

The Druze in Israel: Between Protest and Containment

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Abstract

Israeli policy toward the Druze has been two-dimensional since the establishment of the state. While the state enforced conscription of Druze into the military, the government's policy toward Druze in civilian areas was no different from the policy toward its Palestinian citizens in general, namely the confiscation of lands, discrimination in education and employment, and exclusion from a self-identified Jewish state. The ambivalent reality of the Druze community thus produces a dual dynamic of protest and containment. In this article, Yusri Khaizran reads the trajectory of protest among the Druze community inside Israel, and identifies key inflection points in that trajectory. He also analyzes the primary obstacles to such protests, which undermined their momentum and helped the state to tighten its grip over the Druze, despite the discrimination and exclusion that Druze, like all Palestinians inside Israel, face. This includes not only state authorities but also the traditional religious establishment in the Druze community, which has been increasingly involved in the efforts to contain and coopt Druze protest since the early 2000s.

Keywords

Druze; Israel; political protest; Palestinians in Israel; minority; Palestine; Middle East.

This article charts the repeated instances of *fawran* (spontaneous eruption of protest) and containment that characterize the Druze relationship with the Israeli state since the 1950s. It begins

with the efforts to impose and resist compulsory military conscription in the 1950s. It then examines the rise of Druze political organizations, the most important of which is the Druze Initiative Committee in the early 1970s. In response, the Israeli state sought to isolate and contain the increasingly politicized Druze through the education system. Despite the effectiveness of these efforts, the 2000s saw the emergence of new political forces among the Druze, including new efforts to restore connections – with Druze in Syria and Lebanon, but also with other Palestinians – that had been severed in prior decades. The article concludes with a look at recent developments, particularly the impact of the Arab uprisings of 2011 and their consequences, and the passage of the Nation-State Law, to consider Druze protest in the present time.

The Druze in Israel number close to 148,000 and are scattered over nearly twenty villages and towns in the Galilee and Mount Carmel, as well as in the Israeli-occupied Golan.¹ In comparison with Syria and Lebanon, where the Druze participated heavily in both nationalist and leftist movements, the Druze community in Israel constitutes something of an anomaly. Its small size, lack of power, and peripheral location all contributed to its historical marginalization in Palestine. In the Mandate period, the Druze were an integral part of Palestinian rural society, but remained on the fringes of the Palestinian national movement, reflecting the deep rift between political elites and the peasantry.² When the 1936–39 revolt failed and internal feuds ravaged Palestinian society, Zionist activists sought to mobilize the Druze as “a knife in the back of Arab unity.”³ At the same time, in 1939, the Zionist movement devised a transfer plan for the Druze population in the Galilee and Carmel, seeking to settle the community in the Hawran in southern Syria. Several Druze dignitaries collaborated with the Zionist movement in the wake of the revolt, but most Palestinian Druze fought neither alongside nor against Zionist forces during the 1948 war – nor were they transferred beyond the borders of Palestine.

Zionist strategic policy toward the Druze has remained relatively stable since the 1930s – namely, it has sought to mobilize them internally and externally as a kind of buffer against Arab Muslims. However, a major shift took place with the establishment of the state of Israel, after which it was possible to use state power and institutions to impose military conscription for the Druze, contain local leaders, form religious courts, and produce a separate education system. As part of its goal of isolating the Druze from their cultural and national milieu, Israel recognized the community first as a religious minority and then as a national group in 1956. That same year, Druze conscription into the Israel military forces became mandatory. The government patronized traditional leaders, whom it encouraged to promote and legitimize Druze army service. Some also regard military service as affirming a “Blood Alliance” and brotherhood between the Jewish people and the Druze community – two persecuted minority groups – said to go back three thousand years to Jethro’s giving of his daughter Zipporah to Moses.⁴ This view dovetails with the traditional Druze claim that the community is completely separate from Islam and its religion obligates loyalty to the ruling government.⁵ This pseudo-religious doctrine of allegiance has been crafted to justify the network of special relations and cooperation between the Druze political and spiritual leadership and the Israeli establishment.

The state also embraced an education system grounded in control and alienation from a collective national identity. In this regard, Israel's education policy toward the Druze was part and parcel of the policy applied to Palestinian citizens of Israel more generally. Centralized and under full control of the Ministry of Education, the education system for Palestinian Arabs in Israel is managed and supervised by Jewish staff. The ministry interferes extensively in the appointment of teachers, principals, inspectors, and education curriculum development committees.⁶ Yet Israeli authorities have also sought to separate the Druze and Arab education systems to divorce the Druze community from its milieu. These efforts intensified in the 1970s, when protests among the Druze seemed to indicate the state's dwindling grip on the Druze community, particularly its youth.

For over forty years, the formal education system has methodically subjected the Druze to an isolationist agenda, which sought to reformulate their political consciousness and historical memory through emphasizing a shared history with Jews as oppressed minorities struggling for survival, and instilling a fundamental fear of the Arab and Islamic milieu as a source of persecution. Special textbooks were put in place in Druze schools in subjects like history, Arabic, and Hebrew, all with the blessings of the Druze spiritual leadership. This was clearly an attempt to shore up the rising generation's loyalty to the state and to affirm Druze particularism and an introverted sectarian identity, wrenched from its vital Arab and Islamic milieu, and in so doing instill the belief that the status quo was preferable to any alternative.⁷

This has, to some extent, resulted in the alienation of the Druze community from its immediate and broader Arab milieu. Although this can be understood as a product of the Druze's minority status in a state that encourages the nationalization of their sectarian uniqueness, the community suffers from the same exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination that the Palestinian Arab population of Israel experiences as a whole.⁸ Druze land is confiscated and Jewish settlements are erected around Druze villages while the budgets allocated to the community and official appointments are minimal.⁹ Some 64 percent of Druze land has been confiscated by Israeli authorities under various pretexts, most commonly for "public interest" and "security issues."¹⁰ Most of these lands were expropriated during the period of the military rule between 1949–66, when the Druze villages in the Galilee, with the exception of Daliyat al-Carmel and 'Isfiya, were under the same military rule imposed on other Arab villages. Twenty-six Jewish settlements have been established on these lands.¹¹

Indeed, the Druze experience in Israel lays bare the fallacy of Israeli political discourse that claims that the status of its Palestinian citizens suffers only as a result of the community's failure to participate in civilian or military service. While Druze military service has improved the conditions for certain individuals, it remains on a personal, and not a structural, level. Military service has not expedited Druze integration into the Israeli milieu. This is because integration into Israeli society is not contingent on performance of duties, but is associated with the definition of Israel as a Jewish state. Racial, national, or religious affiliation, rather than civic participation, determines the relationship between citizens and the state. This has been made explicit after Israel passed the Nation-State Law, which affirmed the exclusive Jewish character

of the state and entrenched the privileges of its Jewish citizens.

As a result, despite economic dependence, manipulation of leaders, reengineering of consciousness, and a discourse of “preferring what is earned to what is deserved,” the Druze in Israel have engaged in multifaceted protests, ranging from organizations that play an opposition role in the realm of power politics to demonstrations, public meetings, publication of bulletins, lawsuits, and efforts to establish and maintain contacts with the Arab milieu. These various efforts seem to largely agree about the goals: namely, abolition of conscription, emphasis on the Druze’s affiliation with the broader Arab community, and equality within the framework of the state.

