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## THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION: THEMES OF JUSTICE AND POWER

### Part II: The Palestinians in Israel

RAEF ZREIK

*This second of a two-part essay explores how the tension between the imperatives of justice and the realities of the balance of power, which the author contends has shaped Palestinian politics since 1948, affects the Palestinians of Israel, particularly with regard to such issues as citizenship and identity, "Israelization" and "Palestinianization," and demands for equality and autonomy. While the oscillation between the poles of justice/history and power prevents them, like their brethren in the occupied territories (the subject of part 1 of the essay, in JPS 128) from developing a clear strategy, in their case it also undermines their ability to formulate a coherent vision of the requirements for a "historic compromise," without which there can be no true normalization with the Israeli state.*

THE OSLO AGREEMENT aimed at solving the Israeli-Palestinian crisis arising from the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, but it also had powerful (if indirect) repercussions for the Palestinians of Israel. The agreement brought home to the Israeli Palestinians the fact that their fate was henceforth separate from that of their brethren across the Green Line, opening the way to their coming to terms with their own situation. But the process of "normalization" with Israel initiated by Oslo, both in the occupied territories and (implicitly) with the Palestinian community in Israel, brought into sharp focus a contradiction that has long plagued Palestinian politics. On the one hand is the reality of an overwhelming imbalance of power, which mandates major concessions by the Palestinians of the territories and a tendency toward docile acquiescence among the Palestinians of Israel. On the other hand is the Palestinians' deep conviction in the unassailable justice of their cause arising from the weight of their history, which militates against concessions in the occupied territories and against cosmetic integration into Israel for the Israeli Palestinians. It is my contention that the dichotomy between these two poles—the pole of power and the pole of justice—has implications for the Palestinians' ability to formulate a clear and consistent strategy both in the occupied territories

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and in Israel, even though its manifestations inevitably differ in the two areas.

Certainly, the two cases are very different by virtue of the simple fact that the situation in the occupied territories is about an internationally recognized conflict between occupier and occupied, while the situation in Israel proper concerns relations between the state and a minority whose members are citizens of that state. In the first case, the need for resolution (and hence for negotiations and a final agreement) is recognized by both parties as well as by the international community. In the case of the Palestinians of Israel, by contrast, there is no such recognition, with the Israeli state seeing the Palestinian minority only as individual citizens without any kind of corporate identity, which means that in Israeli eyes there is neither anything to negotiate nor anyone to negotiate with, and whatever problems may exist will be remedied over time.

The consequences of these differing circumstances are obvious. In the occupied territories, the very fact of negotiations and the prospect of an eventual agreement placed the Palestinians squarely before the tension between power and justice—a tension that became more and more apparent as the Oslo process evolved. This power versus justice dichotomy, moreover, resulted in a second dichotomy of leadership versus people, with the Palestinian Authority (PA) apparently willing to make more concessions than the people were willing to bear. In the case of the Israeli Palestinians, on the other hand, the absence of negotiations (or at least acknowledged negotiations) between Israel and its Palestinian citizens made the issues far less clearly delineated, and the implications of the accelerated integration into the Israeli system were not recognized or acknowledged. Yet this very reluctance or even refusal to recognize that *de facto* moves toward “normalization” have a price and entail losses was itself rooted in this very same power-justice dichotomy. But in order to examine how the power-justice paradigm relates to the Palestinians of Israel, it is first necessary to sketch some historical background and the specifics of their situation.

### THE EVOLVING DISCOURSE OF ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP

Israeli citizenship was conferred upon the Palestinians who remained in their land almost immediately after the creation of the state. In the early decades, certainly, citizenship for the Palestinians of Israel was largely meaningless apart from the crucially important fact that it seemed to preclude the possibility of expulsion outside the state borders. As the beleaguered and demoralized remnant of the Palestinian Arab majority which, in the space of a few months in 1948, was reduced from 67 percent of the population to a barely tolerated minority of 16 percent (or from some 900,000 to 150,000 people), they were immediately placed under military rule and a state of emergency that lasted for almost twenty years.

