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Between Two States and One

Palestinian Citizens of Israel

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While numerous studies have examined the impact that the Oslo Accords and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian talks have had on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, less attention has been paid to how the Oslo process affected the lives and political horizons of Palestinian citizens of Israel (also known as '48 Palestinians and Palestinians inside the Green Line). In large part this is because the Oslo Accords—and before that, the declaration of Palestinian statehood in 1988—excluded this group from the Palestinian national agenda. As a result, during the 1990s many Palestinian citizens sought to assimilate into Israeli society, assuming that the Oslo talks would solve the conflict in the form of a two-state solution and that their future lay within the Israeli state. But the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, along with the steady rightward shift of the Israeli political landscape, forced Palestinians inside the Green Line to revisit many of their previously held beliefs about possible solutions to the conflict.

While recent polls of '48 Palestinians show that a majority still believe a two-state solution is the best proposal for solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a growing number of Palestinian intellectuals and activists inside the Green Line are calling into question the fundamental premises of the two-state solution.[1] The development of these positions should be understood within a broader historical context of political debates among '48 Palestinians that goes back to the founding of the Israeli state. Despite living under restrictive military rule until 1966 and facing isolation from the Arab world, Palestinian political activists and intellectuals inside the Green Line have engaged in rich political discussions about their position within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and especially their relationship to their fellow Palestinians beyond the Green Line. While decolonization was a common thread in these discussions, the two dominant Palestinian political formations in Israel—the communist camp and the nationalist camp—had differing notions of how decolonization should be understood in the Israeli context. In this chapter, I

argue that these historical discussions shape the political landscape today, especially with regard to the debates over one- and two-state solutions. I also show how Israel's shift since the 1990s toward emphasizing its Jewish character has led many Palestinians in Israel to adjust their earlier, more optimistic views of Oslo. Finally, I lay out some of the alternatives to the two-state solution that are being proposed among Palestinians in Israel, along with the challenges they face.

PALESTINIAN POLITICS UNTIL 1967: THE COMMUNIST AND NATIONALIST CAMPS

Since 1948, the main oppositional Palestinian forces in Israel largely have largely fallen into two dominant camps: a communist camp and a nationalist camp. The communist camp was represented by the Israeli Communist Party (ICP), which has consistently emphasized Jewish-Arab class solidarity and cooperation and, until 1991, hewed closely to the Soviet Union's official positions on all matters foreign and domestic. The ICP was known by its Hebrew acronym, Maki, until 1965, when it split along national lines into a predominantly Jewish Maki party and a new, predominantly Arab party that took the Hebrew acronym Rakah.

During the first several decades of the state, the ICP was the only legal, non-Zionist party in Israel that allowed Arabs and Jews to be equals. Members of the communist camp adopted broad concepts of decolonization that emphasized the need for everyone to live in peace and equality.[2] They further argued that the Zionist underpinnings of the state led Israel into the lap of imperialist powers, and they denounced the numerous discriminatory policies against the Palestinians who remained within the Green Line, arguing that they were not in keeping with Israel's democratic claims.[3] But it was not an anti-Zionist party: in keeping with Soviet ideology, the ICP recognized the state of Israel and did not question the fundamental legitimacy of Israel's founding. And although it earned the ire of Israeli leaders, as a legal political party it was allowed to operate. That included participating in Knesset elections, where the ICP ran lists with alternating Jewish and Arab names. While the party only held one to three seats in any given Knesset, it served as a venue in which MKs such as Emile Habibi and Tawfiq Tubi could raise uncomfortable issues about Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians from the dais.[4]

In contrast to the communists' general calls for decolonization around the world, members of the Arab nationalist camp adopted decolonization discourses that were more vociferously anti-Zionist than those of their communist counterparts. They questioned whether Israel could ever truly be both Jewish and democratic, thus sowing doubt about the legitimacy of the state. They identified more openly with Arab decolonization movements, especially the pan-Arab *(qawmi)* nationalist expressions of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, and they argued that for Palestinians inside the Green Line to be truly free, they needed to be part of a pan-Arab, Nasser-led, unified formation.[5]

Given the Israeli leadership's fears of Arab nationalism, Palestinian activists in Israel who expressed such viewpoints had much less political room in which to maneuver. Israeli government and establishment figures claimed that by openly siding with Israel's enemies, those activists posed an existential threat to the state. Moreover, with the vast majority of pre-1948 Palestinian national figures and institutions uprooted, and with the communist leadership taking a dim view of their positions, nationalist-minded Palestinians had very few venues in which they could express their ideas publicly. Yet Arab nationalist views had wide appeal, as evidenced during the brief appearance of the Ard (Land) group in 1959–60. Leaders of the Ard group were unabashedly Nasserist and pan-Arab nationalist, as demonstrated in their series of wildly popular single-issue papers, issued between October 1959 and January 1960, that lauded Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and stressed their desire for pan-Arab unity.[6] The communists opposed both these positions, arguing that the best way forward was to bring Jewish Israelis around to the belief that they could abandon certain elements of Jewish privilege while maintaining Israel as a Jewish state. The communists did not attack the nationalists directly, given the strong popular support they enjoyed, but the ICP leadership quietly seethed at the nationalists, believing that they undermined the communists' attempts to reassure Jewish Israelis that allowing for equality with Palestinians would not pose an existential threat to the state.[7]

