

Title of the podcast series: “Israel’s Divides Explained”

Title of the podcast episode: The Effect of NGOs within Israel’s National Divide

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Submitted to Prof. Rami Zeedan

Course: “Israel: From Idea to statehood.”

The University of Kansas, Spring 2023.

Duration: ___ minutes

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Introduction: (about 3 minutes)

1. **“General introduction”:** _____ seconds/minutes

- Hello and welcome to the podcast series “Israel’s Divides Explained.”
- This episode focuses on the National Divide in Israel. Specifically, this episode is about “The Relationship between Israeli-Arabs and NGOs.”
- This episode of the podcast series was produced in spring 2023 as part of the course Israel: From Idea to statehood with Prof. Zeedan at the University of Kansas.
- I’m your host Coby Patterson
- I like to introduce myself as a rudimentary scholar of history and an interested observer of Israeli affairs. I am working on my undergrad in Global and Intercultural Studies and as well as History. I am also of partial Ashkenazi descent. Both of these things give me a personal connection to the topic of Israeli affairs and the current situation surrounding the state of Israel.

2. **“Topic introduction”-** introduce the question and the structure of the podcast episode: (about 2 pages / 2 minutes)

Today we will explore what role NGOs play in the lives and communities of average Israeli Arabs and how to they relate to the National Divide?

First, to define an NGO:

- A Non-Governmental Organization is an independent organized entity that acts outside of any sitting government, often on a national level. NGOs are usually non-profit and advocacy-oriented. They can be powerful forces on both the community and national levels as they can fulfill needs of underprivileged or misrepresented groups who otherwise could not act for themselves. I hope to explore their role in affecting the Arabic minority groups within Israel. Specifically, how they are a benefit to these groups.
- NGOs often exist in areas where people are mistreated or misrepresented. They can act a counterweight to underrepresentation, discrimination and malpractice by providing aid to those in need. In the case of Israel, Israeli-Arabs do not enjoy all the protections under the law that their Jewish counterparts do. They are marginalized in a myriad of ways. Therefore, I imagine many of them could make use of an NGOs help here and there. While the Israeli-Arab's situation is unique in and of itself, this is not the only instance where an ethnic minority group is mistreated by its government. Similar situations exist all over the world currently, including in my home country, the United States. Analyzing the Israeli-Arab perspective not only grants us understanding of their specific plight, but also that of misrepresented minorities globally.
- The information here is based on a selection of primary and secondary sources, however this is not an exhaustive survey.
- One of my major sources for this episode is a study by Amal Jamal, "The counter-hegemonic role of civil society: Palestinian–Arab NGOs in Israel"
- I will be posting my sources online. More details at the end of this episode.

- In our episode today, we will talk about 4 major items
 - 1: Short introduction to Israel
 - 2: Introduction to the six divides and the National divide in Israel
 - 3: What role do NGOs play in the lives and communities of average Israeli Arabs and how to they relate to the National Divide?
 - 4: Looking to the future
- Did you know that Arabic communities in Israel are some of the most reliant on non-profit organizations in the world with nearly 4,000 independent NGOs working for on their behalf?

Central Section (minimum 10, and a preference for a maximum of 25 minutes):

- First, a brief introduction to Israel:
- The people of Israel originate from far and wide and within, representing many parts of the world and the Levant itself. The immense diversity found within the Israeli people contributes to an extremely varied Israeli populace and culture.
- While this diversity should be celebrated, many have instead found it a cause for contention. There is unfortunately a social hierarchy within Israel that prevents some groups from being on the same level when it comes to status or means. Therefore, not all peoples in Israel find themselves represented on the national level.

- **Item 2: Introduction to the six divides and the _____ divide in Israel- _____ seconds/minutes (about 2 pages / 2 minutes)**
- I would argue the most relevant topic surrounding Israel today is these extensive internal divisions, namely: Its political divide, national divide, ethnic divide, socioeconomic divide, religious divide and gender divide.
- This episode is focused on Israel's national divide. At the state of Israel's inception at turn of the 1948 War nearly 700,000 Arabs were expelled from the country. The remaining the Arabic population stood at roughly 20% of the total populace. Today, Israeli citizens who are non-Jewish are still underserved by their government in many ways, and do not identify with their country's Jewish-oriented national narrative.
- Israeli-Arabs find themselves in a predicament where their government deems them as citizens but refuses to represent them in public or political realms. The Israeli-Arab's standard of living is generally worse off than their Jewish counterparts, which is reflected in the lower wages they earn and the lacking infrastructure within Arabic communities. Arabs are not represented in any of Israel's national symbols, the Israeli national anthem or flag. Arabic is no longer a recognized national language in Israel. Worse yet, there is seemingly no future intention to represent these groups on a national scale.
- In fact, in 2020 a survey was conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute based around the sense of belonging Israeli citizens feel toward their country. The results showed a notable disparity between a higher level sense of belonging among the Jewish populace as opposed to a lower level among Arabs. 90% of Jewish citizens felt as if they were part of the State, whereas about 77% Arabs felt the same way. Also, 66% of Arab respondents felt that

