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### Minorities in democracy and policing policy: from alienation to cooperation

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## Minorities in democracy and policing policy: from alienation to cooperation

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Tense relations between the Israeli police and the Arab citizens of Israel have been a major concern in recent years. Policing provides a challenge in democracies with diverse societies where cultures, religions and competing national identities challenge the existing order, and where the police in many cases have yet to develop the capabilities to engage with diversity and overcome its own biases and prejudices in order to better serve minorities. While police officers and policy-makers may be aware of the need to initiate reform in order to succeed, they need to identify the actual needs of minorities. In this study of police reforms in Israel vis-à-vis the Arab minority we propose a bottom-up study of the potential impact of three types of reforms: recruitment of Arab citizens to the police, cultural training of police officers and institutionalising police-community relations. Our findings are based on two complementary stages of research, four focus groups and a comprehensive research survey of a representative sample of 1006 adult Arab citizens.

**Keywords:** policing; minorities; Israel

### Introduction

Policing provides a challenge for democracies with diverse societies where cultures, religions and competing national identities challenge the existing order, and where the police in many cases have yet to develop the capabilities to engage with diversity and overcome its own biases and prejudices to better serve minorities (Barlow and Barlow 2000, Casey 2000, Kelling and Moore 2006). The police are a central public service in a modern state that possess the power to protect the fundamental freedoms essential for democracy, but also the potential power to abuse these freedoms severely (Jones *et al.* 1996). While policing rests on implied consent, the disenfranchising and de-incorporation of certain citizens from the structures of government and the use of the police to require minimum levels of social compliance implies that ‘in many respects policing is against the resistance of certain communities in order to retain the respect of other communities.’ (Findlay 2004, p. 7).

Tense relations between police and minorities are often underscored by real or perceived discriminatory police practices against minorities. Literature and experience point to two central issues in police-minority relations that can be described as ‘under-policing’, the neglect of minority neighbourhoods, and ‘over-policing’, an aggressive approach that singles out minorities. Minorities who suffer from over-policing and/or

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under-policing are likely not to trust the police and not to cooperate with it. This mistrust may lead to a vicious cycle in which the police are unable (or unwilling) to provide services for minorities and, as a result, become even less trusted. While institutional changes will be required in order to increase the trust of minorities in the police and the ability of the police to operate among minorities, such changes may be difficult to achieve. First, while police officers (as well as policy-makers) may be aware of the need to initiate reform, institutional and political constraints could limit the reforms so that they fall short of minorities' demands and expectations. In addition, police reforms might fail to identify the actual needs of minorities.

Relations between the Israeli police and the Arab citizens of Israel, a minority of 20% of the general population, have been a major concern in recent years, especially since the events of October 2000 when the police gunned down 13 Arab citizens during demonstrations. A committee of inquiry formed after the events placed the blame not only upon the police, but also on Arab leaders' inflammatory rhetoric and pointed to the long-term discrimination of Arab citizens of Israel as underscoring their frustrations. The report described a 'muddled relationship' between the police and Arab citizens and outlined the need for reforms:

The committee noted the need for a reform of police systems with regard to the Arab sector. The police is not conceived as a service provider by the Arab population, but as a hostile element serving a hostile government. There is a need to expand community police services in order to improve service to this sector. (Orr Commission 2003, Chap. 6, p. 14)

The general criticism was accompanied by more specific recommendations: inculcating moderate and balanced norms of behaviour among all ranks of the police personnel with regard to the Arab sector, uprooting existing prejudice among officers and raising the level of dialogue between police officers and the leaders of the Arab community. Various reform initiatives were initiated by the police after the events, including new channels of communication and allocation of resources to improve the service provided to Arab citizens. Nonetheless, as the discussion that follows demonstrates, the trust of Arab citizens in the police remains significantly lower than that of Jewish citizens.

What reforms are likely to have a positive impact on the trust of Arab citizens in the police? While in many democratic countries there is broad support for general principles of good policing (use of minimum force, impartiality, fairness and accountability), surprisingly little is known about the level of popular support for specific kinds of reforms (Weitzer and Tuch 2006, p. 37). As in other fields of public policy planning, policing has to take into account not only the needs of individual citizens but also of communities (or 'target groups') that have specific requirements. What is needed, therefore, is a bottom-up approach to public policy where data is generated from below, based on the experience and perceptions of citizens and minorities in particular, in order to determine what reforms can change the relationship between the minority group and the police. Thus, integrating the public into the evaluation process by mapping the attitudes of minority groups creates new opportunities for public influence and expertise and, in turn, for policies that suit the needs of those it seeks to influence.

In this exploratory research, we study these questions by defining the key areas of reform, based on other case studies, and the perceptions of Arab citizens regarding

policing and reforms. Specifically, we examine issues of over-policing and under-policing and three types of reforms: recruitment of minority officers, changes in procedures and training and the involvement of community leaders. Our findings are based on two complementary stages of research. First, we conducted four focus groups composed of seven or eight Arab citizens of Israel to assess general perceptions of the police and of potential police reforms. Based on the findings of the focus groups, we then created and administered a comprehensive research survey. The survey, conducted among a representative sample of 1006 adult Arab citizens, is the core of this study and provides an understanding of the challenges and potential benefits of future reforms. Taken together, the focus groups and the survey provide a bottom-up analysis of the actual perceptions, demands and needs of the Arab minority vis-à-vis the state of Israel and the police.

