

Annex

Palestinians in Israel: the Impact of the Intifada

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The Intifada shocked both the Palestinian people and the rest of the world. The scenes of Palestinian youth confronting the Israeli army with stones and the exceptionally harsh Israeli reaction to this had a powerful effect on public opinion throughout the world, with the result that Israel's image as a vulnerable state fighting to defend its very existence was seriously undermined.

The Arabs in Israel, as a part of the Palestinian people and at the same time citizens of Israel, were the first to express their clear support for the Intifada. This support, combined with the physical closeness to the occupied territories, has had a significant effect on the Arab community in Israel.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to examine the different forms this support has taken, the way in which the Intifada has impacted upon the Arab community within Israel, and the Israeli reaction toward its Arab citizens when they showed their solidarity with the Intifada.²

Palestinians in Israel: the background

The first Arab-Israeli war broke out in 1948 and was followed by the establishment of the state of Israel. The immediate effect upon the Palestinian population was twofold. First, the exodus of a large proportion of the Palestinians, who became refugees. Second, the transformation in the status of those Palestinians who remained. They became a minority in their own homeland, cut off from the rest of their people.

Mari has depicted the situation of those 120,000 who remained within the boundaries of Israel:

... emotionally wounded, socially rural, politically lost, economically poverty-stricken and nationally hurt, ... it was an agonising experience. ... Arabs in Israel were left without political leadership and an educated elite.³

The Arab citizens in Israel lived under the heavy hand of military rule from 1948 until 1966. Today the Arab population of around 700,000 has grown from about 10 per cent to 16 per cent of the total Israeli population, the majority of them living in villages. Although they were promised equality in the state's Declaration of Independence, they continue to suffer from deprivation and discrimination after 42 years.

The confiscation of the majority of their land rendered them economically dependent upon the Jewish sector, which in turn caused a transformation in the class structure of the Arab population from a predominantly peasant society to one where the majority of males became part of the unskilled working class.⁴ The scale of dependency has remained so great that there are still only somewhere in the region of 8,000 Arab workers employed in manufacturing facilities within the Arab sector.⁵

With regard to access to public services and amenities such as health, education and the like, research has revealed that Jewish local authorities enjoy a budget up to three times higher than those in the Arab sector.⁶ The result can be seen clearly in the inadequacy of the basic services provided by the Arab local authorities.

The national curriculum which Arab students are required to follow reflects the values and assumptions of the dominant Jewish culture and Zionism. Arab culture in general, and anything that hints of Palestinian nationalism is excluded from the curriculum. Furthermore, the impoverishment of the Arab local authorities has meant that the physical condition of the majority of schools is very poor. Overcrowded and under-equipped, many classes are held in rented rooms lacking adequate facilities.⁷

Despite these handicaps, by the time the Intifada broke out, there had been significant developments in the political consciousness and organisation of Arabs in Israel.⁸ The Committee to follow up the Concerns of Arab Citizens in Israel (CFCAC) was formed in 1987. It soon became the most representative and powerful body to have been established within the Arab community since 1948, the chief forum for Arabs in Israel, with representatives from a whole range of voluntary organisations and committees sitting alongside Knesset and Histadut members and representatives from all the different political groups, including the Islamic movement and Arabs associated with Zionist parties. This virtual parliament of Arabs in Israel has agreed on two principle demands: equality for Arabs in Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories.

Over the years, the Israeli Arabs have become a political power both within Israel and within the Palestinian national movement. This reflects the duality of their identity as Israelis and Palestinians: their civic identity as citizens of the state of Israel, their sense of national identity as Palestinians. They have become Palestinian-Israelis.

Solidarity with the Intifada

The different types and displays of support carried out by the Arabs in Israel can be divided into three main categories: political support, food and medical support, and moral support.

Political support

Taken unawares like everyone else, the first political reaction by Arabs in Israel to the Intifada took place on 21 December 1987 with a total general

strike of the Arab community on "Peace day". In their leaflet, the organizers expressed the concern and solidarity of the Arab population in Israel with the Intifada.

The events in the occupied territories directly concern the Arabs in Israel as an inseparable part of the Palestinian people and as citizens of the State of Israel. We perceive the Intifada as a people's struggle for its freedom and independence. We proclaim our full solidarity with the struggle of this people, our people, against the Israeli occupation.⁹

It is significant that from this first collective display of solidarity the Israeli Palestinians made a clear distinction between the occupied territories and Israel, between the Palestinians on the two sides of the Green Line. On the one hand the organising committee emphasised the fact that Arabs in Israel were an integral part of the Palestinian people with whose struggle they identified. On the other hand the differences between the two communities were acknowledged: the Arabs of Israel were citizens of that state. Ian Lustick underlined this point when he observed:

