

Topic: **Knesset Elections, January 22, 2013**

Updated: **June 2014**

## 2013 Election Results

- The Arab sector had a voter turnout of 56% of the eligible voters, as compared with 63.7% of eligible voters from the population as a whole.<sup>2</sup> The number of votes needed for a party to pass the electoral threshold and enter the Knesset was 73,000 in 2013.<sup>3</sup>
- Christian Arabs (mostly in the Northern District) had the highest voter turnout rate at 60.4%, Druze turned out at around the average rate (55.9%), and Bedouins had the lowest rate at 46.9%. Within the Bedouin population, the least likely to vote were residents of unrecognized villages, as 30.4% of eligible voters exercised their right.

## Voting Results in Arab and Druze Localities in 2009 (18<sup>th</sup> Knesset) and 2013 (19<sup>th</sup> Knesset)<sup>4</sup>

Arab and Jewish-Arab Parties	2009	2013
RA'AM-TA'AL-MADA <sup>5</sup>	32.1%	32.0%
HADASH <sup>6</sup>	27.5%	23.2%
BALAD <sup>7</sup>	22.3%	21.8%
DA'AM <sup>8</sup>	0.2%	0.2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>82.1%</b>	<b>77.2%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Compiled by Prof. Elie Rekhess, Associate Director, Crown Center for Jewish and Israel Studies, Northwestern University

<sup>2</sup> *Ha'aretz*, January 23, 2013.

*Ynet News*, January 22, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> *Ha'aretz*, January 23, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Konrad-Adenauer Center for Jewish-Arab Cooperation "Arab Politics in Israel: The 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset Elections", volume 3 [Hebrew], 2012.

<sup>5</sup> RA'AM-TA'AL-MADA stands for a coalition of the parliamentary faction of the United Arab List (UAL – RA'AM), the Arab Movement for Renewal (AMR – TA'AL) and the Arab Democratic Party (ADP – MADA).

<sup>6</sup> HADASH stands for Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE).

<sup>7</sup> BALAD stands for National Democratic Alliance, (NDA).

<sup>8</sup> DA'AM's full name is Da'am Workers Party (DWP) and stands for Organization of Democratic Action. See:

<http://www.kas.de/israel/en/publications/33260/>, and [http://en.daam.org.il/?page\\_id=25](http://en.daam.org.il/?page_id=25).

<b>Jewish-Zionist Parties</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Labor</b>	4.6%	3.8%
<b>Kadima</b>	3.7%	3.1%
<b>Hatnua</b>	N/A	2.0%
<b>Yesh Atid</b>	N/A	0.7%
<b>Meretz</b>	1.4%	2.9%
<b>Likud</b>	2.1%	4.3%
<b>Yisrael Beitenu</b>	2.3%	
<b>Shas</b>	2.0%	3.7%
<b>Other</b>	1/8%	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	17.9%	22.8%

- The following Arab and Druze Knesset members were elected in 2013:
  - Hamad Amar, Likud Yisrael Beitenu;
  - Afu Agbaria, HADASH (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality);
  - Taleb Abu Arar, RA'AM (UAL, United Arab List);
  - Mohammad Barakeh HADASH (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality);
  - Masud Ganaim, RA'AM (UAL, United Arab List) – TA'AL (AMR, Arab Movement for Renewal) – MADA (Arab Democratic Party);
  - Basel Ghattas, BALAD (NDA, National Democratic Alliance);
  - Issawi Friej, Meretz;
  - Ibrahim Sarsur, RA'AM (UAL, United Arab List);
  - Hanna Suweid, HADASH (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality);
  - Ahmad Tibi, RA'AM (UAL, United Arab List) – TA'AL (AMR, Arab Movement for Renewal);
  - Jamal Zahalka, BALAD (NDA, National Democratic Alliance); and
  - Haneen Zoabi, BALAD (NDA, National Democratic Alliance)
- Reactions to Election Results:

- Former HADASH (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) MK Issam Makhoul and present MK Hanna Suweid described the election results as “halting the shift to the right” and “showing that the nation is sick of extremism” respectively.<sup>9</sup>
- Yesh Atid MK Yair Lapid received a lot of press and criticism, from Arab leaders in general and Ahmad Tibi in particular, for declaring that he had no intention of forming a bloc with the “Zoabis” (referring to Arab parties). Lapid would later apologize for his terminology.<sup>10</sup>

