

# 2021 Israeli Elections

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مركز مساواة لحقوق المواطنين العرب في اسرائيل  
Mossawa Center The Advocacy Center For  
Arab Citizens In Israel



# The Mossawa Center



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# Our Work

## Our Strategies:

- The Mossawa Center, the Advocacy Center for Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, was established in 1999 to promote the economic, social, cultural, and political rights of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel and the recognition of this community as a national indigenous minority with its own national, cultural, and historical distinctiveness. The Mossawa Center seeks to promote a democratic society and acts against all forms of discrimination.
- Promote The Legal Status of our community.
- Economic Development and state budget analysis
- Strengthening Arab civil society through capacity building, Community organizing, Youth & women engagement, Outreach to the Jewish community
- Media advocacy
- International advocacy in political centers of power and Civil Society.

# The Potential of the Arab community

- 21% of the population.
- Multi-linguistic abilities.
- 51,000 Arab students in universities.
- Contribute 9% to GDP.
- 15 seats with 65% Arab voter turnout, 19 seats if turnout reaches 80%.
- Game-changers.

# Challenges Facing the Arab Community

- [Discriminatory Laws](#)
- [Police Brutality](#)
- [Economic and Social Discrimination](#)
- [Home Demolition](#)
- [Land Confiscation in the Naqab](#) (Southern of Israel )
- [Political delegitimization and Incitement](#)

