

Political Monitoring Program

Israel and the Palestinian Minority: Mada's Bi-monthly Report

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This report covers December 2008 and January 2009 and focuses on three related subjects. The first is the reaction of Arab citizens to Israel's war on Gaza and the response of Israeli politicians and decision-makers to the Arab protest. The other two subjects arise from the national elections Israel held on 10 February 2009: one, the decision of the Central Elections Committee to disqualify two Arab political parties from running in the elections and the Supreme Court of Justice's decision to nullify the disqualification, and the other, the attack by the political party Israel Beitenu and its head, Avigdor Lieberman, on Palestinian citizens in Israel and on Arab political parties, an attack that provided the central issue in the election campaign of Israel Beitenu, which won fifteen parliamentary seats in the election.

The three subjects clearly indicate a great difference in Jewish consensus and Palestinian consensus on the status of the two populations and the relations between them. During the war, Israeli politicians, wanting Arabs in Israel to remain neutral and not to protest, called for a change in the position of the Arab population and of the Arab political parties toward the war. In the course of the election campaign, there was an attempt to force this change by political and legal means. Especially conspicuous in this regard was the activity of Israel Beitenu, which turned the issue of Palestinian citizens into a major election subject and attempted to bring about a new kind of citizenship in Israel, one requiring a declaration of loyalty to the state as the state of the Jewish people. This report offers a brief survey of these three matters.

Political opinion opposing the war, forbidden

On the afternoon of Saturday, 27 December 2008, Israel began its air offensive on the Gaza Strip the first phase of the war Israel declared on Gaza. In the first hours of

the offensive, almost 200 Palestinians were killed and hundreds more were injured.¹ Learning of the hundreds of Gazans who were killed and injured, the majority of whom were innocent civilians, Palestinians in Israel began to protest against the war. Spontaneous demonstrations proceeded from Nazareth's city center the same afternoon that the offensive began. In the evening, Arab political parties organized a mass demonstration in Nazareth. The demonstration was orderly and quiet, with no exceptional incidents and without police involvement.² The longer the war continued and the harsher it became, the greater the Palestinian protests inside Israel.

With the start of the offensive, it was clear that the two groups – Jews and Arabs in Israel – would take different positions on the war. According to the war and peace index survey conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies, at the Tel Aviv University, a week and a half after the war broke out, some 94 percent of the Jewish public supported the war, and 92 percent believed that the objective of the war was security for Israel. Ninety-two percent justified the air-force bombings in Gaza despite the damage to infrastructure and the suffering it caused to the local civilian population. Contrary to the Jewish population, a large majority of Palestinians in Israel, 85 percent, opposed the war.³ Most Jews and decision-makers were not pleased with this position, and wanted Palestinians to remain on the side and refrain from expressing opposition to the war and from identifying with their Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Dr. Shlomo Tzedek, a jurist and lecturer, published an article in *Ha'aretz* that openly warned the Palestinians:

The necessary defensive, just, and moral war of the Jewish people in the South provides a great kindness specifically for Arab Israelis. The Jewish cast lead [the name Israel gave to the operation] requires Israeli Arabs to come out of the national closet. They are here or there... [In matters of national consciousness and citizenship, being half pregnant is not acceptable and does not have to be acceptable to the Jewish people. Let [the Arabs] define themselves as they wish, just so that they don't become a national Trojan horse... Until now, it seems that they haven't

¹ *Ha'aretz Online, ynet*, 27 December 2008.

² *Arab48 Online and Alarab Online*, 27 December 2008.

