

Palestine Papers 4

The Entrenchment and Expansion of Political Persecution against Palestinians in Israel

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Persecution against Palestinians in Israel
on the Gaza Strip**

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Introduction

Israel has been pressing ahead with its genocidal war against Gaza and its people since it resumed fighting on March 18, 2025. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, from the start of the conflict on October 7, 2023 until mid-June 2025, Israel's attacks had left 55,207 people dead and 127,821 wounded.¹ The Israeli army has also continued to escalate its assault on the West Bank, through incursions, raids, arrests and home demolitions, forcing out more than 50,000 refugees from camps in the Jenin and Tulkarm governorates and the Nur Shams refugee camp.²

Amid its ever-escalating war on the territories it occupied in 1967, Israel has also sought to silence Palestinians within the Green Line, conducting arbitrary arrests and repressing protests and demonstrations. Israeli state institutions, in collaboration with the Israeli media—and to a large extent, Israeli society—continue to incite against Arab citizens.

In June 2024, Mada al-Carmel published an extensive report on the starkest manifestations of racism against Arab citizens of Israel from the outbreak of the Gaza war until March 2024. These included racist statements by leading politicians and decision-makers, artists, intellectuals, media personalities, and members of the Israeli general public. The report also covered racist policies and practices against Arab citizens by Israel's security, judicial, and academic institutions, and legislation enacted by the Knesset (Israel's parliament).

This paper also examines racist policies and practices of silencing, repression, and political persecution against Palestinians inside the Green Line, during the period from April 2024 to May 2025. It finds that government policies toward Palestinian citizens have escalated over the past year, and that Israel has expanded them to include the use of administrative detention against political leaders and the suppression of freedom of opinion among journalists, artists, and political leaders. These go hand in hand with existing tools such as banning protests and demonstrations, suppressing any opposition to the war, killing, and destruction, and persecution on social media.

Israel has continued and even increased its resort to these tools even as the security crisis that the Israeli government and Israeli society have used as a pretext for their policies toward Palestinians in Israel has eased, and despite growing public protests for a prisoner and hostage exchange deal with Hamas. They also continue despite the calm that has prevailed within Arab society in Israel since the start of the war on Gaza.

The paper concludes that Israel's policies of repression and silencing dissent, justified

1. Arab48. (2025, June 13). War on Gaza: Evacuation Orders Issued in Khan Yunis and the Resistance Announces Operations on Several Fronts. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

2. Arab48. (2025, June 13). The West Bank under Fire: A Young Man is killed near Jenin, on Grounds of Allegedly Carrying out a Shooting. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

by the ongoing state of emergency declared on October 7, 2023, reflect the underlying logic of its treatment of Arab citizens. The state of emergency has become a constant feature of the establishment's approach toward Palestinian society, reinforced by the continued use of wartime measures in place since October 7, 2023, and their expansion to include new policies such as administrative detention. The paper argues that there is a clear danger that these measures will become entrenched and permanent, particularly given the prevailing sense of complacency and fear within Arab society, in the face of ongoing intimidation. Rising racism and escalating efforts to silence dissent further reveal how readily the mechanisms and mentality of military rule can be revived, and how consistently Palestinians are treated as outsiders and enemies of the state's citizenry.

Rising Racism and the Silencing of Dissent

In recent months, the Israeli establishment has escalated its policies of muzzling and suppressing opposition to the war, in place since the events of October 7, 2023. Racism and attempts to silence dissent are not limited to official institutions and government agencies, nor to the judiciary's weakening of safeguards to facilitate the suppression of free expression. These are also evident within broader Israeli society, including civil society organizations.

Using the Law to Suppress Freedom of Expression

Just days after the war on Gaza began, the Israeli Attorney General announced that police were no longer required to obtain the State Attorney's prior approval before arresting or investigating a person suspected of incitement to terrorism or affiliation with a terrorist organization. Security forces were granted exceptional powers to launch investigations into cases of suspected public support for Hamas without following this procedure, abolishing longstanding safeguards.³ Additionally, the State Attorney authorized the police to submit court approval to extend detention until the end of legal proceedings, a highly unusual measure for cases involving expression of opinions. This measure facilitated the police's arrest of hundreds of Palestinian citizens for investigation.

Between 2018 and 2022, before the start of the war on Gaza, the Israeli police opened 283 investigations under the Counter-Terrorism Law and filed 88 indictments, 70 of which were against Arab citizens.⁴ From the beginning of 2023 until October 6, 2023, the police received 160 reports of incitement-related offenses.⁵ By contrast, from the start of the war until November 26, 2023 —just a month and a half— 269 investigations

3. Habbas, Walid. (2024, December 16). Persecution of Palestinians within Israel during the War on Gaza... Official Israeli data. [Madar](#). [In Arabic]

4. Hershkovitz, Roni. (2023, October 23). Data on Offenses of Incitement to Terrorism and Identification with a Terrorist Organization. Research and Information Center. [Knesset](#). [In Hebrew]