As the Palestinian national movement began to gain traction in the mid-1960s, Arab nationalists in Israel who affirmed their connection to the Palestinian people ran further afoul of the government. In 1964 Ard leaders applied for formal state recognition as an association—a request that inherently signaled their recognition of the Israeli state. But their proposed articles of association stated in part that their group was aimed at "finding a just solution for the Palestinian problem, through its consideration as an indivisible unit—in accordance with the wish of the Palestinian Arab people."[8] The language of the clause bore a striking resemblance to Articles 3 and 4 of the PLO's Palestinian National Charter, signaling that there were Palestinians in Israel who were not reconciled to their perpetual minoritization within the Jewish state. The Israeli government denied the group's petition—a denial that the Israeli High Court ultimately upheld.[9] The fall of the Ard movement demonstrated that the Israeli authorities would not tolerate discursive framings that tied Palestinians in Israel to the Palestinian people as a whole, even if those framings were carefully worded in a way that accepted the Israeli state as a fait accompli. That experience would shape the work of subsequent intellectuals and activists, especially as the political landscape gradually opened up after the 1967 war.

This brief examination of the Palestinian political landscape in Israel prior to 1967 shows the spaces—and limits—of oppositional political discourse in Israel. While the communists adopted a language of decolonization that denounced, often vehemently, Israeli policies that discriminated against Palestinians and put Israel in league with imperialist forces, they did not question the legitimacy of the

state itself. As a result, although they faced restrictions and attacks from the Israeli authorities, they nonetheless continued to operate as a sanctioned political party.

In contrast, the Palestinian Arab nationalists—especially those organized around the Ard movement—adopted a language of decolonization that criticized Israel at a more fundamental level, denouncing Israel's Zionist underpinnings as inherently discriminatory. While these activists offered de facto recognition of the state, Israeli authorities saw their calls for pan-Arab unity and Palestinian self-determination as too close to Palestinian nationalist rhetoric. As a result, Arab nationalists faced more severe punishment from the Israeli state and were not allowed to maneuver as freely as were the communists. The 1967 war and the rise of the Palestinian nationalist movement further enhanced these differences.

1967–1987: THE TWO-STATE DEBATE

The June 1967 war and the rise of the Palestinian resistance movement dramatically altered the political landscape of Palestinians inside the Green Line. Israeli officials grew alarmed at the rise in apprehensions of young men seeking to join the resistance, especially after the PLO's famous stance at Karamah in March 1968.[10] Ard leaders Sabri Jiryis and Habib Qahwaji also went into exile in 1969 and 1970, respectively, further signaling the perceived threat that Palestinian Arab nationalism posed to the state.[11]

For the Palestinian communist Rakah party, the crackdowns on the nationalists and the positions of the Soviet Union led them to emphasize the so-called '67 issues, of occupation and settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, rather than the so-called '48 issues, of Israeli colonization of historic Palestine and the return of refugees. The party strongly denounced Israel's land grab during and after the June 1967 war as illegal. After UN Security Council Resolution 242 was passed in November 1967, calling on Israel to withdraw from territories it had occupied in the war, Rakah leaders frequently invoked this resolution as a basis for solving the conflict. Party leaders also strongly denounced the treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, reporting regularly on violations of human rights and international law.[12] For Rakah, these positions were in keeping with the language of decolonization that it had advocated in earlier years.

But Rakah's focus on decolonizing the lands occupied in 1967 was at odds with the Palestinian national movement in exile, which stressed the need to decolonize all of historic Palestine. Thus, Rakah was critical of the Palestinian resistance movement, as well as the broader Palestinian consensus that armed struggle was necessary for the goal of liberating all of Palestine. By recognizing that the Israeli people had national rights to a homeland within the Green Line, by focusing only on territorial disputes in the 1967 territories, and by refusing to unequivocally call for the right of return of Palestinian refugees, Rakah adopted positions that diverged sharply from the Palestinian consensus at the time.[13]

Yet even these positions carried a heavy political cost inside Israel. Several of Rakah's political and cultural leaders were placed under house arrest for years following the 1967 war, while others were subjected to a sunset-to-sunrise curfew.[14] Such measures were aimed at limiting the reach of Palestinian activists in Israel who were critical of the state's policies in the Occupied Territories and its repression of Palestinian activists within the Green Line. Despite these oppressive measures, Rakah's history of political organizing and institution-building, coupled with a political maneuverability that the nationalists did not enjoy, allowed the party to gain steady support over the following years. But a new nationalist challenge would soon emerge.

During the early 1970s, a new awakening of nationalist thought emerged among younger Palestinian intellectuals living inside the Green Line. They had grown up under Israeli rule and were frustrated by the rampant discrimination and inequality they faced. But they were also increasingly aware of Palestinian decolonization discourses that were more uncompromising than before and that took into account what had happened to the Palestinians in 1948. For many, this nationalist rhetoric was more attractive than Rakah's calls for joint Arab-Jewish cooperation and its refusal to endorse armed struggle. Additional social and economic factors, such as greater employment opportunities in Israel's flourishing economy and a rise in the number of students who were finishing high school and attending college, led many younger intellectuals to feel a greater sense of independence.[15]

Some of these younger, bolder nationalists also grew more vocal in their criticism of Rakah, arguing that its refusal to examine critically the foundations of the Israeli state and its emphasis on Arab-Jewish cooperation "enabled the assimilation, as Israelis, of Arabs in the state."[16] In response to this growing desire to emphasize their identity as Palestinians, in 1972 several activists based in the central triangle town of Um al-Fahm formally declared the establishment of the Abna' al-Balad (Sons of the Village) movement. With a mix of Arab nationalists and former communists of various strains, members of Abna' al-Balad had many different ideological orientations, but they came together around a dual platform of "affirmation of the Palestinian identity among the Arab people in Israel" and "opposition to the communist party."[17]

