



Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues

ARAB COMMUNITIES AND ARAB-JEWISH RELATIONS IN ISRAELI MIXED CITIES

October 2021

In May 2021, violent riots erupted in and around Arab towns and mixed cities throughout Israel. Triggered by confrontations in East Jerusalem and the related flare-up between Israel and the Hamas in Gaza, the events escalated into two weeks of clashes involving Jewish and Arab citizens, police, and military forces at a scale reminiscent of the Events of October 2000. Mixed cities were at the heart of the most severe inter-communal violence, drawing widespread attention and concern about the causes and implications for Jewish-Arab relations in the country as a whole.

Mixed cities are where Jewish and Arab citizens in Israel live in closest proximity, under the same municipal umbrella. Because or despite this proximity, contentious issues in Jewish-Arab relations (i.e. socio-economic gaps, civil equality, land disputes, mistrust) are often accentuated. On one hand, this makes mixed cities a microcosm of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel, from which insights into their challenges and possibilities can be drawn. On the other hand, every mixed city is unique, with specific barriers and opportunities for stronger and more resilient community relations.

This short update is a basic primer on Israel's mixed cities: what they are, their general characteristics, and examples of their significant distinctions. Whether for purposes of understanding Jewish-Arab relations in Israel in general, for looking at the future of areas becoming more mixed, or addressing issues in these mixed cities specifically, the following is intended as an orientation to the interplay of national and local issues and capacities to address them.

Israel's Mixed Cities

A mixed city in Israel¹ is a municipality with a vast majority of Jewish residents and a considerable minority of Arab residents. Today, the state commonly refers to eight mixed localities (Haifa, Ramla, Lod, Akko, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Nof Hagalil (formerly Nazareth Ilit), and Ma'alot Tarshiha. There is no strict criterion of the proportion of Arab residents used to recognize a city as mixed. Rather, these eight include Israel's historically mixed cities, Nof HaGalil that has been more recently recognized as mixed due to internal migration of Arab residents, and Ma'alot-Tarshiha which became mixed following the merger of two localities. There are other cities and regions that are not formally recognized as

¹ Avgar, Edo; Weisblai, Ety; Schwartz, Rami; Lerel, Michal. "[Overview of Arabs in Mixed Cities](#)" Knesset Research and Information Center. May 27, 2021. (Hebrew)

FIGURE 1: Mixed Cities in Israel



mixed but, like Be'er Sheva, are a metropolitan center for a large Arab community, and Carmiel, that have a steadily growing Arab population.

It is important to note that every mixed city is unique, with local circumstances and histories. Likewise, both their Arab and Jewish populations are heterogeneous. Religious and cultural identities, economic status, historical narratives, and migration patterns affect the character, inter- and intra-communal relations of each city. For example, Arab families in mixed cities may include those with deep local roots, those who moved there at the formation of the state (sometimes referred to as internally displaced), and those who settled more recently from other Arab localities within Israel as well as from the West Bank.² Likewise, Jewish residents may also be recent arrivals or deeply rooted, Mizrahi or Ashkenazi, of varying economic status, secular or religious, or part of a 'Garin Torani'—religious national communities established in all of the mixed cities within the past two decades. While this paper focuses primarily on relations between Jewish and Arab citizens, the urban realities are often far more layered.

General Demographic Gaps and Divisions

In total, approximately 490,000 or one quarter of Israel's Arab population today live in Israel's eight mixed cities. The vast majority, 74%, are residents of Jerusalem and subject to unique demographic, social, and political circumstances. The remaining 130,000 make up 13% of the population of the other seven mixed cities, comprising roughly 8% of Israel's Arab citizens. In recent years, there has been a slow but steady rise in the percentage of Arab residents. (See Figure 2 on page 4).

In some respects, demographic gaps and geographic divisions in mixed cities mirror those in Israel at large. (See Table 1 on Page 3) The Arab population in mixed cities is younger and has lower socio-economic status than both the Jewish population and broader Arab society in Israel:³ 44% of Arabs in mixed cities, including Jerusalem, are under the age of 20 (compared to 31% of the Jewish residents),

² Haj'Yahya, Nasreen Haddad. "Israel's mixed Jewish-Arab cities are on fire. Here's how to put out the flames." Times of Israel, May 20, 2021.

