



Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel and the Summer of 2014: Assessments and Insights

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Writer: Avivit Hai

Editor: Liron Shoham

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Organizations interviewed include: [AJEEC-NISPED](#), [Al Tufula](#), [ANU](#), [Dirasat](#), [Economic Empowerment for Women \(EEW\)](#), [Givat Haviva](#), [Hand in Hand](#), [INJAZ – Center for Professional Local Arab Governance](#), [Israel Religious Action Center \(IRAC\)](#), [Kav Mashve](#), [Mahapach-Taghir](#), [Mossawa Center](#), [Shatil](#), [SIKKUY](#), [The Abraham Fund Initiatives](#), [The Association for Civil Rights in Israel \(ACRI\)](#). Academics, journalists and leaders interviewed include: Prof. As'ad Ghanem, Prof. Mordechai Kermnitzer, Dr. Dalia Fadila, Prof. Sammy Smootha, Prof. Elie Rekhess, Oudeh Bisharat, Jacki Hourri, Nazir Majalli, Dr. Sarah Ozacki-Lazar, MK Bassel Ghatas and MK. Hanna Sweid.

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Introduction

Jewish-Arab relations in Israel are deeply affected by the ongoing conflict between Israel, the Palestinians and the larger Arab world. This summer, the kidnap and murder of three Jewish teens in the West Bank began a period of escalated tensions within the country that remained high through the course of Operation Protective Edge and is still reverberating through Israeli society today.

On June 30th confirmation of the deaths of the Jewish teens sparked violent demonstrations and mourning in Jerusalem, in the midst of which a number of violent attacks against Arab inhabitants of the city took place and a Palestinian teen was kidnapped and murdered in an act of revenge. Arab demonstrations in response turned into riots that included blocked roads, stones thrown at vehicles and some clashes with police in Jerusalem and in Arab villages in Israel. As these events were unfolding, rockets launched from Gaza increased and Israel prepared for a military operation in the South, escalating tensions further. During this period, there was an increase in acts of incitement between Jewish and Arab citizens, a significant rise in anti-Arab hostility - including violent attacks in public places (e.g. malls and buses) and on social media, demonstrations in Arab towns that turned violent and joint Jewish-Arab demonstrations that were attacked by right wing counter-demonstrations.

A period of relative calm followed the ceasefire on August 26th in which a sense of normalcy gradually resumed and civil society leaders began to assess the impact of the escalations on Jewish-Arab relations and explore lessons-learned. As of the writing of this paper, renewed tensions in Jerusalem surrounding the Temple Mount, lethal acts of Palestinian terror against Jews, and the shooting of an Arab citizen in Kfar Kana by police have been part of a new cycle of escalations which threatens to grow further still. As these events are still fresh and their repercussions yet to be seen, this paper addresses the impact of this summer's events on Jewish and Arab relations, which is perceived as significant in severity and in many ways unique in character.

This summer's escalations come on the backdrop of an increase in the quality and quantity of civil society and government efforts to improve the status of Arab citizens and internal relations in Israel over the last decade. The severity and characteristics of the escalations that took place shed light on how society has also changed over this time, how bottom up and top down efforts may have contributed to these changes, and avenues for future work. This paper therefore aims to map how experienced leaders and experts on the ground view the summer's events relative to previous escalations, and what insights they have begun to formulate for the future.

Background: Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel

Arab citizens make up a little more than 20% of the population, approximately 1.6 million people, the majority of whom live in Israel's northern and southern periphery. While levels of interaction vary regionally, and have gradually increased over time, on the whole, Jews and Arabs live in separate localities, study in separate public school streams (in either Hebrew or Arabic respectively), and by and large have few occasions to meaningfully meet and engage.

Poverty rates among Arab citizens are more than three times higher than among the Jewish majority, and Arab towns and villages consistently rank lowest on Israel's municipal socio-economic scale. Arab citizens' underrepresentation as civil servants, in the advanced labor market, and in higher education contributes not only to growing income gaps and economic losses to the country as a whole, but to the reality that Arabs and Jews do not yet have many opportunities for shared, constructive and cooperative spheres of activity.

Underlying the socio-economic realities, Arab citizens' national identity is complex, spanning ties to both Israel and the Palestinian people and larger Arab world.¹ Jewish-Arab relations within the country have fluctuated over the years depending on Israel's relationship with its neighbors. Periods of relative calm between Israel and its neighbors allow for trust to build and relations to strengthen between Arab and Jewish citizens, while conflict deteriorates relations and exacerbates tensions and mistrust. 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.

The "Events of October 2000"—demonstrations and riots by Arab citizens that took place at the beginning of the Second Intifada—are seen today as an important turning point in Jewish-Arab relations. After these events, in which 12 Arab citizens and one Palestinian were killed in clashes with Israeli police, Jewish-Arab relations retreated into a long period of disconnect. The events shook the nation such that a National Commission of Inquiry (so-called the "Orr Commission") was nominated by the government to investigate the causes of deadly clashes.²

In its report, the Orr Commission found that long-term "neglectful and discriminatory" handling of the Arab community by Israeli governments was a root cause of the violent protests, and "demanded that immediate, medium-term and long-term action be taken." The Orr Commission also recognized the complexity of Arab citizen identity in the Jewish state:

"Relations between the majority and minority are difficult everywhere, let alone in a country that defines itself according to the nationality of the majority... The feelings of the Arabs in Israel, whose affiliation with the Palestinians beyond the Green Line aren't just national but social and familial too, were expressed in that famous saying of Abed al-Aziz Zoabi, 'My country is at war with my people.'"³