5. Habbas, Walid. Reference No. 3.

were opened on suspicion of incitement and supporting a terrorist organization and 86 indictments were filed, through expedited procedures.⁶

In December 2024, the Israeli Knesset's Science and Technology Committee received a report on the authorities' handling of so-called "crimes of incitement to terrorism and expressions of sympathy for terrorist organizations" in the years 2023 and 2024. The report indicates that the Police Investigations Division received 1,542 reports in the first three weeks after October 7, 2023. Since October 2023, the State Attorney's Office approved 611 requests to open investigations and rejected 292. Furthermore, the police opened 105 investigations without prior approval from the State Attorney's Office, as per legislative amendments.⁷ The report also noted that the highest number of investigations and indictments filed for "online incitement offenses" was recorded in 2023,⁸ with cases involving Palestinian citizens constituting 92% of the total, with only 8% involving Jews.⁹ This situation persisted into 2024, albeit at a slightly lower rate.

In all 42 indictments filed against Palestinian citizens, the defendants were found guilty. Israeli courts issued harsh sentences of up to 18 months in prison. Suspects arrested under the Counter-Terrorism Law often faced physical violence, humiliation, verbal abuse, and detention in the "security wings" of prisons.¹⁰ In violation of legal safeguards to protect detainees' rights, the police released news of arrests along with photos of suspects, in a further humiliation.¹¹ By contrast, not a single indictment was filed against a Jewish suspect,¹² even though digital rights group *7amleh* found more than 12 million instances of violent and inciting content posted by Israelis against Palestinians in general, documented in the organization's Hebrew Violence Index for 2024.¹³

6. Ynet News. (2023, November 26). Since the Outbreak of the War: 269 Cases of Incitement and Encouragement of Terrorism have been opened, and 86 Indictments have been filed. [Ynet](#). [In Hebrew]

7. Habbas, Walid. Reference No. 3.

8. To read the full report, see: Hershkovitz, Roni. (2024, December 17). Data on Offenses of Incitement to Terrorism or Cursing and Offenses Based on Racial Motives. [Knesset Research and Information Center](#). [In Hebrew]

9. Hadash. (2024, December 16). Hardline Right-Wing Government: 92% of Incitement Cases Opened are against Arabs; All Cases Ended in Convictions. [Hadash– the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality](#). [In Hebrew]

10. Editorial Board. (2024, October 10). Adalah: "A Year into the War on Gaza: Deepening Apartheid and Undermining the Citizenship of Palestinians in Israel". Blogs. [Institute for Palestine Studies](#). [In Arabic]

11. Association for Civil Rights in Israel. (2024, October). A Year of Neglect: The Collapse of Human Rights Advocacy in Israel and the West Bank in the Shadow of War. [Association for Civil Rights in Israel](#). [In Hebrew]

12. Ibid.

13. Qa'adan, Muhammad. (2025, January). Hashtag Palestine 2024: The War on Gaza, Digital Rights Violations, and Weaponization of AI. [7amleh- The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media](#). P. 16.

The State Puts Lawyers and Human Rights Defenders in the Crosshairs

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir attacked Arab judges, describing them in a tweet as "enemies from within" after an Arab judge ordered the release of an Arab political activist who had been detained and charged with incitement in the early days of the war. In response to criticism from the judiciary, which called his tweet offensive, Ben-Gvir suggested that rather than attempting to educate public representatives, the judiciary should hold judges who show sympathy for supporters of terrorism accountable.¹⁴

Such incitement has not targeted Arab judges alone. Arab lawyers and human rights activists have faced similar persecution as part of a broader campaign by Israeli organizations, including the far-right group B'tsalmo, aimed at intimidating and silencing anti-war voices, from political and human rights groups to student associations. Following a complaint filed by B'tsalmo director Shai Glick, the Israel Bar Association initiated disciplinary proceedings against attorneys Fouad Sultani (from al-Tira) and Amal Ourabi (from Deir Hanna) over posts on Facebook and X in which they voiced opposition to the war on Gaza. A separate complaint was filed to the Bar Association against attorney Maha Ighbaria (from Umm al-Fahm) for posts she made after October 7, 2023. As a result, Ighbaria faces possible suspension from the Bar.¹⁵ This was followed by the arrest of attorney Sari Huriyyah, secretary of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Jabha/ Hadash) political party in Shefa-Amr, on suspicion of publishing several "inciting posts" in November 2023.¹⁶

The arrests of attorney Ahmed Khalifa and Muhammed Jabareen (both activists from Umm al-Fahm) are another example of the discriminatory use of prolonged detention against Arab citizens on charges related to freedom of expression and organizing demonstrations against the war. The two men were detained for four and eight months, respectively, for participating in a demonstration at the start of the war in October 2023, and were charged with "incitement to terrorism" and "affiliation with a terrorist organization" under the Counter-Terrorism Law. Khalifa was released in February 2024, followed by Jabareen in June 2024, both under stringent conditions.¹⁷

14. Almog, Tamar, et al. (2023, October 31). Ben-Gvir Called a Judge an "Enemy from Within", Criticized by the Judiciary. [Kan Channel](#). [In Hebrew]

15. Haj-Yahya, Diaa. (2024, July 15). After October 7: Persecution of Arab Lawyers Opposing the War on Gaza. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

16. Arab48. (2023, November 8). Political Persecution in the Shadow of the War on Gaza: New Indictments against Five Activists. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

17. Shihadeh, Mtanes. (2024, June). Fragile Citizenship: Racism and Oppression against Arab Citizens in Israel during the War on Gaza. [Mada al-Carmel](#).

