

March 2023

UPDATE JULY 2023 – STATUS



Preparing for the New Reality of Israel

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan

JULY 2023 – STATUS UPDATE

The following slides summarize the intended actions of the coalition government that are relevant to Arab society and Jewish-Arab relations, the expected impact if implemented, and the identified mitigating strategies and actions Sikkuy-Aufoq intends to take.

In this status update we have added the mitigating strategies and actions that we have taken so far, and have also added the current status of the government actions. Slides with updates are titled accordingly, updates are in **blue**.

Introduction

Reflecting the grave crisis of constitutional, democratic, societal, and human rights that the new government and its agenda has brought about, Sikkuy-Aufoq's annual review of the strategic plan this year was replaced by the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan presented in this document. Our assessment shows that if completed the government's actions will undermine the legal, material, and cultural bases for equality and partnership between the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. However, significant damage is already being done even if not all of the government's goals are achieved as the readiness of the government to consider these actions and the often hateful public discussion around them makes clear the real thoughts of many.

Our risk assessment

- Identified the true goals of the government through detailed analysis of the coalition agreements and focused monitoring of government statements and actions
- Identified the risks of these goals to our vision of equality and partnership between Arabs and Jews
- Guided our formulation of mitigating strategies and actions to protect progress already made and to minimize the damage that will come

A strong message regarding the legitimacy of exclusion, racism, incitement and violence against Arab citizens is ringing loud in mainstream Israeli society. Together in partnership we will not let this happen.



Our framework for action

Our assessment shows that if completed the coalition agreements and the actions of the government will:

Weaken the **legal basis** for equality and partnership through

- Judicial overhaul
- Authorizing discrimination against Arab citizens in trade and in services through new legislation
- Enabling the disqualification of Arab candidates from being elected to the Knesset through new legislation

Weaken the **material basis** for equality and partnership through

- Redirection of funds approved for the 5-year plans for Arab society - GD550 and GD1279
- Reframing of the struggle against violence in Arab society to one of 'war against national crime'
- Judaization of the Negev

Weaken the **cultural basis** for equality and partnership through

- Forbidding the display of the Palestinian flag through new legislation
- Weakening civil society NGOs and the ability of foreign governments to support them by imposing ruinous tax penalties on foreign government donations

Our response

Based on our risk assessment and the strategies and actions identified, as a veteran civil society NGO we believe it is our responsibility to

- Initiate and lead identified mitigating strategies and actions where we are the primary actors in civil society
- Collaborate with others on mitigating strategies and actions where we can add value
- For the long-term (and this IS a long-term fight), take concrete steps to develop capabilities that will be needed to advance mitigating strategies and actions but that don't currently exist in Sikkuy-Aufoq

Judicial overhaul - Government action

Judicial overhaul will weaken the judiciary, the civil service, the free press, and organized labor so that

- It will be much easier to pass laws that discriminate against Arab society.
- The civil service will eventually become less professionalized and more politicized, diminishing its willingness to initiate and promote changes that support equality and partnership.
- The media will become more partisan, less critical, and less independent. The loss of independence will eliminate the media's role as a fair monitor and communicator of government actions.
- The stage is more fully set for destructive civilian clashes between Jews and Arabs, from verbal interchanges and inciteful discourse to extreme violence and pogroms.

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Actions Status July 2023
Join existing protest initiatives and statements	Collaborate, in cases that align with our values and the issues we fight for	Sikkuy-Aufoq, alone and with other civil society NGOs, publishes statements on government actions that impact Arab citizens and Arab society.
Conceptualizing the implications of judicial overhaul for Arab society	Initiate and lead, collaborate with partner organizations	Sikkuy-Aufoq publishes articles on the impact of the judicial overhaul on Arab citizens and Arab society, and collaborates with other organizations in roundtable discussions and seminars.
Advocacy vis-à-vis international institutions	Collaborate with relevant partner organizations, develop necessary skills and connections	In initial discussion and planning phase
Closely monitor government plans and actions	Dedicate project coordinator for monitoring government plans and actions, serve as a focal point for related information and Sikkuy-Aufoq responses (true for all identified risks)	Currently recruiting a dedicated project coordinator for monitoring, analyzing, and reporting government activity

