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ANNUAL REPORT

2024

BUILDING A SHARED SOCIETY FOR ISRAEL'S  
JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN CITIZENS





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## LETTER FROM AMNON AND SHAHIRA

### **Dear Friends,**

2024 was a painful year for those who care about the lives of Jews and Palestinians in the region. Not only did the deadly and destructive war in Gaza continue, with hostages remaining in horrible captivity, but even more families were forced to flee their homes as war spread to Lebanon and northern Israel.

In Israel, an extremist government further divided the country. The attempts to undermine the independence of the judiciary did not stop, nor did the racist incitement against Palestinian citizens of Israel by senior ministers and government officials. Even more tragically, the government continued to neglect the safety and security of Arab communities, which saw 230 fatalities from internal violence.

Yet the carnage of war, the plight of the hostages, and the senseless damage caused by the national government are not the only stories in Israel. Building a shared society for Jewish and Palestinian citizens has never been a top-down project alone. It has involved working directly with communities, local governments, and partner organizations to create positive change in people's lives.

There is no replacement for a national government favorably disposed to shared society—but we cannot wait for a change in the national political environment to act. We must drive that change ourselves from the ground up.

As you will read in this report, there are reasons to hope that we will emerge from this darkness—and sooner than many expect. In mixed cities and regions, our staff worked with local officials and activists to prevent outbreaks of violence and build resiliency. In cities such as Lod, Ramle, and Haifa, which experienced terrible violence during the previous Israel-Hamas war in May 2021, a better reality prevailed in 2024. Tensions between Jews and Arabs have not disappeared, but The Abraham Initiatives has brought together leaders in both communities who understand the necessity of shared living.

We have refused to accept the inevitability of hate and violence in these times. In the education system, we have called out instances of racist incitement, implemented teacher and principal trainings to help defuse conflicts, and continued offering our crucial anti-racism curriculum to students in high schools and pre-military academies. We also trained a first cohort of management consultants to advise mixed workplaces, including healthcare institutions and municipal governments.

In Arab localities in the Negev ravaged by crime, violence, and state disinvestment, we offered personal security courses and community event days to engage women and youth, and connect communities to public resources. We also conducted campaigns on social media and on billboards to promote peaceful conflict-resolution alternatives to violence. On the national level, we continued to highlight the government's failures in the Knesset and in the media. Despite the ongoing national emergency connected to the war, we succeeded in making sure the issue has not left the public's consciousness.



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TO SHARED SOCIETY

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Shahira Shalaby and  
Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu

Looking to the future, we are advocating for shared governance. The previous coalition government, which included a party from Arab society for the first time in Israel's history, made significant inroads in improving the prospects of shared society and reducing gaps between Jewish and Palestinian citizens. We are regularly engaging recently-elected city councillors and mayors as well as leaders of national political parties, and pressing the importance of appealing to all Israelis.

The coming year presents similar challenges and opportunities to the last. Yet shared society cannot remain in a defensive posture for long. Our vision is a transformational one. When we look back on this period, will we have merely defended our considerable past accomplishments or laid the foundations for significant change in Israeli society? We are determined to bring about the latter.

Thank you for your continued confidence and support in our work.

Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu  
Shahira Shalaby  
*Co-Executive Directors of The Abraham Initiatives*

## SHARED CITIES AND REGIONS

**Our work** in Israel's mixed cities and regions has been central to our response to the crisis following the October 7th terrorist attacks. Although tensions have undoubtedly increased between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel since that horrible day, the destructive intercommunal violence that shattered mixed cities in May 2021 has not recurred. This is a testament to the work of residents and local activists, including members of our staff, and their efforts to reduce tensions and create opportunities for positive engagement.

In 2024, we built on our immediate emergency response to the crisis. We developed and led a partnership with fellow shared society organizations Givat Haviva and the Tzedek Centers to immediately implement a de-escalation model we developed after the violence in May 2021 in 11 mixed cities and regions throughout the country. We hired local coordinators and engaged local organizations, residents, elected officials, and municipal departments. We also held our annual Mixed

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Cities Conference in Haifa—a return of an important gathering of elected officials, public authorities, and civil society organizations that we had been forced to cancel in October 2023. The conference dealt with the reality in mixed cities since October 7th. Dr. Shany Payes, our Director of Research and Evaluation, presented a report on the actions municipal employees, social activists, and elected officials took to successfully prevent violence in mixed cities.