### *Democracy, policing and minorities*

The discussion of policing in a multi-cultural society and police reform is embedded in the broader context of political responses of democratic states to diversity. Cultural diversity and ethno-national politics are common to most contemporary states that must contend with a multi-cultural and at times multi-national reality. The growing reality of multi-national and/or multi-cultural democracies, composed of cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities, calls into question conventional understandings of national sovereignty, group identity, social justice and group and individual rights (Young 1998, Tully 2002). Political and economic institutions, no longer regarded as neutral, can turn into sites for intensified ethnic identities and conflicts, a situation that many countries have not been well prepared to deal with. Some nations have shifted towards a more accommodating approach to diversity and adopted 'multicultural policies' (Banting and Kymlicka 2003, p. 3) go beyond the protection of basic civil and political rights guaranteed to all individuals in a liberal democratic state. Others are still debating about how to address the challenges of diversity.

An examination of particular models for multi-cultural or multi-ethnic states must take into account not only their contribution to political stability, at times a short-term measure, but also their ability to promote participatory democracy, fairness, social cohesion and social justice in the longer term. Questions of rights (individual and group rights), equal opportunities, democratic participation, and access to public services underscore practical questions of policy and policy reforms. The assessment of policy choices – multi-cultural or other – must examine the needs and preferences of ethnic and cultural groups, the capacity of existing institutions to meet them and the actual impact of these policies.

The police, in charge of maintaining public order, are often the target of complaints and concerns of ethnic minorities. Democratic policing encompasses procedural regularity and the rule of law, respect for substantive rights, and popular participation in policing through civilian oversight or delegation of authority to the community (Skalansky 2008, pp. 3–4). In the context of a multi-cultural setting democratic policing can also refer to the capacity of the police to provide services that fit the needs of different communities and to uproot existing prejudices and unfair practices towards minorities. Unfair practices can be divided into 'over-policing' and 'under-policing'. Over-policing implies mistreatment of minorities by the police,

either by excessive use of force towards minorities or by discriminatory practices against them (Findlay 2004, p. 101). Thus, 'racial profiling', the targeting of visible minorities as suspects, creates tensions between police and minorities (Wortley 2003, Wortley and Tanner 2004, Closs *et al.* 2006, Smith 2006, Open Society Justice Initiative 2009). Under-policing is largely about police neglect of minorities and their needs. Thus, complaints of racial harassment and attacks against minorities by racist groups may be ignored or not taken seriously, and police may absent themselves from minority neighbourhoods regarded as 'hopeless' so that poor urban communities suffer from unresponsive policing and high crime rates.

Both under-policing and over-policing can be related to discriminatory practices that frustrate minorities and explain their lack of trust in the police. Minorities can suffer from both under-policing in their neighbourhoods where the police are absent and from over-policing outside their neighbourhoods where they are targeted as suspects. Consequently, there is a wide gap between minority and majority perceptions of and trust in the police. In the USA, for example, blacks are more inclined than whites to believe that the police abuse citizens, treat black suspects differently than white suspects and ignore crime in neighbourhoods where the majority of citizens are black (Weitzer and Tuch 2006 pp. 5–6). These perceptions are often grounded in reality. Research shows that racial and ethnic minorities are more likely than white Americans to be stopped, questioned, searched and arrested by the police (Walker *et al.* 2000). When frustrations mount, clashes between police and minorities can erupt (Barlow and Barlow 2000, Casey 2000, Mazerolle *et al.* 2003), further eroding trust.

The alienation of minority groups from the police can be the result of unjust policies, police racism, negative perceptions of the police or language and cultural barriers between the police and the minorities they serve (Fleras 1992, Howell *et al.* 2004, Brunson and Miller 2006). This alienation may undermine police work and prevent citizens of minority groups from receiving the police services to which they are entitled. When mistreatment of minorities by the police is exposed, public uproar and calls for reform often emerge. In Britain, for example, the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young black man, by a racist group and the subsequent police mistreatment of the family exposed racism within the police and led to an inquiry committee and, later, to a debate over British multiculturalism and 'the future of multi-ethnic Britain' (Runnymede Trust 2000). In the United States, the beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles police led to a heated public discussion over the mistreatment of African-Americans by the police.

### ***Police reforms***

Reforms aimed at improved working relationships with minorities may be the result of public pressure following significant incidents of violence or police brutality, or acknowledgement by the police that reforms would improve its efficacy and public image (Brown and Benedict 2002). In some cases, as in Northern Ireland, police reforms were part of a comprehensive process of post-conflict institution building that included the creation of an effective, professional, fair and accountable police service (McGarry and O'leary 1999). The reform of the police in Northern Ireland, which included changing the name of the police from the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabularies)

to the PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland), is regarded as one of the few instances that has had a broadly sustainable impact (Bayley 2005, Ellison 2007).