The *raison d'être* and aim of the new state was to gather into the country Jews from all over the world. Indeed, the new state was a *Jewish* project, not

an *Israeli* project. It was created to serve not the people within its borders (its citizens), but a people the majority of whom was not even resident (the Jews in exile). Moreover, the Jewish law of return reduced the difference between actual and potential citizenship to a technicality, since every Jew could exercise his right to immigrate, thereby turning potential citizenship into actual citizenship. For Jews, the difference between being “inside” and “outside” the state was almost irrelevant. While the state represented the interests of Jews even outside the state, it did not take seriously the interests of the Palestinians inside the state and who were citizens of it.

Another anomaly of the new state was the question of land ownership: in 1948, at a time when Israel wanted to absorb millions of Jewish immigrants, Jews owned less than 7 percent of the land. This problem was speedily resolved through a series of complicated laws (enumeration of which is beyond the scope of this article) that confiscated the lands belonging to the refugees—both the 750,000 who had left or been expelled from the country and the tens of thousands of “internal refugees” who had been driven from their homes and lands even while remaining within Israel’s borders (the so-called present absentees). Some of the “official” institutions that held title to the confiscated lands, including the Jewish Agency (JA) and the Jewish National Fund (JNF), stipulated in their bylaws that the land was to be held in perpetuity not for the “*Israeli* people” but for the “*Jewish* people.” The reference and guide for their action, then, was exclusively ethnic, not civic. Given this logic, it was inevitable that relations between Jews and Palestinians would be based on a zero-sum game. Thus the struggle of the Palestinian citizens of the state for the next decades was for survival, not equality, for preserving what remained to them rather than striving for fair redistribution.

The zero-sum game paradigm gradually began to shift in the mid-1980s for a number of reasons, only a few of which I shall mention. First, Israel over the preceding four decades had managed to take over the bulk of the land remaining in Palestinian hands, thereby destroying the very fabric of the largely rural society. Second, during this same period the state enacted a number of laws that were applicable to territory and could not be confined ethnically, thereby increasing the role of law, the importance of civil society, and the accountability of state institutions to the citizenry. A third element involved the collapse of the labor movement and its economy and the consequent rise of a new Jewish middle class and civil society relatively free of the state and the Jewish-*national* collectivist economy. A fourth element relates to changes within the Palestinian community itself, including the growth of a new middle-class intelligentsia that took both Palestinian identity and Israeli citizenship more seriously.

Developments within the Palestinian minority accelerated during the 1990s. The eruption of the first intifada had reinforced the rediscovery by the Palestinians of Israel following the 1967 war of the commonalities they shared with their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza. But, as has been noted, the longer the intifada continued, the more they came to realize what separated

them as well. They became aware that their Israeli citizenship, however limited, *did* mean something, conferring upon them a certain number of minimal rights. In those post-1967 years, too, two distinct trends within Israeli Palestinian society became clearly identifiable: Palestinianization, which put the emphasis on the sense of Palestinian identity that had gained ground as of the late 1970s, and Israelization, which put the emphasis on Israeli citizenship, as will be discussed below. Though distinct, the two trends more often than not were both present, to varying degrees, in all Israeli Palestinians. Rather than being brought together or integrated, however, the two trends were ever alternating in the uneasy interplay that is one of the themes of this essay.

But it was the signing of the Oslo agreement that brought Israel's Palestinians face to face with their future: it was now clear that not only was the problem of the Israeli Palestinians different from that of the Palestinians of the territories, but so was the solution. In this regard, Oslo created not only a new politics, but seemingly also a new history and geography: If Palestine is *there*, in Jenin and Ramallah, then what is *here*, in Nazareth and Um al-Fahm?

