



UK Task Force

on issues relating to Arab citizens of Israel

Briefing: Arab populations in 'mixed cities'

2 January 2012

Introduction

- The term 'mixed city' is used to describe an area populated by a significant Arab minority (above 10%) living alongside a Jewish majority. The Central Bureau of Statistics defines seven cities as mixed (in addition to Jerusalem): Acre, Haifa, Tel Aviv-Yaffo, Ramla, Lod, Ma'alot-Tarshiha and Nazareth Illit.¹ These cities are home to over 400,000 Jews and almost 100,000 Arabs (around 7% of all Arab citizens of Israel).²
- Mixed cities can be further categorised into two groupings. In several cities (the first five cities in the above list) the Arab population is indigenous, with a presence dating back to before the founding of the state of Israel. These are often referred to as 'traditional' mixed cities.
- In recent years, 'new' or 'emerging' mixed cities have sprung up, as Arab citizens have immigrated due to several factors, including persistent housing shortages in existing Arab towns. These emerging mixed cities include Ma'alot-Tarshiha and Nazareth Illit.³
- While mixed cities are often large, with strong economies, many Arab residents live in separate Arab neighbourhoods. Arab areas often face significant challenges in relation to infrastructure, housing, education, employment, access to municipal services and crime.
- This briefing will address common characteristics of mixed cities, current challenges and state and civic responses.

Demography

- The Arab population of mixed cities often pre-dated the foundation of the state in 1948 or descended from internal refugees of the War of Independence. In Haifa, the city was historically mixed, whereas in Ramla, Acre and Jaffa they became mixed following large Jewish migration after 1948.⁴
- The demography of mixed cities has begun to change more recently, with increased Arab immigration and Jewish emigration. For example, in Lod there was a 24% increase in the Arab population between 2003 and 2009 whereas the Jewish population dropped by 8%.⁵
- The political affiliation of Arabs in mixed cities has followed the national trend away from the mainstream Jewish parties, with 82% of Arabs voting for Arab political parties in the 2009

¹ Amnon Beeri-Sulitzeanu and Uri Gopher, *Mixed Cities and Regions: The Future Face of Israel* (The Abraham Fund Initiatives, 2009), p.6.

² *Mixed cities in Israel Fact Sheet* (Inter Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, April 2010), p.1. Found at <http://www.iataskforce.org/sites/default/files/Mixed%20Cities%20in%20Israel%20April%202010.pdf>.

Accessed on 23 August 2013

³ Beeri-Sulitzeanu and Gopher, p.7

⁴ Jacobi, H. *The Jewish-Arab City: Spatio-Politics in a Mixed Community* (Routledge, Oxford 2009).

⁵ Ynet, *Study: Jews leaving mixed cities* (4 May 2011)

elections, up from 72% in 2006. In Acre and Jaffa, 88% of Arab voters supported Arab political parties, compared to 67% in Haifa, 59% in Ramla and 55% in Lod.⁶

- The northern branch of the Islamic Movement, led by Sheikh Raed Salah, who has previously been arrested for incitement⁷ and prosecuted for illegally funding Hamas,⁸ has attracted growing support in Acre and Jaffa.⁹ Islamist groups are also becoming increasingly popular in Lod.¹⁰
- Although there is net Jewish migration away from mixed cities, the Jewish population remaining has changed considerably over the past 20 years, with an influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union (FSU) - in Ramla, for example, there were 5,800 FSU Jews in 1990, a figure which rose to 22,800 by 2001.¹¹
- FSU immigrants tend to support right wing parties including Israel Beiteinu (now merged with Likud) which takes a strong line on the place of Israel's Arab citizens as characterised in its 2009 election slogan "no loyalty, no citizenship" and its proposals to include exchanges of Arab-inhabited land as part of a two-state deal with the Palestinians.¹²
- There has also been an influx of 'Garinim Torani'im' communities over the past twenty years, with religious Zionist leaders supporting migration into mixed cities, particularly from settlements in the West Bank, to ensure a Jewish majority remains in these areas.