Reforms begin with the recognition of policy-makers or the police itself that its functions must be broadened so it can engage effectively with different cultural groups, take part in conflict resolution and problem solving, provide services that will strengthen its legitimacy across society and answer the democratic challenges described above. Reforms require first and foremost the willingness of the police to critically examine its policies towards and treatment of minorities (Chan 1997, Kelling and Moore 2006). In practice, the examination includes the provision of services that suit all segments of society, the diversification of the police force so it will mirror society, an improvement in the image of the police among minorities, and serious engagement with hate crimes against minorities (Oakley 2001).

Police reforms related to multiculturalism and minority groups usually fall into six categories: (1) diversification of human resources; (2) cultural sensitivity training for police officers; (3) formal anti-racism policies within the police; (4) a review and revision of operational practices that may lead to 'systemic discrimination', (5) liaison between the police and minority communities; and (6) inclusion of minority group representatives within the membership of the police's governing authorities (Stenning 2003). These recommendations can be divided into three central areas that together tackle the central issues of over-policing and under-policing. First, there must be a change in the patterns of recruitment in order to diversify the police. Second, the training of police officers must be imbued with cultural sensitivity and police practices must be revised to reflect this sensitivity. Third, the relationship between the police and minorities must be improved by creating police-community liaisons or by adopting community policing. The suggested reforms reflect a common sense approach that addresses both under- and over-policing. However, the potential impact of the reforms depends on specific needs and desires that differ from one community to another. Policymakers, therefore, must assess the resources available for reform and the specific problems and expectations of minority communities.

Recruitment of minorities to the police is particularly important when the police force is homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, gender and class, so that important parts of society are not represented. Recruitment is part of a wider debate about cultural diversity in the work place, both private and public, and its benefits and challenges (Williams and O'Reilly 1998, Brief 2008). Minorities may regard a police force that is made up solely of members of the majority as an alien group. Such a force may lack the knowledge and ability to engage with minorities' needs, and may even develop a police sub-culture that regards minorities as alien and suspicious. The diversification of the police force, therefore, can strengthen the legitimacy of the police, improving its capacity to operate among minorities and provide better service. However, doubts have been raised about the actual impact of recruitment and its ability to change existing discriminatory practices (Desroches 1992, Tinor-Centi and Hussain 2000, Coderoni 2002, Stevens 2007). Consequently, minorities may be suspicious of police attempts to recruit them, be critical of minority officers serving in the police and expect major changes in the police before considering joining the police.

The cultural sensitivity training of police officers is designed to change police practices considered offensive to minorities, to reduce stereotypes that interfere with police work and to translate commitment to equality into policies that eliminate

existing discriminatory practices. In addition, when necessary, language training and cross-cultural communication skills can also be included in police training. This training could contribute to reducing existing misperceptions and incorrect filtering of communication 'data' (Shusta *et al.* 2008, p. 112). However, cultural training is also open to debate and fraught with concerns. First, police prejudice is not necessarily equivalent to cultural miscommunication. In some cases (mis)communication is not the problem, and what minorities are demanding is not cultural recognition. Rather, police prejudice underscores the unfair treatment of minorities in society at large. What minorities seek is equality. Moreover, minorities might also be concerned with the gap between the programs of tolerance taught in police classrooms and the actual conduct of the police on the streets vis-à-vis minorities.

Improving relations between the police and minorities can be achieved not only by interpersonal exchanges but also by structural changes through which the community becomes involved in police works and vice versa. Community policing is one measure for bridging the gaps between the police and minority communities and includes principles, policies, and practices that link police and community members together in the joint pursuit of local crime prevention (Fleras 1992, p. 74, Roberg *et al.* 2002, p. 56). However, both the police and minority groups themselves may consider community policing to be too soft and ineffective. Alternatively, reforms can include formal and informal channels for communities to convey their needs and concerns or even provide an opportunity for citizens to oversee police work (Perez 1994, Stone and Bobb 2002, Lewis 2005). Civilian oversight may help police gain legitimacy and the trust of minority groups by subjecting its policies and practices to public scrutiny. However, the police may resist subjecting itself to civilian control. Consequently, minorities might remain suspicious and uncooperative if the oversight proposed is perceived as a sham.

### ***Policy planning: bottom-up approaches***

Changes in the recruitment and training of police officers, the uprooting of discriminatory practices, community engagement and oversight are all methods of reform that can be part of the police's adaptation to a multi-cultural reality. However, the potential advantages and shortcomings of these measures must be contextualised and adapted to local conditions. Different minority groups suffer from different problems. Therefore, reforms must address the specific needs of each community in order to bring about the desired change in police-minority relations. Thus, a bottom-up study that examines the actual demands and needs of specific minorities and provides a genuine democratic measure must precede policy planning and policy-making. As in any process of democratic policy-making, this programme involves an unprofessional public in professional policy decisions and carries the risk of populism and short-term considerations. Notwithstanding these potential pitfalls, gathering information about public needs and demands, rather than assuming them, provides a voice for the public and a critical tool for policy-makers.

A top-down approach to policy planning or design often fails due to a hierarchical structure, unduly optimistic expectations likely to fail in the face of complexity (deLeon and deLeon 2002) and resistance from groups opposed to the policy, often not consulted in the planning stages. Conversely, a bottom-up approach reflects communal interests, is more conducive to a democratic approach and likely to provide the policy planning and implementation with greater legitimacy (deLeon 1997). Such

an approach would require that policy-makers 'do more than listen to themselves, their in-house analysts, and extant interest groups . . . reaching back in the policy process framework to include policy formulation deliberations as a means to help define policy goals by talking with the affected parties well before the policy is adopted by the authorized policy maker' (deLeon and deLeon 2002, p. 483).