³ "The average salary of Arab men in Lod, Ramla and Acre is less than NIS 8,000 (compared to NIS 12,489 for Israeli men overall, and NIS 8552 for Arab men overall); The average expenditure per Arab high school student in Mixed cities is \$8000, compared with NIS 11-13,000 per Jewish student. 48% of Arab households in mixed cities are poor compared to 38% in Arab urban localities." "May 2021 Escalations: Jewish-Arab Clashes Within Israel" Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, May 2021.

Table 1: Arab Population, Comparative SER, and Political Representation in Mixed Cities. Source: Knesset Research and Information Center⁴

CITY	POPULATION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC RANKING (SER) (1 lowest – 10 highest)				No. Municipal Council Members (Arab/Total)
	Total	Arabs	% Arabs	City	Arab areas	Jewish areas	Mixed areas	
JERUSALEM*†	936,427	358,796	38%	3	1	1-9	2-3	0/25
TEL AVIV – JAFFA	460,616	20,705	4.5%	8	3-4	3-10	4-5	2/31
HAIFA*	285,317	33,353	12%	7	1-7	1-10	2-5	2/31
LOD*	77,224	23,641	31%	4	1-2	3-6	1-2	6/19
RAMLE*	76,248	18,299	24%	4	1-2	3-6	3-4	4/19
AKKO*	49,381	15,829	32%	4	2-4	4-8	2	5/17
NOF HAGALIL	41,733	11,977	29%	5	5	3-7	3-4	3/17
MA’ALOT - TARSHIHA	21,836	4,746	22%	5	5	3-7	None	4/13
BE’ER SHEVA‡	209,687	5,639	2.7%	5	NA	NA	NA	0/27
TOTAL (excluding Jerusalem† and Be’er Sheva‡)	1,012,355	128,550	13% (average)	5 (average)	–	–	–	26/147

*Israel’s five traditional mixed cities

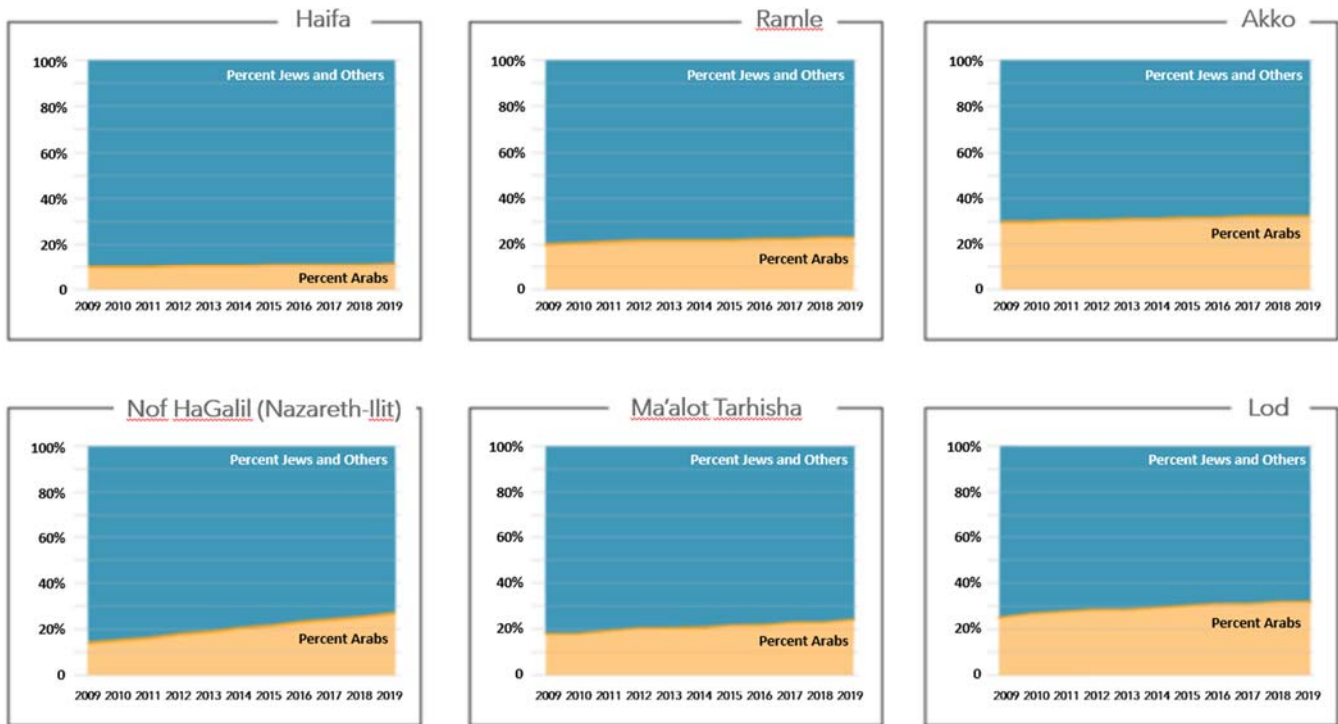
†While Jerusalem is by far Israel’s largest mixed city, most of the 350,000 Arab residents of East Jerusalem are not citizens of the state