- Government legislation related to the judicial system was temporarily suspended in March of this year as a result of effective public protest.
- In order to achieve “Otzma Yehudit” support for the suspension, the government approved the establishment of the national guard under the direct authority of Ben-Gvir
- On April 30th the Knesset returned from recess. If no compromise is achieved under the President’s mediation, the coalition is expected to fully advance the suggested legislation.
- The coalition is using its method of ‘death by a thousand cuts’ (or the salami slicing method, in Hebrew) to advance its agenda and legislation piecemeal, cut by cut, before the Knesset session recesses before the end of the month. For instance, cancellation of the ‘reasonableness standard’, which passed the first reading a week ago and which the government intends to pass into law in the next two weeks, is a key part of the coalition’s plan to weaken Israel’s judicial system.

Authorizing discrimination against Arab citizens – Government action

Authorizing discrimination against Arab citizens in trade and in services through new legislation

- Will increase the institutional discrimination, racism, and violence against Arab citizens in every aspect of life
- Deepen the exclusion of Arab citizens from Israeli society, minimizing or completely erasing the possibility of a fair shared society in Israel

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Actions Status July 2023
<p>Formulate policy steps for institutions (such as universities, hospitals, regional clusters, large employers) to ensure respectful practices and prevent racism, prepare for emergencies and escalation; harness the administrations of institutions to promote these processes</p>	<p>Lead in collaboration with other organizations that work with institutions such as universities, large employers and others</p>	<p>Relevant policy steps have been incorporated in current Shared Society projects including: public parks in mixed Arab-Jewish municipalities, public spaces in the health system and in museums, education for shared society, representation of Arab society in the media</p>
<p>Mobilize our donors to pressure the government</p>	<p>Lead</p>	<p>Discussions with donors in progress to understand their positions and desired actions</p>
<p>Accelerate the development of our strategic program Fighting Delegitimization</p>	<p>Lead</p>	<p>Advisory committee established and first stage of program in progress. Program focus changed to 'Mainstreaming Equality and Shared Society'</p>

- Legislation to enable discrimination by private businesses was strongly objected by the Ashkenazi-Haredi public, and hence most likely won't be approved. However, raising this issue to the public discourse can itself encourage illegal discrimination against Arab citizens.
- The proposed government decision submitted, giving Jewish, Zionist values, a practical status as a guiding principle in policy processes, was returned for revision due to opposition by the ultra-Orthodox and evident international pressure and will likely be brought up again in the future.

Simplifying the disqualification of Arab candidates – Government action

Simplifying the disqualification of Arab candidates from being elected to the Knesset through new legislation will

- Potentially eliminate all elected representation for 20% of Israel's population
- Enable an increase in the institutional discrimination, racism, and violence against Arab citizens in every aspect of life, starting from the Knesset
- Deepen the exclusion of Arab citizens from Israeli society, minimizing or completely erasing the possibility of a fair shared society in Israel

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Status July 2023
Accelerate the development of our strategic program Fighting Delegitimization	Lead	Advisory committee established and first stage of program in progress. Program focus changed to 'Mainstreaming Equality and Shared Society'
Public campaign	Collaborate with partner organizations	In development pending advancement of the government action

- A private legislation to ease the disqualification of Arab candidates was submitted.
- No updates available

Redirection of funds from Arab society plans - Government action

Redirection of funds approved for GD550 and 1279 will

- Slow the trend of closing gaps that have existed for decades
- Increase the danger that this trend will be halted and reversed
- Have a significant negative impact on Arab society, including an increase in unemployment, poverty, and violence
- Lead to the eventual collapse of the Israeli economy as fewer Arab citizens are able to contribute to the economy