Since Abna' al-Balad's members opposed participating in Knesset elections, they did not pose a direct electoral threat to Rakah. But they constituted a fundamental challenge to key Rakah ideological positions. Since 1967 Rakah had emphasized that Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories was the first and most necessary step towards the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the same time, they demanded collective and individual equal rights as Palestinian *Israeli* citizens. Therefore, while Rakah endorsed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the party did not agree that the PLO represented Palestinians in Israel. In contrast, Abna' al-Balad rejected the idea of a Palestinian state in the

West Bank and Gaza Strip as defeatist. They also argued that "the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people . . . which constitutes a single entity, wherever it may be." Thus, "any settlement of the Palestinian question must include an official recognition and international guarantees of the national rights of the Palestinians who live . . . in Israel as well."[18] In short, Abna' al-Balad saw itself "as part of the Palestinian national enterprise, which [strove] to establish one Palestinian state on all the Palestinian lands."[19]

Yet even Rakah's emphasis on ending the occupation and withdrawing from Palestinian lands was met with fear in many Israeli circles. By 1975 some on the Israeli right were calling for Rakah and its activities to be outlawed. More liberal Israelis warned that this would be a mistake, arguing that Rakah represented "a relatively moderate Arab nationalism" and was "a safety valve for Arabs in Israel, protecting them from slipping into extremist nationalism."[20] These Israeli fears had a direct bearing on the political calculations of Palestinian activists in the country, who worried constantly that if they crossed a discursive red line, they would be banned, as the Ard movement had been a decade earlier.

There were also more urgent pressures at home, including systematic discrimination against Palestinian citizens and the confiscation of their land. In response to these pressures, Rakah and Abna' al-Balad joined forces in March 1976 to organize a general strike and coordinate a series of large demonstrations that collectively became known as Land Day. The massive turnout, coupled with widespread outrage over the police killings of six unarmed protesters, led to greater politicization among Palestinians inside the Green Line.[21] At the same time, this increased political awareness among Palestinian citizens made the ongoing debates between the communists and nationalists all the more visible.

These tensions were especially palpable among youth groups and university students, who were debating with each other the possible solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the fate of the '48 Palestinians. In fall 1976, Fouzi El-Asmar, a '48 Palestinian poet and former Ard member who returned for a time to his homeland after spending several years in the United States, captured the two sides of this debate:

> I heard from a number of people with whom I talked during my stay in the country that Communist political education of Arab youth encourages them to accept the status of an Arab minority in Israel with Israeli identities. A leader of the [Rakah] party explained this logic as follows: "When the Palestinian state is established alongside its sister Israeli state, we shall remain an Arab minority in Israel. Changing this situation will take generations and it may never change. The best thing is to raise our new generation with this perspective, for in the future it will help them in keeping their identity intact."[22]

But El-Asmar also observed that not everyone shared the assumption that a Palestinian state would (or should) be established. He cited one student journalist who wrote,

> If we suppose that a Palestinian state is established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, then the Palestinians living inside Israel proper will remain as a persecuted minority. On the other hand, all those Palestinians who were kicked out of their homes in 1948 will move from their current refugee camps to other camps set up for them on the West Bank and Gaza. Subsequently their status will change but little. If such a solution is carried out it will solve the problem of only one segment of the Palestinians, namely the ones who have lived for generations on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The solution to the Palestinian issue will come about only with the establishment of a state after the return of all the Palestinian refugees to their homes. The new state should be a state concerned with individual welfare, emphasizing collective humanity and not racial distinctions.[23]

Thus, while Rakah leaders defended their support for a Palestinian state in terms of pragmatism, their nationalist critics argued that a two-state solution—even if it were to come to fruition—would not address the ongoing oppression of the Palestinians living as a minority in Israel. For these nationalists, the best solution was a single democratic state that would be free of ethnonational preferences.

Throughout the mid-to-late 1970s the nationalists' position was more popular among university students, as evidenced by the consistent victories of Abna' al-Balad's student arm, the National Progressive Movement, in student government elections.[24] But Abna' al-Balad's firm position against participating in Knesset elections, coupled with restrictions it faced from the Israeli authorities, ultimately limited the impact it could have in the larger political sphere. In its absence, communist and other progressive parties that favored a two-state solution soon dominated the national political arena. The largest was the Democratic Front of Peace and Equality (DFPE—also known by its Hebrew acronym, Hadash, and its Arabic shorthand, Jabha). Comprised of Rakah members and noncommunist activists, it won 50 percent of the Palestinian vote when it first ran in the 1977 Knesset elections. In 1983 it was joined by the Progressive List for Peace (PLP), led by attorney and former Rakah activist Muhammad Mi'ari, which included radical Jewish leftists and former Abna' al-Balad members who disagreed with the leadership's refusal to participate in Knesset elections.[25] The DFPE and the PLP were bitter rivals and campaigned harshly against each other in the 1984 Knesset elections. But when it came to their positions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, their positions were virtually identical. Both supported the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside Israel, and both called for mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO of each other's right to self-determination, which was to be achieved through direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO.[26] In the 1984 elections the PLP received 18 percent of the Arab vote while the DFPE received 33 percent, totaling 51 percent of the Arab vote.[27] Abna' al-Balad continued to support a single democratic state in all of historic Palestine, but by the late-1980s the emergence of a Palestinian and regional consensus around two states pushed it to the margins, leading it to recede from the political scene.[28]