# Arab Political Representation

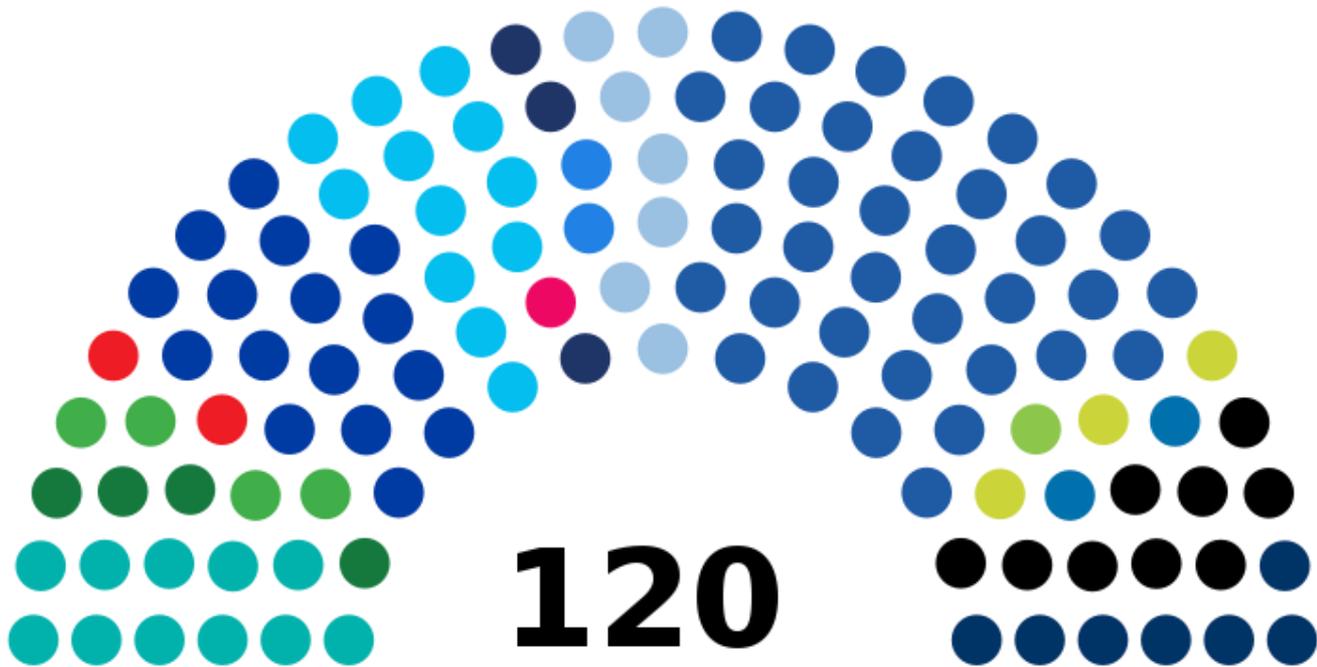


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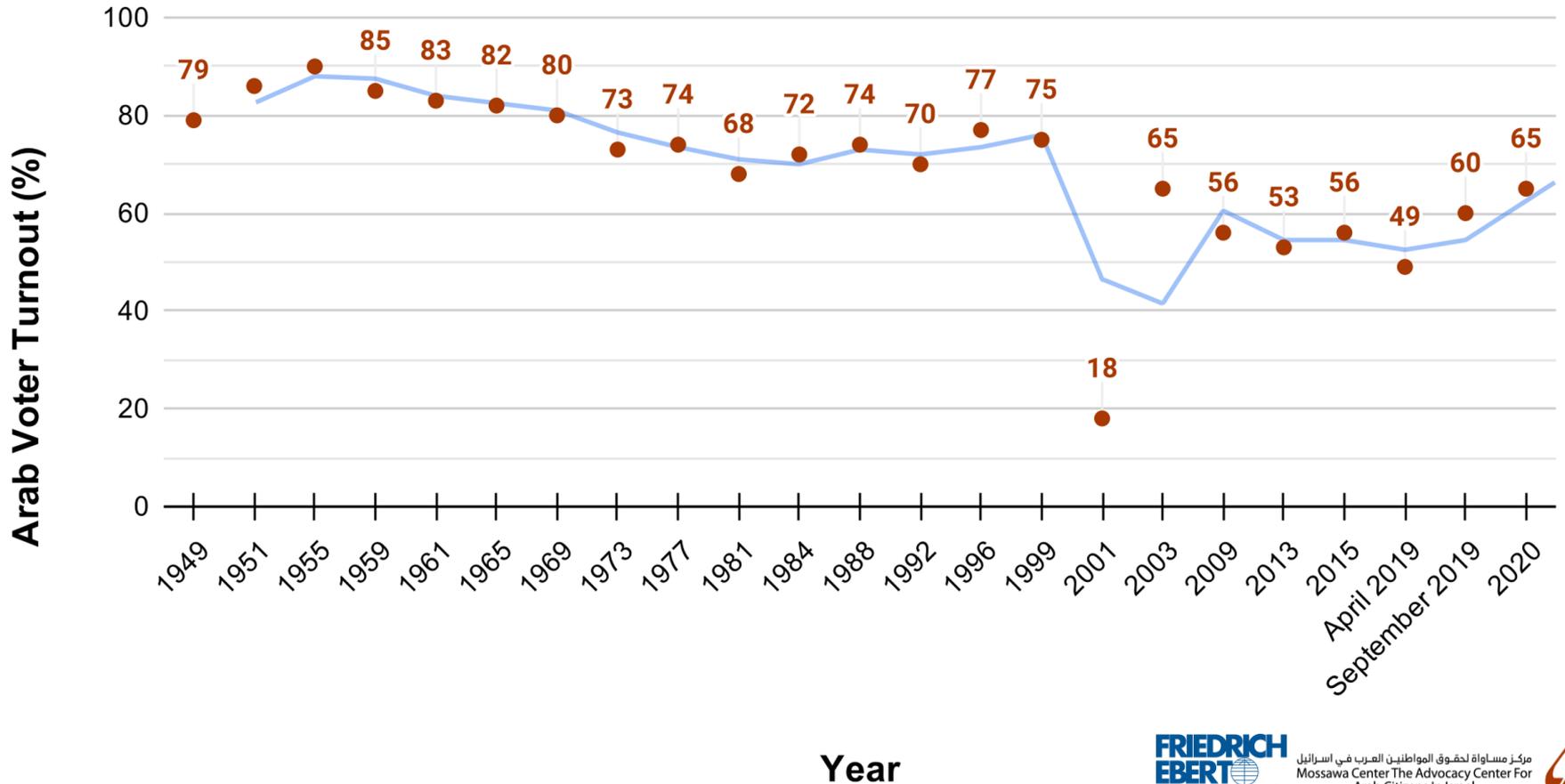
# The Current Knesset

	Joint List: 11 seats
	Ra'am: 4 seats
	Meretz: 4 seats
	Labor: 2 seats
	Gesher: 1 seat
	Yesh Atid: 16 seats
	Blue and White: 12 seats
	Telem: 3 seats
	Derekh Eretz: 2 seats
	Yisrael Beiteinu: 7 seats
	Likud: 36 seats
	Jewish Home: 1 seats
	Yamina: 3 seats
	Religious Zionist: 2 seats
	Shas: 9 seats
	UTJ: 7 seats



- The Joint List was established in 2015 elections, it split into two lists in prior to April 2019 elections where the Arab parties gained only 10 seats, 3 less that what the Joint List had, as the turnout decreased to 50%.
- In the September 2019 elections, the reunification of the Joint List allowed it to gain 13 seats again, with Arab voter turnout increasing from 50% to 60%.
- In the March 2020 elections, the Joint List managed to increase the Arab voter turnout even more to 65%, allowing it to gain a historic 15 seats. As a result, the Arab community, through the Joint List, almost blocked Netanyahu from forming his right-wing government.

