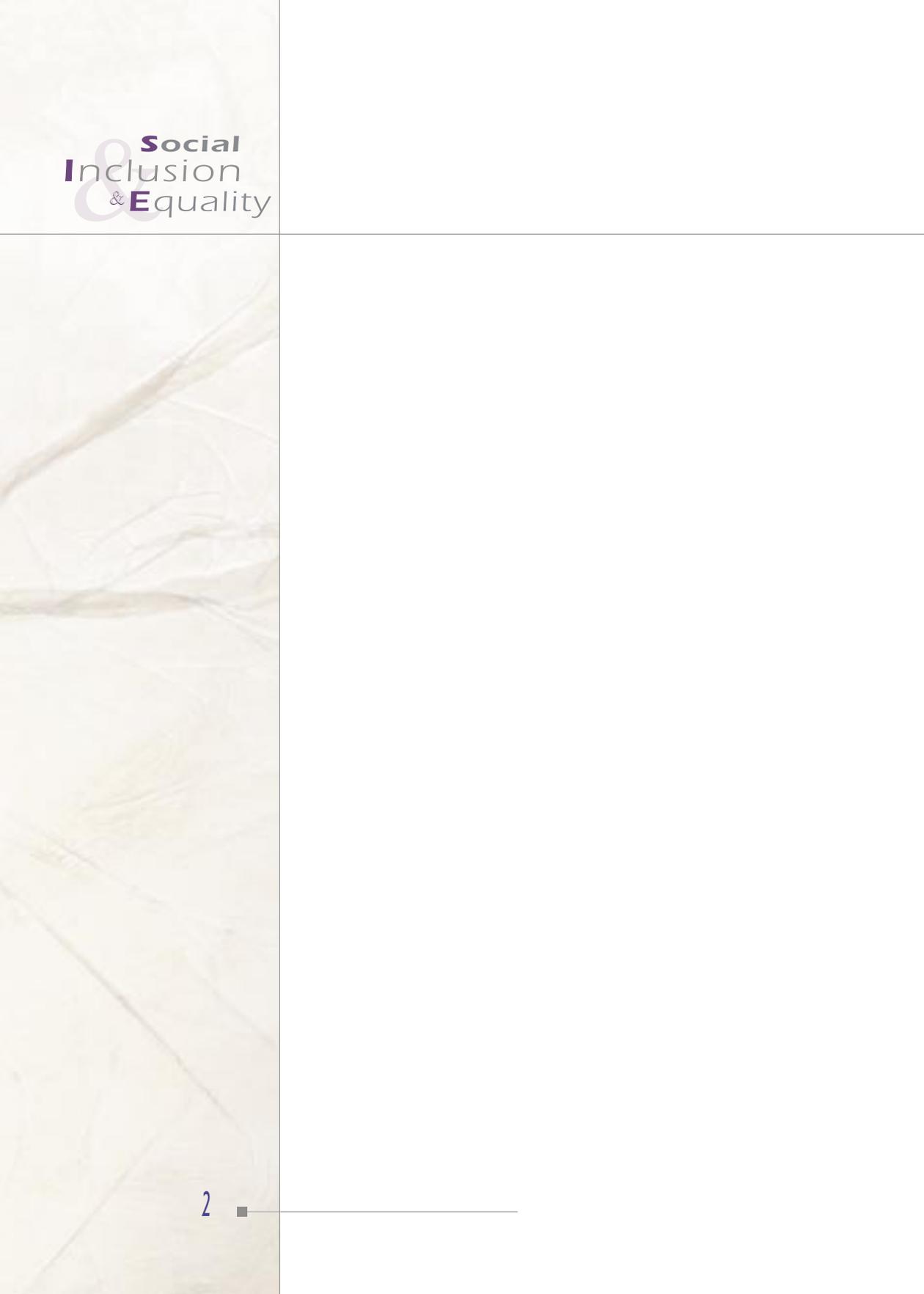
יוזמות קרן אברהם
مبادرات صندوق إبراهيم

The Abraham Fund Initiatives

Social Inclusion & Equality
**Governmental Responsibility
for Social Inclusion and
Jewish-Arab Equality in Israel**

Position Paper + December 2008

G.G. Communications Center Neve Ilan
Harey Yehuda 90850, Israel
Tel: 972-2-5349300 Fax: 972-2-5349301
info@abrahamfund.org.il + www.abrahamfund.org



Social
Inclusion
& **E**quality

Overview

Considering the deterioration of Jewish-Arab relations over the past decade, this paper proposes governmental actions needed to overcome divisions in Israeli society and achieve social inclusion and integration, inspired by examples from similar initiatives in Northern Ireland.