³ Ephraim Ya'ar and Tamar Herman, *War-Peace Index, December 2008*, Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies, Tel Aviv University, available at www.tau.ac.il/peace.

learned anything. Not from the history of nations, in general, and not from the history of the Jewish-Arab conflict, in particular. They simply stubbornly bring one destruction after another on themselves. The Jews weren't hoping for this kind of conduct. It was expected that if the Arabs in Israel cannot identify with the suffering of the Jewish state and its towns in the South, they would at least be smart enough to remain quiet at this time... Israeli citizens, all of them, must express their loyalty to their state, and to its democratic decisions... Whoever cannot be part of such a democracy, because it is contrary to his national identity, should go and make "aliya" [emigrate to] his new country. Gaza is a possibility as well.⁴

Tzedek's position was not out of the ordinary on Israel's political landscape. Decision-makers and politicians in Israel expressed a similar opinion. For example, at a special session of the Knesset plenum, held on 29 December, to discuss the war, opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu said:

To Israel's Arabs, I say: Rid yourselves of the extremists among you, preserve the fabric of co-existence between us. To the extremists, I say: Beware, we'll act with an iron hand against Hamas supporters among us... We demand complete loyalty to the state from all its citizens. Whoever is not completely loyal to the state in which he lives will find it hard to demand all the rights in the state in which he lives.⁵

Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni chose to give a threatening message to Palestinian leaders in Israel following their opposition to the war:

[This war] is also a test of the Arab leadership in the State of Israel. You are bringing the Arab public in the State of Israel, citizens of the State of Israel, to tread a thin line, and it is impossible to cross the clear line between what is permitted and what is forbidden, between legitimacy and illegitimacy, between the ethical and the erroneous. Everyone has to choose a side, and the choice is not between your being Arabs, on the one hand, and Israel and the Jewish people, on the other hand. The choice is being on the right side, and we are on that side, the State of Israel and all the moderate entities in the region, including the vast

⁴ Shlomo Tzedek, "Days of Truth for Israel's Arabs," *Ha'aretz*, 28 December 2008.

⁵ The speech before the Knesset is available at www.knesset.gov.il/plenum/data/07311508.doc#_Toc218343695 [in Hebrew].

*majority of Palestinians and the Arab world, against the terrorist side, against the side of the extremists. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no middle ground.*⁶

In his comments, Knesset member Avigdor Lieberman said to the plenum:

*I think that the time has come to make a clear comparison between citizenship and loyalty, between National Insurance [social security] and national service, between the demand for the right of return and the right of expulsion... Therefore, there is no reason for hesitation: these people, who are a fifth column here, are people who use a political wing of terrorists from the Hamas organization in the Knesset. These acts are real acts of treason, and we are at war. Identifying with the enemy in time of war, there is no other definition for it but this: treason. Therefore, there is no reason to hesitate, we must use expulsion, expulsion of those who incite day in and day out... The time has come to break the silence. The time has come for us to see a moderate Arab leadership, which says first of all: We are citizens of Israel and we are with you.*⁷

The peak of the threats directed at Palestinians in Israel was the declaration made by Foreign Minister Livni at her talk to students of the New School, in Tel Aviv, that the national solution of the Palestinian population in Israel will be realized after establishment of a Palestinian state.⁸

The claims made against the Palestinians following their opposition to the war, which resulted in carnage for their people, were held by the majority of Jews and decision-makers. But there were exceptions. An editorial in *Ha'aretz*, of 30 December, under the heading "Not a Test in Citizenship," stated:

War between Israel and its neighbors places the Arab citizens of Israel time after time in an oppressive and painful test. Even someone who believes that the offensive on the centers of Hamas activity in Gaza is justified must not shut his heart to the severe price in blood entailed in the action, and must take into account that every person looks at these images with a torn heart... The distress of Israel's Arab citizens has grown in recent years because all the state's promises to close the social-

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Arab48 Online*, 11 January 2009.

economic gap between them and the Jewish public have not been kept. The caustic memory of the events of October 2000 and the recommendations of the Or Commission (that was appointed in their wake) that have not been implemented to this very day aggravate the feeling of this large public that it is considered Grade B in the eyes of the establishment and also in the eyes of the whole society.

With complete irresponsibility, Netanyahu promised to handle “with an iron hand” the “supporters of Hamas at home,” as if he does not understand that support of Hamas is not involved, but identity with the tragic fate of residents of Gaza...So long as Israel does not lift a finger to improve the trust between it and its Arab citizens, it cannot accuse them for not satisfying the imaginary tests that it places before them from time to time.

