

TWO PEOPLES AND ONE CIVIL SOCIETY – INDEED?

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Introduction

This article seeks to discuss the question: Could relations of cooperation between civil society organizations comprised of Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel influence chances for reconciliation in the region and, if so, to what extent?

Between the sea and the Jordan river there exists, in effect, a conflict within a conflict: the broad conflict between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people harbors an internal conflict within the state of Israel, between the Palestinian citizens and the state with its Jewish majority. Citizenship in Israel serves as an arena for this conflict. These two conflicts are interconnected, yet it is the internal conflict in Israel which is influenced by the broader conflict and not vice versa. Could reconciliation of the internal conflict in Israel project positively on the reconciliation of the overall conflict? Should civil society be expected to act as a catalyst in this process, and in what way?

We claim that the relationship between Jews and Palestinians within the state of Israel has an indirect influence on the relationship between the state of Israel and the Palestinians, yet it is a long-lasting influence and could nevertheless shape it as a whole. We will also examine the civil society's ability to carry out its role in a situation in which the state isn't neutral towards various groups within its borders. Today, the population of the state of Israel is made up of 81% Jews and 19% Palestinians, and these numbers are not expected to change over the next 20 years. Within its borders, the state of Israel discriminates between its Jewish and Arab citizens, the discrimination itself also serving as a factor of conflict between them. But could the citizens, on their part, avoid entering the pattern of conflict imposed on them by the state?

Since a civil society fashions its worldview and defines its needs independently of the government, we believe, in this context, that a very meaningful and constructive role was meant for the civil society in Israel. The civil society in Israel has the potential of constructing a viable alternative to the existing policy, both between Jews and Palestinians inside Israel, and between Israel and the Palestinian people as a whole.

Nevertheless, past experiences point to a difficulty in realizing this role. The civil society constitutes a broad arena for Jewish and Palestinian activities that promote relations between them that may lead to true equality, yet in reality they do not fulfill this role. Most of the joint Jewish and Palestinian activities are still played out in marginal areas such as youth and children's activities, culture, and society, but are not intended to

¹ Many thanks to Dr. Shani Pais for her helpful and constructive remarks.

change government policy.² In this article we will discuss this question, examine the factors and finally propose a possible way of changing this situation.

The Relationships Between Jews and Palestinians in Israel as an Impetus for the Organizations' Participation in the Peace Process

The reality in Israel is in fact bi-national, as the two most basic elements of the population are the Jews and the Palestinians. The formal fact that both are citizens of the state did not succeed in softening the sting of the built-in, historical conflict between the two groups. On the contrary: citizenship in Israel has become one of the arenas of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict in the region. There is a deep-seated disagreement in this arena, between the (Jewish) state and the Palestinian citizens regarding their lack of access to state resources³ and discriminatory laws⁴. Furthermore, Palestinians in Israel do not see eye to eye with Jewish citizens concerning their inferior social status.

Jews and Palestinians are the two main groups in the country, akin to two tectonic plates resting beneath the surface of Israel's historical and political reality. More than any other conflict or "split", the conflict between them will be the one to determine the future of the state. In this situation, any above ground structure in the state of Israel – social, economic, organizational, political or cultural -- will be affected by the nature of the relations between these two "tectonic plates," and mainly by their movements caused by the friction between them.

It is a common assumption that there also exists a fundamental disagreement between Palestinians and Jews in Israel regarding the definition of the state as Jewish. This disagreement is based on the assumption that the roots of the institutionalized discrimination between Jews and Arabs, as well as the reality of a "lesser citizenship" of Palestinians in Israel, lie in the very definition of the state as "Jewish", serving as the main tool in order to fulfill the aspirations of the Zionist movement. According to this approach, there is no possibility of equal citizenship between Israelis and Palestinians in Israel in the future as long as the state is defined as "Jewish" and its symbols are Jewish. The symbols, and more importantly the definition, express the exclusiveness of the Jews in the context of Israeli citizenship.

On the other hand, there is a claim that the test of Israel's equal treatment towards its Palestinian citizens is essentially practical, and does not stem from the official definitions of the state. According to this approach it is this practical test which steers Palestinian public opinion in Israel. This approach claims that acting consistently to close the gaps between Jews and Palestinians in Israel may bring about a significant turnaround in the Palestinian public's attitude. The following diagram illustrates a monitoring of Palestinian public opinion regarding its willingness to accept the Jewish and Zionist definition of the state. The diagram clearly shows that in 1995 such a turning point took place: an increase of about 100% with those who accept the Jewish-Zionist definition of

² See appendix for list of organizations in 2003

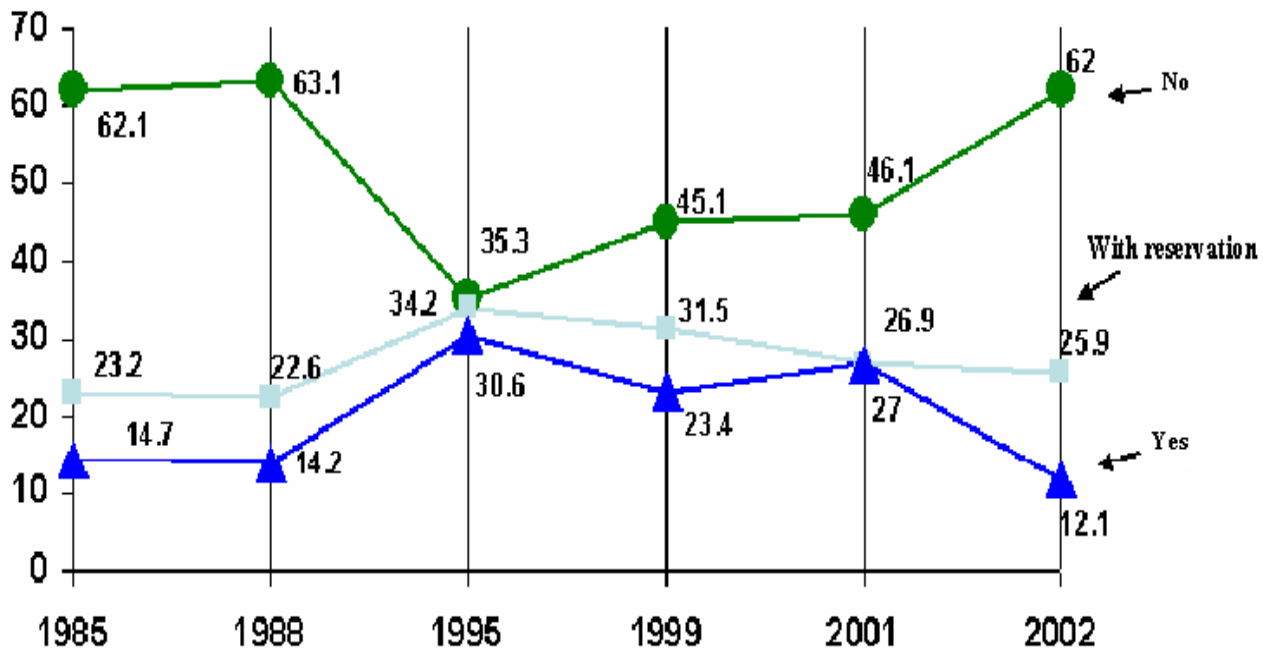
³ See Sikkuy reports

⁴ See Prof. Krechmer

the state. The reasons for this turnaround at the time are varied: 1) Progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace proves projected positively. 2) Prime Minister Rabin used a “safety net” provided by Arab Members of the Knesset to pass the Oslo Accords in the Knesset and ensure support for the agreement. 3) The Rabin administration recognized the discrimination against Palestinian citizens up to that time, and began implementing practical measures to close the gaps, particularly in the area of physical infrastructure.⁵ These three factors, one of which is external and the other two internal, probably caused the Palestinians in Israel to assume that state’s conflict with their people is being settled, while they are also beginning to assert their status as citizens in the state.