‡Be’er Sheva, not formally recognized as a mixed city, is a metropolitan center for over 250,000 Arab-Bedouin population living in the Negev.

⁴ Ibid. Avgar, Edo; Weisblai, Ety; Schwartz, Rami; Lerel, Michal. Population and socio-economic ranking data ranges from 2017-2020.

with an additional 10% between the ages of 20-24.⁵ Arab neighborhoods are ranked lower socioeconomically than Jewish areas in the same cities. In Lod, for example, the city's four Arab areas are ranked as socioeconomic clusters 1-2 (on a national scale of 1-10), while the city's Jewish areas rank 3-6. The newer mixed cities of Ma'alot Tarshiha and Nof Hagalil are exceptions. There, each town's single Arab area ranks 5 on a range of 3-7 on the scale.

Figure 2: Population change in select mixed cities 2009-2019⁶



Data analysis: [Shomrim](#) Data Division. Data Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

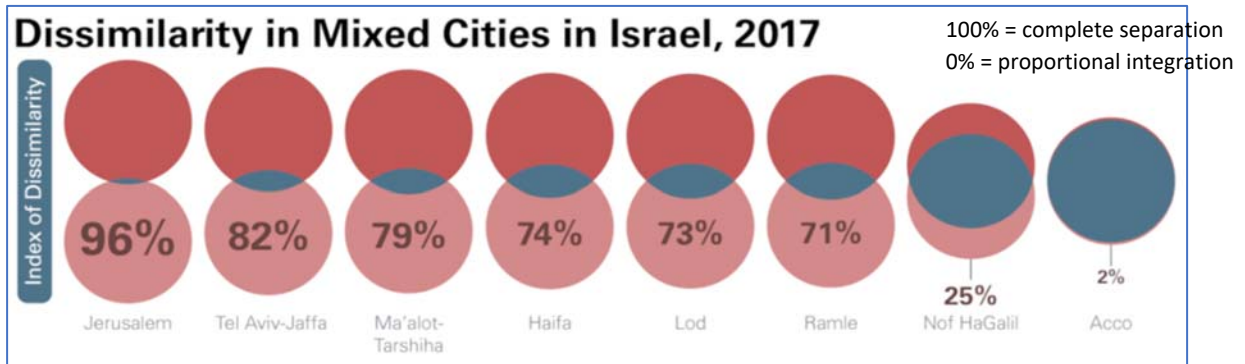
In addition, just as most Arab citizens in Israel live in Arab municipalities, most Arab citizens in mixed cities live in Arab neighborhoods. While more Jewish-Arab encounters occur in mixed cities, they happen less as part of residential life and less among individuals whose spend most of their time in their own neighborhood. A Dissimilarity Index from 2017⁷ (*Figure 3*) compiled by the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research shows high levels of residential segregation between Jews and Arabs in mixed cities.

⁵ Not including Jerusalem, the ratio is 38% of Arabs in mixed cities are less than 20 years old compared with 24% of the Jewish population. Ibid. Avgar, Edo; Weisblai, Ety; Schwartz, Rami; Lerel, Michal

⁶ Shalita, Chen. "[Is Ramat Eshkol, which is 30% Jewish, an Arab neighborhood? It is called Ramat Eshkol and not Ramat Hania](#)" *Shomrim*. May 20, 2021. (Hebrew)

⁷ Assaf-Shapira, Yael. "[Segregation and Dissimilarity](#)" *Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research Blog*, December 20, 2019.