Druze protest movements, however, have lacked a clear intellectual ideological foundation, as well as a coordination of ongoing struggle and protest. In the absence of strong civil society organizations – like those found among Palestinian citizens of Israel – protest movements have appeared isolated and ineffectual. At the same time, recent years have marked a clear escalation, increasing momentum, and frequency of protests among the Druze, fueled by an intensifying housing shortage and educational shortcomings. Military service has not prevented the state from confiscating and constructing settlements on their land. Hence, resentment is twofold – directed at the state that antagonized the milieu against them, grabbed their land, marginalized them, and discriminated against them, as well as at Druze religious and traditional leaders who contributed to enforcing state policies and gave their blessing to conscription, land expropriation, and the dilution of identity.

The 1950s: Compulsory Military Service and Early Protest

The beginnings of political protest among the Druze are linked to the Israeli authorities’ imposition of compulsory conscription. Like France’s *Troupes Spéciales* in Syria and Lebanon and Britain’s Iraqi Levies, the Israelis separated Druze recruits within a “minorities unit” (*yihadat ha-mi’otim*). The Israeli establishment’s long-term efforts to recruit Druze into the Israeli military forces eventually reaped its rewards, and in 1956, at the instigation of a group of Druze notables, Druze conscription became mandatory.¹²

Contrary to the prevailing narrative in Israel, this decision sparked fierce opposition in Druze villages, supported initially by Shaykh Amin Tarif, spiritual leader of the Palestinian Druze. According to the Israeli intelligence services, Shaykh Tarif’s opposition was rooted in moral, religious, and political considerations, including the presence of Druze communities in Arab states and the fear of being accused of treason.¹³ In 1956, only about one-fourth (51 of 197) Druze conscripts from villages in the Galilee complied with their conscription orders; a similar proportion (32 of 117) of Druze conscripted from villages in al-Karmil, ‘Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmil complied.¹⁴ Despite arrest campaigns carried out by the police, dozens of Druze clerics in Shafa‘ Amr sent a letter to the prime minister and the defense minister asking that the recruitment order be lifted and to treat the Druze like the rest of the Arab citizens of the state, stressing that the army was not in need of their service.¹⁵

Opposition to compulsory conscription never coalesced into a protest movement, however. No doubt the atmosphere generated by the defeat of the 1948 war, namely the low morale that prevailed among Palestinian Arabs in its wake and the imposition of military rule, played a role. But the authorities also succeeded, through manipulation of the faction- and family-based divisions within the traditional leadership, in silencing the voice of protest and passing conscription, which, in the end, received the blessing of the Druze spiritual leadership.¹⁶ By exploiting conflicts of interests between local leaders, Israel managed to convince many traditional leaders to embrace and promote the conscription project. Although Shaykh Tarif had opposed mandatory conscription, the positions of the traditional leaders later forced him to abandon his opposition, fearing that it would undermine his position and that of his family vis-à-vis the state.¹⁷ The traditional spiritual leadership of the Druze in Israel argued that the Druze were religiously bound to serve the ruler in place, whoever that may be, and this included, and thus legitimized, military service.¹⁸ In the end, Shaykh Tarif had to back off from his initial position and acknowledge the status quo.

The implementation of compulsory conscription on the Druze was accomplished by way of several other major developments in terms of the state's relationship with the community. In 1956, Israel recognized the Druze as a distinct religious (and then national) group – although it had for centuries been seen as a part of the Islamic faith – and in 1961–62 the state established a spiritual head and religious courts for the community, providing further avenues for patronage.¹⁹ The minorities unit, meanwhile, remained outside the official framework of the Israeli army and was in regular contact with the political division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Militarily, the unit reported to the operations section of the Israeli army general staff and within the framework of intelligence operations.²⁰

The Late 1960s and Early 1970s: Political Organization of Protest

The early 1960s were a period of relative inactivity, facilitated by the imposition of compulsory conscription and the continuation of military rule. By exploiting economic conditions and alliances with the traditional community leaders, Israel largely succeeded in eliciting Druze compliance with its decrees.²¹ However, in April 1965, a group of educated Druze youth, including Samih al-Qasim, Nayif Salim, Muhammad Naffa', Salah Hazima, and Jihad Sa'd, organized themselves in what became known as the Free Druze Youth (*al-Shabab al-Druze al-Ahrar*). They issued a statement, distributed in Hittin during the annual visit to the shrine of the prophet Shu'ayb, calling for the lifting of oppressive measures, foremost among them mandatory military service.²² This group would later form the nucleus of the Druze Initiative Committee, which after its establishment in 1972 became the primary engine and platform for Druze opposition to state policy. Muhammad Naffa', a founding member of both groups, claimed that the Druze Initiative Committee had no links to the Communist party, although a number of its founders were members or supporters of the party.²³ Instead, Naffa' argued, the committee reflected young Druze intellectuals' dissatisfaction with

the status quo. This growing frustration and resentment can also be seen in the results of the 1969 parliamentary elections, in which Rakah (*Reshima Komunistit Hadasha*, New Communist List) received approximately 10 percent of the Druze vote.²⁴

In fact, discrimination and prejudice had pushed some Druze linked to the establishment – employees of the Arab directorate in the Histradrut, correspondents for the daily newspaper *al-Yawm*, and teachers in some government schools, among others – to establish the Association of the Druze in January 1967. This was set up by intellectuals affiliated with the state, the most notable among them Zaydan ‘Atsha, Amal Nasr al-Din, Farhan Tarif, Salman Farraj, and Munir Faris.²⁵ They sought to instrumentalize their positions within state institutions to demand that the Druze be granted rights, that government institutions be open to them, that their villages be industrialized, and that government schools teach a shared history that brought together Jews and Druze. On top of this, the Association of the Druze demanded that the Labor party – the ruling party at the time, whose membership had been closed to Arab citizens until the late 1960s – open its doors to young Druze, as party membership was a key to integration into the establishment.²⁶ Nabih al-Qasim goes so far as to claim that Amnon Linn, the long-time head of the Labor party’s Arab directorate, was behind the establishment of the Association of the Druze – Israeli authorities having realized from 1956 that they could contain protest movement through Druze intermediaries. In 1970s, the Labor party opened its membership to Druze “and all other minorities who serve in the security forces,” in a clear attempt to ease tensions.²⁷

In 1969, the Israeli government announced that it would no longer recognize Eid al-Fitr as a Druze holiday, replacing it with the day Druze religious figures visited the shrine of the prophet Shu‘ayb near the depopulated village of Hittin. Although the vast majority of Syrian and Lebanese Druze do not celebrate it, this became an official Druze holiday in Israel, during which schools are closed and work is not mandatory.²⁸ This move was part of the Israeli effort to strengthen the traditional religious leadership, which administers the holy place. Exhibiting no qualms about being used politically to ensure loyalty to the state of Israel, the spiritual leadership accepted the condition that soldiers serving in minority units take their loyalty oath at the shrine – during which time it would also host Israeli state leaders and government representatives. This took place against the backdrop of the 1967 war, which brought the Syrian Golan, as well as the West Bank and Gaza, under Israeli occupation, and reaffirmed for Israeli authorities the need to cultivate the Druze as a “loyal minority.” Yigal Allon, a Labor leader, suggested creating a Druze buffer state between Israel and Syria in the Golan and Hawran mountains, that would be sponsored and armed by the Israeli government, to serve as the forefront of the struggle against the Arab eastern front.²⁹