Expressing Opposition to the War as Grounds for Arrest

Since the resumption of the war on Gaza in March 2025, Israel has dramatically stepped up its repression and silencing of Arab voices, targeting journalists, artists, and prominent political figures, and expanding its use of administrative detention. Following an intense campaign of incitement led by Israeli media outlets and extremist Jewish groups, police raided the home of journalist Saeed Hasanein in Shefa-Amr on February 25, 2025, and detained him for 78 days. The State Prosecutor charged him with several offenses, including —as per the indictment— "contact with a foreign agent and expressing solidarity with a terrorist organization, after he expressed solidarity and praise, in media interviews, for Hamas's actions and treatment of Israeli detainees, as well as praising Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah for their support of the Palestinians".¹⁸

Hasanein's arrest came after right-wing Channel 14 broadcast a televised interview he gave to Al-Aqsa TV on February 23.¹⁹ B'tsalmo then filed complaints to the police, the Attorney General, the government's Legal Advisor, and the head of the Israeli Football Association, demanding that Hasanein be arrested, "thrown in prison, interrogated, and brought to justice", for allegedly "praising terrorism and supporting Hamas", and referring to the Israeli army as "the army of the enemy".²⁰ Channel 14's broadcast of the interview was followed by a string of inflammatory headlines in Israeli newspapers and a series of punitive measures against him Hasanein by state authorities.

In an article entitled "The Scandalous Statement— and the Dismissal",²¹ journalist Shimon Elbaz wrote on the Ynet news website: "Hasanein's statements in the interview he gave to Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV—which is banned in Israel— were harsh, appalling, and opposed to the State of Israel and the army. They also contained insulting statements about the hostages released in the recent deal".²² Meanwhile, despite Hasanein's claim that his statements had been taken out of context, the management of Bnei Sakhnin Football Club, at the request of the Israeli Football Association, dismissed him from his position as commentator at the Sakhnin football stadium.²³ Minister of Culture and Sports Miki Zohar had also demanded Hasanein's immediate dismissal. The Government Press

18. Zoubi, Mustafa Walid. (2025, April 2). Journalist Saeed Hasanein's Detention Extended Until the 28th of This Month. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

19. Abuchatseira, Yitzhak. (2025, February 24). News 14: Complaint Filed to the Attorney General Against Sakhnin Sports Commentator. [Channel 14](#). [In Hebrew]

20. Ibid.

21. Elbaz, Shimon. (2025, February 24). "Israel is the Enemy": Bnei Sakhnin Broadcaster Praised Hamas— and was Fired. [Ynet](#). [In Hebrew]

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

Office promptly revoked Hassanein's official press card.²⁴ After a 78-day detention and 13 court hearings, the Haifa District Court issued a decision on May 13, 2025, ordering Hasanein's release and placing him under house arrest with restrictive conditions.²⁵

Another incident that illustrates the police's role in suppressing freedom of expression in the Arab community occurred in February 2025, when Palestinian comedian Nidal Badarneh was summoned for investigation. Badarneh was arrested at his home in Haifa on the pretext that he was "behaving in a manner that might disturb the public's safety".²⁶ This followed an incitement campaign against him by far-right groups, who claimed that one of his performances had addressed the issue of the Israeli detainees in Gaza. In parallel with the investigation, the police —acting on letters from right-wing groups— pressured and threatened venue owners in Nazareth not to host Badarneh's stand-up show, despite lacking legal authority to do so. The police also banned Badarneh's show in Haifa.²⁷

In February 2024, police arrested music teacher Ali Yassin Bakri at his school in the village of Kafr Yasif for singing the famous Arabic song *A Bird Peered from the Window* to his students, based on Lebanese journalist Nabil Hawi's poem about freedom and oppression, made famous by singer Umayma al-Khalil and Lebanese oud player Marcel Khalife.²⁸ A year later, in February 2025, police arrested Fadi Abu Younis, the secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee, on the pretext of disturbing the peace, and interrogated him for several hours.²⁹

In a letter to the Attorney General on April 24, 2024, human rights organization Adalah— The Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel- warned that the police's use of Article 216 (a) (4) of the Penal Code of 1977 to detain for six months anyone who acts in a public place in a manner that might disturb the peace, was discriminatory, illegal, and increasingly becoming a tool of political persecution. Adalah argued that these arrests constituted a grave and unconstitutional violation of fundamental rights and contravened the law. The letter added that Adalah had received testimonies indicating that the police were expanding their use of this provision to carry out arrests.³⁰