The needs and opportunities in each city and region are unique. In Acre, we quickly forged positive ties with the new mayor and built an effective relationship with the municipal department of security. In Haifa, we advised the municipality on the Haifa 360° Program, which focuses on the needs of at-risk youth in the city—addressing their needs in the areas of health, welfare and education to give them opportunities for academic and professional success. In Ramle, we initiated a local forum of grassroots organizations and strengthened connections between residents and elected officials. In Lod, we increased Arab residents' understanding of municipal services, which will enable them to effectively advocate for their needs. In the Galilee and Valleys Cluster, we worked to both diffuse tensions while also developing a unique incubator for social entrepreneurship initiatives. At the end of year, we held a conference in the region with 70 local stakeholders and organizations to reflect on progress made over the year.

**A panel discussion at our annual Mixed Cities and Regions Conference.  
From left to right: Tel Aviv City Council members Chen Arieli and Amir Badran; Haifa City Council members Sarit Golan-Steinberg and Raja Zaatry; and Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu, co-Executive Director of The Abraham Initiatives**





## SAFE COMMUNITIES

**Our Safe Communities Initiative** works to combat violence, improve personal safety, and make life-saving services accessible to Palestinian citizens through a combination of advocacy work and direct on-the-ground interventions. Unfortunately, the crisis of deadly and violent crime plaguing Arab society did not improve in 2024. The number of fatalities nearly reached the record high set in 2023. Furthermore, under the leadership of the extreme-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, trust between Arab communities and the police continued to decline.

Holding the government accountable was thus our top priority. In the spring, we released a mid-term report on binding commitments the government made in 2021—amounting to billions of shekels—to help prevent violence and invest in the economic development of Arab locales. Our findings, made in collaboration with the Center for Citizen Empowerment in Israel, showed fulfillment of these commitments to be entirely insufficient and behind schedule. Despite the media focus on the war,



Fayroz Alatayka, Safe Communities Coordinator in the Negev for The Abraham Initiatives



# 230

Arab citizens murdered in 2024.  
A national crisis.

the research findings attracted the attention of the public and Members of Knesset. The report is not only an important tool for public pressure but also provides Arab communities with concrete data and evidence to pursue their claims with the state.

We also continued our partnership with IDF Home Front Command to improve security for residents of the Negev during the emergency situation. Due to The Abraham Initiatives' reputation and partnerships, Home Front Command approached us to serve as a critical conduit for life-saving information to communities whose relationship to the state is often fraught. Volunteers have come from the alumni of our ongoing Personal Security Courses in the region, which impart first aid and other emergency skills and resources to residents of the Negev. On top of running eight additional Personal Security Courses in hard-hit areas of the Negev, we also offered four courses for alumni to train as volunteers for Home Front Command.



## We are determined

to highlight the  
life-and-death issue of  
violent crime in  
Arab communities and  
the government's  
unacceptable  
inaction.

## EDUCATION FOR A SHARED SOCIETY

**In the past,** our Education for A Shared Society Initiative focused on shared society and anti-racism programming for students in the Jewish and Arab school systems in Israel. But following the October 7th attacks, it became clear that teachers required attention and training in order to handle potentially explosive scenarios in the classroom or in the larger school community. Working with regional and municipal education authorities, we held a series of well-attended trainings for teachers and principals. During an abbreviated academic year full of heightened tensions, close to 2,000 educators and students took part in the program and the model was adopted by the Ministry of Education as an approved program for middle and high schools in the 2024-25 school year.

Intervention in the education system is sorely needed—especially in high schools and pre-military academies. In early 2024, in collaboration with the Geocartography Institute, we conducted a study of attitudes among Jewish and Arab students. We found alarming rates of intolerance and mistrust toward members of the other communities. We also learned that teachers were desperate for tools to deal with classroom discussions about the conflict. This strengthened our

A panel featuring The Abraham Initiatives' Galia Bazak Hilger and Dr. Shany Payes; journalist Eran Zinger; and a student at the Reali High School in Haifa



# 2000+

students educators and students  
reached by our programming



determination to ensure our programming was effective and met the needs of the current moment. This is especially true for pre-military academies, where we look to raise awareness of Palestinian citizens of Israel among future leaders in Jewish society who have not previously been meaningfully exposed to “the other” beyond stereotypes. Students learn about the diverse lives, challenges, cultures, and communities of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

We are gratified by the enthusiasm and support of both students and staff, but we are also only too aware of the magnitude of the problem in the educational system—and the need for much greater impact. We have presented our research to the Ministry of Education and have received positive responses about future collaboration. Looking ahead to 2025, we aim to increase the number of teachers and students we reach. Our ultimate goal is to have the Ministry of Education institutionalize these trainings in schools across the country.

