


Between the Uprising of 2021 and the Silence of 2023: Rethinking Palestinian Political Mobilization Inside Israel

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Abstract: This article examines the relative absence of large-scale Palestinian political mobilization inside Israel following October 7, 2023, situating it within broader historical, political, and structural transformations rather than treating it as an isolated moment. It asks how the interplay between intensified political control and conditional economic integration under Israeli settler colonialism and neoliberalism over the past two decades has reshaped the conditions of political action for Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Drawing on qualitative content analysis of policy documents, public discourse, and socio-economic data, the article adopts a dialectical approach to examine five interrelated processes: a persistent condition of “in-betweenness” shaping the lived experience of Palestinians in Israel; macro-level shifts in Israeli policy marked by intensified political repression alongside expanding economic containment; the resulting fragility of the national political center and erosion of political agency, intersecting with political fragmentation and the rise of organized crime; the recalibration of Israeli policy following the May 2021 uprising, including expanded punitive measures; and the further escalation of these dynamics after October 7, generating a climate of heightened political intimidation and fear.

By foregrounding these interconnected processes, the article explores how changing perceptions of political opportunity emerge, highlighting the ways in which political action is shaped by shifting constraints, structural tensions, and evolving forms of state-society relations.

Keywords: Genocide in Gaza; Palestinian citizens of Israel; settler colonialism; neoliberalism; in-betweenness; cooptation.

ES Entre el levantamiento de 2021 y el silencio de 2023: repensando la movilización palestina en el interior de Israel

Resumen: Este artículo examina la relativa ausencia de movilización política palestina a gran escala dentro de Israel tras el 7 de octubre de 2023, situándola dentro de transformaciones históricas, políticas y estructurales más amplias, en lugar de tratarla como un momento aislado. Se pregunta cómo la interacción entre el control político intensificado y la integración económica condicional bajo el colonialismo de asentamiento israelí y el neoliberalismo durante las últimas dos décadas ha reconfigurado las condiciones de acción política para los ciudadanos palestinos de Israel.

A partir del análisis cualitativo de contenido de documentos de política, discurso público y datos socioeconómicos, el artículo adopta un enfoque dialéctico para examinar cinco procesos interrelacionados: una condición persistente de “entre dos mundos” que configura la experiencia vivida de los palestinos en Israel; cambios a nivel macro en la política israelí marcados por una represión política intensificada junto con una creciente contención económica; la fragilidad resultante del centro político nacional y la erosión de la capacidad de acción política, que se cruza con la fragmentación política y el auge del crimen organizado; la recalibración de la política israelí tras el levantamiento de mayo de 2021, incluidas medidas punitivas ampliadas; y la posterior escalada de estas dinámicas tras el 7 de octubre, que generó un clima de intimidación y temor político exacerbado.

Al destacar estos procesos interconectados, el artículo explora cómo surgen y se transforman las percepciones de las oportunidades políticas, resaltando las maneras en que la acción política se ve influenciada por limitaciones variables, las tensiones estructurales y las formas en evolución de las relaciones entre el Estado y la sociedad.

Palabras clave: genocidio en Gaza; palestinos ciudadanos de Israel; colonialismo de asentamiento; neoliberalismo; intermedialidad; cooptación.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Framing the Field and Epistemological Considerations: Citizenship, Containment, and Political Opportunity in a Settler-Colonial Context. 3. Between Political Control and Economic Co-optation and Containment: Mapping Israeli policies Toward Palestinians in Israel. 4. May 2021: The Uprising as a Side Effect. 5. The Proliferation of Incitement and Political Repression after October 7. 6. Discussion and Conclusion. 7. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

On October 22, 2023, Israeli Police Chief Kobi Shabtai remarked, “A good word must be said about the exemplary behavior of Israeli Arabs” (Turgeman, 2023), referring to the absence of mass political mobilization among Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI).¹ Following the launch of Israel’s war on Gaza, this comment, though framed as praise, signals a deeper shift in the political agency of PCI, and raises a central question: Why did Palestinians in Israel mobilize in May 2021, yet remain largely silent after October 2023?

The genocidal war on Gaza has posed profound dilemmas for PCI. The silence of 2023 contrasts starkly with *Habbat al-Karamah*, or the “Dignity Uprising”, of May 2021, when widespread protests erupted in solidarity with Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah, Al-Aqsa, and Gaza. This distinction calls for analysis that goes beyond surface-level reactions or reductionist, binary readings of PCI.

Palestinian political behavior is frequently interpreted through the lens of two dominant and opposing discourses, both of which shape and constrain how such behavior is understood within Israel. The first romanticizes PCI by viewing them solely through the lens of May 2021 and casting them as heroic resisters. The second reduces them to their silence in 2023, reading political withdrawal as apathy or cowardice. Despite their differences, both perspectives overlook the complex structural, economic, and social transformations that condition and constrain collective political agency. In other words, they rely on surface-level assessments of highly visible moments while ignoring the underlying structural forces that mediate political life.

This article seeks to move beyond such binaries by examining the deeper processes that enabled mass protest in 2021 while foreclosing it in 2023. Although state repression, especially the thousands of arrests and punitive measures that followed May 2021, is a crucial factor, it alone cannot explain the subsequent political withdrawal. Rather than treating the relative silence of PCI after October 7 as an isolated outcome, this article examines its relationship to broader transformations in state power and socio-economic structures. In particular, it asks how intensified state control and longer-term processes of uneven economic containment have reshaped the conditions in which political action becomes possible.

Moving beyond approaches that portray PCI as passive recipients of state power, the article adopts a dialectical lens to explore how post-2000 transformations, characterized by political repression, partial inclusion, and neoliberal integration, have reconfigured both opportunities for mobility and constraints on political agency. Here, the emergence of grassroots, extra-parliamentary mobilization in 2021, and the relative absence of similar dynamics in 2023, raise important questions about the shifting structure of political opportunity. The article also investigates how shifts in state strategy, particularly following the May 2021 uprising, and developments after October 7 have contributed to a narrowing political space, in which the costs of political engagement are heightened and the scope of collective action increasingly constrained. In this sense, the analysis considers processes that may be understood in terms of eroded collective political agency, raising questions about the conditions under which political action is enabled or restricted.

The article employs two interrelated conceptual frameworks. First, the notion of liminality and in-betweenness (Ghanim, 2009) captures the suspended condition of PCI, caught between formal citizenship and collective exclusion. Second, the dialectic of control and containment (Anabtawi, 2024) conceptualizes the Israeli regime’s approach as a dynamic interplay of inclusion and repression aimed at managing, rather than resolving, the Palestinian question. These dialectic shapes political opportunity structures (POS) for PCI, influencing perceptions of mobilization. Crucially, it emerges not only from state strategy but also from bottom-up resistance and evolving Zionist logics, including its colonial-religious turn and neoliberal consolidation.

The article combines theoretical reflection with qualitative content analysis of multiple sources, including Israeli government policy documents, policymakers’ public discourse, and socio-economic data, supplemented by relevant secondary literature. The empirical corpus consists primarily of (1) official government decisions on the economic integration of PCI, particularly multi-year development plans, e.g., Government Decisions 922 and 550, and (2) a sample of media and public discourse from the first week after October 7, 2023, including statements by political actors, coverage in major Hebrew-language media outlets, and selected social media content. Documents were selected for their relevance to state policy toward PCI and their role in shaping public discourse at critical political junctures. The analysis employs qualitative content analysis to identify recurring themes, discursive patterns, and policy framing.