In this context, the Druze Initiative Committee signified a quantum leap forward in the institutionalization of protest against state policies, representing the establishment of its first organized framework, tightly linked to Rakah. The Druze Initiative Committee was announced in March 1972 at a meeting at the home of Shaykh Farhud Farhud in the village of al-Rama. This meeting, organized by Shaykh Farhud

– who had been active in the campaign against compulsory conscription in 1956 – set the parameters of the struggle against the injustices and inequality imposed by authorities on the Druze.³⁰ It pointed to three key points in this regard: mandatory conscription; land confiscation, especially in al-Rama, Bayt Jann, al-Buqay‘a, al-Maghar, and Yarka; and interference in the religious affairs of the Druze community through the abolition of Eid al-Fitr and the exploitation of religious visits for political purposes.³¹ The committee subsequently presented a petition to state leaders bearing some eight thousand signatures and making four basic demands: (1) cancellation of military service; (2) non-interference in religious affairs and holidays; (3) an end to land confiscation and the return of confiscated lands; and (4) provision of grants and technical and financial assistance required to develop Druze villages.³²

The Druze Initiative Committee served for many years as a platform for resisting state policies, gathering within its framework a number of prominent personalities known for their Arab nationalist and anti-establishment tendencies. These included the poet Samih al-Qasim; Muhammad Naffa‘, secretary of the Communist Party; the poet Nayif Salim; the educator Nimr Nimr; the writer Salman Natur; Ghalib Sayf; and Hadi Zahir, among others. The Druze Initiative Committee attained further significance given Shaykh Farhud’s stature as a local religious and spiritual authority. His position diverged from the quiet accommodationist line adopted by the Druze’s traditional religious leaders in Israel; his refusal to lend religious legitimacy to the status quo thus raised doubts about the traditional leadership’s claims that the Druze were religiously obliged to give allegiance to the state within which they lived.³³

The Druze Initiative Committee also served as an institution linking Druze opposition to the Communist Party, which had previously faced major difficulties mobilizing support among the Druze. This was one of the reasons, according to Muhammad Naffa‘, that the party supported the committee’s establishment.³⁴ The parliamentary elections of 1973 witnessed a doubling in Druze support for Rakah, to 20 percent of the Druze vote. No doubt, these developments can also be seen as in keeping with a broader resurgence of the Palestinian national movement. With the rise of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon, the 1970s marked the revolutionary episode of the Palestinian national struggle, which evolved side by side with the Lebanese left under the leadership of Kamal Jumblatt, scion of a notable Druze family from Mount Lebanon. Jewish-Israeli attacks on Druze clergy in Tiberias, and Kiryat Shmona, following an operation in Kiryat Shmona in April 1974 carried out by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command further raised tension among the Druze.³⁵

Israeli authorities noticed the deterioration of relations between the state and the Druze and appointed two commissions to look into the issue. The first, formed in May 1974, was headed by MK Avraham Shekhterman. The second was formed a few months later in November, at the request of the president’s adviser on Arab citizens’ affairs. Chaired by Gabriel Ben-Dor of the University of Haifa, it was tasked with researching the means and measures necessary to restore friendly relations between the state and its Druze citizens.³⁶

The Late 1970s and 1980s: Manipulation through the Education System

Both the Schechterman Committee and the Ben-Dor Committee presented their recommendations in 1975. Among the commissions' recommendations were that the government stop dealing with Druze issues by way of the Arab directorates. The Schechterman Commission made wide-ranging recommendations on land, planning, and economic development; however, its recommendations on education were particularly important as they made clear the functional objectives to be applied to the formal education system of the Druze community. The commission called for the "Druzification" of the teaching ranks in Druze communities, proposing that all educators in Druze schools should be members of the Druze community, with parent committees and local councils empowered to review non-Druze teachers in Druze villages.³⁷ Druze retired military officers and wounded veterans were to be invited to lecture students on the benefits of military service, while the curriculum at Druze schools would emphasize the concept of "Druze-Israeli awareness."³⁸ The state would establish youth clubs in Druze villages, which would also be integrated as a distinct component into the Hebrew Youth Movement (Gadna).³⁹

The Ben-Dor Commission explicitly recommended separating schools in Druze villages from the Arab Education Department and developing Druze-specific education programs. To realize the committee's vision, textbooks in Arabic, Hebrew, history, and geography would be compiled exclusively for the Druze, and a course on Druze heritage would be introduced. According to the committee, "applying such an education program in these areas will definitely lead to eliminating the feeling of frustration emanating from the identity problem."⁴⁰ Both substantively and structurally, the proposals reflected a systematic effort to alienate the Druze from their Arab and Islamic milieu and to bolster sectarian particularism and isolationism among the younger generations.⁴¹

In mid-1975, the Ministry of Education moved forward with these recommendations, developing a curriculum for Druze schools that stressed, among other things, Druze heritage and love of the homeland, allegiance to the state of Israel, Jewish culture, and the distinctive relationships between Druze and the Jews. The Druze heritage course was blessed by the traditional religious leadership, which ensured that it would not include any secret religious texts of the Druze sect.⁴² The main purpose of this program as a whole – which was applied to instruction in Arabic, Hebrew, history, and heritage – was to promote allegiance to the state among the young generation and consolidate a reclusive sectarian identity in isolation from the Arab and Islamic milieu, into which the Druze community had emerged in the eleventh century and with which it has been connected ever since.

Overall, Israeli policy toward the Druze frames the objective and religious discourse at Druze schools, which emphasizes Druze-Israeli consciousness, including the Jews and excluding the Arab milieu with all its implications. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not taught in Druze schools, pan-Arabism is barely cited (and a blind eye turned

to the pivotal role that Druze-born figures played in pan-Arab or leftist revolutionary movements in the Arab Mashriq), and the history of the Druze under Islamic rule emphasizes Druze particularism. This division is reinforced by the insistence on Druze teachers, sidelining Palestinian Christian and Muslim educators who might (formally or informally) challenge the official line. Indeed, whereas non-Druze teachers comprised 50 percent of teachers in Druze schools in 1975, by 1985 this number was reduced to 28 percent.⁴³ Supposed to serve as a cultural tool of communication and identification of self-culture, Arabic has become an instrument to reproduce consciousness and frame the young generation in tandem with the minority thought devised by Zionist ideology. Hence, the state's education policy, implemented in collaboration with the traditional leadership and some Druze intellectuals, effectively serves as an extension of Israel's approach since 1956, which unrelentingly seeks to Zionize the Druze in terms of both intellect and conduct.

