



PERSPECTIVES

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Arab-Israeli Knesset Members: Enemies of Peace

by Dr. Edy Cohen

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Israel's recent normalization of relations with the UAE and Bahrain changed the rules of the game in the region. The winners so far are Israel and Gulf Arab states. The losers are the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Qatar, and Iran. The historic normalization of relations even has opponents inside Israel in the form of Arab-Israeli Knesset members, whose unanimous opposition represents the interests of the Palestinian Authority more than the interests of their own constituents.

External actors like Turkey and Iran are not the only opponents of Israel's recent normalization of relations with the UAE and Bahrain. There are also opponents to the new peace inside Israel. Arab-Israeli Knesset members who are supposed to look after the interests of Israel's Arab-Israeli citizens voted unanimously against the UAE and Bahrain accords.

That vote will not be soon forgotten. It brings another such vote to mind. In 2016, the Arab-Israeli Knesset members and their leader, MK Ayman Odeh, refused to attend the funeral of the Israeli president who cared the most about the interests of the Arab-Israeli citizens: Shimon Peres. Even Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas attended. In fact, he cried at the funeral, while Israeli Arab Knesset members did not even bother to show up for the funeral of their own president.

Israel Today has reported on the ways in which Arab-Israeli Knesset members are failing to work to realize the interests of the Arab citizens of Israel who elected them and whom they are meant to represent. Rather, they are working for the interests of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Arab Knesset members are taking advantage of their position to advance the Palestinian issue—an issue

in which most Arab countries have lost interest—at their own constituents' expense.

Only naive Europeans continue to donate to the Palestinians. The Arab states have stopped donating, as they know their money is siphoned off to senior PA officials.

It should be noted that the Oslo Accords were passed with the support of Arab Knesset members. However, the Arab Knesset members of today are more radical and less pragmatic. There can be negative consequences to this kind of approach. For example, when Yasser Arafat supported Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait in 1990, liberated Kuwait retaliated by deporting the 400,000 Palestinians who were living there.

Today, the Gulf States might logically assume that Israeli Arabs support the behavior of their elected representatives and treat them accordingly, a consequence that could prove costly.

The Arab Knesset members are angry that the Abraham Accords do not address the issue of Palestinian statehood and do not contain any real concessions for the Palestinians. One member, Sami Abu Shehadeh, hurried to be interviewed by Aljazeera on the day of the vote. In his interview, he repeatedly stated that he considers himself a Palestinian and that he opposes the whole agreement, which he deems no more than "a weapons deal."

Israeli Arab citizens are an integral part of Israeli society with equal rights. Most of them are successfully integrated into Israeli society. But the Arab Knesset members harm rather than help Israeli Arabs when they oppose peace. By condemning the Abraham Accords, the Arab Knesset members proved to every Israeli citizen—Jew and Arab—that they are not only against peace but are tools of the intransigent Palestinian Authority.

This is an edited version of an [article](#) that appeared in Israel Today on October 22, 2020.

Dr. Edy Cohen (Ph.D. Bar-Ilan University) is fluent in Arabic and specializes in inter-Arab relations, the Arab-Israeli conflict, terrorism, Jewish communities in the Arab world. He is a researcher at the BESA Center and author of the book The Holocaust in the Eyes of Mahmoud Abbas (Hebrew).