The article is organized into six sections, following a thematic and chronological approach to the core research question. After the introduction, Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework, introducing key concepts

¹ PCI refers to Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel, who make up approximately 17.5% of Israel’s population. They are the Palestinians who remained in the territories that became Israel after 1948, having survived the *Nakba* (the mass displacement and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians), and were granted citizenship in the newly established state.

such as protest action, political opportunity structures, settler-colonial governance, and integration-as-control. It conceptualizes PCI as inhabiting a liminal, in-between condition that shapes their collective agency. Section 3 traces two decades of Israeli policy shifts, showing how neoliberalism and religious-settler colonial ideology have redrawn the political landscape. It analyzes strategies of political control, economic containment, and co-optation, and their impact on the political agency of PCI. This section also addresses how these policies interact with the weakening of the Palestinian political center among PCI and its institutional frameworks, as well as growing political fragmentation, particularly amid the expansion of organized crime among PCI. While this study does not examine and elaborate on these phenomena, they are treated as part of the broader socio-political context, shaped in a dialectical relationship with Israeli macro-level policies.

Section 4 examines the May 2021 uprising as the culmination of intersecting socio-political processes over the preceding two decades and explores the state's strategic response, particularly the suppression of grassroots mobilization. Section 5 turns to the post-October 2023 context, highlighting how lessons from 2021 were translated into heightened, preemptive repression and the collapse of political opportunity structures. Finally, Section 6 offers theoretical and empirical reflections on the transformation of citizenship and political agency.

1. Framing the Field and Epistemological Considerations: Citizenship, Containment, and Political Opportunity in a Settler-Colonial Context

After surviving the Nakba, around 156,000 Palestinians granted Israeli citizenship became, in Ilan Pappé's (2013) words, "strangers in their own homeland". These Palestinians have continually struggled to preserve their national and cultural identities amid policies by successive Zionist governments aimed at suppressing such expression. From 1948 to 1966, a military administrative regime was imposed on Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI), followed by strategies of co-optation, fragmentation, surveillance (Lustick, 1980) and elimination (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury, 2015), designed to control them and neutralize political dissent and mobilization (Ibid).

While early scholarship relied on modernization and minority-integration models (Rozenhek, 1995), critical Palestinian and post-Zionist frameworks reinterpret this experience through a settler-colonial lens (Ghanem and Mustafa, 2009). Elia Zureik's (1979) concept of "internal colonialism" highlighted how labor control and economic stratification were used to manage the native population. Building on this, Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury (2015) introduced "settler-colonial citizenship" to capture how PCI are legally incorporated into the state while denied national recognition. Bishara (2017) described this citizenship as "incidental", granted not by democratic design but by the failure of complete expulsion, while Jamal (2007) termed it "hollow" citizenship. Others (Robinson, 2013; Molavi, 2013) emphasize structural exclusion through spatial and legal mechanisms. Citizenship thus embodies both incorporation and control.

While these analyses highlight repression, they often understate the containment strategies accompanying exclusion. Scholars like Sa'di (2014) and Lustick (1980) have long argued that control also operates through economic containment and co-optation. Lustick's model of segregation, dependency, co-optation remains relevant. Ofra Bloch (2021) describes this dynamic as "hierarchical inclusion", whereby selective integration, often via affirmative action, reflects a desire to control PCI rather than egalitarian values. Neoliberal reforms since the 1990s deepened this paradox, as expanded access to education and employment coincided with political marginalization (Haidar, 1995; 2021).

Sa'ar (2019) shows how inclusion can suppress collective power, particularly among women. She introduces the concept of "economic citizenship" to highlight how recent integration processes offer individual economic benefits while repressing collective national rights. Comparative settler-colonial literature further clarifies Israel's containment strategies. Scholars such as Wolfe (1999), McGregor (2011), and Armitage (1995) show how settler regimes symbolically incorporate Indigenous populations while denying substantive rights. Wolfe's notion of "elimination through assimilation" is instructive: integration reinforces domination rather than shared sovereignty. Coulthard (2014) similarly criticizes such "politics of recognition" as colonial tactics that depoliticize dissent, while Dhillon (2017) and Kelley (2002) demonstrate how education, development, and affirmative action can suppress collective mobilization.

In Israel, assimilation is both strategic and constrained. As Bishara (2002) and Ghanim (2009) argue, Israeli citizenship is ethnonational: the state belongs to the Jewish people, not its full citizenry. Inclusion of PCI is thus perpetually partial, granting civic rights without national belonging. These contradictions produce structural liminality or in-betweenness, a socio-political habitus suspended between two poles: PCI are formally part of the civic sphere but never fully integrated due to the ethnonational foundation of the state. They are also excluded from the national political community, denied recognition as a collective group, and remain peripheral to the central Palestinian political project. Thus, they are neither fully included in nor fully excluded from either the Israeli civic domain or the Palestinian national sphere. As Ghanim (2009), Bishara (1998), and Rouhana (1997) argue, this "betwixt and between" condition shapes both their political imagination and everyday experience.

This duality sharpened after the end of military rule and the 1967 occupation through what Bishara describes as the dual processes of "Israelization" and "Palestinianization". Rising living standards, liberalization, and the re-emergence of a middle class brought some PCI closer to the state, yet full integration remains obstructed by racialized citizenship and exclusionary nationalism. Bishara (2000) captures the paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion as "relaxing at the intersection of two margins". Recent research (Anabtawi, 2021) shows how youth navigate these contradictions daily. Citizenship thus becomes a space of regulation and compromise, or what I term integration-as-containment (Anabtawi, 2024).

Despite structural repression, PCI have achieved partial political gains. Since the 1970s, access to higher education and professional fields fostered a middle class and the founding of nationalist parties and representative institutions. Land Day (1976) marked a pivotal moment when PCI collectively asserted civic and national rights in response to land confiscation and state discrimination. Since then, they have mobilized politically to demand equality within Israel while affirming their Palestinian identity (Khalaily and Ghanem, 2023), pursuing gains within the constraints of Israeli citizenship (Smootha, 1998).

This political pragmatism aligns with political opportunity theory, which posits that marginalized groups mobilize when institutional openings emerge (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Tarrow, 2011). The 2021 Dignity Uprising reflected not only a response to repression but also the convergence of long-term grievances with perceived opportunities. McAdam's concept of cognitive liberation helps explain how PCI recognized their collective agency. From this perspective, Palestinian assertion of national agency, especially since the October 2000 Uprising, as part of the Second Intifada, has triggered shifts in Israeli governance and signaled a change in collective mobilization and political vision.

In response, Israeli policymakers recalibrated governance strategies, combining tightened political control with selective economic containment. Over the past two decades, this approach fostered a new socio-economic elite among PCI, particularly those integrated into the labor market, higher education, and the public sector. As Haidar (2021) observes, this emerging middle class is economically included yet politically cautious; unlike the politicized middle class of the 1980s, it prioritizes individual advancement over collective struggle. The result is a politically quiescent, economically integrated stratum that remains structurally marginalized. Yet containment does not erase the contradictions: the rise of religious ethno-nationalism, limited political representation, and persistent economic inequality continue to shape the political behavior of PCI. As the following sections show, the 2021 uprising and the relative silence of 2023 must be viewed through this dialectical lens, where state control strategies intersect with shifting social structures and evolving political subjectivities.

3. Between Political Control and Economic Co-optation and Containment: Mapping Israeli policies Toward Palestinians in Israel

Scholars identify two pivotal moments that reshaped Israeli policy toward PCI: the October 2000 Uprising and the 2006–2007 “Future Vision” documents.² The latter reflected growing political maturation by linking civic equality to demands to de-Judaize the state (Ghanem and Mustafa, 2009; Anabtawi, 2024), and signaled to policymakers the emergence of a renewed national consciousness requiring a strategic response. Concurrently, two broader shifts shaped Zionism: the rise of colonial-religious ideology and the entrenchment of neoliberalism. These forces did not replace earlier strategies but reinforced erasure, surveillance, fragmentation, and containment in new forms. The next section explores how Israeli policy over the past two decades has operated through a dialectic of political control and economic containment.