Above: Ruth Lewin-Chen, Deputy Executive  
Director of Programs at The Abraham  
Initiatives, leading students on a tour of Lod



## BINATIONAL WORKPLACES

**After the October 7th attacks**, tensions increased in mixed Jewish-Arab workplaces, with some troubling episodes of discrimination making national headlines and going viral on social media. A growing piece of our work since then has been aiding private and public organizations with diverse staff to defuse tensions and build opportunities for cooperation. In municipalities serving diverse populations, we have long offered public employees (especially frontline social welfare workers) training in Arabic language and culture. This work has taken on newfound importance amidst the current emergency, with the priority of ensuring Arab citizens feel a part of Israeli society and are served by their local authorities. Last year, we were also pleased to bring these trainings to the Jezreel Valley Regional Council, whose staff serve a diverse population in the north. In Haifa, we ran a series of trainings to guide professional teams in the municipality in improving their ability to provide services to Palestinian citizens and to build and strengthen Jewish-Arab partnerships in this city. We also trained organizational consultants to work with the municipality's welfare and other departments, in addition to providing Arabic language and culture classes.

A roundtable  
of social workers  
featuring  
Abraham Initiatives  
Board Member  
Nataly  
Hilou-Monayer  
(pictured center)





In the private sector, we aim to design inclusive workplaces that are safe and equitable spaces for both Jewish and Arab employees as well as those they interface with. Last year, we trained our first cohort of management consultants to implement our binational workplaces model who began providing consultations to academic departments and institutions. This year, our focus is on healthcare organizations, which have been the site for some of the most sensitive Jewish-Arab collaborations and conflicts over recent years.

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Left:  
May Arow, Director of Language as a  
Cultural Bridge for The Abraham Initiatives,  
teaching an Arabic language and culture class

## PUBLIC POLICY

**Our public policy and advocacy work** increased markedly in 2024 in response to multiple crises and government failures. We issued policy reports and gave expert testimony to the Knesset on virtually all the issues discussed in the preceding pages. In addition to our report highlighting the failures of the government to follow through with their budgetary commitments to Arab localities, we issued a detailed end-of-year summary of violent crime affecting Palestinian citizens of Israel, which was covered in the press. On matters including the inequitable distribution of budget cuts resulting from the emergency, discrimination and conflict in academic settings, and policing mixed cities, The Abraham Initiatives stood front and center in advocating for solutions that bolster equality.

As one of Israel's leading shared society organizations, and the only one to have a consistent presence in the halls of the Knesset, we take our responsibility to inform the public and elected officials very seriously. We regularly offer testimony at committee hearings, publish policy papers, and make concrete recommendations. This year, we plan to reorganize our policy team to prepare for the challenges ahead, including the revival of the government's judicial overhaul and possible new elections.



Shahira Shalaby, Co-Executive Director of The Abraham Initiatives,  
providing expert testimony to a Knesset committee



Rev. Gary Mason addressing  
members of The Abraham Initiatives  
delegation to Belfast, Northern Ireland



The  
**Abraham  
Initiatives**  
has stood front  
and center in  
advocating  
for solutions that  
bolster  
**equality.**

## SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

**Across and on top of all our initiatives,** we are working to positively shape public opinion. Successfully building a shared society requires sustainable majority support for politics and policies that are conducive to such outcomes, as well as the clear and public rejection of racism and hatred. All our public appearances and contributions to the press are carefully planned with this priority in mind.

In the Israeli media, The Abraham Initiatives is a trusted go-to source for information on issues affecting social equality and Arab society. Journalists and editors know that our staff are both experts in policy and have unparalleled experience on the ground. In responding to breaking news, we make sure that voices for shared society and against division and incitement are heard. Especially since the start of the emergency, it has been crucial to combat messages encouraging Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel to see each other as enemies.

But we are not only reacting to events. We regularly contribute opinion essays to leading Israeli newspapers and journals, driving public conversation in our field. Our senior staff are frequently interviewed at length on television and radio programs, where we have reached a significant cross section of Israeli society.

