



מכתב הנائب אימן عودة- رئيس قائمة الجبهة والعربية للتغيير
לשכת חבר הכנסת איימן عودة- יו"ר רשימת חד"ש-תע"ל
MK Ayman Odeh's Office- Head of Hadash-Ta'al list

December 9th, 2022

**His Excellency Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General**

United Nations Headquarters

New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

I write with great concern about the critical situation of violent crime plaguing Arab Palestinian communities in Israel. Violence is a part of daily life for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem and is the unavoidable consequence of the Israeli government's ongoing illegitimate occupation and policies of control over the Palestinian population. Palestinian citizens of Israel face violent crime including shootings, murders, property destruction and armed robbery, and this problem has now spiraled into an epidemic.

In recent years, the rate of murders and violent crimes in Arab Palestinian communities has skyrocketed. According to former Israeli minister of security Gilad Erdan, who now serves as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, the majority of illegal firearms in circulation were stolen from the Israeli military. Arab Palestinian citizens make up approximately one fifth of the population of Israel. Between 1980 and 2000, there were 81 murders in Israel; between 2001 and 2021, there were 1675. From 1948 until 2000, the percentage of murder victims in Israel who were Arab Palestinian citizens was 4.9%. Yet by 2021, that figure has shot up to 67% of all murders in Israel.

As a result of this, Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel feel great concern for their personal safety and for the safety of their families. According to a 2021 study, Arab Palestinian citizens are over three times more likely to fear for their personal safety compared to Jewish Israelis (37% vs 11%). Moreover, because of consistent inaction by the Israeli authorities, including those responsible for the safety of the country's citizens, Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel have no address for their concerns and no reasonable expectation that these concerns will be taken seriously.

The Israeli government has successfully kept the rate of illegal gun ownership and violent crimes low within Jewish communities in the state. There is no reason the same cannot be done in Arab Palestinian communities where Arab Palestinian citizens are the victims. This is not an issue of lack of ability but rather a cruel absence of political will to protect the lives and safety of Arab Palestinian citizens.

The cause of this devastating problem is the systematic exclusion of Arab Palestinian citizens from all parts of society by many successive Israeli governments. This includes advancing policies defining the state as one for Jews only and ensuring that state power should be used not for the benefit of all its citizens, but for its Jewish citizens only. Instead of solving the structural problems



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that might be readily addressed through increased access to housing, greater investment in schools, hospitals, and social services in Arab Palestinian communities in Israel, and laws that unequivocally establish equal civil and national rights regardless of religion, race, or nationality, some politicians in the Israeli government have attempted to blame Arab Palestinian citizens, declaring this a "cultural problem." This is false, racist, and absolutely unacceptable.

Arab Palestinian citizens and those of us elected to represent our Arab Palestinian communities in Israel have led the charge to address the real causes of violence for many years. Yet our efforts have been met by the Israeli government with indifference at best and racist victim-blaming at worst.

The incoming Israeli government will include Itamar Ben Gvir, an adherent of Kahanism, a racist, Jewish supremacist political movement which has been designated a global terrorist organization by many international organizations including the United States Department of State. As a lawyer and public figure, Ben Gvir has defended and glorified Jewish terrorists who have murdered Arab Palestinians and called for Arabs to be forcibly transferred from the state. In the coming weeks, Ben Gvir will be named Minister for National Security and will be given a high level of control over state armed forces, including the police and border patrol. It is difficult to overstate the terror this has already caused among Arab Palestinian citizens. This is an extremely dangerous situation that requires international intervention to protect the lives of Arab Palestinian citizens.

Your consideration and special attention to this matter is needed, and most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Member of Knesset Ayman Odeh

Chair Hadash-Ta'al List