The Israeli Arabs are taking an active and integral part, not in the uprising in the occupied territories, but in the general political life in Israel, specifically on the debate about the future of the occupied territories¹⁰

The "Peace Day" marked the point when Arabs in Israel as a community began to actively identify with the Intifada. The strike was total in all Arab villages and towns and throughout all spheres of life. There were demonstrations and marches organised throughout the localities, including a number of confrontations with the authorities when tear-gas was used and over 100 people were arrested.¹¹ Individual incidents on the day of action included Molotov cocktails and stones being thrown at Israeli cars. A number of roads were also blocked, in particular the Wadi Ara road running through the Triangle villages between Tel Aviv and the north of Israel. An observer described the confrontations with the Israeli authorities on the strike day as follows:

In Nazareth, in Jaffa, in Um el Fahem, in Lod, and only a shade less fervently than the Palestinians in Ramallah, Balata, Gaza city and Jabaliya — Israeli Arabs blocked roads, threw rocks, burned tyres and shouted religious and nationalist slogans. Israel itself got a taste of civil war.¹²

More than anything else it seemed as if the Intifada had united all Palestinians in Israel behind one goal: unconditional support for the Intifada. An agreement, based on three principles, was forged between all political forces, from the left radicals to those affiliated with Zionist parties: the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside Israel, recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and full equality for the Arab citizens of Israel.

“Land Day” of 1988 was marked by another general strike in solidarity with the Intifada and against the continuation of Arab land confiscation. In addition to the annual “Land Day” demonstrations there have been a number of other general strikes. Thus, the strike in November 1988 in protest against the demolition of Arab homes took on an added dimension in the context of the Palestinian National Council Meeting in Algiers and the declaration of the independence of the State of Palestine. Both Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories declared a general strike on 21 May 1990 to mourn and protest against the killing of eight Palestinian workers by an Israeli gunman the previous day in Rishon Le’Zion. Demonstrations swept the Arab community in Israel and large scale clashes with the police occurred in Nazareth and other locations¹³

It is worth noting at this point that, since the Intifada, the Arab leadership in Israel has been far more prepared to use strikes as a form of protest than in previous years. Indeed, 1988 marked the first time that the Arab community had struck for more than one day in a year. This increase was inevitably perceived as a negative development by Alex Bile, the Deputy Adviser of the Prime Minister for Arab Affairs when he observed in May 1989:

From the beginning of the Intifada there was an increase in political activity by Israeli Arabs, on both the level of political institutions and of the individual. There have been four days of strikes whereas in the past there was only one a year. The general strike weapon has increased.¹⁴

Rouhana has estimated that between December 1987 and June 1989 the Arabs in Israel held 35 regional and national strikes and demonstrations in support of the Intifada.¹⁵ The largest took place in Nazareth on 23 January 1988 when an estimated 50,000 Arabs gathered to demonstrate their solidarity with their compatriots in the occupied territories.¹⁶ Alongside these, there were a number of local strikes and demonstrations. Many of these were organised spontaneously in reaction to events and without any encouragement from the established political groups and parties. As such they are indicative of the pressure that was put on the political leadership within the Arab community to take firm and radical actions in support of the Intifada.

A massive demonstration did take place on 3 June 1989. This was designated “Palestinian-Israeli Peace Day”. Palestinians in Israel and Jewish democratic and peace groups joined together in a day of action. Workshops, meetings and discussion groups were organised where Palestinian families, students, ex-prisoners, women and artists from the occupied territories met with Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel.

This event illustrated a significant feature of the response to the Intifada in Israel: the substantial increase in the level of cooperation between the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel and the Palestinians of the occupied territories. Even the religious leaders of the Arab community in Israel, who have traditionally worked closely with the Israeli authorities, participated in

this process. Thus, at a meeting in Nazareth on 2 February 1988, about 50 Muslim and Christian figures gathered to express solidarity with the Intifada. This group also included three Rabbis who were planning a "solidarity visit to the holy places in Jerusalem and prayers for peace in the Middle East".¹⁷

Apart from the general strike days and the demonstration in Nazareth in January 1988, the Arab political forces in Israel have appeared reluctant to participate in the cooperative endeavour necessary to organise such large-scale events. A key reason for this failure has been the fact that each party has been more interested in promoting its own campaign, trying to "use the Intifada" for election purposes. Thus, during the election campaign of 1988 in the Arab community the candidates competed with each other to display their support for the PLO and the Intifada: using the jargon, symbols and slogans associated with the PLO and the Intifada in their search for votes. As one candidate proclaimed:

First we must insist that we are Palestinians. We must support the Palestinian cause as Israeli citizens by contacts with the PLO and support for the Intifada.¹⁸

In similar vein, it has been noticeable that the leadership of political groupings representing Palestinian citizens of Israel have repeatedly sought to attract support by meeting with PLO officials and the Palestinian national leadership in the occupied territories.¹⁹