Figure 3: Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research - 2017 Dissimilarity Index of Mixed Cities



*Percentages refer to the portion of Jewish or Arab residents that would have to move for the ratio in each area or neighborhood to match the ratio of Jews and Arabs in the city overall.

As minorities in their municipalities and part of the Arab minority in the country, Arab residents of mixed cities at times refer to themselves as a ‘double minority,’⁸ with unique issues that are not often addressed by measures focused on the Arab population as a whole. A prominent example is GR-922, the historic NIS 10.3 billion economic development for Arab society plan approved in 2015. Because most of the budgets were channeled through Arab municipal bodies, most did not reach Arab communities in mixed cities. Following the May 2021 events, the next multiyear economic development budgets for Arab society (currently pending approval) are expected to incorporate a plan for Arab residents of mixed cities.

Jewish-Arab Relations in Mixed Cities

Several factors beyond the demographic and socio-economic gaps in mixed cities have significant influence on their Jewish-Arab relations:

- **Historical Contexts** - the way a city became mixed, and the degree to which it incorporates its diversity into its identity. In several mixed cities, Arab and Jewish neighborhoods were originally designated with the intention of maintaining separation for security and ideological reasons.⁹ Arab neighborhoods, while often subject to neglect, were also places where Arab culture, identity, memory, and community were retained. For social and economic reasons, subsequent development and gentrification processes that blur these historic separations have enabled Jewish residents to enter Arab neighborhoods without in turn enabling “Arabs to become a legitimate part of the wider urban fabric.”¹⁰ Thus in Jaffa, Ramle, and Lod, for example, many Arab residents experience urban development as ongoing dispossession. This is especially the case in places like Jaffa and East Jerusalem, where there are high concentrations of Arab tenants living in homes marked as Palestinian Absentee Properties. Changes in status or sales of these properties (usually to Jewish

⁸ Rabinowitz and mOnterescu

⁹ Monterescu, Daniel, “[The ghetthoization of Israel’s mixed cities.](#)” *+972 Magazine*, December 5, 2015.

¹⁰ Ibid.

investors) are highly controversial.¹¹ In cities that were established later, like Nof HaGalil and Ma'alot Tarshiha, issues of civil equality remain but they are less historically laden.

- **Municipal Services and Civil Equality:** In a 2019 survey of mixed city residents, 50% of Arab respondents believed their municipality does not provide equal services to Jews and Arabs, and 68% believed that representation among municipal employees is low.¹² Some of the most contentious issues revolve around building and residential rights in which Jewish community projects and residential investments have expanded while Arab residents lag or are pushed; violent crime and personal security that is not adequately addressed by local authorities; access to education in cities where there is no Arabic public school or they are underfunded, and other basic services.
- **Building and Residential Rights and Garin Torani Communities:** Beyond gentrification that affects both Jewish and Arab veteran residents of mixed cities to varying degrees, the growth of “Gar’in Torani” communities in mixed cities in recent decades has stoked frustrations around unequal development rights and privileges. A [Garin Torani](#), literally “Torah Nucleus,” refers to an organized group of national-religious families who move to less prosperous and less religious localities with the aim of strengthening their Jewish character and economic status. In the last two decades, Garinim Torani'im established neighborhoods in all mixed cities, often with financial backing by NGOs. In many cases, they forge strong relations with the state and municipality and gain access to municipal land, services, permits, and privileges^{13,14} beyond the reach of veteran residents. While not all Garin Torani communities are the same or have the same backing, as a whole they have magnified economic and socio-cultural disparities to varying degrees. This is pronounced in cases where housing shortages or neglect of Arab neighborhoods are a point of contention. In Lod, where the movement is adjacent to Arab neighborhoods that are subject to longstanding disputes over building rights, the issue is volatile despite the day-to-day neighborly interactions.¹⁵ The tensions surrounding Garinim Torani'im gained national attention during the May events when members of other nationalist Jewish communities outside the cities came in large numbers to intervene in the clashes.