By the eve of the First Intifada, the political consensus among the dominant Palestinian political parties in Israel rested on the following pillars: "(1) support for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under PLO leadership; (2) full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel; (3) that all political acts would be within the constraints of Israeli law."[29] But the political consensus of '48 Palestinians as a whole was not as clear-cut. In a nationally representative poll of the Palestinian minority taken by Israeli pollsters in December 1987, only 28 percent of respondents preferred the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, while 33 percent opted for a binational state, and 10 percent wished to see a Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine.[30] But in the same survey, when asked to rank their options for "*realistic* expectations," 78 percent of respondents favored "the establishment of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories with no modifications to the 1967 borders."[31]

In short, the transformation of the PLO's position towards an acceptance of the two-state solution shifted the balance of power among Palestinian factions inside the Green Line, lending greater weight to those who argued in favor of establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. The transformations brought about by the First Intifada and the Palestinian Declaration of Independence would soon solidify the political consensus around the two-state solution.

1988–2000: THE TWO-STATE CONSENSUS

The First Intifada, which broke out in December 1987, brought renewed international attention to the plight of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It also gave new urgency to their demand for statehood in the Occupied Territories. That urgency, coupled with the PLO's desire to stay relevant in a rapidly changing international environment, led it to formalize what had been its de facto stance for several years.

In November 1988, the Palestine National Council (the PLO's highest decision-making body) adopted a series of resolutions, including a Palestinian Declaration of Independence that formalized its vision of a comprehensive two-state solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.[32] While the Declaration of Independence did not specify the borders of the Palestinian state, the follow-up political communiqué called for "the withdrawal of Israel from all the Palestinian and Arab territories it occupied in 1967, including Arab Jerusalem," and "the annulment of all measures of annexation and appropriation and the removal of settlements established by Israel in the Palestinian and Arab territories since 1967."[33] No mention was made in either the Declaration of Independence or in the follow-up political communiqué of the Palestinians inside the Green Line.

By formally adopting a two-state formulation, the PLO's new policy prioritized the aspirations of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, effectively excising the '48 Palestinians from the Palestinian national project.

As a result, the Intifada and the PNC resolutions "resurrected the Green Line in the consciousness of both Palestinian communities."[34] For Palestinians inside the Green Line, the PLO's Declaration of Independence and recognition of Israel sent a clear message that their political path would necessitate adopting a program that differed significantly from that of Palestinians under occupation.

As a result, many Palestinians concluded that their future lay within the Israeli state, and that integrating into the Israeli state would not harm the Palestinian cause.[35] In the 1992 Knesset elections, for the first time in nearly twenty years, a majority of Palestinian voters (53%) voted for Zionist parties, and five Arab Knesset members joined the Labor and Meretz parties to form a coalition government. But while the Rabin government loosened some of the laws restricting freedom of expression and accepted the establishment of some Palestinian social organizations in Israel, it made no meaningful concessions to the Palestinians citizens' more substantive demands regarding political and economic equality. In other words, a large number of Palestinian leaders in Israel were co-opted by the Israeli government without achieving material improvements in the conditions of their communities.[36]

Therefore, by the time the Declaration of Principles was signed in September 1993, Palestinian citizens of Israel had already been conditioned to believe that a two-state arrangement was the best solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and that they needed to stake their political claims within the Israeli state. Rather than marking a watershed moment, the Oslo Accords in many ways marked a return to earlier calls to integrate '48 Palestinians into the Israeli body politic, albeit in ways that severed them from Palestinians across the Green Line. The early- to mid-1990s saw Israeli government policies that allowed greater freedom of movement and expression, while Zionist parties (especially Labor and Meretz) sought to expand their "Arab sectors." In response, many Palestinian citizens became convinced that waiting for a comprehensive solution to the Palestine issue was futile and began undertaking acts that were once deemed unthinkable, such as joining Israeli military service, celebrating Israeli Independence Day (including raising the Israeli flag), and appearing with Israeli Jewish symbols in art, sport, cultural, and political venues.[37] Palestinian citizens who participated in these activities argued that with the PLO engaged in direct talks with Israel, it was only a matter of time before an independent Palestinian state would be established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel's security concerns would be alleviated, and they would therefore be able to enjoy full integration and equality within the Israeli state. They would soon be disappointed.

The PLO's recognition of Israel effectively took off the table the question of Israel's right to exist, at least within the Green Line. With that matter settled, a discursive shift took place within Israeli society, whereby Jewish Israelis began to emphasize the state's Jewish character more clearly than before. While the Israeli right had stressed Israel's Jewishness for decades, the formulation of Israel

as a Jewish state was now articulated increasingly by the Zionist left, which had previously sidestepped questions about Israel's ethnic character. In other words, "the Oslo political climate legitimized ethnic conceptions of the state . . . allowing the Left to be vocal about its stance on Israel's Jewish essence."[38] The Zionist left's growing emphasis on Israel's Jewish character, even as it was trying to recruit Palestinian citizens into the Israeli body politic, highlighted the limits of assimilationism for Palestinians living inside the Green Line.