¹ In the 2012 Index on Arab-Jewish Relations, 66.5% of Arab citizens include the term "Palestinian" as part of their self-definition (e.g. Palestinian-Israeli, Palestinian citizens of Israel). Over 80% include the term "Arab" in their self-definition (e.g. Arab-Israeli, Arab-Palestinian citizen of Israel). [Index of Arab-Jewish-Relations in Israel in 2012, Hebrew edition, p. 98](#)

² The Orr Commission (The "National Commission of Inquiry into the Clashes Between the Security Forces and Israeli Citizens on October 2000"), was a three-person panel appointed on November 15th by the Israeli government to investigate the Events of October 2000. The panel was headed by Justice Theodore Orr, a Supreme Court Judge, and included District Court Judge Hashim Khatib and Former Ambassador Professor Shimon Shamir. The Commission released its findings on September 2, 2003. The executive summary was published in English in Haaretz and [can be seen online here](#).

³ [Executive Summary of the Orr Commission Report](#)

While Jewish-Arab relations suffered in the aftermath of these events, a new mandate was set for government policy. Civil society organizations have since worked to promote new and more targeted strategies to enhance opportunities for Arab citizens and strengthen Jewish-Arab relations. In recent years, the government of Israel has made economic-integration of Arab citizens a national priority—employment and higher education especially—backed by billions of shekels in massive development programs. These top-down and bottom-up efforts have led to increased interactions between Arabs and Jews, growth of the Arab middle class, and more collaboration between Arab and Jewish local leaderships.

During the heat of the conflict over the summer, civil society organizations, mayors and local leaders worked to respond to the rise of incitement, to quell further escalations and limit damages to Jewish-Arab relations. A few months following, Jewish and Arab leaders are working to assess how the escalations that took place should be understood. Which trends of the last decade contributed to the breakdown in relations, and which were instrumental in preventing violent outbursts or constraining some of these tensions? What needs to be done to prevent tensions manifesting in incitement and violence, even with fluctuations in the external conflict in the future?

Jewish-Arab Relations: Summer of 2014

Prior to June 2014, there were opposing trends in Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. On the one hand, government and civil society efforts to close economic gaps and better integrate Arab citizens into the economy and higher education were making modest but important gains. Civil society organizations, many of which had developed the economic programs now being scaled for national implementation, were increasingly incorporating concepts of shared society into their discourse and work, while professionalizing and institutionalizing their programs.

On the other hand, a number of legislative efforts had been initiated in recent years that directly or indirectly disadvantaged Arab citizens, be it by strengthening the definition of Israel's Jewish character over its democratic character (i.e. by suggesting to revoke the status of Arabic as an official language of Israel), raising the electoral threshold in the Knesset (making it more difficult for Arab parties to gain seats), or predicating housing benefits and discounts on military service (from which Arab citizens are exempt). At the same time, the phenomenon of 'Price Tag' activity, or anti-Arab hate crimes, had been on the rise within Israel and, though condemned by many government leaders, not successfully prosecuted to a large extent.

Responses to the summer's events within Israel fell along similar lines in that there were government, civil society and activist efforts to preserve cohesion between Jewish and Arab citizens, as well as actions that acted on and intensified divisions and mistrust.

The first wave of escalation in tensions this summer was in response to the murders of the three Jewish teens, Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer, and Eyal Yifrah. The discovery of their bodies on June 30th after an intensive search sparked Jewish demonstrations in Jerusalem including hostile anti-Arab protests where the chant 'Death to Arabs' was heard and would be repeated in later demonstrations elsewhere in the country, and where a number of [Arab residents were attacked](#) on the streets. On July 2nd, one day after the Jewish teens' burial, Palestinian teen Mohammad Abu

Khdeir was kidnapped and murdered in East Jerusalem in an act of revenge. This sparked [Arab demonstrations and riots](#) that included burning tires, blocked roads and clashes with security forces. At the same time, there were efforts to demonstrate non-violent, joint-Jewish-Arab response to the tragedies including a [number of marches organized by civil society organizations](#), each [attended by several hundred participants](#).

In the days following, rocket attacks from the south intensified and focus shifted to Israel's military operation in Gaza. The beginning of Operation Protective Edge raised the level of tensions throughout the country further. From the launch of the operation on July 8th through the cease-fire on August 26th there was a significant increase in incitement between Jewish and Arab citizens on the street and online. Arab citizens were assaulted and intimidated in public places like shopping malls and on public transportation, and were systemically harassed on social media. Many Arab civil society leaders stated this was the first time they felt fear on the street and that many Arabs refrained from speaking Arabic in public places. Both Arab and Jewish citizens were targeted for voicing opinions that criticized the IDF or questioned the military operation and several [joint-Jewish Arab demonstrations were attacked](#) by anti-Arab Jewish protesters. There are reports of numerous Arab citizens who [lost their jobs](#) for stating their opinions about the war online, though the exact number of dismissals is unknown. There were [demonstrations in Arab towns](#) that [turned into violent](#), intimidating neighboring Jewish towns or passersby, and viral social media campaigns called IDF soldiers "murderers" and worse, inciting deep anger and mistrust in the Jewish community.

