

The Personal Security Index

Violence, Crime and Policing in Arab Communities

Report 2017

Written by: Adv' Rasool Sa'ada and Adi Stein

Editor: Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu

Academic Advisor: Dr. Nohad Ali

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Abstract

“Violence, Personal Security, and Policing in Arab Communities – 2017” is the first in a series of annual reports that will be published by **The Abraham Fund Initiatives**. The goal of the report is to monitor attitudes among Arab citizens on issues relating to policing and violence; the work of the police in the Arab population; and the implementation of Government Decision 1402 for enhancing personal security in the Arab sector, as adopted on April 10, 2016.

There has been a sharp rise in the level of crime and violence in Arab society over recent years, and the phenomenon appears to have reached plague-like proportions. A total of 70 Arab citizens were killed in 2017, accounting for over 55 percent of murder and manslaughter victims in Israel in that year.

The main reasons for violence in Arab society are: an inadequate police presence in the Arab communities; the socioeconomic condition of the Arab population – half of all Arab families are defined as poor, and almost two-thirds of Arab children live below the poverty line; high unemployment, particularly among young people; changes in Arab society and the tension between tradition and modernity; the lack of proper government services; discrimination against Arab citizens; and inequality by comparison to the majority Jewish society.

In recent years, government officials have increasingly recognized that the longstanding attitude of the police toward Arab citizens has been inadequate and inegalitarian. At the same time, there has been growing awareness within Arab society that violence and crime now constitute a strategic threat that is causing serious damage. Both sides – the government and the Arab public – appear to recognize that it will not be possible to combat crime effectively without cooperation based on mutual trust.

Government Decision 922, adopted in December 2015, allocated unprecedented resources for promoting the economic development of Arab communities. Government Decision 1402, adopted in April 2016, sought to improve the level of personal security in the Arab sector and in Jerusalem. The decision defined several objectives: The establishment of a new administrative authority for police services in Arab society; the recruitment of thousands of police officers, including members of Arab society; the establishment of new police stations in Arab communities; and the upgrading of existing stations.

The 2017 personal security survey focuses on five spheres: (1) Feelings and attitudes regarding the scale of violence; (2) Attitudes concerning different spheres

and types of violence – i.e. the areas in which violence is felt in Arab society; (3) The sense of personal security and citizens' level of exposure to violence; (4) Willingness to help in the struggle against violence; (5) Attitudes toward the police.

The survey was held on the basis of a representative sample of the entire Arab population. For comparison purposes, a parallel national survey was conducted among a representative sample of Jewish society.

The survey findings highlight the lack of policing in Arab society. The reports by the Arab respondents reveal a sense of lawlessness and police neglect:

- The proportion of Arabs reporting that there is a problem of violence in their place of residence is 54% – four times higher than the proportion among Jews.
- Regarding types of violence, the exposure of all citizens of Israel to burglary and theft is high – 53% in Jewish society and 58% in Arab society. Jewish citizens feel much more protected against violence and murder than Arabs, but in other types of violence – such as property crimes, burglary, and theft – feelings in both populations are similar.
- The phenomenon of protection (*khawa* in Arabic) is perceived as a more serious problem in Arab society than among the Jewish population.
- Both Arabs and Jews believe that drug abuse is common in their place of residence, though the problem is more widespread in Arab society, where approximately half of respondents hold this view, compared to one-third among Jewish citizens. Regarding drug dealing, 20% of Jews believe that their place of residence has a problem, while the proportion among Arabs is twice as high – 40%.
- Illegal use of firearms emerges as a serious problem among the Arab public: 49% believe that there is a widespread problem of illegal shooting and use of firearms, compared to just 7% among Jews.
- The proportion of Jewish citizens who believe that there is a problem of domestic violence in their place of residence is 14%, compared to 33% in Arab society. There are sharp differences between men and women concerning domestic violence: The proportion of women in both sectors who believe that this is a problem is higher than among men.
- The proportion of Arabs reporting that they were the victims of violence or crime over the past three years is 4%, compared to 3.3% among Jews. While this rate may appear low, in numerical terms it paints a very alarming picture.