Land, planning and housing

- In many mixed cities, planning authorities have failed to develop long-term strategies for dealing with increasing Arab populations and the need for extra housing. There are often delays to new housing projects, a lack of land and difficulties in granting building permits.¹³
- Many Arab residents have key money tenancy agreements which prohibit building extensions, with growing families often building illegally. Over 100 houses have been demolished in Acre, Ramla and Lod since 2003 with a further 500 demolition orders outstanding.¹⁴

a) Gentrification

- Gentrification, the process whereby wealthier people acquire or rent property in low income and working class communities, has put a strain on Arab residents of mixed cities, particularly in Acre and Jaffa. In Acre, the Old Acre Development Company, a subsidiary of the Israeli tourism ministry, is marketing many of the old city's historic buildings for development as luxury hotels, restaurants, boutique shops and exclusive apartment complexes. The old city was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2001.¹⁵
- As modern Tel Aviv incrementally absorbs Jaffa, the lines between the two cities have become increasingly blurred. Real estate developers have begun marketing valuable beachside properties in the Arab neighbourhood of Ajami near the Jaffa port. Affluent Jews are now

⁶ Ephraim Lavie and Arik Rudnitzky, *Arab Politics in Israel and the 18th Knesset Election* (The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation. February 2009). Found at <http://www.dayan.org/kapjac/files/Elections2009eng1.pdf>. Accessed on 23 August 2012

⁷ Efrat Weiss, 'Sheikh Raed Salah arrested for incitement,' *Ynet News* (10 June 2009).

⁸ BBC News, *Sheikh Raed Salah: Profile of pro-Palestinian activist* (30 September 2011). Found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15123174>. Accessed on 23 August 2012

⁹ Raphaeli Israeli, *The Islamic Movement in Israel*, Jerusalem Letter (October 1999). Found at <http://jcpa.org/jl/jl416.htm>. Accessed on 23 August 2012.

¹⁰ The Economist, *Israel and its Arabs: Pulled apart*, (14 October 2010). Found at <http://www.economist.com/node/17254422>. Accessed on 24 August 2012.

¹¹ Beeri-Sulitzeanu and Gopher, p.23

¹² Liam Hoare, 'How to understand Yisrael Beiteinu,' *The Jewish Chronicle* (12 July 2011)

¹³ Shiloh, S. 'When the policy of discrimination fails,' *Ha'aretz* (2 March 2009)

¹⁴ Buthayna Dabit, *The New Israel Fund-Shatil Mixed Cities Project* (The New Israel Fund and Shatil, 2004), p.2

¹⁵ Harriet Sherwood, 'Israel's historic city of Acre faces tourist and settler tensions,' *The Guardian* (24 June 2012)

moving into Ajami. Most are from Tel Aviv, but overseas residents are also increasingly buying properties as an investment.¹⁶

- This redevelopment has limited positive impact on local Arabs, pushing up the cost of property.¹⁷ In Ajami, house prices have risen in six years from around \$50,000 (£31,000) to as much as \$1.2 million (£765,000).¹⁸ Rising prices and the housing crunch in Jaffa have already pushed many Arab families to adjacent Bat Yam, where their children attend Jewish schools but rarely fully integrate socially.¹⁹

b) Arab access to housing

- Many Arabs in mixed cities live in 'absentee ownership' properties owned by the State. The State argues that many Arab-owned properties, such as in Ajami in Jaffa, were abandoned by their owners during the 1948 war, and were taken over as public housing for both Jewish and Arab families. Most Arab residents of Ajami say they are living in homes that were once owned by their families and should be treated as rightful heirs. In an area such as Ajami, where the value of property has gone up by hundreds of thousands of dollars in the past five years, many residents are fighting eviction orders from the Israel Land Authority (ILA).²⁰
- Access to new housing is also restricted with some projects strictly catering to Jewish residents only, such as Ramat Elyashiv in Lod and housing projects funded by private organisations in Ramla.²¹
- Some city municipalities and civic groups have tried to respond to Arab housing shortages in mixed cities. For example, the Tel-Aviv-Jaffa municipality announced on 11 February 2011 that it would build 100 subsidised, affordable housing units for Arab citizens.²²
- The Arab community has also tried to respond pro-actively, with a private Christian school in Ramla building a new wing to alleviate over-crowding using only donations from local people.²³

Planning controversies

- Municipal authorities have come under pressure in recent years due to their residential planning policies in mixed cities. Allotment of land to groups from different parts of the population is being increasingly scrutinised.
- In Acre, Arab residents claim the municipality has been aiming to attract new religious Zionist residents in order to change the mixed Arab-Jewish character of the city.²⁴ The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) asked the Israel Lands Administration to cancel a recent tender for a housing development with some 200 housing units in Acre because, according to ACRI, it is being marketed exclusively to religious families and is discriminatory. The petition was rejected by the Haifa District Court, though the judge noted in his verdict that land allocation to a group with singular cultural or religious characteristics needed to be examined according to the tender's

¹⁶ Daniel Ben-Tal, 'The gentrification of Jaffa,' *The Jerusalem Post* (2 February 2006)