While the politicians threatened Israel’s Arab population, the Israel Police suppressed Palestinian protest. However, this time, contrary to previous practice, the Police used means to deter and frighten Palestinian rather than force. The Police learned a lesson from the clashes of October 2000, in which thirteen young Arabs were killed by Police gunfire. Palestinian demonstrations and protests did not, therefore, deteriorate into violent events.

The Police chose not to enter Arab city centers while the political protests were taking place. Rather, they threatened the Palestinian leadership and summoned public officials and “warned” them (an understatement) to act with restraint in the protests and demonstrations.⁹ But the Police did not hold back from using force (albeit not live ammunition) to disperse demonstrations in places in which there was great likelihood that the protests would become violent, such as the demonstration of Arab students at Haifa University, in which twelve students were arrested and eight students were injured.¹⁰

During the first days of the war and the outbreak of a wave of protests, the Israel Security Agency (the Shabak) summoned the new general secretary of the Hadash

⁹ Shanan Street, “Well Done, Police,” *Yediot Aharonot*, 4 January 2009.

¹⁰ *Arab48 Online*, 6 January 2009. Jacky Khoury, “Operation Cast Led: Violent Altercations between Jewish and Arab Students at Universities in Jerusalem and Haifa,” *Ha’aretz*, 6 January 2009.

political party, Ayman Odeh, and questioned him on his role in organizing the demonstrations and in writing articles against the war, and asked him to restrain the wave of protest.¹¹ The Shabak also summoned dozens of Balad party activists for questioning, and warned them not to organize demonstrations and not to protest the war.¹² On 7 January 2009, the Shabak placed Amir Makhoul, chair of Ittijah-Union of Arab Community Based Associations, an umbrella organization of Arab non-profit organizations and chair of the Liberties Committee, which operates under the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee, in preventive detention, claiming also that they needed to question him.¹³ Shabak and Police interrogators made severe accusations against him, and called him a terrorist who operated against the State of Israel during the war. The interrogators also stated they would be happy if they could get rid of Makhoul by sending him to Gaza. His Israeli identity card prevented them from realizing their desire.¹⁴ Following the interrogation and threats, Makhoul was released.

Ha'aretz provided a summary description of the arrests and interrogations that took place during the war, as follows:

According to Police figures. during the war, 763 Arab demonstrators and young people were arrested. Two hundred and forty-four of the detainees during the demonstrations were youths under eighteen years of age. Members of the Arab public in Israel contended that hundreds of the detentions were political, and that the arrests were not made because the detainees had committed offenses. Amir Makhoul told Ha'aretz that, in the vast majority of cases, no indictment was filed against the detainees, and they were released within a few hours. According to Makhoul's figures, more than forty-five percent of the detainees were minors, under the age of eighteen, some of them as young as fifteen. "This is part of the policy of harassment of Arab political protest," Makhoul said. "They want to break the spirit of the young generation, which showed a high degree of national identity in recent years, and is committed and active."

In addition to the arrest of persons who took part in demonstrations, the authorities arrested and carried out other actions against Arab leaders.

¹¹ Hadash *Online*, 30 December 2008.

¹² *Arab48 Online*, 1 January 2009.

¹³ *Arab48 Online*, 7 January 2009.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The general secretary of Balad, Awad al-Fahah spent a night in detention and was then released with no charges being filed against him. The same is true for heads of the Bnai Hakfar [Sons of the Village] movement, Muhammad Kananeh and Raja Agbariya.¹⁵

The war on Gaza, which was carried out at the same time as the elections campaign, had a great effect on the attitude of the Jewish political parties and of Jewish citizens toward Arab citizens and Arab political parties in Israel. Furthermore, the question of “citizenship” granted to Palestinians and the activity of some of the Arab parties played a central role in the run-up to the elections, as is seen in the following two sections.