While some national political leaders strongly condemned violence and incitement between Arab and Jewish citizens, both Jewish and Arab national leaders made inflammatory or inciting remarks that further fanned the flames. Notably, [Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman called for a boycott of Arab businesses](#) that went on strike in protest of the war (ultimately seen as a call for a boycott on all Arab businesses,) and [MK Haneen Zoabi said kidnappers of the Jewish teens were not "terrorists"](#) and [called IDF soldiers "murderers."](#) Since most national leaders remained focused on the crisis in Gaza and did not address internal escalations, these statements made significant waves and added to the level of discord in the public.

Assessments

The escalations between Jewish and Arab citizens this summer are widely considered to be the most severe since October of 2000. External factors related to the ongoing conflict were the triggers behind tensions—in particular the length of the war, the scope of destruction in Gaza, and the number of casualties on both sides. But there were internal factors that affected the severity and character of the escalations within Israel. During and since the crisis, civil society leaders, professionals, academics and activists in the field have been assessing what internal factors aggravated tensions, and which helped retain cohesion and avert further deterioration. Below is a selection of factors cited by leaders in the field, though their relative weight and importance varied among interviewees.

Aggravating Factors

1. Violence between civilians

One of the most concerning aspects of the escalations this summer is that incitement took place in public and violence erupted between civilians, whereas in the past clashes occurred mostly between Arab citizens and state security forces. This time, Arab citizens were attacked or harassed in public places, and joint Jewish-Arab and anti-war demonstrations were attacked by right-wing counter-demonstrators. While this is one of the characteristics that describe why tensions this summer are considered the most severe since October of 2000, it was also a factor in deepening fear and mistrust between Arab and Jewish citizens. Many professionals in the field cite this as a new and dangerous development.

2. The rise of exclusionary and anti-Arab discourse in the mainstream

Many civil society leaders spoke about a connection between the public expressions of anti-Arab hostility this summer and the rise of top-down and bottom-up anti-Arab discourse in recent years. From the top, there has been an increase in legislative initiatives seen as aiming to disadvantage Arab citizens, including efforts to make certain opportunities and benefits conditional on various "service" or "loyalty" clauses. This legislative trend includes the [Nationality Bill](#) which was approved by cabinet during the writing of this paper and emphasizes the Jewish, rather than democratic, nature of the state. While most of these bills have ultimately not passed, combined, they are seen to have given public momentum and top-down legitimacy to exclusionary and conditional discourse.

At the same time, a rise in the number and strength of social movements and activist groups promoting exclusionary or anti-Arab platforms is also seen to have sown this discourse into the mainstream. Ranging from informal grass-roots efforts to formal organizations, these groups have been leading campaigns in the media, Knesset and on university campuses (e.g. in protest of ["anti-Zionist" university content](#), [against memorialization of the Nakba](#), and [left-leaning legislation in the Knesset](#), or to [fight Jewish-Arab romantic interactions](#)). These campaigns receive a lot of coverage in the media, furthering the prevalence of this discourse in the public sphere.

A recent poll commissioned by Channel 10, one of the main television channels, found that 86% of Arab citizens experience strong or moderate racism in Israeli society at the same time that 77% prefer to remain part of the Israeli state.⁴

3. Limited government response to escalations

Institutionally, the Ministry of Justice was the only government agency that acted on heightened levels of incitement during the summer, opening and publicizing a hotline to report such incidents. Most government leadership and politicians did not address the war's impact on Jewish-Arab relations in the country, and there was serious concern by many in the field that this omission was seen as sanction for anti-Arab incitement. As of the

⁴ [68% of Israeli Arabs oppose recent wave of terrorism, poll finds](#) – *Jerusalem Post* – Ariel Ben Solomon – 11.25.14

writing of this paper, there has been strong and vocal response by government leaders to discrimination against Arabs following recent terror attacks in Jerusalem. Prime Minister Netanyahu, Minister of Finance Bennett and others strongly opposed the Mayor of Ashkelon's move to bar Arab construction workers from city projects, setting strong tone for the country on this issue. Over the summer, however, there was disappointment among civil society leaders that government leadership did not take a stronger stance against incitement activity.

A few important exceptions include strong condemnations of violence by out-going [President Shimon Peres](#), Minister Yaakov Perri, a number of Knesset Members, and, most notably, incoming President Reuven Rivlin who made explicit and repeated calls [against incitement](#) and for [coexistence and tolerance](#). On the other extreme, national leaders also made inflammatory statements, including Arab and Jewish Knesset members⁵ and, most prominently, Foreign Minister Liberman's call for Jews to [boycott Arab businesses](#) that took part in a general strike announced by the Arab Follow Up Committee as a form of non-violent protest against the war. Liberman's call made waves in that it was understood as a high level official legitimizing and even encouraging boycott on all Arab-owned businesses (it is not possible to differentiate which Arab businesses were closed as part of the strike).⁶

4. Social media

Social media is fully integrated into Israeli life and during this crisis provided greater immediacy to information and visibility into perspectives of the general public and of politicians alike. During the war, millions of Israelis received a flow of images and information from the front-lines—Jews generally from soldiers and Jewish communities near the border and Arabs from Gazans—that intensified their polarized experience of the crisis. In addition, their comments, thoughts and feelings were more public than ever before. In numerous cases, Arabs and Jews who posted negative views of the war or the IDF, or [showed sympathy](#) to the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza, were subject to online harassment. A sample of 4110 social media updates posted over three days in the first week of Operation Protective Edge were analyzed by the [Coalition Against Racism](#) and showed that 44% were racist or inciting, including a large number (45%) targeting leftist demonstrators against the operation.⁷ In other cases, there are reports that negative posts by Arabs were systematically searched and used to pressure their employers to dismiss them. In yet other cases, hate-speech campaigns and [Facebook groups](#) targeting Arabs were launched and went viral. Many believe that greater visibility into the opposing opinions of everyday people may have played a significant role in reinforcing negative attitudes between Arabs and Jews.