Redirection of funds from Arab society plans - Our response

ACTIONS UPDATE

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Status July 2023
Improving monitoring system for the program	Lead, in collaboration with member organizations in the committees of the National Council of Arab Mayors	First version of monitoring tool developed, pilot for use by Sikkuy-Aufoq to start in near future; intent to share with other NGOs
Mapping the sections that are at risk for cuts/diverting funds and taking action to prevent cuts	Lead	Mapping in progress, estimated completion date of Sept 2023
Harnessing high-ranking parties from various sectors (civil service, the business sector, media, OECD) to object to harming the plans	Lead	To be determined based on outputs of mapping described above
Strengthening ties with civil service that is “on our side” and streamlining processes ensuring the flow of information	Lead	Integrated into ongoing communications with relevant civil servants
Mobilizing invested donors to pressure the government	Lead	Initial discussions with donors to understand their positions
Understand and leverage the processes used to advance the ultra-Orthodox, and advocate for implementing them in the plans for Arab society too	Lead	Successfully leveraged advancement of ultra-orthodox representation in the public sector to ensure inclusion of Arab society in legislation
Increasing our focus on the Knesset	Lead	Currently recruiting a dedicated project coordinator



- GR 550 budgets for transportation infrastructures in ALAs was reduced from 2 Billion NIS per year (as was planned) to 500 million NIS per year in the state budget for 2023-2024 extending the period of implementation of transportation infrastructure from 10 years to 40 years.
- The rest of GR 550 budgets will be probably approved in the state budget for 2023-2024.
- The minister for social equality (incharge of the implementation of GR 550) declared that NGOs that are involved in the implementation of 550 will be scrutinized and the government will cancel programs with organizations that “support Palestinian identity, such as AJEEC.”
- With the exception of the budget cut noted above, GD 550 was approved as part of the state budget. We anticipate that the government may attempt to reduce or delay funding by other means; we will monitor this closely and respond as necessary.

Reframing the Struggle Against Violence - Government action

Reframing of the struggle against violence in Arab society to one of 'war against nationalist crime' and linking such a process to the struggle against crime and violence in Arab society will

- Escalate the difficult relationships between the police and Arab citizens that will lead to violent clashes
- Irreparably harm trust relations between the State and the Arab citizens
- Derail the struggle against crime and violence in Arab society

Reframing the Struggle Against Violence - Our response **ACTIONS UPDATE**

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Status July 2023
Formulating a public position as an organization	Initiate and lead	In progress
Monitoring processes in this area	Initiate, collaborate with partner organizations	Development of position papers in progress
Public campaign	Collaborate with partner organizations	Publishing articles clarifying the potential threat of intended government actions (e.g. the addition of the General Security Agency 'Shabak', publishing social media posts

- Legislation for politicization of the police has been partially blocked due to effective resistance by a coalition of NGOs led by Idea.
- The establishment of a national guard under the direct authority of Ben Gvir was approved.
- In 2023 the rate of murders in the Arab society almost doubled in comparison with the same period of time in 2022.
- The 'Seif' police section dedicated to fighting crime and violence in Arab society has been dismantled.
- **The government is nationalizing violence:**
 - considering the insertion of the Israel Security Agency (the Shin Bet, or Shabak in Hebrew) as part of their response to the terrifying explosion of violence in Arab society.
 - Legislation is proposed for allowing administrative detention with the approval of Ben Gvir

Judaization of the Negev – Government action

Judaizing the Negev will establish Jewish communities and develop national infrastructure, and in doing so will

- Advance the forced uprooting and destruction of the unrecognized villages of the Negev Bedouin citizens of Israel and further emphasize that the Bedouin citizens and their villages have no real place in Israeli society
- Force expulsion and destruction of the unrecognized villages that may lead to violence between the Bedouin citizens and the police, deepening even more the sense of hostility between the Jews and Arabs of the Negev

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Status July 2023
Mapping infrastructure projects designated for implementation	Lead together with partner organizations	Comprehensive mapping completed, advocacy to mitigate risks in planning stage
Formulating initiatives with communities for recognizing villages threatened by eviction	Lead together with partner organizations	Developing advocacy plans to mitigate the risk
Building coalitions for public opposition	Collaborate	On-going

