

Swords of Iron War

SNAPSHOT

October
24, 2023*

The Arab Society in Israel in Shadow of the War

Emergency Needs and Prevention of Escalation in Shared Spaces #2

* The brief offers a current overview based on the information accessible to us at this time. For the previous review in Hebrew, including extensive background, please refer [here](#).

The challenge: The Israel-Hamas War, which broke out on October 7, 2023, presents extremely difficult challenges for the Arab community in Israel. Among these are pressing humanitarian needs and the urgent imperative to prevent escalation and violence in shared spaces. These challenges, often interwoven, have been growing in intensity as the war persists and develops.



Government Perspective

Arabs and Bedouins have been directly impacted by the brutal assaults by Hamas, placing them in a state of wartime emergency with specific emergency needs. The government is collaborating with Arab local authorities to identify these needs, develop tailored solutions, and allocate budgets, with particular focus on the two emergency centers established in Rahat and Kfar Qasim.

It is crucial to underscore the significance of preventing escalation and fostering unity between Jews and Arabs. Arabs are actively participating in civic initiatives, donating financial aid, blood, and essential supplies. Nonetheless, there is a concern within the Arab public about potential disruptions in majority Jewish areas and workplaces.

Effective coordination between various sectors - government, local authorities, civil society organizations, and philanthropy – is pivotal.

From the standpoint of Arab local authorities, there are noticeable structural disparities when compared to the Jewish local authorities and local authorities managing shared societies. Hence, government backing is essential to foster communal and urban resilience.

* This status report is based on information presented at a joint meeting of IATF, SVF, and JFN on October 24, 2023. The following individuals participated in the meeting:

- **Meir Bing**, CEO of the Ministry of Social Equality.
- **Amir Basharat**, CEO of the National Committee for Arab Local Authorities in Israel.
- **Jonathan Paz**, Head of the Socioeconomic Development Division in the Ministry of Social Equality.
- **Salimah Mustafa Suleiman**, Head of the Senior Local Authorities Division at the Authority for Economic Development in Arab Society.
- **Hassan Tuafra**, Head of the Authority for Economic Development in the Arab Society.

The Ministry of Social Equality and the Authority for Economic Development in Arab Society are facilitating the allocation of funds (in accordance with Plan 550) for defense measures, preparedness, and the establishment of shared emergency rooms, following the Kfar Qasim model.

➤ Philanthropic backing is essential

With philanthropy holding an advantage in collaborating with civil organizations, identifying existing organizations with expertise in the required areas is of paramount importance for swift action. Supporting the activities of community organization, promoting calming messages, advancing welfare programs, and establishing mediation centers, among other initiatives, are necessary. Assistance is needed to link proficient civil organizations with Arab emergency centers to provide training and develop specialized capabilities and infrastructure for the Arab community. Coordinated support for substantial organizations is preferable to backing small, unsustainable initiatives.

A question of prioritization arises between providing assistance to cope with the emergency situation in the Arab community during the war, and addressing Jewish-Arab relations. It's important to emphasize that this is not a situation of "either/or." Coordination is needed to provide a comprehensive response from the government and philanthropy in both areas.

Kfar Qasim Emergency Center

Established five days after the outbreak of the war with the aim of guaranteeing civil defense and strengthening social resilience. The center operates to identify needs in local authorities and provide assistance to residents by pairing civil society organizations and external funding. The center works to disseminate information for response and emergency management, including translation and explanation, creating tailored content that consolidates various sources, and addressing "fake news" within the Arab society (baseless rumors of Jewish vengeance, and the like).

Prominent Needs:

- Lack of awareness and training for dealing with emergency situations in Arab authorities and among authority employees, which includes the need for preparedness and training programs.
- Launching appropriate campaigns to raise awareness and deal with the emergency.
- Partnership and coordination with government ministries, including promising accessibility to "calls for proposal" and allocating budgets according to the unique needs of Arab authorities. This involves ensuring that government budgets are allocated in a way that addresses the specific needs of Arab communities, such as infrastructure and safety measures for low-rise construction.
- Engagement with established civil society organizations to leverage their expertise and existing experience in meeting specific needs, implying the need to tap into the knowledge and resources of existing community organizations.
- Preparation and consideration for the rehabilitation phase, which involves planning for recovery and reconstruction efforts.
- Preparation and consideration for the northern front, highlighting the need for readiness and contingency planning in Arab authorities in the northern regions.

Local Arab Authorities in Israel | Capabilities, Needs and Responses

- **Background:** There are structural disparities between Jewish and Arab local authorities; including the urban and rural structure of towns and villages compared to Jewish cities; the economic crisis that began earlier is intensified due to delays in passing 2023 government budgets; organizational weaknesses within Arab local authorities.
- **Emergency Teams** have been established in most local authorities.
- **Volunteers:** Most authorities have active volunteer programs, totaling approximately 3,800 volunteers. Some authorities, however, are facing shortages.

- **Training Gaps:** Training is needed in first aid, professional training (paramedics), volunteer management, emergency room management, resilience, and psycho-social support. Immediate partnerships with experienced civil society organizations are required to tailor programs accordingly.
- **Inadequate Sheltered Spaces:** Less than 50% of residents in approximately 60% of authorities have adequate shelter.
- **Lacking Emergency Services and Equipment:** Around 70% of authorities face shortages. Approximately 50% of authorities lack basic emergency services, including first aid, paramedics, ambulances, and immediate response teams (first responders).
- **Basic Mechanical Equipment Lacking:** Shortages include generators, forklifts, tractors, and similar equipment.
- **Insufficient Communication Channels:** Primary communication is via Facebook pages or local authority websites, which are not immediate enough and don't provide a response when infrastructure like internet or electricity fails.

Mixed Cities | Capabilities, Needs and Responses

- **Physical Needs and Infrastructure Shortages:** These include sheltered spaces, therapeutic assistance, education, welfare, and more.
- **Emphasis on Preventing Tension and Violence Between Communities,** particularly in the context of the May 2021 events. Emergency rooms have been established; communication with groups and communities has taken place.
- **Missing Responses:** Translation of explanatory materials from Hebrew to Arabic is lacking, making it difficult for messages to be easily disseminated. Specific campaigns are required in each of the mixed cities to reduce tension between groups.

Employment and Economic Stability

The challenge in this area evolves and intensifies daily:

- Severe impact on Arabs working in sectors with particularly sluggish economic activity.
- Daily workplace interactions between Jews and Arabs are causing tensions and raising concerns among Arab employees, possibly leading to work avoidance or absences.
- Strengthening employer guidance to hire Arabs and mitigate tensions in mixed workplaces is essential.
- Measures are required to prevent loan-sharking in the informal economy, as it economically and physically harms Arab families.

Information

- [Joint Society Initiatives \(Social Justice Centers\)](#) - Arab citizens and Arab-Jewish relations (IATF)
- [Comprehensive and up-to-date data repository](#) categorized by topics:
 - [Jewish-Arab relations - activities and needs](#)
 - [Coordination of efforts](#)
 - [Bedouin society in the Negev - activities and needs](#)
 - [To add initiatives to the database, please fill this form](#)
- Twarak - The coalition of Arab civil society organizations operates as a northern "home front" and focuses on providing psychosocial support, addressing tensions, building trust, and ensuring protection against actions such as arrests and other activities conducted by governmental authorities. For further information, you can contact Samer Swaid at samerswaid@gmail.com
- [Presentation: "Emergency Assistance and Information Center for the Arab Society"](#)