⁵⁵ For example, MK Hanin Zoabi saying that those who abducted the three Jewish teens were "[not terrorists](#)", Arab MKs from Balad party [visited Qatar](#) in August, and a [confrontation in the Knesset Interior Committee](#) during which MK Zahalka accused the Chief of Police for having "blood on his hands" and MK Miri Regev calling him in response "a terrorist."

⁶ At the end of September, a [poll](#) conducted by the Tel Aviv-based Geocartography Knowledge Group Research Institute showed that almost a quarter of Israeli Jews were still boycotting Arab businesses.

5. Mainstream media

Despite the efforts of a number of civil society organizations this summer to promote an alternative voice of Jewish-Arab cooperation and empathy in the media, mainstream media is seen by civil society organizations as having by and large played a negative role during the crisis. According to organizations involved in media work, mainstream media tended to focus on and amplify anti-Arab sentiments among the Jewish public and anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish sentiments from Arab society. Many believe that media focus on the negative extremes reinforced these attitudes and made it more difficult for alternative voices, actions and visions to be heard.

Tempering Factors

6. Increase in Jewish-Arab interaction

In recent years, there has been gradual integration and enhanced presence of Arabs in the public sphere in Israel. This includes, for example, in shopping centers (as both consumers and employees), in the labor market (e.g. in civil service⁸ and private market professions⁹) and in the media.¹⁰ As a result, there is enhanced contact between Jews and Arabs and more daily interaction. While some claim that this has triggered a [right wing backlash](#), other say it has created a more resilient, [integrated](#) and interdependent reality on the ground. In retrospect this is seen by players in the field as a decisive factor that prevented an even more severe breakdown of relations and that will most likely prevent a long period of economic disengagement such as happened during the early years of the new millennium following the October 2000 events.

7. Municipal leadership

As opposed to national leadership, local leaders became some of the most effective lines of restraint and diffusion of tensions. Arab mayors and [local Jewish and Arab municipal leaders](#) played an important role in [containing demonstrations](#) and intervening to prevent them from turning violent.¹¹ Arab mayors proactively interacted with the police, with neighboring Jewish mayors and with their own communities to prevent, preempt, contain and stop local violence. On a number of occasions, Arab mayors [objected to attempts to organize massive anti-war demonstrations in their localities](#), or when such demonstrations did take place, made it possible for the community to express their anger within the

⁸ According to the statistics of the [Civil Service Commissioner's office](#), only around 2,800 Arab employees (including Druze) worked as civil servants in 2003 (the first year where such analysis was conducted) comprising at the time around 5.5% of all civil servants. At the end of 2012 (last available analysis) that number rose to around 5,500, comprising 8.37% of all civil servants. While this is still short of fulfilling the relevant government resolutions according to which that number should have been 10% by the end of 2012, this is still a sizable improvement. For more details see the Task Force's Briefing paper [Arab Citizen Employment in Israel](#).

⁹ One notable area of improvement has been high tech, where Arab employees were all but absent a decade ago, and where today, although they are still significantly underrepresented, between 2-3 thousands of them are employed.

¹⁰ Especially on TV, where the successful program [Arab Labor](#) brought the reality of Arab citizens into the attention of many Jewish Israelis and where a number of Arab citizens competed and even won in high-rating reality programs.

¹¹ For example, in the midst of the crisis, relations between neighboring mayors enabled the release of three or four [joint statements](#) by Jewish and Arab mayor forums - often with the help of civil society organizations that have been working with them.

boundaries of the town and without letting the demonstration reach main roads and intersections, thus avoiding escalation or harsher clashes with the police. This is seen as a positive development resulting from the strengthening and professionalization of Arab local leadership, a new generation of younger, more sophisticated mayors, and enhanced political awareness among the growing Arab middle class. Some mayors used economic arguments to remind communities how dependent they are on Jewish buying power and employment, and warning them not to cause irreversible damage to Jewish-Arab relations, which will backfire economically. Work of civil society organizations to promote this professionalism and interdependence, and to build relationships between Jewish and Arab mayors,¹² is also seen as having been instrumental in these developments.

8. Police restraint

With respect to events of the summer, there is widespread agreement that police behavior was much more professional and responsible than in October 2000.¹³ By and large, the police used means that are more adequate for internal civilian protests, refrained from entering into Arab localities during demonstrations, and according to numerous accounts acted to avoid injury and harm. The police did garner criticism from civil society actors and the Arab public for curbing Arab demonstrations, [insufficiently protecting Arab demonstrators](#) from counter-demonstrators, and [detaining hundreds of protesters](#). However, many people attribute to the overall professional behavior of the police the fact that, despite high levels of violence, no one else was killed as a result of internal escalations.¹⁴

9. Highly developed civil society sector

The past decade and a half has seen civil society organizations working on issues related to equality, development and Jewish-Arab relations become more specialized, professional and sustainable. Many have created lasting institutions (e.g. bilingual schools, NGO coalitions, clusters of Jewish and Arab communities, partnership with governmental agencies) which anchor shared Jewish-Arab vision and interests. Of these organizations, many have already experienced previous conflicts over the past decade and were better prepared to respond to escalations this summer (ranging from internal organizational dialogue, through emergency work vis-à-vis the community, to mobilizing their networks). Unlike organizational setbacks and even break-down in the past, this crisis showed that by being more professional, institutionalized, diversified and networked, civil society organizations were better prepared to withstand the crisis and to play an important role reinforcing Jewish-Arab relations under pressure.

