

Vision

The State of Israel as a Shared Society for its Jewish and Arab-Palestinian Citizens

חזון

מדינת ישראל חברה משותפת של אזרחיה היהודים
והערבים פלסטינים

رؤية

دولة اسرائيل مجتمع مشترك للمواطنين اليهود والعرب الفلسطينيين -

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Introduction

We, members of “The Ridgefield Group,” Jewish women and Arab women, Arab men and Jewish men, citizens of Israel, hereby present a vision of a shared society in Israel.

For years, all of us have been active, both as individuals and as staff members of Jewish, Arab and shared organizations promoting equality.

We have devoted the last two years to this document, in yearly conferences at the Leir Retreat Center in Ridgefield, Connecticut, and in work meetings in Israel. During our work on this document we learned from the experience of other nations and various countries. We examined models of shared societies in countries with histories of persistent and long-term conflicts, whether nationalistic, ethnic, religious or cultural, countries which despite this were able to build a sustainable shared society.

We are convinced that it is possible to do this in our country also.

According to our vision, the State of Israel will exist as a shared society in which all of its citizens, Jews and Palestinian Arabs, will live with dignity, with equality and with peace.

The definition of a shared society that was before us when we came to shape this vision relies on the project of *Club de Madrid* and other initiatives, while adjusting them to the unique reality of Israel. This is how we would describe the shared society: A society in which there is social cohesion, stability, and safety. A society where all its members feel at home. Such a society advances the dignity and human rights of all its members and grants equal individual and collective rights.

The shared society in Israel will be a democratic society valuing and identifying the economic, social and political potential that lies within in national and cultural diversity. This society will act to promote the principle of equal partnership through mechanisms, practices, and government policy. As such it will create opportunities and will unite its members around shared values, objectives and projects.

The society shared by Arabs and Jews in Israel will be based on relationships between citizens (both individuals and groups) that are characterized by mutual respect, tolerance, openness and inclusion of diversity, pluralism, societal solidarity and shared responsibility. All these create a sense of belonging and ownership.

We are aware of the fact that implementation of this vision is a complex and gradual process that requires building of broad consensus, both in relation to the nature of the society in Israel and in relation to a just solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which relies centrally on the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. The ability to overcome the disputes and fears between our two peoples will make it possible for us to create a new reality, which will be founded on this vision and will lead to a flourishing and thriving state where its citizens live in peace and wellbeing.

The country will enjoy the abundance of resources which will be re-directed from expenditures on war and defense to the investment in an optimal quality of life for all its citizens and for the development of the entire region.

We call upon the citizens of the state to adopt this vision and to act to promote it for the sake of a better future for us and for our children.

And for this we, the members of the Ridgefield group, have signed here:

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|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Yaniv Sagie | يانييف ساجي | יניב שגיא |
| Thabet Abu Ras | ثابت ابو راس | ת'אבת אבו ראס |
| Chassia Chomski Porat | حاسية حومسكي پورات | חסיה חומסקי פורת |
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We would like to thank Professor Eileen Babbitt, from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University who conceived of and initiated the Ridgefield Group, for her professional guidance and leadership, and for her warm support and encouragement and her full faith in us.

In addition, we would like to thank Sana Knaneh, Dahlia Shaham, Dr. Pamela Steiner and Naseem Khuri, for their professional facilitation; and the administration and staff of the Leir Retreat Center, for the inviting and enabling environment they granted us and that allowed us to take leave from our pursuits in order to focus on composing the document; and to everyone who accompanied the process during its various stages.

The Purpose of the Document

This document proposes a basis for defining a new vision for Israel as a democratic state shared by the two peoples who live in it: The Jewish people and the Palestinian Arab people.

Its purpose is to lay the foundations for a shared and egalitarian society, paving the way for historical and political reconciliation between the two national groups who live in the country.