# Palestinian Arab Voter Turnout in Israeli Elections



- By looking at past voting patterns, we can see that there is potential for an even higher Arab voter turnout. If Arab voter turnout reaches around 75% like it did during the 1990s, it could bring at least 3 more seats to the Arab community representation.
- A major drop in Arab voter turnout came in the 2001 elections which took place shortly after the outbreak of the Second Intifada and the killing thirteen Palestinian Arab citizens by Israeli police in the October 2000 demonstrations.
- There was a massive call to boycott the elections, leading to a turnout of only 18% in the Arab community voted. Since then, we have not seen the voter turnout return to the levels of the 1990s and the boycott agenda strengthened.

# Two Arab Lists, Again

Internal squabbling and divisions within the Joint List have led to its breakup ahead of the upcoming elections. We now have 2 separate Arab lists running for the Knesset.

- \* The Joint list (Hadash, Balad Taal).
- \* The United List (The Islamic Movement)

# Ra'am

- Running alone.
- Disagreement with overall platform and structure of the Joint List.
- Strongly opposes Hadash and Balad's positions on women status and LGBTQ.
- Wants to vote freely, regardless of majority rule in the Joint List.

- In particular, tense debate took place over the Islamic Ra'am party's demand to be able to vote freely in the Knesset, regardless of majority rule within the Joint List.
- As a result, Ra'am is now running separately from the Joint List. Ra'am strongly opposes the pro-LGBTQ+ stance of some of the other factions in the Joint List and wanted the ability to vote freely in parliament, regardless of majority rule in the Joint List.
- In recent polling, Ra'am appears to be struggling to cross the electoral threshold, meaning it may not be in the next Knesset.

# The Joint List is Lowering its Expectations

- Hadash, Balad, and Ta'al remain the Joint List.
- Likely decrease in Arab voter turnout.
- Currently polling at around 9 seats.
- Even if Ra'am does make into the Knesset, the Arab parties will most likely have less than the 15 seats they held previously.
- New, alternative Arab political parties have emerged, likely splitting the Arab voter further.

- Meanwhile, Hadash, Balad, and Ta'al all remained in the Joint List and are running together.
- According to polls, this split of the Joint List could lead to a decrease in Arab voter turnout (about 55%), with the Joint List currently polling at around 8-9 seats.
- This political situation in Arab society has led to the establishment of alternative parties that are competing for the Arab voice.
- Disagreements around Social and political issues will be agreed according to the majority.

# Arabs in Jewish Majority Parties



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- The division of the Arab vote and breakup of the Joint List has allowed some Jewish majority parties in Israel to try and grab any Arab votes they can.
- In the previous election, only around 12% of Arab voters voted for Jewish majority parties. Now that the Arab vote is split, Jewish parties will likely get a bigger share of that vote, about 20%.

# Netanyahu Seeking Arab voters

- Heading into the upcoming election, Netanyahu has made a strategic decision to pander to the Palestinian Arab community and Jewish Center.
  - Previously perpetuated unfound claims of voter fraud in Palestinian Arab communities and relentless incitement against them.
  - “The right-wing government is in danger. Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in droves,” he said. “Left-wing NGOs are bringing them in buses.”
- “Whoever says we only remember the Arab public before the elections is either lying or ignorant of the facts,” Netanyahu claimed.

- Netanyahu himself has made a big push to try and gain Arab support by making a series of visits to Arab localities including Nazareth – the largest Arab city in Israel – Jisr AzZarqa, and the Naqab in southern Israel.
- Despite his constant incitement against Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel and his government passing numerous discriminatory legislation like the Nation-State Law which said that only Jews have the right to national self-determination in Israel, Netanyahu is still trying to get any Arab votes he can.
- During his reign as prime minister, violence in the Arab community, home demolition and economic crisis has increased significantly and police brutality against Palestinian Arab citizens has become the norm. Moreover, his government has made no concrete promises to seriously tackle these issues.

16



Arab nominees in Jewish majority parties

- Netanyahu's Likud party is not the only one trying to appeal to Arab voters. Virtually many Jewish majority parties are doing so.
- We can see this through the fact that there are now 16 Arab nominees to the Knesset across the major Jewish majority parties.



