



Escalations of October 2015: Impact on Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel

October 2015

INTRODUCTION

Over the last several months, a series of events in the West Bank and at the Temple Mount/Al Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem have triggered a wave of violent attacks – mostly in the West Bank and East Jerusalem but also in Israel proper. These include attacks against random Jewish citizens by Palestinians and, in three cases, by Arab citizens. There have also been a handful of revenge attacks, two of them stabbings, by Jewish citizens against random Arabs, and several cases of mob violence against innocent civilians.¹

Though the causes are located outside of Israel proper, the wave of attacks has led to deterioration in Jewish-Arab relations within Israel. In large measure, Jewish and Arab citizens are now mutually suspicious and afraid in the public sphere, in conflict in political discourse, and divided and often hostile on social media. Jewish-Arab relations within the country have fluctuated over the years depending often on Israel's relationship with its neighbors. Periods of relative calm between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors allow for trust to build and relations to strengthen between Arab and Jewish citizens, while conflict deteriorates relations and exacerbates tensions and mistrust between Arab and Jews inside the country.²

The current wave has also polarized tensions and arguments within Jewish and Arab communities themselves about how leadership and the public should respond, and what outcomes are possible or desired. At the same time, Jewish and Arab leaders and grassroots activists committed to strengthening majority-minority relations in Israel are making efforts and seeking opportunities, often jointly, to address the tensions and be heard above the din.

Current Escalations

Two separate triggers are recognized as immediate causes behind the current escalations. One, the firebombing in late July of the home of the Dawabshe family in the Palestinian village of Duma in the West Bank,³ which took the lives of the mother, father, and 18-month-old child, leaving a four-year-old child orphaned and badly wounded.⁴ This attack sent shockwaves through both Jewish and Arab communities⁵ and was attributed to right-wing Jewish extremists. Many Arab citizens, who share close familial and national ties with West Bank Palestinians, saw in this a dangerous escalation of vigilante tactics and 'Price Tag'

¹ Details and references in the 'Current Escalations' section of this paper.

² For example, in the 1990s, during the Oslo Peace Process, relations improved (now perceived as a "golden age") and many programs were established to bridge and build stronger ties between communities. During the Second Intifada in 2000 and subsequent wars in Lebanon and Gaza in 2006, 2008 and 2012, tensions heightened and Jewish-Arab relations were adversely affected. (See the Task Force briefing paper on Jewish-Arab relations following Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in the summer of 2014: "[Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel and the Summer of 2014: Assessments and Insights](#)")

³ "[A chronology of escalating violence between Palestinians and Israel.](#)" US News & World Report, Associated Press, October 13, 2015

⁴ "[Duma Arson Attack.](#)" Wikipedia

⁵ Hasson, Nir; Lior, Ilan; Shpigel, Noa. "[Thousands across Israel protest violence, incitement.](#)" Haaretz, August 1, 2015

attacks.^{6 7} Despite the fact this incident took place in the West Bank and was strongly condemned by numerous Jewish leaders, including PM Netanyahu, alongside the promise of harsher measures against Jewish terrorists,⁸ Arab citizens of Israel saw this as a failure of Israeli law enforcement to provide equal protection and justice to Arabs at large.⁹ The fact that perpetrators of the arson have been identified but not detained¹⁰ further exacerbates these sentiments.

In parallel, there were escalations surrounding the Temple Mount/Al Aqsa Mosque in August and September as efforts by both Jewish¹¹ and Muslim groups to assert, and arguably extend, their respective rights to the site¹² were taken up and amplified by Jewish and Arab leaders. Repeated visits by Jewish and Arab MKs over the summer incited and inflamed anger on both sides, leading to an increase in rock throwing by Palestinians, an intensified Israeli police presence,¹³ demonstrations that turned violent and clashed with police,¹⁴ and limitations on Muslim access to the site¹⁵—including a ban on two activist groups,¹⁶ and ultimately a ban by PM Netanyahu on visits by both Jewish and Arab MKs.¹⁷

Within the Arab community in Israel – as among Palestinians and other Arab states - there is a strong belief that Israel is aiming to break the status quo and that "Al Aqsa is in danger"¹⁸ which Israel adamantly denies.¹⁹ A delegation of Arab MKs even sought intervention from the Jordanian King, who issued a warning to Israel.²⁰ Israeli security enforcement at the site and Jewish claims to it continue to fuel much of the current confrontation, even among secular Arab youth.²¹