Popular Relief Committees

The cooperation between Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line has gone far beyond dialogue. There have been reports that some of the leaflets distributed in the occupied territories and signed by the UNC were printed in one of Israel's universities and some Arab villages. Printing businesses in the Galilee and Triangle have been raided by Israeli police and some people have been arrested. A more widespread form of cooperation and expression of solidarity, however, was evidenced by the emergence of popular relief committees to organise the provision of direct material support to the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

In considering the role of these relief committees it is important to realise the geographical proximity of the two communities. The distance between Arab villages in the Triangle region of Israel and the West Bank is only a very few miles. In two cases the villages actually straddle the Green Line. There is no doubt that this proximity and ease of access provided a unique opportunity for Palestinians in Israel to organise relief campaigns in support of the Intifada.

From the first week local initiatives were taken by political groups which led to the establishment of popular relief committees to support the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This local activity undoubtedly spurred on the CFCAC to call for the establishment of Popular Relief Committees in all Arab locations when it met on 19 January 1988. These committees have

formed the broadest relief forum. They have included political parties, social organisations, professionals, students and community groups in the channelling of food, clothing, medical supplies and money to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. In contrast, the Islamic Movement in Israel has not participated in this forum and has operated separately through its own establishments.

In general the work of the relief committees has fallen into two main categories: the supply of food and money, and the provision of medical supplies.

Food and Money

Right from the early days of the Intifada local committees emerged in each village to collect food, money and clothing from the residents to support the Intifada. In small groups, members of the committees went around the shops and from house to house asking for donations. This campaign took on added urgency as a result of the curfews and other forms of collective punishment imposed by the Israeli forces on villages and refugee camps in the occupied territories.

The first few months of the Intifada witnessed the overwhelming generosity of people. They gave money, rice, lentils, flour, olive oil, olives, canned food and so on. During January 1988 it was estimated that more than a 100,000 tons of food were sent to the occupied territories. Almost everybody who was asked for a donation responded positively.²⁰ There was a profound feeling among people that this is the least they can do to contribute while people are sacrificing their lives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²¹ According to a Jerusalem-based Hebrew newspaper about £15,000 was collected in two days from two small Arab villages in the Triangle area.

A significant feature of the relief activities has been the participation of Israelis, both Zionist and non-Zionist. In similar fashion, the Popular Relief Committees have facilitated the bringing together of political opponents in the Arab sector. Thus, in May 1989, more than twenty political groups and peace organisations from both sectors joined in a campaign to send food to Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. This was targeted due to its long closure by the authorities.

In the Arab community the participation in the relief activities of Bedouin villages from the Negev district has been most noteworthy. Arab student committees in Israeli universities have also taken part in these campaigns, particularly in the collection of money. However, the high school student committees' role has been even more central, with pupils in each village organising campaigns to raise funds.

Medical Supplies

From the beginning, in tandem with the "food campaign", local committees requested medical supplies from chemist shops. Some of these supplies, such as First Aid materials and medicines, were purchased with the money donated by people. In February 1988 there was the first direct appeal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the "Committee to follow up the Health Concern in

the Arab sector". It came as a result of the large number of casualties, and called on "the popular Relief Committees, the owners of chemists, medical traders and companies to help our brothers in the occupied territories. We urge you all to donate medicine and First Aid material".²²

A feature of the medical supply campaign has been its relatively poor organisation — largely operating without professional advice, and often with little coordination between the local committees and the health organisations in the occupied territories. As a result it has been very difficult to estimate its effectiveness and worth. The limitations of the medical campaign can be attributed in part to both the decentralised nature of the campaign and the lack of any serious initiative from Arab medical personnel in Israel. But whatever the reasons the general response, particularly with regard to the donation of blood, was poor. Exceptions included the Arab University students, especially those at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who organised supplies in coordination with El Makassed Hospital in Jerusalem. As the head of the Arab students committee proudly remarked: "We did not expect such a wide and positive assent from the students. They had to queue for hours to be able to give blood".²³ Another exception was the Druze Initiative Committee which arranged visits to the West Bank to donate blood and visit injured people as acts of solidarity with the population.²⁴

It is very difficult to give exact figures about the material and medical support given to the Intifada. Some observers have estimated its value as having reached somewhere in the region of £2 million by March 1990. However, there has emerged a feeling among the Arab population that they have not demonstrated sufficient support. Indeed, it was only in December 1989, two years after the outbreak of the Intifada, that a "national higher committee" was established to coordinate the activities of the local popular committees and arrange visits to identify the needs in the occupied territories.