Up until that moment, much of Palestinian national feeling had been projected outside the borders, first on the Arab nationalism of Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and then on the PLO. But now the Israeli Palestinians had to formulate a project of their own capable of responding to their own unique reality in the post-Oslo period.

## IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP

In the early years of the state, a demand for equality would have been utterly meaningless. What, after all, could equality mean between Jews and Palestinians when the former were the victors and the latter the vanquished, when the Jews were building the homeland that the Palestinians had lost, when the former had fought and died to create a state and the latter had fought and died to prevent its establishment, when the Jews were reuniting their families and the Palestinians were cut off from families henceforth shattered and fragmented? Thus the nature of the experience of the two groups was so utterly contradictory and so lacking in commonality as to make a discourse of equality impossible. The stark reality was "us" versus "them." In this sense, it could be argued that even the Palestinians who joined Zionist parties in the first decades of the state—and there were quite a few—did so not out of a sense of belonging to the state but, quite the contrary, out of a sense of estrangement from it; the guiding logic was that "we" (Palestinians) have been utterly defeated and should therefore behave as guests in a Jewish state where there could never be an Israeli "we" encompassing both Jews and Arabs.

It is against this background that one must approach the rise in the 1990s of the discourse on cultural autonomy for the Palestinians of Israel and the

project of Israel as a “state for all its citizens.” Both discourses were launched by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Azmi Bishara, which sought to develop a discourse capable of encompassing the two main dimensions of the Palestinian experience in Israel: identity and citizenship or, otherwise stated, difference and sameness. The NDA’s point was to take these two dimensions seriously and to push them to their limits. To take the question of identity seriously meant to demand cultural autonomy for the Palestinian community, while to take citizenship seriously meant to demand that Israel become a state for all its citizens.

The demand for cultural autonomy reflects the cultural and linguistic reality that the Palestinians in Israel are not merely individuals but form a distinct collective. As such, the Israeli Palestinian question cannot be resolved merely by granting the Palestinian citizens equal individual rights, for they are not only Israeli citizens but are also part of a national and cultural group that is different from the majority group and indeed that preceded the new majority on the land. This being the case, to treat the Palestinian citizens equally would require treating them as part of a national and cultural context that is accorded equal respect. This concept is not meant to replace citizenship but rather to enhance it; it is not to detract from individual civil rights but to add to them collective rights. It is for this reason that the NDA subordinated the demand for cultural autonomy to the demand that Israel become a state for all its citizens. In other words, the liberalization of the state was seen as a precondition for and a first step toward cultural autonomy.

But while the stated demand was for cultural autonomy, in fact it implied something beyond issues of cultural differences and the right (actual, not theoretical) to use the Arabic language in the public sphere. Underlying this call was the unspoken demand for recognition of what the Palestinians had lost: their lands, their country, their wholeness as a people. As the “natives” who bore the cost of the establishment of the state, the Palestinians of Israel felt that the state has an unpaid debt to them not only as individual citizens but as part of the nation that was crushed by the state in 1948. Such claims, however, cannot be negotiated with the state unless there is, first, an entity or a “self” recognized as representing the Israeli Palestinians and, second, a coherent vision of the conditions for (and compromises necessitated by) a historic reconciliation, as will be discussed below.

The call for cultural autonomy, however, was very much overshadowed by the NDA’s other call, for Israel as a state for all its citizens. The issue is a complicated one. On the one hand, the call for Israel’s becoming a state for all its citizens could be seen as a revolutionary project (and I believe this is how it was intended by the NDA leadership). To turn Israel into such a state would mean to democratize the country in radical fashion. It would call into question the tangled political and institutional links between Israel and the Jewish people as well as the special status of the JA and the JNF and, to an extent, the Jewish law of return itself. Turning Israel into a state for all its citizens would end both the “overexclusion” of the Palestinian citizens from