24. Ibid.

25. Zoubi, Mustafa Walid. (2025, May 13). Journalist Saeed Hasanein Released from Megiddo Prison and Placed under House Arrest. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

26. Zoubi, Mustafa Walid. (2025, February 25). Artist Nidal Badarneh Released after a Raid on his Home, his Arrest and Interrogation. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

27. Ibid.

28. Ali, Majd. (2024, December 15). Oppression of the Palestinians of 1948... Complementarity between the Official and Popular Institutions of the Occupation. [Al-Araby Al-Jadeed](#). [In Arabic]

29. Al-Ittihad. (2025, February 24). The Communist Party and the Democratic Front: Police Release Fadi Abu Younis after Arbitrary and Intimidating Police Detention. [Al-Ittihad](#). [In Arabic]

30. Adalah. (2024, April 22). Adalah's letter to the Attorney General: Illegal arrests based on Section 216 (a) (4) of the Penal Code, 1977. [In Hebrew], cited in: Ali, Majd. Reference No. 28.

Administrative Detentions

Since the beginning of the Gaza war, the Israeli Defense Minister has issued dozens of administrative detention orders against Palestinians in Israel, for periods ranging from one to six months.³¹ By early April 2024, according to data published by the Arab48 website, 25 Palestinian citizens of Israel aged between 18 and 22 had been placed under administrative detention.³² Such measures against this demographic group are unprecedented; even during the May 2021 Dignity Uprising, only three similar cases were recorded. These figures reveal an increase in the use of arbitrary and repressive measures, disproportionately used against Arab citizens.³³

This escalation in the use of administrative detention orders coincided with the Knesset's preliminary approval, in July 2024, of a bill to amend to the Emergency Powers (Detentions) Law relating to "Administrative Detentions for Membership in a Terrorist Organization".³⁴ The amendment stipulates that, "a citizen of the State of Israel may not be placed under administrative detention unless the Minister of Defense has reasonable cause to believe that the person is a member of a terrorist organization that has set itself the goal of undermining the existence of the state or committing acts of terrorism against its citizens".

Adalah argues that the bill is racist and seeks to revive the regime of military rule that was in place from Israel's founding in 1948 until 1966. It notes that the powers the bill grants to the Minister of Defense are similar to those held by military commanders under emergency laws during that period, effectively creating a separate legal system parallel to criminal law.³⁵ The amendment aims to entrench the establishment of two separate legal systems based on national identity, as well as the status of Palestinians as subjects without rights.³⁶

On November 22, 2024, Israeli Defense Minister Yisrael Katz announced an end to the use of administrative detention against Jewish settlers in the 1967 occupied territories. The existing emergency regulations governing administrative detention do not include any reference to terrorist organizations; instead, they permit detention by warrant for up to six months in cases where there is reasonable cause to believe that "state

31. Shezaf, Hagar, & Lis, Jonathan. (2024, November 22). Defense Minister Katz Announces He Will Stop the Use of Administrative Detention Orders against Settlers. [Haaretz](#). [In Hebrew]

32. Bweerat, Ameer Ali. (2025, April 3). Administrative Detentions: 5 Youths from Iksal Sit in Israeli Prisons. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

33. Zaher, Sawsan. (2022, May). Administrative Detention as a Form of Collective Punishment against Arab Citizens within the Green Line. Situation Assessment. [Mada al-Carmel](#). [In Arabic]

34. Knesset News. (2024, July 4). Approved in Preliminary Reading: Restrictions on Imposing Administrative Detention on Israeli Citizens. [Knesset News](#).

35. Arab48. (2023, July 9). Adalah: Administrative Powers Bill Aims to Bring Back the Days of Military Rule. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

36. Ibid.

security or public safety" is in danger.³⁷ Human rights organizations and advocacy groups have described this decision as harsh, undemocratic, and a form of apartheid, as it effectively abolishes the use of administrative detention against Jewish settlers, while allowing for its continued use against Palestinians, both residents of occupied East Jerusalem and citizens of Israel.³⁸

The administrative detention of Raja Eghbariah, a 74-year-old senior political figure in the Abnaa al-Balad movement, was the most prominent such arrest since the start of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. It was also the first administrative detention of a political leader inside Israel in decades. On April 15, 2025, Defense Minister Katz issued a four-month administrative detention order against Eghbariah, a week after his arrest by the police.³⁹ During his detention, Eghbariah was physically assaulted, resulting in a broken leg. In response, on May 11, 2025, Adalah filed a petition to the Supreme Court demanding that he be permitted to receive medical treatment outside the prison and to meet with his lawyer immediately. The Prison Service has denied his lawyer permission to visit him since his detention, despite repeated requests, in what Adalah describes as a "blatant violation of his right to defend himself, especially given the degrading and inhumane conditions of his detention".⁴⁰