Moral Support

At the outbreak of the Intifada the wide media coverage of the confrontations between Palestinians and the Israeli army inspired Palestinians in Israel to express deep concern and moral support for their fellow nationals. The Intifada prompted much discussion among people and became the major news in the Arabic press in Israel. On the one hand, people expressed a profound feeling of moral support, pride and admiration for the "children of the stones", but on the other hand there was a growing feeling of anger, resentment and frustration towards the Israeli authorities. As one Um el Fahem resident commented in May 1989:

Watching the news promotes discussion and anger against Israel. The Intifada is in our minds and hearts. In the streets, cafés, schools, the Intifada is the first topic we talk about.²⁵

The popular relief committees organised regular visits to villages and refugee camps in the occupied territories to express sympathy and solidarity with the struggle. There is no doubt that such visits had a deep impact on

the Palestinian visitors from Israel. They could witness at first hand the circumstances of those living under occupation and their struggle to free themselves. The visits encouraged people to organise various activities in support of the Intifada when they returned home to their villages. This in turn strengthened the bonds between the two communities of Palestinians. According to the head of a local relief committee in Um el Fahem, the visits had an effect on both communities:

We think we can encourage them; it is our role to do that, but they encourage us as well. They see the end of this dark time. They are full of hope and believe that the day will come when their struggle will succeed in overcoming the occupation.

A Disappointing Effort?

Although there has been agreement between all shades of political opinion within the Arab community concerning the importance of supporting the Intifada, there has been considerable controversy over the actual level of that support. Thus, it would appear that after the Land Day strike of 1988 the level of solidarity action dropped. Even though political parties proclaimed the importance of developing further means of supporting the struggle, few of them invested the necessary effort to translate their words into action. In fact it became clear that the political groups had not even exploited to the full all the legal possibilities for extending support, let alone engaging in any forms of civil disobedience. As one Arab activist remarked:

I am not satisfied with the moral and material support that Palestinians in Israel have given to their brothers in the State of Palestine. The relief campaign has become "seasonal" and sometimes only for propaganda. Our voice inside has not reached its maximum effect and power.²⁶

Evidence to support this view emerged from Rouhana's interviews with sixty Arab leaders from all points on the political spectrum who agreed that "the absolute value of the support is minimal and fell below that which their community could and should be offering".²⁷

This sense of disappointment came to be shared by the Palestinians in the occupied territories. This was in sharp contrast to the admiration expressed for the support shown during the first months of the uprising when a Palestinian lecturer in the Islamic University in Gaza was moved to bear witness that "the donations of the first months of the Intifada had helped to stop a siege on the refugee camps in Gaza Strip. We did not expect Palestinians in Israel to play any role or to give any help".²⁸

Effects of the Intifada on Palestinians in Israel — a sense of solidarity and unity

One result of the 1967 war was that it brought together two parts of the Palestinian people after twenty years of separation. A consequence of the Intifada has been to strengthen this sense of a common bond between the

two communities, a shared awareness of their identity as Palestinians. The Intifada has become a part of the political awareness of Arabs in Israel and has contributed to a strengthening of their self-confidence and political determination. As one Arab activist remarked: "The Intifada has become a model for us, how we should face the occupation. We now see a possibility of ending our own oppression."²⁹

It seems clear that the "national unity" established between the different factions within the occupied territories during the Intifada has also had an effect on political life in the Arab community in Israel. Thus, the Committee to Follow Up the Concerns of Arab Citizens has become the forum in which major decisions are made and has taken on the status of a legitimate national leadership. As the Palestinian sociologist Rouhana has observed:

The committee gained the respect of the Arab public through its show of unity, despite deep political divisions within its ranks. The committee has earned the status of national leadership because it represents daily concerns, national needs, and the consensual political views of the Arabs in Israel. No other authority, including the Israeli Government, enjoys such status within the Arab community.³⁰

A sense of difference

Over recent years the main political agenda of the Arabs in Israel has been twofold: to seek equal rights within Israel and to campaign for the establishment of a Palestinian state. In a paradoxical manner, whilst the Intifada has strengthened the sense of solidarity and actual support for the establishment of a Palestinian state amongst Arab citizens of Israel, it has also heightened their sense of separateness, the awareness that the actual differences between the two communities has increased.

Palestinians in the occupied territories are engaged in a national struggle for liberation and are denying the legitimacy of Israeli rule. The Arabs in Israel, in contrast, are part of the Israeli system. However disadvantaged they might be, they are undeniably part of the political and economic life of Israel. As Majid al-Haj has remarked:

The orientation of Israeli Arabs is different from that of the Palestinians in the territories. The Israeli Arabs want to adapt, the Palestinians want to secede.³¹

In this sense it is possible to argue that far from "crossing the Green Line", the Intifada has reinforced the boundary separating not just the Israeli Jews but also the Arab citizens of Israel from the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Double marginality

Palestinians in Israel have seen their main political struggle as encompassing two goals: the achievement of equal rights within Israel, and the formation of an independent Palestinian state. In relation to both the Israeli state and the

anticipated Palestinian state, they occupy a marginal position "on the periphery". They have not been fully integrated into Israeli society. They are still discriminated against, they still constitute a disadvantaged sector of that society. Furthermore, they are marginal to the struggle for a Palestinian state, they are not part of the Intifada, the future Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that has become the goal of the Palestinians is not intended for them.