Effective strategies for police reform can draw on lessons learned elsewhere regarding bottom-up democratic policy planning. Specifically, if stakeholders have no voice in the reforms, it may be difficult for them to embrace them when implemented. Thus, when governments provide citizens with a voice, they make them partners in public policy-making. A bottom-up policy reform means, first, the rejection of a 'one size fits all' formula and, second, attentiveness to the different needs that exist among citizens, especially in diverse societies. Like other governmental institutions whose current policies may reflect what they perceive as citizen demands, the police also have to take into account 'the risks associated with a citizen focused police agenda, namely policing for the majority at the expense of the minority' (Harrison *et al.* 2009, p. 343). In diverse or multi-cultural societies in particular, the police need accurate tools for planning policies that will properly serve all of its communities. Surveys are a tool used by more and more agencies, including the police, as part of a bottom-up strategy designed not only to assess performance, but also to capture public perceptions and help shape strategy and service delivery that enhance public trust (Harrison *et al.* 2009). Thus, surveying the needs and concerns of minority groups is essential for devising police reforms that will improve relations between the police and minorities and foster legitimate and effective policing.

### **Arab citizens in Israel**

Arab citizens in Israel and the police have a long history of tense relations, itself a reflection of the tension between the Jewish state and the Arab minority. This tension came to a head in October 2000 when 13 Arab citizens were killed by police officers during riots in the northern part of Israel. The inquiry commission established after the events found fault not only in the actions of the police but also, and more importantly, in deeper structural issues:

The events, their exceptional character and their adverse consequences were the result of structural factors that caused an explosive situation among the Arab public in Israel. The state and the elected governments consistently failed to seriously engage with the difficult problems of a large Arab minority within a Jewish state. The government's treatment of the Arab sector was generally of neglect and discrimination. At the same time, not enough was done to enforce the law in the Arab sector . . . as a result of this and of other causes, the Arab sector suffered deep distress evident, among other things, in high levels of poverty, unemployment, shortage of land, problems in the education system and serious deficiencies in infrastructure. All those crated ongoing discontent, heightened towards October 2000 (Orr Commission 2003, Chap. 6, p. 5).

The Jewish-Arab divide is considered the deepest schism in Israeli society. Arab citizens are a non-dominant, non-assimilating, working-class minority and are considered by the Jewish majority as dissident and enemy affiliated (Smootha 1989, p. 218). From the end of the war in 1948 until 1966, in spite of their formal citizenship, Palestinian Arabs were placed under military rule that limited their movement. The



gradual relaxation of Israeli policies towards Arab citizens since 1966 has not diminished the social gaps between them and the Jewish majority and has not ended their economic, social and political marginalisation (Lustik 1985, Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1993, Gavison and Abu-Ria 1999). Today, non-Jews in Israel constitute close to 20% of the population or about 1 million people who belong to three religious communities: Muslim (81%), Christian (9%) and Druze (10%). The Druze minority occupies a relatively privileged position in Israel, is distanced from other Arabs and takes part in military service. Despite their formal, legal equality with Jewish Israelis, Arab citizens suffer from higher rates of poverty, a low quality of public services and are underrepresented in the public sector. Tensions between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority involve struggles over land and budget allocations, but also an identity struggle regarding their status as a minority in a Jewish State.

The demands for equality and representation, or individual and group rights, challenge some of the basic foundations of the state – its Jewish character and encounter widespread resistance from the Jewish majority. The Jewish character of the state, almost a consensus among the Jewish majority, implies that Palestinian Arabs are citizens of a state whose symbols reflect the Jewish majority's culture and are exclusive in nature. Beyond the symbolic issues, the preference of Jews over non-Jews is anchored in laws that deal with immigration, use of state land and semi-governmental institutions, as well as in Israel's basic laws that anchor the Jewish character of the state (Rouhana 1998). In a recent document, Palestinian citizens described Israel as an 'ethnocratic state' that denies full citizenship to the minority. This document contends that as a result, Palestinian Arabs suffer from 'extreme structural discrimination policies, national oppression, military rule that lasted until 1966, land confiscation policy, unequal budget allocation, rights discrimination and threats of transfer' (National Committee 2006, p. 5).

Relations between Arab citizens and the police derive from general frustrations with and mistrust of the state, but are often exacerbated by specific assignments given to the police. Such assignments include dealing with demonstrations, civil disobedience or the demolition of houses built without permits in Arab towns and villages. Carrying out these assignments pits the police against the Arab minority and has the potential to escalate. The Orr Commission described a 'vicious cycle' where mutual distrust provokes altercations that, in turn, amplify the Arabs' alienation from the police, reinforce their belief that they are not full citizens of the country, and impede the efforts of police to fight crime in Arab communities due to their distrust of the police (Hasi and Weitzer 2008). The explosion of these tense relations in the events of 2000 brought the police under severe criticism, but has also led to an internal recognition that reform is necessary. Following the recommendations of the Orr Commission, police stations were opened in Arab villages, community policing was established, the training of police officers with the help of NGOs is taking place and various channels of communication were established between the police command and Arab leaders. However, as discussed below, these reforms have yet to have the desired impact.

