

The Arab Population in Northern Israel under State of Emergency Damages from the Second Israeli War on Lebanon – A Report

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Summary

The last Israeli war against Lebanon (summer 2006) is notable for the fact that Arab towns and villages in Israel became, for the first time, part of the front subjected to direct missile and rocket fire. Thus it could be expected that a large proportion of the Arab population would articulate a negative or hostile position towards Hizbullah and Lebanon during the latest hostilities; however, that was not the case.

This report seeks to document the damages sustained by Arab citizens of Israel during the war, both individually and collectively, and to indicate areas of weakness within its organizations and institutions. It also aims to analyze these weaknesses, in order to address them and prevent them from recurring in the future.

The results documented in the report indicate that the Arab community in Israel is highly vulnerable. As we shall see below, this vulnerability manifested itself in the behavioral patterns of individuals and representatives of civil society organizations, as well as in the lack of social services infrastructure during this emergency. The number of fatalities and severe material damages – incurred as a result of missiles and rockets landing on Arab towns and villages in the north of Israel – starkly revealed the lack of various service-related facilities in Arab towns and villages, including a shortage of qualified personnel, hospitals, fire and first aid service centers and bomb shelters. Data gathered from all the Arab towns and villages in the north within the range of the missile fire and included in this report illustrates this deficiency..

The report aims to document the effects of the Israeli attack on Lebanon (summer 2006) on the Arab community in Israel at various levels, the most important of which are psychological health, material damages, governmental services and the conduct of the national and local Arab leadership. Likewise, the report identifies areas of weakness and basic needs that remain unmet as regards its physical and psychological well-being in an emergency situation.

Among the clearest results of the report are the following: the state and its numerous bodies failed to deal with the consequences of its attack on Lebanon and the Lebanese missiles that landed on Arab towns and villages; Arab towns and villages lack the facilities and services required to cope with emergency situations; the Arab population is ill-equipped to deal with such emergencies; and local authorities and civil society organizations are unable to provide assistance to the Arab population when under missile fire.

The number of fatalities among Arab citizens in Israel resulting from Israel's attack on Lebanon totaled 18 people; these fatalities account for 41 percent of the total number of civilian fatalities among Arabs and Jews in Israel killed from the first day of the attack (12 July 2006) to the end of hostilities (14 August 2006). Significantly, 78 percent of the total

number of Arab victims was killed during the last two weeks of the war, and 65 percent of the total number of Jewish Israeli victims died during the first part of the war.

By analyzing the information received by the *Ataa* Center via telephone calls made by Arabs living in northern Israel, we found that the Arab population lacks essential information on how to cope with cases of anxiety and insomnia in children. They also lack information about what to do in case of property damages and which agencies to contact. In addition, no activities for Arab children and adults were provided during the war in stark contrast to special activities provided to Jewish citizens.

The data contained in the report indicates an urgent need among eleven Arab towns and villages for fire services during hostilities. However, there are no fire service centers in any Arab towns or villages. From the data collected, it can be inferred that 70 percent of the families who sustained damages did not have access to alternative accommodation. Approximately 67 percent of those questioned indicated that they had been psychologically harmed during or after the hostilities. Physical injuries accounted for approximately 10 percent (112 individuals): approximately 20 percent of those physically injured were children and young teenagers (0–14 years); around one third were between 15–30 years old; and around 48 percent were 31 years and older. A large proportion (46 percent) of those injured was between the ages of 20–50.

A number of official and unofficial reports have been published in Israel on the effects of the Israeli attack on Lebanon, all of which are in agreement regarding the reasons for the government and official agencies' failure to deal with the emergency situation. However, none of these reports discussed the degree to which Arab local authorities and Arab civil society in the country are weak, nor did these reports document the various damages sustained by Arab families.

Significantly, during November 2006, the Jewish Agency, for the first time in its history, decided not to discriminate between Jewish citizens and 'non-Jewish' citizens of Israel with regard to the provision of financial assistance. Further, the president of the United Jewish Communities announced that approximately US \$33 million had been transferred for the benefit of the 'non-Jewish' population during and following the war. According to the website of the Jewish Agency, those referred to as 'non-Jews' are the 'Druze and Arab' population in Israel. Thus, many of the various associations in the Arab community, including local authorities and organizations, have received financial assistance from the Jewish Agency. However, the majority of these organizations, fearing criticism that may result from such a discomfiting transaction, have not declared the fact publicly. It is not possible to verify these immense sums, but it is certain that far smaller sums in the form of materials and equipment have actually reached Arab towns. The ambiguity surrounding the proof of payment of US \$33 million dollars stems from the fact that most of this money cannot be accounted for concretely on the ground.