The Rise of Religious Zionism and the Consolidation of Political Control over PCI

Since 1967, Zionism has increasingly fused its religious and colonial dimensions, aligning the vision of “Greater Israel” with settler expansion (Bishara, 2005; Ghanim 2022). This convergence accelerated after 2000, as the Zionist center-left declined and religious Zionism gained ground in key state institutions (Ghanim, 2022). Once peripheral, religious Zionism is now a main shaper of Israel's ideological and legal order (Zureik, 2022). For PCI, this has meant shrinking political space, institutionalized Jewish supremacy, heightened tensions around the Al-Aqsa Mosque, demographic engineering, and the containment of Palestinian elites within the state system (Anabtawi, 2023; 2024).

In recent years, Israeli policy has shifted from managing the conflict to attempting to end it through legal and institutional means (Shahada and Shalhat, 2017). Laws such as the Nakba Law, 2011 and the Nation-State Law, 2018 formalize Jewish exclusivity and curtail Palestinian agency. The latter reflects demographic anxieties and reasserts Zionism's ideological foundations. Boulos and Sorek (2024) distinguish between defensive and offensive settler-colonial policies, identifying the Nation-State Law as an example of the latter and an escalation of Israel's settler-colonial project.

In tandem, the Israeli state has endeavored to suppress and restructure the Palestinian political leadership. The banning of the Islamic Movement (2015) and targeting of political parties like Balad (2016–2017) aimed to silence opposition, while local municipal leaders were promoted as depoliticized intermediaries (Dakwar, 2017). These measures, legal entrenchment of Jewish supremacy and intensified political persecution of national parties³, extended beyond conventional mechanisms of control to target the foundations of Palestinian political agency. In this sense, they constituted a form of political erasure (Sabbagh-Khoury, 2025), undermining the Palestinian political center and its capacity for collective mobilization.

This trajectory coincided with internal weaknesses within the Palestinian political field. The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, their highest representative body, functioned as a loose coordinating framework rather than a cohesive institution (Muwasi, 2024: 4). The disintegration of the Joint List

² A series of visionary papers produced by Palestinian intellectuals and organizations in Israel articulating political demands and proposing a new framework for relations between the state and its Palestinian citizens.

³ On the mechanisms of political persecution targeting Palestinian activists and proliferation of discriminatory legislation, see the political monitoring reports of Mada al-Carmel, available at: <https://mada-research.org/category/339>; and Adalah, “The Inequality Report” (2010), available at: [https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/Public/file/Christian%20Aid%20Report%20December%202010%20FINAL\(1\).pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/Public/file/Christian%20Aid%20Report%20December%202010%20FINAL(1).pdf).

(2015–2021) further reflected the absence of a unified political vision and the dominance of representational over organizational politics (Mustafa, 2019). These fractures deepened with the United Arab List's (Ra'am) participation in the ruling coalition (2021–2022), further fragmenting Palestinian political forces.

At the same time, heightened political persecution has left institutionalized Palestinian collective action more fragile, intersecting with internal factors related to the agency and effectiveness of political elites. While this article does not elaborate extensively on elite agency, scholarship suggests that the current condition cannot be understood apart from intensified state repression. For example, Zoabi (2025) shows how certain elites reproduced a politics of fear to justify the political silence (Ibid: 159). Additionally, major shortcomings include the failure to build durable institutions and the overemphasis on parliamentary representation at the expense of broader public mobilization (Muwasi, 2025:921). In parallel with political monitoring and attempts to dismantle the PCI political center, Palestinian society has witnessed a sharp rise in organized crime, with homicides increasing nearly 400% over the past decade (from 58 cases in 2015 to 245 in 2023 and 252 in 2025), (Zoabi, 2025). Recent critical scholarship interprets this phenomenon as structurally related to Israeli governance, arguing that state policies have enabled and exacerbated its expansion (Muwasi, 2025; Zoubi, 2026). Sabbagh-Khoury (2025: 22) conceptualizes this dynamic as socio-politicide, referring to the simultaneous erosion of social cohesion and weakening of the political center. Together, these processes undermine Palestinian society's capacity for collective agency. While a full analysis lies beyond the scope of this article, it is important to situate this phenomenon within the broader trajectory of political dismantling and the neutralization of Palestinian collective action.

Yet, the weakened political center gave rise to youth-led grassroots activism, which I term "peripheral politics" including protests against the anti-Praver Plan (2013), and the Abu Khdeir (2014), Tala'at (2019), and Umm al-Fahm (2021) protests, which laid the groundwork for the 2021 uprising.

The Neoliberal Turn and Tightened Economic Containment

The 1980s ushered in a restructuring of Israel's economy, as neoliberal reforms replaced welfare-state policies with privatization and market liberalization (Filc, 2006). This shift accelerated during Netanyahu's tenure as Finance Minister from 2003, when deep welfare cuts and deregulation transformed the socio-economic order (Gutwein, 2013). These changes widened economic disparities and deepened the marginalization of already disadvantaged groups, particularly Palestinians. Since 2007, calls by Israeli policymakers to integrate PCI into the Israeli economy have increased, driven by government committees and commissions formed after the Second Intifada. This melding of religious-nationalist politics and neoliberal governance entrenched exclusion and dependency among PCI (Anabtawi, 2020).

Economic containment has deep roots. As early as 1958, the Shin Bet and Mapai's Arab Section proposed long-term co-optation strategies to neutralize political resistance by integrating cooperative elites (LPA archive, 1958: 37). This strategy was formalized in Shmuel Toledano's 1968 plan, which warned of the nationalist potential of an educated Arab class and aimed to foster economic dependency while limiting political agency (ISA archive, 1968: 18).

The 1967 occupation triggered a strategic reorientation. With military rule lifted and a new Palestinian intelligentsia emerging, the state moved to block national ties between PCI and Palestinians in the occupied territories. In the 1970s, containment was further entrenched: a 1973 committee institutionalized public-sector job quotas, reinforcing dependency and control (LPA archive, 1973).

Two developments consolidated this trajectory: the rise of neoliberalism and the 1976 Land Day protests, the first mass mobilization by PCI against state discrimination. Land Day signaled the emergence of a national Palestinian political identity inside Israel, prompting the state to expand containment alongside repression. A 1979 policy document outlined three strategies: block independent Arab economic development, increase employment to neutralize dissent, and promote loyal leaders over nationalist ones (LPA, 1979: 19–22).

David Harvey (2007) reminds us that neoliberalism is not merely an economic strategy but a political project to consolidate elite power. In Israel, this intersects with longstanding containment strategies that reinforce Palestinians' dependency and undermine collective agency. Over the past decade, economic integration has become a main tool of political control, marketed not as a path to equality but a means to neutralize national mobilization.

Israel has pursued selective integration for two decades, incorporating PCI into the labor market while confining them to its margins. This policy was partly motivated by explicit political objective: in 2012, Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin argued that economic integration could suppress dissent by raising its costs. Similar logic guided the discourse of "economic peace", framing dependency as a strategy of control (Anabtawi, 2024). By the 2000s, integration was endorsed as a matter of "national interest", culminating in 2007 with the establishment of the Minority Sector Economic Development Authority.

Israel's 2010 entry into the OECD reinforced the push for economic inclusion, as membership required narrowing employment and income gaps. Officials promoted integration while intensifying repression of the Palestinian national leadership, decoupling economic rights from political expression. This convergence of neoliberalism and containment grew from 2009 under Netanyahu's premiership, building on earlier recommendations by the Or (2003) and Lapid (2004) Commissions to manage mobilization by PCI through controlled development.