Elections in the shadow of disqualification of Arab political parties

As has been the case before every election campaign since 2003, requests pursuant to the provisions of section 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset are submitted to disqualify Arab political parties and thereby prevent them from running in the elections.¹⁶ In the 2009 elections as well, attempts were made to disqualify Arab parties. On 4 January 2009, three requests were made to the Central Elections Committee to disqualify Balad. One of the requests was filed by Israel Beitenu, one by the National Union party, and the third by a private citizen. In addition, the National Union requested the disqualification of Ra’am-Ta’al.

On 7 January 2009, Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, on behalf of Balad and Ra’am-Ta’al, filed with the Central Elections Committee detailed responses to the requests for disqualification.¹⁷ Adalah argued there was no legal basis for disqualifying the parties: the requests for disqualification do not satisfy the

¹⁵ Yoav Stern, Yehonatan Liss, and Ofra Edelman, “More than 700 Arabs Arrested in Demonstrations in Israel since the Beginning of the Operation in Gaza,” *Ha’aretz*, 18 January 2009.

¹⁶ Under this section, the Central Elections Committee is permitted to disqualify a candidate or candidates’ list if their purposes or acts (1) negate the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state; (2) incite to racism; (3) support the armed struggle of a hostile state or of a terrorist organization against the State of Israel. The last grounds – “supporting armed struggle” – was added in the 2002 amendment to the Basic Law. For further discussion in the amendment to the Basic Law: The Knesset, see Nimmer Sultany, *Citizens without Citizenship* (Haifa: Mada al-Carmel, 2003), 19-23.

¹⁷ Adalah Press Release, “Elections 2009: Attempts to Disqualify Arab Political Parties from Running for the Knesset,” 21 January 2009. the press release is available at www.adalah.org/eng/pressreleases2009.php

provisions of section 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset or the rules specified by the High Court of Justice relating to the minimal criteria for disqualifying a party. Furthermore, Adalah argued, preventing a party to run in elections violates the public's constitutional right to vote for these lists and to choose its representative in the Knesset. In addition, the requests for disqualification relied on partial quotations that were cited out of context, taken from newspapers and Internet sites, thus indicating the political motives underlying the requests.

On 12 January, the Central Elections Committee decided, by a vote of 26-4, to disqualify Balad, and by a vote of 21-9 to disqualify Ra'am-Ta'al.¹⁸ The decisions were made even though, as *Ha'aretz's* legal commentator Ze'ev Segal wrote, under the statute, it is not sufficient to identify with armed struggle against the State of Israel, and proof of actual support is necessary.¹⁹ Also, the Attorney General was of the opinion that Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al should not be disqualified, because the request to disqualify "was unsubstantiated and was supported by extremely weak evidence."²⁰

Regarding the Committee's decision, Knesset member Ibrahim Sarsur (Ra'am-Ta'al) said that, "The disqualification of the Arab political parties is proof that the State of Israel is fighting two bloody wars – in the Gaza Strip it murders humanity and destroys Palestinian life, and inside Israel, it destroys democracy."²¹ Knesset member Jamal Zahalka (Balad) said that, "The Israeli establishment must understand that disqualifying the party will increase the number of Arab citizens who boycott the elections... They are not doing us a favor, but they have to thank us for choosing to take part in the parliamentary elections."²² Adalah said in response: "The present attempt to keep the Arab political parties in Israel from sitting in the Knesset is the latest in a series of efforts by the Right in Israel to marginalize the Palestinian Arab minority politically. In its decision to disqualify Arab lists, the Central Elections

¹⁸For details on the vote, see: Shachar Ilan and Roni Zinger-Heruti, "Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al Lists Disqualified from Running for the Knesset," *Ha'aretz*, 13 January 2009.

¹⁹ Ze'ev Segal, "Proof Needed," *Ha'aretz*, 13 January 2009.