¹² For example, the past and current work [INJAZ](#), [Sikkuy](#), [the Abraham Fund Initiatives](#), [Shatil](#) and [Givat Haviva](#).

¹³ In the Orr Committee Report issued following the October 2000 events, the actions of the police were strongly criticized. The Committee's recommendations address the need to change the means and attitudes the police uses while addressing risks of demonstrations and even riots of Arab citizens. In recent years, a number of civil society organizations were involved in working enhancing the police's cultural sensitivity, e.g. through The Abraham Fund Initiatives' [Policing in a Divided Society](#) project.

¹⁴ During the writing of this paper an Arab citizen was [shot by police in Kfar Kanna](#) in an incident unrelated to the summers' escalations. This shooting was met with harsh criticism by the Arab public, left wing politicians and human rights organizations and is still under investigation.

Insights for the Future

As events were unfolding, civil society leaders identified immediate actions to take in response to rising tensions. Organizations were quick to mobilize, [issue statements](#), collaborate and initiate local and regional activities in solidarity, including [media campaigns](#), [advocacy efforts](#), [public discussions](#), [publishing joint ads](#), organizing marches, and [mobilizing their networks](#). This quick response, seen as one of the positive takeaways of the summer's events, countered vocal anti-Arab groups and presented an alternative tolerant and joint vision of Jewish-Arab relations during the heat of the crisis. Since, leading activists, academics and leaders in the field have been drawing insights for long-term and future efforts from their experiences and assessments over the summer.

Following are areas identified as either currently lacking or presenting potential for strengthening and creating greater resilience in Jewish-Arab relations.

1. Education for a more tolerant and shared society

The most common insight from the breakdown of relations this summer is that the absence in the Israeli education system of curricula for a pluralist, multicultural, not to mention Jewish-Arab society is believed to have far-reaching consequences. Many leaders emphasize a need not just for education to combat intolerance, but to provide skills for shared living, democracy, and pluralism as basic values of citizenship. This is seen as both a preventative measure, addressing these issues at an early age, and one that would create greater readiness within schools to address escalations when and as they arise.

Immediately after the war and in light of the deteriorating discourse, the [Ministry of Education announced](#) a special week-long program "to promote anti-racist and multicultural discourse in high schools" launched at the beginning of the school year. More recently, the Ministry [announced that this program will be expanded](#) to include additional age groups and become a multidisciplinary program titled: "Dealing with tolerance, prevention of racism and a shared life in the education system."

To date, only a minority of students in Israel participated in programs that provide skills and expose students to the issues of living in a pluralistic, Jewish-Arab society. These have usually been implemented via local or regional programs led by civil society organizations, at times in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.¹⁵ As tensions began to settle towards the end of the summer, a number of civil society organizations ramped up efforts to confront intolerance and racism in schools,¹⁶ and launched campaigns encouraging the Ministry of Education to adopt such programs on a national scale.¹⁷

¹⁵ For more see the Task Force's Briefing paper on [Shared Society Between Jewish and Arab Citizens of Israel](#).

¹⁶ Two such initiatives are the Association for Civil Right's initiative to produce a special anti-racism educational campaign under the slogan "[This Siren is for Us](#)".

¹⁷ Specifically, organizations in the field have been calling on the Ministry of Education to practically implement the "[Solomon-Issawi Report on Shared Living Education](#)". The Solomon-Issawi Committee was appointed in 2008 by then-Minister of Education Prof. Yuli Tamir. In January 2009 the Committee submitted its report, which detailed a work plan for "shared life education from kindergarten to 12th grade." The plan included: Integrating shared life education within civics, history, geography and literature studies; Integrating Arabic language and culture education in Jewish schools; Long-term, professionally crafted Jewish-Arab student encounters; and Development of methodological and pedagogic

Most civil society leaders would like to see such programs adopted by the Ministry of Education and integrated into the public school system, ideally in ways that permeate the school environment. A poll sponsored by a coalition of twelve major civil-society organizations found that public opinion sees the Ministry of Education as equally responsible for “fighting phenomena of hatred and violence based on racism in Israel” (50.2% respondents placed responsibility on MOE) as the Prime Minister (50.4% of respondents). In the same poll, 65.2% of respondents said the Ministry of Education is not investing enough in “enhancing education for shared society.”¹⁸

2. Promoting tolerance in public discourse

The rise of anti-Arab discourse and activity in the public sphere was on the whole deeply concerning to activists and leaders in the field. Many fear that the hostility and anti-Arab discourse that rose to the surface this summer will harm Jewish-Arab relations and Israeli society in the long term. Still, the perception in the field is that because these attitudes surfaced, there is an opportunity to address them head on. Over the summer, organizations quickly mobilized to respond to the rise in incitement. Some activities were developed as quick and immediate responses to escalations, addressing local tensions and bringing communities together in actions of Jewish-Arab solidarity.¹⁹ Others were actions taken by established civil society organizations that formed coalitions and mobilized their network for greater coordination and impact.²⁰ In the months since, many civil society leaders and activists are talking about the need to maintain local efforts, continue to work in coalitions, and expand the reach of their programs to communities not currently exposed to alternative perspectives on Jewish-Arab relations.