The 2000s: New Protest Formations and the Containing Role of the Religious Establishment

From the late 1980s, the relationship between the Israeli state and the Druze community in Israel has been marked by recurring expressions that resist the alienation of the Druze in Israel from their coreligionists in Lebanon and Syria and from their Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic milieus, as well as the continued marginalization of and discrimination against Druze within Israeli society. In 1987, violent clashes broke out between the community and the police in the village of Bayt Jann. The conflict stemmed from the Israel Nature and Parks Authority's claims over the lands of al-Zabud, which belonged to Bayt Jann. The roots of the protest around al-Zabud lands reach back to the 1960s, when the government decided to establish the Miron reservation, which blocked peasants' access to their lands in al-Zabud. In 1984, the villagers tried to open a road through the reserve, but this attempt was interrupted by a court order. After three years of discussions (1984–87), the villagers were unable to reach an agreement with the Israeli authorities. In July 1987, the protest renewed with even more strength. A general strike was declared and all the entrances to the village were blocked. A large police force entered to disperse the protesters, and violent clashes between the residents and the security forces left twenty-six wounded and three vehicles burnt. The events of al-Zabud were the most violent clashes between the Druze and the authorities since the establishment of the state, holding a significance for the Druze akin to Land Day.⁴⁴ In response to the protest movement in Bayt Jann, the Israeli government announced Decision 373 in April 1987, a historic move granting equality between Druze and Circassian citizens and their villages and Jewish citizens in all civil fields and governmental services.⁴⁵ By the 2000s, however, efforts by state and traditional authorities to manage or contain Druze protest produced diminishing returns.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Tawasul (Communication) Project launched by 'Azmi Bishara⁴⁶ sought specifically to penetrate the political isolation imposed

on the Druze by Israel over the preceding decades. Ties to their brethren in Syria and Lebanon had been cut in 1948 and expressions of identification, especially since Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, had been confined to the social, the familial, and the religious; politics were put aside and even religiously prohibited by the official religious leadership (itself a politicization of religion that served to subjugate the Druze in Israel). What was new about Tawasul was its creative attempt to break through the wall of isolation to bring about political communication between the Druze of Israel and the Druze in Syria and Lebanon, who were long known for their nationalist and pan-Arab inclinations. More important still, the project engaged a large group of Druze religious figures under the umbrella of opposition to conscription and returning the Druze to the fold of Arabism from which Israel had long tried to alienate them.

The friendly relations (at that time) between the Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and the Ba'athist regime in Syria contributed to Tawasul's support. In 2001, Tawasul held a conference in Amman. Attendees included Druze figures and forces from Lebanon who enjoyed the patronage of the Jumblatt-sponsored pan-Arab bloc attended, as well as Druze delegations from the Galilee and al-Karmil. The resolutions that emerged from the conference not only rejected compulsory military service for the Druze in Israel but also denounced non-Druze Arabs volunteering in the Israeli army.⁴⁷ Jumblatt's estrangement from the Syrian regime after the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005 cast a shadow over the project. After a hiatus of about two years, another delegation of Druze clergy from Lebanon, Israel, and the Golan was sent to Syria in September 2005. Meanwhile, relations between Druze religious authorities and the state showed evidence of fraying. The Israeli security services, fearing the affinities that could result from the continuation of these visits, called a number of Druze clergy for interrogation and pushed for judicial proceedings to be initiated against them for having visited an enemy state.⁴⁸ These prosecutions ended in 2014 by sentencing Sa'id Naffa' to imprisonment and the religious figures to probation.⁴⁹

The Tawasul project gave birth to a new dynamic for organizing a protest movement among the Druze in Israel, one that affirmed the Druze's Arab nationalist affiliation and exposed the injustices to which they are subjected despite serving in the army and security services. The first of the new organizations formed in this spirit was the Free Druze Charter (Mithaq al-Ma'rufiyyin al-Ahrar), founded by a group of activists led by the lawyer Sa'id Naffa' and linked to Balad (Brit Leumit Demokratit, or National Democratic Alliance, a party formed in 1995 and headed by 'Azmi Bishara) and the Tawasul Project. This organization tried networking with Druze in Syria and centered on the issue of visiting holy places throughout *bilad al-Sham* (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine). In a May 2005 statement titled "Returning from Damascus," the Free Druze Charter pointed to the inability of Druze to visit their holy places and relatives in Syria and Lebanon, asking: "Are all citizens – Muslim, Circassian, Baha'i, Christian, and Jewish – able to go to hostile states – Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, Morocco, Lebanon, and even Iraq – without fear that they will be accused of betraying the state?"⁵⁰

Another organization to emerge from the Tawasul Project was the Free Movement for Arab Civilization (Harakat al-Hurriyya lil-Hadara al-‘Arabiyya). Founded in 2005 on the initiative of the activist Ihsan Murad, it announced its formation at a demonstration in front of Hadarim prison near Netanya, calling for the release of prisoners, at their head the Lebanese Druze Samir al-Quntar. The movement defined itself as an open social nationalist political and intellectual movement that believes secular nationalism to be the best way to preserve Arab civilization in circumstances of sectarian fragmentation. In its founding statement, the movement committed to raising nationalist consciousness around land confiscation and displacement and to abolishing mandatory military service for the Druze.⁵¹ In a February 2014 statement, the movement called upon Druze religious authorities in Lebanon to issue a religious proscription of the use of Druze religious sites inside Israel for Israeli army exhibitions or administering the oath of allegiance for Druze recruits in the Minorities Unit, now called the Sword Battalion (Gdud Herev).⁵²

The goals and orientation of the Free Movement for Arab Civilization converged with those of other recently established organizations like al-Juzur Society to Strengthen and Consolidate the Cultural Roots of the Arab Druze (Jam‘iyat al-Juzur li-Tathbit wa Tarsikh al-Juzur al-Hadariyya li-l-‘Arab al-Duruz) and the ‘48 Arabs–Druze Communication Committee (Lajnat al-Tawasul al-Dirziyya ‘Arab al-1948), comprised primarily of the clergy who participated in the delegation that visited Syria. Before long, the Communication Committee suffered from internal divisions and split: one group, which remained the Communication Committee (Lajnat al-Tawasul), was headed by Shaykh ‘Ali Ma‘di, while a breakaway organization called the National Communication Committee (Lajnat al-Tawasul al-Watani) was headed by Shaykh ‘Awni Khunayfis.

The involvement of clergy in such organizations seriously challenged the claim made by the official religious leadership that the Druze were religiously obliged to show loyalty to any ruling authority.⁵³ It demonstrated that there was in fact no consensus among the clergy on the position of blind loyalty and that a significant number were ready to adopt positions other than those dictated by the authorities. The official religious leadership was apprehensive of what seemed to be the emergence of an alternative leadership under the umbrella of the national project, especially since the Communication Committee argued that the Druze could not remain a “tribe under the banner of the tribal chief.”⁵⁴ Collectively, these organizations fulfill a need that the traditional leadership had not met, namely addressing the state’s attempts to dilute the national identity of the Druze.

The growing disillusionment of Druze in Israel and the diminishing ability of state authorities and traditional elites to exert control can also be seen in the bloody clashes in the village of al-Buqay‘a and protests against land confiscation in al-Mansura and al-Jamala by residents of ‘Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmil. The dispute between the Druze in al-Karmil and the state broke out in 2003, following governmental plans to expropriate private agricultural lands of Druze peasants in the Jalma and Mansura areas, east of their villages, to build a railroad line and a gas line. These plans provoked

strong protest among the Druze of al-Karmil and the landowners quickly established an organization called the Committee for Defending Land and Home (Lajnat al-Difa‘ ‘an al-Ard wa al-Maskan). This committee, headed by Fahmi Halabi, advocated for fair compensation to landowners, while insisting on the principle of “land for land.”⁵⁵ Driven by real fear of escalation, the institutionalized religious leadership hastened to position itself as a mediator between the state and the Druze landowners. Rather than supporting the landowners, the main goals of the religious leadership were to contain the crisis and to reach a compromise – containment and cooptation having always been the main political strategy adopted by the religious leadership.⁵⁶

The same approach can be seen in the religious establishment’s reaction to events in Buqay‘a a few years later.⁵⁷ In 2007, violent events in al-Buqay‘a marked a potential turning point in the relationship between the Druze community and the Israeli state. These clashes were the most violent and bloody clashes between Druze and the state since 1948. In October 2007, police entered the village of al-Buqay‘a to arrest young men accused of setting fire to a cellular antenna erected in the Jewish settlement of Peki’n ha-Hadasha (New Peki’in). The attack on the antenna was a spontaneous response to the attempts by ultra-Orthodox Jews to revive the Jewish presence in al-Buqay‘a, which the people of al-Buqay‘a considered a grave threat.⁵⁸ The community’s reaction to the police raid led to clashes that lasted two days and left twenty-nine policemen and thirteen villagers injured.⁵⁹ The police used live ammunition against the residents of al-Buqay‘a, which shocked the Druze, who had long believed that their military service immunized them from the violence of the state. However, it became clear to them in this case that any attack on a Jewish citizen crossed a red line that rendered their property, their lives, and even their religious assembly halls fair game. The state was surprised by the outbreak of the al-Buqay‘a events, as was the religious establishment.

