

Last update - 03:46 16/06/2005

Showing a sour face to the Arabs

By Haaretz Editorial

The housing fair that took place in the north last Sunday was aimed at attracting new residents to towns in the Galilee. But it turns out that not all Israeli citizens are welcome in these "community villages." Haaretz reporter David Ratner, who was present at the fair, received the impression that the welcoming approach of agents from the Misgav Regional Council suddenly disappears when the applicant is an Arab citizen - even if he is a doctor and department chair at Poriya Hospital, a factory owner or a journalist.

The result is that the 29 community villages of the Misgav Regional Council do not contain even a single Arab resident. Council head Erez Kreisler says that Arabs do not apply, because they know that there is no "cultural infrastructure" for their absorption. It is possible that he is right and that Arabs are reluctant to apply for places in a community village whose other residents are all Jews. But it is more likely that this reluctance stems from a recognition of reality.

Iman and Adel Ka'adan, who petitioned the High Court of Justice in 1995 because the community village of Katzir refused to accept them, are still not living there, even though the court ruled back in 2000 that they must be allowed to do so. Kreisler says that the court approved these communities' admission criteria and he stands by his right to pick and choose new residents, relying on regulations that allow such communities to examine whether residents would be socially suitable. Even if one accepts his argument, it is hard to believe that other Arabs, "socially suited" to life in Misgav's community villages, have not been found by this time.

In towns established on the basis of a homogeneous social trait, such as a religious or Bedouin community, or one comprised of strict vegetarians, one can understand the filtering process. But it is harder to accept in communities whose homogeneity is based on the candidates' ethnicity rather than their lifestyle.

The nonacceptance of Arabs in Misgav's communities, which are built on public lands, increases the inequality between young Arabs and Jews in the Galilee, because of the housing shortage in Arab towns and because the purchase of a home in Misgav's community villages is subsidized, while the purchase of private land in an Arab village is very expensive, leaving young Arabs with no option but to live with their parents or leave the Galilee.

Arab Israelis are discriminated against as a group; the public remembers them only when the Labor Party holds a registration drive or when there are riots, like those in Umm al-Fahm at the start of the current intifada.

The view that the Arabs are a demographic threat and, in the case of the Misgav Regional Council, that they are taking over the Galilee - Misgav's communities were originally built to Judaize the Galilee - provides fertile ground for diplomatic platforms such as that unveiled yesterday by Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman, which calls for transferring Umm al-Fahm to the Palestinian Authority.

The State of Israel is not, and never has been, homogeneous; about one quarter of its citizens are not Jews. This fact should long since have been internalized - first and foremost, in the behavior of Israeli authorities.

[/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=588642](#)

[close window](#)