This paper includes the following sections:

1. Background on the State of Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel
2. Government Action for Social Inclusion and Equality: The Northern Ireland Experience
3. Government Policies for Social Inclusion and Jewish-Arab Equality: The Benefits
4. Principles for Governmental Responsibility
5. Summary

This position paper was initially presented at the 2008 Herzliya Conference.

**Background:
The State of
Jewish-Arab
Relations in Israel**

The Orr Commission Report, published after the October 2000 events, constituted the first official recognition by a government agency of the depth of discrimination and institutional exclusion experienced by Israel's Arab citizens since the establishment of the state. Many had believed that this seminal event would serve as a turning point in Jewish-Arab relations and be an opportunity for change in the government's policy toward its Arab citizens. In practice, the Commission's recommendations have not been implemented. In the past seven years, no actual improvement in the state's stance toward its Arab citizens has been evident, in spite of the fact that the Orr Commission explicitly mentioned the failure to reduce the discrepancies between the two populations, and the policy of "no-policy," as a central factor fueling the frustration and alienation of Arab citizens.

Since the early 2000s, we have witnessed a sequence of events that signal the deterioration of relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Among the main events in recent years that have attracted the focus of the media and which signal the ongoing decline, the following are noted: the October events; the establishment of the Orr Commission and its subsequent report; the population/land transfer discourse; the rise of the Israel Beitenu party in the recent elections and its inclusion in the government; Balad MK Azmi Bashara's departure from Israel; the "Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law" which prevents Arab spouses residing on both sides of the Green Line from living together in Israel;¹ the failure of the "Constitution

1 The law precludes that official status in Israel be granted to residents of Gaza and the West Bank. This law was passed in 2003, extended in 2006, and its restrictions expanded in 2007. As a result of a judicial decision, thousands of Arab-Palestinian families are unable to live together due to their nationality. For additional information, see: <http://www.adalah.org/heb/famunif.php>.

“

Many had believed that the Orr Commission would serve as a turning point and an opportunity for change in the government's policy toward its Arab citizens, but in practice, the Commission's recommendations have not been implemented and no actual improvement has been evident.

(page 4)

”

by Consensus” initiative; the publication of the “Future Vision” documents by several prominent groups in Arab civic society;² the Second Lebanon War and the subsequent deepening divide between Jews and Arabs; the decline in election participation rates of the Arab population; the continuing demolition of homes in Arab towns; the Peki'in events; the debate over civil/national service for Arab citizens and the establishment of a special governmental body for promoting this issue; the acceptance of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) Law in the first reading;³ the publication of the Association for Civil Rights' report and additional annual reports, showing the deterioration in relations and increased racism in Israeli society; the widening of socio-economic gaps between Jews and Arabs according to the Poverty Report, especially in regards to Arab children; and finally the call by sections in the Arab society to boycott Israel's 60th Independence Day celebrations.

The polarization in Jewish-Arab relations is tangibly reflected in the figures which follow: **Figure 1** presents the change in attitudes of the Jewish society in Israel toward the Arab population between 2005 and 2006, published in the 2007 Racism Index and the 2007

- 2 The following four documents were published between 2006 and 2007: “Equal Constitution for All?” Mossawa Center (November, 2006); “The Future Vision for Palestinian Arabs in Israel” published on behalf of the National Committee for Arab Heads of Local Governments in Israel (December, 2006); “The Democratic Constitution” by Adalah (February, 2007); and “The Haifa Declaration” published by Mada-al-Carmel Institute (May, 2007). The documents are available on the websites of the above mentioned organizations.
- 3 A bill proposed by MK Uri Ariel of the National Union-Mafdal provides that land owned by the JNF (13% of the lands in Israel which were originally owned by Arab refugees or Internal Displaced Persons) will be allocated exclusively to Jews. The bill was approved by a significant majority of 64 for, 16 against, and 1 abstention. For more information, see: <http://www.adalah.org/heb/jnf.php>.