Party	Percentage of Total Arab Vote
Likud	1.7%
Blue and White	4.8%
Labor-Gesher-Meretz	2.0%
Shas	0.7%
Yisrael Beiteinu	1.4%
United Torah Judaism	0.1%
Yamina	0.1%

Breakdown of the Arab vote for the Jewish parties in March 2020 elections.

88% of the Arab votes were for the Joint list in 2020 elections.

- As we can see, when the Joint List was united, it was able to consolidate a vast majority of the Arab vote because it had the confidence of the Arab community.
- When the Joint List wasn't united, a bigger share of the Arab vote will go to Jewish majority parties. In the upcoming elections, the disunity of the Joint List will likely lead to exactly that happening.
- More Jewish Parties declared this election they are willing to sit with Arab parties.

# Identity Voting



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- Identity voting has plagued Israel since 1977 and accelerated since the Oslo Accords.
- In Israel, political allegiances are mostly tied to descent – including Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, Ethiopians and post-Soviet Russians – or religious affiliation, which is further divided into Ashkenazi and Mizrahi factions.
- Presently, this alignment manifests with religious parties and the Palestinian Arab parties, but also with Russian-speaking voters gravitating towards Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beiteinu, and the historical alignment between Mizrahim and the right-wing parties, who capitalized on their historical grievances with the left-wing establishment's policies towards them, since the 1950's.

# Russian Voters

- Apart from the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beiteinu were the other big winners, receiving 7 seats, 2 more than in the April 2019 elections.
- Liberman's hawkish and racist views are well-established, but his rhetoric in the September election was more focused on secularism, thus securing more Russian-speaking voters.
- At the current election he admitted that the Jewish Nation Law was mistake.

# Mizrahi Voters

- The Mizrahim have, for decades, voted for right-wing parties (Likud & Shas). This trend emerged as a response to the Labor party's historic association with an Ashkenazi secular elite and policies towards Mizrahim in the 1950's and 1960's.
- The 2020 election broke with this trend: the Geshet (Bridge) party, led by the right-wing Orly Levy, merged with the Labor party led by Amir Peretz. As a result, the party has increased their vote share in traditionally right-wing towns.
- On top of this, Kulanu (All of us), a centrist party with a Mizrahi voting base, merged with Likud for the last election.

# Moving Beyond Identity Voting

- Identity voting has been a significant phenomenon in Israel ever since 1977, when Likud overcame years of Labor dominance by appealing to Mizrahi Jews.
- Political allegiances have since revolved around descent, including Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, Ethiopian, and post-Soviet Russian speakers, as well as religious affiliation, which is divided into national religious and ultra-orthodox groups with Ashkenazi and Mizrahi factions.
- The negative influence of identity politics must be addressed in order to tackle the issues faced in Israel-Palestine.

# Impact of Elections on the Arab Community



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- The improvement in the political representation of Palestinian Arab society in the elections is the result of a process of reorganization under a united leadership that maintains social ideological diversity.
- The political parties must strengthen the process of organizing and mobilizing all the components of Arab society, all under the umbrella of the High follow up Committee. Strengthening Arab society requires strengthening internal dialogue and personal commitment.

- The lead for Netanyahu's bloc is another step towards implementing their vision from the sea to the river, while maintaining a discriminatory and racist rule against Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

- Violent crime and lack of allocated budgets have plagued the Palestinian Arab community for decades, with the situation severely deteriorating in recent times.
  - Over the past four years, the murder rate of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel jumped by 50%.
- This violence directly stems from underfunded municipalities that lack the necessary budgets for education, welfare, and policing.

- Without the Arabs it's impossible to push back against Netanyahu's far-right agenda, yet with them it's not enough.
- The latest polls show that the opposition camp will not be able to win the election. A Netanyahu-Saar coalition would have a majority with somewhere between 65 to 70 seats.
- The disunity of the Joint List and the collapse of the Jewish left-wing and peace camp in Israeli politics has not only fueled the rise of Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing politics, but also strengthened it.

- Netanyahu's decision to embrace, legitimize, and empower the radical far-right Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Strength) party led by Itamar Ben-Gvir will demolish any pathway towards peace, justice, and equality.
- Ben-Gvir has called for the expulsion of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel who he claims are not loyal to the state.
- Ben-Gvir's Jewish Strength party merged with the far-right Religious Zionism party led by Former Transport Minister MK Bezalel Smotrich - they are poised to get a critical 5 seats in the Knesset.

- Netanyahu's grip on power has enabled far-right, racist parties, individuals, and organizations to become central players in Israeli politics.
- Such a development threatens not only the rights of Palestinian Arabs within Israel, in the West Bank, and in Gaza, but also threatens to destabilize the entire region.