Activists, political leaders, and major Palestinian institutions argue that the escalating use of administrative detention, particularly against Eghbariah, is not intended merely to restrict political activity, but to eliminate it entirely.⁴¹ According to the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab citizens of Israel, "The ruling establishment is continuing a campaign of repression, intimidation, and the fabrication of charges against political activists, with the aim of criminalizing political and social activity, as well as our right to express our views or demonstrate our natural support for our people. This campaign is constantly escalating, under the cover of the genocidal war being waged against our people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank".⁴² Abnaa al-Balad called Raja Eghbariah's administrative detention retaliation for "the inability of the Israeli security establishment to bring

37. Zitun, Yoav; Ben Kimon, Elisha; & Halabi, Einav. (2024, November 22). Minister Katz Decided to Stop Using Administrative Detention Orders Against Jews in Judea and Samaria. [Ynet](#). [In Hebrew]

38. Maanit, Chen. (2024, November 23). Lawyers: Katz's Decision on Administrative Detention Orders is Illegal and is expected to be overturned in the Supreme Court. [Haaretz](#). [In Hebrew]

39. Bweerat, Ameer Ali. (2025, April 15). Raja Eghbariah Transferred to Administrative Detention... Condemnations and Denunciations. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

40. Arab48. (2025, May 12). "Urgent Petition Demanding Raja Eghbariah's Transfer for Medical Treatment and to Meet with his Lawyer" . [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

41. Bweerat, Ameer Ali. Reference No. 39; Al-Ittihad. (2025, April 15). "The Democratic Front and the Communist Party Condemn the Administrative Detention of Leader Raja Eghbariah: Activating Administrative Detentions is a Pathetic Attempt to return us to the Days of Military Rule!". [Al-Ittihad](#). [In Arabic]

42. Ibid.

charges based on genuine facts".⁴³ Adalah stated that his arrest "demonstrates the policy of retaliation and political persecution under the guise of security".⁴⁴

Retaliation against the Widow of a Martyred Prisoner

On May 29, 2025, at the request of Police Chief Inspector Danny Levy, and following a demand from National Security Minister Ben-Gvir, police arrested activist Sanaa Salameh, the widow of martyred prisoner Walid Daqqa, while she was in Jerusalem with her daughter, Milad.⁴⁵ The police interrogated Salameh over her social media posts, accusing her of "identifying with terrorism, and incitement".⁴⁶ Her lawyer, Fadi Baransi, described the arrest as brutal and arbitrary, conducted without any regard for her status as a mother or a woman, adding that neither she nor anyone else had been informed of the reason for her arrest. Salameh was interrogated immediately but was never questioned about her social media posts; the questioning was general and vague. Baransi argued that there was no legal basis for her arrest, especially since the investigation file presented to the court contained no serious evidence, but relied solely on her family and political background.⁴⁷

After the Hadera Magistrate's Court ordered Salameh's release, Alaa Talawi, a member of her defense team, said, "The allegations against Sanaa are, in our opinion, false, and the police attempted to misinterpret the allegations". Salameh was released under restrictive conditions: ten days' house arrest at her mother's home in Tira, a bail of 20,000 NIS, and a ban on leaving the country.⁴⁸ Her late husband, from Baqa al-Gharbiyye, died in early April 2024 following a battle with illness in an Israeli prison, ending 38 years of confinement. Over a year after his death, the Israeli authorities continue to withhold his body and refuse to hand it over to his family for burial. In September 2024, the Israeli security cabinet decided not to release the bodies of seven martyrs from the 1948 territories, including Daqqa.⁴⁹

43. Ibid.

44. Adalah. (2025, June 3). "Haifa Court: Raja Eghbariah's Health Condition is Worrying and his Administrative Detention Decision must be Reconsidered". [Adalah](#). [In Arabic]

45. Bweerat, Ameer Ali. (2025, May 29). After Ben Gvir's Demand for Her Deportation: Sanaa Salameh Arrested in Jerusalem. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

46. Bweerat, Ameer Ali. (2025, June 5). Police Appeal Sanaa Salameh Daqqa's Release and a Court Hearing is to be Held on Friday. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

47. Ghafri, Mohammad. (2025, June 3). Sanaa Salameh's Lawyer to Ultra Palestine: Her Arrest Is Political and Vengeful. [Ultra Palestine](#). [In Arabic]

48. Bweerat, Ameer Ali. Reference No. 47.

49. For more on Israel's withholding of Walid Daqqa's body and those of other Palestinian citizens of Israel, see: Zoabi, Nareman Shehadeh. (2025, May). The Israeli Justice System in the Shadow of a Genocidal War. [Mada al-Carmel](#).