²⁰ Tomer Zarchin, "Mazuz: No Grounds to Prevent Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al from Running for the Knesset," *Ha'aretz*, 20 January 2009.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Committee disregarded the right of the Arab minority, which comprises some twenty percent of the state's population, to be involved in political matters.²³

The response in the Israeli press about the lists' disqualification was not uniform. For example, Dr. Haim Misgav, an attorney and lecturer at Netanya Academic College, supported the Committee's decision:

*A decision of this kind had to be made years ago. Not because the Arabs are not citizens with equal rights in the State of Israel, but because they are citizens who are not committed to being loyal to the state. This is not the state in which they want to live, so they are not willing to contribute to its strength and stability... It is insufferable to continue a situation in which citizens in the State of Israel deny the very purpose for which it was established – creation of a national home for the Jewish people, as expressed in its founding document. Anyone who wants to continue to live in it has to learn how to live with the idea.*²⁴

Gad Barzilai, a professor of political science, law, and international studies at Washington University, held a divergent opinion, viewing the Committee's decision as a threat to democracy:

The mistaken and dangerous decision greatly damages the existence of Israel as a democracy. If not nullified by the Supreme Court, pursuant to its statutory authority, this decision would officially turn Israel into an Apartheid state... Section 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset, which currently enables disqualification of political parties or candidates, was expanded a number of times in the past following political pressure by the Likud and other parties on the Right. Giving a broad reading to the language of the statute will result in the shattering of democratic procedures in Israel... Identification with Palestinians in Gaza and sharp condemnation of the war there are not grounds for disqualification, inasmuch as they do not clearly indicate support for armed struggle against the State of Israel. Statements condemning the use of military force in the Occupied Territories, or the claim that the state must be a

²³ Adalah, Press Release, supra, footnote 17.

²⁴ Haim Misgav, "Heretics," *ynet*, 13 January 2009.

*state of all its citizens and not a Jewish state, also is not grounds for disqualification.*²⁵

Avirama Golan, a journalist for *Ha'aretz*, also criticized the disqualification:

*Even if the Supreme Court overturns the miserable decision of the Central Elections Committee to ban Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al, and the two parties can again run for the Knesset, the damage has already been done, Israel's democracy having been exposed as being in total panic... For protection, democracy has secret services, police, and courts, which are charged with thwarting any action, including treason and incitement, and punishment that brings about removal from the political arena. Every other means, including a slap in the face of the Arabs, does not protect democracy; rather, it destroys it.*²⁶

In a similar spirit, *Ha'aretz*, in an editorial, criticized the Committee's decision:

*In recent years, this has become a kind of shameful ceremony on the eve of every elections: political parties on the Right seek to ban Balad or Ra'am-Ta'al as part of the propaganda and in an attempt to gain a few headlines. Therefore, the real chance of disqualifying the two parties is not what those seeking disqualification are taking into account. Rather, they wish to declare that they think the Knesset is no place for these lists.*²⁷

The two Arab parties that were disqualified by the Central Elections Committee petitioned the Supreme Court.²⁸ In the appeal, filed on their behalf by Adalah, the petitioners argued that the Central Elections Committee did not hear the requests for disqualification with due fairness and did not base its decision on substantive proofs. The petitioners added that the Committee's decision to disqualify Arab parties that call for complete equality and support universal principles was patently unreasonable and contrary to section 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset. Democracy is impossible if a national minority, constituting twenty percent of the state's population, cannot be represented in the Knesset. Furthermore, the decision also breached international law, which emphasizes the right of national minorities to receive suitable

²⁵ Gad Barzilai, "On the Way to an Apartheid State," *ynet*, 13 January 2009.

²⁶ Avirama Golan, "Frightened Democracy," *Ha'aretz*, 14 January 2009.

²⁷ Editorial, "Don't Disqualify," *Ha'aretz*, 12 January 2009.