- Discussions in the south planning committee regarding plans to establish 2 new Jewish villages are ongoing.
- Strong objection from the Society for the Protection of Nature, Arab and Jewish local authorities (Rahat, Beer-Sheva, Bnei-Shimon) and the Ministry of Finance.
- Accelerating the development of national infrastructure is included in the The Arrangements Law draft and expected to be approved in May 2023 alongside the approval of the national budget.
- Discussion on increasing the majority of representatives appointed by government ministers in planning committees has begun in the interior committee of the Knesset and in the national planning committee.
- Chairs of both committees agreed with ACRI, Bimkom and Sikkuy-Aufoq's argument that this process will discriminate against Arab society and accepted Sikkuy-Aufoq's recommendation that additional civil society and Arab representatives should be appointed.
- Reliance on data and policy recommendations from far-right, nationalistic NGOs (Regavim, HaShomer HaChadash, Mishmar Hanegev etc.).

Legislating against the Palestinian flag - Government action

Forbidding the display of the Palestinian flag through new legislation will

- Support the delegitimization of Arab society and the institutional erasure of its collective Palestinian identity
- Further emphasize that a collective Palestinian identity has no place in Israeli society and so eliminate the hope of a fair shared society of Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Status July 2023
Accelerate the development of our strategic program Fighting Delegitimization	Lead	Advisory committee established and first stage of program in progress. Program focus changed to 'Mainstreaming Equality and Shared Society'
Continuing to advance Shared Society through our existing projects	Lead	Shared Society projects are moving forward, including public parks in mixed cities; significant interest by multiple hospitals in our research 'Arabic in the health system'; Arabic in museums; education for shared society, fair representation of Arab society in the media, and others
Continue to advance a fair public discourse using all available media channels	Lead	Publication of social media posts



- The ministers committee for legislation has decided to support a private legislation in this issue by member of Otzma Yehudit.
- The minister for national security (Ben-Gvir) has instructed the police not to allow raising of Palestinian flags in every public space.
- Police have begun to enforce sanctions against protestors that raise PL flags.
- Protest movement has completely excluded the PL flag.
- PL flag was originally more present in the first widespread demonstration against proposed judicial overhaul.
- Even if legislation isn't approved, severe damage has already been done.

Weakening Civil Society NGOs - Government action

Weakening civil society NGOs and the ability of foreign governments to partner with them as agents of social change by imposing ruinous tax penalties on their support will

- Cause severe financial harm to organizations working for equality and partnership, including the closure of organizations receiving any amount of foreign government support
- Decrease or eliminate the power of global philanthropy to work effectively to advance values of democracy, equality, and shared society between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel through destruction of the NGO half of the partnership

Actions	What Sikkuy-Aufoq will do	Status July 2023
Joining legal and public actions led by umbrella organizations in the field of philanthropy and civil society	Collaborate	Discussions held with umbrella organizations to understand how best to support
Working with our philanthropic partners to identify opportunities for making our powerful joined voices heard in Israel, in the US, and in Europe	Lead	Discussions in progress with selected major donors to identify opportunities.
Counter the public delegitimization of organizations working for equality and partnership through our campaigns to change the public discourse	Lead	Advisory committee established and first stage of program in progress. Program focus changed to 'Mainstreaming Equality and Shared Society'



- Significant high-level opposition and pressure by US and European governments and other interested parties led to the government's May 28 removal of this proposed legislation from consideration at this time.
- Our expectation is that this proposal will return in another form in the winter session; we and others in civil society are monitoring and will act as necessary.

Summary

The coalition government has brought Israel and its citizens to a state of emergency. The hundreds of thousands of protesters in the street recognize it, the world recognizes it, and we believe it is our shared responsibility to fight against it.

The sudden instability, uncertainty about the future, and indeed panic that the government's actions have created for all those for whom democracy, equality, and shared society are fundamental values is frightening. And yet we do not have the luxury of remaining frozen in fear. Sikkuy-Aufoq's action plan looking forward is to

- Continue the progress of our current projects – for socio-economic development, for the development and growth of shared public spaces, and for reshaping the public discourse
- Begin work on the new actions identified in our Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan, and so do our best to protect our fundamental values.

Together we can make this happen.