Both the Duma arson and peak of provocations surrounding the Temple Mount have been followed by a wave of violent attacks, demonstrations and mob violence. Since the beginning of October, these have taken place almost daily (often more than once a day) mostly in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, but also inside Israel proper. Most attacks have taken the form of stabbing incidents against Jewish civilians – usually by East Jerusalem Palestinian residents, three times by Arab citizens—from Nazareth²², Um El Fahem,²³ and one thought to be from Hura or Al Kassum,²⁴ and two times by Jewish citizens in acts of revenge.²⁵ Mob attacks on innocent civilians have also taken place, both in cases of mistaken identity where the victim was thought to be an attacker,²⁶ and others with the “express intent of attacking Arabs.”²⁷

⁶ Rubin, Shira. [“After Arson Murders, West Bank Village Waits in Vain for Justice.”](#) Forward, September 22, 2015

⁷ [“List of Recent Select Price Tag and Extremist Attacks in Israel.”](#) Anti-Defamation League. July 31, 2015

⁸ Lazaroff, Tovah, Yaakov Lappin, Lahav Harkov, and Khaled Abu Toameh. [“Israel Approves Use of Harsher Measures against Jewish Terrorists.”](#) Jerusalem Post. August 2, 2015

⁹ Cheslow, Daniela. [“In Arab village where toddler died, providing security a challenge.”](#) McClatchyDC, August 4, 2015

¹⁰ [“Ya’alon said to say Israel knows who perpetrated Duma attack.”](#) Times of Israel, September 10, 2015

¹¹ Eldar, Shlomi. [“Glick continues his campaign to bring Jews to Temple Mount.”](#) Al-Monitor, September 23, 2015

¹² This site in the heart of Jerusalem, sacred to both Jews and Muslims, was conferred special status in 1967, referred to as ‘the status quo,’ in which Muslims retain religious sovereignty over the site, Israel retains overall sovereignty, and Jordan administers the site’s Muslim religious affairs. Under this agreement, Jews are allowed to visit during certain hours but not to pray. (Gonen, Rivka. *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.* Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Pub. House, 2003. Print.)

¹³ Gross, Judah Ari, staff. [“Police Gird for Temple Mount Violence Friday as Unrest Persists.”](#) Times of Israel, September 17, 2015

¹⁴ Chana, Jas. [“Arab MK Calls Out Israeli Government After Violent Clash at Temple Mount.”](#) Tablet, July 29, 2015

¹⁵ [“Jerusalem police limit Muslim access to Temple Mount following violence.”](#) Jerusalem Post, September 27, 2015

¹⁶ Cohen, Gili. [“Israel Bans Two Muslim Activist Groups from Temple Mount.”](#) Haaretz, September 9, 2015

¹⁷ Lazaroff, Tovah, staff, [“Netanyahu bars all MKs, ministers from visiting Temple Mount.”](#) Jerusalem Post, October 8, 2015

¹⁸ [“Arab MK: Israel wants to drag the region into a religious war.”](#) Middle East Monitor, September 14, 2015

¹⁹ [“Netanyahu bans Jewish officials from Jerusalem holy site.”](#) CBS News, AP, October 8, 2015

²⁰ [“Jordan King Warns Israel over Holy Site Violence.”](#) CBS News, Associated Press, September 14, 2015

²¹ Baker, Luke. [“Behind Palestinian-Israeli attacks, angry youth and women ... and al-Aqsa.”](#) Reuters, October 13, 2015

²² Gross, Judah Ari. [“Arab woman attempts to stab Afula security guard, is shot.”](#) Times of Israel, October 9, 2015

²³ Hartmen, Ben. [“Four wounded, including soldier, in stabbing attack carried out by Arab Israeli.”](#) Jerusalem Post, October 11, 2015

²⁴ Ben Zikri, Almog, Efrati, Ido. [“Gunman Behind Be'er Sheva Shooting Attack Identified as Bedouin Man”](#) Haaretz, October 19, 2015

²⁵ Zieve, Tamara. [“Anti-Arab attacks on the rise amid recent terror wave.”](#) Jerusalem Post, October 11, 2015

²⁶ Schwartz, Michael, Brumfield, Ben. [“Israeli soldier, bystander dead after bus station attack by Bedouin.”](#) CNN, October 19, 2015

Dozens of Israeli citizens have been wounded and eight were killed.²⁸ More than 90 Arab citizens of Israel (and approximately 400 Palestinians) have been detained. Marches by Jewish right wing demonstrators, at times actively seeking to harm Arab civilians, have clashed with police.²⁹ In Arab society, a number of local demonstrations were followed by a general strike along with a massive demonstration in Sakhnin on October 13.³⁰

The resulting deterioration in Jewish-Arab relations in Israel is palpable, immediate, and leaving many wondering about its long-term impact.