This discursive shift also led some Palestinian activists to conclude that the communist-led DFPE and other existing Arab parties were insufficiently prepared to address these changing political conditions. The notion that Palestinian citizens could be assimilated into Israel as full and equal citizens by working with the Zionist left (a key stance of the DFPE and its supporters) did not accord with the Zionist left's own shift towards privileging Israel's character as a Jewish state. Concerned by the growing push towards assimilating Palestinian citizens in ways that stripped them of their Palestinian identity, several former Abna' al-Balad activists decided to create a movement that would affirm their people's indivisibility from the Palestinian people, while simultaneously utilizing the political tools available to them as Israeli citizens. As former Abna' al-Balad leader Awad Abdel Fattah explained, "For the first time we [as a group] decided to take our citizenship seriously, but in combination with our nationalist identity. Because even if you call for equality, without focusing on adhering to the nationalist identity and aspirations, I think you'll get nowhere. You'll get civil rights, but you won't get national rights."[39]

In 1995 Abdel Fattah and several Palestinian nationalists and former communists established the National Democratic Assembly (NDA) party (also known by its Arabic name, Hizb al-Tajammu' al-Watani, and its Hebrew acronym, Balad). According to NDA leader 'Azmi Bishara, one of their key concerns was what they called the accelerating "process of Israelization," by which they meant "the marginalization of Palestinians in Israeli society and a gradual joining of Zionist parties."[40] Having accepted the two-state solution as the international and local consensus at the time, the NDA demanded equal rights for Palestinians within Israel at both the civic and—more importantly—national levels. In doing so, the party challenged the trend toward characterizing Israel as a Jewish state, adopting instead a platform that called for Israel to be "a state of all its citizens."[41]

The NDA's debut onto the political scene came at a time when hopes that the Oslo process would bring about both a truly independent Palestinian state on the 1967 lines and a collective improvement to the lives of Palestinians in Israel were already starting to dim. In October 1995, one month before his assassination, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reassured fellow Knesset members that the Palestinians' hoped-for state would be "an entity which is less than a state," while the permanent borders of Israel would be "beyond the lines which existed before the Six Day War," and would encompass a "united Jerusalem, which will

include both Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev [settlements], as the capital of Israel, under Israeli sovereignty."[42] Not only did a truly sovereign Palestinian state seem further away than ever, but most of the economic improvements and legal changes that would have put Palestinian citizens of Israel on equal footing with Jewish Israelis did not come to fruition.[43]

Seeking to highlight these concerns, the NDP ran in the 1996 Knesset elections for the first time, joining with DFPE in order to meet the threshold of votes. These elections also saw the debut of the United Arab List (UAL, or al-Qa'ima al-'arabiyya al-muwahhada, also known by its Hebrew acronym, Ra'am), which was comprised of members of the southern branch of the Islamic movement and ran on a joint list with the Arab Democratic Party (ADP, or al-Hizb al-'arabi al-dimuqrati). Both the NDP-Hadash and the UAL-ADP lists called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 lines and stressed equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel; they gained three and four Knesset seats, respectively. But their demands received little attention in the Knesset, especially as newly elected Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed coalitions with far-right and religious Zionist parties whose leaders had loudly denounced both the Oslo talks and the integration of Palestinian citizens into Israel. Palestinian citizens in turn became increasingly skeptical that assimilation into Israel, even on Israeli terms, would lead to greater equality.

Building on that skepticism, the NDA began floating the idea of a binational state. In 1997, NDA leader and Knesset member 'Azmi Bishara predicted that "when it becomes apparent that an independent and democratic state occupying every inch of the West Bank and Gaza Strip free of Israeli settlements is not realizable either in this generation or the next, it will be time for the Palestinians to reexamine their entire strategy. We then will begin to discuss a binational state solution that will do away with the system of ethnic discrimination that is in place now." Pressed further, Bishara elaborated:

> It means that the Palestinians in the territories and the Palestinians in Israel will form a single political unit within a binational state. There will be a Jewish political unit and a Palestinian-Arab political unit, which together will constitute a Jewish-Arab polity with two separate legislative chambers as well as a common parliament. I believe this must become our demand in the future. I am not referring to a democratic secular state but to a binational state, a federal or confederal system comprising two ethnonational communities. Only in such a context will it be possible to resolve such problems as the refugees and the settlements. Settlements no longer will pose an insurmountable obstacle within the context of a single binational state: If the Israelis should choose to settle in the West Bank, then so be it; we, too, will have the right to set up residence in Jaffa, for instance.[44]

Bishara's early forays into discussions of binationalism came at a time when the Palestinian political consensus in Israel still stressed the need to work within the existing political parameters. In order to highlight the limits of those

parameters, during the 1999 election campaign Bishara nominated himself for the position of Israeli prime minister, knowing that he did not have a chance of winning. The move garnered much media attention and offered Bishara a platform to highlight the fundamental lack of equality in Israel and to call for a shift to a binational state. In an interview Bishara stressed that it was still an academic discussion at that point, since no political momentum was mobilizing behind the idea, but he emphasized that this discussion was the first step toward a larger movement.[45] Bishara withdrew his nomination shortly before the election in the face of large-scale Palestinian mobilization to ensure that Netanyahu would be defeated by Labor candidate Ehud Barak. Barak campaigned on a slogan of "a state for all," receiving 95 percent of the Palestinian vote as a result.[46] But Barak's refusal to take seriously any of the demands of Palestinian citizens led growing numbers of Palestinians inside the Green Line to wonder if the political calculations they had made during the 1990s were accurate.

Largely absent during this period of the "two-state consensus" were formulations of Palestinian liberation that invoked the conceptual framework of decolonization. The PLO leadership framed national liberation as the establishment of a Palestinian state in the 1967 territories, while the Palestinian political leadership inside the Green Line framed liberation as achieving true equality within the Israeli state. The question of what liberation meant for Palestinians in exile remained unaddressed beyond vague references to the right of return. But the violence and trauma of the next several years would lead Palestinian activists on both sides of the Green Line to reassess this absence in their political thinking and would lead some to reintroduce decolonization as a guiding conceptual framework.