The Silencing of Arab Members of Knesset

On May 31, 2025, Ayman Odeh, a Member of Knesset (MK) and head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Jabha/ Hadash) party, delivered a speech at an anti-war demonstration in Haifa in which he condemned the occupation, genocide and ethnic cleansing underway in Gaza. His remarks sparked a widespread campaign of incitement against him, led by far-right MKs and government ministers who demanded his removal from the Knesset.⁵⁰

The incitement campaign against MK Odeh and demands for his removal from the Knesset began with Likud MK Avihai Boaron, who gathered 70 signatures from parliamentarians on a petition to invoke a law allowing for his expulsion.⁵¹ This was in response to a social media post by Odeh in which he expressed joy over the release of both Israeli and Palestinian detainees in a prisoner exchange deal on January 19, 2025. Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman wrote about the post, "Once again, Ayman Odeh proves that he is Hamas's spokesman in the Knesset [...] he must be expelled to Gaza with the murderous terrorists". Culture and Sports Minister Miki Zohar (Likud) said, "Anyone who rejoices over the release of terrorists [...] belongs in prison, not in the Knesset".⁵²

Following Odeh's speech at the Haifa demonstration, Boaron announced that he had collected 70 signatures— 60 from coalition members and 10 from the opposition (six from Yisrael Beiteinu and four from the right-wing "national camp"). He claimed that anyone who chanted, "Gaza has won and will win" at the demonstration had no place in the Knesset.⁵³ Continuing the campaign of incitement and exclusion, National Security Minister Ben-Gvir called on Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara to lift Odeh's parliamentary immunity and allow the police to investigate him for alleged incitement and support for terrorism.⁵⁴

On June 30, 2025, the Knesset House Committee voted to expel MK Odeh. Representatives from all Zionist parties voted unanimously in favor, while two MKs from the Arab parties voted against. The motion was then referred to the Knesset plenum, which is set to vote on it at a special session to be scheduled in due course. The expulsion motion requires the support of 90 of 120 MKs to be passed. Notably,

50. Al-Ittihad. (2025, June 1). The Democratic Front and the Communist Party Warn of the Danger of Fascist Incitement Against MK Ayman Odeh. [Al-Ittihad](#). [In Arabic]

51. Shalev, Tal. (2025, June 5). "He has no place in the Israeli Knesset": The Proceeding to expel MK Odeh was opened after Obtaining 70 signatures. [Walla](#). [In Hebrew]

52. Admaker, Yaki; & Shalev, Tal. (2025, January 19). MK Ayman Odeh in a Provocative Statement: "Joy over the Release of the Kidnapped and Captives". [Walla](#). [In Hebrew]

53. Shalev, Tal. Reference No. 51.

54. Baloch, Abraham. (2025, May 31). Ayman Odeh: "Gaza won and will win"; Ben-Gvir to Gali Baharav-Miara: "Open an Investigation". [Maariv](#). [In Hebrew]

since the enactment of the expulsion law in 2016, the only other case to have reached the Knesset House Committee for discussion was that of left-wing MK Ofer Cassif. However, the expulsion process failed, as only 86 MKs voted in favor— just shy of the 90 votes needed.⁵⁵

Not only have state institutions targeted individual political leaders, journalists, artists, and other citizens in a campaign to restrict their freedom of expression and silence their opposition to the war, but they have also used tools of collective repression, attacking any attempt at political and community organization and suppressing political activity and public protest.

Group Silencing and Repression

Israeli police and government officials continue to clamp down on Palestinians' political activity, by preventing demonstrations, prohibiting commemorations of the *Nakba* to suppress Palestinian collective identity and memory, and banning collective political and civil organization, including by proscribing NGO *Ifsha' al-Salam* (peace dissemination).

The Pretext: Palestinian Protesters "Support Terrorism"

Since the start of the war on Gaza, the security establishment and the judiciary have blocked most attempts to organize protests or demonstrations against the war, killing and destruction. When the conflict first broke out, three petitions were submitted to the Supreme Court challenging police bans on solidarity demonstrations in Arab towns. The court rejected all three. In January 2025, Adalah filed a petition to the Court demanding a permit for an anti-war demonstration in Sakhnin, organized by the High Follow-Up Committee for Palestinians from across the country. The request came after police refused to authorize the demonstration except under prohibitive conditions.

During the hearing, the court ordered Adalah representatives and members of the Follow-Up Committee to leave the courtroom while it reviewed confidential information presented by the police. The court subsequently ruled in favor of the police, upholding the ban on the demonstration along the requested route, and accepting the alternatives proposed by the police as a condition for granting a permit. According to Adalah, the Supreme Court's actions demonstrate that Israel has "separate legal systems: one for Jews that allows them to demonstrate and block roads, and another for Arabs, aimed at repressing them and silencing any expression of opposition to the war".⁵⁶ The rulings

55. Shalev, Tal. Reference No. 51.

56. Bakri, Qassem. (2025, January 9). Follow-up Committee: The Demonstration in Sakhnin was Postponed after the Court Joined the Police's Attempts to Thwart It. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

also underline the fact that the Supreme Court has backed the police in the majority of cases involving the rights of Arab citizens of Israel to protest since the start of the war on Gaza.⁵⁷