This shift is not reducible to authoritarian design, nor does it imply complicity among economically integrated individuals; rather, it reflects a complex alignment of state strategy, ideological shifts, and grassroots pressures. The October 2000 Uprising catalyzed PCI to assert national agency within the Green Line, and

the Or Commission’s findings reoriented state policy, responding to Palestinian demands for equality amid broader neoliberal and settler-colonial transformations.

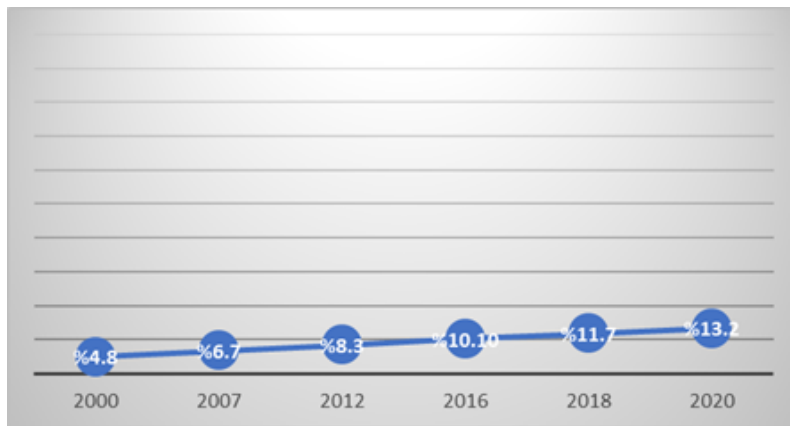
Between 2011 and 2023, Israel invested nearly 59 billion NIS in economic containment programs targeting PCI (see Appendix 1). Key examples are Plan 922 (2016–2021), allocating 15 billion NIS to integrate PCI into state-monitored sectors, and Plan 550 (2022–2026), dedicating 30 billion NIS to education, employment, and infrastructure under the guise of social development. Other measures, like Resolutions 735 and 2579, promoted Palestinian participation in the public sector. Private-sector initiatives, including “Occupational Diversity” and a Council for Higher Education plan (2012–2017), framed PCI inclusion as economically advantageous and steered students toward market-aligned disciplines.

Rather than fostering autonomous Palestinian economic development, these programs embedded PCI labor in Israel’s economic periphery. Structural inequality persisted, and independent growth was discouraged. Economic containment also furthered spatial and demographic control, as state plans divide Palestinians into categories such as Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, and (non-Arab) Circassians, enabling fragmented governance. Development initiatives included urban planning, more aggressive policing, and efforts to recruit PCI into state security forces. Notably, Netanyahu explicitly tied economic investment to the securitization of Palestinian communities. These policies reflect the broader Israeli logic that integration is permissible only when paired with surveillance, fragmentation, and subordination. From this standpoint, economic inclusion functions not to empower but to contain, ensuring that material advancement does not translate into collective mobilization or national expression.

The Socio-Economic Impact on PCI

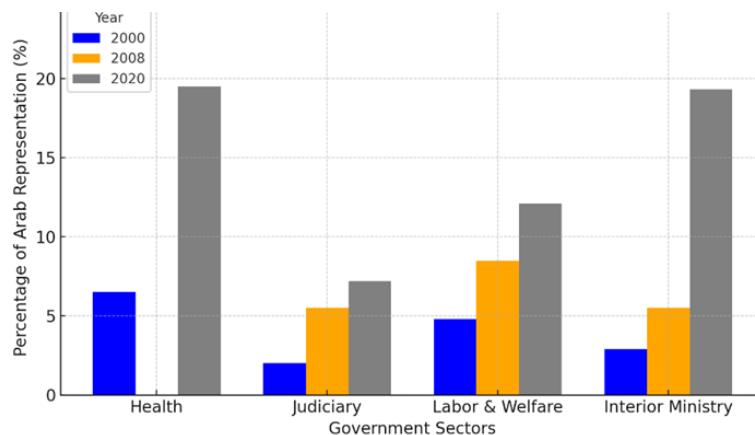
Over the past two decades, Israel’s economic containment policies and internal social changes have together reshaped Palestinian society in Israel, altering employment patterns, class structures, and political agency. It also increased dependence on Israeli citizenship, despite its political hollowness. While some PCI groups have experienced upward mobility, gains remain uneven, reinforcing dependency and inequality both between and within groups. A key indicator is the rise of Palestinian professionals in the public sector, from 4.8% to 13.2% of sector employees (Figure 1). By 2020, Arabs comprised 46% of licensed physicians and 57% of pharmacists in Israel. Employment has shifted from manual labor to public services and white-collar positions (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Percentage of Arab Citizens in Government Sector Jobs



Source: Prepared by the author based on Waseem Hosary, Adequate Representation of Arab Citizens in the Public Sector, Haifa: Sikkuy Association, 2021, p. 9 (Hebrew).

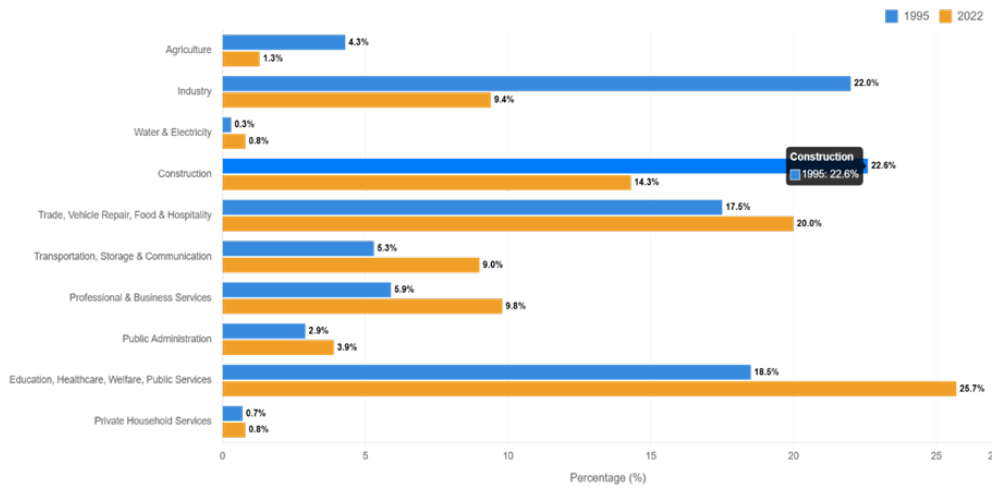
Figure 2. Arab Representation Across Government Sectors (2000-2020)



Source: Prepared by the author based on Ibid, p. 12.