### ***Methodology and research questions***

Ten years after the events of October 2000, and after several efforts at reform have been made, we can examine the current state of relations between the Arab minority

and the police, the impact of the reforms undertaken to date and the potential of new reforms. The low level of trust in the police and the significant differences between Arab and Jewish citizens suggest that the reforms have yet to make an impact and change the relations between the Arab minority and the police. However, what reforms are most likely to produce positive changes? To answer this question, we undertook a two-stage study that included qualitative focus groups and a survey. The focus groups consisted of 30 people divided to four groups of 7 to 8 participants. An assigned discussion leader guided the groups into a directed discussion on topics dealing indirectly with the question at hand. Participants in these focus groups were all Arabs citizens of Israel, residents of three different Arab cities (Tira, Cassem village and Jut). There were 16 women and 14 men ages 20 to 25 years old. The focus groups provided an empirical basis for the second stage of the study, a telephone survey of a random sample of 1006 Arab citizens of Israel, adults over the age of 18.

The survey was conducted by the University of Haifa survey center between March and April 2009. Interviews were conducted in Arabic by Arab interviewers. A majority of participants – 65% – completed the entire interview. Participants were 48.5% men and 51.5% were women; their average age was 35.33 years (standard deviation of 13.2 years). With regard to ethnicity and religion, 80.4% defined themselves as Muslims, 1.6% as Bedouins (altogether 82% Muslims, compared to 81.6% in the general population), 11.9% defined themselves as Christian (compared to 10.3% in the general population) and 3% as Druze (compared to 8.13% in the general population). The vast majority of the participants – 74.9% – lived in the Galilee in the north of Israel (compared to 70% in the general population), 18.9% lived in the centre of the country in an area known as The Triangle and 6.3% lived in the southern Negev. The Negev Bedouins are underrepresented in the survey because many of them live in small, unrecognised villages and cannot be reached in a phone survey.

We begin with an overview of the general perceptions of the Arab minority about the police and their services, identify the major problems experienced by Arab citizens and continue with the three potential areas of reform discussed above. Accordingly, we posit the following questions. First, can recruitment of Arab citizens to the police change current perceptions? Second, do Arab citizens believe that the training of police officers and a revision of police practices in accordance with cultural sensitivity are necessary? Third, can police-community liaisons and community policing contribute to improving relations? We will discuss the significance of our findings in the last part of the paper.

### *General attitudes*

Studies consistently show that the trust of Arab citizens in the Israeli police is low. Rattner (2005) conducted several surveys between 2000 and 2005 and found that the lack of trust of the Arab minority in the police is similar to that of the Jewish majority. However, while Arab and Jewish citizens report low levels of trust in the police, they differ in their reasons for this lack of trust. For example, 71.3% of Jewish citizens agree that the police treat people fairly and equally, but only 30.6% of the Arab citizens agree with this statement (ibid, see also Smith and Yechezkel 2004). Similarly, in this study, while only a minority of the respondents (26%) report they have personally experienced discriminatory treatment from the police, a large

majority (77%) believes that the police treat Jewish citizens better than Arab citizens. This feeling is also reflected in the perception of under-policing, namely that the police are largely unable to fight crime in Arab neighbourhoods and that the quality of police services is rather low (Figure 1).

Arabs citizens' perceptions of the police reflect both over-policing and under-policing. In the focus groups the participants described various incidents of police abuse. 'There is a lot of racism in the police', explained one of the respondents. 'The police treat Arabs differently than the way they treat Jews'. Another participant attributed this difference to security (mis) perceptions: 'They always say that security is the most important thing and they define us a security problem'. Similarly, in the survey, Arab citizens agree (49% against 22%) that the police arrest more Arab citizens than Jewish citizens (over-policing). However, respondents also feel that the police are not decisive enough in enforcing laws and are not visible enough in their neighbourhood, disagreeing with the statement that the police provide Arab citizens with security. For some, this neglect is not accidental. As one participant in the focus group noted: 'When a problem occurs . . . a shooting for example, no effort is made to find the shooters . . . if this happened in a Jewish neighborhood, they would act immediately. But we are Arab, so they don't care'. In the survey, only 30% believe that the police provide security to Arab citizens, while 46% believe it fails to do so. Specifically, if a problem occurs in their neighbourhoods, 40% of respondents say they would not call the police, 38% say they would and 20% are not sure what they would do (Table 1).