“

Several statutory governmental and quasi-governmental institutions have been established through legislation in Northern Ireland in order to institutionalize policies of inclusion and equality. These institutions have been structured to be independent of the changing political composition of the government and of any given individual

(page 10)

”

Report of the Association for Civil Rights. These statistics indicate a rise in ethnocentric and racist attitudes. They are consistent with the statistics of the 2007 Democracy Index presented in **Figure 2**, which show a gradual decline between the years 2000 and 2007 of support among the Jewish public for equal political rights of Arab citizens and the inclusion of Arab parties in the coalition government. In 2007, only 22% of Jewish society supported political equality, compared to 46% in 2000, reflecting the lowest rate since the early 1990s.

The polarization is also reflected in statistics regarding the Arab population. **Figure 3** presents the declining participation rate of Arab citizens in Knesset elections between 1996 and 2006. These statistics express their deepening sense of alienation. The figures are highlighted by the turnout for the special Prime Minister elections in 2001, in which the voting rate of the Arab population was a mere 18%, compared to 77.2% in the Jewish population. In view of these figures, it is not surprising that only 33% of the Arab citizens believe that Israel is a democracy, according to a survey conducted by the Mada-al-Carmel Institute. 62% of the survey participants believe that Israel cannot simultaneously be a Jewish and democratic state; 87% view the Law of Return as discriminatory legislation; and 94% view Zionism as a racist movement (Mada-al-Carmel, 2004).

CHART 1: Attitudes Amongst the Jewish Population

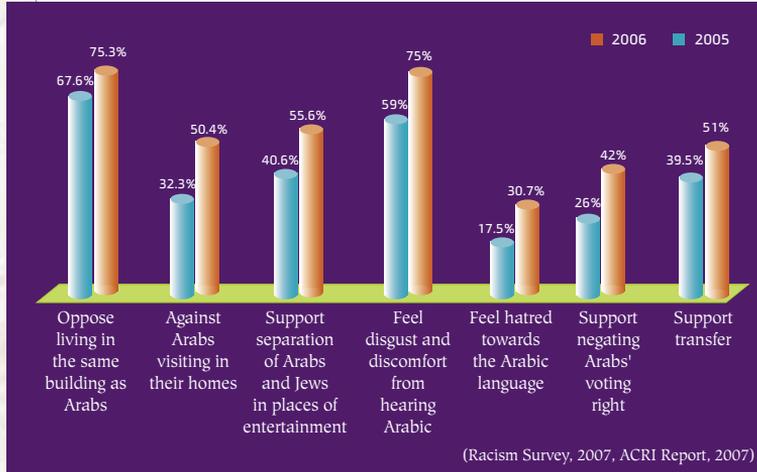


CHART 2: Support Amongst the Jewish Public for Political Equality for the Arab Minority (The Inclusion of Arab Parties in the Government, Including as Ministers)

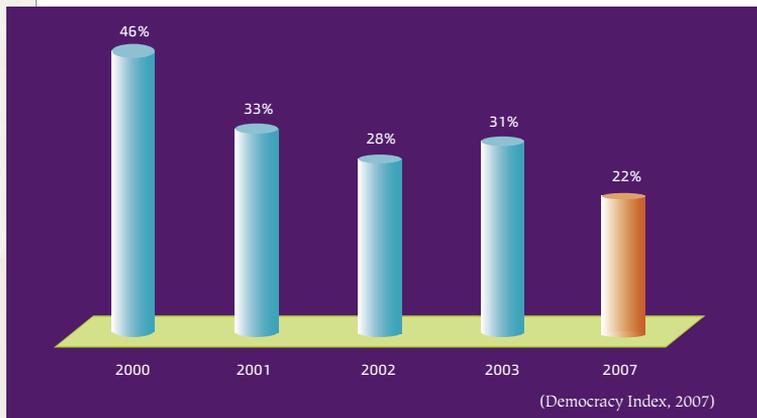
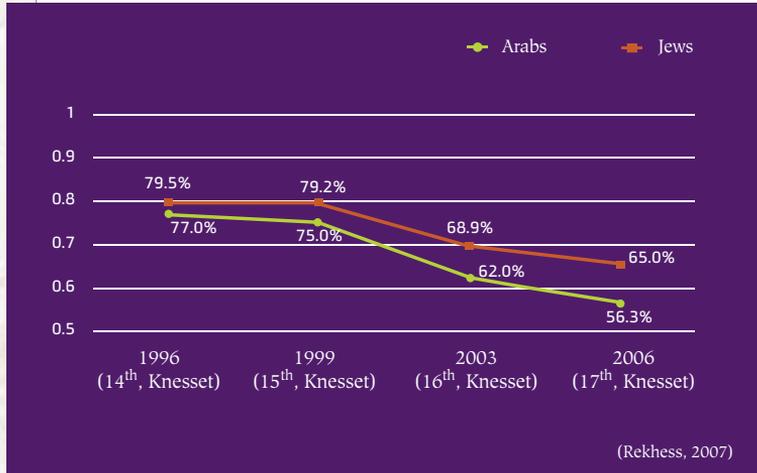