IMPACT ON JEWISH-ARAB RELATIONS IN ISRAEL

The most visceral and generalized effect on Jewish-Arab relations in Israel has been an increase in polarized discourse between the Jewish majority and Arab minority and an almost total separation between Arab and Jewish communities. Jews refrain from entering Arab localities, while Arabs, more of whom need to visit major cities and engage with the Jewish majority for work, services, study and so forth, are limiting their travel to all-Jewish areas as much as possible. Commerce in Arab localities has come almost to a halt, with restaurants empty and internal tourism almost nonexistent. Jews are afraid of terrorist attacks and in some cases are willfully boycotting Arab businesses as a matter of principle. Arabs, in the meantime, are afraid of being mistaken for an attacker, being a victim of violent reprisal attacks or encountering anti-Arab abuse or harassment.³¹

Media and social media consumption patterns reinforce this fear and separation. Arabs and Jews generally receive news from separate, Hebrew and Arab media outlets and participate in separate social networks online, in different languages. Disparate narratives and perceptions about the causes of conflict and motives of the other are thus reinforced, as are fear and mistrust.³² Increasingly, in interviews and on social media representatives of each community are pushed into taking sides, while rumors abound³³ and the discourse becomes ever more polarized.

Within this general reaction, there are a few major lines of discourse within Arab and Jewish society framing the current situation and each community's response and concerns going forward.

Leadership

In recent years, both government and Arab political leadership have made strides towards better Arab inclusion in Israel's economy and society. A rising number of government investments and programs have been initiated over the last decade to close economic gaps and enhance Arab access to socio-economic opportunities. Meanwhile, this last year, the Joint Arab List, under the leadership of its Chair, MK Ayman Odeh, became the third largest party in the Knesset, advancing a new vision of shared citizenship and increased focus on Arab citizens' domestic interests.³⁴

²⁷ Sharon, Itamar. "Police arrest 5 over Arab man's beating in Netanya." Times of Israel, October 10, 2015

²⁸ Ben Zikir, Almog. "[One Killed, 11 Wounded in Shooting Attack in Southern Israel.](#)" Haaretz, October 18, 2015

²⁹ Yanovsky, Roi. "[Right wing demonstrators clash with police, search for Arabs.](#)" Ynet, October 8, 2015

³⁰ Ben Solomon, Ariel, "[General strike called Tuesday for Arab sector to protest police, support Al-Aksa.](#)" Jerusalem Post, October 11, 2015

³¹ For example: (1) a Bedouin child was [forced to leave her Jewish kindergarten](#). (2) An Arab resident of Tel-Aviv [encountered suspicion from neighbors](#), or (3) see this personal blog on [Facebook](#).

³² Edelman, Ofra. "[Internet Incitement Against Arabs in Israel on the Rise.](#)" Haaretz, October 13, 2015

³³ For example: A photo of numerous knives that were allegedly uncovered in a recent IDF search was [distributed on social media](#) – while its original source was from a few years ago. Likewise, Arab social media was full of rumors that the 13-years old terrorist who was wounded in Pisgat Zeev died, when in fact he was being treated in an Israeli hospital.

³⁴ Arlosoroff, Meirav. "[Despite Tensions, Israeli Arabs Narrowing the Economic Gap With Jews.](#)" Haaretz, October 16, 2015

While some Jewish and Arab leaders in Israel have made efforts to sustain a discourse of inclusion and cooperation in response to the recent escalations, the wave of attacks have also surfaced divisions and challenged the abilities of both Jewish and Arab leaders to bridge them.

Prime Minister Netanyahu and a number of his ministers have laid blame on leaders of the Palestinian Authority and the Northern Chapter of the Islamic Movement in Israel for incitement.³⁵ Many of them, including for example Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked, are talking about taking legal steps to outlaw this movement.³⁶ A number of ministers have also laid blame on Arab leadership, especially Arab Knesset Members. Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke in his opening speech of the Knesset's Winter Session about "the instigating leadership of the communist Balad party, behind whom are a train of ISIS flags," urging Arab citizens to "chose the right path" and "expel this divisive leadership."³⁷ Netanyahu also excluded Ayman Odeh, Chair of the Joint Arab List—the Knesset's third largest party—from security briefings with opposition leaders after a shooting attack by an Arab citizen of Israel, sending the message that he is condemning Arab leadership for its contribution to the ferment among Arab society and connections to Sheikh Raed Salah, head of Northern Chapter of the Islamic Movement.³⁸