### The Arab Vote

- The Arab population in Israel makes up 20.6% of the total population, or approximately 1.6 million people.<sup>11</sup> However, according to recent data, Arab voters comprise only 15% of all eligible voters in Israel due to the lower average age of the Arab population<sup>12</sup> and the fact that Arab East Jerusalem and Golan Heights residents do not vote in the general elections.<sup>13</sup> In the past decade there has been a dramatic decline in participation of Arab voters in the general elections. Throughout the 80's and 90's Arab voter turnout was consistently around 70-75%, while in the last four elections – 2003, 2006, 2009, and 2013 these numbers dropped to 62%, 56%, 53%, and 56% respectively.<sup>14</sup>
- Several recent studies identified a number of reasons for this decline. Among them are the widely held belief among Arab citizens that they are powerless to affect decision making circles; attitudes of separatism that call for Arab citizens to boycott the elections and disassociate from Israel's governmental system; disenchantment with current Arab MKs who are perceived by the Arab population as ineffective and inhibiting the formation of a larger and more influential Arab bloc due to personal motives; and an act of protest against the "discrimination, inequality, and the disregard of the needs and demands of the Arab public, as well as against the actions of the defense establishment against Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories".<sup>15</sup>

### Political Platforms

- **Reference to Arab citizens and Jewish-Arab relations in parties' platform**  
Listed below are the 12 most prominent parties which ran for elections, along with the references to Israel's Arab citizens and Jewish-Arab relations in each of their platforms.<sup>16</sup>
- Likud Yisrael Beitenu <http://halikud-beytenu.org.il/Default.aspx>  
Likud Yisrael Beitenu is an electoral alliance between Benjamin Netanyahu's incumbent party, Likud, and Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beitenu. The alliance was formed in 2012 in advance of the January 2013 elections. There is no party platform listed in the official alliance website.

<sup>9</sup> Konrad-Adenauer Center for Jewish-Arab Cooperation “Arab Politics in Israel: The 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset Elections”, volume 3 [Hebrew].

<sup>10</sup> “The 2013 Elections and the Arab Population in Israel,” <http://in-oneplace.net/2012/05/elections-2013>.

<sup>11</sup> Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics [http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/b1\\_h.htm](http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/b1_h.htm).

<sup>12</sup> The Arab population is at average younger than the Jewish one, so a smaller percent is over 18 years old, which is the voting age in Israel.

<sup>13</sup> Around 280,000 Arabs living in East Jerusalem and around 20,000 Druze living in the Golan Heights are included in this statistics, and while they carry an Israeli ID, they are defined as permanent residents rather than citizens and can thus vote in the local elections but not in the general elections.

<sup>14</sup> Source: The Abraham Fund Initiatives paper “[Voting in Arab Society: A Call for Action](#)”, 2012 (Hebrew and Arabic).

*Ha'aretz*, January 23, 2013. For further reading on public attitudes see a recent Israeli Democracy Institutes poll. See: <http://www.peaceindex.org/defaultEng.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

The Abraham Fund Initiatives paper “[Voting in Arab Society: A Call for Action](#)”.

<sup>16</sup> For reasons of space we have made very brief summaries of major issues mentioned in the political platforms published on the parties' formal websites. Where websites or platforms exist only in Hebrew, translation is ours.

- **Likud (Benjamin Netanyahu):** <https://www.likud.org.il>  
The Likud Party has no platform in its official website.
- **Yisrael Beiteinu (Avigdor Liberman):** <http://www.beytenu.org.il>
  - Suggests that anyone applying for Israeli citizenship should be obligated to declare loyalty “to the state as a Jewish state, its symbols and sovereignty, and to the declaration of independence” and must accept the obligation to serve in the IDF or national civilian service.
  - Offers that Veterans’ Benefits will include “affirmative action in university admission and tuition relief; land allocations in areas of national priority and grants for settling in the Periphery.”
  - Calls to “Get Tough on Sedition” including “suspending state payments and benefits to current and former elected officials, such as Azmi Bishara, who are suspected of a serious offense against state security. Upon conviction, they will lose such benefits.”
- **Yesh Atid (Yair Lapid):** <http://yeshatid.org.il>  
The party platform makes no specific mention of the Arab minority except in the following way:
  - Defines Israel as “a democratic, Jewish state in the spirit of the visions of the prophets of Israel” in which “every person must have their fundamental rights met regardless of religion, race, gender or sexual orientation.”
  - Offers that “every citizen of 18 years will have to serve in military or civilian service.” The chapter discusses mainly Haredi Jews but calls the state to “open quotas that will enable the absorption of Arab youngsters” to voluntary service.
- **Labor Party (Shelly Yachimovich):** <http://www.havoda.org.il>
  - Quotes Israel’s Declaration of Independence calling for “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex”.
  - States that the labor party “is the party of Jews, Arabs, Druze and Circassian.” Promises to create a comprehensive policy to close current socio-economic gaps, through (a) equal distribution of resources; (b) strengthening democracy and implementing the Or Committee recommendations; (c) strengthening local government; (d) state-led policy for education towards equality, peace, inter-ethnic tolerance and equality between the sexes. (e) realization of the right to full work and employment; (f) solving land shortages for the Arab public; (g) enhancing voluntary civil service.
- **HaBayit HaYehudi (Naftali Bennett):** <http://www.baityehudi.org.il>
  - Defines Israel as “a Jewish state governed by democracy.”
  - Promises to “act to strengthen the Jewish nature of the state” and “fight against those who attempt to transform Israel into ‘a state of its citizens’” while “upholding the rights of Israel’s minorities, among them the Arab minority.”
  - Claims that “Israel currently makes a double mistake. It overlooks the incitement of Arab factors who seek the destruction of Israel, and it discriminates against the Arabs who wish to be a part of Israeli society”, while promising to “act in exactly the opposite way...”
- **SHAS (Eli Yishai):** <http://www.shas.org.il>
  - The party platform makes no specific mention of the Arab minority except in the following way:
    - Believes in “the existence of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, based on democratic values according to the Torah.”