Israel has had more failures over the course of its history than it has had successes. The inverse result was true to for Jewish respondents.

- **Item 3: The answer to your question (chose a title for it) - _____**
 - So how do NGOs factor into all this?
- NGOs attempt fill the socioeconomic void the state has created.
- It is clear why Israeli-Arabs are often in need of assistance obtaining their general necessities and receiving representation. This is where the NGO comes in. The government doesn't provide for these people consistently. So, the NGO attempts to do so themselves. The government does not represent these people professionally, therefore the NGO makes an effort to grant them a voice they wouldn't have otherwise.
- There are currently over 1500 NGOs that exist solely to aid Arab communities in Israel. These NGOs play a vital role in providing for the Israeli-Arab in ways the government does not. By doing so they try to equal the socioeconomic landscape via their various functions of aid.
- NGOs fill the void primarily in two ways: Providing direct practical aid and services, or by providing ample political representation:
- Starting with Providing aid and services: NGOs provide practical aid in a multitude of areas: such as food/goods, housing, employment and education:
- There are many organizations that distribute food and other necessities. These are mostly religious non-profits as well as a few secular ones that give food out year-round to underprivileged Muslim families. Leket Israel is a notable group that funds over 263 food-providing non-profits, regardless of the ethnicity, many of them posted in Arab communities.

- There are many groups like Adalah (Justice in Arabic) that provide public housing in mixed cities, such as Haifa and Jaffa. They aid in planning housing developments, subsidizing rent and other housing costs for Arabs.
- Several NGOs provide employment centers in places of high unemployment, such as Bedouin towns and mixed cities. There are large disparities between Jewish and Arab employment in skilled, professional and academic work. NGOs often provide Arabs with opportunity into such fields. Either they are employed within the NGO sector itself as a professional or they are provided with training to enter the larger workforce. Many organizations like the Nazareth-based NGO Tsofen High Technology Centers, hope to provide Arabs with training in hi-tech and cybersecurity skills. Currently Arabs make up only 2% of Israel's vast hi-tech industry. That number may jump to 7% in the next 5 years largely due to NGOs.
- Many organizations aid in education for Arabs. Such as the Follow Up Committee for Arab Education which aids in the development of Arab-oriented curricula and provides scholarships. The Eqraa Association and Iqra'a provide university preparatory programs, after-school curricula, school sports and pre-schooling. All amenities Israeli-Arabs often go without.
- In sum, these NGOs providing practical aid and services manage to benefit the struggling portions of the Israeli-Arab populace in many ways. They are extremely notable in their ability to tackle temporary needs of underprivileged peoples.

- The second way NGOs work to benefit Israeli-Arabs is by providing political representation. The Arabic political parties often are not able to obtain the platform needed to make serious waves in the Knesset on the behalf of the Arabic populace. So communities rely on NGOs for the representations they can provide. This side of the NGO sector is focused on protecting the rights of the Israeli-Arab populace and fostering social change.

As Quoted by Jamal:

- “The Arab NGO sector has provided services in many fields where the state has failed. It pressures state institutions to change their policies in various fields. Thereby, the Arab NGO sector plays a strong counter-hegemonic role vs the state, assisting political parties to improve their role in the political arena.”

Some great examples on how NGOs represent the Israeli-Arab are as follows:

- The Al-Marsad group engages in researching and monitoring the forced re-settlements of Arabs in the Golan Heights, triangle and elsewhere, and provides legal services to those affected.
- The Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages tries to halt resettlement of Bedouin municipalities in the Negev. Last year they, and Adalah, were able to halt two evacuations of Bedouin townships.