²⁸ The petition was filed on 18 January 2009. The complete text of the petition is available at www.adalah.org/features/political/petition%20diquali%202009.doc [in Hebrew].

representation in parliament, to influence state institutions by democratic means, and to support positions that are contrary to those held by the majority.²⁹

On 20 January 2009, a special nine-judge panel of the Supreme Court held an emergency hearing on the petition. On 21 January, the Supreme Court nullified the decision of the Central Elections Committee to disqualify Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al from competing in the elections. Regarding the petition on behalf of Balad, the vote was 8-1. In the matter of Ra'am-Ta'al, the panel's decision was unanimous.³⁰

"Now it is necessary to take action to nullify section 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset," said Adalah's executive director, Attorney Hassan Jabarin, who represented the two parties, following the Supreme Court's decision. Jabarin noted that, "In recent years, the Right in Israel has used this section of the statute as a tool to incite against Arab citizens of Israel and against Arab political parties."³¹

Right-wing parties sharply criticized the Supreme Court's decision. Knesset member Avigdor Lieberman, head of Israel Beitenu, declared that he would submit a proposed bill that would condition Arab citizens' right to be elected to the Knesset on a "test of loyalty to the Jewish state."³²

Lieberman's position reflected a vision in which Arab parties and Palestinians in Israel threaten the character of the State of Israel. This theory was laid out in detail in the election campaign of Israel Beitenu and constituted a central component in efforts to limit the political and party activity of Palestinians in Israel, as will be described below.

No loyalty, no citizenship

The recent election campaign provided fertile ground for a few groups in Israel to attack Palestinian citizens of the state. The leader of the attack was Avigdor Lieberman and his party, Israel Beitenu, which made the attack on Arabs in Israel its

²⁹ Adalah Press release, *supra*, footnote 17.

³⁰ Aviad Glickman, "Supreme Court Rules: Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al will Run in Elections," *ynet*, 21.1.2009. The High court's decision is available at www.adalah.org/features/political/decision%20diquali%2009.pdf [in Hebrew].

³¹ Yoav Stern, "Supreme Court Rules: Balad and Ra'am-Ta'al to Take Part in Elections," *Ha'aretz*, 22 January 2009.

³² *Ibid.*

prime campaigning issue, under the slogan “No loyalty, no citizenship.”³³ In this framework, Israel Beitenu seeks a new kind of citizenship for the Palestinian population, conditional on Arab citizens signing a declaration of loyalty to the state, to the state’s flag, to the national anthem, to the Declaration of Independence, and to Israel as a Jewish and Zionist state.³⁴

Avigdor Lieberman was born in 1958 in Moldavia. In 1978, when he was twenty years old, the Lieberman family emigrated to Israel. Lieberman studied in Beersheva University’s pre-academic program. After completing his studies there, he moved to the Hebrew University, in Jerusalem, where he obtained a bachelor’s degree in international relations and Slavic studies. In 1988, the Lieberman family moved from Jerusalem to the Nokdim settlement, not far from the Palestinian city of Bethlehem. According to reports in the Israeli press, Lieberman was a member, for a short period, of the far-Right Kach movement, which was ultimately banned.³⁵

At the end of the 1980s, Lieberman was appointed director general of the Likud party. With the victory of Binyamin Netanyahu and the Likud in the 1996 elections, Lieberman was appointed director general of the Prime Minister’s Office. In 1999, Lieberman founded Israel Beitenu, which won four seats in the elections that year. Following the special elections for prime minister, in 2001, won by Ariel Sharon, Lieberman was appointed National Infrastructures Minister. In the 2003 elections, Israel Beitenu ran jointly with Moledet and Tekuma, winning seven parliamentary seats. Lieberman was appointed Minister of Transport in the new government. In the 2006 elections, Israel Beitenu won eleven seats, and ultimately joined the coalition government but later withdrew.