A number of politicians, among them Former Minister of Finance, MK Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid), Minister Naftali Bennet (Jewish Home), the Mayor of Jerusalem³⁹ and others, have called on Jewish citizens to carry live firearms to protect themselves and respond to attacks and articulated a 'shoot to kill' objective for security forces or even civilians⁴⁰ when facing armed attackers.⁴¹ Arab leaders already concerned with the quick resort to shooting, denounced encouragement of overly aggressive policing.⁴² It is important to note that while some Arab leaders denounced the police for aggressive response to protestors, no live fire was used during demonstrations and security forces seem to have internalized lessons learned from past experiences in this respect.⁴³

President Rivlin, in line with his ongoing efforts to strengthen Jewish-Arab relations since taking office, gave a Knesset address calling on everyone to show responsibility and maintain calm, stressing that "especially in these tense days, we must remember that building trust between Jews and Arabs in Israel and abroad is a necessity," and that "now more than ever we need strong leadership from both sides that does not quail in the face of fear and does not encourage it."⁴⁴

³⁵ The actual influence of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement and its leader, Sheikh Raed Salah, are quite deeply disputed within Arab society. Most Arab citizens of Israel refuse to support the movement's ideology and some do blame the leader for deepening the rift between Arabs and Jews in Israel. Others see him as a scapegoat for the Israeli government symbolizing the administration's animosity towards Islam. (Eldar, Shlomi. "[Palestinians in Israel ride rip current into violence](#)" Al-Monitor, October 14, 2015)

Still there is great resistance within Arab society to outlawing a social and religious movement such as the Islamic Movement. (Khoury, Jack. "[Analysis: What's Driving the Israeli Arab Public's Struggle?](#)" Haaretz, October 12, 2015)

³⁶ While Sheikh Raed Salah, the Head of the Northern Branch, has been [extremely vocal](#) about the "danger for Al Aqsa" (Cohen, Shimon. "[Arab MKs Threaten Israel with 'Intifada' on Sukkot](#)" Israel National News, September 24, 2015), some write that the influence of the Islamic Movement is significantly diminished in Arab society. (Khoury, Jack. "[Analysis: What's Driving the Israeli Arab Public's Struggle?](#)" Haaretz, October 12, 2015)

³⁷ Bender, Eric, Somberg, Dana. "[Netanyahu opens the winter session: Arab leadership incites; we will defeat terror.](#)" Maariv, October 12, 2015 (Hebrew)

³⁸ "[Netanyahu didn't invite Ayman Odeh to a round of briefings with opposition leaders](#)" Haaretz, October 19th, 2015 (Hebrew)

³⁹ Eisenbud, Daniel K. "[Barkat to 'Post': Jews with gun licenses should carry pistols.](#)" Jerusalem Post, October 9, 2015

⁴⁰ Harkov, Lahav. "[Bennett calls for Israelis to 'eliminate the enemy.'](#)" Jerusalem Post, October 8, 2015

⁴¹ Klein, Steven. "[Israelis shouldn't be urged to take the law into their own hands.](#)" Haaretz, October 13, 2015.

⁴² Ben Solomon, Ariel, "[General strike called Tuesday for Arab sector to protest police, support Al-Aksa.](#)" Jerusalem Post, October 11, 2015

⁴³ Specifically, many say these lessons were learned from the events of October 2000 and the Orr Commission Report: Arlosoroff, Meirav. "[Despite Tensions, Israeli Arabs Narrowing the Economic Gap With Jews.](#)" Haaretz, October 16, 2015

⁴⁴ Dvorin, Tova. "[Rivlin: Israel Not at War with Islam.](#)" Israel National News, October 12, 2015

For their part, Arab MKs from the Joint Arab List have unequivocally placed blame for this wave of violence on Israel's "occupation policy"⁴⁵ in the West Bank and Gaza. While some, like Chair of the Joint List Ayman Odeh, have come out in condemnation of terror and called on all sides to refrain from incitement and violence,⁴⁶ others released incendiary remarks about the Israeli government, the threat to the Temple Mount, and denial of Jewish connection to the site.⁴⁷

Elected Arab leadership, local and national, made efforts to channel the anger and frustration of Arab community, especially the younger generation. Following spontaneous and at times violent demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinians in the first week of October,⁴⁸ Arab leaders organized more controlled demonstrations in Nazareth and Sakhnin.⁴⁹ While these demonstrations were vocal, they were contained and peaceful with no significant clashes and no casualties.