We see the following agreed-upon principles as the basis of the vision:

1. Israel within the 1967 borders will be a democratic state whose sovereignty belongs to all its citizens, Jews and Arabs alike, and both peoples have equal national group rights in it.
2. The state will pursue equitable policies for all of its citizens.
3. In parallel, action is needed to end the occupation in the Palestinian territories, to arrive at a permanent agreement with the Palestinians and to create a shared society in Israel. The end of the occupation and peace between the peoples are important in order to strengthen and advance the building of a shared society.
4. A cultural, economic, and social bond must be developed and strengthened with the peoples in the region.
5. The concepts of both restorative justice and distributive justice will inform all resource allocations in the State of Israel.
6. The historical, moral and political injustices of the displacement and dispossession of the Palestinians will not be corrected by new injustices.
7. National rights for each group are not to be awarded at the expense of, or to replace religious rights for each group.

The values at the heart of the vision:

- **Equality of rights and opportunities**

Equality is the normative principle organizing the shared vision that refers to the political, social and economic spheres within the entire society in Israel.

- **Recognition and pluralism**

The national groups in the country have adopted perceptions and positions that stand in opposition to each other. The ethical perception of moral pluralism recognizes this fact, but does not privilege the values and narratives of one of the groups over those of the other. Each group recognizes the narrative, the needs, and the aspirations of the other group. Both groups will have visibility in the public sphere without giving priority to one over the other.

- **Historical restorative justice**

Recognition of the injustices of the past and action to correct them.

The vision of a shared society will allow full equality between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority. To this end a detailed response needs to be provided for the inequality currently existing in Israel in the nine areas that are detailed below:

1. Cultural Rights

a. Language

Today, the Arabic language is an official language and the language of the Arabic education system. Its instruction in Hebrew schools is not implemented as mandatory. It is partially in effect, and sometimes not at all, in public institutions, on official forms, in signage, in rulebooks and the street signs in cities with mixed populations. The status of the Arabic language is in danger and efforts are being made to squeeze it out of the public space.

In the future shared society in Israel both languages, Arabic and Hebrew, will have equal legal status and all citizens of the state will be fluent in them. The Arabic language will be present in the public space and in all the services the nation provides to its citizens.

b. Education

In Israel today there are separate education systems for Jews and Arabs. Despite there being ostensibly equitable budgets, in actuality the resources that reach the Arab student are reduced. This student sits in more crowded classrooms, in worse physical conditions and achieves lower accomplishments that track him later on in life. Arabs have the right to be educated in the Arabic education system, but the curriculum is dictated by the Ministry of Education and under its supervision, and reflects only the Jewish and Zionist narrative. There is almost no shared education in Israel. Most students in the education system do not meet “the other” from the other nationality throughout all their years of education and this is despite the fact that since the year 2000 the educational objectives in Israel also include the following goal: “To get to know the language, the culture, the history, the heritage and the unique tradition of the Arab population and of other population groups in the State of Israel and to acknowledge the equal rights of all citizens of Israel.”

In the future shared society in Israel there will be full and equitable access to educational resources and to post-secondary studies. There will be an equitable distribution of the education budgets and the physical infrastructures of academic institutions. Educational and post-secondary institutions, at all ages and in all subjects, will be bi-lingual and multicultural spaces.

Curricula will be promoted with the objective of building a shared society.

The curriculum will include the different national narratives and all students will learn both narratives and will become acquainted with the heritage sites of both peoples.

The curriculum will also include universal perspectives and humanistic values.

Both languages will be studied in all schools. Educational frameworks will be, at their foundation, shared and bilingual frameworks. In places where for reasons of faith, culture or demography, a separate educational framework is present, there will be meetings and shared learning experiences with “the other.” There will also be supplemental educational frameworks on a particular basis: national, cultural and/or religious.

In measuring student achievements there will be no gaps between students based on a background of the national group they come from.

c. Culture

Today, Arab culture is not recognized as part of public culture, and is not studied in the educational system for Arabs. There are few Arabic cultural institutions (theaters, museums book publishers) and communications media, most of which are private initiatives of Arab citizens and civil society organizations. The state does not invest resources in assuring the presence of the Arabic culture and most of the Jewish public in Israel is not familiar with it nor is it accessible to the Jewish public.