¹⁷ Harriet Sherwood, 'Jaffa's Arab haven of coexistence resists influx of Israeli hardliners,' *The Guardian* (July 2010)

¹⁸ Erika Solomon, 'Dream location, legal nightmare as Jaffa gentrifies,' *Reuters* (13 January 2010). Found at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/01/13/us-israel-arabs-property-idUSTRE60C1P920100113>. Accessed on 23 August 2012

¹⁹ Daniel Ben-Tal, 'The gentrification of Jaffa,' *The Jerusalem Post* (2 February 2006)

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ Haim Yacobi, 'Separate and unequal,' *Ha'aretz* (17 October 2008)

²² Ilan Lior, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/tel-aviv-to-build-affordable-housing-for-jaffa-s-arab-residents-1.346102>

²³ Noam Dvir, 'The school that saved Ramle' *Ha'aretz* (18 November 2010)

²⁴ Jack Khoury, 'Mixed Israeli city marketing homes to religious Jews only, says rights group,' *Ha'aretz* (4 March 2012)

specific conditions and in view of all ILA tenders, to ascertain whether the administration allocated land in an equal way to various parts of the population.²⁵

- In Jaffa, the government has been providing financial benefits for IDF reservists to buy property, leading to the Jaffa Muslim Council filing an appeal to the High Court. The High Court issued a show-cause order to the prime minister and ILA to explain why reserve soldiers should receive benefits and priority in land purchases in Jaffa. The court recognised the necessity of rewarding reserve soldiers, but questioned the State's doing so with tenders, where the law is very clear regarding equality.²⁶
- According to Faten Zinati, a municipal government employee in Lod, the city has developed more than a hundred housing plans for Jewish communities, but none for Arab residents.²⁷ The Kerem Al Tufaaharea neighbourhood in Lod, home to about 1,000 Arabs, is an example of a particularly rundown and neglected area. Streets have no names, houses have no numbers and roads are unpaved, have no lampposts and are littered with rubbish. Authorities rarely grant building permits to Arab residents. In contrast, a new accommodation, Ramat Elyashiv, is being built to home hundreds of religious Jewish families. A study by the Israeli rights group Shatil last year showed that 70% of Arabs' homes in Lod were built illegally and activists say hundreds of them face demolition orders.²⁸

Education

- In mixed cities, there are often shortages of educational institutions for Arab children, with some Jewish schools refusing to register Arab students and, whilst many schools have become mixed, most staff are Jewish. At one school in Jaffa, where half the students are Arab but all classes are taught in Hebrew, students were banned from talking Arabic amongst themselves.²⁹
- In Ramla, Jewish residents in the Kiryat Menachem neighbourhood campaigned against the opening of an Arab school due to fears over a fall in house prices and increase in crime.³⁰
- In response to educational deficiencies for Arab children in Haifa, certain civic groups have acted to improve the situation. Two Christian schools in Haifa have flourished, with over 95% of students matriculating, compared to a national average of 53%, with one of the schools teaching Christian, Muslim, Druze and Bedouin students.³¹
- The Leo Baeck Educational Center in Haifa maintains schools all the way from nursery, through primary school, to secondary school, for Arab and Jewish students. It also puts on a variety of social and cultural events.
- Students from the Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa and students from the Arab village of Ein Mahal in the Lower Galilee performed together in an original Arab-Jewish musical production titled 'Step By Step / Sauwa Sauwa.' The programme was sponsored by Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, and had its UK premiere at West London Synagogue in April 2012.³²

²⁵ Jack Khoury, 'Appeal in Acre against housing for religious Jews fails,' *Ha'aretz* ((24 April 2012)

²⁶ Jack Khoury, 'Jaffa residents claim IDF reservists get priority in buying real estate' *Ha'aretz* (15 July 2011)

²⁷ Jihan Abdalla, 'Violent Arab ghetto shows Israel's seamy underside,' *Reuters* (30 May 2012). Found at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/30/us-israel-arabs-crime-idUSBRE84T0WH20120530>. Accessed on 24 August 2012

²⁸ Vita Bekker, 'In Israel's mixed city of Lod, two districts so close yet so distant,' *The National* (9 September 2012)

²⁹ Ilan Lior, 'Ban on Arabic in Jaffa classroom sparks protests' *Ha'aretz* (29 December 2010)

³⁰ Yuval Azoulay, 'Ramle Jews oppose opening of new Arab school' *Ha'aretz* (31 August 2004)

³¹ David Ratner, 'Haifa's Christian schools lead the league,' *Ha'aretz* (25 May 2004)