The uprising has increased this sense and experience of "double marginality". The Intifada is the struggle of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, not that of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Moreover, as a result of the clashes between Palestinians and Israeli Jews in the occupied territories and the open support for the Intifada amongst the Arabs of Israel, the tensions between the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel has intensified during the Intifada. Feelings of bitterness and anger, mistrust and fear, have heightened between the two communities.

The Israeli Reaction

From the start the response of the Israeli authorities to Arab expressions of solidarity with the Intifada was harsh. In particular the Peace Day general strike on 21 December 1987 met with a severe reaction from politicians across the political spectrum and led to calls for "tough measures" to be taken against the Arab population.

President Chaim Herzog was quoted as saying that "the demonstrations could lead to another chapter in the Palestinian tragedy".³² This was interpreted by many as a sinister reference to 1948 and the exodus of the majority of the Palestinians from their homeland. In similar vein Defence Minister Rabin advised Arab Knesset members that "you have known tragedy in the distant past, and it would be better for you and for us that you not return to that tragedy".³³ Prime Minister Shamir expressed his belief that "Arabs do not know the meaning of democracy", and warned them that their stand with regard to the Intifada would eventually determine their status in the country. He offered them a stark choice: "They could follow the PLO or remain loyal citizens of Israel. But if they chose the path of the PLO, there would be dire consequences".³⁴ The then deputy minister responsible for Arab affairs urged that government offices should cease all dealing with the Committee of Local Arab Council Heads, this being the main body behind the strike whilst the leader of the Likud party in the Knesset advocated the re-imposition of military rule over the Arab population in Israel and the cutting off of all financial aid to Arab councils that supported the strike.³⁵ Other Knesset members demanded the dismissal of all Arab workers who supported the PLO and/or participated in the strike, and their replacement with Jewish or foreign workers.

The attacks on the Arab population from the Israeli extreme right wing, although more predictable, were vicious. The Tehiya Party presented a proposal to the Knesset that suggested revoking the Israeli citizenship of Arab

citizens who were involved in any incitement to oppose the state or who cooperated with terrorist organizations.³⁶ Such demands and warnings made it very clear to the Arab population that they were not equal citizens of the state and they did not have the same right to protest against government policy as the rest of the population. It became apparent to many Arabs that not only were they "second-class" citizens, but they were also "conditional citizens" — their citizenship being dependent upon "good" political behaviour.

If one of the aims of these threats was to intimidate the Palestinian citizens of Israel and deter them from engaging in any further displays of solidarity with the Intifada, then the tactic met with some success. As one commentator confirmed:

For older people the government's reaction to initial support of the Intifada was strong enough a message to stop any further expressions of support. The reaction of Israeli officials to these expressions of support, including that of Shamir, was so mean and threatening at the time, as to have left many observers shocked and bewildered.³⁷

New Measures

It was clear that the traditional perception of the Arabs in Israel as an internal security threat came once more to the fore during the Intifada. There were claims that the Intifada had crossed the Green Line, that the threats to the very existence of Israel came not just from the Arabs outside but also from the Arabs inside the country. This all helped to justify and explain the need for new measures to monitor and control the enemy within.

In addition to the formation of new intelligence and police units, new legislation has been introduced with the aim of halting the flow of cash from abroad to Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories. The Third Amendment to the Prevention of Terror Ordinance (1984) came into force on 23 May 1989. It made it an offence to receive or bring into the country property known by the recipient to be connected with a terrorist organisation; permitted the foreclosure on property received directly or indirectly from a terrorist organisation or property that was thought to be used for the purposes of such an organisation; permitted the registration corporations to refuse to register a company or association suspected of being an illegal corporation.³⁸ Furthermore the new law was retroactive so existing associations also became liable to foreclosure.³⁹ In conjunction with these legislative and policy changes police officers were given new wide ranging powers to seize property from individuals, associations and any premises used by them, including the right to enter such premises without a search warrant.

Palestinians in both Israel and the occupied territories expressed deep concern about the new measures. It was obvious that the measures had been brought into effect to stop the flow of financial assistance to the Intifada from abroad, much of which it was believed was channelled through the 70 or so non-profit making associations operating in the fields of education, culture, health, economic development and human rights within the Arab sector of

Israel. According to reports from Israel, the direct targets of the new law are the Palestinian organizations in Israel.

Racism

The Intifada, and the reaction it has unleashed in Israeli society, have provided fertile ground for the growth of racist attitudes. The result has been the emergence of a political and social climate within which groups and individuals feel free to express their prejudices against the Arab population resident within Israel.