In the future shared society in Israel the state will invest resources in the development and preservation of cultural pluralism and these will be distributed in an equitable manner between the Hebrew culture and the Arab culture, which will be recognized as a shared basis for the culture of the country. Equitable laws will be introduced for the holidays of all the religions that will be commemorated by the state and will be represented in the vacation calendar of public institutions. A shared civilian holiday will be declared and celebrated to mark life as a shared society.

d. Heritage and Heritage Sites

Today, the Antiquities Law in Israel recognizes sites that are at least 300 years old and removes from mandatory preservation many sites from the Ottoman period. Muslim cemeteries are neglected, and there are mosques and abandoned villages with no one

to take care of them. There is no national preservation of the heritage of the Palestinian people.

In the future shared society in Israel the state will take full responsibility for cherishing and preserving the national, religious and cultural heritage of the peoples who live and lived in it throughout thousands of years of history. The state will ensure expression of the memory of the 1948 war (the Nakba and Independence) as well as commemorating other memorial days of both groups in an equitable manner.

e. Religion

Today in Israel there is a system of courts for the minority ethnic groups. There is no institution with governmental recognition that is equivalent to The Chief Rabbinate.¹ No Mufti has been recognized who can interpret the law. There are no Muslim/Christian religious councils with budgets. The mosques/churches are subject to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. There is no authorization for development of holy places that are not Jewish.

In the future shared society in Israel, the religion an individual belongs to will not determine his judicial and legal status. The religious institutions of all religions will receive equitable attention and budgets.

f. Media

Today, national/public media is primarily in Hebrew. There is independent Arab press, including radio. There is no television channel under Arab control, but there are regular programs in Arabic on the television channels.

In the future shared society in Israel there will be public and governmental media in each of the two languages.

¹ Chief Rabbinate of Israel Law, 5740 (1980).

2. Freedoms and Political Rights

a. Legal status

Today the state is defined as “Jewish and democratic.” There is no recognition of the Arab population as a national minority in legislative documents and there is no recognition of the leadership bodies of the Arab population. Legislation has determined affirmative action in government companies and in public service. The Supreme Court has set mandatory fair representation in public appointments and obligated the state to act with proportional equitability in distribution of budgets. In practice, these laws and rulings are not enforced. In contrast, there are proposed laws to obligate those requesting citizenship to swear allegiance based on the definition of the state as Jewish and democratic.

In the future shared society in Israel the state will be defined as a democracy the sovereignty of which belongs to all its citizens, Jews and Arabs, and both national groups will have equal collective national group rights within it. There will be a recognized, representative elected leadership of the Palestinian Arab minority, with the power to advance the Palestinian Arab minority and to prevent harm to it because of it being a minority.

b. Parliamentary representation

Today the Knesset is an open and shared institution. Arab parties have proportional representation without a quota or ensured seats. They are represented on Knesset committees, and in the role of one of the vice chairs of the Knesset. The vast majority of the Arab Knesset members are in the Joint Arab list. There are very few Arab Knesset members in “Jewish Zionist” lists. There is one Jewish Knesset member in the Joint Arab List.

In the future shared society there will also be shared Arab Jewish parties that express an ideological partnership extending beyond separate national affiliation. There will be fair and influential representation of Arab Knesset members in all Knesset committees.

c. Representation in centers of power

Today Arab citizens of Israel have almost no ability to influence state policies, because they are not fairly represented in the centers of power. There are no Ministers or Deputy Ministers who are Arabs, and in the past there were only a few isolated instances of this representation. There has been one Arab justice in the Supreme Court since 2004. There are no Arabs in the judicial appointment committee and only 7.8% of the judges are Arabs, primarily in the lower courts.² There is no fair representation of Arabs in the media.

