Violence, Crime and Policing in Arab Towns

Personal Security Report - 2018

Nohad Ali and Ruth Lewin-Chen

June 2019
Violence, Crime and Policing in Arab Towns

Personal Security Report - 2018

Nohad Ali and Ruth Lewin-Chen

Author: Dr. Nohad Ali and Ruth Lewin-Chen

Academic Advisor and Chairman of the Jewish-Arab-State Sector at the Samuel Neaman Institute at the Technion: Dr. Nuhad Ali

Editing: Dr. Nehama Baruch

Arabic Translation: Rima Abu Qatish

English Translation: Shaul Vardi

Design & Printing: Reem Graphic Design


June 2019
The 2018 Personal Security Index is the second report issued on the subject of violence, personal security, and policing in Arab communities in Israel.

The Abraham Initiatives publishes this annual report in order to provide readers with an up-to-date picture concerning attitudes among Arab citizens on issues relating to policing and violence. The reports also monitors the work of the police in the Arab population and the implementation of Government Decision 1402 for enhancing personal security in the Arab sector.

The index was launched in recognition of the alarming reality in Arab society, which has seen a sharp rise in the level of crime and violence over recent years. A total of 71 Arab citizens were killed in 2017, accounting for over 61 percent of murder and manslaughter victims in Israel in that year – three times the weight of the Arab population in the state.

The main reasons for violence in Arab society are: inadequate police presence in Arab communities; the socioeconomic condition of the Arab population – half of all Arab families are defined as poor, and almost two-thirds of Arab children live below the poverty line; high unemployment, particularly among young adults; changes in the role of the family in Arab society, including a transition to a more individualistic society, so that the family no longer constitutes a source of security and law enforcement as it did in the past – while the official authorities are still not filling this function adequately in the lives of Arab citizens; and inequality in service-provision for Arab citizens, as reflected, for example, in the sparse presence of government institutions in Arab communities.

In recent years, government officials have increasingly recognized that the longstanding attitude of the police toward Arab citizens has been inadequate and inegalitarian. At the same time, there has been grow-
ing awareness within Arab society that violence and crime now constitute a strategic threat that is causing serious damage. Both sides—the government and the Arab public—recognize that it will not be possible to combat crime and violence effectively without cooperation based on mutual trust.

Government Decision 922, adopted in December 2015, allocated unprecedented resources for promoting the economic development of Arab communities. Government Decision 1402, adopted in April 2016, sought to improve the level of personal security in the Arab sector and in Jerusalem. The decision outlined the following objectives: The establishment of a new administrative authority for police services in Arab society; the recruitment of thousands of police officers, including members of Arab society; the establishment of new police stations in Arab communities; and the upgrading of existing stations.

The 2018 personal security index focuses on four spheres:

(1) Perceptions and attitudes among Arab citizens regarding the scale of violence and crime, and prominent phenomena in this field, in their communities; (2) The level of exposure of Arab citizens to violence and crime, whether directly or more generally in their community; (3) The willingness of Arab citizens to join efforts to combat violence; (4) Attitudes among Arab citizens toward the police and their impressions of police behavior toward them.

The survey was held on the basis of a representative sample of the entire Arab population. For comparison purposes, a parallel survey was conducted among a representative sample of Jewish society.

The survey findings highlight the lack of police services in Arab society. The reports by the Arab respondents paint a depressing picture in terms of violence and crime and the impact these have on the lives of Arab citizens. This reality includes the use of firearms, drug dealing, physical violence, and intimidation.
Key Findings of the Survey:

- Over one-third of Arab citizens (35.8%) feel a sense of personal insecurity in the community where they live due to violence. This compares to just 12.8% among Jewish citizens.

- The phenomenon of most concern to Arab citizens is general violence (80.3% are worried about this phenomenon), followed by the use of firearms (77% are worried or very worried about this). These high levels of concern reflect the tangible danger facing the Arab public, due to violence and the use of firearms. Other types of crime occupy third place in terms of alarming phenomena – 37% of the respondents are worried or very worried about this.