¹¹ Peleg, Bar “[To Jaffa Arabs, Sales of ‘Absentee Ownership’ Properties Aim to Expel Them From the City](#)” *Haaretz*, April 21, 2021.

¹² “[Survey Findings – Residents of Mixed Cities in Israel](#).” *The Abraham Initiatives*, Nov 2019.

¹³ Shmaryahu-Yeshurun, Yael. “[The strange surprise of the Garinim Torani'im from the violence in the mixed cities](#)” *Mekomit*. July 21, 2021 (Hebrew)

¹⁴ Sadeh, Shuki and Cohen, Adi, “[‘Their Agenda? Expelling Arabs’: The Contentious Movement Taking Root Across Israel](#).” *Haaretz*, Sept 25, 2021.

¹⁵ Shalita, Chen. “[‘Is Ramat Eshkol, which is 30% Jewish, an Arab neighborhood? It is called Ramat Eshkol and not Ramat Hania’](#)” *Shomrim*. May 20, 2021. (Hebrew)

- Violent Crime and Personal Security:** Arab communities in the most disadvantaged mixed cities are disproportionately affected by the violent crime crisis in Arab society in Israel. In the years 2018 through 2020, 24% of all Arabs killed under violent circumstances lived in mixed cities, despite being only 8% of the Arab population.¹⁶ High rates of criminal and violent incidents destabilize the sense of personal security within Arab neighborhoods and between Jewish and Arab neighbors. They also deepen tensions between Arab residents and local authorities—municipal leadership and police—when Arab residents feel that authorities are not adequately responsive to their security needs. A 2020 survey by The Abraham Initiatives the Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy research showed that 60.8% of Arabs in mixed cities felt personally unsafe, compared to 37.2% of Arabs in the rest of the country. By comparison, 27.5% of Jews in the mixed cities felt unsafe at home, compared with 10.6% of Jews in the rest of the country.¹⁷ The same survey showed that only 8.9% of Arab residents of mixed cities had complete trust in the Israel Police, compared to 15.9% of all Arab society in Israel.
- Leadership:** Mayors and municipal leaders in mixed cities play a big part in establishing relations, sense of inclusion, and shared identity of a mixed city. Some mayors have tended towards setting an inclusive tone, while others have struggled to generate trust among Arab residents. In addition, inclusion of Arab leadership among elected and appointed officials is considered key to advancing equitable policies. In Israel’s 2018 local elections,¹⁸ Arab representatives were elected to all mixed city local councils, raising hopes for the possibility of better addressing equity issues.¹⁹ By 2020, elected officials reported varying experiences depending on the severity of challenges, receptivity to shared leadership, and tensions in their respective cities.²⁰ Following the May 2021 events, officials involved in a shared cities leadership forum reported that “in cities where efforts have been made to promote a shared society, Jewish and Arab residents and leaders were better able to come together and respond to the situation.”²¹

Unique Local Realities

While Arab-Jewish relations in mixed cities share many broad characteristics, each city’s unique history, geography, demographic changes, and recent developments determine the character and substance of these relations locally. The violence triggered in May 2021, for example, erupted in different levels of severity and manner in each. In some—like Nof Hagalil—there was no violence while in others, like Lod, clashes were most severe with heavy violence and property damage. In

¹⁶ Nohad 'Ali, Ruth Lewin-Chen and Ola Najami-Yousef. “[2020 Personal Security Survey of Arab Society in Mixed Cities](#)” *The Abraham Initiatives*, July 2021. (English at the end)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Local elections take place in Israel every five years.

¹⁹ [Changing Dynamics and Shared Government in Israel's Mixed Cities](#), IATF, January 2020.

²⁰ [Annual Shared Cities Conference](#), *The Abraham Initiatives*. December 8, 2020.

²¹ “Shared Cities Leadership Forum Convenes Post-Violence.” *This Week at The Abraham Initiatives*, May 28, 2021.

Akko, violence was unleashed in Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, including at institutions known for celebrating Akko's mixed character.

Just as each mixed city's unique characteristics impacted the level of volatility, they are also the context for identifying the local issues, priorities, and opportunities for developing resilience and cohesion. As a preliminary orientation, the list below provides a broadly generalized description of the some of the defining characteristics per mixed city.