"Great March of Return" Forcibly Cancelled

The campaign of collective political persecution did not spare the annual March of Return to depopulated Palestinian villages to commemorate the *Nakba* of 1948, an annual event organized since 1998 by the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID) under the slogan "Their Independence Day, Our Nakba Day". Although the police did not officially ban the 28th march—to the former village of Kafr Sabt in the Tiberias district—they imposed unprecedented, prohibitive conditions on ADRID with the clear aim of preventing it from going ahead. These included a ban on raising the Palestinian flag, a limit of 700 participants,⁵⁸ and a stipulation that participants arrive at the site only by bus. Police also threatened to raid the route of the march and the closing ceremony.⁵⁹ The Lower Galilee Regional Council, which oversees the area, also strongly opposed the march, claiming it would damage fields and challenge "Israeli sovereignty over the region".⁶⁰

Attorney Sawsan Zaher, legal advisor to ADRID, stated that police had delayed responding to the association's request for a permit for the march, submitted in March 2025. National Security Minister Ben-Gvir's public incitement against the march led to the association's request to relocate it to Hosha (near Shefa-Amr) being rejected. Faced with police threats that "no good would come" if ADRID violated its instructions, it decided to cancel the official march to Kafr Sabt out of concern for participants' safety.⁶¹

The cancellation of the march elicited statements and condemnations from activists and political leaders, who emphasized Israel's escalating political persecution and drift towards fascism.⁶² Journalist Jack Khoury attributed the cancellation of the march to the "social and political climate". He continued: "The rise of far-right figures like Itamar Ben-Gvir has deeply influenced the police and broader public opinion. Right-wing incitement against the march has gained traction. The judiciary

57. For more on the Israeli Supreme Court's role in approving police policies, fabricating pretexts to prevent Palestinian citizens from expressing opposition to the war (while failing to bring an end to police violations of citizens' basic rights), and in helping provide cover for genocidal practices, see: Shehadeh-Zoabi, Nareman. Reference No. 49.

58. Thousands had participated in the Great March of Return in previous years.

59. Zoubi, Mustafa Walid. (2025, April 30). After the Cancellation of the Great March of Return: Restrictions, Persecution, and Attempts to Erase Identity. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

60. Zoubi, Bakr. (2025, April 30). No March, No Flag, No Memory. [Sikha Mekomit](#). [In Hebrew]

61. Zoubi, Mustafa Walid. Reference No. 59.

62. Ibid.

has been depleted, and placing hope in it feels unrealistic. In 2025, a Palestinian flag —once even flown at the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem— along with discourse about the *Nakba* and the right of return, are no longer considered legitimate in a country marking 77 years of independence".⁶³

Prohibition of the *Ifsha' al-Salam* Committees

Political and social analysts and activists generally agree that the Israeli establishment and police's failure to tackle crime in Arab communities reflects a systematic policy of preoccupying Arab society with the economic, psychological, and social effects of crime, rather than addressing national issues, and keeping Palestinians politically marginalized.⁶⁴ Crime has become so organized that only the police and state institutions have the means to combat it.⁶⁵ In response, the *Ifsha' al-Salam* Committees —established in 2021 under the umbrella of the High Follow-Up Committee— have attempted to alleviate the impact and severity of crime in Arab towns and to develop tools to resolve internal issues within the Arab community before they escalate to violence and criminality.⁶⁶

The Israeli establishment has treated *Ifsha' al-Salam* as a threat to its attempts to engineer Palestinian society.⁶⁷ In order to "reassert [Israel's] sovereignty", in late January 2025 approximately 1,500 police officers —including special forces and Border Police— raided the offices of *Ifsha' al-Salam* in Umm al-Fahm, as well as those of the Association for Social Peace, Reform and Arbitration, confiscated their assets and froze their bank accounts. The police announced a ban on *Ifsha' al-Salam*'s activities and those of its branches in several Arab towns. The ban was accompanied by a wave of arrests and home raids against *Ifsha' al-Salam* activists, most notably its chairman, Sheikh Raed Salah.⁶⁸

These measures followed an order by Defense Minister Katz prohibiting *Ifsha' al-Salam* based on its affiliation with the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, which has been outlawed since 2015. In a statement, the police claimed that while the group publicly aims to tackle violence, police intelligence gathered in recent years "indicates that the committees were established as a cover for the continued

63. Khoury, Jack. (2025, May 2). The Cancellation of the Nakba Commemoration March Primarily Reflects the Situation in Israel. [Haaretz](#). [In Hebrew]

64. Hawari, Areen. (2023). "Palestinians in Israel". In: Ghanim, Honaida (Ed.). Madar Strategic Report 2023. Ramallah: Madar. Pp. 154- 167. [In Arabic]

65. Zoubi, Bakr. (2025, April 17). In Arab Society, People are convinced: The Crime is Not Negligence. It is an Authoritarian Program. [Sikha Mekomit](#). [In Hebrew]

66. Habiballah, Ali. (2025, January 29). The Banning of Ifsha' al-Salam: What is New? [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

67. Ibid.

68. Bakri, Qassem. (2025, January 28). Ifsha' al-Salam's Activities are banned: The Investigation in Sheikhs Raed Salah and Khairy Iskandar. [Arab48](#). [In Arabic]

activities of the banned Islamic Movement, aligned with the worldview of the Muslim Brotherhood, and to promote its global agenda against the State of Israel".⁶⁹

Some political leaders and parties viewed the arrest of Sheikh Raed Salah and committee activists, along with the decision to outlaw the committees' work, as a dangerous and purely political move that comes as part of a systematic policy of politically persecuting Palestinian national institutions and leaders.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The State of Israel's hostility toward the Palestinians in Israel did not begin in October 2023. Rather, these policies —though varying in intensity over time— have been in place since the establishment of Israel. From the state's founding to the present day, Palestinians who remained in their homeland after the *Nakba* have lived under a racist and exclusionary system. Starting with military rule (1948– 1966) and over the ensuing decades, they have faced land and property confiscation, home demolitions, attempts to erase their collective Palestinian identity, and political persecution against those who challenge these policies.