CHART 3: Voter Participation Rates in Knesset Elections



2

**Government
Action for
Social Inclusion
and Equality:
The Northern
Ireland
Experience**

Northern Ireland offers one of the most significant examples of vigorous, effective government action to promote social inclusion and equality in a divided society. This document does not address the basis for comparison between Northern Ireland and Israel, the features of the Northern Ireland situation, nor the types of government action being practiced there. These issues should be discussed in a separate, in-depth essay. Nonetheless, we note several areas of government action in Northern Ireland that may contribute to the discussion about the development of potential tools and government strategies for social inclusion and Jewish-Arab equality in Israel.

**FORMULATING
A VISION OF A
SHARED FUTURE**

In 2005, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland published the “A Shared Future” document that was disseminated as official ministerial policy and served as a strategic framework for generating good relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The document was the result of a vibrant public debate on the topic, involving community representatives from diverse arenas of public activity. The document's broad scope and aims were designed to transform the existing political structure, while instigating changes to increase inclusion and equality in all areas of life, and promote conciliation between the communities. Since its publication, government agencies and the two communities in Northern Ireland are actualizing the documents, declarations and policies.

For additional information see: <http://www.asharedfuture.gov.uk>.

LEGISLATION

Northern Ireland has one of the world's most progressive sets of legislation in the area of social inclusion and equality,⁴ most notably in the wake of the 1998 Belfast Agreement (“Good Friday”), which contains a collection of laws known as Section 75 that guarantees equality, fair representation and human rights in diverse areas of life. It must be noted that legislation in these areas preceded the Agreement by several years, and significant constitutional

4 The following is a list of the major laws on inclusion and integration in Northern Ireland: Equal Pay Act, 1970; Sex Discrimination, 1976; Race Relations, 1997; Fair Employment & Treatment, 1998; Northern Ireland Act, 1998; Equality Order, 2000; Employment Equality, 2003; Hate Crime Legislation, 2004; Special Educational Needs, 2005.

**ESTABLISHING
INSTITUTIONS**

reforms were also conducted after the Agreement was signed. The system of laws and its concomitant enforcement have proven to be highly effective in reducing discrimination and enhancing equal opportunities in Northern Ireland, despite the fact that Northern Ireland (like the rest of the United Kingdom) has no constitution.

Several statutory governmental and quasi-governmental institutions (with independent Boards of Directors, who receive government funding and are not yet formally subordinate to the government) have been established through legislation in Northern Ireland. In order to institutionalize policies of inclusion and equality, these organizations have been structured to be independent of the changing political composition of the government and of any given individual. The main areas of activity of these organizations include drafting and monitoring legislation and policy; supervision; enforcement; and establishment of local and national partnerships between communities. Several government agencies, such as the Northern Ireland Commission for Human Rights, are active in areas that would be considered in Israel to be within the scope of civil society. Furthermore, one of the governmental areas that underwent the most significant transformation in Northern Ireland, and which is considered to be enormously successful, is the Policing Service of Northern Ireland. The transformation of the police force in Northern Ireland is a topic of study in many places throughout the world. This significant process was rooted in changing the notion of policing as a means of control by the majority over the minority and developing a new awareness and service orientation for equitable

“

The development of sustainable frameworks and prioritizing majority-minority relations as a major national goal is an urgent and necessary step in advancing social inclusion and Jewish-Arab equality.
(page 15)

”

policing services for all sections of the population. These changes have been achieved by involving local communities in decisions dealing with policing, inclusion of all communities in the police force, ending the dominant status of the majority group in the police force, the establishment of supervisory and consulting agencies to the police, and increased transparency and accountability of the police force in general.