THE SECOND INTIFADA AND A RETURN TO DECOLONIZING DISCOURSES

In the months before the Second Intifada broke out in September 2000, Palestinian citizens of Israel continued to receive mixed messages as to whether they would be integrated into Israel as equals. In March, after a five-year legal ordeal, the Israeli High Court ruled that the Qa'dan family could not be prevented from moving into the predominantly Jewish Katzir community just because they were Palestinian citizens. Even though the court's ruling left plenty of room for the Katzir Community Cooperative to maneuver its way out of implementation, it nonetheless drew an outcry among Knesset members on the right who declared that the ruling marked "a black day for the Jewish people."[47]

At the same time, '48 Palestinians felt increasingly abandoned by the Labor Party. Prime Minister Barak refused to include any Arab parties as part of his coalition or to meet with the High Follow-Up Committee (the foremost representative body of Palestinians in Israel) during his first several months in office. The collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian talks at Camp David II that summer, which Barak blamed solely on the Palestinians, furthered their disillusionment.

By early September, tensions were already rising, not only between Palestinian citizens and the Israeli state, but also between Palestinians under occupation and the Israeli military. Thus, when Likud Knesset member Ariel Sharon walked onto al-Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount) surrounded by a bevy of armed Israeli guards on September 28, the provocative move triggered Palestinian protests that erupted into the Second (Al-Aqsa) Intifada. Dozens of Palestinians were killed in the first days of the new uprising, including twelve-year-old Muhammad al-Durrah, whose televised screams sparked international outcry. To protest the killings and signal support for their people on the other side of the Green Line, '48 Palestinians declared a general strike on October 1. During the protests that ensued over the following week, Israeli security forces killed thirteen unarmed Palestinians (twelve citizens of Israel and one from the West Bank). The killings were a major blow to those Palestinians who believed that their Israeli citizenship protected them from lethal force. They were also a severe blow to the argument that the future for Palestinians inside the Green Line lay in greater assimilation within Israel.

Following the killings, the Israeli government established the Orr Commission to examine the conditions of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. The commission's final report, issued in September 2003, marked the first time that an official Israeli body acknowledged that the creation of Israel as a Jewish state had inherently led to the unequal treatment of Palestinian citizens. The report's introduction framed the '48 Palestinians as an "indigenous minority" whose feelings of injustice were "fed by the obvious existence of collective rights for the Jewish [people]."[48] Yet despite this unprecedented acknowledgement by an official Israeli body, the report's conclusion offered only vague recommendations.

As a result, the Orr Commission's report did little to improve the conditions of Palestinians within the Green Line. Instead, the Israeli government, led by a series of far-right and center-right parties, passed laws that were even more discriminatory against Palestinian citizens than in the past. In 2003, the Knesset passed an amendment to the Citizenship Law that prevented Palestinian citizens of Israel from bringing in their Palestinian spouses from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 2007, the law was expanded to apply to spouses from the "enemy states" of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.[49]

In part these laws were promulgated to try to counteract the rise of a new generation of more assertive Palestinian citizens who were emerging onto the political scene. Born during the last quarter of the twentieth century, they came of age during the tumultuous years of the Second Intifada and had become "disillusioned with the prospect of ever becoming equal citizens in Israel."[50] Rather, they became increasingly vocal in asserting their identity as Palestinians, including spearheading collective actions that commemorated events significant to the Palestinian people as a whole, including Nakba Day and Land Day.[51] In doing so, they were part of a larger shift in Palestinian discourse and strategic thinking, one that sought to reframe Israeli-Palestinian relations in terms of colonialism—and more

specifically settler-colonialism—and that had longer lineages and wider implications than the "two-state solution" discourses.[52]

This renewed attention to the colonial paradigm emerged in three documents issued by Palestinian NGOs in Israel in 2006 and 2007 that laid out a vision of what the relationship between Palestinian citizens and the Israeli state should be. Two of the documents explicitly framed the issue in terms of colonialism: the Haifa Declaration described the Zionist movement as having initiated a "settler-colonial project in Palestine," while the Future Vision document described Israel as "executing internal colonial policies against its Palestinian Arab citizens."[53] Though they differed slightly from one another in terms of the specific political entity they wished to see established, they stressed that "Israel should be a democratic binational state that guarantees full equality between Arabs and Jews within the Green Line."[54]

Although the Vision Documents (as they were collectively known) formally recognized the state of Israel within the Green Line, they were nonetheless met with widespread hostility by Jewish Israelis, who could not countenance a narrative of Israel's foundation that differed so wildly from their own.[55] Especially galling for many Israelis was the explicit positioning of the Palestinian citizens of Israel—along with the Palestinian people—as victims of Zionist and Israeli colonialism. Moreover, the documents were issued at a time in which more wide-scale and organized commemoration of the Nakba by Palestinian groups within the Green Line, such as the Association for the Defense of Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, were taking place. In response, in 2011 the Knesset passed a "Nakba Law" that criminalized active commemorations of Palestinians' displacement by Israel in 1948, thereby indicating that the Israeli authorities, too, saw a link between commemorations of the Nakba and the shift towards a centering of decolonizing discourses.[56]

But the law had a limited effect in counteracting the rise of these decolonizing discourses. A year after it was passed, Palestinian citizens marked the Nakba with a general strike, symbolizing the growing salience of the Nakba as central to the "collective consciousness" of '48 Palestinians.[57] In short, the Nakba has emerged as one of the primary markers of the shift back to decolonizing discourses and along with it, a return to the idea that all of historic Palestine needs to be liberated from the Zionist project. While this view continued to gain traction over the following decade, not everyone agrees that it is the best way forward.