There are some indications that this moment could have led to an organized protest movement demanding a new basis upon which to reconfigure the relationship between the state and the community had not the accommodationist traditional religious leadership thrown its weight behind containing the events’ political repercussions.⁶⁰ The official spiritual leadership rushed to play an intermediary role between the police and the protesters in al-Buqay‘a. Matters stabilized as Druze youth who participated in the events of al-Buqay‘a were not indicted. The official spiritual leadership also mediated between the Druze owners and the Israel Lands Administration and Prime Minister’s Office in the case of al-Karmil, resulting in a 2009 meeting between the director-general of the prime minister’s office, Eyal Gabbai, and a delegation from the villages, arranged by the spiritual leadership.⁶¹ In 2011, an agreement was reached in which landowners received other lands in compensation for those the government had expropriated.⁶²

Notably in these cases, Israeli authorities did not initiate steps toward containment; rather, the official spiritual leadership took it upon itself to mediate between the community and the state. Gabbai’s September 2009 statement clearly indicates a shift in the state’s position: he accused the Druze of thuggery, going on to say that

“Druze” had become a word that inspired terror within government offices, as it was impossible to deal with Druze carrying licensed weapons.⁶³ This shift can be explained by the growing rightist and isolationist trend within Israel in recent years, which increased sharply after the second intifada and is represented in the promulgation of laws – including on matters of citizenship, nationality, immigration, boycott, and civil society organization funding – bearing a clear racist imprint toward the Arab citizens.

The events at al-Buqay‘a demonstrated the increasingly strained relations between the Druze and the state, representing a qualitative shift in the political consciousness of a large segment of the Druze. Indeed, they seem to indicate the future of relations between Druze communities on the one hand and the establishment and the traditional leadership allied with it on the other. A poll conducted in early 2009 by Majid al-Haj and Nihad ‘Ali, two researchers from the University of Haifa, illuminates this trend. According to the poll, 64 percent of Druze favored abolishing compulsory conscription or making it voluntary; 48 percent of those polled described the relationship between the Druze and the state as not good or not sufficiently good. Four factors emerged as fueling resentment, frustration, and alienation among the Druze: 95 percent of respondents mentioned land confiscation, 75 percent mentioned unemployment, 70 percent mentioned the events at al-Buqay‘a, and 68.5 percent mentioned the absence of master plans for Druze towns.⁶⁴ Al-Haj saw the results as an indication of a multi-dimensional crisis within the Druze community, involving the state but also the official Druze leadership. Seventy-two percent of those polled believed that the Supreme Druze Religious Council⁶⁵ did not represent the interests of the Druze in Israel. This traditional leadership’s flagging legitimacy provides fertile ground for a protest movement against both the state and the traditional leadership that has since 1956 played such an instrumental role in convincing the Druze to accept the authorities’ diktats.

Inspired by the leading role played by the young generation in the popular uprisings of the “Arab Spring,” an organization called Urfud (Refuse) was established against compulsory Israeli army service. Formally founded in 2014 to protest all forms of enlistment imposed by Israel on Palestinians in general and the Druze in particular, this non-party youth movement comprises young men and women from various regions. The principal activists focus their efforts on the struggle against compulsory Druze conscription, emphasizing humane values and identification with Arab-Palestinian identity. Women – such as Hadiya Kayuf and Maysan Hamdan – hold key positions alongside central figures like Yaman Zaydan and ‘Ala’ Muhanna. According to its platform, Druze citizens of Israel are Palestinian Arabs, and it expresses uncompromising opposition to the Israeli government’s repeated and ongoing attempts to “divide and conquer” through sectarianism, confessionalism, clannism, and geographic particularism. Urfud also resists all forms of Palestinian conscription, including so-called national service. Organizing diverse activists in Arab villages, it calls for refusal of military service and offers information, advice, legal counsel, and workshops and seminars designed to raise awareness on the subject. Some members have participated in international conferences as a way of making their voice heard.⁶⁶

Despite this, the pan-Arab bloc has not been able thus far to unite and transcend personal, factional, and partisan differences.⁶⁷ Structural factors impede the development of an organized protest movement that would present a real challenge to the establishment, chief among them the absence of any real Arab protection or support. In this, the case of the Druze is no different from that of Palestinians inside Israel more generally: the lack of Arab support has allowed the Israeli establishment to cultivate an accommodationist leadership and impose politicized educational programs. Equally important, however, is the pliant religious leadership, which considers loyalty to the state to be a crucial component of religious belief. Further, one cannot discount the economic dependency that is the product of compulsory military service. Military service and engagement in security agencies have provided a primary livelihood for broad segments of the Druze community, particularly given the loss of land and subsequent decline of traditional agriculture. A study in the 1990s demonstrated that more than 30 percent of young Druze men in the labor force are involved in the security forces, whether the police, army, or border guard.⁶⁸ Many young Druze men consider army service as a means of self-realization, integration into mainstream Israeli society, and social mobility – as well as a source of income. Thus, the prime candidates to participate in any protest movement cannot afford to do so given that their livelihoods are fundamentally threatened and subjected to politics.

Ghalib Sayf, a member of the Druze Initiative Committee since 1983 and its head since 2012, attributes the movement's weakness to three main factors: the economic factor, official education, and the compromised position of the spiritual leadership. To these he adds the fact that the Israeli media provides no coverage of the activities of the nationalist forces within the Druze community. On top of this, there is no support from the Palestinian national movement.⁶⁹ Because the question of the Druze was not in and of itself a priority for the Palestinian nationalist forces, the nationalist trend within the Druze community never received resources or political attention equivalent to what Israel devoted to separate the Druze from the Arab milieu.

Although Sayf was clear to avoid casting blame, since the nationalist forces at home and abroad face many challenges, Muhammad Naffa' felt that the Palestinian national movement should have done more to embrace the protest movement among the Druze.⁷⁰ The political reality produced by the disastrous results of the 1948 war explain to a great extent the Palestinian national movement's neglect of this issue. The Druze were dealt with similarly to how the Arab world dealt with the Palestinians inside Israel, who were held responsible for accepting Israeli citizenship and integrating (however marginally) into Israeli political life. Likewise, the Arab world chose not to embrace, even minimally, the nationalist forces among the Druze, which struggled to thwart the project of compulsory conscription. Without such support, these forces' efforts to resist the Israeli state's policy of splitting the Druze from their surroundings and their past were overmatched.