In the future shared social of Israel there will be equitable representation of the Arab population in centers of power, in the government, in public institutions and in the media. In the event that the Prime Minister is Jewish, an Arab Deputy Prime Minister will be named, and vice versa.

d. Political freedoms

Today, Israeli law guarantees basic political freedoms. Sometimes, primarily in periods of crisis, these freedoms are violated, and then the gap between over-enforcement towards Arabs and under-enforcement towards Jews is striking. Inciting statements by the Jewish leadership do not receive an appropriate response. This situation creates an atmosphere of fear that undermines meaningful implementation of political freedoms. In addition, there are legislative limitations to political rights, and included in these: prohibiting parties that do not accept the Jewish democratic nature of the State of Israel from running for elections to the Knesset, ban on travel to countries currently defined as enemy states, and limitations on the freedom of expression such as the Nakba Law.

In the future shared society there will be no discrimination based on national identity with regards to political rights whether in legislation or in enforcement. All citizens of the state will be able to realize political rights with a sense of security and equality, including freedom of expression, freedom of movement, the freedom to organize politically, to vote and to be elected.

² Yasser Awad, *Adequate Representation in Israel's Justice System*, Sikkuy 2008

3. Land

The issues of land are at the heart of the Jewish Palestinian conflict in Israel. They include expropriation of land and its nationalization, uprooting of towns and villages, discrimination in allocation of land and in planning. These problems constitute a primary roadblock standing in the way of development of the Arab society in Israel.

a. Expropriation, compensation and return

Displaced people (internal refugees) are Israeli citizens who were displaced from their homes in 1948 and have not yet been allowed to return to them. Today, there is no agreement about the demand to return land and to bring those who have been displaced back to their villages. Over the years the State of Israel has expropriated private land of Arabs, sometimes without appropriate compensation.

In the future shared society historical justice will be carried out at the center of which will be granting of appropriate compensation, with land or with money, to the Palestinian society and to those whose land was expropriated since the establishment of the state, including the return of displaced people, to the extent possible.

b. Allocation of land and control

Today more than 93% of the area of Israel is under the ownership of the state, while only 3.5% of the land is under Arab ownership and the areas of jurisdiction of Arab settlements is only 2.5%.³

There is unequitable allocation that greatly harms the Arab citizens of Israel, through a shortage of areas of jurisdiction, Arab settlements and industrial zones. The state uses absentee property and the land under its ownership to lease land almost exclusively to Jews.

In the future shared society in Israel there will be comprehensive land reform that will create an equitable basis among all citizens of the state. Each Arab settlement will have the land and infrastructure necessary for its development. In every region in the

³ Yitzhak Reiter, "Chapter 5 – Land Issues", in *Information Handbook – The Arab Society in Israel*, The Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013.

country where Jews and Arabs live as neighbors, industrial and employment zones will be shared and the income will be distributed equitably between municipal authorities according to needs and based on the number of people.

There will be more mixed neighborhoods in cities throughout the country and any citizen can choose where to live. Jewish and Arab municipal authorities will be equitably distributed across the national socio-economic ranking of municipal authorities.

Municipal borders will be demarcated so that they will not be organized according to the national demographics. Any municipal governance authority, including cities, will be recognized as an integrated Jewish Arab authority. Planning will be regional, and the authority will represent the entire population, with various forms of land settlement options. The division into municipalities will take into account the use of state-owned land and provide for equitable distribution of income from municipal rates and taxes.

c. Representation in policy-making and the legal status of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency

Today, representation in policy-making grants international Jewish organizations legal and practical status on land matters. Arab representation is very small: two out of 31 in the Israel Land Authority Council, one in the JNF.

In the future shared society international organizations of the Jewish people will have no land status. Decisions on matters of real estate will be made by public authorities under the responsibility of the government of Israel in which the Arab citizens of Israel will be partners in an equitable manner.

d. Planning, construction and housing

Today there is a lack of zoning plans for Arab settlements and underrepresentation in the National Council and in regional and municipal councils for planning and

construction. In addition, there is almost no construction of public housing and there is discrimination in housing assistance.