TWO STATES OR ONE?

Bishara's 1997 prediction that Palestinians would start to call for a binational state once the two-state solution no longer seemed viable is gaining traction in some circles. With widespread decrees that the two-state solution is dead, some members of the nationalist camp are thinking once again of alternative ways in which

Jews and Palestinians can live together equally in the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. In 2008, for example, Abna' al-Balad introduced a revised political platform that has consistently reaffirmed its call for the establishment a single democratic state on all of Palestine.[58]

New initiatives are also emerging, such as the Popular Movement for One Democratic State on Historic Palestine, which was established in May 2013. Most of the group's fifty-some members hail from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but it also includes leaders from Nazareth, along with Palestinians and Israelis living abroad. The Popular Movement argues that since there is already a one-state reality characterized by Jewish Israeli supremacy, "establishing one democratic state on the land of historical (mandatory) Palestine, a democratic state for all its inhabitants, based on a democratic constitution, the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantee freedom, democracy and equality of rights without discrimination based on race, religion, gender, colour, language or political or non-political opinion, national or social origin, wealth, place of birth or any other status—establishing this state is, indeed, a just and feasible solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."[59]

In response to these growing calls for a one-state solution, proponents of the two-state solution argue that it is not wise to abandon the goal of an independent Palestinian state, especially after so much Palestinian political capital has been expended to gain international support for it. As DFPE leader Ayman Odeh explained in 2015:

> I still believe that the most realistic and possible solution in the foreseeable future is the establishment of a Palestinian state in 1967, and I think it is a grave mistake to abandon this cause and go to the idea of a single state, because in practice we succeeded in persuading the whole world, as well as a slice within Israeli society, of the two-state solution. We cannot abandon it now and move on to talking about Haifa, Acre and Jaffa. We don't have the constituency for that. I personally cannot say to my people who suffer from the occupation on a daily basis, "Wait for the one-state solution."[60]

Odeh's argument bears a striking resemblance to those of previous Palestinian communists regarding pragmatism and the expeditiousness of the two-state solution. But there is a key difference: by speaking of "my people" who suffer under occupation, he demonstrates a discursive shift in which there is no longer a distinction being made between Palestinians in Israel and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. According to Odeh, they are all one people whose futures are intertwined. This shift is important because it signals the success of the decolonial paradigm in positioning the Palestinians inside the Green Line as part of the Palestinian people as a whole, with a shared future, despite the call for two states.

Odeh's comments also indicate that while there is broad agreement that Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line share a future together, there is little agree-

ment on how to operationalize that sentiment through existing political structures. In a poll conducted in 2015, 56 percent of '48 Palestinians and 55 percent of '67 Palestinians wanted to see Palestinians inside the Green Line play a greater role in the Palestinian national movement.[61] But when given several options for implementing this idea, there was no consensus. For example, while 73 percent of '67 Palestinians saw a need for Palestinian citizens of Israel to have real representation in Palestinian national political institutions, only 41 percent of Palestinians inside the Green Line saw such a need.[62]

Part of the reluctance among some '48 Palestinians to participate more robustly in Palestinian institutions is likely due to fears of Israeli punitive measures, given the state's long history and ongoing rhetoric accusing Palestinians in Israel of being a fifth column. It is also likely related to their experiences fighting for representation in Israeli institutions, which they would not want to give up. But we cannot overlook the role of the Palestinian national leadership's own disarray and lack of engagement with the Palestinians inside the Green Line. While there have been some meetings between Palestinian MKs and various PLO and PA leaders over the last few decades, there has yet to emerge a clear articulation of how Palestinians inside the Green Line fit into a broader, representative Palestinian national vision of the future. Nor has there been an accounting of how and why Palestinian citizens of Israel were excluded from the Oslo process in the first place.

This lack of accounting is also evident among the Palestinian leadership in Israel. In 2017, NDA Secretary General Mtanes Shehadeh called for a more critical appraisal of how the Palestinians' initial support of the Oslo framework undermined their project for greater equality in Israel while simultaneously marginalizing them from the Palestinian people as a whole. More important, he argued, was the need for Palestinians inside the Green Line to reassess the wisdom of trying to gain Palestinian liberation by working with the Zionist left: "Can a Zionist left that is part of a colonial project offer a solution that accords with the Palestinians' natural rights? Do we support and stand by the Zionist left in accordance with the political ceiling that it poses? [These are especially important questions] since we are aware today that the Zionist left does not propose a project that is fundamentally different from the Zionist right-wing project, but may differ to some extent from the religious-right settlement project."[63] Shehadeh's placement of the Israeli left within the Israeli colonial structures that have impacted Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line further indicates a more assertive discourse of decolonization among some '48 Palestinians. His questions also draw attention to the changes that took place in the Israeli political landscape during the 1990s, after the PLO officially recognized Israel, in which the Israeli demand shifted to recognizing Israel as a Jewish state. As noted above, members of the Zionist left advocated for a two-state solution on the basis that it would preserve the Jewish and democratic character of the Israeli state. For Shehadeh, this solution is unacceptable because it amounts to a continuation of the Zionist

colonial project in which Palestinian citizens of Israel are relegated to permanent second-class status.

