

Israel's Arab Citizens in the 2015 General Elections: References in Party Platforms

Nearly every political party in Israel references Arab citizens as a part of their platforms. Below are the positions of every party that publishes a platform, aside from the **Joint Arab List**, which was covered in detail in the previous update.¹

The Zionist Camp

Yitzhak Herzog (Labor), Tzipi Livni (Hatnua)

The Zionist Camp is a joint electoral list established in early 2015 by the Labor Party and Hatnua. Its political platform includes two detailed plans addressing the social and economic needs of Israel's Arab Citizens: (i) Arab, Bedouin, Druze and Circassian citizens of Israel, and (ii) "Fighting Racism and Promoting Shared Living:"

- (i) The Zionist Camp aims refers to achieving equality and closing gaps between Jewish and Arab citizens as "a central objective for Israeli society" and "an utmost expression of Israel's democracy and the lessons of the past learnt by the Jewish people." The plan put forth covers a range of issues including equal budgeting and government allocations, closing socio-economic gaps, greater Arab representation in government jobs; industrial development, tourism, and policing and crime-reduction in Arab localities; solutions for housing shortages, resolution to Bedouin land claims and unrecognized villages in the Negev, and issues related to Arab culture, youth movements, civil service and more.
- (ii) The platform also addresses the need to fight racism and advance shared living in Israel. It offers practical measures to do so such as blocking bills that restrict non-Jewish citizen's rights, blocking funding to organizations with racist agendas, establishing a special commission within the Justice office to address racism, supporting and expanding bilingual schools in Israel, among others.

Habayit Hayehudi (Jewish Home)

Naftali Bennett

Habayit Hayehudi is a religious Zionist political party founded in 2008 as a successor to the National Religious Party. The party platform refers to Arab citizens in three sections, (i) Jewish State, (ii) The Arab Minority, and (iii) Preservation of National Land:

- (i) Under "Jewish State", the platform reads "The State of Israel is a Jewish state, the state of the Jewish people, with a democratic regime. [Habayit Hayehudi] will work to strengthen the Jewish

¹ [Israel's Arab Citizens and the 2015 General Elections – IATaskForce – March 2015](#)

character of the state, and we will fight against all those who are working to make Israel 'a state of all its citizens.' That said, we will support the full rights of minorities, including the Arab minority."

- (ii) In the section relating to "The Arab minority," the platform says that "[t]oday the state of Israel is erring twice: it allows incitement by Arab elements working to destroy Israel, and it discriminates against Arabs that want to integrate into Israeli society. [Habayit Hayehudi] will do the exact opposite – stand firm in the face of a fifth column and strengthen Arab citizens that wish Israel well."
- (iii) Under "Preservation of National Land," the platform states that "The State of Israel is losing land in the Galilee and the Negev. Massive illegal construction on the part of the Negev Bedouin results in losses of land, rule of law, and practical enforcement of Israel's sovereignty over the territory. We will enforce law and order in the Negev and the Galilee, thoroughly address illegal construction and seizure of land, and to strengthen Jewish settlement in the regions."

Yesh Atid (There is a future)

Yair Lapid

Yesh Atid is a centrist party that established prior to the 2013 general elections. Yesh Atid focuses on social, civic and governance issues. The party's detailed platform includes a section on "Minorities in Israel" which states that "Israel is both a Jewish and democratic state, and as such, must act to ensure all its citizens enjoy equal rights under the law." The section is divided into (i) Druze and Circassian, (ii) Bedouin, and (iii) Arab populations and refers to each as follows:

- (i) Druze and Circassian populations are an "inseparable and contributing part of Israeli society," whose economic and societal challenges are "incompatible with the fact that they carry the burden of serving the country." Yesh Atid promises to formulate and realize a long-term comprehensive solution for "core strategic issues, local issues that require rapid response, and a change in allocations given to these populations."
- (ii) Yesh Atid believes that "better integration of Bedouin Israeli society is a mutual interest, and will continue to operate and develop programs to promote recruitment of Bedouins to the IDF and national service [such that] the Bedouin population will receive full rights and realize its inherent economic potential." Yesh Atid also commits to finding a gradual and mutual solution to unresolved Bedouin settlement claims in the Negev.
- (iii) Yesh Atid developed a comprehensive five-year plan to address Arab (Muslim and Christian) economic issues such as "planning, construction and housing, employment, judicial boundaries, electricity and water connections, drainage and infrastructure issues, development of industrial zones, underrepresentation in government, improving public transportation, development of tourist sites, and preserving traditions and unique culture." In addition, Yesh Atid "will encourage the participation of Arab women and men in national service when they reach the age of 18."