³² Liberal Judaism, *NPLS Sponsors Thought-Provoking Arab-Jewish Musical*. Found at <http://www.liberaljudaism.org/news/494-npls-sponsors-thought-provoking-arab-jewish-musical.html>. Accessed on 23 August 2012

Crime

- An especially troubling issue for mixed cities is high levels of crime and imprisonment. In 2010, Jaffa, Haifa and Ramla had some of the highest crime rates in the country.³³ In Lod, violent crime and drug dealing has become endemic, linked to gangs involved in drugs and arms trafficking, with Arab residents protesting and calling for greater law enforcement.³⁴
- A 2005 report by the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority (PRA) found the rate of imprisonment was nearly three times higher in mixed cities than Arab or Jewish cities. Whilst the Arab town of Umm al-Fahm had 1.35 and the Jewish town of Eilat 1.6 prisoners per thousand residents, Lod and Acre had 4.64 and 4.21 prisoners per thousand residents respectively, with Arab prisoners from mixed cities over-represented.³⁵
- In response to the high levels of crime within Arab communities, both in Arab towns and mixed cities, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spoken out against the 'insufferable' burden of crime on the Arab sector and vowed to invest more in law enforcement in Arab areas with high crime.³⁶ The state-sponsored 'City Without Violence' programme has also been extended into all mixed cities to combat violence, anti-social behaviour and crime.³⁷
- Following a string of murders in Lod during October 2010, Prime Minister Netanyahu vowed to invest 130 million NIS (£21.2 million) to combat crime, provide more welfare provisions for poor families, and try to attract new residents and tourists to the city.³⁸ This included funding for five new social workers who speak Arabic (previously there were only two working part-time).³⁹

Emerging mixed cities

- Amnon Beeri-Sulitzeanu and Uri Gopher, in a 2009 review on mixed cities produced for the Abraham Fund Initiatives, argue that the recent emergence of new mixed cities can be attributed to severe housing shortages in Arab towns.⁴⁰
- In these cases, shortages in housing together with the poor level of services in Arab towns lead to Arab families moving to Jewish towns with more available housing.
- In other cases, mixed cities are created when an Arab community is incorporated into the jurisdiction of Jewish cities, such as the case of Ramiah, a neighbourhood of Karmiel, or the northern neighbourhood of Nazareth Illit.⁴¹
- In addition, Beeri-Sulitzeanu and Gopher cite internal urbanisation and modernisation in Arab society as additional factors for migration to emerging mixed cities, and the appeal of the attractive physical residential environment in Jewish towns.⁴²

³³ Yaniz Kubovich, 'Police study: Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa, Ramla and Eilat Israel's most violent cities,' *Ha'aretz*, (9 October 2011)

³⁴ Ben Hartman, 'Lod's Arab residents protest; blame police for murders,' *The Jerusalem Post* (22 October 2010)

³⁵ Ruth Sinai, 'Most criminal towns: Lod and Acre- Mixed Jewish-Arab towns have highest rate of incarceration' *Ha'aretz* (19 October 2006)

³⁶ Jihan Abdullah, 'Violent Arab ghetto shows Israel's seamy underside,' *Reuters* (30 May 2012). Found at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/30/us-israel-arabs-crime-idUSBRE84TOWH20120530>. Accessed on 24 August 2012

³⁷ City Without Violence. See <http://www.cwv.gov.il/English/Pages/default.aspx>

³⁸ 'Netanyahu pledges to invest NIS 130m to save crime ridden Lod,' *Ha'aretz* (28 October 2010)

³⁹ Noah Kosharek, 'Wide state plan aims to reduce crime, up social support in Lod,' *Ha'aretz* (29 October 2010)

⁴⁰ Beeri-Sulitzeanu and Gopher, p.10

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.10

⁴² *Ibid*, p.10

Socio-economic status compared with Arab-only towns

- Arabs living in traditional mixed cities could be expected to have better socioeconomic status than those living in Arab-majority cities, as many are located within or close to prosperous metropolitan areas.
- Comparisons of socioeconomic status of Arabs living in Arab-majority and traditional mixed cities found there was no significant difference between the two, and on several measures, Arabs living in mixed cities were worse off than those from Arab towns.⁴³
- However, the socioeconomic status of Arabs within new mixed cities tend to be much higher, with more affluent Arab residents from medium and upper class backgrounds able to afford better housing in areas with better access to municipal services.⁴⁴
- Thus, the development of new mixed cities can be linked to more affluent Arab families seeking better living conditions.