- The Mossawa Center created and maintains an elaborate analysis of the State budget and government spending to signify disparities in funds that favor the Jewish populace and neglect Arab sectors. This analysis in turn placed pressure on the government to renovate their national budget to be more equitable for all people groups in the nation.
 - The Galilee Society works to uphold Arab health rights and petitions for cleanup of government caused health-hazardous environments within Arab communities.
 - And lastly, Atidna is a coalition of both Jewish and Arab educational leaders who first banded together during the Covid-19 pandemic when education systems struggled. They hope to formulate a better education system for several Arab communities that are lacking educational standardization. They have an emphasis on the importance of upholding an Arab identity within a Jewish state.
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- These are just a few examples of how NGOs work to counter the Jewish hegemony that dominates the Arab communities within Israel. These organizations grant the Arab a voice in the public realm. In doing so, they contribute to the adding legitimacy to the Arab's national narrative, helping to solidify the Israeli-Arab national identity.
 - Together, these NGOs also loosely amalgamate to create an NGO sector in Israeli society that can potentially elevate the Arab's position in society. With so much activity happening across multiple sectors of society, all of which Arab-oriented, this vast web of NGOs band together to create a loose pseudo-national system positioned around the Arab.

- A great number of professionally trained Arabs find work within the NGO sector, as it is easier for them to become employed there compared to the general workforce. Working in the NGOs sector also has the added benefit of bringing with it a sense of community advocacy. The Arab working within the NGO sector is contributing to a system that directly benefits his community, whether that be giving students an opportunity for a better education, urban planning for Arabic townships, working in an employment agency, managing a food drive, etc. Whereas working within the general workforce often may feel like doing the opposite, as in opposing their community by benefiting a system that is geared toward benefiting the Jewish populace at the Arab's expense. The NGO sector provides an alternate workforce that is friendlier to Israeli-Arab affairs.
- Music
- NGOs do some phenomenal work in aiding and empowering Israeli-Arabs. However, this observation would not be well-rounded if NGOs limitations were not discussed.
- Each example of NGOs I have mentioned work to fill a gap that was intentionally left unfilled by the Israeli government. Essentially, these organizations are forever locked in a game of catch up, trying to fix whatever issue the government leaves broken. They are working in a system that has no intention of changing. There is no way these organizations, who largely depend on donation in order to function, could ever possibly provide for the Arab citizen on scale as the government could. While the role of NGOs is necessary, it is not sustainable solution. It is a band-aid on a gunshot wound. Jamal puts it this way,

“As pointed out by many NGO scholars, It is doubtful that NGOs can offer sustainable substitution for state spending, an observation that is applicable to Arab NGOs in particular, despite their good intentions.”

- The fact of the matter is that people rely on these outside organizations because the government shirks its responsibility to take care of its citizens. NGOs are invaluable within the national divide, but they can never be the end of the discussion.

- **Item 4:** - Looking to the future:
- As we look toward the future there is much cause for concern when speculating about the national divide. There are no signs on the horizon that the situation for Israeli-Arabs will get any easier any time soon.
- Therefore, for the foreseeable future, NGOs will play important roles in the everyday lives of the Arab public.
- However, the proliferation of NGOs in marginalized communities is a recent phenomenon that is picking up pace globally, and certainly so within Israel. More and more Arab NGOs are created every year, and that is likely to continue to be a benefit.

- Personally, I am troubled at the state of affairs within Israel's national divide. The current system is not fair to the Israeli-Arab populace. As I stated earlier, they are marginalized in a myriad of ways. Their situation mirrors marginalized groups around the world and within my home country. And because of this, I can understand how the Arabic population would feel at odds with their government, and why they might hold to a separate nationality. My hope is that outside actors such as world governments and NGOs will continue to place pressure on the Israeli government to shift their practices to being more inclusive, and lean into equity for all.

Wrap-up and closing remarks (about 2 minutes):

- Altogether, Israel is a complex society. Its National Divide has complex issues that require comprehensive solutions. For now, NGOs are that solution to the extent they can be. They have proven their ability to grant practical aid in the way of necessities, education, employment, housing and through tapestry of other services that were not mentioned. They can also defend the rights of Israeli-Arabs and uphold their image on a national level through representation in the face of adversary.
- I will be posting my sources for this episode online, look at this online page where you are listening to the episode.
- Thank you for listening and thank you for your interest and concern for the Arabic minority within Israel and for marginalized minority groups

everywhere. I'm grateful for your time. Please be sure to check into the other episodes in the series, "Israel's Divides Explained."

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