

A Message from the Co-Executive Directors

"The explosive nature of relations is increasing"

In our introduction to the 2004-2005 Sikkuy Report we made favorable mention of the decision by the attorney general to reconsider the decision of the Police Investigation Unit to close the investigative files against the policemen suspected of shooting Arab demonstrators to death during the events of October 2000 (Al-Aksa Intifada). We emphasized at the time that this decision was a result of a highly publicized struggle, and expressed doubt as to the conclusion of the investigation. We also wrote that this event teaches us that opposition to injustice, with a focused and publicized public struggle, is likely to succeed, even if the struggle to implement equality and justice requires patience, determination and coordination among all the levels of activity.

At the end of January 2008 and three days before publication of the Winograd report, when the media were engaged in predicting the conclusions and recommendations, the attorney general, seven years after the killing of 13 Arab demonstrators, chose to publicize his decision to close the investigative files against the policemen who had fired, explaining that no evidence had been found against them. By this decision, and the unfortunate timing of its publication, not only did the attorney general acquit these policemen; he justified their deeds and gave a green light to any policeman to fire at Arab demonstrators in future. We cannot accept this decision, and it should be firmly rejected. Not only because it adds fuel to the fire that is raging in any case and exacerbates the explosive nature of relations between Jewish citizens and Palestinians in Israel, but because it also undermines public confidence in the legal institutions that are supposed to represent the principles of justice, truth and equality.

The attorney general's decision, which is commensurate with the consistent attitude of the State towards the Palestinians in Israel, intensifies the level of frustration of the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel and its despair of the possibility of genuine citizenship in the country.

From October 2000 until now relations between the Palestinian public on the one hand, and the State and the Jewish majority on the other, have been characterized by frequent crises. Moreover, the intensification of extremism and racism towards the Arab citizens is reflected in frequently published public opinion surveys; in the continued demolition of homes in Arab communities in general and in the Negev in particular, and in the persecution of leaders and political activists by means of investigations and trials.

In addition, the plan to deny citizenship to Arabs living along the Green Line is receiving widespread support from Israeli politicians and intellectuals and to date has not been publicly condemned by the prime minister. The declaration by the head of the Shin Bet security services that the Arab citizens represent a strategic threat indicates the depth of abhorrence of the minority. In addition there have been statements by politicians such as MK Efraim Eitam, who promised in the Knesset plenum (on March 26, 2008) that "the day will come when we will expel you," and by recent statements by Jewish religious leaders, such as the repeated statements of Safed chief rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu openly inciting against the Arab public and its leaders. The circumstances



that led the Arab citizens to demonstrate in October 2000 are still in place: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is escalating, and the situation of the Arab citizens is steadily worsening. Since the events of October the State has done nothing concrete to repair the historical injustice. In light of the continuation of the discriminatory policy, it is possible that the events of October 2000 were only a foretaste of what is still liable to happen in another future confrontation.

"A platform for policy change"

The above description gives rise to questions such as: Is it possible to change this situation? Is it possible to change the attitude being demonstrated by the State for the sixth consecutive decade? Is it possible to convince the Jewish citizens that equality between them and the Arab-Palestinian citizens is a common interest? Is it possible to convince the Arab-Palestinian citizens that they should not despair and that there is a possibility of living together in an egalitarian country that is capable of containing the two national groups living inside it – a Jewish majority and an Arab-Palestinian minority?

Most of those active in the government and public arenas would probably reply to these questions in the negative, and this is the reason for the importance of our activity and of our cooperation with additional civil society organizations. Sikkuy is a joint organization of Jews and Palestinian Arabs, citizens of Israel, whose agenda is continually being formulated through open and intensive dialogue. Even without agreement on future political solutions, there is sweeping agreement among all the members and employees of the organization that we must live in total equality. Sikkuy's strategic choice is to promote this philosophy and its implementation on three levels: in the government, on the municipal level and among the public.