Israeli civil and political life by ending the structural discrimination against them, and the “overinclusion” or privileged status of Jews who are not Israeli citizens in the political life of the state. In this way, the “superstructure” of the state would reflect the “infrastructure” of citizenship; a *demos* would be born to replace an *ethnos*. In the process, Israel would become a “normal” state, where statehood is a trust for the interests of its citizens, and where ethnic, religious, or “national” affiliation is largely a private matter outside the public or political sphere. It was thus that this ambitious and potentially far-reaching project represented a new challenge to Zionism from the “inside”; the struggle, as Bishara once expressed it, had moved from being over the form and existence of the Israeli state to being over its substance. In short, the project aimed to put citizenship at the center of the political discourse.

Yet ideas have a dynamic of their own and bear different readings. Citizenship presupposes the existence of the state and is its precondition; to take citizenship seriously implies taking statehood seriously. The flip side of the state for all its citizens project launched by Israeli Palestinians is its impact on their own narrative. For just as the state for all its citizens project requires Israel to normalize its relations with its citizens, so does it require the citizens (i.e. the Palestinians themselves) to normalize their relations with the state. This would mean truly *accepting* the state (not just as a fait accompli), which in turn implies accepting the state’s victory over the Palestinians in 1948 and the end of the Palestinian national project (or at least a certain version of it). Certainly, the project would put limits on whatever political program would grow out of the Palestinian narrative, and there could be implications as well for their moral superiority as the wronged and dispossessed natives of the land. Similarly, since a state for all its citizens entails a fair distribution of resources, it could imply agreeing to start with a clean slate, which would mean renouncing the unresolved claims arising from the expropriation of their lands—and, for the “present absentees,” the loss of their homes and expulsion from their villages as well. In other words, the state for all its citizens project can be seen as a project that focuses on the future, not the past, and on the universal rather than the particular.

But the real implications of the state for all its citizens were not debated within the Palestinian community, and the project was not understood to be a part of a historic compromise where the Palestinians, if they were to be consistent, would be required to pay a price. Rather, the state for all its citizens program was seized upon by some as a license to put aside the questions of history and nationalism and, under the rhetoric of universalism and individual rights, to try to integrate themselves into the Israeli system at the individual level. In this sense, the collapse of the national movement into the PA opened a small window of individual opportunity for some Palestinians of Israel—or

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at least they thought so. It was thus that the process of Israelization that had begun rather tentatively in the 1970s accelerated.

### ISRAELIZATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Israelization encompasses a number of trends that together can be seen as promoting greater Palestinian inclusion and participation in Israeli public life, such as progress in *civil* rights and reducing the inequalities between Palestinian and Jewish citizens through legal mechanisms. Though the term “Israelization” is used derisively by many Israeli Palestinians, particularly followers of the NDA, as tantamount to accommodation or even collaboration with the system, logically the very project of a state for all its citizens could qualify as Israelization, as would, certainly, moves such as running for the Knesset (to say nothing of prime minister) and challenging rights violations in Israeli courts. All such moves take Israeli citizenship seriously, and all are based on the legal structure put in place by the state. In this broad sense, virtually the entire political spectrum of the Palestinians of Israel—with the possible exception of some factions of the Islamic movement and the Sons of the Village (*abnaa’ al-balad*)—underwent a process of Israelization, just as virtually the entire political spectrum accepts Israeli citizenship as the ceiling of the political struggle. Still, while all are party to Israelization, a distinction can be made between those who support integration at the *individual* level (e.g., most of Hadash), and those calling for negotiating with the state *as a collectivity*, as a national minority with its own historical distinctiveness and national demands (i.e., the NDA, at least in their political rhetoric). But if this is the situation, then the question ought not to be whether there should be Israelization, but rather, How are we to organize ourselves as a group? What should be our demands in exchange for a historic compromise? Should the normalization be reciprocal, and, if so, how should it be achieved?