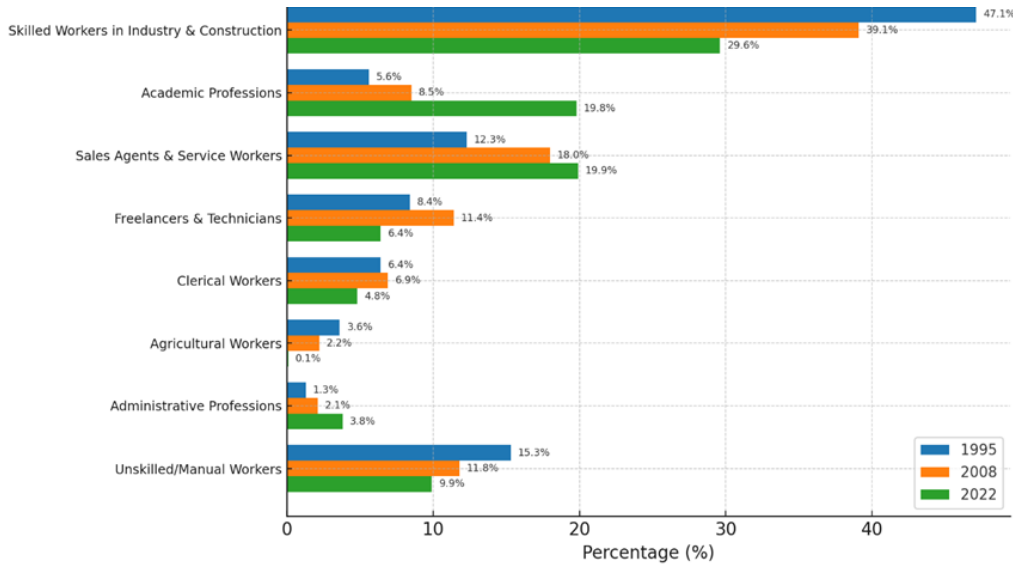
This shift represents a long-term restructuring of the labor force. Between 1995 and 2022, PCI in academic employment rose from 5.6% to 19.8% of the total, while in manual labor their share declined from 47.1% to 29.6% (Figure 3). The past 15 years indicate a clear transition from blue-collar to white-collar professions, reflecting economic diversification since the 1970s (Figures 3 and 4). These trends denote growing dependence on the Israeli labor market amid limited alternative opportunities.

Figure 3. Distribution of Palestinian Citizens of Israel by Economic Sectors (1995 vs. 2022)



Source: Author’s own analysis and processing of tables from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 1995; 2023.

Figure 4. Arab Workforce Participation by Profession (1995-2022)



Source: Ibid.

Alongside shifting employment patterns, enrollment in higher education among PCI rose from 9.2% in 2009 to 20% in 2023, fueled by state policies aligning education with Israeli labor-market needs (Figure 5). The same policies also boosted the participation of Arab women in the labor force, from 21% in 2000 to 45% in 2022, and increased the average income from 6,148 NIS in 2008 to 9,000 NIS in 2020.

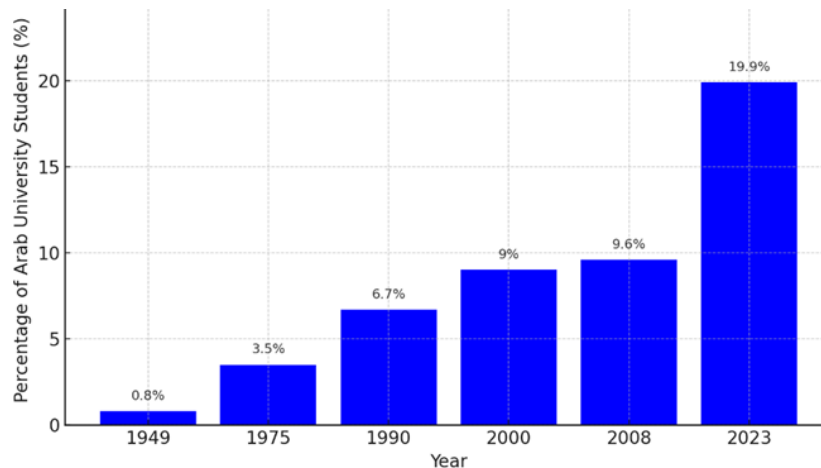
Consequently, the middle class grew from 17% in 2000 to 27% in 2017; however, stark disparities persist within and between national groups. Jewish citizens’ wages remain 50% higher on average, and material gains have not translated into collective empowerment or political equality (CBS, 2020).

Despite some gains, poverty among PCI rose from 37.9% in 1997 to 45.3% in 2018. By 2021, 60.5% of Palestinian families lived at or near the poverty line, nearly triple the national average. While some groups benefited, many, particularly in the Negev and “mixed cities,” remain marginalized (Anabtawi, 2024). These trends demonstrate that economic integration, though framed as inclusion, reinforces dependency, economic stratification, social polarization, and political containment.

Fragmented integration has produced a stratified Palestinian society in Israel. One segment of the middle class has formed closer ties to the state through economic inclusion, viewing citizenship as a vehicle for upward mobility. Yet this stratum remains suspended between material dependency and persistent inequality, prompting renewed reflection on the national question. Viewed through this lens, the 2021 uprising constituted a threshold moment, an eruption fueled by structural inequality, dependency, and political fragmentation,

revealing both the potential and the limits of grassroots mobilization under containment (Anabtawi, 2024: 88–90).

Figure 5. Percentage of Arab Students in Higher Education (1949–2023)



Source: Author's own analysis of data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS; <https://tinyurl.com/5n76ey2r>) and the Council for Higher Education (CHE; <https://tinyurl.com/2pwhhp4b>).

4. May 2021: The Uprising as a Side Effect

The May 2021 uprising was a watershed moment in Palestinian political agency within Israel, culminating, the culmination, or “side effect, of two decades of structural policies of political control, economic containment, and settler-colonial governance, which heightened pressures, especially in the ‘mixed cities’”.

Over the past two decades, the Palestinian political center, traditionally represented by nationalist parties and formal institutions, was eroded and restructured. In parallel, youth-led grassroots movements and decentralized activism filled the void left by weakened party structures and the state's efforts to undermine the political center. Movements such as the Praver protests (2013), the Abu Khdeir uprising (2014), the Tala'at feminist mobilization (2019), and anti-crime protests in Umm al-Fahm (3202–9102) laid the symbolic and organizational groundwork for the 2021 Dignity Uprising. Over time, these movements built a shared repertoire of memory, discourse, and resistance to colonial fragmentation.

Economically, neoliberal integration generated a fragmented economic structure. On the one hand, a growing middle class, primarily employed in the public sector, developed stronger ties to Israeli citizenship as a vehicle for socio-economic mobility. Yet, many within this stratum confronted the structural limits of inclusion, as economic mobility failed to translate into political equality. This experience underscored (for them) the enduring political salience of the national question and prompted some to re-engage with grassroots forms of national mobilization. Meanwhile, marginalized groups, especially in the Negev and mixed cities, were excluded from “neoliberal gains”. The latter became core actors in the clashes of the 2021 uprising; however, their protest was not only rooted in socio-economic and material deprivation but was also articulated through anti-colonial and national discourse. Rather than a contradiction, this dynamic reflects the dialectical nature of Israeli governance: the 2021 uprising exposed both the possibilities and limits of economic containment, demonstrating that national mobilization can still emerge even among the economically integrated. It is precisely for this reason that it triggered a process of policy recalibration aimed at foreclosing similar mobilization in the aftermath.

The events began with protests against evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and police raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Tensions escalated after the far-right Flag March in Jerusalem and the killing of Musa Hassouna in Lod by a settler, which sparked widespread protests in Palestinian towns inside the Green Line. From May 10–18, culminating in the “Dignity Strike”, PCI mounted their largest uprising in two decades, described by Israeli officials as unprecedented.

The May 2021 uprising differed from earlier mobilizations in at least five fundamental ways:

1. **Geographical Reconfiguration:** The uprising was centered in the mixed cities of Lod, Acre, Jaffa, Haifa, and Ramle, areas deeply impacted by two decades of intersecting settler-colonial and neoliberal policies, including gentrification and the proliferation of religious-Zionist “Torah nucleus” settlements. It also erupted in the Negev, where PCI face acute state neglect, police violence, and land dispossession. These spaces became not just protest sites but arenas of direct confrontation with settlers, marking a shift from clashes solely with state forces.
2. **Rise of Settler Violence:** Unlike previous uprisings, which primarily involved clashes with state authorities, the May 2021 events featured direct settler attacks, often with state protection, particularly in Lod and Acre. This reflected the deepening entrenchment of religious settler-colonial projects within the 1948 territories, particularly in the “mixed cities”.