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## Survey finds asymmetry in feelings of hatred between Jewish and Arab students, teachers

A survey of Jewish and Arab students and teachers' perceptions shows asymmetrical views, but interaction fosters positivity and empathy.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF  
MAY 11, 2024 17:36



Last month, the [Abraham Initiatives](#) conducted an internet and in-person survey to examine the views Jewish and Arab students and teachers have towards other cultural groups, according to a letter sent to Education Minister Yoav Kisch on Thursday.

The letter noted that, based on the survey, the situation is dire. The survey found that where [Jewish students](#) and teachers view Arab counterparts as a threat, Arab counterparts view Jewish counterparts as a threat. This came with a call for teachers that co-existence is not a threat.

However, the letter also claimed that the two cultural groups to one another, and that the group regarding their counterparts.

عن ماذا نتحدث؟

منطقة

الرئيسية / أخبار محلية

## مبادرات ابراهيم: اعتقال البروفيسور نادرة شلهوب كيفوركيان هو خطوة سياسية خطيرة واستمرار مباشر لسياسة الاعتقالات بتهم مخالفات حرية التعبير

كلد العرب  
15:08 19/04/24 نشر

## 83% מהערבים ו-72% מהיהודים במקומות עבודה משותפים מעידים על יחסים טובים

לפי סקר 'יחסות אברהם' ראשון, רוב הנשאלים לא שנו את דעתם על הקבוצה השנייה בעקבות כניסת הסכר | עוד נמצא כי השקעה מצד ההנהלה ביחסי יהודים-ערבים מגבירה את החישה השיתוכ של העובדים

## THE TIMES OF ISRAEL ISRAEL AT WAR - DAY 542

INTERVIEW 197 ARAB ISRAELIS WERE KILLED IN HOMICIDES SO FAR THIS YEAR

## NGO head says Israeli racism and neglect responsible for Arab sector's high murder rate

With 2024 on path to become the deadliest year on record for Arab Israelis, Abraham Initiatives co-director Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzanu points to National Security Minister Ben Gvir

By DEBORAH DANAN  
26 October 2024, 11:25 am

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**The Abraham Initiatives would also like to thank the following foundations and individuals for making contributions or estate commitments to support our endowment fund, which will ensure that shared society will endure in Israel:**