Local municipal leadership, as was the case in previous security deteriorations, seems focused in large part on maintaining their communities' economic viability and worked to contain violent outpourings in their respective areas and at times took issue with the politics of their national elected leadership. In a widely reported incident, the Mayor of Nazareth interrupted a live television interview with Joint List Chairman Ayman Odeh to denounce Arab leaderships' "escalations of tensions rather than efforts to bring calm,"⁵⁰ offered a rare public glimpse into divisions within Israel's Arab society. Mayor Salam has since been a focal point for Hebrew mainstream media, repeating to Israeli Army Radio that he "blame[s] the leaders. They are destroying our future; they are destroying coexistence,"⁵¹ and to Walla, a mainstream Israeli online news outlet, that "[w]e need to find a way to live together. We cannot fight like this. We are damaging ourselves."⁵²

Local municipal leaders also publicly condemned terror attacks. After a Bedouin resident of the Negev was identified as the gunman in a Beersheba shooting attack, local Bedouin leaders described the attack as an "abominable act... which is morally vile and harmful" and added that "we are, the vast majority of us, are for coexistence and peace".⁵³

In other cases, local and national Arab leaderships have been working in tandem to maintain calm. In the Arab city of Sakhnin, where the largest and most successful demonstration was held, drawing 20,000 participants, municipal and national leaders employed local ushers to prevent young demonstrators from approaching the main road and clashing with police.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ ["Thousands Rally in Nazareth vs. Occupation & for an Independent Palestinian State alongside Israel."](#) CPI, October 11, 2015

⁴⁶ Chairman of the Joint List, Ayman Odeh, even when condemning violence on any innocent people consistently coupled this condemnation with an assertion that PM Netanyahu is the greatest instigator. (Heller, Or, Wolf, Maya Ziv. ["MK Odeh: 'Condemns violence against innocent people; Netanyahu is prime instigator.'"](#) Nana, October 13, 2015 (Hebrew))

⁴⁷ E.g. [MK Hanin Zoabi](#) from Balad who called for a third Intifada, and [MK Zahalka](#) who yelled at Jewish to leave the Temple Mount. ["Arab-Israeli Lawmaker To Be Investigated Over Call for 'Real Intifada.'"](#) Forward, JTA, October 11, 2015; Harkov, Lahav. ["MK Zahalka accuses Jews on Temple Mount: 'Criminals, fascists, racists.'"](#) Jerusalem Post, September 29, 2015

⁴⁸ For example in [Lod](#), [Galilee](#) and Jaffa.

⁴⁹ For example in Nazareth on October 10 and in Sakhnin on October 13. While the Nazareth demonstration attracted a [relatively small crowd](#), as did an earlier demonstration to commemorate 15 years to the [October 2000 events](#), the one in Sakhnin included around 20,000 people.

⁵⁰ Cohen, Moshe. ["Arab MK Odeh: I Won't Fight With Nazareth Mayor in Public."](#) Israel National News, October 12, 2015

⁵¹ Gordis, Daniel. ["Mutual Fear of Attacks Divides Israel Further."](#) BloombergView, October 12, 2015

⁵² Ben Zion, Ilan. ["Nazareth mayor heckles Arab party leader on live TV."](#) Times of Israel, October, 11 2015

⁵³ ["Gunman Behind Be'er Sheva Shooting Attack Identified as Bedouin Man"](#); Haaretz, October 19th, 2015; ["Perpetrator of the shooting in Beersheba: Resident of the Bedouin settlements" NRG, October 19th, 2015 \(Hebrew\)](#)

⁵⁴ Khoury, Jack. ["The current uprising, unstructured and unguided, is in response to the occupation."](#) Haaretz, October 14, 2015 (Hebrew)

In the Galilee⁵⁵ and in Wadi Ara,⁵⁶ regional groups Jewish and Arab mayors issued joint statements calling for calm and reaffirming their commitment to continue working together for a shared and peaceful society. The group of 40 mayors in the Galilee also offered to serve as an example for how such cooperation can help resolve the crisis at large.

Some analyses say this pragmatism among Arab local leaders in Israel is a result not only of a desire to protect economic gains and relationships with their Jewish neighbors, but having experienced just how much there is to lose. In a recent meeting of the Arab Higher Monitoring Committee, everyone present agreed that the October 2000 events, in which massive demonstrations turned violent, accomplished nothing for Arab citizens.⁵⁷

Public Discourse

Most of the Arab public in Israel seems to echo this reluctance to further escalate or inflame the situation. While the demonstration in Sakhnin did attract a large crowd—that remained peaceful, other recent demonstrations have been less successful than in previous years, attracting fewer people and of those, mainly minors. Minors seem to be the most involved group among Arabs in the recent escalations. They are more likely to be frustrated by inaction and able to organize more spontaneously through online social networks.⁵⁸ Older generations seem less willing or interested in taking part in demonstrations and other forms of protest.⁵⁹ MK Ayman Odeh himself cited this generational gap when he argued that Arab leadership is trying to calm tensions, but that the younger generation is beyond their control.⁶⁰