This more robust decolonizing rhetoric came at a time when Israel moved towards embracing its settler-colonialism even more clearly than before. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of this was the passage of the Jewish Nation-State Basic Law in July 2018. The law describes Israel as "the historic national home of the Jewish people," a people that alone "exercises its natural, cultural, and historic right to self-determination." Moreover, according to the law, "the state views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage it and to promote and to consolidate its establishment."[64] The law makes no mention of Palestinian citizens' historic rights or connections to the land, thereby undermining claims that it is a democratic state. In addition, by refusing to define Israel's borders yet encouraging Jewish settlement in "the Land of Israel," the law provides legal cover for Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, making the establishment of a viable, sovereign, contiguous Palestinian state impossible. Together, these two aspects of the Jewish Nation-State Basic Law have demonstrated to many Palestinian citizens that they will not be able to attain full equality in a Zionist state of Israel, even if a Palestinian mini-state were to be established in parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In this climate of settler-colonial expansion, several proposals challenging the Oslo-based two-state consensus have been gaining ground. In addition to the Popular Movement for One Democratic State, which was launched in 2013, the One Democratic State Campaign (ODSC) has been holding planning meetings and plenary sessions since January 2018. Unlike its one-state predecessor, OSDC's core members are primarily Palestinians and Jews based inside the Green Line, and one of its leaders, Awad Abdel Fattah, has a long history of nationalist organizing as a former member of Abna' al-Balad and the former NDA secretary general. The OSDC envisions a future in which, "within a constitutional democracy in which all citizens enjoy a common citizenship, one common parliament and thoroughly equal civil rights, constitutional protection would also be granted to national, ethnic or religious collectivities desiring to retain their various identities and cultural lives if they so choose." Such a structure "allows people to move out of rigidly bounded ethnonational blocs into a more integrated, fluid and shared form of civil society."[65] These civil society groups are continuing to articulate their views, and while their advocates are heartened by the support they have received from Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, they readily acknowledge that these positions are still in the minority, at least among Israeli Jews.

The greatest willingness to accept such proposals can be found among the Palestinians inside the Green Line. A December 2017 survey found support for a number of possible outcomes. While support for the traditional two-state solution was strongest, at 83 percent, majorities also supported the idea of a one-state solution (59 percent) as well as a confederation arrangement with

Israel (70 percent).[66] The results indicate a desire among '48 Palestinians as a whole for a solution that would guarantee their political rights and those of their fellow Palestinians.

What is lacking is a consensus among the Palestinian leadership on both sides of the Green Line on how to move forward. As of this writing, Palestinian factionalism between Fatah and Hamas continues, with neither party able to overcome the structural impediments imposed by the Israeli occupation. As for the leadership inside the Green Line, there was considerable optimism when the Joint List was formed in 2015 to run in Knesset elections, bringing together the DFPE, NDA, and other smaller parties. However, with the continued dominance of Likud and other right-wing parties in the Knesset, and in the absence of a deeper conversation about how best to move forward, the Joint List has not been able to do much in terms of moving toward a clear political vision. At the same time, some younger Palestinian activists and intellectuals are questioning the wisdom for directing so much energy toward seeking inclusion in the Israeli body politic. They argue (in language strikingly similar to that of Abna' al-Balad in the 1970s) that focusing on electoral politics grants unwarranted legitimacy to the Israeli state and limits the political horizons of Palestinian citizens at a time when integration into Israel as equal is becoming evermore elusive.[67]

Even more elusive are the prospects for a viable Palestinian state, as Israel and the United States actively work to undermine any momentum toward full Palestinian sovereignty. In October 2018 the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv University published a "Political-Security Framework for the Israeli-Palestinian Arena" that envisioned a Palestinian "state" in a mere 65 percent of the West Bank, excluding the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Israel would "continue construction within the existing settlement blocs," and no settlers would be forcibly removed.[68] In January 2020 the Trump administration proposed a Palestinian "state" that would have neither contiguity nor sovereignty. Moreover, it floated the idea that borders could be redrawn such that the triangle communities in Israel would be transferred to the Palestinian state.[69] This move, which would potentially strip some 250,000 Palestinians of their Israeli citizenship, was the clearest indication yet that the "two-state solution" as envisioned by right-wing Israeli and American administrations would not result in the integration of '48 Palestinian citizens into Israel as equal citizens.

CONCLUSION

Since 1948, champions of Palestinian rights in Israel have largely fallen into two camps: the communist camp and the nationalist camp. While the communist camp has focused on decolonizing the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967, the nationalist camp has expanded its decolonizing discourses to include all of historic Palestine. Beginning in the early 1970s, the two-state solution

championed by the communist camp became the dominant position among '48 Palestinians, but not all Palestinian intellectuals and activists supported the idea of two states. Nationalists associated with the group Abna' al-Balad provided the most clear-eyed advocacy of a single democratic state in Palestine, but their reach was largely limited to university campuses. Shifts in the PLO's official position towards endorsement of the two-state solution gave more weight to advocates of a Palestinian state.

The 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence, the 1993 Oslo Accords, and subsequent negotiations between Israel and the PLO seemingly took the binational-state option off the table. However, numerous political and cultural developments since 2000 have allowed for the gradual re-emergence and development of alternative proposals to the two-state solution, particularly the idea of a single democratic state. This has corresponded with a broader identification of '48 Palestinians as an inextricable part of the Palestinian people, as well as a growing salience of decolonization as a conceptual framework among Palestinians as a whole in order to counteract numerous forms of Zionist and Israeli settler-colonialism on both sides of the Green Line. However, in the absence of a clear Palestinian national political program or decision-making body that incorporates Palestinians in the '48 lands, there is no clear way to translate these sentiments into political agency.

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