Multi-year poll of Arab citizens:

Does Israel have the right to exist as a Jewish-Zionist State?



*Conducted by Prof. Sammy Smooha Haifa University FULL REFERENCE: YEAR
NAME OF PUBLICATION*

The diagram indicates a halt in the government’s policy of development from the mid-90s and on. Despite the changes that occurred in the status of Palestinians in Israel, in their quality of living and in education, as well as in areas of society and culture, their misery

⁵ Sikkuy report, 1992-1996 full reference

did not change over the years. This misery originates mainly from a consensus among the Jewish majority in Israel which views citizenship as exclusive unto itself within a Jewish-Zionist state that was created for, and the purpose of which, is solely for Jews.⁶ Out of this stems in practice the marginal status of Palestinian citizens.

Since its creation, the Palestinian citizens in Israel have been perceived as a security or a demographic threat, which will some day outnumber the Jews. The military rule that governed the Palestinian citizens for the first two decades was replaced by a tight security supervision of the Shin Bet, mainly through the education system. For many years the classical sociological approach to research of Arab Palestinian society in Israel has been dominant. This approach argues that intensive contact with the modern society is the main factor advancing the development of an undeveloped society. The traditional culture and social structure of the undeveloped society is the main factor that delays this development. In other words, the internal characteristics of Arab society in Israel, particularly its traditional nature, are the central variables that explain its marginal place in Israeli society. This approach has been criticized greatly by prominent researchers such as the sociologist Rozenhak,⁷ mainly for its view of Arab Israelis' place in Israel in terms of friction between traditionalism and modernism, and for neglecting to examine the condition of structural subordination of Arabs in Israel in a full and in-depth manner. In other words, numerous mechanisms – from security forces to teachers in state schools – have contributed greatly to preserving the existing balance of powers in which the Jews are the main benefactors of the state and their perception of Palestinians is that of tolerance and benevolence. This, then, is an acceptance that arises not from acknowledging the principle of pluralism, but as a tactic to perpetuate the existing situation.⁸

Under the historical conditions that exist here, and especially under the shadow of the “tectonic relations” between Jews and Palestinians in the state of Israel, it seems that this delicate fabric may be torn by the slightest movement beneath the ground of Israeli

⁶ See poll results on page 7

⁷ Rozenhak, Z. (1995). “New Developments in Sociology of Palestinian Israeli Citizens: An Analytical Overview, **Megamot, L.Z.**, 167-190

⁸ Peled, Y. (1995). “Strangers in Utopia: The Social Status of the Palestinians in Israel, **Theory and Critique**, 3, 21-35

reality.⁹ And yet so immense is the Jews' difficulty to deal with the issue that they would prefer to leave the inequities intact – as well as the resulting friction to which they are subjected as a result – if only so as not to engage in a fundamental change in their relationship. It seems that there is a great apprehension among Jews of altering the form of the relations, because, in their view, it may cost them their favoured right in Israel. Moreover, Jews fear very much a loss in principle as a result of a just distribution of the state resources with the Palestinian citizens. This loss is not simply a material one but a surrender of the very advantage, which is perceived as the essence of the Jewish existence is Israel as the sole Jewish state in the world.

This has to do not only with Jews as a whole, but also with most of those who labour to bring Jews and Arabs closer. Of all organizations who deal with Jewish-Arab relations, only 4% work to truly change the reality. The rest work to alleviate the intake of the existing reality. The dominance of Jews in these organizations is no secret, which helps understand why only 4% strive for a true change. Below are some of the findings of the Israeli Institute for Democracy from 2003:

- 53% of the Jews in Israel oppose equal rights between Jewish and Arab citizens;
- 57% of the Jews in Israel support governmental encouragement of Arab emigration from Israel;
- 69% of the Jews in Israel oppose Arab participation in governmental coalitions;
- 77% of the Jews in Israel think that there must be a “Jewish majority” for crucial State decisions.

The Palestinians in Israel do not share in feeling an ownership over the state, and on the other hand are not an actual part of the Palestinian struggle. Since they lack status and genuine power in the Israeli public sphere, they have no influence on the agenda in this context. They are perceived by the Jewish public as a “fifth column” (*gais hamishi*). Furthermore, if they took part in the Oslo process, it was only as a parliamentary safety net, i.e. a passive role at best. In addition, the Jews do not consider them a real part of the

⁹ Sikkuy report, 1999-2000

Palestinian struggle, which is characterized by being multi-dimensional – political and military – none of which the Palestinian citizens of Israel are part of. Their partnership in the struggle is reflected only in the civilian aspect: aid shipments of money, food, and medicine, and the holding of demonstrations in support of their brothers across the Green Line.¹⁰

The Oslo process constituted a watershed for Palestinians in Israel. They were not included by either side, Israeli or Palestinian, accentuating their marginality and namely their sense of isolation. These sentiments brought about a renewed process of examining their collective identity. In the winter of 1993-94, the Supreme Monitoring Committee held a series of public seminars aimed at redefining their identity and needs of the Palestinians in Israel. By doing so, the Palestinian leadership in Israel began a decade of Palestinian institutional recuperation.

And yet this recuperation is not necessarily steered by the Monitoring Committee. The new wave in which national identity was consolidated, the “proud generation,” strengthened the abilities of the Palestinians in Israel to organize.¹¹ They fill the ranks of associations for self-help, advocacy, and the struggle for equality within Israel. At the center of this process is the establishment of dozens of new associations and the sharpening of internal historical discussion within this society. With the assistance of those from their parents’ generation who have not been worn down trying to assimilate into the state, the activists in these associations steer the internal discourse towards empowerment and a shift in discourse with Jews. In other words, it is a powerful positioning of the self that does not accept the reality of unequal but rather strives for equality in all senses – the civilian vs. the state, and the personal-collective in the discourse with Jews.¹²

¹⁰ Add reference of Asad and Sara

¹¹ Dani Rabinovitz and Haula Abu Bakar, *Hador Hazakuf*, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem 2002.

¹² Shany Payes, *Palestinian NGOs in Israel: The Politics of Civil Society* (London: IB Tauris, Forthcoming).

Compared to this approach, some researchers attribute only little stability to this development. Reches¹³ holds that since 1993 parallel processes have begun, both of ripening social and economic changes among the Palestinian population in Israel, and of the beginning of a reconciliation process between Israel and the Arab world. Reches calls the relations “shifting sands,” meaning a fluid and shifting condition resulting from the influence of internal and external factors. According to this approach, movements in Palestinian society are reactions to the government’s actions and do not necessarily develop from internal processes.

The October 2000 events marked another milestone in the relations between the two populations, and greatly impacted the awareness of Palestinian citizens regarding majority-minority relations and Israel’s treatment of the Palestinian minority.¹⁴ According to Ganem,¹⁵ “the discomfort of the Palestinian citizens as citizens in the state was expressed in the massive confrontations of thousands of them with security forces after the killing of the Palestinian in Umm El-Fahem. When the issue is the rights of the Arabs in Israel, the Jewish political leadership stands as one in order to explain and justify the government policy, and refrains from protecting the Arab minority in Israel.” In opposition to this view, the researcher Noiberger¹⁶ claims that characterizing the Israeli-Jewish society as one standing against the Arab minority is erroneous. He believes the Israeli-Jewish society is a society polarized between the religious-hawkish “national camp” and the secular-dovish “peace camp”. Each of these camps has a different approach towards the Arab minority. Thus, when the relations between the Arab minority and the Israeli-Jewish are analyzed, one has to take into account the diversity of each Israeli-Jewish camp.