Thus, the incitement campaign led by top Israeli officials against the Palestinian community in Israel a few weeks after the outbreak of the Intifada has spread, encouraging others to join in with hostile and racist attacks. One result has been that the so-called "transfer" of the Arab population from one part of the country to another, or even outside the country altogether, has become a legitimate topic of political debate, along with increasing demands to limit the rights of Arabs in Israel.

At a meeting of the Israeli government held in mid-1988 the situation of the Arabs in Israel was discussed. One Likud member of the government likened them to the "sharp edge of the javelin" for all the "enemies of Israel", including the PLO. The proposals discussed to control this threat from within included the suggestion that every citizen should be required to swear allegiance to the state flag, laws should be introduced to deal with Arab nationalism, and Arabs should be required to serve in the Israeli army with a maximum penalty of loss of citizenship and expulsion from the country for refusal.⁴⁰

Since the outbreak of the Intifada an increasing number of public and political figures have come out in favour of some form of "transfer" of the Palestinian population within Israel. The minister for agriculture, Katz Aoz, declared in May 1989, during a visit to a Jewish settlement in the Galilee, that his aim was to create an: "internal transfer of the Arab population". He suggested there be a mass transfer of Arabs from the Galilee to other parts of the country to ensure a Jewish majority there.⁴¹ The President of Beer Sheva University made the astonishing admission that he opposed the transfer of Arabs — not because of moral considerations but on practical grounds alone!⁴²

The Jewish mayors of mixed towns, where Arabs and Jews live together, have been to the fore in advocating the relocation of Arab inhabitants. The mayor of Acre expressed his desire to see Arabs move out of the old city, maintaining that: "I want to help them with their housing problem. Those who do not agree will not be forced to leave. But if they do not want to leave they should not complain."⁴³ In a similar vein the Mayor of Naharya, to the north of Acre, described the presence of 250 Arab families living in the town as "a dangerous phenomenon that we have to put an end to, because we do not want the town to be an Arab Jewish mixed town like Acre. Arabs can work in the town but they need not live here."⁴⁴ Zri Bar, a former commander of the paramilitary Border Guards and Likud mayor of Bamat Gan, a town

adjacent to Tel Aviv, called upon Jewish municipal heads to hire Jews in place of the thousands of Arabs employed by the municipalities. He justified his plea by charging that 80 per cent of the murders, rapes and homosexual assaults in Tel Aviv were perpetrated by the Arabs! As he spoke hundreds of Jews were scouring the streets of Ashdod beating up Arab workers after the discovery of the body of a paratrooper who had gone missing three months previously.⁴⁵

The growth of racist attitudes within Israel has been reflected in opinion polls. In 1988 a survey of 1,152 Israelis that excluded Arabs, kibbutz members and settlers from the occupied territories, revealed that 41 per cent of the respondents supported the transfer of the Arab population in Israel; 45 per cent thought that Israel was too democratic; 51 per cent opposed granting equal rights to Arab citizens of Israel.⁴⁶

In a survey of 1,200 Israeli Jews carried out in April 1988 Professor Smootha of Haifa University discovered that 68 per cent agreed that the right to vote should be denied to "Israelis who support a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza under the leadership of the PLO". Fifty-seven per cent favoured the denial of the right to vote in national elections to Israeli Arab citizens.⁴⁷

Attacks against Arabs

It is clear that what has taken place in Israel during the Intifada has been a further demonisation and dehumanisation of the Palestinians in the eyes of the Jewish citizens. This has been made most manifest by the increasing numbers of physical attacks on Arabs. The response of Prime Minister Shamir to the killing of two Israelis in Jerusalem in May 1989, when he urged citizens to be prepared to defend themselves against such attacks and to make sure that assailants "do not get away unharmed" seemed to endorse the law of the "lynch mob". One of the earliest outrages occurred in the summer of 1988 in Or Yahoda, near Tel Aviv, when three workers from the Gaza Strip were burned to death while they were sleeping in their hut. Later, in September of the same year, a flat in Jaffa used by Arab workers was burned down, in this case without injuring the occupiers. There have also been a number of stabbing attacks on Arab workers, one of which resulted in the death of a worker from the Galilee during his work in the market of the old city of Acre.⁴⁸

For Arabs in Israel the result of such attacks has been an increasing sense of insecurity and fear. They feel vulnerable and largely unprotected. Some have even begun to avoid speaking Arabic in public when they are in the cities, so as to avoid drawing attention to themselves. This fear became all the deeper after the murder of eight Palestinians by an Israeli gunman on 21 May 1990.

