

Jewish-Arab Partnership Ahead of the October 2026 Election in Israel

Avraham Spraragen, J Street Policy and Research Coordinator | AUGUST 27, 2026

The news that a Jewish Member of Knesset [may join](#) Ra'am, a Muslim Arab party in Israel, is the latest sign that meaningful Jewish-Arab partnership is indeed possible. Israeli Jews who support an equitable and just future in Israel should actively seek to partner with the country's Arab community. This future must include adequate representation in Israeli government for the 20-percent Arab minority, equal protections for Arab citizens, and full Arab societal integration. Social justice for Palestinian citizens of Israel would also help resolve the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict by building trust between Jews and Arabs and demonstrating the enormous potential of Jewish-Arab partnership. This issue brief examines Jewish-Arab partnership in various Israeli political parties, civil society, and higher education, and argues for overcoming the barriers to Jewish-Arab partnership and forging a shared future.

Challenges for Jewish-Arab Partnership

Arab Israelis face threats of [voter suppression](#) ahead of the October election, anti-Arab [incitement](#) by Netanyahu and his far-right allies on the campaign, as well as [bigoted fearmongering](#) about the Israeli Jewish opposition forming a coalition with the Arab parties. The Arab community is also [contending](#) with rising crime, Israeli government neglect, and police brutality. On August 15, heavily armed Israeli officers [raided](#) a wedding in the Arab city of Umm al-Fahm. Israeli officers threw stun grenades and ordered the Arab weddinggoers to lie on the ground. The officers suspected that a firearm had been used, but no weapon was found. None of the Arabs were arrested, but they were certainly treated as second-class citizens. These persistent inequalities pose a significant challenge for Jewish-Arab partnership, which can only flourish if Jews and Arabs are on equal footing.

Jewish-Arab Partnership in the Democratim Party

The Democratim, led by former IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Yair Golan, was formed in July 2024 through a merger of the center-left Labor and left-wing Meretz parties. On June 20, the Democratim held its primary to select the party's candidates for the October election. [Nine](#) Arab/Druze candidates ran in the primary alongside 42 Jewish candidates, and two were elected to represent the Democratim: [Somaya Bashir](#), a leader in Women Wage Peace – an Israeli grassroots peace movement led by Jewish and Arab women – and a psychologist from the Arab Israeli village of Jatt, as well as [Ali Salalha](#), a former Meretz MK from the Druze village of Beit Jann. Bashir was elected to the 10th spot on the Democratim list, and Salalha to the 18th. The Democratim are expected to win [9, 10, or 11](#) seats; if they win just 9 seats, then the party will have no Arab representation in the

Knesset; if they win 10 or 11 seats, then Bashir will be the only Arab MK from the Democratism. Salalha will almost certainly not serve in the next Knesset.

For a party that seeks to represent the diverse liberal democratic camp in Israel, this level of Arab representation is disappointing. That said, the Democratism [platform](#) does include specific policies on “combating crime and violence in Arab society,” such as declaring a national state of emergency and establishing a multi-agency task force with an annual budget of one billion shekels to fight organized crime, restore the rule of law, and ensure security for Arab citizens. The Democratism also propose establishing a “Team 49” – named after the number of Arab Israeli children killed during the tenure of far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir – to address the inequalities faced by Arab citizens in education, welfare, and rehabilitation. Demonstrating his commitment to Jewish-Arab partnership, Yair Golan has [called](#) on the Israeli opposition to form a coalition with the Ra’am party. Golan also held a [launch event](#) earlier this month for the Democratism’s Arab safety initiative, standing alongside Somaya Bashir and in front of a Hebrew-Arabic party banner.

Jewish-Arab Partnership in the Newly-Formed Makom Lekulanu Party

Makom Lekulanu, which translates to A Place for Us All, is a Jewish-Arab party founded in June 2026 by the leaders of Standing Together, Israel’s largest Jewish-Arab grassroots organization. Founded in 2015, Standing Together is made up of Jewish and Arab citizens committed to a shared future. Standing Together runs a [Solidarity Guard](#) that it has activated to prevent anti-Arab attacks by far-right activists on Jerusalem Flag Day and to prevent far-right activists from blocking humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Makom Lekulanu is running [six candidates](#) in the October election, three Jews and three Arabs, including Yonatan Zeigen of Kibbutz Be’eri – the son of the famed Israeli peace activist Vivian Silver, who was killed on October 7, 2023. The party [platform](#) includes an “emergency plan to stop crime in Arab society,” repealing the discriminatory 2018 Nation-State Law and 2011 Nakba Law, making Arabic an official language alongside Hebrew, and teaching Arabic in Jewish schools and spoken Hebrew in Arab schools. Notably, former Knesset Speaker Avram Burg, a champion of Jewish-Arab partnership and founder of the [All Its Citizens](#) party, recently [joined](#) Makom Lekulanu. While the party is not expected to cross the electoral threshold, and its leaders have indicated they would drop out if polling does not improve, its emergence nonetheless marks progress toward a shared Jewish-Arab future.