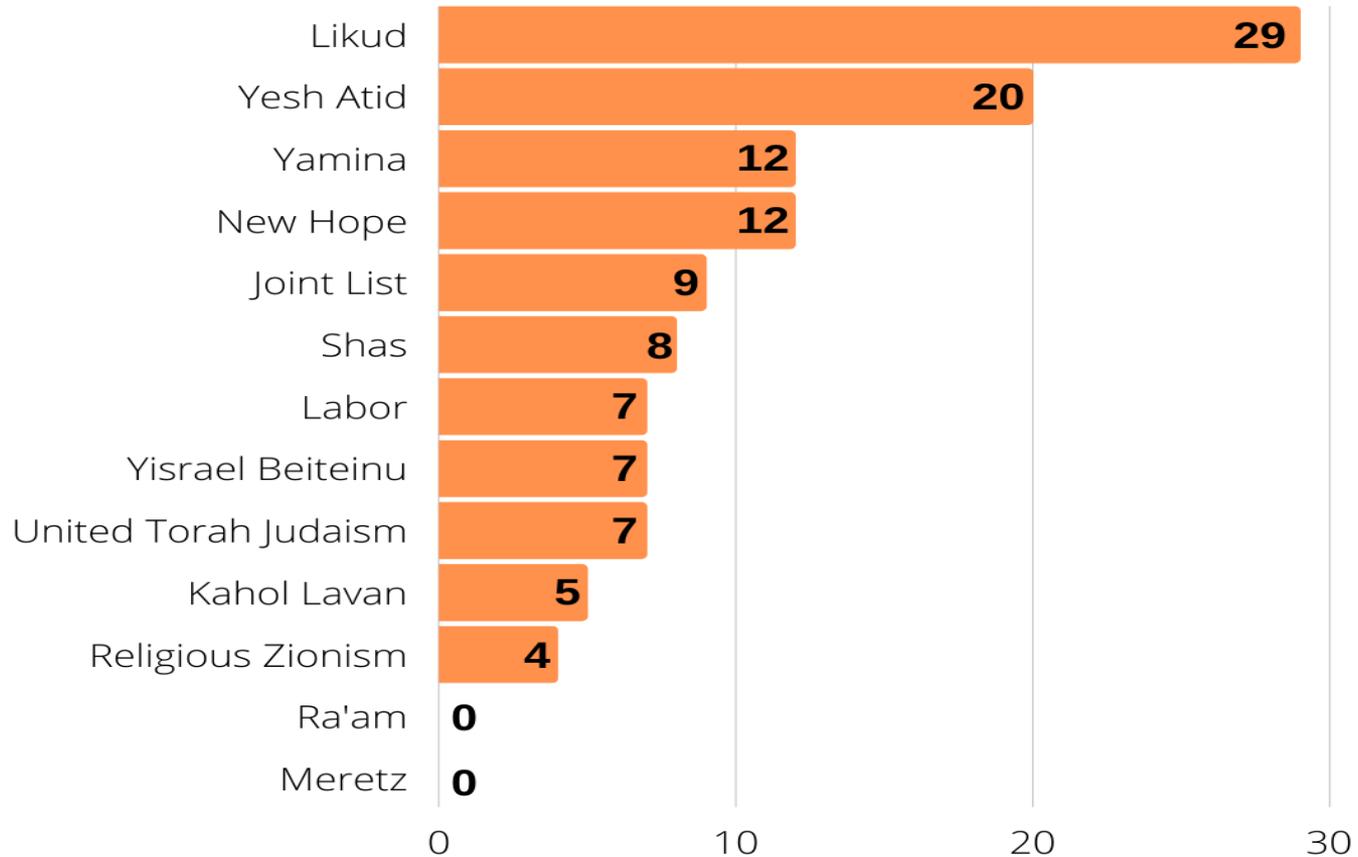
# What to Expect



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# Projected Seat Distribution Following 2021 Elections



- Palestinian Arab voters, most of whom interact daily with Jewish Israelis and with the Palestinians in the occupied territories, understand that the two nations need a new vision.
- A vision that will end the occupation without separating the two peoples.
- A vision of a democratic space, in which the two peoples will realize their self-determination without occupation and tragedy.
- A multicultural space, in which tax money will be invested in social justice and not in occupation and war.
- The unique position of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel will require them to lead future processes rather than to react to a reality imposed on them.

For more information you can visit our websites

[www.mossawa.org/eng/](http://www.mossawa.org/eng/)  
[www.friendsofmossawa.org](http://www.friendsofmossawa.org)