AKKO | Total Population: 49,381 | Arab population 15,829 (32%)

During the Jewish high holidays in 2008, Akko experienced long nights of violent clashes between its Jewish and Arab residents.²² The events, which resulted in extensive property damage, was a wake-up call for Akko and other mixed cities that followed in its wake to address its internal relations. Since, Akko has been considered a model for incorporating its Jewish and Arab diversity into the city's identity and leadership and promoting shared spaces in the city. Just one week before the May 2021 events, Akko's mayor, together with prominent religious and community leaders, hosted a public Ramadan Iftar meal. That said, the rapid economic development of the city as a coastal tourist destination has accelerated gentrification processes over the last decade. Akko's historic Arab neighborhoods are located close to the Mediterranean, in prime locations, but are underdeveloped and have poor housing. In a rapid move combining real estate entrepreneurs, municipal regulations and local and offshore investments, Akko's urban slums were gentrified into upper class housing and air B&B's, leading to a skyrocketing rise in housing prices in their surroundings accessible only to Jewish Israelis, foreign investors and Garinim Torani'im. Within a decade, the demography the historically Arab neighborhoods changed, with few Arabs benefiting from the rising prices, and those that left struggling with higher rent, municipal taxes, and rising debt from the municipality and landowners despite remaining in older buildings. But unfortunately, the events of August 2008 were just a primer for the 2021 May events²³ which surpassed the previous round of escalation in every possible way, including loss of life and many remaining injured.

²² Roffe-Ofir, Sharon, "[Police official says instigators of Akko riots Jewish.](#)" *Ynet*, December 10, 2008.

²³ Ben-David, Amir, "[When despair conquered Acre.](#)" *Zman*, June 6, 2021. (Hebrew).

HAIFA | Total population: 285,317 | Arab population: 33,353 (12%)

Haifa, a historically mixed city, is known for generally good Jewish-Arab relations and cooperation. The city's relatively strong socio-economic status, narrower gaps between Jews and Arabs, and the existence of several mixed neighborhoods, create more opportunities for meaningful and positive shared experiences. According to a 2019 survey²⁴ conducted by Dr. Hisham Joubran, director of the Afkar Institute, only 5% of Arabs and 9% of Jews saw the inter-group relations as negative. Among mixed cities, Haifa leads on several other parameters: 72% of Arabs and 48% of Jews have workplace interaction with each other. In this city, Jews express the highest rates of support for bilingual signage in public spaces (51%). Haifa's two universities, The University of Haifa and the Technion, both have high rates of Arab students and have made significant efforts to support multicultural campus culture. In 2021, Haifa made history by appointing the first ever Arab woman as deputy mayor²⁵. The disputed appointment was eventually cancelled following political pressure from right wing members of the council. Haifa is also a center of Arab political activism, home to headquarters of prominent Arab political parties and leaders and has its fair share of political protests and disputes. Most have taken place in the political arena though in recent years there have been more instances of public Arab and Jewish-Arab protests clashing with police. In May, Israeli police dispersed solidarity demonstrations that were deemed illegal, leading to arrests and some gunfire.²⁶

Jerusalem | Total Population: 936,427 | Arab population: 358,796 (38%)

Israel's largest and most prominent mixed city is exceptional in several ways. Most of the 350,000 Arabs in East Jerusalem are permanent residents of the city but not citizens of the state. While East Jerusalem is home to the Al Aqsa Mosque and has powerful political and religious significance for Arab citizens of Israel, there are many ways in which the realities and identity of East Jerusalemite Palestinians, and Jerusalem's Jewish-Arab relations are unique. First, the segregation between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem is in some ways deeper than in other mixed cities in Israel. Geographically, East Jerusalemite Arabs generally refrain from entering the city's western neighbourhoods and two East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, Kufur Akkab and Jabel Mukaber, are behind the separation barrier dividing Israel from the West Bank. East Jerusalemites from those neighborhoods must pass through checkpoints to enter the rest of the city. The education system in East Jerusalem also diverges from that within Israel proper: Arab-Palestinian schools generally follow Tawjihi, the Palestinian Authority curriculum and form of matriculation, while the Jewish schools follow that of the Israeli Ministry of Education. This

²⁴[Summary of Findings: Attitude Survey of Mixed City Residents](#). *The Abraham Initiatives*. November 2019. (Hebrew)

²⁵["Haifa Hadash Activist Becomes 1st Ever Arab-Woman Deputy Mayor."](#) *The Communist Part of Israel*, May 6, 2021 (Hebrew).