These questions were not asked, however. On the contrary, the accusation of Israelization was used by its critics to cover up hard questions regarding the Palestinian minority’s relations with the state, the Jewish Left, and its own internal organization. And at the same time, Israelization proceeded apace, but in a helter-skelter fashion, without any planning or forethought. A good example relates to land distribution. As already mentioned, Israel’s principal aim during the first four decades of its existence was the Judaization of Palestine, mainly through the transfer of land title and possession from Palestinian to Jewish hands. This being the case, the Palestinian struggle during the first four decades focused on efforts to prevent the state, through its various branches, from seizing what was left of their land; indeed, the main Palestinian vehicle of protest through the 1980s was called the Committee for the Defense of Lands. Thus, notwithstanding the Palestinians’ Israeli citizenship, the battle was understood as a zero-sum game of natives versus colonizers, of “us” versus “them.” This became especially clear when various legal challenges showed that the High Court was unwilling to stop the expropriations.



Despite the bitter history of the land confiscations, in the late 1990s the High Court mandated the appointment of a Palestinian to serve on the Israeli Land Council, the body responsible for zoning and planning throughout Israel and indeed the very body that had been responsible in the first place for confiscating the lands of the Palestinian citizens for redistribution to Jews. Moreover, of the three entities constituting the Israeli Land Council, two—the JNF and the JA—represent not Israeli citizens but solely the Jewish people wherever they are and regardless of whether they are Israeli citizens. Only the third constituent body of the council, Minhal, is subject to Israeli administrative and public law. But though the presence of a single Palestinian on this council obviously could have no real impact on the process of zoning and land use, and in that sense could be seen as an example of tokenism, the appointment was welcomed by most of the Israeli Palestinian political parties (except some voices within NDA) and by most Israeli Palestinian public figures.

Few voices were raised asking the questions that needed to be asked: What is the historical significance of removing the site of the struggle from the Committee for the Defense of Lands, where the confrontation had been seen as a zero-sum game, to the Land Council, where the hope was that a Palestinian representation might assure fairer treatment in zoning and planning? Was this a victory or a defeat, or both? And if the Palestinians of Israel are making claims regarding land use in their capacity as equal citizens (and only in this capacity), how would these claims differ from those, say, of Russian immigrants? If the Palestinians claim, as equal citizens, that they deserve, alongside other groups, a fair share of the state land (originally Palestinian land) and are entitled to participate in the decision-making process, what does this mean in terms of their historical claims and rights? And what is the basis of these claims and rights?

In addition to the appointment of a Palestinian to the Land Council, a number of similar gestures were made between 1998 and 2000. A Palestinian was appointed to a one-year term as a justice of the High Court; a young Palestinian woman won the Miss Israel beauty contest; a Palestinian Knesset member (MK) was appointed to the Knesset Committee for Security and Foreign Affairs; another Palestinian MK was appointed deputy foreign minister. Palestinian MKs were authorized to meet high officials or even presidents of Arab countries, carrying—explicitly or implicitly—messages from the Israeli government. All these developments were greeted as historic achievements by a majority of the Israeli Palestinian community. Even while not denigrating the progress such moves represent, how should we read these developments, which took place only a few years ago against the background of a “peace process”? In short, what was the strategy here?

## REFLECTIONS ON THE STATE FOR ALL CITIZENS

What the Israeli Palestinians failed to acknowledge—or preferred not to see—was that the paradigm was shifting. Certainly, the appointment of a