- Violence against women is also a source of concern among Arab citizens. Women are more concerned about this phenomenon than men: Approximately 71% of Arab women are worried about violence against women, compared to 53% of men.

- By comparison to violence against women, the phenomenon of domestic violence (which also includes violence by parents against their children) is of less concern to Arab society, but remains high: 48% of women and 45% of men are worried or very worried about this phenomenon.

- Fear of being harmed by various forms of violence and crime is more widespread in Arab society than in Jewish society. 19.6% of Jewish citizens are afraid they will be harmed by violent offenses, compared to 59.3% of Arab citizens. Property offenses are also the subject of much greater concern in Arab society – 51.8%, compared to 18.7% among Jews. Concern over sexual assault, by contrast, is closer between the societies – 35.9% among Arab citizens and 27.6% among Jews.

- When asked in which place they feel a sense of personal insecurity, Arab citizens most frequently mentioned places of entertainment (32.1% reported a strong sense of insecurity in these places), followed by their home locale (31.8%). By contrast, the home is regarded as the safest place (only 6% of
Arab respondents reported a threat to their personal security in their home. This finding shows that for Arab citizens, their home is their castle, and is regarded as the only place that can protect them against violence and crime.

- The proportion of Arabs who report that they, their relatives or their friends were harmed by various manifestations of violence is higher than among Jews. For example, 11% of Arab respondents reported that they or their acquaintances were harmed by the use of firearms, compared to 1.2% among Jews.

- Almost one-fourth (23.5%) of Arab citizens reported violent threats against themselves or their relatives, or experienced verbal violence.

- Among respondents reporting that they experience violence or threats of violence, 67% stated that they were acquainted with the attacker or the person making the threats. In 38% of cases, the attackers or intimidators were neighbors, friends, or acquaintances; in 16% of cases they were relatives; and in 11% of cases they were coworkers.

- Regarding attitudes toward the police, 61.7% of Arab citizens who experienced violence stated that they did not report the incident to the police. This finding reflects a profound lack of trust in the police, leading many citizens to seek alternative ways to resolve problems without recourse to the law enforcement agencies.

- 34.9% of Arabs, compared to 47.9% of Jews, reported that their most recent contact with the police was good or very good.

- Arab citizens believe that police response to aspects relating to the enforcement of law and order is good: 45.2% stated that the police’s enforcing traffic laws in Arab society is good or every good, and 32.7% expressed satisfaction with the police in terms of the enforcement of law and order. However, the level of satisfaction is lower in other areas: protecting the security of Arab citizens; the response to crime in Arab
society; the police response to drug dealing and drug abuse; addressing criminal families in Arab society; and the overall response to violence. In the last area, for example, only 16.1% of Arab citizens believe that the police functioning is good or very good.

- Another worrying finding concerns the perceptions and feelings of Arab citizens towards firearms: 90.8% of Arabs agree or tend to agree with the statement that it is easy to obtain firearms in Israel, compared to 33.8% of Jews. Similarly, 93.1% of Arab respondents feel that the use of firearms in their locale has increased in recent years, compared to 22.2% of Jews. These figures highlight the central role of firearms in Arab society, a factor that makes their daily routine akin to a state of emergency.

- Arab respondents feel that the most significant factor influencing the use of firearms is the leniency in penalties imposed on offenders: 84.7% of Arab, compared to 77% of Jewish respondents believe that this is a very influential factor. 82.6% of Arab respondents believe that the availability of firearms influences their use, compared to 50.6% in Jews. It is important to note in this context that the limited number of police officers is also regarded as a factor influencing the violent use of firearms (67% of Arab respondents and 53.8% of Jewish respondents mentioned this factor).

- 44% of Arab citizens are willing or very willing to join efforts to combat violence in their locale, while 29% are moderately willing to do so. This finding reflects a relatively low level of willingness to participate in this struggle, highlighting the sense of despair among Arabs due to their doubts regarding their ability to change the depressing reality, leading them to be less likely to join communal efforts to combat violence.

