

## Concept

# The Arab Higher Monitoring Committee

8.22.2007

## Definition

The Higher Arab Monitoring Committee is an independent political organization whose aim is to coordinate the political actions of various Israeli-Arab bodies. The Committee is comprised of Arab MKs, Arab local council heads and representatives of different streams in the Arab sector.

## Background

The establishment of the Higher Monitoring Committee in 1982 signaled one of the peaks in the Palestinization process that Israeli-Arabs have undergone since the 1970s. During this process, new Arab parties and NGOs that are represented in the Higher Committee were founded.

The Monitoring Committee is not an elected or an executive body and the State does not recognize it as an official or representative Israeli-Arab organization. Moreover, there is a great deal of criticism within the Israeli-Arab community over the Committee's ineffectiveness in promoting issues on the Israeli-Arab's agenda. Despite this, the Monitoring Committee holds informal contacts with government ministries, and its statements are published in the media. The wide representation of political bodies in the Monitoring Committee and the fact that its decisions are received unanimously, give these statements great weight.

Normally, the Monitoring Committee's activities focus on issues on the Israeli-Arab agenda, and that apply to the state's institutions.. The secretariat meets every month or after exceptional events, such as the October 2000 riots. The Committee is active in issuing press releases and organizing demonstrations and protests against the establishment. It organizes two annual rallies – on March 30<sup>th</sup> to mark Land Day and on October 1<sup>st</sup>, in remembrance of the events of October 2000.

## The October Riots and the Orr Commission

The Monitoring Committee burst into the Israeli national consciousness after it led the battle to establish a Governmental Commission of Inquiry to investigate the results of the October 2000 riots in which 13 Israeli-Arabs were killed.

Initially, the Monitoring Committee expressed reservations over the composition of the Orr commission that was appointed by the State.<sup>1</sup> However, in light of the Commission's criticism regarding the discrimination and marginalization of the Israeli-Arab minority, the Monitoring Committee accepted the report and praised its conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

In its report, the Orr Commission determined that the Monitoring Committee had no restraining influence over the course of the riots, and in fact initiated the large protests and general strikes

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<sup>1</sup> Head of the Commission was Supreme Court judge Theodor Orr. [Click here](#) for a Summary of the Commission's report.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee even designated the Orr Commission's report as an important official document that constituted a historic watershed in relations between Jewish and Arab citizens in the state. See "Monitoring Committee changes its mind: The Orr Commission Report is an Important Official Document, [Ha'aretz](#) (9/10/2003) in Hebrew.

while publicly blaming the police for being responsible for the events.<sup>3</sup> At the same time however, the Orr Commission concluded that it was fair to assume that the Monitoring Committee had no interest in escalating events and that some of its members were actually attacked and injured while trying to stop the more disruptive elements of the crowd.<sup>4</sup>

## The Future Vision of the Arab Palestinians in Israel<sup>5</sup>

The 'Future Vision of the Arab Palestinians in Israel' (hereafter, the Vision Document) published by the Monitoring Committee and the Committee of Arab Local Council Heads, is the first of its kind to challenge the place and status of Israeli-Arabs in the Jewish state.

Alongside its demand for socio-economic equality, the Vision Document includes demands for annulling the definition of the State as Jewish and establishing a government based on 'Consensual Democracy' that would allow Israeli-Arabs to have a veto on national decisions. In this way, the Monitoring Committee hoped the national, historic, civic, individual and collective rights of the Arab minority would be ensured.

The aim of the Document was to initiate a public discussion regarding the relations between the Jewish community and the Arab community in Israel, to influence the agenda in Israel and to attract Arab and international attention to the status of Israeli Arabs.

End.

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<sup>3</sup> The statements issued by the Monitoring Committee during the October riots reflect the trend of Palestinization which is emerging within the Israeli-Arab community. In a statement made on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2000, the Arab community is called upon "to show solidarity with our people who are groaning under the yoke of occupation in the PA." This motif of showing solidarity with the Palestinians was repeated in additional official statements which emphasized the shared interests between the two.

<sup>4</sup> The Orr Commission's report investigated the relations between the State and the Arab minority in light of the deepening rift and increase in suspicion and enmity between the Jewish and Arab communities. The Commission determined that a method needs to be found for strengthening the feeling of belonging of Arab citizens to the State without undermining these citizens belonging to their culture and communities.

<sup>5</sup> [Click here](#) for the 'Future Vision of the Arab Palestinians in Israel'.