

### F3. For the Benefit of All its Inhabitants – the Israeli Arabs

*David Ben Gurion (excerpt from a lecture at a convention of Keren HaYesod, 29 October 1947)*

In the Jewish state we will not be responsible for the Jews alone... but for all the residents of the state. And for all the residents of the state in equal measure. Our concern will no longer be devoted solely to Jewish locales alone, or to the education and health services of the Jewish Yishuv alone – but to every locale. Jewish and Arab in equal measure, without any discrimination and distinction, and the services of all residents – again on the basis of full and absolute equality. We will be required to attend to health and education, development, and all the remaining services of the Arab village in no less measure than those of the Jewish village...

In what, therefore, will the Jewish state be Jewish? Not only in the fact of the Jewish majority in the state, but in one of the central tasks that will be imposed on the state in establishing the “National Home” for the Jewish people – that is to say, in absorbing Jewish immigration and in the maximum development of the country, in improving the soil and farming it intensively, in the full exploitation of water reserves, and in building an intensive economy in agriculture, industry, and at sea – which will enable both a gradual improvement in the level of its residents and the constant absorption of Jewish immigrants. Ben Gurion, *Our Neighbors and Ourselves*, p. 184 (also appears in: G. Shimoni, *The Zionist Encyclopedia*, p. 354) [clarify when written]

*Leviticus 25:10, 23-24*

*10 And you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee unto you; each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family.*

*But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, ; for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me. 24 Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land.*

A permanent resident in Israel is a person whose permanent address is in Israel, and who is registered in the Population Registry of the Ministry of the Interior. A permanent resident is bound by all the obligations imposed by the state, including drafting to the army (if found fit) and payment of all taxes, and is entitled to all the rights granted by the state (including health insurance, freedom of vocation, and voting in elections to the local authority), with the exception of two rights: Voting for the Knesset and receiving an Israeli passport. A permanent resident bears a blue identity card, i.e. enjoys unrestricted movement throughout the state, and may receive any service from the state authorities.

From: The Hebrew edition of Wikipedia

- **Who are “residents” according to these sources?**
- **Who are “all its inhabitants” according to the Declaration of Independence?**
- **Since its establishment, to what extent has the State of Israel “fostered the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants” on an equal basis?**

We are commanded to protect the rights and equality of our Arab neighbors, but we would be lying to ourselves if we said that the Land of Israel means that same thing for the Arab people that the Land of Israel means for the Hebrew people. If the formula of binationalism alludes to this formula, then it is no more than a distortion of the truth and the castration of the goal. In place of this defective formula I say: the Land of Israel is destined for the Hebrew people and for the Arabs who reside within it.

*The Palestine Mandate, made in London on 24 July 1922 and enacted as of 29 September 1923*

Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have agreed, for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, to entrust to a Mandatory selected by the said Powers the administration of the territory of Palestine, which formerly

belonged to the Turkish Empire, within such boundaries as may be fixed by them; and Whereas the Principal Allied Powers

have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country; and Whereas recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country;

**מדינת ישראל תהא פתוחה  
לעליה יהודית ולקיבוץ גלויות;  
תשקוד על פיתוח הארץ  
לטובת כל תושביה:**

*Declaration of Independence, section 3*

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma'pilim [(Hebrew) - immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

*Declaration of Independence, section 16*

WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

**מדינת ישראל תהא פתוחה לעליה יהודית ולקיבוץ גלויות;**

**תשקוד על פיתוח הארץ לטובת כל תושביה:**

**The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants;**

Regarding the change in Berenson's version (see p. ...), Yoram Shachar wrote (p. 572): This completely changes the character of the promise. Rather than a commitment to grant equal status of rights and obligations to the Arabs who are present in the Jewish state, those Arabs who are citizens are here invited to work in construction.

*Justice Zvi Berenson (1972):*

“When we were exiled from our Land and drew away from the offering of the sacrifices we came to belong to the nations of the world among whom we dwelled, and in every generation we tasted the bitter taste of persecution, usurping, and discrimination solely because we are Jews “for their religions differ in each people.” Equipped with this bitter and miserable experience, which has profoundly penetrated our awareness and our national and human conscience, it may be expected that we would not follow in the reprehensible ways of the Gentiles and, in renewing our independence in the State of Israel we must take heed and guard against any shadow of discrimination and any practice of distinction toward any law-abiding non-Jewish person who is present with us and wishes to live with us in his way, in accordance with his religion and faith. Xenophobia is a double curse: it defaces the Divine image of its bearer and brings evil to the object of hatred through no fault of his own. We must show a human and tolerant attitude toward every person created in [God's] image, and we must maintain the great principle of equality among all humans in rights and in obligations.”