Jewish-Arab tensions

- Tensions between the communities have occasionally spilled out into more tangible discord, with the 2008 riots in Acre the most serious instance. The backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has at times played a divisive role. Even Haifa, considered by many to be a haven of coexistence, suffered a rift in mutual trust when, during the Lebanon war, Arab communal leaders refused to condemn Hezbollah.⁴⁵

a) Acre riots

- On Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement and holiest day of the year, an Arab resident drove through a Jewish neighbourhood of Acre, allegedly playing loud music and smoking, and was stopped and assaulted by Jewish residents. In response, Arab youths congregated and rioted, with four days of rioting between Jewish and Arab youths and police, businesses and homes attacked, and several Arab homes in Jewish neighbourhoods set on fire.⁴⁶
- Since the 2008 riots, Acre has remained calm and avoided further outbreaks of violence. The city has received 1.1 billion shekels (£173 million) of investment over the last 6 years alongside the building of new apartments, hotels, and a shopping mall, and resurgence in tourism with 1.5 million visitors a year, particularly to the Old City.⁴⁷

b) Price tag attacks

- 'Price tag' attacks by Jewish extremists that following actions by Israeli authorities that are perceived as harming the settlement enterprise, have extended into Israel proper over the past two years. There have been several "price tag" attacks targeting Arabs in several mixed cities, with Muslim and Christian graves desecrated⁴⁸ and an arson attack against an Arab restaurant in

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.11-12

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.11-12

⁴⁵ Eyan Ben, 'Haifa: Coexistence Shattered,' *Ynet News* (25 August 2006)

⁴⁶ Nadav Shragai, Jack Khoury and Yoav Stern, 'Police spread across Acre in tense wake of Arab-Jewish riots,' *Ha'aretz* (9 October 2008)

⁴⁷ Linda Gradstein, 'Richard's royal seaside city,' *The Jerusalem Post* (3 May 2012)

⁴⁸ Reuters, *Muslim and Christian graves desecrated in Israeli city* (9 October 2011). Found at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/08/us-palestinians-israel-graves-idUSTRE79712420111008>. Accessed on 23 August 2012

Jaffa;⁴⁹ as well as a mosque vandalised in a Bedouin village east of Haifa.⁵⁰ There have been a few reprisals, including the attempted arson of a synagogue in Jaffa.⁵¹

Shared society opportunities

- Despite the tensions, the proximity of Jewish and Arab populations in mixed cities offers opportunities for facilitating day-to-day Arab-Jewish interaction.
- There is a wealth of shared society initiatives, working at both the policy and grassroots levels in mixed cities, to foster positive Jewish-Arab relations; help the Arab minority access mainstream Israeli society and cultivate an atmosphere of acceptance – and even celebration - of Arab culture.
- Three important examples in this area are: 1. The Citizens' Accord Forum for Jews and Arabs in Israel (CAF); 2. The Hand in Hand: Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel; and 3. The Shatil's Shared Society Programme
- The Citizens' Accord Forum for Jews and Arabs in Israel (CAF) was established with the vision of building a just and equal relationship and stability among Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. The Jaffa Convention on Jewish-Arab Cooperation, inaugurated in November 2005, was the first national gathering to set a public agenda to focus on equity and bridging the gaps between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. It brings together Israel's leading academics, journalists, politicians and leaders of civil society organizations to discuss key points on Jewish-Arab relations and the status of Arab citizens of Israel.⁵²
- The Hand in Hand Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel is a network of integrated, bilingual schools combining peace education and high academic standards, with campuses in Jerusalem, the Galilee and Wadi Ara. In the coming year, it will be introducing its successful educational frameworks into communities in the mixed cities Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa to promote the model of shared, equal society.
- Shatil's Shared Society programme includes many initiatives that are seeking to transform mixed cities into places that are truly shared by all their citizens. Shatil is working in Haifa, Acre, Nazareth Ilit, Carmiel and Lod to empower minorities and build genuine dialogue between the cities' residents.
- These kinds of opportunities for discussion and understanding are less attainable in Arab-only or Jewish-only areas. Mixed cities present the testing ground for the success of shared society initiatives in Israel.

⁴⁹ Jack Khoury, 'Vandals set fire to Arab restaurant in Jaffa in suspected 'price tag' attack,' *Ha'aretz* (31 October 2011)

⁵⁰ Jack Khoury, 'Mosque vandalised in Bedouin village near Haifa,' *Ha'aretz* (9 June 2010)

⁵¹ Yaniz Kubovich and Jack Khoury, 'Molotov cocktails thrown at Jaffa synagogue; hundreds protest 'price tag' attack on cemeteries,' *Ha'aretz* (8 October 2011)

⁵² The Citizens' Accord Forum between Jews & Arabs in Israel. See <http://www.caf.org.il/index.html>