Jewish-Arab Partnership in the Arab Parties

For the first time, three of the four Arab parties – Hadash, Balad, and Ra’am – will each have a Jewish candidate on their list ahead of the October election. Disappointingly, only one of these

Jewish candidates, Ofer Cassif of Hadash, is likely to serve in the next Knesset, based on [polling](#) numbers and the Arab Joint List's [new agreement](#).

Hadash: Ofer Cassif, a Marxist political philosopher, anti-occupation activist, and champion of Jewish-Arab partnership, is a sitting Member of Knesset from Hadash and remains on the party list ahead of the election. Cassif was [suspended](#) from the Knesset in 2024 for supporting South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice.

Hadash also recently elected a new party leader, Yousef Jabareen, a human rights lawyer who is [committed](#) to Jewish-Arab partnership. In another demonstration of this partnership within Hadash, two party members became deputy mayors of major cities this summer. In June, the head of Hadash's Jaffa branch, Amir Badran, [became](#) Tel Aviv's second-ever Arab deputy mayor. In July, Hadash member Fakher Biadsi [became](#) Haifa's deputy mayor.

Balad: For the [first time](#) in Balad's history, the party [selected](#) a Jewish candidate, Orly Noy, a Mizrahi activist and board member of the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem.

Ra'am: Most notably, the Ra'am party led by Mansour Abbas has [moved closer](#) to adding MK Yoav Segalovitz, who [left](#) the Yesh Atid party earlier this month. Segalovitz developed relationships within Arab society during his career in Israeli law enforcement and later as deputy public security minister in the Bennett-Lapid government. In this role, he gained credibility for his efforts to combat the crime epidemic in the Arab community.

Selecting a Jewish candidate would be the latest in a series of strategic decisions by Abbas to broaden his party's appeal and expand its ranks. He previously [separated](#) Ra'am from the Islamic Movement in Israel and its guiding Shura Council. Abbas also made the historic [decision](#) back in 2021 to become the first Arab political leader to join an Israeli governing coalition. He served as minister without portfolio in the Bennett-Lapid government, [securing](#) an unprecedented multibillion-dollar budget for the Arab community.

Despite this Jewish-Arab partnership within the Arab parties, the full participation of the Arab community in Israeli politics is still constrained – as revealed at the Ra'am convention on August 23. During his [speech](#) to party delegates, Abbas called for Israeli and US recognition of Palestinian statehood and said that Arab Israelis could serve as a “bridge for achieving peace.” The Ra'am leader's comments were vehemently rejected by [Netanyahu](#) and his [chief opponent](#) alike, and Abbas was subjected to an onslaught of bigotry. This political climate, marked by anti-Arab incitement and fearmongering, is a major barrier to true Jewish-Arab partnership.

Jewish-Arab Partnership in Civil Society and Higher Education

Israel has a robust civil society ecosystem dedicated to shared society work. Organizations such as the [Abraham Initiatives](#) and [Sikkuy-Aufoq — For a Shared and Equal Society](#) work to advance Jewish-Arab partnership. There are Jewish-Arab communities like [Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam](#) (meaning Oasis of Peace) and Jewish-Arab educational institutions like [Givat Haviva—The Center for Shared Society](#). [Hand in Hand](#) is a network of Jewish-Arab schools, and institutions like [This Is Not An Ulpan](#) bring Jews and Arabs together through Hebrew and Arabic language instruction. A new initiative, “Thiqa - Emun - Trust,” will focus on the “central role of Palestinian citizens of Israel in building [a] shared society and shared future.” Furthermore, academic centers for the study of Jewish-Arab relations exist at both Haifa University (Jewish-Arab Center) and Tel Aviv University ([Konrad Adenauer Program](#) for Jewish-Arab Cooperation). If Israeli political leadership embraces these societal efforts and truly reflects them in government, the country as a whole could reap the fruits of Jewish-Arab partnership.

Israel to Decide: Jewish-Arab Partnership or Inequality

Israel will need to decide whether its future is defined by meaningful Jewish-Arab partnership or by persistent inequality between Jews and Arabs. Ahead of the October election, the Democratim, Makom Lekulanu, and Arab parties have pursued Jewish-Arab partnership to varying degrees. Numerous Israeli civil society actors and some in Israeli higher education also pursue Jewish-Arab partnership. Regrettably, this has not been the approach of Israel’s political leadership. Israeli government neglect of the Arab community, police brutality, voter suppression, and anti-Arab incitement prevent Jewish-Arab partnership from reaching its full potential. This hostile political climate in which Arabs remain on unequal footing with Jews is inconsistent with Jewish values and Israel’s founding egalitarian principles. By contrast, Jewish-Arab partnership countrywide is the moral choice and would also pave the way for broader regional peace. In this equitable and just future, Arab Israelis would no longer be treated as second-class citizens, allowing Jewish-Arab partnership to flourish. For the sake of Jews and Arabs alike, Israel must urgently address the persistent inequality and begin to forge a shared Jewish-Arab future.