Palestinian to the High Court breaks traditional barriers and, within the context of Zionism's traditionally unalloyed ethnic exclusionism, represents a significant ideological shift. In this sense, the appointment does represent progress in the struggle for equality (and this is what many Israeli Palestinians chose to focus on). At the same time, however, it can be seen as less of an achievement for the Palestinians (if it was an achievement at all) than for the Israeli state, insofar as the presence of a Palestinian judge on the High Court represents a major step toward achieving Israel's long-held goal of normalization. In this sense, accepting the appointment represented a *Palestinian* concession, not only an Israeli concession, and as such used up some of the primary Palestinian (symbolic) assets of history and justice. Such a move should have been part of a historic compromise between the state and its Palestinian citizens. To perceive the appointment solely or primarily as a Palestinian gain reveals a degree of national amnesia and even lack of national pride, for the Palestinians of Israel are not marginalized immigrants struggling to improve their lot who should be grateful for whatever they get. They lost their national project, their homeland, their elites, their towns; they were cut off from the rest of their people. They paid a heavy price in advance and have a historical case pending against the state that is awaiting a historic compromise. Thus, for the Palestinians of Israel, equality is not simply a *demand*, but entails historic compromises on their part, just as a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip represents not simply a demand but requires compromises. Once again, however, such issues were not sufficiently debated within Israel's Palestinian community, and there was an unbearable rush to embrace Israel without setting any terms for the concessions—however symbolic—being offered, unilaterally and de facto, to the state.

As for the Israelis, though they certainly could not embrace the state for all its citizens in its entirety, since it effectively entails a radical transformation of the Zionist project of a Jewish state, many did embrace aspects of it, notably

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the Israelization process discussed above. The Israelis approached the state for all its citizens project similarly to how they approached the Oslo process: they saw only those elements of the formula that put limits on the Palestinians, not on Israel. Thus the Palestinian drive for a state for all its citizens was seen, in part, as an eraser of Palestinian identity within Israel, just as the idea of a Palestinian "state" governed by the PA was seen as a way of divesting Israel of responsibility

for the people while allowing it to retain control of the land. In both cases, what was involved for the Palestinian people was a representational achievement devoid of real content. For Israel, on the other hand, the state for all its citizens project involved, like Oslo, a moment of normalizing its existence both with regard to its Palestinian citizens (insofar as their acceptance would now be principled as opposed to de facto) and with regard to the region (insofar as it implied acceptance of the nonreturn of the Palestinian refugees, who

obviously are not citizens of the state). What the Palestinian minority failed to realize fully was that for each Israeli move toward Palestinian inclusion, the Israelis were expecting something in return.

The extent of the self-delusions and false expectations on the two sides came fully to light with the events of October 2000, when the Palestinians of Israel massively demonstrated throughout the country in solidarity with their brethren in the occupied territories following the outbreak of the second intifada, resulting in the shooting deaths of thirteen of their fellow citizens by the Israeli police. The headlong rush toward normalization appeared to come to an abrupt halt, though in fact what ended was only its obvious and surface aspects, and the deeper, more hidden process of Israelization at the institutional, economic, and legal level continued uninterrupted. But while the halt to normalization was superficial, the deep divide laid bare by the October events, between Israeli Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, particularly on the Left, was not. Each side felt betrayed by the other: the Jewish Israelis saw the Palestinian citizens as merely nationalists, while the Palestinians came to see the positive changes as merely cosmetic. Having (apparently) come together so easily, they just as easily came apart.

In fact, it could not have been otherwise, for the hard and difficult questions relating to history and justice—the real issues—were insufficiently debated either among the Palestinians or among Israeli Jews. Just as no real compromise could be reached in the occupied territories by sweeping under the rug the fundamental issues, so it was in Israel proper. The Jewish Israelis had been expecting the Palestinians to “give more” in order to enter the Israeli polity—they wanted something in exchange that they were hesitant to name or even to recognize fully for fear that it might raise Palestinian expectations and consequently demands. The leaders of the Israeli Palestinian community, for their part, were similarly shy about articulating their true needs; to an extent they feared the gravity of the justness of their cause. To raise such historical issues would have meant opening a Pandora’s Box they did not feel capable of controlling. Raising such issues would also have meant excluding themselves from the political game of the Oslo process many were engaged in and whose injustices for the most part they refrained from criticizing (even though acceptance of such a distorted peace implied acceptance of a similarly distorted citizenship). On both sides, then, things were left to expediency and short-term politics. The inevitable result was the deep estrangement between the two communities that persists to this day.