In the future shared society in Israel there will be a comprehensive and broad response to problems of planning and construction in Israel. There will be organized and agreed upon zoning plans for all the settlements in Israel, the status of houses built without building permits will be settled, there will be proportional representation on all the relevant committees for planning and construction. In addition, public housing will be given to the disadvantaged and affordable housing will be guaranteed in an equitable manner, including shared housing. The state will guarantee equitable conditions in eligibility to receive mortgages.

e. Settlement

The state only recognizes the establishment of Jewish settlements. No new Arab towns have been established since the proclamation of the state. There are a number of unique problems: dispute over the ownership of Bedouin lands in the Negev; dozens of unrecognized villages; problematic enforcement on the topic of illegal construction.

In the future shared society of Israel the state will establish new Arab towns, will establish new shared towns and will allow shared living for Jews and Arabs in settlements, in accordance with the nature of the settlement and without harming its uniqueness, values and culture. The state will settle the legal status of all the unrecognized villages and will solve in a consensual way the Bedouin land claims and the issue of unauthorized construction.

4. Economic and Cultural Rights

Based on legislation, the right exists to equality in employment and in products, in services and in entry to places of entertainment and public places without difference of race, gender, religion or religious group, nationality, country of origin, outlook, party affiliation or military reserve service. The right to equality in civil and cultural rights is recognized by force of *Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty* and *Basic Law: Freedom of*

Occupation; and their implementation is supervised by the Supreme Court. Despite this today we witness broad discrimination in employment, in services and even in entry to places of entertainment and public places. There is discrimination in implementation of the right to equality, but there is a right to petition to courts.

In the future shared society in Israel the provisions of these laws will be upheld and there will be no discrimination of any kind. The equal right to employment, products, services and entry to public places will be available to all.

a. Employment

There is visible and hidden discrimination in the private and public sectors, in being accepted to work, in salary conditions, in the possibility for advancement, in dismissal and more. The most notable gap is in the employment of Arab women.

In the future shared society in Israel there will be complete equality in the fields of employment including equal opportunity for employment, conditions of hiring and salary conditions. In addition there will be equal access to work places with all issues related to the distribution of industrial and employment zones, means of transportation, and an infrastructure of employment-supporting social services. The state will prioritize shared employment.

b. Economic development

Today, there is a lack of employment, industry, and commercial zones under Arab ownership. Only about 6.25% of the government development budget is invested for the benefit of the Arab society.⁴

In the future shared society in Israel, employment, industry and commercial infrastructures will be developed under Arab ownership and within the borders of the Arab municipalities. The state will advance business initiatives, including in the area of tourism, and development of supportive infrastructures with an emphasis on transportation.

⁴ Carinne Abu Ria, *Share and Needs of the Arab Society in the 2012 State Budget*, Musawa Center 2012

Government development budgets will be equitable and priority will be given to employment areas shared by Jewish and Arab municipal authorities, as well as to shared business initiatives.

c. Public service

Fair representation is a significant and symbolic aspect of full partnership that includes all the citizens of the state. Today, legislation obligates fair representation of Arab citizens of the state in public institutions and in governmental companies.⁵ In actuality, Arabs constitute about 6% of state employees, primarily at lower ranks.⁶ In addition, government offices and their representatives are located almost only in Jewish towns.

In the future shared society in Israel these laws will be implemented diligently, leading to full partnership in public service. Government offices will be located equitably in Arab and Jewish towns and will serve the entire public.

d. Welfare, health and social services

Today, the proportion of Arab citizens living below the poverty line is much higher than their proportion in the population. There is a large need for welfare services for the population of the poor and this need is larger because of the structural inequality and because of the gap in making such services accessible. There are also gaps in access to health services between Arabs and Jews and as a result, gaps in life expectancy, in infant mortality and in general health.

In the future shared society in Israel there will be no difference in services based on the socio-economic status of citizens of the state. Social services will be accessible in a shared and equitable manner. Health services located in Arab settlements will serve all citizens of the state.

⁵ Law Governmental Companies, 5735 (1975), Law of Public Service (Appointments), 5719 (1959).

⁶ Musawa Center 2012, *ibid* note 4.

e. Higher education

Today only about 10% of the students in institutions of higher education are Arabs.⁷ Arab representation is lower among academic faculty and miniscule among administrative staff.