- Believes in "tolerance in the relations between the segments of the Israeli society...peace starts within ourselves, in solidarity between the different groups in the society, in relations of equality and in respect for the rights of other religious groups."
- **Yahadut HaTorah (Ya'akov Litzman)**
  - Yahadut HaTora is an electoral alliance of two Ashkenazi Haredi parties - Agudat Yisrael and Degel HaTorah. The parties have run with a joint list since 1992. Neither of the parties has an internet website nor online platform.
- **Hatnua (Tzipi Livni):** <http://www.hatnua.org.il/>
  - States its major aim is "to ensure the grounding of the State of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, and a democratic state in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence".
  - Defines that "every citizen has the right...to participate in the socio-economic fabric of Israeli society, independent of origin, gender, faith or place of residence...The right and obligation of each citizen is to contribute to this fabric...through a military/national/civilian service, work, paying taxes...."
  - Offers that "the obligation to serve the state must be enforced on all citizens independent of religion, race or sex...either in the IDF or in a national or civil service".
  - Economic benefits "will be revoked from defectors."
  - Calls to enforce "the integration of minorities up to 20% of the state (civil service) employees"; to promote equal opportunity in education to all of Israel's citizens; to close existing gaps in education and to streamline educational content between Jews and Arabs.

- **Meretz (Zehava Gal-On):** <http://meretz.org.il>
  - Defines Israel as “the state of the Jewish people and of all its citizens.”
  - States that The Law of Return “provides Jews with an advantage only as far as entering Israel is concerned” and that “Israel must recognize the Arab minority as a national minority with collective rights.”
  - Acknowledges the existence of discrimination against Arab citizens “throughout the entire life of the state... in a deep and systematic manner in numerous fields.”
  - Commits to advance the full implementation of the Orr Committee Recommendations, as well as a detailed plan to close gaps in infrastructure and planning, historical narrative, resolution to the unrecognized Bedouin villages, etc.
  - Calls for preferential treatment to Arabs in higher education; separation of religion and state; strengthening the socio-economic status of the Arab community and correcting discrimination.
  
- **HADASH (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) (Mohammed Barakeh):** [www.hadash.org.il](http://www.hadash.org.il)
  - Hadash is a joint Jewish-Arab party.
  - Determines that “HADASH (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) plays an important role in crystallizing the Palestinian society in Israel as a public fighting for its rights ...as well as a democratic force in the all-Israeli political arena.”
  - States that “the national Arab minority, working consistently with the democratic Jewish forces, has an important role” in fighting against social wrongs, advancing rights and equality and fighting racist trends.
  - Criticizes the “incitement against Arab citizens...which enhances racist trends”, the promotion of development programs that are “actually programs to Judaize the Negev and Galilee... ignoring the needs of the Arab inhabitants” and the “lack of proper representation of Arab citizens in state apparatuses”.
  - Proposes a detailed plan “to reach equality for the Arab minority”, including recognizing it as a national minority with equal civilian and national rights and suggesting practical steps in development, employment, religious rights, local government, etc.
  
- **RA'AM-TA'AL (UAL, United Arab List – AMR, Arab Movement for Renewal) (Ahmad Tibi)**
  - RA'AM-TA'AL is an electoral alliance of two Arab parties, [RA'AM](#) (UAL, Arab United List) and [TA'AL](#) (AMR, Arab Movement for Renewal). These two parties are running with a joint list since 2006.
  
- **RA'AM (UAL, United Arab List) (Ibrahim Sarsur):**
  - The party has no internet website or platform.
  