HJC 392/72, Emma Berger v Haifa District Planning and Building Committee, Piskei Din 27(2) 764, 771.

## Identity Card / Mahmud Darwish, 1964

Write down!

I am an Arab  
And my identity card number is fifty thousand  
I have eight children  
And the ninth will come after summer  
So does that anger you?

Write down!

I am an Arab  
I work with my fellow laborers at the quarry  
I have eight children  
I get them bread  
Clothes and exercise books  
from the rocks..  
I do not beg for charity at your doors  
Nor do I belittle myself at the footsteps of your  
chamber  
So does that anger you?

Write down!

I am an Arab  
I have a name without a title  
Patient in a country  
Where everyone lives in a state of rage  
My roots  
Were entrenched before the birth of time  
And before the opening of the eras  
Before the pines and the olive trees  
And before the grass grew

My father.. descends from the family of the plow  
Not from a privileged class  
And my grandfather – a peasant  
Neither well-bred nor well-born! -  
Teaches me the pride of the sun  
Before teaching me how to read  
And my house is like a watchman's hut  
Made of branches and cane  
Are you satisfied with my status?  
I have a name without a title!

### *To Whom Does the State Belong? Shlomo Zand, Ha'aretz, 10 October 2000*

The very definition of the state as a Jewish state entails an anti-egalitarian and alienating element casting doubt on the ability to maintain a proper liberal democracy over time. In the historical conditions prevailing in 1948, three years after the Holocaust, it is certainly possible to understand why the Declaration of Independence was worded as the declaration of the Jewish people. But it must be recognized that 52 years later the rigid Jewish identity of the state has become anachronistic and constitutes a constant and dangerous anomaly. By definition, the state belongs far more to an anti-Zionist rabbi in New York than it does to an Arab Member of Knesset, or even than the Druze soldier who was killed... at Joseph's Tomb. Jewish nationhood has not managed to develop into an open and inviting Israeli nationhood that can embrace all the citizens who live within its borders. Since the establishment of the state, we have also refused to develop an overall Israeli identity under which diverse Jewish or Arab traditions could have flourished. The absence of a process of civil Israelization places in question not only the proper ongoing functioning of the democratic process, but also the very existence of a single state framework. Neither the Arabs nor the 400,000 immigrants who identify as non-Jews will resign themselves for long to the existence of an alienating ethno-religious democracy.

Write down!

I am an Arab  
The color of my hair... coal black  
The color of my eyes... brown  
My features:  
A kaffiyah and rope band on my head  
My palm as strong as rock  
My address:  
I am from a forgotten and defenseless village  
Its streets without names  
And all its men... are in the fields and at the quarry  
So does that anger you?

Write down!

I am an Arab  
You have stolen the orchards of my ancestors  
And the land which I cultivated  
Along with my children  
And you left nothing for us  
Except for these rocks..  
So will the State take them  
As has been said?!

Therefore!

Write down on the top of the first page:  
I do not hate people  
Nor do I encroach on anyone  
But if I become hungry  
The usurper's flesh will be my food  
Beware..  
Beware..  
Of my hunger  
And of my anger!

*First published (in Arabic) in the journal Al Jadid.  
English translation based on <http://www.barghouti.com/poets/darwish/bitaga.asp>,  
with modifications and additions by Shaul Vardi*

- **From the Report of the Or Commission, August 2003**

Majority-minority relations are problematic anywhere, and particularly so in a state that defines itself according to the nationality of the majority. In practice, the dilemmas that arise in such a state do not have perfect solutions; some argue that there is a substantive contradiction between the principles of a majority nation-state and the principles of liberal democracy. In any case, establishing reasonably harmony in majority-minority relations is a difficult task borne by all sectors of society. This task requires a particular effort on the part of the state institutions, which reflect the hegemony of the majority, in order to balance the vulnerability of the minority due to its inherent inferiority in terms of numbers and influence. Refraining from such an effort, or engaging therein inadequately, creates feelings of discrimination and a reality of discrimination among the minority; these are liable to worsen over time.

- **HCJ 6698/95 `Adal Ka`adan v Israel Lands Administration, Piskei Din 54(1) 258 (“the Katzir case”)**

From the grounds of the majority ruling:

Justice Aharon Barak: Not only do the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish state not require discrimination on the grounds of religion and nationality in the state, but these values themselves prohibit discrimination and mandate equality between religions and nationalities... Indeed, “the Jewish people established the Jewish state; this is the beginning and we shall continue therefrom” (Justice M. Heshin in the Isaacson case, p. 548). Yet once the state has been established, it applies equality among its citizens. The State of Israel is a Jewish state within which minorities live, including the Arab minority. Each member of the minorities living in Israel enjoys complete equality of rights.

## ***Rabbis for Human Rights***

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