In the future shared society in Israel Arab citizens will be part of the shared academic space in all its components: as students, as academic faculty, as administrative staff, as researchers, members of senates and administrative committees in an equitable manner. The campuses will constitute shared spaces in which students will learn in both languages and the different cultures and narratives will be represented equitably in these spaces, in the calendar and in the curriculum. A university will be established in an Arab settlement that will teach in the Arabic language as its primary language and will be a magnet for students from the entire country, the Middle East and the world.

5. Law enforcement

Today, law enforcement in the state is not equitable. This matter is recognizable on the one hand in under-enforcement of everything having to do with criminal activity in Arab settlements, and on the other hand with over-enforcement of everything having to do with civil and national struggles (for example, dispersing of demonstrations and demolishing of illegal construction). Towards Jews, primarily in incidents with a political national nature, there is under-enforcement. The central enforcement body, the police, is a body with a security role and not only a civil role. The percentage of Arabs serving in the police is low in ratio to their proportion of the population.⁸

In the future shared society in Israel, law enforcement will be equitable. There will be full enforcement of state laws in all the towns in Israel that will guarantee personal and public security. Uniform criteria of law and order will apply with regards to all citizens of the state. The police will be a shared and equal civilian organization that will also act by way of community policing.

⁷ Nouhad Ali, *Representation of Arab Citizens in Higher Education Institutions*, Sikkuy 2013

⁸ Yaniv Ronen, *Crime Statistics in the Arab Society in Israel*, Knesset Research and Information Center, 2010

6. Military/civilian service

Today the Security Service Law requires all citizens of Israel to serve in the Israel Defense Forces but in actuality the Ministry of Defense exempts most of members of minority groups from military service on an individual basis. The possibility is given of civilian service to those who are interested, in a limited scope.

In the future shared society in Israel mandatory military service will be cancelled. Those choosing to serve in the military will receive proper compensation for their service, but they will not receive preferential social benefits. The state will prioritize and incentivize community and social action in order to expand it as much as possible. Education for social service and contribution to the community will begin from a young age and will be an integral part of the school curriculum.

7. Symbolic space and public space

Today, the flag, the symbol and the anthem of the state express that the State of Israel is a “Jewish State” and exclude its Arab citizens from the symbolic space.

In the future shared society of Israel the name of the state, the symbol and the flag will raise a sense of identification in both groups. The national anthem will match the citizenship and culture shared between the two national groups. All sites in the public space will be noted by their correct and original names in Hebrew and in Arabic.

8. Immigration and Naturalization Laws

Today in Israel the immigration and naturalization laws express that Israel is a Jewish state and that it is a shelter for any Jew in distress,⁹ and they make it possible for any Jewish person so wishing to immigrate to Israel and to become a citizen. The laws were intended to realize the objective that was set forth in the declaration of independence: Establishing a state for the Jewish people and ensuring the existence of a national home for the Jewish people. Alongside the protection of Jewish interests there is policy that

⁹ Law of Return, 5710 (1950), Citizenship Law, 5712 (1952), Law of Citizenship and Entry to Israel (Temporary Provisions), 5763 (2003).

harms the rights of the Palestinians to become citizens, whether by force of marriage to Israeli citizens, or through the framework of repatriated refugees.

In the future shared society the issue of Palestinian refugees will be solved by international law and in the framework of a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine.

Israel will be the national home of the Jewish people and of the Palestinian national minority. The laws of immigration and naturalization will allow equal citizenship for Jews and Arabs.

The Law of Return will continue to be the basis of the arrival of Jews to Israel but citizenship laws will also allow the naturalization of Palestinians in Israel. The processes of becoming citizens will be equal for everyone.

9. Historical restorative justice

Today there is no national engagement in historical justice and in the required process of healing.

In the future shared society of Israel mechanisms will be built that will allow for historical justice, restorative justice that recognizes the injustices of the past and corrects them. The historical, moral and political injustices of the displacement and dispossession of the Palestinians will not be corrected by new injustices that will harm the current citizens of the state. There will recognition of the historical roots of both nations sharing the country. The question of the historical roots will not determine the relative right to live in the country.