- The sense of personal insecurity among Arabs is 2.5 times greater than among Jewish citizens. The proportion of Arabs who feel insecure in their place of residence is 32%, compared to 13% among Jews.
- Regarding attitudes toward the police, 63% of Jewish citizens hold the police responsible for residents' security, compared to just 36% of Arabs. This alarming finding shows that the majority of the Arab public does not rely on the police and does not consider it responsible for its security. Conversely, the proportion of Arab citizens who believe that the family or parents are responsible for residents' personal security is 32%, compared to just 1% among Jewish citizens.
- Neither Jews nor Arabs hold the education system responsible for personal security: the proportion of those who do so is 1% among Jews and 3% among Arabs. Accordingly, the education system is not regarded as having any connection to the protection of personal security.
- Approximately 70% of Arab citizens are prepared to help in the struggle against violence, compared to 39% of Jewish citizens – an encouraging finding. A large majority of the Arab public believes that the time has come to wage a war on violence, and 70% are willing to help in this struggle.
- A clear majority of the respondents have little or no trust in the police – 59% of Arabs and 54% of Jews. A comparison with the findings of a survey conducted in 2014 shows that there has been an erosion in public trust in the police, which is continuing to fall. The respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with the police's actions: 53% among the Jewish public and 61% among Arabs.
- A majority of citizens still hope that a regular police presence in their place of residence will help reduce violence – 66% of the Jewish public and 63% of Arabs hold this position.
- Despite the mistrust and general dissatisfaction with the police's functioning, the proportion of Arab citizens who support the opening of a police station in their place of residence is 77%. Moreover, 79% of Arab citizens are willing to report crimes or offenses they witness to the police, a finding that reflects a willingness to cooperate in practical terms with the police in order to eradicate violence.
- A large majority of Arab citizens – 72% - support the integration of Arabs in the police force, and 48% would be willing to serve in the police force themselves or for one of their relatives to do so.


Alienation between the police and the Arab public worsened in 2017 as the result of two issues: (1) **The killing of Arab citizens by the police** – in 2017, three Arab citizens were killed by the police: Ya'aqub Abu al-Kiyan in an incident in Umm al-Hiran in January 2017; Muhammad Taha in an incident in Kafr Qassem in June 2017; and Mahdi Sa'adi in an incident in Jaffa in July 2017. (2) **The demolition of illegal buildings** in the city of Qalansuwa.

As for the victims of violence: in 2017, 67 Arab citizens (nine women and 58 men) lost their lives, in addition to the three citizens shot and killed by police forces.

The police is working to improve its cooperation with Arab society, and in 2017 new police stations were opened in Jisr a-Zarqa and Kafr Kana. Several murder cases were solved, a campaign to collect weapons was held in Arab communities, and dialogue continued between police chiefs and the elected leadership. The police also launched an Arabic-language Facebook page and a Twitter account in order to convey information to the Arab public.

The monitoring of the implementation of Government Decision 1402 shows that: (A) The number of police officers in Arab communities has increased. From 2016 through the end of 2017, 325 Arab police officers were recruited, including 65 women; (B) Additional staff positions have been provided at police stations in and in the support systems; (C) The Arab Society Service Authority is running a broad-based support system including personal adaptation for the needs of candidates for service in the police in order to enhance their prospects during the admissions process (approximately 4,000 Arab men and women have submitted their candidacy); (D) Work has begun to implement the Emun (Trust) program on the national level – a management strategy that requires the police to focus time and resources on the problems that bother normative citizens in each community; (E) The North Start project was developed in the Northern District to improve police services in Arab communities; (F) The Ministry of Public Security plans to open another 10 new police stations in Arab communities by 2020 and to upgrade existing stations.

The Abraham Fund Initiatives attaches the utmost importance to the struggle against crime and violence in Arab society. It regards these problems as an obstacle to the development and prosperity of the Palestinian-Arab minority and to its integration in the state. To this end, **The Abraham Fund Initiatives** has established a Safe Communities project that seeks to promote a service-oriented and positive policing approach toward Arab citizens. The project is based on mechanisms for dialogue between the police and the community; education against violence; and the establishment of life-saving services in Arab communities.



The following are our key recommendations for improving personal security in Arab communities:

- ✓ A systemic and long-term program should be initiated for the struggle against violence in Arab communities and the necessary resources allocated for its implementation.
- ✓ A regular and positive police presence is needed in Arab communities, including the adoption of a service- and community-oriented approach to residents.
- ✓ Police stations should be established within emergency service compounds in the Arab communities.
- ✓ There is a need for formalized and regular dialogue between the police and the community.
- ✓ Additional campaigns should be initiated for the voluntary collection of illegal weapons, while at the same time enhancing enforcement in this field.
- ✓ Educational programs against violence should be developed in formal and informal education frameworks in Arab communities.
- ✓ In-depth studies should be undertaken in communities with police stations, and where police stations were recently established, in order to examine their impact on reducing violence.