That said, the Arab public has been deeply affected by the escalations, and social media is playing a significant role. Many of the recent attacks are documented and available to view online. While the attacks themselves inspire fear and anger within the Jewish public, the manner in which perpetrators are subdued fuels anger and suspicion among Arabs. The video of a Nazarene woman being apprehended with a knife at the Afula bus station⁶¹ purportedly inspired at least two additional attacks,⁶² as Arab social media threads disputed claims that she wielded a knife or attacked an Israeli soldier, and most poignantly, questioned why she was shot instead of otherwise subdued.⁶³

In addition, Arab citizens are also exposed to discourse in the Jewish community. Hebrew Facebook campaigns calling for the dismissal of Arab workers⁶⁴ were echoed in public when major companies like Rami Levi faced pressure to dismiss Arab employees. Rami Levi refused, committing instead to take knives off his supermarket shelves, but “social media are filled with unverified reports of Jewish employers refusing to allow Arab employees to come to work and/or asking employment agencies not to send Arab candidates.” So far, though, “[T]here are few if any signs that Arab employees are being suspended from their jobs or fired.”⁶⁵

⁵⁵ [“Forty Arab and Jewish Mayors issue call for end of violence in signed statement.”](#) [lataskforce.org](#) –October 13, 2015

⁵⁶ [“As Tensions in Israel Escalate, Civil Society Organizations Take Action](#) – [iataskforce.org](#) –October 16, 2015

⁵⁷ Khoury, Jack. [“Analysis: What’s Driving the Israeli Arab Public’s Struggle?”](#) Haaretz, October 12, 2015

⁵⁸ Postings in Arabic call on Palestinians and Arab citizens alike to “anoint your knives with poison” when attacking “occupying soldiers” and to attend masked demonstrations in Arab villages in Israel and the West bank. (Shalan, Hassan. [“Anoint your knives with poison’: What incitement looks like on social media.”](#) Ynet, October 11, 2015

⁵⁹ Khoury, Jack. [“Analysis: What’s Driving the Israeli Arab Public’s Struggle?”](#) Haaretz, October 12, 2015

⁶⁰ Khoury, Jack. [“The current uprising, unstructured and unguided, is in response to the occupation.”](#) Haaretz, October 14, 2015 (Hebrew)

⁶¹ [“WATCH: Police shoot female terrorist in dramatic standoff at Afula bus station.”](#) Jerusalem Post, October 9, 2015

⁶² Rudoren, Jodi. [“Leaderless Palestinian Youth, Inspired by Social Media, Drive Rise in Violence in Israel.”](#) New York Times, October 13, 2015

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ [“Fire the terrorist of tomorrow, today!”](#) Image on Facebook page named “We are all behind death for terrorists”

⁶⁵ Dovrat-Meseritz, Adi, Bsoul, Janan. [“Faced With Calls to Bar Arabs From Workplaces, Israeli Employers Stand Firm.”](#) Haaretz, October 15, 2015

Other companies, like Bezeq, that had one employee use their vehicle to perpetrate an attack, are splitting Jewish and Arab technicians to serve in Jewish and Arab towns, respectively, and even asking Jewish employees with permits to carry guns.⁶⁶ These, plus “a sharp rise in the number of statements inciting to violence against Arabs” on Jewish Israeli social media,⁶⁷ reinforce fear among Arab citizens of being profiled as suspects,⁶⁸ and of being subject to reprisals⁶⁹ or harassment.⁷⁰

The Jewish Israeli public is indeed frustrated by the current security situation. Some have taken to the streets to protest the attacks and “what they said was Benjamin Netanyahu’s insufficiently tough response.”⁷¹ Rising numbers of Israeli Jews are openly expressing anti-Arab sentiments in public and online⁷² and in extreme cases, right wing elements have taken to the streets of Jerusalem to intimidate and attack Arabs.⁷³ Hebrew mainstream media and Israeli leaders condemn such actions,⁷⁴ and initial steps have been taken to outlaw the most extreme right-wing organizations.⁷⁵ At the same time, a number of grassroots social media memes⁷⁶ have taken off that counter anti-Arab sentiments⁷⁷ and reinforce values of co-existence in the Jewish-Israeli public.