In such an atmosphere the Arab media in Israel have become targets of special attention. During the first two years of the Intifada two Arab weeklies, *Al-Raya* and *Al-Jamaheer*, were closed down on the grounds that they had links with terrorist organisations. *Derech Hanitzotz*, a weekly published in Arabic and Hebrew, was closed down for the same alleged reason. The Rakah

newspaper *Al-Ittihad*, the only Arabic language daily in Israel was closed by the Israeli authorities for a week in March 1989. This closure, which took effect just before Land Day, came as a consequence of the paper publishing "provocative articles and news which identified with the uprising in the occupied territories and which threatened public security". In June 1990 *Sawt-al-Haq Wal Hurriya*, a weekly associated with the Islamic movement, was closed for three months on the orders of the minister of the interior.

Political activists within the Palestinian community of Israel have also been targeted by the security forces. By June 1988 it had been estimated that 663 arrests had been made for activities related to solidarity and support for the Intifada. Amongst their number were several detained without trial, whilst many of them were activists in the popular relief committees. During 1989 Palestinian activists in Israel began to experience an intensification of this "hard-line" approach. Whereas the authorities had shown a degree of tolerance towards slogans identifying with the Palestinian struggle in the occupied territories, by mid-1990 this attitude had toughened. People participating in legal demonstrations were now arrested for shouting slogans considered by the Israelis to be an "incitement to violence".

Conclusion

Since the outbreak of the Intifada Palestinians in Israel have expressed profound feelings of solidarity and identification with the Palestinian struggle in the occupied territories. They showed this solidarity by organising general strikes and demonstrations. Popular relief committees were also established to provide food, money and medical supplies to the population of the occupied territories. However the harsh Israeli reaction and the nature of the Arab political groups brought about a gradual decline in the level of active support after the first few months of the uprising.

Under the impact of the Intifada the tension between the twin dimensions of the identity of Arabs in Israel has mounted. They are Palestinians, but they are also citizens of the state of Israel. This duality has been reflected in the political struggle of the Arab community within Israel, which has developed along twin paths and has been sharpened under the impact of the uprising. First, the struggle for equality within Israel, and second, support for the national struggle in the occupied territories.

The "twin-track" nature of their political programme reflects their structural location on the periphery of both the Palestinian nationalist movement and Israeli society itself. They are not fully integrated into the struggle of the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, neither are they fully integrated as equal citizens of Israel. Perhaps somewhat ironically, this position of being on a "double periphery", with a "foot in both camps" — so to speak — could enable the Palestinian citizens of Israel to play a crucial role in the future as a bridge between the PLO and Israel.

As regards future developments, a number of possible scenarios suggest themselves. It is possible that as the Intifada continues the Palestinians inside

Israel will find themselves in an increasingly sensitive and vulnerable position, particularly in the context of the increasing racism in Israel and the continuing attempts by the state to suppress any political manifestations of the Palestinian national identity. The prospect is one of increasing inter-communal tension, one marked by an escalating cycle of protest and counter-repression degenerating into more and more violent clashes. This would fuel demands for the transfer of the Arabs in Israel, whilst in the Arab community one would in all probability see the emergence of a more radical leadership. Amongst the most likely contenders for such a position would be the Islamic movement, which already controls a few local councils.

In such a scenario, signalling as it would the failure of any attempt at the integration of the Arab community into the mainstream of Israeli society, there might well be a heightened demand by the Arabs for some form of autonomy, involving increased control of their own separate educational, cultural and municipal affairs. Alternatively, if the Intifada continues and the polarisation process in Israel continues, the Arab political forces might emerge as the main democratic movement in Israel, combining with like-minded groups amongst the Jewish population to reverse the authoritarian and racist trends within Israel in a joint struggle to create a truly democratic and pluralist society. A crucial component of any such struggle for democracy and equality in Israel would be the fight against the occupation, insofar as the military oppression in the occupied territories and the discrimination in Israel are twin aspects of the same policy.

If one anticipates a successful conclusion to the Intifada through the achievement of its political aims, then another scenario opens up. The recognition of the Palestinians' national rights and the establishment of a Palestinian state would very likely result in Israel's preparedness to acknowledge the national rights of its own Arab citizens. There would be far less reason for Israeli Jews to fear the Arab Palestinian identity, which has previously been synonymous with the PLO and the threat to destroy Israel. For Arabs, the conflict and the tension between the two parts of their dual identity would be greatly decreased, leaving them free to identify more whole-heartedly with Israel. As Palestinians within the state of Israel they could refocus their political energies from the twofold struggle into an intensified campaign to achieve full equality with their Jewish fellow-citizens. The realisation of such a vision would, of course, involve a fundamental transformation in the nature of the Israeli state and society as a Zionist entity. As such, the prospects of its realisation in the foreseeable future appear very bleak.

Notes

1. Throughout this chapter such terms as "Arabs in Israel", "Palestinian citizens of Israel", "Arab sector", "Arab community" will be used as labels for the communities that have grown up from the Palestinian population who remained in the country after 1948. These terms are highly political and specific and have been used in the text as seemed appropriate.