3. **Class Composition:** Although middle-class professionals, students, and party activists participated, most of the approximately 425 individuals who received criminal indictments came from economically marginalized sectors denied the benefits of neoliberal integration. This underscores the material basis of the mobilization despite its nationalist framing.
4. **Lexical Shift:** The uprising's rhetoric emphasized unity, dignity, and national cohesion across fragmented geographies, Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the 1948 territories. Social media, graffiti, and chants fostered a trans-local identity that challenged imposed divisions.
- 5.

Organizational Form: The mobilization was decentralized, spontaneous, and largely independent of formal political parties. Nearly 90% of those indicted were unaffiliated with any organization. The uprising resembled a non-movement, horizontal, agile, and grassroots based, though its lack of structure also made it vulnerable to fragmentation in the aftermath.

In sum, the May 2021 uprising was not simply a reaction to events in Sheikh Jarrah or Gaza, but the cumulative outcome of long-term structural transformations: the weakening political center, growing economic fragmentation, expanding settler-colonial spatial control, and the rise of a new grassroots generation. It both reflected and defied Israel's two-decade strategy of political control and economic containment. For policy-makers, it starkly highlighted the volatility inherent in governing an Indigenous population through repression and conditional inclusion. In its aftermath, the state resorted to mass arrests, legal persecution, and surveillance, ushering in a new phase of politicicide aimed at extinguishing collective Palestinian political agency, particularly during the war on Gaza, and further constricting perceived political opportunities for PCI.

Recalibrating Control: From Containment to Preemptive Repression

As noted, the May 2021 uprising represented a rupture in Israel's security and political calculus, exposing the long-term effects of neoliberal restructuring and growing settler-colonial control, and revealing the limits of containment. The state responded not by retreating but by recalibrating its strategy, emphasizing three key measures: punitive escalation, dismantling grassroots infrastructures, and heightened surveillance of middle-class and elite integration. Together, these measures raised the cost of political struggle against state policies.

The immediate response was a sweeping legal crackdown. Branded "Law and Order", it resulted in the arrests of over 2,000 PCI (Anabtawi, 2024: 102). Of 616 indictments filed, 545 targeted Palestinians, many under the Counter-Terror Law of 2016, typically applied in the West Bank and Gaza. Courts classified 36% of cases as "nationalist" and 17% as "terrorist", enabling enhanced sentencing that can double prison terms (Ibid: 104–105). In July 2021, the Attorney General called for "the maximum possible sentences" (Ibid), a stance echoed in the State Comptroller's 2022 report, which identified deterrence as a central objective (Ibid). In Lod and Acre, sentences reached up to 15 years, steeply raising the cost of political participation and setting a new threshold of repression.

In parallel, the state increasingly targeted the youth movements central to the 2021 uprising. These informal, decentralized networks had outflanked traditional parties, embodying a form of mobilization beyond institutional control. For instance, the local movement protesting organized crime in Umm al-Fahm faced systematic harassment: in 2022, at least ten activists were summoned by the Shin Bet, interrogated, and explicitly threatened (Al-Jarmaq News, 2022). Similarly, in the Negev, youth affiliated with the Baladna Association were subjected to summons, surveillance, and intimidation, particularly for activities related to Palestinian identity and empowerment.

This pattern extended to broader popular mobilizations. In the Bedouin village of Sa'wa, peaceful protests against land expropriation in 2022 were met with mass arrests and excessive force, including rubber bullets and tear gas (Al-Sanah and Asaad, 2023). In Sandala (Marj Ibn Amer), community mobilization following the killing of Diyar al-Omari by a Jewish settler was swiftly subdued through checkpoints and arrests (Ibid). These cases illustrate a recalibrated strategy aimed at neutralizing protest before political momentum can develop.

The new phase also reflects Israel's attempt to colonize and weaponize spaces of economic integration. The aim of integration is no longer only economic, but is increasingly conditional on depoliticization. Hence, a new coercive bargain has emerged: professional advancement demands silence and self-censorship. The primary target is the educated middle class comprised of students, doctors, engineers, and public-sector employees. Surveillance now extends to universities and workplaces, where ideologically motivated non-state organizational actors like Im Tirtzu, The Jewish Voice, and Btsalmo⁴ operate online monitoring units, flagging political expression and assertions of national identity by PCI, often leading to suspensions, academic sanctions, and public shaming.

The growing overlap between state authorities and settler-aligned civil society groups has blurred the line between official repression and vigilantism. This regime hardened after October 7, 2023. The genocidal war on Gaza provided a pretext for expanded repression, targeting not only activists but also ordinary

⁴ Im Tirtzu is a far-right nationalist Zionist movement that campaigns against perceived "anti-Zionist" actors in academia and public life (see: <https://imti.org.il/>). The Btsalmo organization promotes a Jewish nationalist agenda and actively pressures institutions to sanction dissenting voices (see: <https://btsalmo.org.il/>). The Jewish Voice refers here to a right-wing digital media initiative engaged in surveilling anti-Zionist voices (see: <https://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il/>). Together, these actors contribute to the informal policing of political expression and mobilization, particularly by PCI.

Palestinians expressing grief or solidarity. Under the guise of national security, the state and aligned actors have thus made political mobilization increasingly dangerous and costly.

5. The Proliferation of Incitement and Political Repression after October 7

The post-October 7 silencing of Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI) was neither spontaneous nor incidental. It unfolded through an orchestrated, multi-institutional campaign involving the mainstream and right-wing media, political elites, security agencies, far-right groups, university administrations, and the judiciary. Together, these actors cultivated a climate of incitement and repression, casting PCI not as equal members of the polity, but as internal enemies and security threats.

In the immediate aftermath of October 7, 2023, a wave of incitement against PCI surged through the Israeli media and quickly spread to political institutions, security agencies, and far-right organizations. PCI were portrayed as a “fifth column” and de facto “fourth front” in Israel’s multi-front war. This securitized framing displaced the notion of equal citizenship and legitimized exceptional measures, formalized by the declaration of a state of emergency.

This securitization was made explicit in official rhetoric. In his wartime addresses, Prime Minister Netanyahu identified four active fronts: Gaza, Lebanon, the West Bank, and an internal front, implicitly referencing PCI (Mada al-Carmel, 2023: 2). Military analysts echoed this framing. Within hours, journalist Niv Dvori warned of unrest among “Israeli Arabs”, urging “preventive action” (Channel 12, 2023). Police Commissioner Shabtai called for heightened vigilance in mixed cities and Wadi Ara, while former Air Force Commander Eliezer Marom declared, “Israeli Arabs... are the fourth front”.

This discourse was shaped by what Israeli officials described as an “overriding concern to prevent a repetition of May 2021”. Far-right MK Tzvi Fogel convened a parliamentary session on “Preparations for Guardian of the Walls 2”, while far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir warned, “Guardian of the Walls is ahead of us” (Arlosoroff, 2023; Turgeman and Azulai, 2023), suggesting imminent unrest among PCI.

This atmosphere of anticipation, amplified by media incitement, preceded any actual mobilization. The term “fifth column” resurfaced in right-wing and nationalist discourse. Im Tirtzu labeled MK Ayman Odeh a “fifth column” (Im Tirtzu, 2023), while “Student Logic” demanded the dismissal of lecturers critical of the war. Rabbi Yaakov Maor posted a video warning of mobilization by PCI: “Great Danger [PCI]... We Must Prepare” (Maor, 2023). Collectively, these narratives normalized a campaign of delegitimization and repression portraying PCI as latent insurgents.