Natalie and Danny Barkan  
Ziv Carthy  
Roberta Elliott

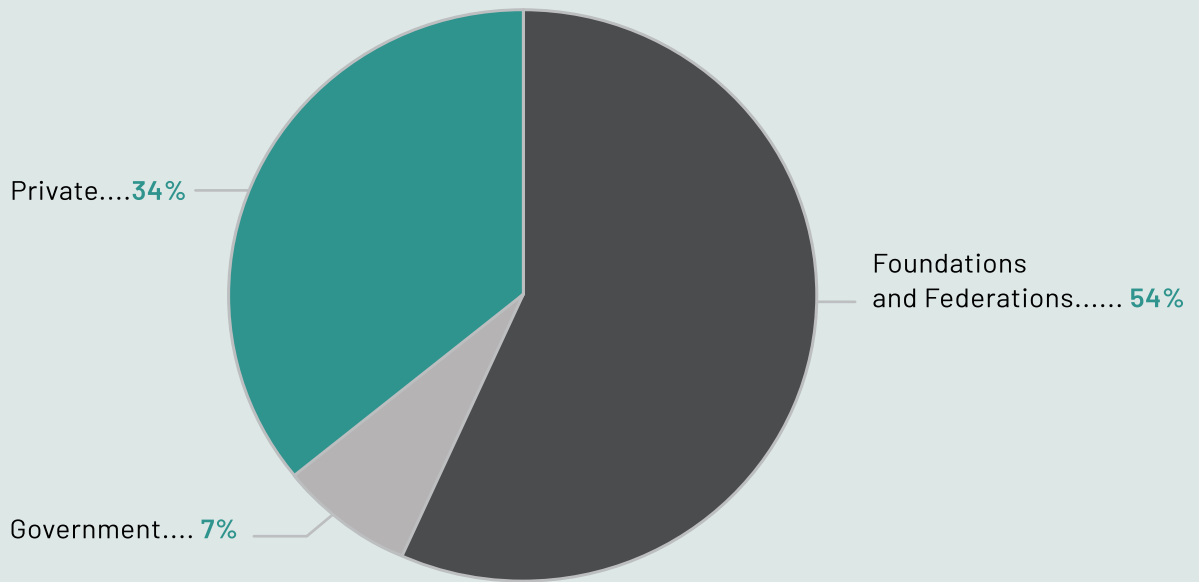
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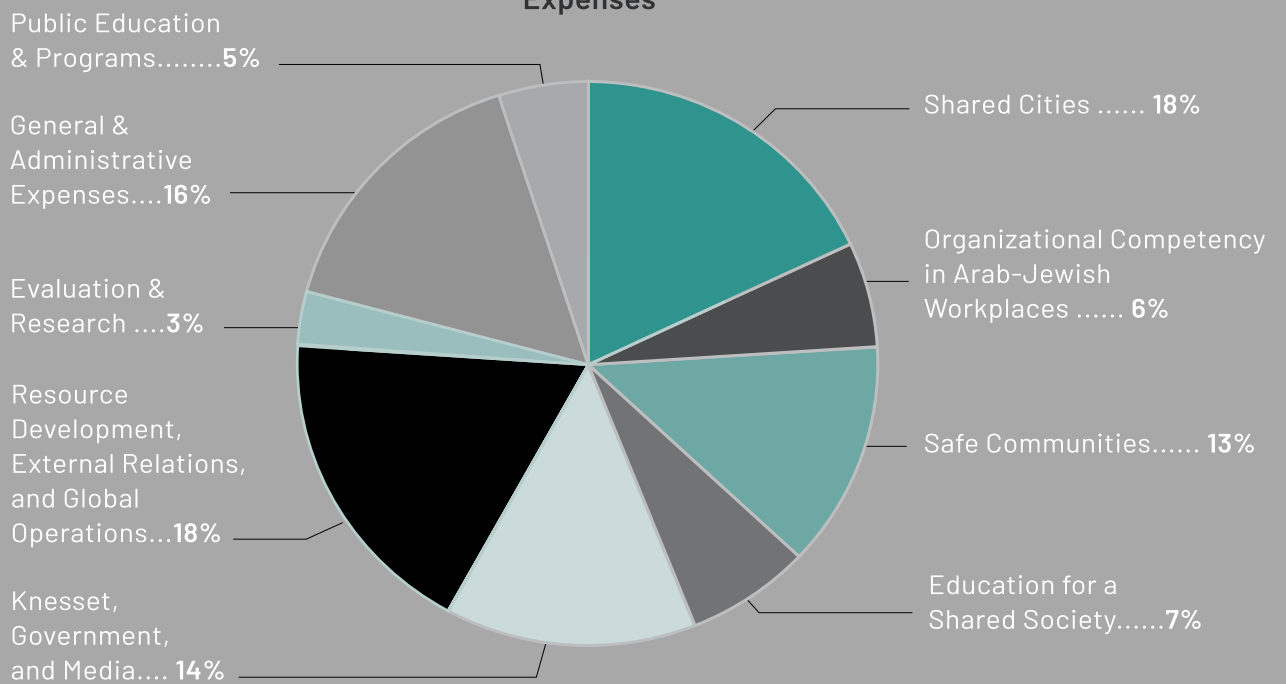
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**Revenue By Source**



**Expenses**



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Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu

Shahira Shalaby

### Staff:

Karen Abu Adra, *Senior Resource Development Associate*

Fayroz Alatayka, *Safe Communities Coordinator in the Negev*

Kholod Alzinaty, *Social Cohesion Coordinator in Lod and Ramle*

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**For more information** and to support The Abraham Initiatives' work, please contact one of our offices below. Thank you for helping transform the landscape of Jewish-Arab relations, and helping create a shared society of inclusion and equality among Israel's Jewish and Palestinian citizens.

**Support Shared Society in Israel Today.**

**Donate at:**

[AbrahamInitiatives.org](http://AbrahamInitiatives.org)



### **In Israel:**

7 Shoham Street  
Ramat Gan 5251002  
Phone: 972-2-3733000  
Email: [info@abrahaminitiatives.org.il](mailto:info@abrahaminitiatives.org.il)  
Amuta: 580165256

### **In the U.S.:**

The Abraham Initiatives  
1460 Broadway,  
New York, NY 10036  
Phone: 1-646-992-3725  
Email: [info@abrahaminitiatives.org](mailto:info@abrahaminitiatives.org)  
*EIN: 13-3556715*

### **In the UK:**

148 Kew Road  
Richmond, Surrey  
TW9 2AU  
United Kingdom  
Phone: +44 7713 884263  
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