Sikkuy is a catalyst for change in government policy on equality between Jews and Arabs. If to date we have documented the results of discrimination in reports, now we are investigating the mechanisms that intensify it. In the past year we have been engaged in mapping the patterns of resource allocation in the government ministries. Our recommendations for a change in policy are already finding a more attentive ear in the ministries in Jerusalem than in the past, but the pace is slow and we must accelerate our efforts considerably, because history does not wait, and the anticipated outcome of discrimination is imminent. This is a race between a deterioration of relations in the country and an improvement of the situation through a change in policy.

A year ago we improved on the traditional Sikkuy report on the outcome of discrimination and for the first time in Israel developed the Equality Index, which presents a broad and thorough picture of the results of government policy. The first index was welcomed by the media, government ministries, academe, civil society organizations and the general public. On the basis of that data we formulated position and policy papers that were submitted to the ministries.

The Equality Index that we are publishing for the second consecutive year serves us as an important tool for presenting the results of discrimination, and primarily its causes. By presenting and analyzing this data we can pinpoint the damage caused by discriminatory government policy, and point out possible ways of closing the gaps that have been created between Jews and Arabs in Israel in past decades. We will continue to broaden and intensify our combination



of research and initiation of policy change.

According to the picture that emerges from the index, inequality between Jews and Arabs is increasing in almost every one of the areas that we examined, as well as in the Weighted Index. The data in the index serve as a warning of the destructive outcome of government policy, and the analyses serve as a platform for changing this policy.

We would like to thank the Sikkuy staff that contributed to this index, and particularly Yaser Awad, Michal Belikoff and Manar Mahmoud who invested a great deal of time and thought in improving the index, collecting and processing the data, and writing this report.

We also thank the members of the steering committee for designing the index – Prof. Rassem Hamaisy, Prof. Mohammed Haj-Yihye, Prof. David Nahmias and Prof. Yossi Yahav – who advised the staff members and made a significant contribution to completing the second index.

We also thank the team of content experts, who were generous with their attention, comments and advice: Dr. Khaled Abu Asbah, Dr. Anat Ben Simon, Dr. Goni Gal, Dr. Nihaya Daoud, Prof. Rassem Khamaisy, Dr. Ravit Hananel, Prof. Yossi Katan, Mr. Mohammed Khatib, Dr. Sami Miari and Dr. Shlomo Swirsky.

Sincerely,

Ali Haider, Adv. and Shalom (Shuli) Dichter

Co-Executive Directors

Sikkuy



Abstract

This is the second consecutive year in which Sikkuy is publishing the Equality Index. The Equality Index was developed last year with the help of experts in various areas, who helped and guided the Sikkuy research staff. The team of experts included the steering committee, which is composed of leading academicians in their area: Prof. Mohammed Haj-Yihye, Prof. Rassem Hamaisy, Prof. David Nahmias and Prof. Yossi Yahav. We were also assisted by a series of additional content experts in the areas relevant to the Equality Index.

The Equality Index is unique in being the first overall index in Israel that systematically analyzes the gaps between Jews and Arabs in the State of Israel, based on data officially published by government institutions. The Equality Index is based on existing approaches of international models for measuring equality, such as the indexes used to measure the gaps between whites and Afro-American and Hispanic minorities in the United States (the Total Equality Index), the Ginni Index for measuring socioeconomic gaps, and indexes for measuring the gender gap in various social arenas (GDI, GEM, HDI) that were used by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Program.

In the previous report we explained that the Equality Index is designed to survey the inequality between Jews and Arabs in the three principal aspects of citizenship: equality before the law, equality in the political arena and equality in the socioeconomic sphere. We emphasized the importance of the three aspects and of their interconnectedness in promoting equality. However, for lack of time and data, this year too, as in 2006, the index deals with the socioeconomic aspect only, with attention to five central areas of life: education, health, employment, social welfare and housing. The Equality Index is a weighted index of the aggregate indexes, which are calculated for each one of the five areas on the basis of data collected for each area separately.