Two years ago, Lieberman suggested a solution to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict that would ensure state security with an eternal Jewish majority, as he described it. In his book, *My Truth*, which was recently published, Lieberman dwelled at length on this plan, which is based on exchange of land and populations, with Arab land in the Triangle [an area of Arab towns and villages not far from the Green Line, in the

³³ See the party’s Website, www.beytenu.org.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ehud Hamu and Ronen Leibovich, “People on the Extreme Right: Lieberman was a Member of Kahane’s Kach Movement,” *Nana10 News*, 3 February 2009.

eastern Sharon plain] being handed over to the Palestinian Authority, in exchange of Jewish populated areas in the West Bank, and implementation of a new citizenship law that would require every citizen of Israel to declare loyalty to the State of Israel and do military service or alternative national service.³⁶

In an article Lieberman published on Israel Beitenu's Website, he described what the slogan "No loyalty, no citizenship" means:

In the next Knesset, Israel Beitenu will enact a Citizenship Law, which will return to us our national dignity and give meaning to the word loyalty. The statute will require every citizen to sign a pledge of loyalty to the Jewish state, to its principles and its laws. Whoever refuses will lose his right to vote and to be elected. In addition, Israel Beitenu will develop a closer connection between military service or national service and rights given under National Insurance. All this will be carried out in the spirit of the simple principle that the more loyal a person is, the more he receives. We have reached a situation in which we no longer have a choice: forgiveness is the same as suicide. Whoever fails to say things clearly and precisely now will face more serious threats later. We have enough threats from outside, so it is forbidden that we continue to hesitate and give in to the threats at home. Loyalty is a central foundation of our strength, and we must have it so we can cope with the dangers before us and triumph.³⁷

In addition to the demand for loyalty from Palestinian citizens of Israel, Lieberman also attacked the Arab political parties, especially Balad. The following statement appeared on Israel Beitenu's Website:

In the acts, statements, and objectives of members of Balad and the party's theorists, the party denies the existence of the State of Israel both as a Jewish state and as a democratic state, and even expresses support, praise, and encouragement for hostile acts carried out against Israel and Israelis.

³⁶ Lieberman's personal history is taken from the party's Website, and is available at www.beytenu.org/116/686/article.html.

³⁷ "No loyalty – No citizenship!", article by Avigdor Lieberman.

After the Central Elections Committee disqualified Balad, Lieberman stated this was only the beginning: “After it was decided that the terrorist organization Balad cannot take part in the elections, the first stage ended. The next stage is to ban Balad outright, on the grounds that it is a terrorist organization whose objective is to harm the State of Israel.”³⁸

Just prior to the hearing on the petitions Balad and Ra’am-Ta’al filed in the Supreme Court, Lieberman said that, “The objectives of Hamas and Balad are identical – the destruction of Israel. There is only one difference – Hamas is situated in Gaza, outside of Israel, while Balad is inside Israel, and worse than that, inside the walls of its legislative body.”³⁹ These claims were made even though the Supreme Court had ruled in the past, as well as and in the latest petition, that Balad would be allowed to take part in the elections, and rejected the claims that Balad supports armed struggle against Israel.

A few days before the election, Lieberman participated in the annual Herzliya Conference [which deals with Israel’s military, political, and economic situation], where he said: “The threat from within is more dangerous than the threat from outside. We did not seek the outlawing of Balad because we are anti-leftwing or anti-Arab. We sought to ban Balad because it is a terrorist movement.”⁴⁰ In the same speech, Lieberman made it clear that Israel Beitenu’s demands were acceptable everywhere in the West:

In 2003, Spain outlawed the Basque party. Only a week ago, the Spanish police recommended the banning of two more parties. We would like to adopt the Spanish law here in Israel. These are the accepted norms in the USA, the European Union and the rest of the western world.

Lieberman also views the struggle of Israel Beitenu against Balad as an integral part of Israel’s struggle against the axis of evil that calls for the destruction of the State of Israel.⁴¹ Lieberman also promises to treat Arab Knesset members in the same

³⁸ Avigdor Lieberman, “The Next Stage – Ban Balad Outright,” Israel Beitenu Website, 12 January 2009.

³⁹ Avigdor Lieberman, “Objectives of Hamas and Balad are Identical,” Israel Beitenu Website, 11 January 2009.