Since 1948, the Knesset has enacted numerous laws to entrench Jewish supremacy and racial discrimination, suppress the rights of Palestinian citizens, and tighten control over them, both individually and collectively.⁷¹ Since the Al-Aqsa Intifada of October 2000, racist laws have been enacted at an accelerating pace, including legislation that redefines citizenship, clamps down on commemorations of the *Nakba*, and forms part of the so-called "fight against terrorism". This wave of legislation culminated in the 2018 *Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People*.⁷² Israeli human rights organizations, including B'Tselem, and international organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have described Israel's policies toward its Palestinian citizens, even before October 7, 2023, as a form of Apartheid.⁷³

Since the start of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, the Israeli government has proposed and passed several laws aimed at deepening the repression, persecution, and silencing of Palestinian citizens of Israel. They include legislation facilitating the disqualification of

69. Panet & Panorama Newspaper. (2025, January 28). Joint Statement by the Police, the Shin Bet, and the Ministry of Defense: "Ifsha' al-Salam's Activities Banned, Their Offices in Umm al-Fahm Closed, Organization Outlawed". [Panet](#). [In Arabic]

70. Bakri, Qassem. Reference No. 68.

71. See: Adalah. [n.d.]. Discriminatory Laws Database. [Adalah](#).

72. Jabareen, Hassan; & Bishara, Suhad. (2019). The Jewish Nation-State Law: Antecedents and Constitutional Implications. [Journal of Palestine Studies](#), 48 (190). Pp. 46- 55.

73. See: B'Tselem. (2021, January 12). A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is Apartheid. [B'Tselem](#) [in Arabic]; Amnesty International. (2022, February 1). Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians: A Look into Decades of Oppression and Domination. [Amnesty International](#).

Arab candidates and party lists from Knesset elections,⁷⁴ and imposing up to five years' imprisonment on anyone who praises or denies the "massacre" of October 7, 2023 in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip.⁷⁵ These structurally racist laws and policies have paved the way for further silencing and repression of the Arab community, which have continued over the past year even after the security threat the government had used to justify such policies receded, and despite the prevailing sense of resignation and fear within the community.

This paper has laid out Israel's policies of political persecution and silencing of the Palestinian community inside the Green Line, as implemented by state institutions, media outlets, and NGOs since mid-2024. Since the outbreak of the war on Gaza, security authorities have been granted exceptional powers to investigate alleged cases of public support for Hamas or incitement to violence. The State Prosecutor has also authorized police to submit requests directly to the courts for approval for pre-trial detention of suspects held on speech-related charges, leading to the arrest of dozens of Palestinian citizens.

The paper also detailed the persecution of Palestinian national institutions and political leaders, including the prohibition of *Ifsha' al-Salam*, the confiscation of its property, and the arrest of its activists; the obstruction of the March of Return to depopulated villages to commemorate the *Nakba* and Palestinian displacement; and the growing use of administrative detention and the suppression of free expression, targeting political leaders, journalists, and artists. These measures all aim to eliminate the narrow remaining margin for free expression and to criminalize political activity, including in the Knesset, as seen in the campaign to expel MK Odeh.

These tools and practices demonstrate an escalation in the state's repression of Arab society within Israel. Contrary to the government's claims, this escalation is not a reaction to the behavior of Palestinian citizens of Israel, to their protests, or to security exigencies; indeed, the state of emergency has significantly eased over the past year. Rather, it is the outcome of the ruling establishment's conviction that Palestinian citizens constitute a potential threat due to their national belonging. The Israeli state has made it clear that it continues to view Palestinian citizens through a security lens, and that their citizenship offers them no protection from the hostility of the establishment and the Jewish majority. Indeed, state institutions can revoke their citizenship whenever it serves the government's political or security objectives. Moreover, with few exceptions, these policies are being implemented with no serious pushback from Israeli opposition parties, society, media, or academic and cultural elites.

74. The Israeli Scene. (2024, November 4). Under the Guise of "Fighting Terrorism", Government Bills attempt to Institutionalize Political Persecution!. [Madar](#). [In Arabic]

75. Legal Watch. (2025, January 22). A Bill passed its Final Reading Imposing a Five-Year Prison Sentence on anyone who "Denies or Praises October 7, 2023". [Madar](#). [In Arabic]



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