3. Recognize and leverage the social impact of Arab economic integration

As mentioned above, Jewish Arab interaction in the labor market, in shopping centers and in the public sphere has been gradually increasing and is considered by leaders in the field as a factor that is expected to further equality and strengthen relations as daily interaction and interdependence increase. There is concern in the field at the moment that efforts of the past decade to enhance inclusion of Arab professionals in both private and government sectors may slow due to mistrust and retreat in reaction to events of the summer.²¹ There is strong agreement in the field that economic and employment integration should continue and that attention should be added to how economic integration can be coupled by programs that preempt negative repercussions in times of crisis.

materials including training for teachers, principals and inspectors. The committee estimated a budget of NIS 10 million annually for implementation. The recommendations were adopted by then-Minister Tamir, but following leadership changes in 2009 such policy was stalled.

¹⁸ [Results of Racism and Shared Society Poll among Jewish and Arab Israelis](#) – Panels Research – September 2014

¹⁹ Examples include: A media campaign to enhance the coverage of "[good news](#)"; Activists and organizations who initiated a [major conference in Haifa](#); over 20 organizations that came together to implement a [Conference Against Racism](#) in the Galilee and around 20 grassroots initiatives being accompanied by Shatil.

²⁰ For example, A group of organizations that met in Taibe to coordinate efforts and enhance media presence and ongoing Jewish-Arab solidarity actions organized over the summer by [Hand in Hand](#), [Givat Haviva](#) and [Awareness for You](#) under the title "[Neighbors at Peace](#)".

²¹ E.g. a campaign launched by a number of organizations to [stop discrimination against Arab employees](#) for expressing their political opinions

4. Continued professionalization of local Arab leadership

In light of the important mediating and mitigating role played by Arab mayors this summer, there is greater focus in the field on the need to continue strengthening local Arab leadership and enhancing ties and connections between neighboring Jewish and Arab communities. In November of 2013, local elections in most Arab localities replaced around 70% of the incumbent mayors (as is often the case in local Arab elections) and there is now a new generation of local leaders that have already shown their potential as a force for fruitful collaboration, integration and economic development. In addition, there is recognition of the need to strengthen channels between local Arab leadership and state institutions so that local leaders can harness governmental budgets, services and benefits for greater local, practical, effect.

5. Arab youth engagement

Notwithstanding the efforts of Arab mayors, violence did erupt in Arab towns and villages and some leaders within Arab society attribute a portion of the outbursts to frustrated and under-engaged Arab youngsters who were seen as a major disruptive force this summer. According to government data, more than 40% of all Arab youngsters age 18-25 neither work nor study²², contributing to high poverty rates, frustration, and at times elevated crime. A few programs have been developed to engage and develop productive options for this population.²³

6. Opportunities in Arab society for more Jewish-Arab collaboration

After the Events of October 2000, which caused a long period of disconnect in Jewish-Arab relations, one stream of thought within Arab society was that Arab civil society organizations needed to focus on developing Arab capacities and equality first, and that joint, collaborative work with Jewish society was not the priority, and could even be detrimental under conditions of inequality. While civil society discourse regarding shared society concepts has been in development over the last decade, the escalations of this summer led to more Arab civil society leaders saying that greater outreach and cooperation with Jewish society should now be pursued. An internal thinking process within Arab society and among Arab civil society organizations took place during and in the aftermath of the summer's events regarding both the place of the Arab minority in Israel and priorities for future work.²⁴ As part of this process, a number of important voices are saying that only collaborative outreach work will bring Arab voices, realities and concerns into the mainstream public sphere and will ensure there is a better understanding within Jewish society of the realities and identity issues facing Arab citizens.

²² Data from the Authority for Economic Development, Prime Minister's Office

²³ E.g. the work with youngsters of such organizations as [AJEEC-NISPED](#), [Citizens Build a Community](#), [JDC-Israel](#), [MAASE](#), the [Arab Jewish Community Center in Jaffa](#), [Beit Hagefen](#), [A New Dawn in the Negev](#), and Desert Stars.

²⁴ [Why Sayed Kashua is leaving Jerusalem and never coming back](#) – *Haaretz* - Sayed Kasua – 7.4.14; [Not going anywhere](#) – *Haaretz* - Nadia Hilou – 7.8.14 (Hebrew) ; [I'm sick of being an Arab here](#) – *Haaretz* - Zohair Bahloul (Hebrew) ; [Go in peace, dear Sayed](#) - *Haaretz* - Mira Awad – 7.22.14; [We don't have the privilege of succumbing to despair](#) – *Jewish News (UK)* - Thabet Abu Ras – 7.28.14; [Israeli Arabs, stop whining](#) – *Haaretz* - Oudeh Basharat – 7.29.14. In mid-September, [Mossawa Center organized a major conference in Nazareth](#) that brought together leaders, thinkers and activists for more of an internal discussion.

7. Outreach to mainstream media

Many leaders found that mainstream media was aggravating tensions through sensational reporting focused on the extreme attitudes among both Jews and Arabs. Over the summer, various efforts were pursued to promote reporting on Jewish Arab collaboration and achievements and for Arab voices, professionals, and daily realities to be integrated into mainstream Israeli media. Many agree that impacting the message on mainstream media and making room for more cooperative, empathic voices from Jewish and Arab communities is an important in the effort to reduce escalations in the future.