We assume that the growing trend of open and authentic dialogue that takes place both in the academy and within civil society that acknowledges the conflict and relies on each

¹³ Eli Reches.....

¹⁴ Soltoni, Nadim. (2002). Citizens Without Citizenships. First Mada Annual Political Supervising Report: Israel and the Palestinian Minority 2000-2002.

¹⁵ Ganem, Asad. (2000). Position paper presented to “The Investigation Committee of the Clashes Between Security Forces and Israeli Civilians.”

¹⁶ Noiberger, B. (1998). The Arab Voice: Between Integration and De-legitimacy. In: Reches, A. (Editor): **Arabs in Israeli Politics: Dilemmas of Identity**. Pp 31-39

side's ties to its own identity and interests could build more fruitful relations between the Jewish and Palestinian organizations, as well as the cooperative organizations. The fruitfulness of these relations will be tested on the ability of these organizations to influence their environment in civil society, and to influence the policies of the government.

Different Organizations in Israeli Civil Society

The civil society organizations in Israel take only a minuscule part in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, while the political frameworks play a very active role in sharpening the conflict between Jews and Palestinians both in Israel and in the Occupied Territories. What, then, is the civil society's place in all of this? Does it reflect the existing trends – or could it serve as a field for processing an alternative to the existing relations?

There is a clear distinction in Israel between organizations which look inward to the structure and quality of citizenship in Israel and those who view overall Israeli-Palestinian relations as the focus of reference. Before briefly surveying the types of organizations, we will outline the structural relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel, which influence possible partnerships.

Genuine joint action in the civil society arena in Israel is supposed to reflect the interests and agendas of both sides, assuming the over 100 year-old conflict is built into them. One can expect the organizations' agenda to be consolidated together and to reflect both sides' perception of reality, while authentically representing the "magnetic field" which they come from even in the territory of joint action. Because of the relatively democratic tolerant atmosphere in Israel one would expect the growth of many such partnerships that would reflect that a partnership between Jews and Arabs is possible, and is not beyond the realm of options in the Middle East. Yet this is not the case in reality, and we must examine why:

To the Palestinians, civil society in Israel is an alternate framework to the lacking state services (see the following “The Palestinian Society in Israel”), as well as a framework for the struggle against the state for equality. To Jews, on the other hand, the state has already taken upon itself the national task, leaving them supposedly “free” to engage in partnerships with Palestinians. Yet this is not the case, since there are so many barriers, chief among them is the commitment of Jews to the state and the Zionist project in its traditional sense, i.e. the establishment of Jewish hegemony in the country by way of a (Jewish) state. Most civilian co-operations with Palestinians are subordinate to this mission in the same way.¹⁷

There are many Jewish organizations that employ Arabs, and a number of Palestinian organizations that employ Jews, yet few are the organizations truly joint to Jews and Palestinians in Israel and even fewer are organizations that share ownership, meaning a joint Jewish-Palestinian executive board. As a result of equal distribution of power in an organization, these types of organizations must form an agenda shared between Jews and Palestinians. This is no easy feat, since each side brings its own solid, particular identity, and does not compromise this area simply for the sake of partnership. On the contrary: in genuine joint organizations points of disagreement arise constantly.

The *raison d’etre* for these organizations is the very fact of partnership between two sides engaged in a conflict, and is based on politics of identity. The main objective of these organizations is to use their partnership as leverage to affect government policy and the face of society. Joint organizations, such as the Jewish-Arab Center for Economic Development, The Sikkuy Foundation, Neve Shalom, Osim Shalom and others may engage in a project with Palestinians in the Territories, yet their main focus of attention is changing the internal Israeli reality towards equality among citizens. These are civil-rights organizations which base their actions and demands on change regarding citizenship in Israel.

¹⁷ Research by Yifat Maoz; Halabi

In contrast, the organizations that actively involve themselves in non-civilian issues between Israel and the Palestinians are not under joint sponsorship. These include: The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Adalah, B'Tselem, Doctors for Human Rights, AHR and others. These organizations have taken on themselves a universal agenda of human rights, and in such an agenda the identity of the activist is supposedly irrelevant, since by the universal nature of their actions such activists see themselves outside the confines of identity politics.

Taayosh, however, is an exception. Being a genuine joint organization, it recognizes identity as a fundamental element of political action, yet its agenda is broader, and deals with both areas – citizenship in Israel and peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Therefore Taayosh is not constrained as a civil rights organization or as a human rights organization. It is a non-parliamentary political movement with an agenda even broader than Gush Shalom and Peace Now, which focus on promoting peace between Israel and the Palestinians as a whole.

Other organizations that are involved with the relations between the state of Israel and the Palestinians (IPCRI, ECF, the Peres Center for Peace and others) do not consider civil society in Israel their main objective but work mostly with TRACK-2 diplomacy and accelerating the processes between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This is why it is difficult to associate them with the actions of the civil society in Israel. Two exceptions in this context are the Geneva Initiative and the Ayalon-Nusseibeh Initiative, which recognize the public as an important target for change, yet since these are partnerships between Jews from Israel and Palestinians who are not civilians, we will not include them in our discussion.

Let us go back now and examine more closely the processes Jews and Palestinians are undergoing in Israel, in order to further understand the potential of the joint Israeli-Palestinian civil society organizations' involvement in the overall peace process.

The Strategic Discourse Arena: From The General's Tables of Sand To Public Discussion

In recent years a culture of broad public conferences has taken root in Israel. The two main forces in the conference discourses beginning in 2000 are the security-strategic discourse (The National Strength Measure, The Herzliya Conference) and the economic discourse (The Caesaria Conference). In the past year an attempt was made, at the Sderot Conference in the Negev, to raise social discourse to this level of influence. Below, in the following two items, we shall expand somewhat on discourse in Israel in the last decade in order to examine the possibility of creating a new discourse – the civilian discourse.

Israeli society's sense of national strength is considered a strategic asset of the first degree, part of Israeli steadfastness in the face of an external threat. The widespread agreement among Israeli society regarding the existence of an external threat began breaking down during the Lebanon War, while the society's response to the first Gulf War in 1991 expressed its limited tolerance for withstanding a rear-guard war: about half of the residents of Tel Aviv left the city and tens of thousands traveled abroad for a limited period.

The Palestinian society in Israel was deeply affected by the late-80s Intifada. In December of 1997 the "day of peace" was held in sympathy with the Palestinians on strike in the Territories, followed by shipment of food and medicine from Palestinians in Israel to the Territories. And yet the Intifada underlined the disparity between Palestinians on either side of the Green Line, or, as the Arab saying goes, "he who counts the whip lashes does not feel like the one taking them." The fact is that the '90s witnessed an expansion of Palestinian civil society in Israel, a development that also expressed an accommodation to the existing political framework. In 1995, 67% of Palestinian citizens of Israel believed that their situation has improved during the Rabin government (since 1992), about 30% believed their situation has not changed, and only

3% thought their condition has worsened.¹⁸ Was this despite the uprising in the Territories, or was it aided by it? Whatever the answer, it was separate from it.