- When asked about the various institutions and functions involved in the struggle against violence, the family was mentioned most often with 59.7% of Arab respondents stating that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the family being
the main institution responsible for responding to violence. The education system also received relatively high level of satisfaction with 54.7% of Arab citizens stating they are satisfied with its functioning in this role. By contrast, the leadership of Arab society, the Israel Police, the Knesset (the Israel Parliament), and the government are all regarded as showing limited effectiveness in reducing violence in Israel. Only 24.7% of Arab respondents expressed satisfaction with the function of Arab leadership, 24% with that of the police, 16.8% with that of the Knesset, and 16.2% with that of the government.

- Trust in the Israel Police is low among Arab citizens, with 26.1% stating they trust the Police, compared to 42.2% of Jews.
- Despite this low level of trust, the police is the main institution Arab respondents turn to if they or their family have been the victims of violence or violent intimidation: 58% stated that they would turn to the police, 17% would act by themselves, and 16% would turn elsewhere to request protection.

**Victims of violence:** In 2018, 71 Arab citizens (56 men and 15 women) lost their lives due to violent assault.

**Police Efforts:**

The police is actively working to improve the services it provides to Arab society. In 2018, new police stations were opened in Majd al-Krum, Arara in the Negev, Kafr Qassem, Baqa al-Gharbiya, and Kafr Yassif. In Tamra, a police station was established outside the town, and accordingly is not included here in the list of police stations established in Arab communities. The Israel Police reports that as of May 2019, indictments have been filed in 50% of the murder cases in Arab society in 2017. In addition, the commanders of the police stations maintain dialogue with the elected leaders of Arab society, and the police provides information in Arabic about the organization on the various platforms.
Government Policy & Budgeting:

The monitoring of the implementation of Government Resolution 1402 shows that: (A) The number of police officers in Arab communities has increased. From 2016 through the end of 2018, 550 Arab police officers were recruited (225 joined in 2018). During the same period, 79 Arab women joined the police force, mainly in 2018. (B) The Arab Society Service Authority is running a broad-based support system including personal training for the needs of candidates for service in the police addressing the challenges they face; (C) The Authority also runs training programs for personnel involved in training Arab police officers, as well as specific training on the local level for officers in police stations in Arab communities, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity in contacts with Arab civilians.

However, it is important to note that budget cuts of 400 million NIS in 2018 have severely impacted the construction of new police stations in Arab towns and Israel’s socio-geographic periphery. The budget cuts were sharply criticized by the State Comptroller, who found that the Ministry for Personal Security did not consult with the police and failed to understand the operational and financial damage the decision will cause to the police.¹

Municipal Elections 2018:

A chapter in the report is devoted to the period of municipal elections, often characterized by the intensification of power struggles in Arab local authorities. In some cases, these struggles lead to damage to property, injuries, and even the loss of life. The survey findings support this description. Respondents were asked: “During the past two months (the period of the local elections), has the level of violence in your community risen, fallen, or remained the same?” In response, 70.9% of Arab citizens stated that the level of violence had risen. This finding shows that the local authority, which should serve as an im-

important tool for managing the lives of Arab citizens, actually in itself becomes the arena for violent conflict.

Role of the Abraham Initiatives

The Abraham Initiatives attaches the utmost importance to combating violence in Arab society in Israel. To this end, the Abraham Initiatives established the Safe Communities Initiative in an effort to promote a service-oriented and positive policing approach toward Arab citizens. The project seeks to encourage mechanisms for dialogue between the police and the community; education against violence in schools; and the establishment of life-saving services in Arab communities. The initiative is co-managed by Ola Najami-Yousef and Ruth Lewin-Chen.

The following are key recommendations for improving personal security in Arab communities:

1. **An inter-ministerial task-team should be established to eradicate violence and crime in Arab society.** This team will plan and implement a comprehensive and systemic plan for significantly lowering crime and violence threatening Arab society, including attention to their underlying causes. This specific attention is needed due to the over-representation of Arab citizens both among the victims of crime and among perpetrators of crime and violence, and to the fact that violence has become a major obstacle to economic and social development in the Arab communities. Such a team must include representatives of the leadership of Arab society as partners in preparing and implementing the plan.