8. Building capacities to counter future crises

Within all the insights above, there is an underlying recognition that preparations for recurring conflicts must be an integral part of program strategy and structure. Among the various activists interviewed, there is much frustration about setbacks resulting from the crisis of the past summer, and a realization that while civil society will probably not be able to prevent the next external security crisis, measures could be taken to be better prepared and resistant to its detrimental impact. A number of organizations believe stronger networks within the field should be maintained and capacities, structures and plans developed to handle recurring crises. Many leaders and activists, while disheartened by the prevalence of hostility over the summer, found new resolve and determination to promote a more shared society and realize alternatives to the experiences of the summer.

On the whole the impact of the summer's events on Jewish-Arab relations and how new escalations centered in Jerusalem will affect them is yet to be seen. The summer's escalations were severe and Jewish and Arab activists are concerned regarding their effects on long-term efforts to promote a more equal, tolerant and shared society. Still, the expectations in the field coming out of the crisis were that the period of disconnect in the aftermath would not last an extended period of time. The higher level of shared living stemming from enhanced Jewish Arab interactions and higher standard of living among Arabs means that both Jewish and Arab lives are more structurally integrated and that daily interaction will resume if people resume regular routines. On the whole activists in the field seemed ready to address these challenges through more targeted strategies for maintaining cohesion despite fluctuations.

Appendix: Media links for additional reading

Acts of Incitement

[Neighbors try to block Arab doctor over sons Facebook post - Times of Israel – Itamar Sharon – 8.18.14](#) “Residents issue racist rants, call to keep Ali Zoabi from building house in small northern community of Nurit.”

[Crowd Shouts 'Death to the Arabs' at an Israeli Wedding of Jew and Muslim – Newsweek – Reuters – 8.17.14](#) “Israeli police on Sunday blocked more than 200 far-right Israeli protesters from rushing guests at a wedding of a Jewish woman and Muslim man as they shouted "death to the Arabs" in a sign of tensions stoked by the Gaza war.”

[As Gaza war ebbs, Israeli Arabs feel under threat - Christian Science Monitor - Shira Rubin – 8.6.14](#) “Arab citizens of Israel complain of business boycotts, harassment, and restrictions on speech in the wake of Israel's latest war with Hamas.”

[Arab nurse suspended from Sheba for Facebook post to be reinstated – Haaretz – Revital Hovel – 8.1.14](#) “Nurse who called the IDF 'war criminals' on his Facebook page will apologize.”

[War puts employees’ freedom of speech to the test - Haaretz - Hila Weissberg and Haim Bior – 7.30.14](#) “Lawyers say spate of firings for offensive statements may not stand up in court.”

Opinion

[Dismissal for narrative reasons - The Times of Israel - Ron Gerlitz - 10.29.14](#) “This past summer, in the shadow of the war in Gaza, there was a dangerous development in the relations between Jewish and Arab.”

[How Israel Silences Dissent – New York Times - Mairav Zonszein – 9.26.14](#) “On July 12, four days after the latest war in Gaza began, hundreds of Israelis gathered in central Tel Aviv to protest the killing of civilians on both sides and call for an end to the siege of Gaza and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.”

Demonstrations and the role of politicians and mayors

[Minister Condemns Racism Against Israeli Arabs - Israel National News - Hezki Ezra – 8.17.14](#) “Science and Technology Minister Yaakov Perry insists 'Israeli Arabs are part of us,' calls on the public to eschew prejudice in wake of war.”

[Anti-IDF demonstrators in Galilee hoist Palestinian flags - Israel Hayom - Daniel Siryoti – 8.3.14](#) “More than 10,000 people gather in western Galilee Arab city of Tamra for anti-government, anti-IDF demonstration led by Islamic Movement's northern branch • Sheikh Raed Saleh heads the march, attended by MK Hanin Zoabi.”

[Right-wingers beat Haifa deputy mayor during anti-war protest – Haaretz - Roy \(Chicky\) Arad – 7.20.14](#) "Counter-demonstrators supporting the Gaza war shout 'Death to Arabs' and throw bottles and stones."

[Peri, Shelah meet mayors to stem downward spiral in Arab-Jewish relations – Jerusalem Post -Ariel Ben Solomon – 7.7.14](#) "Minister praises local officials for attempts to effect calm."

Opinion

[Time for tolerance – Jerusalem Post - Robert Cherry – 8.20.14](#) "Exacerbating the problem has been the ongoing attitude of Balad party leaders and other Palestinian nationalists."

[Israel's other war, now on a street near you - Haaretz - Editorial – 7.28.14](#) "Netanyahu must speak out against the increasing number of violent assaults on Arabs and leftist who express opposition to the war."

[Nazareth Mayor vs. Arab MKs - Jewish Press – 7.8.14](#) "Mayor of Israel's largest Arab city lashes out, tells national reps to stay out of Nazareth."

Economic boycott

[Israeli Jews boycotting Arab businesses - The Jewish Chronicle - Sandy Rashty – 9.30.14](#) "A survey of Israeli Jewish consumers found that 24 per cent are boycotting Arab businesses."

[The Gaza effect: In shaky economy, Arab businesses hit hardest - Haaretz - Judy Maltz – 8.7.14](#) "Relations between Jews and Arab in Israel have rarely been as strained as in the past month, during which the allegiance of Israeli Arabs has been called into question."