Notwithstanding these responses, Arab citizens, in spite of their perceptions of police services as discriminatory and of poor quality, are unwilling to give up on them. The majority of respondents (60%) disagree with the statement 'I would rather have no police in my neighborhood at all'. These mixed reactions can be explained, on the one hand, by feelings of discrimination and resentment but, on the other hand, by the understanding that no practical alternative to the police is available and that Arab neighbourhoods require an effective police force. Figure 2 presents the general perceptions of the respondents regarding their willingness to cooperate with the police on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). On average, there is disagreement about giving up on police services (2.271), slightly more agreement that the police are more responsive than other institutions (2.54) and that the majority of

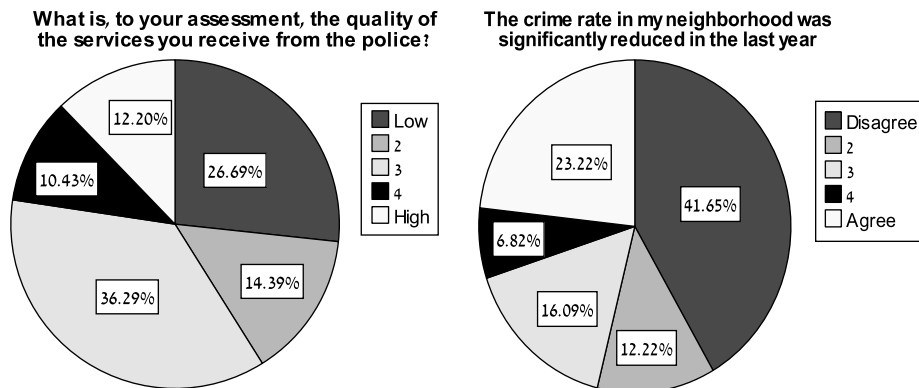


Figure 1. Perceptions of police performance and crime rates.

Table 1. Percentage of under- and over-policing and mean (standard deviation).

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree	Mean (SD)
'The police arrest more Arabs than Jews'.	23	8	19	12	38	3.36 (1.6)
'The police are successful in providing security to Arabs citizens in Israel'.	29	17	24	9	21	2.77 (1.5)
'In case of a problem I would call the police without hesitation'.	20	11	21	10	38	3.36 (1.6)
'The police are not decisive enough in enforcing laws in my village'.	26	15	24	14	21	2.90 (1.5)
'The police are not visible enough in my neighborhood'.	23	10	18	10	40	3.33 (1.6)

the population would assist the police if needed, and relatively strong agreement (3.373 and 3.673 respectively) that the police and police officers should be obeyed.

Frustration with existing police services, on the one hand, and the refusal to give up on its services and a willingness to assist the police on the other, suggest that change is possible. Thus, there may be a potential for reforms that would change the relations between the police and the Arab minority and provide effective, fair and legitimate police service for the minority.

**Recruitment**

Recruitment of Arab police officers could potentially contribute to existing police-minority relations by bringing with them the necessary cultural knowledge and representing the minority in policy planning processes. Currently, however, only 10.3% of police officers are non-Jewish (compared to their being 20% of the Israeli population). These minority officers are 50% Druze, 19% Christian-Arabs, 18% non-Bedouin Muslims, and 6% Bedouin (Weitzer and Hasisi 2008). Given that Muslims constitute 80% of the non-Jewish population, they are heavily underrepresented in

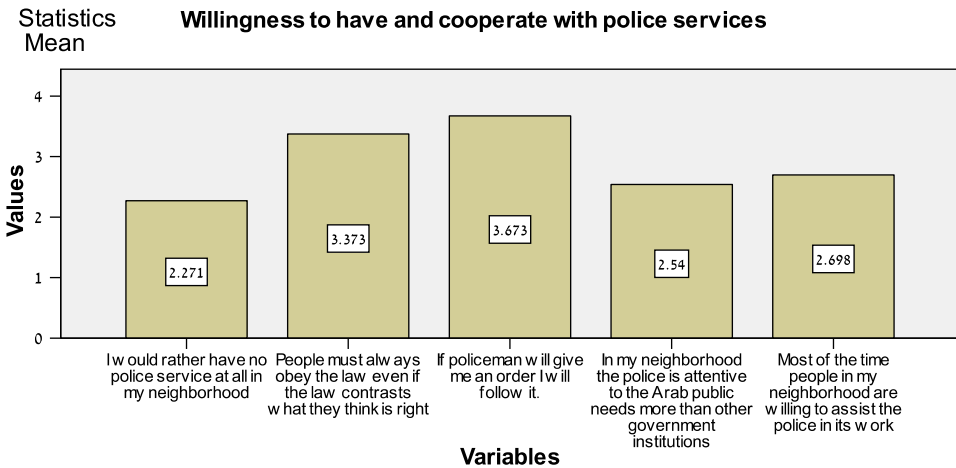


Figure 2. Willingness to cooperate with the police.

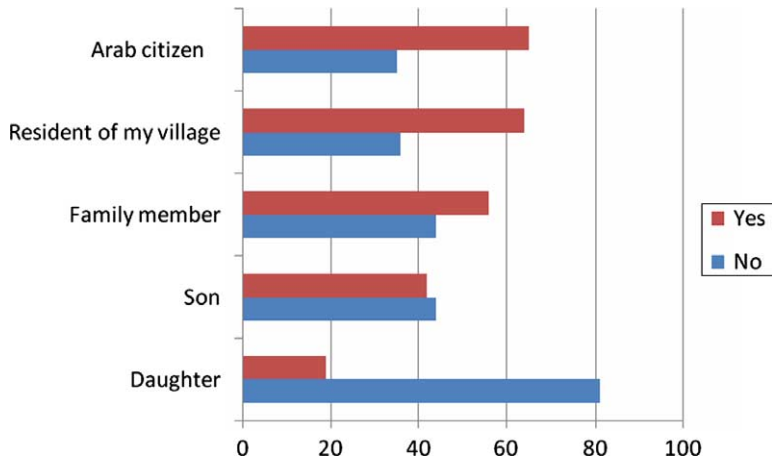


Figure 3. Support for recruitment according to social relationship.