Yet many are equally disappointed with Arab leadership, especially Chair of the Joint List, Ayman Odeh,⁷⁸ for not coming out more strongly on the violent attacks, given his ambitious agenda for coexistence and shared citizenship.⁷⁹ This criticism of Arab leadership was echoed by Arab television anchor Lucy Aharish. In an interview on Israel’s Channel 2, she slammed any justification for acts of terrorism and Arab leadership for inciting youth to violence. In a two-minute segment, she condemned Arab leaders for using religion as an excuse for violence for and “destroying [young people’s] future with your own hands.”⁸⁰ The video has been viewed many thousands of times on social media and Aharish has been quoted extensively in Hebrew and Jewish media. Along with Nazareth’s Mayor Salam who criticized Odeh directly, she is being depicted as one of the hopeful voices that the Jewish Israeli public would like to hear more from their Arab countrymen.⁸¹

Yediot Aharonot, one of Israel’s most popular newspapers, acknowledged a desire to hear this discourse from both Jews and Arabs, In a special issue published under the title “Enough!” the paper featured a series of joint columns by Jewish and Arab mayors, artists, soccer players, civil society activists and people who lost family to terror, all calling for a stop to the the violence.⁸²

CIVIL SOCIETY

In times of crisis, when fear and suspicion dominate much of public discourse, civil society leaders and organizations work to ensure moderate and inclusive sentiments have a platform in the public sphere, and

⁶⁶ [“Bezeq orders Jewish employees out of Arab towns.”](#) Times of Israel, October 14, 2015

⁶⁷ Edeman, Ofra. [“Internet Incitement Against Arabs in Israel on the Rise.”](#) Haaretz, October 13, 2015

⁶⁸ [“It’s enough that people yell ‘Terrorist.’”](#) Israel Social TV, October 15, 2015

⁶⁹ Zieve, Tamara. [“Anti-Arab Attacks on the Rise amid Recent Terror Wave.”](#) Jerusalem Post, October 11, 2015

⁷⁰ Arlosoroff, Meirav. [“Despite Tensions, Israeli Arabs Narrowing the Economic Gap With Jews”](#) Haaretz, October 16, 2015

⁷¹ [“Israelis take to the streets to protest security situation.”](#) Times of Israel, October 11, 2015

⁷² Edelman, Ofra. [“Internet Incitement Against Arabs in Israel on the Rise.”](#) Haaretz, October 13, 2015

⁷³ Hasson, Nir. [“Far-right Activists Chant ‘Death to Arabs,’ Assault Passersby in Jerusalem After Terror Attack.”](#) Haaretz. October 4, 2015

⁷⁴ Pileggi, Tamar. [“Netanyahu decries attack against ‘innocent Arabs’ in Dimona”](#) Times of Israel, October 09, 2015

⁷⁵ [“Israeli Public Security Minister Considers Outlawing Jewish Extremist organization Lehava.”](#) Haaretz, October 11, 2015

⁷⁶ Yaron, Oded. [“Ad Hoc Israeli Facebook Campaign Battles Hatred of Arabs”](#) Haaretz, October 12, 2015

⁷⁷ Pileggi, Tamar. [“Humorous response to anti-Arab racism goes viral.”](#) Times of Israel, October 13, 2015

⁷⁸ Oz, Sheri. [“Dear Ayman Ouda – What Have You Done With Ayman Ouda?”](#) Times of Israel, October 17, 2015

⁷⁹ Mualem, Mazal. [“The failure of Palestinian leadership in Israel.”](#) Al-Monitor, October 15, 2015

⁸⁰ Friedman, Gabe. [“WATCH: Prominent Arab-Israeli news anchor slams Palestinian leaders.”](#) JTA, October 15, 2015

⁸¹ Mualem, Mazal. [“The failure of Palestinian leadership in Israel.”](#) Al-Monitor, October 15, 2015

⁸² Hirshenzon, Ronnie, Dooabs, Hussein. [“From the blood of their hearts.”](#) Yedioth Aharonot, October 18, 2015 (Hebrew)

that people who share these views have opportunities to take action in support of positive Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. During the recent escalations, both veteran shared society organizations and new grassroots initiatives have been working to ensure that the Jewish and Arab public have channels to act in solidarity with each other and against damaging rhetoric and discrimination.