For additional information on the major government and quasi-governmental institutions that implement policies of inclusion and equality in Northern Ireland, please refer to the following:

First Minister and Deputy First Minister:
<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk>

Police Service of Northern Ireland:
<http://www.psn.police.uk>

Northern Ireland Policing Board:
<http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk>

Equality Commission:
<http://www.equalityni.org/site/default.asp?secid=home>

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission:
<http://www.nihrc.org>

Community Relations Council:
<http://www.community-relations.org.uk>

**The Benefits of
Government Policies
for Social Inclusion
and Jewish-Arab
Equality**

SECURITY

- National security
- Personal security
- Social cohesion

ECONOMY

- Economic growth
- Reduced government expenditures

VALUES

- Strengthening democracy
- Cultural wealth and diversity
- Religious and ethical values
- Universal and humanitarian values
- Fulfilling the vision of Israel's Declaration of Independence
- Equal opportunities

POLITICS

- Regional integration
- Palestinian-Israeli agreement
- International legitimacy

There are diverse benefits of government policies for inclusion and Jewish-Arab equality in Israel and the realization of full and equal citizenship for Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. The far-reaching significance of implementing such policies is reflected in the following areas:

Principles for Governmental Responsibility

Support for these claims may be found in studies and publications of The Abraham Fund Initiatives and other organizations, based upon research and experience in Israel and worldwide.

In light of the issues addressed above, we call for governmental responsibility, informed by the following principles:

- **Granting tangible expressions to the centrality of majority-minority relations in Israel**
Public statements and declarations are needed by leaders, especially the government, addressing the urgency and significance of strengthening Arab-Jewish relations in Israel.
- **Dialogue with Arab leadership**
It is essential that the Israeli Government conduct ongoing dialogue with influential public figures in Arab society, including the elected leadership, intellectuals, and other representatives of the Arab community.
- **Developing a shared vision for both populations**
Formulation of a shared vision for all of Israel's citizens is essential for a shared future. Absence of such a vision encourages separatist tendencies, and deepens the divisions between the communities.
- **De-legitimizing exclusion and inequality**
Government institutions must serve as a model for inclusion and equality by guaranteeing fair representation of Arab citizens in the public sector, and by combating discriminatory practices within the civil service and beyond.

- **Legislation**
Specific progressive legislation is necessary to prevent discrimination against the Arab community, and should be accompanied by effective means of enforcement.
- **Establishment of statutory agencies for inclusion and equality**
Agencies should be established in order to advise, supervise and enforce inclusive and equitable practices, established through legislation. These agencies should operate independently of any specific government composition or coalition.
- **Creating “shared spaces” promoting interaction and partnerships between the communities**
It is imperative to nurture existing models, as well as develop new models for a shared society in all realms of life, including education, joint industrial zones, and others.
- **Confidence-building measures between government institutions and the Arab society**
Israel's governmental and legal institutions must take action to build trust with the Arab community, include Arab citizens in decision making processes, and guarantee equitable services to Arab and Jewish citizens.

Summary

If we wish to halt the distressing deterioration in Jewish-Arab relations that we have witnessed in recent years and embark on a path towards a shared society, it is urgent and essential to promote social inclusion and Jewish-Arab equality. This can be achieved through the development of sustainable frameworks for addressing majority-minority relations in Israel, and prioritizing these issues as a major national goal. The Government of Israel must recognize and fulfill its responsibility in this area, which will make a significant contribution to the prosperity, stability and cohesion of Israeli society for the future.

 **Social Inclusion &**
Jewish-Arab Equality in Israel



יוזמות קרן אברהם
مبادرات صندوق إبراهيم

The Abraham Fund Initiatives

G.G. Communications Center Neve Ilan, Harey Yehuda 90850, Israel
Tel: 972-2-5349300 Fax: 972-2-5349301
info@abrahamfund.org.il + www.abrahamfund.org

ISBN 978-965-91366-0-5