the police force. The recruitment of Arab citizens to the police is a sensitive issue because of recent history and overarching questions of identity and belonging. The growing tensions between the Arab minority and the state and the events of October 2000 present political and psychological obstacles that may prevent Arab citizens from joining the police force, which they see as hostile and discriminatory. On the other hand, the recruitment of Arab police officers could, potentially, improve police service in Arab neighbourhoods, change police practices and, consequently, the image of police among Arab citizens. The question remains as to whether Arab citizens believe that joining the police could make a significant change or whether distrust is too big an obstacle to overcome.

The obstacles to recruitment were evident in the focus groups where participants expressed strong objections to joining the police. Arab citizens who serve as police officers, it was argued, are part of a system that discriminates against Arabs. Such officers prefer loyalty to the police over their own ethnic group. As one of the participants explained, 'This is a Jewish state that serves its Jewish citizens. Why would I serve it?' Another doubted that Arab police officers would serve their community. 'Arab officers want to show their superiors that they are loyal, they want to prove themselves and this comes at the expense of their community'. Alongside this criticism, however, the hope was expressed that in the future Arabs would become equal citizens and be able to serve the police without feel guilty. Until these changes occur, however, Arab police officers, the participants claimed, will have little if any positive impact on the way the police treat the Arab minority. Consequently, they concluded, Arabs should not join the police.

The survey, however, yielded different results. A majority of the 1006 people interviewed – 60% – support the recruitment of Arabs to the police forces. While 54% would not join the police if they were looking for a job, 29% say they would, and another 13% would consider the possibility. If a family member or a close friend decided to join the police, 34% would support the decision and 41% would not object to it. As Figure 3 above indicates, support for the recruitment of an Arab citizen or a resident of the village is about 65%, somewhat lower for a family member (56%), lower

Table 2. Recruitment.

The preferable profile of a police force in Arab communities	Percentage
Religion	
Arab and a Jewish	56
Arab only	12
Residency	
Arab police officer from outside my village	60
Support for recruitment according to social relationship	65

for a son (42%) and very low for a daughter (19%), probably a result of the traditional character of Arab society with regard to women's employment and gender roles.

Some 45% of the respondents believe that the recruitment of Arab citizens will have a positive impact on the relations between the police and the Arab community. This response does necessarily mean that Arab citizens want to be policed by Arab police officers. Rather, respondents indicated they were more concerned with the fairness and quality of service than with the ethnicity of the police officers in the neighbourhood. The favoured make up of policing is a joint Jewish-Arab policing in Arab towns and neighbourhoods, and Arabs assigned should be from outside the place of assignment (see Table 2). Overall, about 45% of respondents agree that 'an Arab citizen serving in the police is also serving his community', underscoring the willingness of many Arab citizens to join the police.

### *Training*

Effective policing in a multi-cultural setting may be aided by cultural sensitivity and familiarity with the needs of ethnic minorities. Indeed, in both the focus groups and the survey there was general agreement that training police officers could be of significant value for the relations between the police and the Arab minority. For example, in the focus groups it was suggested that 'police officers will come to know our culture from firsthand experience because this brings people close together. It is unfortunate that they only learn negative things about us, that we are a security threat, that we cause only problems and that they need to treat us harshly'. However, beyond this general agreement it was difficult to pinpoint what exactly such training should consist of. Participants in the focus groups found it easier to indicate what should not be part of the police officers' training, mainly entrenchment of the perceptions of Arab citizens as enemies. Accordingly, it was suggested that police officers be trained to treat Arab citizens as equals and with proper respect. Some more specific suggestions included familiarising police officers with Arab culture and providing an opportunity for police officers to meet Arab citizens in comfortable settings rather than on the beat.

In the survey, more specific questions were asked about the topic. About 65% of the participants agreed that 'a police officer who is not familiar with Arab culture and customs cannot perform well when working among the Arab community'. In addition, 63% believe that when working in Arab neighbourhoods the police should attempt to solve problems in accordance with the local culture. The training of police officers may be an arena for police-minority cooperation, as 42% of the respondents

agree that Arab citizens could and should take an active role in the training of police officers.

### ***Police community relations***

General perceptions about cooperation with the police were also examined. As discussed above, community-policy reforms can range from initiatives from joint forums of consultation to supervision of the police through civilian boards. These reforms require the willingness of both the police and of the community. The majority of the respondents (60%) rejected the statement that 'It is unlikely that Arab citizens will collaborate with police forces on any matter' and 49% reported that they would obey a police officer's orders even if they disagreed with them. Forty per cent believe that good policing must include a sincere effort of involvement in community life and 75% agree that 'the police will succeed in working among Arab communities if they involve community leaders and seek their help when problems in the community arise'. In addition, 40% believe that good policing must include efforts by the police to involve themselves in community life.