The absence of Arab financial, political, and moral support remains, without the slightest doubt, a weakness and has over the past decades curtailed the impact of nationalist forces within the Druze community. With such support – and the

abandonment of the discourse of betrayal – it may have been possible to limit some of the repercussions of the policy of conscription, subjugation, and containment that Israel was able to implement vis-à-vis the Druze. The Tawasul Project showed perhaps the greatest awareness of the importance of Arab support to any nationalist or protest movement inside Druze society.⁷¹ However, this attempt was disrupted by internal developments and events that swept the Arab world.

The 2010s: The “Arab Spring” and the Nation-State Law

The outbreak of so-called Arab Spring revolutions once again led to a breakdown in contact between the Druze in Israel and those in Lebanon or Syria, and the suspension of any protest activity among the Druze in Israel. Syria slid into a civil war, causing the collapse of its social fabric and political system. This has clearly cast a heavy shadow on the protest movement among the Druze in spite of growing issues around unlicensed construction in Druze localities and the hefty fines it has incurred. The rise of Jihadist-takfiri⁷² organizations in Syria and attacks on Druze communities in Idlib, Jaramana, and the Hawran undoubtedly diverted attention to Syria and the threats to communities there. Druze traditional and religious leaders in Israel attempted to use the events unfolding in Syria to reintroduce a reclusive minority discourse, portraying Israel as a safe haven for ethnic and religious minorities. The comparison of Israel to its neighbors dominated the political discourse within the Druze community during the most difficult years of the Syrian revolution.

However, the tide turned after the Knesset approved the Nation-State Law in summer 2018. Passage of the law sparked a large-scale protest movement across the Druze community. Of note, and to the surprise of many, Druze retired military officers led an organized protest campaign, though they were careful not to depart from a broader Zionist-Israeli consensus. Spurred by these officers, the religious leadership adopted a similar position toward the Nation-State Law, calling for its amendment. Protests centered on the principle of equality rooted in the notion of the “covenant of blood and common destiny” shared by Druze and Jews, which was undermined by the Nation-State Law.⁷³

From the outset, Druze military officers and official religious leaders attempted to distinguish themselves from the protest movement among Palestinian citizens of Israel more generally. This was premised on the conviction that maintaining this distinction would help lobby a wide cross-section of the Jewish community onto the side of the Druze movement against the Nation-State Law. Major demonstrations in Tel Aviv, where the organizers made sure that slogans and speeches did not deviate from the Israeli consensus, echoed this trend.⁷⁴ Still, the broad public participation among the Druze and the role played by retired military officers merit special reflection. These protests were triggered by, and cannot be isolated from, the day-to-day concerns that haunt Druze citizens of Israel – concerns about land, housing, unlicensed construction, unemployment, and so on. The predominant sentiment was that discrimination against ordinary Druze citizens was a particular kind of double betrayal: not only had their

allegiance to the Jewish state, manifested most clearly in military service, not spared them these everyday concerns, but the Nation-State Law had now explicitly placed the Druze outside of the boundaries of the political community.⁷⁵ However, in view of the position of the officers and official religious leadership, it is unlikely that the protest movement can in the near future serve as a prelude to a “return to oneself.” Apparently, these parties are still convinced that change can be devised through state institutions and within the framework of the ideological consensus in Israel, and not necessarily by combining protest with a broader effort to reshape identity and collective affiliation among the Druze.

Conclusions

In the Mandate period, the Druze, while an integral part of the Palestinian rural community, remained on the fringes of the Palestinian national movement. A major shift took place when the state of Israel was established. The state used its institutions and power to impose conscription, contain local leaders, form religious courts, and “Druzify” the education system. This has, to some extent, resulted in the alienation of the Druze community from its immediate and broader Arab milieu. This disconnection is reflected in the discourse of the spiritual leadership and Druze Forum for Local Authorities, the education system and curricula, and enlistment in the army and security agencies. Voting for Zionist parties reflects another dimension of alienation (and has remained unchanged even after passage of the Nation-State Law).

Moreover, the situation of the Druze lays bare the fallacy of Israeli political discourse that claims that Palestinian citizens’ rights are diminished only because of their failure to participate in civil or military service. Druze military service has only improved conditions on the individual level. It has not led to integration into Israeli society, which is contingent not on performing certain duties or obligations of citizenship, but on national, and religious affiliation – namely, Israel’s definition as a Jewish state. The historical experience of the Druze speaks volumes to the nature of the state and the limits of inclusion. It also helps explain the recurrence of protest among the Druze.

Despite economic dependence, the manipulation of leaders, the reengineering of consciousness, and the promotion of a discourse of “preferring what is earned to what is deserved,” Druze protest has been multifaceted, ranging from building organizations opposed to power politics to common protest practices, including demonstrations, public meetings, publications, judicial action, and establishing contacts with the Arab milieu. All forces involved in this activity agree on the targets, namely, abolishing conscription, emphasizing the Arab affiliation of the Druze, and demanding equality within the framework of the state. However, the Druze protest movement continues to lack a clear intellectual or ideological foundation or coordination of an ongoing struggle. Further, it lacks civil society organizations that can secure external support, as civil society groups do for the Palestinian community inside Israel more generally.

Recent years have also witnessed a clear escalation of protests among the Druze, as

housing shortages and low levels of education compared to other Palestinian citizens of Israel have spurred protests of increasing frequency and momentum. The Druze also realize that military service has neither prevented these setbacks nor prevented the state from confiscating and building settlements on their lands. Hence, resentment is twofold, directed not only against the state that marginalized them, discriminated against them, seized their lands, and antagonized the milieu against them, but also against the spiritual and traditional leaders who clearly helped enforce state policies and gave their blessings to conscription, land expropriation, and the dilution of identity. These issues are naturally at the heart of protests, which are anticipated to erupt sooner or later as an inevitable consequence of decades-long policies.

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Endnotes

- 1 It is important to clarify that this article does not deal with the Druze of the Golan for two main reasons. First, the Druze of the Golan fought the decision taken by the Israeli government to annex the Golan in 1981, refusing to accept Israeli citizenship and holding onto their Syrian identity. Second, Israel's policy toward the Druze in the Golan is different from its policy toward the Druze in the Galilee and al-Karmil. The state did not impose military conscription on the Druze in the Golan and, as a result, their struggle and protest movement has differed significantly from that which developed among the Druze inside Israel, both in terms of its goals and its consequences.
- 2 Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure," in *The War for Palestine*, ed. Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12–36.
- 3 Firro, *Druzes in the Jewish State: A Brief History* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 55.
- 4 Larry Derfner, "Covenant of Blood," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 January 2009; Firro, *Druzes in the Jewish State*, 77.
- 5 Aharon Layish, "Taqiyya among the Druzes," *Asian and African Studies* 19 (1985): 275–77. As Zeidan Atashi notes: "Since the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, when their religion first became established, the Druze have customarily maintained allegiance to the incumbent regime in the regions, where they have lived, as long as that regime has respected their way of life and their religion." Zeidan Atashi, *Druze and Jews in Israel: A Shared Destiny?* (London: Sussex Academic Press, 1997), 166.
- 6 Mahmud Mi'ari argues that the "Arab education system lacks an independent self-management. Since the state was established, the administrative structure of the education system has been fully controlled by the government. The Ministry of Education, particularly the Hebrew education department and its staff, and sometimes the Israeli security services, manipulate all aspects of the Arab education apparatus (such as infrastructure, services, curricula, programs, and appointments)." Mahmud Mi'ari, ed., *Manahij al-ta'lim al-'Arabi fi Isra'il: dirasat naqdiyya fi manahij al-lugha al-'Arabiyya wa al-tarikh wa al-jighrafiyya wa al-madaniyyat* [Arab educational curricula in Israel: a critical study of Arabic language, history, geography, and civics curricula] (Nazareth: Arab Pedagogical Council and the Follow-up Committee on Arab Education, 2014), 24.
- 7 Yusri Khaizran, "On the State's Education Apparatus: Zionization and Minoritarianism of Druze Consciousness in Israel," *Arab Studies Journal* 28, no. 2 (2020): 76–106.
- 8 Atashi, *Druze and Jews*, 5.
- 9 Arab Center for Alternative Planning