### THE ISSUE OF REPRESENTATION

It is clear that without some kind of a “historic reconciliation” the Israeli Palestinians will never get the closure they need in order to truly normalize their relations with the Israeli state. But the terms of such a reconciliation (which could involve such things as land return, public apology, official recognition of Palestinian suffering, privileges in land allocation and other

resources) have not been enunciated. And one of the great obstacles preventing them from being enunciated is the absence of a structured leadership recognized as representing the Palestinians of Israel as a whole. It is my conviction, then, that this crisis of representation is not just a procedural matter.

In general terms, the issue of representation can be approached in two ways. The first is one of advocacy, where A promotes the interests of B or gives voice to B's claims. In this sense one might say that Edward Said represents the Palestinian cause for American public opinion. Here, representation is mainly a question of interests and ideas. Under this meaning, a non-Palestinian (for example, Noam Chomsky) also could represent the Palestinian case before American public opinion. The second concept of representation, by contrast, is "procedural," relating to location or identity. Here, the representative is at the top of a pyramid, and those represented are at the base. In this sense one might say that the British Parliament represents the British people, the New York Bar Association the lawyers of New York, the City Council of Cambridge the residents of Cambridge, and the PLO the Palestinians. The representative and the represented share some common identity (citizenship in the case of the British Parliament, profession and location in the case of the New York Bar Association, residency in the case of the City Council of Cambridge, and nationhood in the case of the Palestinians).

With regard to the Palestinians in Israel, there is at present only one kind of representation, which is the first. There is no structure permitting the election of an Israeli Palestinian leadership, where the representative and the represented are both Palestinians of Israel and reflect the community as a whole. In the absence of such a structure, the Palestinian MKs have only a very limited representational power to speak on behalf of the community. Without such a body or some similar mechanism reflecting the Palestinians as a distinct group, any talk about historic compromise is meaningless. A group becomes a group in the political sense only through a process of representation.

Clearly, Israel does not want within its borders an elected Palestinian leadership that is accountable directly to its people, not only because Israel does not want to acknowledge that the Palestinians are a people, but also because it does not want to face its own history and responsibility for the grave injustices that accompanied the implementation of the Zionist project. But what is of concern to us here is not Israel's position on the matter but whether the Palestinians in Israel—the people and their elite—are themselves interested in having an elected leadership along these lines. Representation of the kind described above would mean opening the questions of history, memory, and justice; it would also hold the elected leaders accountable to their constituencies on these grave matters. Such a representation would make possible a historic compromise, but historic compromise is also a huge responsibility and it is not at all clear whether anyone is prepared to shoulder it. The current situation, on the other hand, allows a "guerrilla" struggle where the community's representatives, insofar as their representation is localized rather than collective, do not have to commit themselves fully to a clear and final goal,

either with regard to the state or vis-à-vis their constituencies. They cannot, in the current situation, formulate a vision of historic compromise, either procedurally or substantively, so they can continue to snipe at rivals and the state alike without regard for consistency.

### POWER AND JUSTICE

For the Palestinians of Israel, the pull between the poles of power and justice-history that mark the Palestinian struggle in the occupied territories is in some sense paralleled by a pull between two different ways of seeing their experience in the country since 1948. The first, approximating to the “pole of power,” grows out of a “realistic” assessment of the Palestinian minority’s limitations and possibilities given the power of the state. Those embracing this perspective would read the Palestinian experience in Israel as one of continuing progress vis-à-vis the starting point of abject disempowerment during the decades of military rule and would compare their situation to that of immigrant minorities elsewhere in the world. History and the losses endured are downplayed in favor of a universal rhetoric of citizenship and individual advancement. This ideological position, which could be called the “immigrant mind-set,” has existed since the creation of the state but surged forward during the 1990s with the Israelization process discussed above.