- **TA'AL (AMR, Arab Movement for Renewal) (Ahmad Tibi):** <http://www.a-m-c.org>
  - Calls to advance “full civilian equality” by recognizing the Arab minority as a national minority, advancing the legal and civilian status of Arab citizens and closing socio-economic gaps between the Arab and the Jewish sectors.
  - Stresses the cultural and national Palestinian identity of the Arab public in Israel and the importance of the connection with the Arab Nation worldwide.
  - Calls to create an independent Arab education stream in Israel.
  - Supports the principle of Arab-Jewish coexistence and peace, based on mutual respect.

- Works to ensure Arab citizens are part of the national decision-making process.
- Supports the industrialization of Arab localities and the acceptance of Arab professionals to work in state bodies.
- **BALAD (NDA, National Democratic Alliance) (Jamal Zahalka):** <http://www.tajamoa.org>
  - BALAD (NDA, National Democratic Alliance) is an Arab party
  - Defines the party's main objective as "a struggle to transform the state of Israel into a democracy for all its citizens, irrespective of national or ethnic identity."
  - Demands to acknowledge the Palestinians in Israel as a national minority; a nation with collective national rights and full civic equality according to international law and UN Resolutions.
  - Promises to work to enact a law that would legalize the national rights of the Arab-Palestinian minority including correcting past discrimination; appropriate representation of Arabs in all formal and public bodies; development of the Arab culture without interference from the state; establishment of representative and public bodies for the Arab minority; strengthening the status of the Arabic language; inclusion of the Arab minority in all decision making processes and the right to reject state decisions taken without their participation and against their interest; acknowledgement by the state that the Arab public is part of the Palestinian people and refraining from interfering in any contacts between them.
  - Promising to advance legislation that will enable the Arab minority to manage its own affairs in culture, education, communication, media, etc.
- **Kadima (Shaul Mofaz):** <http://www.facebook.com/kadimaparty>
  - Commits to leading "a comprehensive reform in equal distribution of burden in Israel and to social justice...where all citizens, without distinction of religion, race or religious background, carry the burden and enjoy fair and equal opportunity."
  - Defines "social justice" as including the following issues: cost of living; human dignity; housing, equal burden sharing, social welfare and "equal opportunity for minorities".
  - States that "Kadima will create a new civic order, in which minorities will receive equal opportunities, rights and obligations. The state will identify and address the plights of the minorities within it, in a way that would make their integration into Israeli society easier".
  - Further details a work plan for such integration in housing, education, employment, representation, etc.

### **Central Elections Committee and the Supreme Court of Justice**

#### *Recent Rulings on Elections Issues Related to Arab citizens*

- A number of motions were brought before the Central Elections Committee to disqualify Arab and rightist parties from participating in the elections, and disqualify portions of campaigns used by Otzma LeYisrael (a new right-wing party led by MK Michael Ben-Ari) and by BALAD. The Committee ultimately decided not to disqualify any party, but disqualified portions of the campaigns of Otzma LeYisrael and of BALAD. The Committee ruled that Otzma LeYisrael party could not broadcast the phrase "Not an Arab country, not a country of infiltrators" in its campaign ad, claiming this ad is racist, while also disqualifying a BALAD ad that ridiculed rightist MKs singing Hatikva to an Arabic music tune, claiming it insulted national icons. On January 15th the

Israeli Supreme court overturned the Committee's decisions and allowed both ads to be broadcasted.

- A petition to disqualify MK Haneen Zoabi (BALAD), the first woman to have ever been elected as part of an Arab party in Israel, was presented to the Central Elections Committee. The petition stated Zoabi undermined the state and its institutions, including the IDF, by participating in the Mavi Marmara flotilla that tried to breach the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip in May 2010. On December 19th, the Committee decided to disqualify MK Zoabi on grounds that she supported terrorism and rejected Israel as a Jewish and democratic state in opposition to Article 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset. The decision was taken notwithstanding an opposite stand expressed by Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein two days earlier, that there was not sufficient grounds to disqualify any of the parties or candidates to the current elections. Consequently, the Attorney General refused to defend the Central Election Committee's decision before the Supreme Court. On December 30th, the Supreme Court ruled that the Committee's decision should be reversed and MK Zoabi will be able to run in the upcoming elections. The unanimous decision, which was not explained, was rendered by a special panel of nine judges headed by Supreme Court President Asher Grunis.
- The Shutafut-Sharakah Forum wrote Judge Elyakim Rubinstein, Chairman of the Central Elections Committee, to raise his awareness to the fact that there was no Arabic language in the Committee's website, or in its campaign currently broadcasted in Israel's TV and radio, explaining voting procedures and encouraging citizens to vote. Judge Rubinstein responded in a letter in which he agreed that there is great importance in ensuring all services are provided in Arabic, which is a formal language in Israel. As a result, the Committee's website has now been translated into Arabic.