The Campaign of Police Repression and Political Persecution

In the days following October 7, media and political incitement rapidly escalated into largescale repression. Despite little mobilization by PCI during the first week, police and intelligence forces carried out mass arrests, primarily targeting students and workers for social media posts. Within a month, 251 individuals had been detained, 121 for “incitement to terrorism” and 31 for participating in anti-war demonstrations in mid-October (Adalah, 2023b).

According to the State Attorney’s Office, 301 investigations led to 160 indictments, mostly for alleged incitement. In 2024, an additional 238 investigations resulted in 68 indictments, 92% against PCI, despite widespread online incitement by Jewish Israelis (Hershkowitz, 2023). This crackdown followed a preemptive security logic that circumvented normal legal procedures. Most striking was the expanded use of administrative detention: by early 2024, nearly 30 PCI were being held without charge, a practice seldom employed since the military rule era (Bouirat, 2025).

Universities and Public Sector as Sites of Surveillance and Suppression

Universities and the public sector, once symbols of economic integration, rapidly became sites of surveillance and repression. On October 12, 2023, Education Minister Yoav Kish urged university administrators to expel students and faculty accused of “incitement” (Datel-Yakov, 2023). Most universities adopted “zero-tolerance” policies (Boulos, 2024). The Hebrew University led this trend, pledging to expel students for expressing support for “terrorist acts” and encouraging private reporting. An internal memo described the Hamas attack as a “crime against humanity” and warned against any sympathetic expression (see Appendix 2).

This charged climate led to disciplinary action against over 150 Arab students in 33 institutions, often based on social media activity. Nearly half were suspended without hearings, violating procedural norms. Legal center Adalah reported nine permanent expulsions and 11 temporary suspensions (Adalah, 2023b). Tensions peaked when right-wing activists besieged dormitories at Netanya College, forcing the evacuation of Arab students. Repression extended to faculty: Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s arrest after a podcast appearance and signing a letter accusing Israel of genocide, sparked widespread incitement. Right-wing and liberal Zionist media condemned her, while Channel 12 questioned her academic credibility. Hebrew University requested she step down from her teaching position (Maniv, 2024). This episode signals a broader shift in academia, from critical inquiry to political policing under the guise of national security.

Repression also targeted Arab professionals in public and economic sectors, particularly government roles (Majadli, 2024). On October 11, 2023, the Civil Service Commission ordered department heads to report employees’ political expression, enabling immediate dismissals or investigations based on social media or

public statements (Israel Civil Service Commission, 2023). Adalah documented over 50 Palestinian professionals, including doctors, teachers, and lawyers, dismissed for expressing solidarity with Gaza or posting politically contentious content (Adalah, 2023c). The Arab Emergency Committee reported 82 such cases by early November (Farah, 2023), while Kayan Feminist Organization documented around 550 related complaints (Zoabi, 2023).

Healthcare workers were especially vulnerable. Dr. Abd Samara's dismissal over a religious post, for which he faced incitement from Channel 14, became emblematic; he was fired by direct order of the Health Minister. At least 50 medical professionals were dismissed, including a nurse for questioning unverified news reports, and another for referencing civilian casualties in Gaza (Glazer and Mashiach, 2023). These often legally baseless dismissals were part of a broader campaign of political silencing through public vilification.

The campaign also targeted prominent public figures and cultural producers, artists, influencers, and journalists, who were not politically active but made symbolic expressions deemed sympathetic to Gazans. Singer Dalal Abu Amneh was arrested for posting the Quranic verse "There is no victor but God" on Instagram, triggering a wave of media incitement (Walla News, 2023). Actress Maisa Abdel Hadi and blogger Muhannad Taha were similarly detained for brief posts such as "My heart is with the children of Gaza" (Bakri, 2023).

In the legal sphere, the Israeli Bar Association warned that lawyers expressing perceived support for "terrorism" would face disciplinary action, further institutionalizing censorship (Israel Bar Association, 2023). Even humanitarian or symbolic gestures were penalized, narrowing the space for Palestinian public expression and dissent.

Suppression of Political Organizing, Leadership, and Collective Mobilization

The post-October 7 period allowed Israeli authorities to intensify efforts in place since the May 2021 uprising to dismantle Palestinian national political organization and close the few remaining spaces for collective mobilization within the 1948 territories. Although no mass mobilization occurred during the first week of the war, small protest vigils were held in the second week, especially after the bombing of Gaza's Al-Ahli Arab Hospital on October 17. Peaceful protests in Haifa, Umm al-Fahm, and Taybeh were swiftly suppressed. On October 13, police blocked a symbolic car convoy in Umm al-Fahm (Bouirat, 2023), followed by forceful dispersals and arrests in other towns (Bouirat, 2023b). Even limited forms of protest were treated as security threats: Police Commissioner Shabtai declared that any political mobilization by PCI would be preemptively quashed (Al-Jarmaq, 2023).

Authorities also targeted the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens by denying all permits for its public activities. Police even blocked a private indoor event promoting Jewish-Arab dialogue and threatened the venue's owner (Bakri, 2023b). Most notably, the head and several leaders of the High Follow-Up Committee were arrested during a small vigil in Nazareth's Al-Ain Square, even though such gatherings do not require a permit by law (Hona, 2023).

Restrictions continued long after the outbreak of the war, including arrests and prosecutions targeting leaders and activists affiliated with national parties (e.g., the Communist Party, "Tajamaa-Balad", "Sons of the Homeland", and the Islamic Movement, which is banned in Israel), as well as non-partisan national activists. Over two years later, public political expression remains heavily constrained. In a symbolic blow, police cancelled the annual March of Return in 2024, an event held each year since 1998 to commemorate the Nakba, marking the culmination of Israel's efforts to suppress Palestinian political organizing.

The post-October 7 repression of PCI was not merely extra-legal but systematically enabled through legal instruments and institutional support. Emergency legislation expanded the powers of police, prosecutors, and prison authorities. The State Attorney's Office issued directives permitting police to investigate alleged incitement without prior prosecutorial approval, in an extraordinary departure from standard procedure (Maanit, 2024). These powers remained in effect for months, enabling widespread arrests and surveillance.

Simultaneously, a special task force led by Minister Ben-Gvir institutionalized digital repression, monitoring social media and launching hundreds of investigations into politically sensitive posts (Channel 7, 2023). Right-wing parties advanced wartime legislation curtailing political rights, including a bill criminalizing the consumption of "inciting" content, amendments to Article 7A of the Basic Law broadening the grounds for disqualifying Arab Knesset candidates, and revisions to the incitement law expanding police powers without oversight.

These developments signaled a shift toward a legal regime facilitating political suppression. The judiciary, including the Supreme Court, largely upheld these measures, effectively banning demonstrations by PCI and prompting civil society groups to withdraw appeals to avoid creating repressive precedents (Fridson and Khoury, 2023).

This campaign has created an unprecedented atmosphere of silencing and intimidation, stifling popular mobilization. Activists and ordinary citizens increasingly perceive opportunities for political expression to be nullified, in a climate of self-censorship. This is particularly true for those whose livelihoods are tied to the Israeli economic and public sectors, which, as noted above, have expanded significantly over the past two decades through neoliberal reforms and integration policies.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This article began by asking why Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI), who mobilized en masse during the 2021 Dignity Uprising, remained politically quiescent amid the 2023 genocidal war on Gaza. The answer lies in a

constellation of factors: entrenched structures, evolving modes of Israeli governance, and transformed dynamics of collective mobilization.

In this context, the article identifies five interrelated factors shaping the current political condition of PCI.