If the Lebanon War split the Israeli consensus regarding the external threat, the first Intifada, including the Gulf War, shifted the Israelis' conflict with their surroundings to the psycho-social arena. In this sense, in the past decade the arena of a strategic discourse on the conflict with the Palestinians has shifted from the generals' tables of sand to the public discourse of television studios, radios or onto the personal plain in psychologists' mental treatment rooms. This discourse is fed by expert opinions, yet mostly relies on public opinion polls. For example, in his twenty months in office in 1999-2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak ordered over one hundred public opinion polls, while dozens of other polls were presented to him that were not ordered but were funded by others seeking to influence his actions. This also applied to his predecessor Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The first prime minister to use polls to steer his way, however, was Yitzhak Rabin.¹⁹ Rabin realized that the fifth decade of the state's existence was witnessing a shift from the naturally strategic-tactical discourse of the military to the naturally strategic-historical social discourse. He therefore did not limit consultations to security experts but consulted, in effect, with the public itself.

Israeli leaders' use of public opinion polls in the last decade points first and foremost to the importance, and indeed the decisive influence of public discourse in Israel has on the actions of the government. A brief look at the recent decades shows that the most important turning points in Israel's history took place as a result of deep streams of the public's consciousness: 1) The protest movements after Yom Kippur War led to a historic turnabout in the state's leadership from the Labor Party to the right-wing parties in 1977; 2) the settlement movement, which is the practical manifestation of the religious-national stream, has set the historical direction of the state from the mid '70s up until today; 3) the change in the election system in the early '90s was a result of a struggle led by civil society organization; 4) the withdrawal from Lebanon in 1999 came

¹⁸ Prof. Sami Smooha, Equality and Assimilation (Sikkuy Report), 1992-1996

¹⁹ Raviv Druker, Harakiri, pp. 75-77

as a result of public pressure; 5) the construction of the separation wall in 2003; and 6) the Likud party's decision not to withdraw from Gaza in May 2004, which was achieved after a massive ad campaign launched by the settlers, a small minority in Israeli society. Political culture in Israel is particularly based on public debate, the strength of which is attested by the usage of polls by prime ministers in the last decade.

In light of structural changes in the Jewish society, as well as the shift from a military to a social discourse, one must ask why, among the Jews, is there not a growing recognition of the necessity of including the Palestinian citizens in the state and establishing healthy relations with them? It seems that each example of substantial debates that had created historical reversals in Israel were somehow tied to a solid foundation in the Jewish-Zionist, or Israeli, consciousness and ethos: whether the settling of the land of Israel or the sanctity of lives of the boys being sent to battle. And yet it remains difficult to point to deep conscientious foundations in the Jewish-Zionist ethos that can serve as a cornerstone for the consolidation of a civilian discourse. Some exceptions include remarks and writings of Herzl, remarks by first President Haim Weizman and the obscure mention of civil equality in the Declaration of Independence. Support for civil equality can also be found in the Jewish sources, yet in recent decades these serve the aggressive ethos of Zionism more than any humanistic ethos.

In Israel's formative years no civilian discourse was created, nor was any organized philosophy to which one could turn today in attempting to consolidate the state's civil character. One philosophy set down by a significant ideological stream was that of the *Shomer Hatzair*, a settlement movement that spoke and wrote in the '20s, '30s and '40s about a brotherhood of peoples based on socialism. Yet in practice the movement proved to be quite the opposite, aligning itself with Zionist mainstream which ignored the possibility of a shared and equal life with the Palestinians based on joint citizenship.

To conclude this chapter, it should be noted that since 1990 the Israeli leadership has undergone a process of softening in relation to the conflict with the Palestinians, while the Jewish people in Israel are involved in a deep disagreement between those who want

to see an end of the conflict and reconciliation and those who would continue the blood shedding conflict for generations to come. As pointed out before, the leadership, on its part, is ready for strong pressure by civil society to change the existing state, and it seems that now is the time to develop and strengthen that stream of consciousness in the Jewish public, which will make it necessary to rebuild relations with the Palestinian both in the context of citizenship in Israel and with the Palestinian people as a whole. Indeed, this is a pioneer mission, and the civil society must erect this approach from the foundation.

During the mid-90s the Jewish society met about a million new citizens brought to the country as Jewish immigrants (data points out that about 40% of these immigrants are not Jewish at all), either to resolve the demographic struggle in the face of the Palestinian minority's growth, or came as immigrants seeking mainly to improve their quality of life. The impact of this joining was historical, and gave momentum to the social change that had already begun a decade before. Apart from the rapid growth in population by about 20%, this step fit together well with the breakdown of the recruited society and its development towards a "normal" society.

The process of the Jewish society becoming a citizen-oriented society has been expeditious in Israel over the past decade, characterized by two poles. On one hand, the atomization of Israeli society in an era of globalization. This process created during that decade a new reality in Israel, characterized by an economic boom, the widened political horizon of the mid-'90s, Russian immigration, the kibbutz crisis, the strong influence of Western digital culture and more. Socially speaking, a local Generation X had been created here, a generation that sees its life's purpose as a personal fulfillment of intellectual ability, and mainly its ability to generate money as fast as possible. This personal-professional ambitiousness does not owe any collective commitment. During those years a political and civil culture began consolidating, one of interest groups looking out for themselves, while the recruited Jewish collective breaks down.

The new era in the region allowed the growth of a developed civil society in Israel, which is characterized by to main, if not opposing, types: 1) A civil society that expands

services not provided by the state to the citizen; 2) A civil society which defines its own needs independently from the government, and can call on the government to fulfill its duty towards its citizens. On the parliamentary plain, sectoral interest parties such as Shas, the immigrant parties, Shinui, and Palestinian citizens' parties developed rapidly in contrast to the traditional elite interest parties (Labor-Meretz, which were the historical extensions of the settlement movements). In civil society, this trend was characterized in the establishment of strong and demanding environmental organizations, organizations for the physically challenged, and more.

Despite the claim that a civil society is developing in Israel, the crucial test will be its ability to include all of its citizens with no regard to nationality, even if the state fails to do so. Passing this test is still a long way away, because civil discourse over a joint life with the Palestinians has not consolidated yet, nor, of course, has any action towards such an existence.

Yael Yishai has argued that the mainstream attitude of the state towards Jewish civil society has been characterised since the 1980s by 'passive exclusion', an attitude of 'live and let live'.¹ According to Shany Payes, such benign attitudes do not apply towards Palestinian NGOs in Israel, which operate under continual pressure from the state authorities wielding everything from threats of job losses to investigation by the police.²⁰

Palestinian Civil Society in Israel

The reaction of the Palestinian civil society in Israel to the Oslo Accords gave birth to a marked process already undergone by the Palestinian minority in Israel, one of consolidating a sense of a unique collective, and a repositioning of the relations with the state, i.e. challenging the relations of control *vis-a-vis* the Jews.

Data shows that Arab civil society organizations make up about 4.5% of all civil society organizations in Israel. This percentage is significantly smaller than their population

²⁰ Payes (forthcoming)

ratio in Israel (19%). Moreover, the number of Arab organizations supported by government offices is miniscule. Only a small fraction, numbering 43 Arab organizations, qualifies as a public institution in order to receive donations. In comparison, 3800 Jewish organizations qualify to do so. In recent years there has been an accelerated increase in Third Sector organization among Palestinian population in Israel.