Kulanu (All of Us)

Moshe Kahlon

Kulanu is a party founded by former Likud minister Moshe Kahlon in 2014. The party is a center party that says it aims to "renew the hope for better life for every citizen in Israel." Kulanu's website includes a detailed platform with work plans focused predominantly on socio-economic issues. The Arab minority is not mentioned specifically. The platform says that the party will work to "close gaps in Israeli society," to achieve "equal opportunities in education" and that it will focus on "Israel's social and geographic periphery".

Yisrael Beytenu (Israel Our Home)

Avigdor Liberman

Yisrael Beytenu was established by Avigdor Liberman in 1999. At the time, the party appealed primarily to immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Yisrael Beytenu offers hawkish, right-wing positions on matters of foreign policy and security, and secular positions on the religious-secular divide. The party stands firmly for Israel's right to "choose its own character as a Jewish and Zionist state and this right should not be subject to any compromise." The parts of its vision statement referring specifically to Arab citizens are (i) No Citizenship Without Allegiance, (ii) the Peace Plan of Yisrael Beytenu, and in its (iii) Social and Economic Positions, as follows:

- (i) In "No Citizenship Without Allegiance" the party says that "There should be no difference in the attitude of the state to any citizen, be they Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze or anyone else. Every Israeli citizen should be subject to the same duties and the same rights...The Jewish people were always loyal to the nations where they lived, so there is certainly a place to demand similar loyalty from minority groups in Israel. It is therefore legitimate to expect minorities from various groups in Israel to express solidarity, identify with, and respect the symbols of the state in which they are citizens with equal rights and expect every youth, including members of the ultra-Orthodox or Arab communities, to undergo military or civilian national service... This is also why a person who lives in Israel, and turns Independence Day into 'Nakba Day', is something that we have to fight practically and unequivocally... We should also not accept the dangerous phenomenon of Arab Members of Knesset who incite against the state from the parliament where they serve. Arab Members of Knesset have sadly learnt that incitement against Israel pays off."
- (ii) Yisrael Beytenu lists territorial exchange as part of its Peace Plan, "Such an agreement would allow Israeli-Arabs who identify with the Palestinians and not Israel to become part of a Palestinian state. Such an arrangement would first solve the challenge of the Arab-Israelis in the 'Triangle' and Wadi Ara region which is adjacent to the Palestinian Authority."
- (iii) In its Social and Economic Positions, Yisrael Beytenu says that in order to bring about real change it is necessary to prioritize "the citizens who contribute to the state" and that existing targeting only the most disadvantaged, meaning Ultra-Orthodox and Arab Communities, "missed the goal of helping families who work and fully contribute to their country."

Meretz

Zahava Galon

Meretz, founded in 1992, is a Zionist left-wing party that traditionally supports social equality, granting Israeli Arabs equal rights, and the two-state solution. The platform refers to "Israel is a democratic state, the homeland of the Jewish people and a state of all its citizens" and promises "recognition of the Arab minority as a national minority with collective rights."

In the party's platform, a chapter called "A society for all" elaborates on Arab citizens' rights as a National minority; struggle against racism, and efforts against past and present discrimination. The party promises to "correct discrimination against Arab citizens" and promote "preferential treatment" in all walks of life. The party will also fight for the "integration of Arab citizens in political and public institutions and ensure adequate representation." It will ensure full manifestation of the equal status of Arabic and will widen Arabic studies in Jewish educational institutes. The party also stated that it will work to achieve "substantial allocation of resources" for Arab culture.

Likud

Benjamin Netanyahu

The Likud is the major center-right political party in Israel. The party has no published platform.*

*Other parties who have not published platforms but are likely to meet or surpass the electoral threshold are **Shas**, **Agudat Israel**, and **Yachad**.