²⁶ Nir Hasson/Josh Breiner/Jack Khoury, ["Clashes Renew in Jerusalem for Third Day; 15 Arrested in Haifa"](#), May 9, 2021

has far-reaching social and economic consequences in terms of educational achievements, access to higher education and the labor market, knowledge of Hebrew, and above all for national identity and political affiliation. The May events erupted following a series of events taking place in East Jerusalem related to evictions in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, the growing influence of Garinim Toranim, Israeli security forces entering the Al Aqsa mosque—all of which were widely shared on social media. These events further solidified the role of Jerusalem as the city which dictates the atmosphere in Israel’s mixed cities and in the rest of the country.

LOD | Total population: 77,224 | Arab population: 23,641 (31%)

Lod was at the epicenter of the May 2021 events. Situated twenty minutes from Tel Aviv, the city’s name has also long been synonymous with neglect, crime and dysfunction²⁷. Ramat Eshkol, Lod's mixed neighbourhood that was at the heart of the unrest, was established in the early 1970s. Originally inhabited mainly by Jews, it has since been populated by waves of migration: Bedouin from the southern Negev in the early 1980s, immigrants from Ethiopia in the mid-1980s, in the mid-1990s, following the Oslo Accords, Arabs from the Palestinian Authority and the first Garin Torani families. Today, the neighbourhood has 8,000 residents, of whom 70% are Arabs. In Lod, tensions related to the Garin Torani are strong and have led to clashes prior to May 2021. Some of the Garin Torani families settled in veteran neighbourhoods in a process which included evictions of Arab families, and some have settled in new exclusive housing projects right near some of the most neglected neighborhoods. Regardless of the residential status and location, the imprint of the Garin Torani is strong throughout the city. Some prominent examples include the establishment of a premilitary academy in Ramat Eshkol, the establishment of the ‘Jewish Identity’ initiative in the city’s schools, the operation of two of the city’s community centers by the Garin’s NGO or the establishment of new synagogues in residential areas.

MA’ALOT – TARSHIHA | Total population: 21,836 | Arab population: 4,746 (22%)

In 1963, two small municipalities, Jewish Ma’alot and Arab Tarshiha (a mix Muslim, Christian, and Druze families), merged to become one mixed authority in a historic unification to improve local services. For many years, the city has symbolized a model for partnership without dramatic

²⁷ Boxerman, Aaron, [“In Lod unrest, Arab fury against ‘settler’ Jewish newcomers boils to surface.”](#) *The Times of Israel*, May 21, 2021.

friction, attributed among other things to the relatively independent management of populations, the relatively limited socio-economic gaps between them, and the generally good socio economic status of the municipality in general. Today, the municipality has a Jewish mayor and two Arab deputy mayors who were successful during the May 2021 events in keeping violence from erupting.. Over the years, Ma'alot Tarshiha has had disputes between Jews and Arab residents, including over gaps in budget and municipal services between Jews and Arabs, and related to development projects being built over Tarshiha's historical lands. Most of these have been effectively handled within municipal and legal channels.

NOF HAGALIL | Total population: 41,733 | Arab population: 11,977 (29%)

In Nof Hagalil (formerly Nazareth Ilit), formal education and municipal services such as kindergartens, after school activities and community centers, rather than housing, are at the core of Jewish-Arab tensions. Nof Hagalil, previously Nazareth Ilit, is a middle- and upper-class suburb on the border of Nazareth. In recent years, the city has seen a steady influx of young Arab families with means who are looking for better housing and municipal environment, and especially, better education for their children. Today, the city has numerous Arabic preschools but no Arabic public schools for kids Kindergarten and above, meaning that Arab families either send their children to school outside the municipality or, increasingly, integrate into the city's Hebrew public schools. Former Mayor, Shimon Gapso, refused Arab residents' requests to open an Arab elementary schools since this would be "a final relinquishing of the character of the city as a Jewish city."²⁸ Despite ongoing tensions about services, inclusivity, and the character of the city, Nof Hagalil did not experience violence during the May events.²⁹ Some credit Jewish and Arab local leadership for taking quick and preventive action. Others point to the fact that the city is relatively new, residents have moved there by choice, and that there is therefore little of the historical baggage related to dispossession seen in traditional mixed cities. Finally, grassroots efforts over the last decade to turn the city into a joint one (not only demographically mixed one) provided a network that also jumped into action at the threat of violence in May.