The autonomous growth of the Third Sector in Arab society is linked to an attitude towards the Arab population, citizens of Israel, as an unwanted, hostile element. This attitude is reflected in the government's priorities, and creates hardships that remain absent from the overall Israeli public's agenda. The accelerated growth of the third sector can be explained by a number of specific reasons:

1. The Third Sector's lack of commitment to services in Arab society, and/or the incongruity of services by Jewish organizations to the unique culture of the Arab-Palestinian population.
2. The Palestinian population's lack of accessibility to government offices.
3. An under-representation of Arab social capital, specifically among the intellectuals, in institutionalized areas of the state.

Palestinian Members of Knesset may be able to deliver the piece of the pie of the state's resources that their voters deserve, gaining access to resources and budgets through the different Knesset committees. The Israeli Knesset serves as an "open market" for deals between parties and Members, who endeavour on behalf of their voters. Each party looks after its voters by cutting deals with another party, even when it is outside the coalition government. It is able to do because all sides are aware that during the next term it may be part of the coalition government and thus will be able to return the favour to another party that is now part of the government and may not be in the next term. Herein lies the problem: Palestinian Members of the Knesset are unable to return any favours during future terms, because they are never a part of the coalition government. Aside for minute parliamentary manipulations, they lack any real power in the Knesset, and if they wield any power it is limited to giving speeches at the general assembly. This is why

parliamentary action has ceased to be held in high regard, while the Palestinian population in Israel no longer expects it to instigate a genuine change.

In contrast to the devaluation of parliamentary action which has proved itself ineffective, the importance of civil society organizations has only increased. While Jewish civil society organizations complement government actions and work closely with it, identifying with the Zionist “general goal,” Palestinian civil society organizations stand against the government. Even when achieving what the government has failed to accomplish (the Galilee Association, for example, has built clinics for mothers and children), they do it not through coordination and cooperation, but for lack of choice and as a protest meant to encourage the government to do its job. This, then, constitutes an alternative to the actions of the state rather than a coordinated, complimentary act.

The aforementioned autonomous growth, then, turns out to provide a true window for setting projects in motion and matching services to the needs and the culture of Palestinian society in Israel. Palestinian civil society organizations such as the Galilee Association (in the field of public health); The Association for Student Guidance, Women Against Violence (who run a shelter for women in distress); and especially the Islamic Movement, which has created a wide network of social services particularly for children, are all a hybrid array of welfare, education, and health services for the Arab population. The exclusion of this population has, over the years, led to the development of autonomous welfare services that not only aid the state in providing services, but also provide employment to a wide stratum of academics. These organizations often complement or substitute for the state not because of liberal ideology, but solely as a constraint.

Compared with organizations that provide services, there are a small number of advocacy organizations in Palestinian society. These organizations are universal in that while they do not cater to the Jews in the country, they provide for the entire Arab population. This is evident by the frequent use of the word “Arab” in titles of organizations in the Arab sector. Women’s organizations that advocate feminist ideas are an exception. Most

Jewish organizations disregard the Arab population, while only a small number of advocacy organizations, such as the Association for Civil Rights, are equally committed to both populations.

Jewish-Palestinian Relations in Israel and Their Affect on the Development of Civil Society

We will attempt to describe the existing state of relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel, draw possible directions for future developments, while focusing the discussion on two main issues: problems in Jewish-Palestinian relations, and the ramifications of these relations in the context of the development of civil society in Israel.

A society in conflict is in fact a sectoral society which clearly defines who is in and who is out, who belongs to one camp and does not, i.e. it employs rules of inclusion and exclusion.

Some claim that the relations between the two populations in Israel are headed for an inevitable collision²¹ while others argue that both groups use a strategy of mutual accommodation.²² Either way, in order to take a step towards a civil society common to both Jewish and Palestinian citizens, there is no doubt about the need for an honest and prolonged dialogue between the two publics. Furthermore, the existing limitations that delay the integration of Palestinian citizens in Israeli society must be examined in order to be removed.

The conflict between the two communities within the Green Line is mainly mostly non-violent and ongoing. The national struggle between the national Palestinian movement and the national Zionist movement also influences greatly the status of the Palestinian minority in Israel in the last decades. In many senses, the Arab minority's claims and its

²¹ Janem, Asad. (1997). The Palestinians in Israel as Part of the Problem and not of the Solution: Their Status in Times of Peace. *State, Government, and International Relations*, No. 41-42, 123-154.

²² Smooha, S. (1997). Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Prototype. In: P. Genosar and A. Barnea (editors): *Zionism: A Contemporary Debate*, (pp. 277-311) Beer Sheva: The Center for the Heritage of Ben Gurion.

status were never of a high priority in Israeli public policy. Nevertheless, from the creation of the country up until today there have been many changes in the relations between the Jewish and Arab citizens resulting from political changes both at the local level and at the regional level.

One central change is the elimination of military rule in 1966, yet its ramification came into full effect ten years later – particularly on the first “earth day” in March, 1976, when 6 protesting civilians were killed by security forces – and in the consequences of that episode.²³ The 1970s were a time when economic changes in Israeli society began taking root, namely democratization, the strengthening of Israeli media, different globalization processes, privatization and economic growth, the strengthening of human rights values, and a growing awareness among the Arab population of its use of both political and legal mechanisms.

In Israeli academic circles there is a widespread theoretical attitude towards the friction that exists between nationalism and nationality in the state of Israel, and in that context towards the Jewish-Palestinian conflict within the state. This view claims that the essence and definition of the state as Jewish creates those structural blocks that prevent equal citizenship. Without tackling them, talk of taming the conflict is useless. On the other hand, others will argue that within the civil practice of struggles which touch the daily life of people enough to answer their expectations and aspirations and to sustain a situation of relations that can be lived with for many generations. The difference between these two approaches is the difference between a revolution and a process of slow change,

Yet between the option of a revolution and the option of change there lies a widely practiced option in Israeli civil society and that is the broad and widespread action taken by civil society to preserve Jewish control in Israel in “pleasant ways” as discussed below in the examination of “the coexistence culture.”

²³ Earth Day came about following the massive expropriation of private lands belonging to Arab citizens in the Galilee, in order to build Jewish settlements on them.

The “Coexistence”: Some Characteristics of the Relations Between Jews and Palestinians In Israel: A Dialogue Between The Strong And The Weak, The Ruler And The Ruled

Since the creation of the state, dialogue between Jews and Palestinians in Israel has taken place informally in different frameworks – at work places, at the university, in trade and business, in the media, and more. One of its central characteristics is the unbalanced relations of ruler and ruled, corresponding to Jews being on the controlling side of the state. These relations were underlined first by the military rule, then by the security forces, the educational system and other elements of the state, which were perceived by the Palestinians more as mechanisms of control than service-providing systems. Thus, the relations between those meeting up on the street, in the hospital, or in the business place have been shaped according to the relations fixed by the state from its inception. Throughout the years a pattern of controlled behaviour was created among Palestinians, which was construed by Jews as a “coexistent” behaviour. This situation was cultivated by the state and supported by the Jewish public.

