

تقرير سيكوي

דו"ח סיכוי

The Sikkuy Report 2004 - 2005

Monitoring Civic Equality Between Arab and Jewish Citizens of Israel

- ◆ Government development plans for Arab citizens
- ◆ Inequality in social welfare funding
- ◆ Fair representation of Arab citizens in the civil service

- Two years after the Or Commission recommendations

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Introduction

The past year will be remembered as a special one because of two significant events that have ramifications for the status and rights of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel and the struggle to advance equality.

The first event is the murder of four Arab citizens by a Jewish terrorist in the city of Shfaram. Despite the fact that the prime minister was quick to denounce the incident and called the perpetrator a "Jewish terrorist," an inter-ministerial committee decided not to recognize the victims and their families as casualties of hostile activity. The second event is the publication of a decision by Mahash (the Ministry of Justice's Police Investigation Unit) to close the investigation against policemen suspected of shooting to death 13 Arab demonstrators in October 2000.

In the wake of these two events, a well-publicized civic campaign was mounted to change the government's decisions. This campaign was successful in beginning to generate a change, though the practical results are not yet tangible. The government decided to recognize the Shfaram victims and their families as casualties of hostile activity and proposed amending the pertinent legislation (the proposed amendment awaits Knesset approval). In regard to the October 2000 shootings, the attorney general decided to reconsider Mahash's decision, although when this reassessment process will be concluded is anyone's guess.

These two events demonstrate that opposition to injustice in a public, media-savvy and focused campaign can potentially succeed. In addition, the struggle to realize equality and justice requires patience, determination, and coordinated effort at all levels.

A third occurrence is broader and requires a longer-term struggle. The plan to develop the Negev and Galilee was brought to public attention last year in the context of the evacuation of settlements from the Gaza Strip. In a Sikkuy policy paper ("Development of the Negev and Galilee - For Jews Only?" - www.sikkuy.org.il), we explain our criticism of this process and propose ways to transform it from a plan to Judaize the Negev and Galilee to a plan for comprehensive and equal development for Jews and Arabs alike.

The past year provided us with an interesting opportunity to understand the workings of the government, in general, and of the prime minister, in particular. Huge resources and government power are concentrated in the hands of the prime minister. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon initiated and executed the “disengagement plan” despite fierce opposition from members of his party and members of his government. Over the course of two years, he managed to allocate budgets for the plan, establish administrative mechanisms and monitor the execution of a media campaign. The prime minister even expressed his resolve and enthusiasm in front of the cameras, instructing the personnel assigned to implement the plan to “start working.”

Without expressing either opposition or support for this move, it was an instructive lesson in the power of the prime minister to carry out an action that constituted a turning point relative to the historic policy. The prime minister proved that when he wants it, he can do it. It would be desirable if the same approach were applied to instituting equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and to implementing the Or Commission’s recommendations.

Today, there is no doubt in the political system that unwarranted discrimination exists against Arab citizens and that this must be changed immediately. Here too, the required change in policy is both deep and substantial, and here also – a combination of determination by the prime minister and mobilization of public support could lead to a change in the structural and institutional discrimination against Arab citizens that has been practiced since the establishment of the state. The government must boldly state that equality between Jews and Arabs is a top priority for policy revision.

The goal of this report is to examine government policy toward Arab citizens. The report reviews the actions and failures of the executive branch, based on facts and data from reliable sources such as the Central Bureau of Statistics and reports from government ministries and local authorities. The report documents and interprets the findings, and recommends necessary paths of action.

The report contains three chapters:

1. In the first chapter, Michal Belikoff reviews a number of government decisions – in particular, the development plans for Arab communities during the years 1999-2005 – and checks the extent to which these plans have been implemented. This review sheds light on aspects of government policy during this period and is instructive in regard to the Israeli government’s policies vis-à-vis Arab citizens.
2. In the second chapter, Nada Matta examines the issue of resource allocation for social welfare as reflected in ten Jewish cities and ten Arab cities during the 2004 budget year. The comparative study reveals a situation of blatant discrimination against Arab localities.
3. In the third chapter, attorney Ali Haider tracks the implementation of laws and decisions regarding the representation of Arab citizens in the civil service, government corporations and local government. Here too, the findings indicate only very slight progress.

A few words about terminology and definitions:

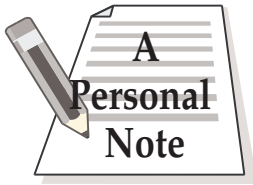
We refer to the population of Israel according to its division into Jewish citizens and Arab citizens. When we use a different term, such as “the minorities’ sector” or “non-Jews” or “Druze” or “Bedouin” – this is based on the source of our data and does not reflect the view of Sikkuy.

All of our comparisons are between Jews and Arabs: The state’s resources are also allocated according to this division and this is what we are seeking to change.

During the past two years, we have expanded Sikkuy’s research capabilities and we now have more numerous and precise data on the state of inequality between Jews and Arabs in Israel. But this is not our objective – changing this situation is the goal. We use this data to produce the Sikkuy Report and the policy papers we present to government ministries with the aim of changing the policy of discrimination.

We wish you fruitful reading, and hope this report will be used effectively to eliminate the gaps between Jewish and Arab citizens.

*Attorney Ali Haider and Shalom (Shuli) Dichter
Co-Executive Directors*



After six years of editing the Sikkuy Report and intensive writing for it, I took leave of the position of editor this year and my partner in directing Sikkuy, Ali Haider, assumed this task.

In editing the report, I came to regard it as the backbone of the civic struggle to significantly change government policy through its in-depth focus on details, and its expertise in assessing the situation and proposing solutions. This expertise is one of the principal sources of strength of civic society when we come to present an alternative to government practice.

The first report I edited, in the summer of 1999, received no coverage in the Hebrew media. Since then, our methods of publicity have improved, the press has become more interested, and decision makers and the public have become more aware of the state of inequality between Jewish and Arab citizens. Today, there is no longer a need to persuade decision makers and the public that discrimination against Arabs exists in Israel, and we now need to take a leading role in changing this situation. The Sikkuy Report will always serve as a beacon to light the way for those who are ready to see this reality and, especially, to work to change it.

With the publication of this report, my wish to the new editor, and to the dedicated researchers, Michal Belikoff and Nada Matta, is that the report will indeed serve to lead toward equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Shalom (Shuli) Dichter