⁴⁰ Avigdor Lieberman, “Enough of Dual Morality!”, Herzliya Conference, available at www.beytenu.org/119/2925/article.html.

⁴¹ Avigdor Lieberman made the comments in a talk at the pre-army academic program at the Eli settlement. See www.beytenu.org/119/2881/article.html.

manner that Israel handled Hamas leaders, without providing details. As the world knows, during the second intifada, Israel eliminated a substantial portion of Hamas' political leadership.⁴²

Lieberman did not settle for harassing Arab political parties and Palestinians in Israel. He also attacked the publication of the vision of the Committee of Arab Local Authorities, viewing it as a sign of the growing extremism of the Palestinian population in the country, especially in its demand for collective rights recognized in international law. In a speech opening his party's election campaign, held in the Golan Heights, Lieberman contended that:

As always, the threat at home is always more destructive. The Israeli leadership's shutting its eyes in the face of the radicalization of the Arab sector is foolishness, an attempt to bury its head in the sand despite the heavy price we pay day after day... This growing mockery by these extremists threatens the delicate relations between us and the entire Arab population. It is forbidden to ignore this problem. The state must prosecute the extremists to the full extent of the law and strengthen those who seek coexistence. Everyone must realize that being a friend of ours is preferable to being our enemy. It is not a matter of the High Court of Justice or the international community. We shall not shut our eyes! We shall ensure a solid Jewish majority in the State of Israel!

We shall also ensure that it pays to be a loyal and faithful citizen of the state. Every citizen who lives here must respect the Declaration of Independence and the Jewish and Zionist character of the State of Israel. The state must reinforce belief in the justice of our way and strengthen Jewish heritage and values, at the expense of the post-Zionist ideology. It is necessary to provide more deeper Jewish and Zionist studies, and not studies of the Nakba, Mahmud Darwish, and their ilk. Whoever wants all the rights will also have to bear all the obligations. No national service, no National Insurance! Persons accepted to study in the sought-after professions in schools of higher education – medicine and law, for example – in the framework of affirmative action (a lower psychometric test score) will be limited to soldiers from combat units. Whoever gives

⁴² Avigdor Lieberman, "Handle Arab Knesset Members like Hamas," *Politico Online*, 7 January 2009, available at www.politico.co.il/article.asp?rId=653 [in Hebrew].

*more must receive more. By acting in this way, the state gives a signal as to its order of priorities, as to the values it wants to encourage.*⁴³

Lieberman also promises to change, by statutory amendment, the oath that Knesset members take. In a letter he sent to the heads of the big factions in the Knesset, he wrote:

*In light of the radicalization that is proceeding apace among the Arab parties, Israel Beitenu decided to draft an initiative to change the oath for Knesset members. Our proposed version will require every Knesset member to make a commitment to the values of the State of Israel as set out in the Declaration of Independence as well as its symbols and anthem.*⁴⁴

The elections to the Eighteenth Knesset, recently held, strengthened Lieberman's political status: Israel Beitenu received fifteen parliamentary seats (two more than the Labor Party). He has become a man of significant influence in Israeli politics. The rightist bloc won sixty-five seats. Kadima won twenty-eight seats. Kadima's platform regarding Palestinian citizens of Israel is not significantly different from that of the parties on the Right, and Kadima's representatives in coalition talks with Israel Beitenu that followed the elections even agreed with Lieberman's demands regarding "no loyalty, no citizenship."

Thus, the number of parliamentary seats held by parties wanting to force an inferior, conditional citizenship on Palestinian citizens comes to ninety-three (the Right and Kadima). The results reflect a new political consensus in Israel, in which the Palestinian population is viewed as a threat to the State of Israel. The implications of this consensus for Palestinian citizens will no doubt be discussed in future political-monitoring reports.

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⁴³ Lieberman's speech is available at www.beytenu.org.il/102/2095/article.html [in Hebrew].

⁴⁴ See www.beytenu.org./119/2772/article.html.