2. It must be emphasised that there has been very little published literature on this subject. Much of this chapter is based on original material, primarily interviews across a wide section of the Arab population in Israel conducted by the author during 1989.

3. Sami Mari, *Arab Education in Israel*, Syracuse, New York, 1978, p. 18.

4. A detailed account of the land confiscation can be found in Sabri Juriya, *The Arabs in Israel*, Monthly Review Press, London, 1976.

5. Sarah Kreimer, "Entrepreneurism in Israel's Arab Communities", *New Outlook*, July-August 1987, p.

9. See also Elia Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel; A Study in Internal Colonialism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.

6. *JP*, 5 May 1988, 13 May 1988 and 21 December 1988.

7. See Mari, op. cit., and S Graham-Brown, *Education, Repression and Liberation*, London: World University Service, 1984.

8. *Mashru'a al-Basmanij al-siyassi li-Harakat Abna al-Balad*, (Abna al-Balad Movement, The Political Program Proposal) March 1983, p 23.

9. Quoted in *Al-Itihad*, 20-December 1987.

10. *Davar*, 16 March 1988.

11. It is significant that there was full participation of the Arab community from both "mixed towns" and from Bedouin villages where, in the past, involvement in Arab political activity in Israel had usually been minimal.

12. *Present Tense*, April-May, 1988. It was noticeable that the Hebrew press, in contrast with the Arabic, presented a very dramatic picture of the events. See *Haaretz*, *Maariv*, *Yedioth-Ahronot*, 22 December 1987.

13. Abna al-Balad holds about 12 seats on different Arab local councils. Its electoral support is relatively limited and in the local elections in March 1989 it lost its position in Um el Fahem where the movement was founded in early 1970 and where it had held a seat since 1973. Despite its small electoral representation, it does enjoy wider support for its political activities.

14. Interview with the author, 16 May 1989.

15. Nadim Rouhana, "The Intifada and the Palestinians of Israel: Resurrecting the Green Line", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, v. 19/3, no. 75, 1990, p 64.

16. It was at this gathering that Abd al-Wahab Darwasha, the Labour Party's only Arab Knesset member, announced his resignation from the party because of its policies in the occupied territories. Some observers have commented that Darwasha's resignation was not only connected to events in the occupied territories but also to the fact that he was not assured a safe seat in the Labour Party list for the next election. Later Darwasha formed the Arab Democratic Party and won a seat in the Israeli Knesset. Darwasha's exit shook the Labour Party and strengthened the role of the Palestinians in Israeli politics.

17. *Al-Itihad*, 2 February 1988.

18. Quoted in *JPIE*, 24 June 1989.

19. The meeting between Rukah's leaders and Arafat in Prague on 10 April 1989 was only one of many such encounters. It was as a result of this meeting that a statement was issued by the two parties indicating the PLO's recognition of Israel and the Palestinians' right to establish their own State. See *Haaretz*, 25 April 1989.

20. In the first few months of the Intifada I was active in the Popular Relief Committees and witnessed a great deal of generosity and support from the residents of my village.

21. Interview with author, 20 May 1989.

22. Quoted in *Al-Itihad*, 19 February 1988.

23. Interview with author, May 1989.

24. The Committee was established in 1975 to support Druze who refused to serve in the Israeli army. It supports the Palestinian right to self-determination and independence.

25. Interview with author, May 1989.
26. *Kul-at-Arab*, 27 February 1989.
27. Rouhana, *op cit*, p 64.
28. Interview with author, May 1989.
29. Interview with author.
30. N Rouhana, "The political transformation of the Palestinians in Israel: From acquiescence to challenge", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, v 18, no 3, Spring 1989, p 45.
31. *Present Tense*, April-May 1988.
32. *JP*, 25 December 1987.
33. Quoted in *JP*, 22 December 1987.
34. Quoted in *Jewish Herald* (New York), 8 January 1988.
35. *Ha'Arez*, 21 December 1987.
36. *Ha-sofeth*, 22 December 1987.
37. Ghassan Bishara, *AF*, no 485, 4 September 1989, p 5.
38. Quoted in *AF*, 10 July 1989, p 9.
39. See *MEI*, 23 June 1989, pp 8-9.
40. Reported in *Bi-Ariz*, no 189, 8 September 1988, p 32.
41. *Davar*, 18 May 1989.
42. *Hadashot*, 24 February 1988.
43. Quoted in *JP*, 24 February 1989.
44. Quoted in *al-Itihad*, 19 May 1989.
45. See *MEI*, 12 May 1989, p 7.
46. *Haaretz*, 8 May 1988.
47. *AF*, 11 June 1990, p 3.
48. *Maariv*, 15 September 1988.