



MORE PALESTINIAN ARABS NOMINATED IN VARIOUS PARTY LISTS FOR ISRAELI LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

The number of Palestinian Arab nominees for the Knesset (Israeli parliament) has significantly increased this year after parties submitted their lists to the Central Election Commission.

This comes as the Joint List – a united list of the four major Palestinian Arab parties in Israel – has split up due to internal divisions between the Islamic-conservative United Arab List (UAL) and the other secular parties. As a result, the UAL will be running on its own for the Knesset elections. According to recent polls, the split could lead to a decrease in the voter turnout among Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, which stood at a about 65% in the previous elections – one of the highest turnouts in decades for the community.

The split among the Joint List parties has led to many Zionist, Jewish parties to nominate their own Palestinian Arab candidates in an attempt to snatch votes from Palestinian Arab citizens. Meretz, which is polling at around five seats, placed two Palestinian Arab candidates in the fourth and fifth places on their list. The far-right Yisrael Beiteinu – whose leader, Avigdor Lieberman, has relentlessly incited against Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel for years – placed Hamad Amar in sixth place, giving him a real possibility to become a Knesset Member with that party.

The Yesh Atid party – the current opposition leader – has placed Palestinian Arab candidates in 26th place, and the New Hope party led by Gideon Sa'ar (who left Netanyahu's party in the lead up to the elections) has placed a Palestinian Arab candidate in 17th place. Both of these candidates are not expected to realistically make it into the Knesset as their respective parties are polling below those number of seats.

A number of small parties – which the polls typically ignore as they have no feasible path to the Knesset – have also placed Palestinian Arab candidates in high positions on their lists. These parties include the New Economic Party, the Democratic Party, the Ma'an party, and others.

The increase of Palestinian Arabs candidates among Zionist and right-wing parties – many of whom have either incited or supported discriminatory legislation against Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel – is not necessarily a good thing. These parties are simply appealing to the Palestinian Arab vote only to continue pursuing policies that harm and suppress that community.

Moreover, incitement against Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel has not faded from Israeli politics. The Mossawa Center will appeal to the chairman of the Central Election Commission and demand the disqualification of the joint run by Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) and Noam for their vicious incitement and racism against Palestinian Arabs.

The disunity of the Joint List and the total collapse of the Jewish left-wing and peace camp in Israeli politics has not only fueled the rise of Netanyahu and his extremist, right-wing politics, but also strengthened it. It is more crucial than ever to rebuild a progressive camp that advocates for equality and justice in Israel, and to put an end to Netanyahu's and his allies' agenda which is seeking to erase any and all hope for peace in the region.