In the past decade the Israeli police have established a system of community policing in Arab neighbourhoods. Community police officers, it was hoped, would be familiar with the community and establish positive relations with the police through various activities and a 'softer' approach to policing. The feeling towards community policing was mixed with many complaints that it neglects important issues (such as crime and violence) and, therefore, is part of the under-policing problem. In the focus groups the community police force was described as a 'waste of public money'. In the survey, 33% of respondents agreed that 'the community police answers the needs of the community', while 36% rejected the statement.

### ***Other factors influencing Arab citizens' perceptions***

Finally, we also examined the effect of various demographic variables – gender, education, income, religion and region – on perceptions about the police. Women differed significantly from men on several key issues. Using a *t*-test we found that women regard police work as higher in quality ( $p = 0.000$ ) and are more supportive of community policing that is sensitive to the needs of the population ( $p = 0.008$ ). While both men and women feel strongly that they are under-policed, women feel slightly less so than men ( $p = 0.006$ ). Gender played no role in attitudes toward over-policing. Women were more supportive of recruitment to the police for members of their close family and friends, except the recruitment of women, a sensitive topic in Arab society.

An *F*-test demonstrated that level of education had a significant effect on differences in attitudes as well. Participants with an academic education had a better evaluation of police work ( $p = 0.000$ ), expressed stronger support for community-oriented policing ( $p = 0.001$ ) and were less likely to believe the community was under-policed ( $p = 0.001$ ). These differences can be explained by the ability of educated citizens to make better use of the available police services. Consequently, respondents with lower levels of education believe that Arab citizens should not cooperate with the police, while educated Arabs held the opposite view ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r_p = 0.136$ ). Regarding recruitment, those with less education were more supportive of recruit-

ment to the police for members of their own family or close friends than those with a higher level of education. The large number of women in the former group, who were more supportive of recruitment, may explain this difference. Similar results were obtained for different income groups (much above average, above average, average and below average incomes) regarding perceptions of the police. Again, people with an academic education and a higher income had a better evaluation of police work ( $p=0.000$ ), expressed stronger support for community-oriented policing ( $p=0.001$ ) and were less likely to feel that their community suffered from under-policing ( $p=0.000$ ).

Religion also had a significant effect on perceptions of the police and reforms. Muslims have a lower evaluation of police services, are less willing than Christians or Druze to join the police (using a contingency coefficient  $p=0.001$ ;  $c=0.171$ ) and would be less supportive of a relative or a friend who decided to join the police ( $p=0.000$ ;  $c=0.236$ ). This finding can be explained by the tense relations between the Muslim minority and the state, compared to the Christian minority that is better integrated economically and the Druze minority that is identified with the state and serves in the military. Age also influenced perceptions about recruitment. Younger people believe that Arab citizens should serve in the police while older people held the opposite view ( $p=0.001$ ;  $r_p = -0.113$ ). This difference can be explained by younger people's greater need for employment and the current difficulties they encounter in the job market.

## Conclusions

Many democratic states contend with the reality of cultural differences and struggles between ethnic, national and religious groups over questions of recognition and justice. The increased multiculturalism in countries poses challenges not only for conceptual definitions of democracy but also for the actual practices of its institutions. The police have a special role in contemporary democracies as its practices often display inherent societal prejudices that are of grave importance to minorities. Tense relations between the police and minorities are often underscored by real and/or perceived discrimination evident in the over-policing or under-policing of minorities. The perceptions of minorities that they have been neglected or abused has led to declining trust in the police, a reluctance to cooperate with it and, in some cases, direct clashes that further erode trust. However, if the police can engage with diversity and overcome its own biases and prejudices in order to better serve minorities, it may gain the community's trust and improve its ability to operate among minorities in accordance with democratic norms.

The purpose of this study was to identify the potential for police reforms in Israel that would contribute to improving relations between the police and the Arab minority. A literature review points to three main areas of reform examined in this work: recruitment of minority police officers, training of police officers and the establishment of police-community cooperation. While broad support for the general principles of good policing (use of minimum force, impartiality, fairness and accountability) was found in many countries and ethnic minorities, little is known about the level of support for specific kinds of reforms (Weitzer and Tuch 2006, p. 37). The combined potential of different reforms has to be examined in specific locations in relation to the needs of the community. Accordingly, a bottom-up approach of



policy planning was used in this work to study the perceptions of Arab citizens in Israel in order to understand what reforms might be of value.

Arab citizens' general perceptions of police and policing include, on the one hand, strong feelings of discrimination or over-policing and, on the other hand, of neglect or under-policing. Combined, these feelings underscore the tense relationship with and distrust of the police, often exemplified in real incidents. Arab citizens regard police services as discriminatory and of poor quality, but realise that no practical alternative to provide for security is available. This realisation is also reflected in attitudes towards reforms. Arab citizens agree that training and police-community liaisons could improve police work and are willing to take part in reforms. While recruitment of Arab police officers is a sensitive issue, there is general support for this measure and a willingness to join the police. Thus, while relations between the Israeli police and the Arab minority reached a low point 10 years ago, and have yet to improve, reforms in the police may benefit both sides and be part of a democratic inclusive measure towards the Arab minority. Success, of course, depends not only on perceptions among Arab citizens but also, and to a larger extent, on what the police and policy-makers would be willing to do.

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