The Dialogue and Its Results

During the ‘80s, different plans for a structured, literal dialogue were developed. These began to rise to the surface Palestinian discontent with the situation, as well as the very fact that this situation had been imposed on them. These initiatives remained quite marginal to the general public, both Jewish and Arab, and were attended by a few dozen youths who aided in facilitating larger circles of mostly high school students. It is not unlikely that tens of thousands of students participated in different dialogue workshops over the years. Yet still, this dialogue remained marginal in the Arab public’s experience. Though the different dialogue initiatives may have eased the hostility and resentment that had accumulated in the wake of the imposed “coexistence”, they failed to bring about a genuine change. Therefore, one should add, they also created a sense of disappointment that may have aggravated hostility.²⁴

²⁴ Haviva Bar and David Bergel. “Living with the Conflict”. Pp 238-241

For the Jewish participants this meant an effort to have the Palestinians accept the Jewish presence in the country. The frameworks were Jewish, as were naturally were the initiatives and the planning. During most meetings the power relations echoed those outside this framework of dialogue: from researchers' analyses we learn of the majority's dominance vs. the minority's passiveness.²⁵ These were not, then, arenas where the situation of control was tackled, but rather where it was perpetuated. Research recommendations from the 80s have not been implemented in a way that would allow an essential intervention. Research from a decade later points only to a very small change in educational patterns of action, which remains more rhetorical than practical.²⁶ Those Palestinians who had taken upon themselves the dialogue with Jews and who were expected to deliver results usually came back to their public with words only. In the eyes of the "proud generation," this generation who tried to communicate with the Jews and assimilate is regarded as the "eroded generation."²⁷

During the 90s, the majority of communication frameworks served only to preserve the existing reality through ongoing talks, while only a small brave part worked to create a partnership through a genuine dialogue. Generally speaking, while Jews acquired friends on the a personal level, and gained sympathy for their Palestinian friends on the political level,²⁸ they did not – save few – engage in a dialogue intended to bring about an open, civil struggle for the equal distribution of state resources. On the contrary – the Jews continued to benefit from the relatively large portion of the pie without objection. The Palestinian share, as mentioned above, remained the ongoing and accumulating disappointment. Furthermore, most efforts during the 80s and 90s were made by children rather than adults, who are the ones with the power to go forward towards a true change.

The historical creation of a "delicate fabric" of relations had been minimalist and unmotivated. It was dealt more with appearances and a disregard for the past than with a

²⁵ Name, pp242-247

²⁶ Yifat Maoz; Halabi

²⁷ Dani Rabinovitz and Haula Abu Bakar, Hador Hazakuf, pp 39-46

²⁸ Bar and Bergel, pp. 214

balanced construction of collective post-conflict relations. These relations were built in the shadow of the crushing Jewish victory in 1948, and perpetuated the essence of this victory: Jewish control over the relations.

The aforementioned activity plays a significantly large part in the range of activities in Israel's civil society, which is particularly evident in the most recent mapping of Jewish-Arab activity conducted in 2003. Indeed, the array of activities aimed at preserving the current situation is very developed, and in this context we will try to examine what confronts those who continue to strive to change the situation in the sphere of civil society.

Civil Society as a Framework for the Struggle for Equality Among Citizens

Civil society organizations are engaged mainly in a struggle based on shaping an ideological worldview of the character of the state. As opposed to representatives in parliament and political parties, civil society organizations are not bound to definitive political solutions. Therefore, their commitments and real abilities to obtain those solutions are very limited and are derived from their degree of pressure and indirect influence on those in official office in parliament and in the government.

In Israel, the ideological challenge against the state is channelled by means of political parties through the institutionalized political system. In this arena almost any stance regarding the future of the political framework is legitimate, yet in 2001 the central election committee disqualified the candidacies of Ahmad Tibi and Azmi Bshara to the Knesset, as well as the Balad party, because the committee did not accept their positions regarding future political settlements. The Supreme Court overturned the committee's decision a few weeks later. Civil society organizations, however, usually refrain from voicing a clear political stance, and therefore involve themselves mainly in social justice issues.²⁹ And yet it is exactly those questions dealing with equality between the Jewish

²⁹ Yael Yishai, *Between Recruiting and Reconciling Civil Society in Israel*. Carmel, Jerusalem 2003. pp 105-7

majority and the Arab minority that in Israel are located on the fine line between purely social issues that do not challenge the political structure and total shake-up of the state's structure.

In Israel's Declaration of Independence there is an unequivocal declaration regarding full equality among citizens³⁰, yet the definition of the state itself is that of "Jewish." One could assume that a contradiction between these two declarations is innate, and indeed the first fifty-six years of the state's existence do show there is still no full equality between the Jewish and the Palestinian citizens. However, almost half a million citizens who are not Jews according to Jewish Law who have emigrated from the former Soviet Union have been granted citizenship by the Law of Return. Israel's Jewish identity does not get in the way of receiving such a large number of non-Jews, since it grants civil rights and even immigrant assistance to many non-Jews. Ian Lustig claims that for this reason Israel is not a "Jewish state" but rather a "non-Arab state,"³¹ although in reality these non-Jews have joined in the Jewish collective in Israel.

The social structure in Israel is in reality bi-national (bi-ethnic), Jewish and Palestinian, and the atmosphere in which this shared citizenship exists is that of fundamental disagreement as to the state's own identity. Over the past fifty-six years the Palestinian minority in Israel has suffered sweeping institutionalized discrimination in all areas of life, this having to do with the fact that the state's main project since its inception has been the creation of a political framework for the Zionist movement and for the Jewish people, its main resources intended for its Jewish citizens.

As mentioned in the context of Jewish public discourse, central to the ability of civil society elements to generate change is its ability to influence Jewish public opinion. We are currently in the phase of searching for those bases of activity in order to activate Jewish activists as catalysts for the mobilization of the entire Jewish public.

³⁰ Shulamit Aloni, *A Citizen and his State*, Maarachot, 1985 pp58

³¹ Ian Lustig, *Israel as a non-Arab State*

According to Israeli law full equality between Jewish and Palestinian citizens can be implemented, yet the policies of all Israeli governments have been sweepingly discriminatory. Only in September 2003, with the publications of the Or Committee report, this discrimination was officially recognized and its amendment was placed at top of the government's agenda by the committee.³² And yet, despite the moral, constitutional, and political legitimacy, the promotion of full equality between the Jews and Palestinians in Israel is often still perceived as a challenge of the state's definition, perhaps for lack of consensus among the Jewish public. As of 2003 there is a majority of Jews (53%) in Israel who objects to an equality of rights with the Palestinian citizens.³³

A central reason for Jews' hesitation to engage in a genuine struggle for equality with Israel-Palestinian citizens lies in a basic feeling of identification. Jews active in the realm of civil and human rights do so out of a broad human and political perspective, and though they belong to the Jewish collective they nevertheless see themselves as part of other "magnetic fields" of identity, such as humanistic and universal values. Some of the Jewish activists even express a discomfort at belonging to the Jewish collective in Israel, at times developing over the years a certain degree of alienation towards the Jewish collective.

During the continuous contact with Palestinian some of them find the allegations against the Jewish collective so hard to bear, that they detach themselves and become non-Zionists. This detachment from the "bad guys" in the story allows them to live closer to Palestinians and to their consciousness. In this sense they feel not as part of the problem, but as part of the solution. On the other hand, those among the activists who acknowledge their belonging to the Jewish collective, i.e. the group benefiting from the Jewish definition of the state, versus those who simply believe that Jews have a right to a national homeland in the Land of Israel – that is, who define themselves as Zionists – accept living in constant disharmony.

³² Or Committee report

³³ Survey by the Israeli Institute for Democracy, 2003

One of the basic qualities of a civil society is its ability to separate itself from the state and identify and promote civil interests divorced from or even contrary to government interests. In other words, to act as an opposition to the government. It seems that on the Jewish side there is still no adequate distinction between the state and the civil organizations. On their part, there is an absolute personal identification between Jewish Israelis and the state, and the organizations in which they work do not intend to make up for what the state has not managed or is unable to achieve; rather, they generally continue along the same lines and in the same direction – for the sake of Israel’s future and its strengthening.