2. **A permanent and positive police presence in the Arab communities.** Establishing new police stations in the Arab communities is important, but in itself it does not guarantee the personal security of citizens. Accordingly, the police should adopt a service-oriented and community-based approach toward the residents. There is a need to take measures to solve crimes in general, and murder cases in particular, this is critical to secur-
ing higher public trust. In order to realize the inherent potential in opening the stations, it is important to ensure that the police stations are designed and function as accessible service centers; they are fully staffed; their teams receive special training for work in Arab society; they provide a rapid and efficient response for citizens; and they receive adequate resources in accordance with local needs.

In order to ensure a positive police presence in the Arab communities, the budget cut of NIS 400 million for the construction of police stations in these communities must be revoked.

3. **Institutionalized dialogue between the police and the community** – permanent mechanisms for dialogue between the command level at the police stations and the public are very important. These mechanisms will ensure police transparency and accountability toward the residents, coordination between relevant bodies, and the setting of priorities for challenges and for the allocation of resources.

4. **Establishing “emergency service centers” in the Arab communities** – the lack of emergency services (fire-fighting and rescue services, Magen David Adom, and civil defense) exacerbates the lack of personal security among Arab citizens. Accordingly, centers should be established and include police services, fire and rescue station, ER or emergency medical services. These centers make sense both operationally and economically and will enhance the legitimacy of the police as a life-saving service.

5. **Prioritizing attention to illegal weapons in the Arab communities** – illegal weapons are one of the main causes of violence in the Arab communities. Weapon amnesties should be formalized, while ensuring anonymity and protection from prosecution. At the same time, enforcement operations and the seizure of weapons in this field should be increased, and penalties for weapons offenses should be increased.

6. **Increased penalties for perpetrators of violence** – Today
there is a widespread feeling among the Arab public that the penalties imposed on offenders are too light, and therefore do not create effective deterrence.

7. Addressing limited availability of land in Arab society – Comprehensive building and urban design plans and freeing frozen land zones is central for the reduction of tension surrounding housing across Arab society. In parallel, state-led initiatives should push for the development and construction of new new Arab cities in the Galilee, the “Triangle,” and the Negev.

8. Enhancing the presence of state institutions in the Arab communities – the availability of state services in Arab communities can improve the relationship between Arab citizens and the state. It is important that services and institutions that are present in Jewish communities will also be present in Arab communities – including banking services, National Insurance, community centers, sports centers, etc.

9. Education against violence – in some parts of Arab society, use and ownership of firearms and the legitimization of violence against women have become norms and socially acceptable. Accordingly, there is a need to develop and operate educational programs against violence in formal and non-formal education frameworks in the Arab communities. These programs should be adapted to the characteristics of Arab society.

10. Attention to families prone to poverty and violence – programs and social services should be extended to families suffering from poverty and violence. There is also a need to develop programs for marginalized youth, including the allocation of staff positions for caregivers and social workers in accordance with the poverty and violence indexes for the communities.

11. Addressing the phenomenon of violence against women – as part of the eradication of violence against women, the legal definition of domestic violence should be expanded to include various forms of violence within the family, and not only violence between partners. The joint program of social workers
and the police in Arab communities should be expanded.

This is the second annual report published by the Abraham Initiatives in Partnership with the Samuel Neeman Institute at the Technion, and the first to adopt a format of an annual index reflecting the attitudes of Arab citizens on issues relating to policing and violence. The report also seeks to monitor the work of the police in the Arab population and the implementation of Government Decision 1402 for enhancing personal security in the Arab sector.

The Safe Communities project and this report does not include residents of East Jerusalem or individuals who are not citizens of the State of Israel. This reflects the specific focus of the Abraham Initiatives on promoting integration and equality among Arab and Jewish citizens of the state.

We would like to thank the authors of this report, Dr. Nuhad Ali and Ruth Lewin-Chen. Special thanks to Adv. Rasool Saada, who was the joint director of the Safe Communities project during the period covered by this report.

Dr. Thabet Abu Ras Amnon Be’eri-Sulitzeanu
Co-Directors of the Abraham Initiatives

Prof. Moshe Sidi
Director of the Samuel Neeman Institution at the Technion