[As war tensions flare, Arab businesses struggle – Jerusalem Post – Niv Ellis – 8.6.14](#) "Arab businesses started feeling the pinch in June, during the search for three kidnapped Israeli teenagers, who later were discovered murdered."

[Gaza Strip Conflict Deepens Divide Between Arabs, Jews in Israel - Bloomberg Businessweek - Amy Teibel and Caroline Alexander – 8.5.14](#) "In Abu Ghosh, a village in the hills between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Jewish customers typically pack the Arab-run restaurants. Since war broke out in Gaza last month, they've stopped coming."

Opinion

[Boycott of Israel's Arabs is guaranteed to backfire – i24news – Nadia Hilou - 8.5.14](#) "Anybody who spends time in Arab towns in Israel, and especially in mixed Arab-Jewish towns these days, can't but feel a tense atmosphere and the existence of a boycott on Arab-owned businesses."

Jewish-Arab relations:

[Anti-Arab hate grows in Israel with rise of the right: Siddiqui –The Star \(Toronto\) - Haroon Siddiqui – 8.20.14](#) “Rise of the religious right and right-wing political parties in Israel is leading to the steady erosion of liberal, democratic forces.”

[Blame Israel's schools for the racism – Haaretz - Or Kashti – 8.20.14](#) “Young people shouting 'Death to Arabs' prove the success of the educational system more than its failure.”

[Coexistence Bowed, But Not Broken, By War - The Jewish Week - Michele Cabin – 8.19.14](#) “Strain on dialogue groups in wake of Gaza conflict, but participants aren’t giving up.”

[American Jewish leaders fiddle while Israeli democracy burns – Haaretz – Chemi Shalev – 8.19.14](#) “Jews fight for freedom, equality and minority rights in America but exempt themselves from the same battle in Israel.”

[Arab doctor saves Jewish soldier hit by Arab bullets. No big deal? – Times of Israel –David Horovitz – 8.18.14](#) “Hadassah’s Prof. Ahmed Eid gets a little irritated when people ask him questions about being an Arab surgeon in Jewish Israel. ‘There’s no drama here,’ he insists. Oh, but there is...”

[Jews and Arabs in Israel more estranged after war - The Washington Post - Carol Morello and Orly Halpern – 8.16.14](#) “Ameer Talal once got 100 customers a day at the car wash he runs outside Israel’s biggest Arab town. But fear has kept away his Jewish clientele.”

[Sympathies divided, Israel's Arab minority is caught in the middle of Gaza war – Fox News – Associated Press – 7.27.14](#) “Facing the threat of rocket fire along with the rest of Israel, residents in this central Israeli Arab town have found themselves caught in the middle between Jewish neighbors and their fellow Palestinians who are dying in growing numbers in the Gaza Strip.”

[Do we belong? – The Economist – 7.26.14](#) “The war in Gaza fuels tensions between Israeli Arabs and Jews.

[In Jaffa, rockets and conflict threaten a delicate Jewish-Arab coexistence - Haaretz - Judy Maltz – 7.14.14](#) “The ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza is upsetting the balance between Jews and Arabs in Jaffa. ‘The Jews don’t want to eat here anymore’ says Issa, a waiter at a usually packed restaurant known for its great hummus.”

Opinion

[An Israel equal for all, Jewish or not - The Washington Post - Patricia Marks Greenfeld – 9.26.14](#) “An American colleague and I traveled to Israel at the end of June to continue research with an Israeli team composed of Jewish and Muslim researchers from Ben Gurion University in Beersheba.”

[Repairing Arab-Jewish Relations Inside Israel - The Jewish Week - Alan Gill – 9.24.14](#) “Times of crisis can push societies to their extremes, inspiring solidarity, courage and compassion on the one hand, and straining capacities for resilience and tolerance on the other.”

[Arab MKs crossed the line – Israel Hayom – Gideon Allon – 8.20.14](#) “One cannot argue with the fact that Balad MKs have the right to speak their mind.”

[Equal shelter for all –Haaretz – Editorial – 8.20.14](#) “Israel’s government must recognize that all its citizens, the Bedouin included, have equal rights.”

[Divorce the personal from the collective – Israel Hayom – Ruthie Blum – 8.19.14](#) “The brouhaha surrounding the wedding reception of a Jaffa couple on Sunday evening is yet another example of ideology gone haywire.”

[Beware of anti-Arabism – Haaretz - Moshe Arens – 8.18.14](#) “There is a great deal that Jewish Israelis can and must do to marginalize, and if possible to suppress, the foul anti-Arab voices that have been heard in Israel these past two months.”

[Rebuilding Jewish- Arab trust post Gaza War - San Diego Jewish World - Daniel Sokatch - 8.6.14](#) “Will Israelis emerge from this crisis recommitted to an open, tolerant, and shared society?”

[Jewish Israelis have no monopoly on victimhood and pain – Haaretz – Alaa Hamdan - 7.14.14](#) “We must be as passionate for reconciliation between Israel’s Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens as those within both our societies who seek to widen the divide between us.”

[Not just escalation: A frightening new era of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel - +972 Magazine - Ron Gerlitz – 7.12.14](#) “Attacks by Jewish hooligans on Arabs, unprecedented incitement by right-wing politicians and clashes between Israeli Police and Arab youth. We’ve been here before, but never like this.”