Recent public opinion polls show that one of the greatest fears among Jews is that if a full equality with Palestinians is implemented, they will lose their exclusiveness in the state.³⁴ Thus, although in Israel “legitimate” challenges to the state’s structure are those that are channelled through the parliamentary system, the struggle for equality in the framework of civil society is often considered a challenge to the state structure itself, perhaps even to the state’s very existence.

The question we pose to conclude this chapter is how can those Jews who are strongly connected to their collective be recruited to a civil struggle in favour of equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel? It seems that the recruitment of merely those Jews who see this as an authentic Jewish interest, may turn the tables in the Jewish public in Israel (and outside) for the sake of an ordinary citizenship in Israel.

The Reciprocal Influence of Jewish-Palestinian Partnership in Israel and the Peace Process

Until now it seemed that partnerships between Jews and Palestinians in Israel did not exert a critical influence on the resolution of the overall conflict. However, we can use the ‘90s as a time frame to examine the possible influence resolution of the overall

³⁴ The main argument for the discrimination of Palestinian citizens stems from the Jewish definition of the state.

conflict between Israel and the Palestinians had on the shared civil society in Israel. It should be asked: Did the beginning of the process towards a solution in the mid-'90s, or at least the feeling it brought, aid in building relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel?

It seems that this period of crystallization of the particular Palestinian identity in Israel, and perhaps the Oslo process as well, acted as catalysts to the unique self determination of the Palestinian citizens in Israel. At a Nazareth convention in January 1994, Prof. Majeed Alhalaj protested against the disregard of Palestinian Israelis in the Oslo Accords and claimed that “if we are not part of the solution – we will remain a part of the problem”. As mentioned before, in 1993-4 the Supreme Monitoring Committee began an internal examination process which led to the establishment of various committees. Dozens of advocacy and self-help organizations emerged, and by 2001 the Palestinian civil society had managed to win effective international exposure for its agenda at the Durban Convention in South Africa. One of the most invested moves in building the self image of the Palestinian collective in Israel was its placement within the Arab world. Activists for Arab organizations such as Itajaa attended international forums in Arab countries not only as representatives of the Palestinian society in Israel but of those in Lebanon and Jordan as well. In April 2004 the Arab League discussed the issue of “the Arabs of '48.” Some representatives of civil organization (primarily Itajaa) participated, yet the head of the Supreme Monitoring Committee declined the invitation, claiming this was not the arena to promote the interests of Palestinian in Israel – it is the domestic arena that is the proper forum. Nevertheless, elements of civil society organization from Israel continue to operate in the international scene. From a group forgotten by the Arab world after 1948, only to be subsequently condemned by it, the Palestinian citizens of Israel may yet become a forceful element in the inter-Arab civil arena – providing this action remains consistent.

Until recently the open forum of civil society in Israel generally allowed freedom of movement, creation and assembly, which are more restricted in Arab countries. And yet, as a whole, Palestinians in Israel are always suspect, the government always watchful of

them. This is in fact a direct continuation of the military rule under which the Palestinian citizens lived for the first 19 years of the Israel's existence (1948-1966). The arrest of the Islamic Movement's activists in May 2003, and their detention (as these lines are written) without trial for the past year, was carried out because of money transfers for humanitarian causes in the Territories. The claim that these funds strengthen Hamas through its welfare institutions underlines the state's paradigm with regard to its perception of the Palestinian citizens: there is no distinction between relief for widows and orphans and support of the armed Palestinian struggle. In the government's eyes, and without question in the eyes of the Jewish public, they are the same.

The fatal shooting of protesters in October 2000 marked the climax of a process by which the government attitudes and norms have been transposed from the Occupied Territories onto the Israeli Palestinian citizens of Israel. This attitude, consolidated in the laboratory of military rule in the Territories, constantly looms over the Palestinian citizens within the state. In this context, the arrest of the Islamic Movement's leadership in suspicion of monetary felonies of money transfer (as emphasized by the police – as well as the lack of grounds for detention), and its detention without trial for the past year, does not only constitute a legal act, as no precedent exists for such a lengthy detention on financial suspicions; this act is public-political, and it seems meant to deter others from getting involved socially or humanitarily in the fate of the Palestinians in the Territories. And, of course, this is not a step aimed at applying more pressure on the Palestinians in the Territories, but rather increasing the pressure on the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Or Committee was an official committee appointed by the Barak government to examine the events of October 2000. It reached a conclusion that the ongoing discrimination is indeed one of the central elements of the civil unrest created in 2000.³⁵ Its conclusions were adopted by the Sharon administration in September 2003, and the government appointed a ministerial committee to examine the implementation of the systematic recommendations of the Or Committee, chiefly the unequivocal recommendation to place the issue of Jewish-Arab equality at the top of the government's

³⁵ Or Committee report, p. 762 section 5

agenda.³⁶ The Lapid Committee (the ministerial committee appointed to propose a plan for the implementation of the findings) is formulating an agenda which includes the establishment of a joint governmental-civilian authority which will be put in charge of the government's treatment of its Arab citizens ("minorities" in its own words), instituting civilian service as an alternative to military service and instituting a "citizenship holiday" and a "week of learning about the other" within the Ministry of Education. It is still too soon to judge whether and to what extent these frameworks will be effective in terms of altering the unbalanced allocation of resources between Jews and Arabs in Israel, as government policy may be used to "dry up" this new shared governmental-civilian authority.

It won't be too long before it is evident whether and to what extent government frameworks are able to implement the primary conclusion of the Or Committee, because "it is in the state's interest to work to erase the stain of discrimination of the Arab citizens, in all its different shapes and forms".³⁷ Whether the government framework is effective or not, the Or Committee report may be the most practical leverage for the promotion of a full equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and for this broad and extensive public pressure is needed.

People as a Bridge to Peace?

It used to be expected, and still occasionally is, that the Palestinians would serve as a bridge for peace. This expectation assumes that their knowledge of both Hebrew and English can serve as a mediating tool between the Zionist movement and the national Palestinian movement. This simplistic perception fails to take into account many factors, namely the numerous historic-political forces that exist. Nevertheless, civil society is not obligated to align itself in accordance with the historical rules and identifications, and is freer than the state in determining the future. In this light, we will attempt to draw out

³⁶ Name, pp. 677-766

³⁷ Or Committee report, Government Press, Jerusalem, September 2003 p.767

what is necessary to happen in order for civil society to be an effective element in the advancement of the peace process.

The civil encounter in Israel is more an existential must between two collectives, rather than a “celebration of differences” between immigrants-of-choice like in the West. The common civil framework in Israel was created as a result of a collision between the two national movements, and continues to reflect that conflict. Therefore, from access to the common space is hesitant and suspect from both directions.

However, could a partnership in the framework of citizenship in Israel assist in promoting relations between both peoples as a whole? Before determining this question we must examine what lies ahead for Jews and Palestinians between the Jordan River and the sea, apart from the political framework that is going to be fashioned during this generation. It seems that there is no tendency of merging the collective identities of both peoples, and every month that passes in this conflict only extends the time it will take for this tendency to appear on the horizon. Thus the unique identity of each partner must find full expression in any common framework. Those who approach the creation of these partnerships in the framework of the state carry a burden and a commitment towards their collectives, and are therefore expected to sharpen their particular identity within the common framework.