The second approach, approximating to the “pole of justice,” grows out of an inability to overlook the past and is driven by the deep sense of grievance arising from the trauma of 1948 and the injustices that followed. This approach, which could be called the “historical” perspective, would evaluate the Palestinian experience in relation to 1948; the relevant comparison would not be to immigrant minorities elsewhere but to what their situation would have been had Israel not been created on the ruins of Palestine. The first perspective could be said to be blind to the past, the second blind to the present. Similarly, while the first could be said to be blind to the self through its embrace of the other, the second, when taken to extremes, could be said to be assertive of the self but blind to the other. At the risk of doing violence to truth by oversimplifying a complex and nuanced reality, one could suggest that the oscillation between the two poles manifests itself as well in the tension between Israelization, the pull toward integration, and Palestinianization, the assertion of identity exacerbated by the weight of history. And as long as the politics of identity among the Israeli Palestinians remain mainly rhetorical rather than political—in other words, reflecting what people *feel* rather than what they *do*—the processes of Israelization and Palestinianization will continue to alternate and work at cross-purposes, instead of being integrated. One day they are Israelis and the next day they are Palestinians; they are never Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Good politics would mean bridging the gap between these poles and their associated trends through the intermediary of representative and accountable institutions. This would mean *integrating* the rhetoric of citizenship and of

identity in one whole, taking them both seriously at the same time rather than using first one, then the other, depending on the circumstance. This integration is no easy task, however. Among other things, it would require a leadership capable of confronting honestly and directly the long-term consequences of the citizenship discourse, the final logic of which is acceptance of the Israeli state and all this implies for the national narrative. The full implications of the citizenship discourse must be made clear to the people, through frank and open debate, just as the historical wounds must be brought out into the open in addressing the Israeli state and the Jewish majority as a group. In other words, what is needed is a leadership able to deal with the limits the rhetoric of citizenship places on Palestinian history, and the limits Palestinian history places on Israeli citizenship. What this boils down to is incorporating the painful questions of history and justice into a political program, which in turn implies laying out the conditions for a historic compromise—the price to be paid for “closing the file” not only by Israel, but by the Palestinian side as well, for the conditions set for the “other” are equally binding on the self.

But just as the burden of history and sense of justice make closing the file difficult for the Palestinians of the territories, so it is for the Palestinians of Israel—all the more so in that the Israeli state shows no willingness to move toward any such resolution. This being the case, adopting a coherent strategy by no means guarantees any measure of success—far from it; it is only one condition among others. Even so, and however unreceptive the Israeli side, the costs of not taking such a step should be pondered. For until the Israeli Palestinians take clear stock of their dilemmas and unambiguously settle on a goal, they will continue to be caught between the poles of power and justice. The rhetoric of citizenship and history (or of power and justice) will continue to alternate instead of being integrated, and instead of supporting each other they will continue to undermine each other. Political parties will continue to invoke the balance of power rhetoric to portray their own small gains as “historic achievements,” and to use the rhetoric of justice to denigrate the achievements of rivals. For depending on whether it is judged through the lens of the “historical perspective” or the “immigrant mind-set,” each and every move toward greater equality can be portrayed either as a “historic concession” (read “collaboration”) or as a “historic achievement” (i.e., “major advance”). It is thus that there is no way for the average Palestinian citizen to determine whether acceptance of a high position in the justice ministry, for example, represents collaboration or simply an assertion of equal citizenship. Without a certain baseline for evaluation that encompasses both perspectives, oscillation between the two poles is bound to continue.

Certainly, there is no easy way out of this impasse, and I do not underestimate the deep dilemmas facing the political leadership. My aim is simply to analyze the impasse and to note that by not addressing the fundamentals, a price is being paid, even if not acknowledged, and the Israeli state will continue to be the primary beneficiary.