- (ACAP), *Da'iqat al-aradi fi al-baldat al-'Arabiyya al-Durziyya (al-Ma'rufiyya)* [Land Pressure in Arab Druze (al-Ma'rufiyya) Communities] ('Aylabun: Arab Center for Alternative Planning, 2008), 1.
- 10 ACAP, *Da'iqat al-aradi*, 8.
- 11 ACAP, *Da'iqat al-aradi*, 8.
- 12 Rami Zidan, *Gedud bene 'Arav: toldoteha shel yehidat ha-mi'utim be-Tsahal mi-shenat 1948 ve-'ad 1956* [Battalion of Arabs: the history of the minorities unit in the IDF from 1948 to 1956] (Tel Aviv: Modan, 2015), 168–69.
- 13 Hillel Cohen, *Aravim Tovim: ha-modi'in ha-Yisre'eli veba-'Arvim be-Yisra'el: sokhnim u-maf'ilim, meshatfim u-mordim, matarot ve-shitot* [Good Arabs: Israeli intelligence and the Arabs in Israel: agents and operators, collaborators and rebels, goals and methods] (Jerusalem: Keter, 2006), 187–89.
- 14 Cohen, *Aravim Tovim*, 188.
- 15 Cohen, *Aravim Tovim*, 190.
- 16 Cohen, *Aravim Tovim*, 194–96.
- 17 See the report *Ganzekeh ha-medina*, document titled “Ha-Ida Hadruzit.” Hitz 28/2402, 3 November 1953.
- 18 In a 1953 meeting between Meir Argov, a leader of the Labor party, and a delegation from the Druze traditional leadership, including representatives of the Tarif, Ma'di, and Khunayfis families, Shaykh Salman Tarif affirmed that the Druze, according to their most holy religious books, were obliged to obey God and the sultan. See “Protocol mi ha-yeshiva 'im mishlahat ha-Druzim,” 14 May 1953, file no. 15-1953-926-2, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl.
- 19 Mordechai Nisan, “ha-Druzim bi-Yisrael: sheola shel zahot” [The Druze in Israel: a matter of identity], *Kiyunim Khadashim* 22 (2010): 6.
- 20 Kais M. Firro, *Duruz fi zaman “al-ghafla”: min al-hirath al-Filastiniila al-bunduqiyya al-Isra'iliyya* [Druze in the time of “inattention”: from the Palestinian plow to the Israeli gun], (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2019), 185.
- 21 See Kais Firro, “al-Tajnid al-ijbari lil-Duruz fi al-jaysh al-Isra'ili: khalfiyya tarikhiyya” [Compulsory conscription of the Druze into the Israeli army: an historical background], in *al-Filastiniyyun fi Isra'il: qira'at fi al-tarikh wa al-siyasa wa al-mujtama'* [The Palestinians in Israel: readings in history, politics, and society], ed. Nadim Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury (Haifa: Mada al-Carmel, 2011), 61–62.
- 22 Druze Initiative Committee, *Samidun* [Steadfast Ones] (Shifa 'Amr: n.p., 2001), 17. Also see the statement issued by this group and published in *al-Ittihad* newspaper, 20 April 1965.
- 23 Author interview with Muhammad Nazza', 6 June 2013.
- 24 Firro, *Druze in the Jewish State*, 197.
- 25 Firro, *Druze in the Jewish State*, 186–89.
- 26 Letter from Association Secretary Munir Faris to Shimon Peres, 27 August 1968, file number 5-027-1968-453, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl. See also: Firro, *Druze in the Jewish State*, 187.
- 27 Nabih al-Qasim, *al-Duruz fi Isra'il* [The Druze in Israel] (Jerusalem: Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyya, 1995), 49.
- 28 Rabah Halabi, “Miarekhet ha-khanokh la-druzim, 1975–1995: mediniyot shel ha-'adafah o shel shlitah” [The Druze system of education, 1975–1995: a policy of preference or control] (MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 13.
- 29 Shim'on Avivi, *Tas nehoshet: ha-mediniyut ha-Yisre'elit klape ha-'edah ha-druzit, 1948–1967* [Copper plate: Israeli policy toward the Druze, 1948–1967] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2007), 363–65.
- 30 Shaykh Farhud presented a petition to Israeli president Yitzhak Ben-Zvi demanding the cancellation of compulsory conscription in 1956. Druze Initiative Committee, *al-Shaykh Farhud Qasim Farhud* (Shifa 'Amr: Dar al-Mashriq, 2005), 19.
- 31 Druze Initiative Committee, *al-Shaykh Farhud*, 16–18.
- 32 Druze Initiative Committee, *al-Shaykh Farhud*, 20–22.
- 33 In fact, this vision has its historical and intellectual roots in the establishmentarian jurisprudence of Sunni Islam, which considered obedience to the sultan a religious obligation and a duty based on the placatory argument that an unjust ruler is better than lasting strife. See Nehemia Levtzion ... (Tel Aviv: Open University, 2000), 99–100.
- 34 Author interview with Muhammad Naffa', 6 June 2013.
- 35 Qasim, *al-Duruz*, 145.
- 36 Halabi, “Miarekhet ha-khanokh la-druzim,” 16–17.
- 37 Suhayl Farraj, *ha-Nose ha-Druzi bi-knesset Yisra'el* [The Druze issue in the Israeli