Within the first several days of the wave of violence, numerous organizations [issued statements](#) calling for tolerance and calm while expressing outrage against violence and incitement.⁸³ As the wave continued and tensions rose within Israel, organizations and neighboring communities took [more concerted action](#).⁸⁴ For example:

- Givat Haviva set up a Partnership Tent for residents, groups and leaders in the Wadi Ara area to meet and dialogue about the situation, and, along with regional Jewish and Arab mayors, [issued a call for leaders](#) “to preserve the fabric of life together that we have put great effort into building.”
- The JDC’s Institute for Leadership and Governance, which convenes a Mayor’s Forum, [called a special meeting](#) in which forty-five Jewish and Arab mayors from the North and South of the country were able to commit to work together to quell tensions and serve as role models for collaborative Jewish and Arab leadership in the country.⁸⁵
- Omdim Beyachad (“Standing Together”), a new movement that formed in response to the current wave of violence, held a series of organizing meetings in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Nazareth that culminated in a 1500-strong March in the center of Jerusalem on Saturday October 17. Under the slogan “we will not surrender to despair,” the rally brought together MKs from the Joint Arab List and Meretz, activists of peace movements and parents and students of the Jerusalem’s Max Rayne Hand in Hand Hebrew-Arabic bilingual school. Participants called to stop all violence and “end occupation of the west bank” and held signs saying “Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies.”⁸⁶

Other efforts include Sikkuy’s calling on the Minister of the Economy [to speak out and prevent](#) unlawful firing of Arab employees; The Hagar Association’s campaign to [“#publicizepeace”](#) that combines a Facebook meme with sharing hopeful stories of encounters between Jewish and Arab citizens that counter the difficult news in the headlines; and Hand in Hand schools’ [ongoing work with their communities](#), bringing students, their families, and their communities together for dialogue and solidarity in times of crisis; as well as grassroots efforts such as a horse-parade for peace through Wadi Ara to Umm El Fahem⁸⁷ and a 700-strong human chain of Jews and Arabs in the Galilee.⁸⁸

For these organizations, many of whose work has spanned numerous crises, the significance of preventing deterioration in relations is profound. Every crisis period in Israel’s conflict with Palestinians threatens the hard won gains made in period of relative calm and adds layers of mistrust and mutual disappointment to the already complex relationship between majority and minority, Jewish and Arab neighboring communities, colleagues in the labor market and so forth.

On the socio-economic level, Jewish-Arab relations are much better than they were 15 years ago,⁸⁹ in no small part through the efforts of civil society initiatives and of the Israeli government to close gaps between Arab and Jewish citizens. In recent years, significant government interest in the welfare of Arab citizens, with more investment in Arab education, infrastructure, and economic development, and greater integration of

⁸³ [“Civil society orgs issue responses to deterioration in Jewish-Arab relations in Israel.”](#) IATaskforce.org, October 13, 2015

⁸⁴ For ongoing updates on civil society activities in response to these escalations, refer to the Task Force website: [“As Tensions in Israel Escalate, Civil Society Organizations Take Action.”](#) IATaskforce.org, October 17, 2015

⁸⁵ Dr. Tamir, Yossi. [“Dispatch: Standing With Israelis During Troubled Times.”](#) JDC Field blog, October 14, 2015

⁸⁶ [“Hundreds Rally for Peace in Jerusalem, Beersheba.”](#) Times of Israel, October 18, 2015

⁸⁷ Etiel, Yoav. [“Riders for Peace in Wadi Ara”](#) Magazin.org.il, October 17, 2015

⁸⁸ [“Hundreds of Israeli Jews and Arabs rally for peace.”](#) Times of Israel, JTA, October 16, 2015

⁸⁹ Arlosoroff, Meirav. [“Despite Tensions, Israeli Arabs Narrowing the Economic Gap With Jews”](#) Haaretz, October 16, 2015

Arab citizens into higher education and the job market, had an effect of deepening Jewish-Arab relations and fostering a greater stake in a functioning Israeli society among Arab citizens.⁹⁰

Many analysts attribute these gains to the reluctance of the Arab public to participate in violent protest during this crisis,⁹¹ and attribute other gains, such as police forces' relative restraint at demonstrations⁹² (compared to confrontations in October 2000 especially) to lessons learned and effective initiatives promoting such changes.

Yet, explains Ron Gerlitz, co-executive director of Sikkuy, "if once the point of friction was with the police ... today the point is between Israel's citizens, and that's much harder to restrain."⁹³ Increasingly, civil society organizations are working to add the social dimension to efforts to increase systemic integration of Arab citizens in Israeli society. If advances in structural conditions can help restrain violence between Jewish and Arab communities in Israel, the hope is that efforts to develop a resilient and shared social fabric, can similarly help Jewish and Arab citizens withstand the pressures of such crises.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Khoury, Jack. "[Analysis: What's Driving the Israeli Arab Public's Struggle?](#)" Haaretz, October 12, 2015

⁹² Arlosoroff, Meirav. "[Despite Tensions, Israeli Arabs Narrowing the Economic Gap With Jews](#)" Haaretz, October 16, 2015

⁹³ Ibid.