Are the activists in this field messengers of the groups they come from – or the contrary – are they catalysts for change within their own society, feeding on the common space they have created for themselves? A few hundred Israeli activists have been trying, in various frameworks, to build partnerships of different types in different fields. As mentioned before, some frameworks have distinct character that serves different and even opposing goals. As a whole, the experience in Israel is not yet methodical, and is not documented enough to learn of its internal matters, much less its influence on the collective environment on either side.

And, essentially: is there a connection, a mutual influence, or a one-directional effect of organized civil relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel on resolving relations between the state and the Palestinians as a whole? This question has two aspects:

1. In order for a positive experience of Palestinian citizenship in Israel to have a ripple effect on relations between Israel and the Palestinian people as a whole, the Palestinian citizens must feel at ease with their Israeli citizenship in all respects apart from the state's conflict with their Palestinian brothers. In order for this to happen the state must completely alter its discrimination policy in a 180° turnaround, and gain the Palestinian citizens' trust. Such a step would require a decade of strenuous effort.
2. In order to serve as effective advocates to their people outside of the state, like American Jews are to Israel, the Palestinian citizens in Israel should be integrated into all state systems; otherwise their voice lacks any real value.

Following is an illustration of two models of the relations between the state and the Palestinian citizens. To each of the models there is a consequence in the context of relations between the two peoples as a whole:

1. The model according to which the state is a patron of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who have a "lesser citizenship" and do not enjoy equal rights (the present situation).
Possible outcome: seclusion and dissimulation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel from the rest of the Palestinian nation and segregation within the more comfortable state, which provides a safety net of minimal social security and access to a more convenient way of life. In this situation some could become involved in aiding the Palestinian people on the civilian level, with professional consulting, or by community shipments of food donations and the like. Yet there is no chance of them having a positive influence on a process of peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.
2. The equal civilian model within the state of Israel, which is manifested in the realization of at least four central elements:

- Full civilian equality between Jews and Palestinian, including collective rights;
- Sound personal and group-related social relations;
- Proper representation in all the state systems and the private market sector;
- Legitimacy and the inclusion of Palestinian citizens into the state of Israel and its definition.

Possible outcome: a ripple effect, a projection outward of trust and security in Jews' ability to live alongside Palestinians, respecting them as a party that lost in the 1948 war but was not crushed as a result; the establishment of the sense of personal and collective confidence in the state; the use of the sense of security in the state as leverage to bridge over the Palestinians' two political poles: the state of Israel as the strong anchor of civilian belonging on one hand, and the strong historical and cultural belonging to the Palestinian people on the other.

It should be asked whether a common, equal, and healthy citizenship within a democratic regime sets a proper example for the framework of relations between the peoples as a whole? Or, in other words: would a successful example of a common life in the state of Israel pave the way to a framework of a common, Jewish-Palestinian life between the sea and the river? The answer to this question is complex: in the short term – no. Yet in the long term, it seems so. In order for the civil society to realize its potential as a framework for identification that permits ongoing conflict, yet that which does not bleed, certain minimal conditions that were described in the second alternative, the civil equality alternative, must exist. What, then, is civil society's role at this stage, before these minimal conditions exist? Civil society has the ability to become the catalyst for these changes.

In the context of the complicated situation, the stagnation and the deterioration, Jewish and Palestinian civil society is closer than ever to presenting a qualitative alternative to this situation. The model of a civil state is not too far away, and could include both sides of the conflict. In order to set this change in motion, the Jewish, Palestinian, and especially the joint organization must consider their next steps wisely.

Conclusion: a Local Civil Society – Or an International One?

The development of relations between Israel and the PLO, and subsequently with the Palestinian Authority – from a popular intifada to peace agreements, their collapse and the continuing efforts to resolve the relations – all project strongly on relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel based on common citizenship. Yet the failed course of the framework relations between the two peoples does not bring about the creation of an alternate course, perhaps a temporary one, based on common citizenship within the state of Israel.

Even the most advanced attempts by civil society organizations cannot solely generate a peace process between Israel and the Palestinian people. In addition to civil efforts a structural change must occur in Israel, its essence we described above, towards the minimum conditions that would allow for an influence on the process as a whole. When these conditions come about, the Jewish-Palestinian partnership will not only affect the motion of the process, but the long term building of relations between the two peoples.

The relative freedom enjoyed by civil society in Israel may be used in order to try and build the possible models here. A great investment is needed, as well as a very broad organization for creating a varied system of viable attempts, to be later marketed to Jews and Palestinian as a model of possible coexistence. Although up until now common citizenship in Israel does not provide an encouraging message and valid examples of Jews and Palestinians living together in the Middle East, yet if this goal is specifically defined, a broad effort could assist in building possible models. In order to achieve this a patience must be galvanized for a decade of coordinated, strenuous work, coordination between the professional, organizational, and academic forces, and consistent, extensive funding.

Civil society, then, is not obligated to align itself with dominant streams in different countries. Its relative freedom allows it to make ties and base the local change on a joint

effort that is international in its essence. Therefore we must wait no longer, and turn to the international civil society for urgent help. Today, the international civil society helps in various initiatives in Israel, yet the assistance could be coordinated between all of the elements as much as possible, without harming the wide range of possibilities.

It is true that freedom of action and a lack of a single determining framework are at the essence of a civil society, but in order to get results current efforts must be strongly coordinated, particularly conditioning efforts to build more frameworks in coordination with what is present. Civil society in Europe, the United States, Southeast Asia, and more may define this effort as a goal for the coming decade, and by doing so they will be contributing greatly. Aside from the funds needed for the advancement of this process, civil society elements could share the knowledge gained from successes and failures in other countries. There are such organizations in Israel, such as Shatil, who have the power to act as a local coordinating body. In terms of the international organizations and funds, three coalitions should be established, European, American and Asian, which will act in coordination through an annual congress. A small coordinating body will concentrate the existing information on current involvement in Israel, and prevent redundancies. This body will gather together, via research, the past attempts in other conflict areas, and allow for their study but not their replication.

The global civil society, as well as governments who give foreign aid, regard the change needed in Israel with great importance, yet they all consider Israel as a developed country that does not need aid from outside. This is true as far as financial and economic aid. And yet, in terms of an index of conflict zones, the state of Israel itself is a conflict zone beset by one of the most intractable conflicts because it is built into the state structure. Therefore, it must be thoroughly dealt with through civil society. In this context, the state of Israel is underdeveloped. Thus, the international funds and organizations which provide humanitarian aid have no place for real action in Israel, yet all of these funds and organizations which deal in using social influence as leverage for the future of human society should be very concerned with what is being done here, and should immediately begin acting along the lines suggested above.

Box:

**Organizations Dealing in Educational Work with Children
From Within the Organizations of Co-existence**

Summary:

- Organizations whose activity is mainly educational: 25
- Organizations whose activity is partially educational: 33
- Organizations that work very little through education: 13
- Organizations who deal also or mostly in advocacy: 4 (among these, 2 work in other fields, including education: the Forum for Civil Agreement and the Abraham Foundation).
- Other organization: 20

Total: 93 organizations

Among them:

- 58 work in the educational field as a central or large part of their activity: 62%
- As some part (large or small) of their activity: 76%
- Only 4 out of 93 organizations also work in advocacy: 4.3%

(Taken from “The Book of Organizations.” List compiled by Yehudit Koren, editor).

¹Yael Yishai, ‘Civil Society in Transition: Interest Politics in Israel’, *Annals* 555, January 1998, pp. 147-162