- Knesset] (Maghar: n.p., 2012), Annex 1, 11.
- 38 Halabi, "Miarekhet ha-khanokh la-druzim," 18–19.
- 39 Farraj, *ha-Nose ha-Druzi*, Annex 1, 11.
- 40 Salman Falah, ed., *ha-Druzim bi-Mizrah ha-tikun* [The Druze in the Middle East] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 2000), 164.
- 41 Halabi, "Miarekhet ha-khanokh la-druzim," 18–19.
- 42 Halabi, "Miarekhet ha-khanokh la-druzim," 22–24.
- 43 Halabi, "Miarekhet ha-khanokh la-druzim," 43–44. Falah believed that the fact that half of the teachers were non-Druze obstructed the implementation of the ministry's education policies, namely, to upgrade education standards among the Druze, and to highlight the identity and historical idiosyncrasy of the Druze. To overcome this challenge, non-Druze teachers had to be transferred outside Druze villages. In addition to giving priority to Druze teachers in vacancies, professional Druze female educators were to be rehabilitated.
- 44 Firro, *Duruz fi zaman "al-ghafta"*, 302–3.
- 45 Statement of Likud MK Amal Nasr al-Din in the Knesset, 13 September 1987, see Farraj, *ha-Nose ha-Druzi*, 181; Druze Initiative Committee, August 1997 Initiative, 18–19.
- 46 Born in 1956, Bishara is a leading intellectual and political Palestinian leader. Between 1996 and 2006, he served as a Knesset member. Bishara is also the founder and leader of the National Democratic Alliance party. He was most identified with the idea of eliminating the Zionist identity of Israel and turning Israel into a state of all citizens. In 2006, Bishara was forced to leave Israel, after being accused of cooperation with Hizbullah during the second Lebanon War in 2006. Currently, he is the head of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Qatar.
- 47 *Al-Wasat* 514, 3 December 2001, 26.
- 48 Statement of the Druze Communication Committee, "Awwaluha wa a'dhamuha sadaq al-lisan" [The First and Greatest Is a Truthful Tongue], September 2004, held in the author's personal collection.
- 49 Sa'id Naffa', *al-Tawasul wa 'uri al-qada' al-Isra'ili: hawamish fi sira jam'iyya wa dhatiyya* [Persistence and the nakedness of the Israeli judicial system: footnotes in a collective and personal biography], vol. 2 (Bayt Jann: al-Haraka al-Wataniyya lil-Tawasul, 2021), 258–65.
- 50 *al-Wasat* 514, 3 December 2001, 26. Statement released by the Free Druze Charter, "Returning to Damascus," May 2005. Author's personal collection.
- 51 By February 2008, the movement announced the cessation of its activities. See the formal statement by its head, Ihsan Murad: Hussam Harb, "Harakat al-hurriyya lil-hadara al-'Arabiyya" [Free Movement for Arab Civilization], *Kul al-'Arab*, 10 February 2008, online at www.alarab.com/Article/43990 (accessed 6 October 2023).
- 52 Harakat al-Hurriyya lil-Hadara al-'Arabiyya, "Kitab maftuh muwajjih li-marji'iyatuna al-ruhiyya wa mashayikhina al-ujalla' al-thiqat" [An open letter to our distinguished and trusted spiritual authorities and shaykhs], 17 February 2012. Author's personal collection.
- 53 This was embodied by the principle, falsely attributed to the founder of the Druze doctrine, Hamza ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Zuzani that "any nation that conquers you, obey it and preserve me in your hearts" (*ayy umma ghalabatkum, ti'uha wa ahfadhuni fi qulubikum*). See the book *Bayn al-'aql wa al-nabi* [Between the mind and the Prophet], author unknown, which attributes this doctrine to Hamza bin 'Ali, though it is nowhere mentioned in *Rasa'il al-Hikma* (The Epistles of Wisdom).
- 54 Statement of the Druze Communication Committee, October 2005. Author's personal collection.
- 55 Author interview with Fahmi Halabi, head of the Committee for Defending Land and Home, Daliyat al-Karmil, 25 September 2023.
- 56 Author interview with Fahmi Halabi, Daliyat al-Karmil, 25 September 2023; author interview with Khalil Fahmi (member of the Committee for Defending Land and Home), Daliyat al-Karmil, 24 September 2023. Both interviewees confirmed that their committee led the struggle, while the religious leadership showed its support.
- 57 Firro, *Duruz fi zaman "al-ghafta"*, 311.
- 58 Indeed, it is impossible to separate the attack launched by the police forces from the symbolic importance of al-Buqay'a/Peki'in in Zionist political memory, as it has long been seen to represent the continuity of Jewish presence on the land and is a place of religious significance linked to Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai. In 1922, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who later became president of Israel, wrote: "The

- village of Peki'in, al-Buqay'a in Arabic, is a large village hidden in the rocky foothills of Safad. The village is rich in water and blessed with fresh and healthy air. One spring, known as the Habus river, flows below the mountain where the carob of Simeon bar Yochai is planted, of which the village girls seek blessings." Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, *ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi bi-Kfar Peki'in* [Jewish Settlement in Peki'in Village] (Tel Aviv: Hotzat sfarim akhedot ha-avoda, 1922), 3). See also Nisan, "ha-Druzim," 12.
- 59 See Efrat Weiss, "Eru'im Peki'in: hashotrim shiyaru lo yo'amdu ledin" [The events of Peki'in: the police who shot will not be prosecuted], *YNet*, 17 April 2008, online at www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3533071,00.html (accessed 6 October 2023).
- 60 This was the conclusion of participants in a one-day seminar organized by the Association for the Support of Democracy in early January 2007. See the Druze Initiative Committee, *'An Buqay'a al-sumud* [On steadfast Buqay'a] (2008), 54–55.
- 61 Nisan, "ha-Druzim," 10–12.
- 62 Firro, *Duruz fi zaman "al-ghafta"*, 311.
- 63 See Eyal Gabbai's statement in *Haaretz*, 3 September 2009.
- 64 The poll's conclusions were published on the official site of the University of Haifa under the title "Seker da'at ha-kahal shel ha-'ada ha-druzit" [Public opinion survey of the Druze community]. See also Druze Initiative Committee, *al-Rumana* 1 (2010), 7.
- 65 Founded in 1995, the council is entirely identified with the religious leadership of the Tarif family and headed since 1995 by Shaykh Muwafaq Tarif.
- 66 Yusri Khaizran and Muhammad Khlaile, *Netushah le-goralah: ha-hevrah ha-'Arvit be-Yisra'el be-tzel "ha-Aviv ha-'Arvi"* [Left to its fate: Arab society in Israel under the shadow of the "Arab Spring"] (Ramat Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2019), 167–68.
- 67 *Al-Wasat*, 514, December 2001, 26.
- 68 Wasif Hasan, "Tamorit bi-mavna ha-ta'suka shel ha-yishuvim ha-druzim" [Changes in the Employment Structure of Druze Communities], in Salman Falah, ed., *ha-Druzim bi-Mizrah ha-tikhun* [The Druze in the Middle East] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 2000), 231–46.
- 69 Author interview with Ghalib Sayf, head of the Initiative Committee, in his home in Yanuh, 16 May 2013. Despite the scarcity of resources and the absence of external support, Sayf pointed out that the Druze Initiative Committee has published nearly sixty books and pamphlets around their activities.
- 70 Author interview with Muhamma Naffa', 6 June 2013.
- 71 More recently, the Druze have sought to counter state policies with the aid of civil society organizations associated with Palestinian citizens of Israel. In June 2011, Shaykh 'Ali Ma'di presented a petition to the High Court of Justice requesting that in Druze communities all financial penalties imposed on unlicensed construction be frozen; that master plans be ratified; that housing bids be distributed to young couples; and that planning and building committees be replaced with technocratic, non-political committees. Statement issued by Shaykh 'Ali Ma'di, 1 June 2011. Author's personal collection.
- 72 Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS.
- 73 Nabih al-Qasim, *Waqi' al-Duruz fi Isra'il: dirasa* [The reality of the Druze in Israel: a study] (Haifa: Dar Raya, 2019), 27–29.
- 74 Sheren Falah Saab, "Druzim ve-Muslimin kholkim bakhag ha-korvan ha-zeh gam et ha-akhzava mehakhsheret khok ha-laom" [On Eid al-Adha this year, Druze and Muslims share the disappointment of the Nation-State Law's passage], *Haaretz*, 19 July 2021, online at (haaretz.co.il) bit.ly/47iw5Jt (accessed 6 October 2023).
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