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**The Disturbances of November 2014
from the Perspective of the Arabs in Israel
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On November 8, 2014, 22-year old Khayr al-Din Hamdan was shot to death in Kafr Qana by an Israeli Police Special Patrol squad. The widespread rage and protest among Israeli Arabs that followed highlighted once again the rift between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Within hours of the incident, the video clip documenting the shooting was posted on the social networks and was shared and viewed by many, including on local news websites. While a strong majority of responses by Jewish viewers perceived the shooting as an act of self defense, among the Arab community the event was almost unanimously described as cold-blooded murder. The statement by the Kafr Qana council included the “demand that the Israel Police chief open a serious investigation and punish the criminals...The police treat us as if we were their enemies and the enemies of the State of Israel, and their automatic trigger-happy response when Arabs are involved is met with no accountability and no punishment.” Indeed, a common assertion in the Arab discourse is that this case was not unusual, and that since the bloody events of October 2000, there have been numerous cases (including some of a criminal nature) in which Israeli Arabs were fatally shot by police, while during this period there were only two cases in which Jews were killed under similar circumstances. This claim, which we are unable to either refute or verify, reflects the frustration and lack of trust in the Israeli establishment that prevails in the Arab community. These feelings signify, at least to some extent, that the recommendations by the Orr Commission established following the riots of October 2000 regarding the relations between the Arab community and the Israeli Police, as well as other important issues relating to the Arab minority, have not been implemented.

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One of the most prominent characteristics of the mass protests following the Kafr Qana shooting was the focus on Palestinian national identity. At the funeral, Hamdan's body was wrapped in a Palestinian flag, Palestinian flags were waved, and black and white checkered keffiyehs, considered a Palestinian national symbol, were common. Kafr Qana local council head Majhad Awaouda said that Hamdan "was murdered because he was a Palestinian Arab from Kafr Qana." Sakhnin Mayor and Arab Local Authorities Committee Chairman Mazen Ghanayem told the local protestors: "Your presence here today is the clearest proof that the Arab minority in Israel remains steadfast and preserves our Palestinian identity." Another Palestinian symbol appearing at the demonstrations was the al-Aqsa mosque (the Dome of the Rock, which the Palestinians regard as part of the "expanded" al-Aqsa mosque) – a clear reference to the recent tensions between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem.

Palestinian motifs also stood out in demonstrations by hundreds of children and youths in various communities and in student demonstrations – evidence of the strengthening of Palestinian national identity among the younger generation. On November 9, the youth movement, al-Hirak al-Shababi, which was prominent in organizing political protests, called on Arab students through the social networks to come to school the next day wearing Palestinian keffiyehs, in response to "Israel's policy, which aims at distorting the identity of our students...and to all those advocating enlistment in the military and ethnic division. The next generation will finally thwart all the Israelization schemes." This call was apparently met with a large measure of success. A few days later, on November 15, severe riots broke out on in Kafr Abu Snan. Beginning as a confrontation between Muslim and Druze students who were about to enlist in the IDF, the riots were of a distinct ethnic nature, but the effects of the political friction between those espousing a Palestinian national identity and those supporting the State of Israel were clearly apparent.

Indeed, the identification with the Palestinian national movement is currently shared by three of the four main political lines of thought in the Arab community in Israel: the national current, the religious-Islamic current, and those advocating Jewish-Arab cooperation. Not included is the fourth current, which espouses a pro-state approach. The combination of religion and nationalism, revolving around Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa mosque as a national symbol, is a well-known motif among the different branches of Palestinian nationalism. In Israel, Raed Salah, the leader of the Northern Faction of the Islamic Movement and the most prominent disseminator of this line, linked the event in Kafr Qana directly with the tensions in Jerusalem.

The demonstrations following Hamdan's death passed relatively quickly, without casualties on either side. In part this was a result of restraint on the part of both the police and the general Arab public. Most Arabs regard Jews as partners for life in the same

country. Moreover, thus far the demonstrations have not spread to all Arab communities, despite the charged atmosphere resonating from the tensions in Jerusalem and despite the heated controversy regarding the nation-state bill, seen by the Arabs (as well as by others) as yet another hostile manifestation of exclusion. The riots were mostly localized, and Jewish-Arab interaction in daily life continued, alongside a growing sense of Arab self-empowerment. Surveys conducted among the Arab community in recent years show that most of those advocating a Palestinian national identity see no contradiction between this allegiance and their self perception as Israeli citizens. For example, in a survey conducted on November 21-23, 2014 by the Statnet Research Institute and reported on Channel 10, some 60 percent of the respondents answered that the Israeli establishment treated them with full equality (8.5 percent) or partial equality (51.1 percent).

It appears that the risk of escalation has receded as of now. At the same time, the overall situation remains volatile, given the effects of Islamic radicalization in the Arab world, the absence of a political process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the severe religious tension in Jerusalem, the sharpening of the dispute within Israel over the question of Jewish national identity, the growing expressions of racism in current Israeli discourse, and perhaps most of all, the wide socio-economic gaps between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. The combination of all these factors might easily spark a serious conflagration, resulting in a harsh confrontation that can escalate into large scale violence.

In these challenging circumstances, it is more important than ever to ensure the scrupulous, careful, proportionate, and lawful maintenance of public order, but this alone will not suffice. There is an urgent need to refrain from exclusionary and alienating measures, including those of symbolic importance, e.g., challenging the formally equal status of the Arabic language. At the same time, it is imperative to initiate an ongoing and substantive dialogue with the leaders of the Arab community, including at the local level, who stress the imperative of Jewish-Arab coexistence. In this context, the significant actions and statements by President Reuven Rivlin, which were welcomed by the Arab community, should be noted. It is also important that other senior politicians underscore that the Arab citizens in Israel are entitled to full equality, as stated in Israel's declaration of independence ("The State of Israel...will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex"). Adoption of an inclusive approach must be followed by systematic action, including full implementation of the existing plans for closing the gaps in infrastructure and society.