TEL AVIV – JAFFA | Total population: 460,616 | Arab population: 20,705 (4.5%)

Tel Aviv–Jaffa is a case of a historic Arab city (Jaffa) and a Jewish city (Tel Aviv), united together under one municipality. Today, Tel Aviv remains almost entirely Jewish with Jaffa being mixed. While Jaffa has attracted many Jewish residents who appreciate its Arab history,

²⁸ Kashti, Or. "[This Israeli City Has 25% Arab Residents, but Won't Open a School for Them](#)" *Haaretz*, Nov 5, 2019.

²⁹ Maltz, Judy. "[Mixed Cities Were Burning All Over Israel Last Month, but Not This One. Here's Why.](#)" *Haaretz*. June 6, 2021.

influence, and culture, the prevailing experience for Arab residents has been one of economic, national, and religiously motivated gentrification. As gentrification processes accelerated, more buyers pursued Arab assets and eviction of resident Arab families from their houses. Many of Jaffa's Arab families live in homes marked as Palestinian absentee properties—similar to those at the heart of eviction disputes in East Jerusalem. Eviction efforts in these cases are perceived within Arab society as a continuation of historical dispossession and land confiscation of Palestinian land and property and provoke strong sentiments. Many of these evictions are also related to expansion of the city's several 'Garinim Torani'im': further adding to tensions. One result of being priced out of Jaffa, is that over the past decade, Arab families have been moving from Jaffa to the neighbouring Bat Yam and Holon. During the May events, many of the Jewish vigilantes in Jaffa came from the neighboring Bat Yam and Holon, motivated by the years of tensions built on their becoming mixed cities.

RAMLE | Total population: 76,248 | Arab population: 18,299 (24%)

A prominent and socio-economically challenged city, Ramle is also a mixed city that has taken some significant steps in strengthening relations between its diverse populations. Similar to Lod, Ramle's challenges include economic gaps between Jews and Arabs, high rates of crime and violence, and poor socio-economic status of most of the city's communities. Ramle's Jewish community is composed, among others, of veteran and newcomers, Olim from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi, Garin Torani, Ultra Orthodox and secular communities, and Karaite Jews. The Arab community is composed of West Bank Palestinians, Bedouins, Muslims, Christians, Copts and others. Ramle is notorious for the ongoing war between gangs and crime families, particularly in the Juarish neighborhood. Ramle had also experienced the May events to their fullest extent with groups of young Jews and Arabs clashing in the streets, leaving behind them wounded demonstrators and residents and extensive damage to property. Since 2008, Ramle's municipality and several NGO's, have been active in trying to create a shared city and reconcile the various communities. The municipality is home to reconciliation forum composed of community representatives, the police, and local leadership and supports access to mediation and conflict resolution workshops as means of investing community leaders with capacities for navigating differences and creation of a strong local identity.

Looking Ahead

The current reality in Israel's mixed cities are integral to both Israel's wider Arab society and Jewish-Arab relations. Demographically, the Arab population of mixed cities is growing, and more of Israel's regions are becoming gradually more mixed. The May Events are an example of the

worst-case scenario, in which pent up frustrations are triggered by a shared sense of injustice. What started as a series of local clashes in Jerusalem, Israel's largest mixed city, quickly spread to all of Israel's mixed cities as well as to Arab towns and villages. Beyond their importance for preventing violence, the growth of Arab communities in mixed cities, interest in participation in municipal governance, and entry into new regions like Kfar Saba or Netanya also bears opportunities. Young Arab couples are moving into mixed and Jewish cities looking for better employment opportunities, housing, urban environments, and quality education for their children. While creating tensions, it also creates a broader responsibility and interest for issues of shared living, and more opportunities to develop relevant initiatives and efforts to generate resilience and cohesion across diversity.