First, in-betweenness. This structural condition has defined the position of PCI since 1948. Their unstable habitus situates them simultaneously within the Israeli civic sphere and the Palestinian national sphere, without full inclusion in either, producing a duality of adaptation, resistance, and episodic silence.

Second, macro-structural socio-economic and political transformations. Over the past two decades, these transformations have intensified Israel's political control and economic containment. While the national political question persists, material dependence on the state has deepened, increasingly linking civic-economic inclusion to depoliticization. Consequently, segments of Palestinian society have come to view Israeli citizenship as a vehicle for socio-economic mobility, particularly in the absence of a strong national political center.

Third, the fragility of the national political center. Internal dynamics and external pressures have weakened collective organization, marked by declining mass mobilization and growing elite-led parliamentary representation. Political repression and the rise of organized crime have further contributed to broader socio-political fragmentation.

Fourth, the post-2021 recalibration of Israeli governance. The May 2021 Dignity Uprising exposed the contradictions of Israel's governance paradigm, driving the state to expand surveillance, dismantle grassroots mobilization, and preemptively constrain political organization, including "peripheral" forms of activism. The uprising disrupted the longstanding silencing of the national question, bring it back into public discourse. In response, the state recalibrated by criminalizing protests, dismantling grassroots organizing, and expanding surveillance into formerly "neutral" arenas like universities, workplaces, and cultural spaces, and systematically targeted youth movements, unaffiliated individuals, and economically vulnerable groups central to the May uprising. Following October 7, these measures escalated further, extending control to the political, academic, and cultural elite.

Fifth, post-October 7 politicicide. The events of October 7 accelerated a form of politicicide based not on the physical removal of PCI, but on undermining their status as a political collective. Unlike policies in Gaza and the West Bank, within the Green Line this operates through deconstructing political agency and collective organization. The post-October 7 crackdown is thus the culmination of a longer trajectory of political suppression rooted in the securitization of Palestinian presence. Framed as a "fifth column" or "fourth front", PCI have been governed through a logic of emergency and exception rather than equal citizenship, exposing the fragility of their formal status.

Together, these dynamics have raised the cost of political struggle and reinforced a widespread perception of limited political opportunity. In this context, a pervasive orientation toward survival has emerged as both a material and psychological condition shaping political behavior and self-perception among PCI. This dismantling of mobilization infrastructure and stepped-up repression have further entrenched their "in-between" condition. Political survival now dominates consciousness, as political opportunities feel hollow and carry high personal costs, especially for those who benefit from material inclusion despite marginalization.

The relative silence of 2023 should not be mistaken for consent or the "Israelization" of consciousness. It reflects intersecting pressures: the shrinking political space, fear amid genocidal violence, and growing material dependence. This is not passivity but the effect of both systemic repression and the internal contradictions of settler-colonial governance.

Theoretically, this study contributes to settler-colonial studies by foregrounding the dialectic of repression and incorporation. Domination is enacted not only through dispossession and violence, but also governance, co-optation, and neoliberal incentives. Institutions that integrate PCI economically have become into sites of surveillance, linking economic opportunity to political silence. These strategies, which I term governance through integration, aim not at the physical erasure of Palestinians, but their political elimination. In line with existing scholarship (e.g., Boulos and Sorek, 2024; Sabbagh-Khoury, 2022), the study also illustrates the ongoing dialectic between Indigenous agency and settler-colonial structures, showing how settler regimes continuously recalibrate policies in response to native resistance.

This article also offers an epistemological intervention in the sociology of PCI. While much existing literature emphasizes fragmentation and legal discrimination, we argue for its supplementation with an analysis of economic containment, neoliberal governance, and shifting political opportunities. The framework centers the dialectic of control and containment, tracing how state strategies, Indigenous agency, and socio-economic structures interact over time.

This analysis challenges the assumption that integration and containment produce political quiescence; the 2021 uprising demonstrates that national mobilization remains possible even among the economically integrated. Indeed, mechanisms of containment, such as employment, education, urban development, can become channels for political awakening. This ambivalence makes the Palestinian case within the Green Line a paradigmatic example of the limits of settler-colonial strategies to pacify the colonized. Yet even partial economic integration deepens material dependency and cultivates an organic attachment to citizenship, which, without a strong national political center and amid heightened repression, consolidates the containment of political agency. This dynamic reflects a broader condition of in-betweenness, where political mobilization alternates between intensification, retreat, and adaptation to a prevailing climate of silencing.

Understanding historical temporality is crucial. October 7 and May 2021 should be seen not as isolated events, but as points along a broader trajectory shaped by two decades of neoliberal restructuring and

settler-colonial shifts. The current suppression of political life is not a rupture but the culmination of sustained efforts to erode political space and weaponize economic containment.

The post-October 7 context calls for a renewed understanding of political agency under settler colonialism. Rather than reducing political behavior to binaries of resistance or assimilation, we must recognize its constrained and contingent nature. Amid an unstable in-between reality, agency persists not in grand gestures, but in daily survival and the gradual rebuilding of political consciousness. The settler-colonial project remains incomplete. The contradictions that fueled the May 2021 national marginalization, and the ensuing settler violence, remain unresolved. Political agency has been constrained but not extinguished. As long as Palestinians in Israel inhabit a liminal reality between homeland and citizenship, inclusion and control, survival and elimination, the potential for mobilization endures.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Major Government Plans and Initiatives (2011–2024)

Date	Plan Name	Gov't Decision #	Budget (NIS)
07.07.2024	Empowerment Plan for Druze & Circassians (Galilee, Carmel, Golan, 2024)	1230	52.5 million
02.08.2022	Urgent Plan to Reduce Disparities & Prevent Violence (Mixed Cities)	1834	300 million
28.07.2022	Development Plan for Jisr az-Zarqa	-	200 million
14.03.2022	Development Plan for Bedouin in the Negev (2022-2026)	1279	3 billion
24.10.2021	Economic Plan to Reduce Disparities in Arab Society (Until 2026)	550	30 billion
24.10.2021	Plan to Address Crime & Violence in Arab Society (2022-2026)	549	2.4 billion
28.11.2021	Development Plan for Druze & Circassians (2021-2023)	716	365 million
28.11.2021	Development Plan for Druze in Golan (2021-2023)	717	11 million
12.02.2017	Development Plan for Bedouin in Negev (2017-2021)	2397	3 billion
30.12.2015	Development Initiative for Minority Populations (2016-2020)	922	15 billion
30.12.2015	Development Initiative for Northern Bedouin (2016-2020)	922 (Supp.)	200 million
14.12.2014	Development Plan for Druze & Circassians (2015-2019)	-	2 billion
13.02.2011	Empowerment Plan for Druze & Circassians (2011-2014)	2861	680 million
2011	Development Plan for Bedouin in the South (2012-2016)	3708	1.26 billion
21.03.2010	Five-Year Development Plan for Minority Towns	1539	800 million
	Total Budget Allocated		NIS 58.976 billion

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on a review of the Israeli government's official website.

Appendix 2 Message from the Hebrew University Administration

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM



11 October 2023
26 Tishrei 5784

Dear members of the university community,

We are in the midst of one of the most difficult events that the State of Israel has ever experienced. As I write these lines, we already know that more than 1,200 people, most of them unarmed civilians of all ages, were killed by terrorists in a heinous attack from Gaza on Saturday. There is also a significant number of hostages who were kidnapped to Gaza, and their fate is unknown. Unfortunately, these are not final numbers. There is no other way to describe this - **it is a crime against humanity of the highest order.**

Actions of this kind cannot be justified, and therefore it is clear that the university will show zero tolerance for expressions of support from any of its community members for these horrific acts.

Source: Hebrew University Administration (2023): *Message to the university community*, email correspondence, October.

