

Demography as an instrument of opposition

Why is the Coordinator of Government Activities in Judea and Samaria publishing the Palestinian Authority's distorted and tendentious data, which adds more than over a million people to the Palestinian population?

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In recent days, the false "demographic demon" was conjured from its familiar bottle by the Coordinator of Government Activities in Judea and Samaria (COGAT), which saw fit to present the data of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to the Knesset. According to the PCBS, five million Arabs live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

This reawakened the old dispute over data and numbers, separation and disengagement – but since when did PA numbers become trustworthy? Why doesn't Israel have its own data on the number of Palestinian Arabs? Why isn't data gathered by Israeli demographers brought before the Israeli public to prove the systematic and tendentious deception of the PA, which adds at least 1.27 million Arabs to Judea and Samaria and another half-million to Gaza?

The interests of the PA are clear as day – the destruction in phases of the State of Israel as a Jewish state. If acts of murder, encouraging terrorists and paying salaries to terrorists are all permissible toward this goal, then surely so is spreading lies and falsifying data.

But while the PA agenda is clear, it is not clear why COGAT sees fit to promote this false and tendentious data before the Knesset and the Israeli public. What is the purpose? What is the goal of the administration in general? Whom is it trying to serve?

The history of the past 20 years teaches us that ever since 1997 the COGAT office has been repeating Palestinian data. In that year, the unit of the Central Bureau of Statistics that dealt with examining Palestinian data was done away with and since then, it has chosen to rely exclusively on Palestinian data, without scrutiny, without checking facts. Why?

For years, we feel that the Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria has understood its purpose to be serving those who,

in its eyes, are "locals," meaning the Arabs. The Jews in its eyes are temporary, "occupiers," and ultimately, in the administration's opinion, they will have to leave Judea and Samaria. But the plans of the administration are not implemented because on the ground, there is extensive Jewish settlement, which, despite its severe limitations, and despite the fact that its hands and feet are tied, continues to grow and flourish, and is now even demanding sovereignty. After 50 years, with a third and fourth generation born in and growing up in Judea and Samaria, the tune in Israel has changed.

Since this is the situation on the ground, those who are leading the agenda in the administration have no choice but to frighten the Israeli public with the warning: "The Arabs are gaining on you, Israel! Run away, leave the land. Establish a Palestinian state in the heart of the land and save Israel."

This problem is not new. There have always been those who have tried to frighten us and conjure up the demographic demon, but we have always overcome and proven that the predictions were wrong.

It is important that we all remember that when Theodor Herzl began the political process of Zionism, there was a Jewish minority of 9% west of the Jordan River. Did this disturbing demographic fact prevent us from continuing to plan for the Zionist return?

In 1948 we were a minority of 39%. Today we are a Jewish majority of 66% (excluding Gaza) with a tailwind of a higher Jewish birthrate than the Arabs – 3.16 births per Jewish woman compared to 3.11 for Arab women, and this trend continues. We cannot deny that we are faced with a significant challenge, but we are on the upswing, we have a goal – Zionism's next step is the realization of our right to the land. This right does not disappear and is not forgotten as a result of any demographic situation. We have dealt with it in the past and we will continue to deal with it and to overcome.

If we examine Zionist history, we find

quite a few examples of this. One of these is the way the late prime minister Yitzhak Shamir dealt with it by encouraging aliyah. At this time, we need a government to set for itself a pro-active goal for aliyah. To encourage, to absorb and to create conditions for potential aliyah. There is a potential for millions more Jewish Israelis: 700,000 in the former Soviet Union, 300,000 in Germany, 500,000 in France. Our brothers from France must be encouraged to come to Israel and not to Canada. And in addition to these, there are another 200,000 waiting in Argentina, 250,000 in Britain, 6,000,000 in the US and more.

To those who tried to discourage the leadership of the Yishuv from the idea of establishing a state, David Ben-Gurion responded: leaders do not accept demographics, they create them!

Aliyah, settlement and security continue to be our Zionist goals. We succeeded when we were a minority in the land. Why would we not succeed now, when we are a majority, with a well-developed, advanced state, with tremendous human resources?

In another 30 years, Israel will be 100. It is expected that there will be 20 million residents. Where will all of them live? In the coastal plain, which rivals Gaza in its population density? Does anyone think that we will be able to exist without massive settlement in the Jordan Valley, the eastern wall that protects us from the infiltration of millions of Arabs? Will we give up the mountain ridge, the security ridge for the lowlands and Ben Gurion Airport, the ridge where there is such rich history of the Jewish people, the history that justifies our existence here? Do those who seek to frighten us really expect us to give up these places?

The residents of Israel understand and have internalized the fact that the "two state solution" is not a solution, but a delusion, one that poses an existential threat to Israel.

The residents of Israel understand well the lessons of the past – that every withdrawal has resulted in an upswing of murderous Arab terrorism. The residents of Israel understand that the establishment of a Palestinian state in the heart of our land is what would bring about a true demographic problem, as millions of Arabs would stream into Judea and Samaria, turning the Jewish majority into a minority.

The residents of Israel know full well that all of the stories about a "Palestinian people" are nothing but fiction.

Indeed, there are Arabs that have infiltrated into our land, the land from which we were expelled. A small minority of Jews has always remained and held on to the land while other parts of the People of Israel, in the Diaspora, kept faith and longed to return. The Arabs who infiltrated into our land did this as a result of the Zionist return, in order to find work here. They infiltrated as private individuals and not as a people with national rights. This false narrative was invented only in the 1970s.

These Arabs are now in our land. After applying sovereignty over Judea and Samaria, the part of the Arab population that desires to remain here will be able to enjoy peace and security under Israeli sovereignty, with the status of residents and a path to citizenship if they meet criteria of loyalty.

"Apartheid, apartheid" the bleeding hearts will scream, but this, too, is only cheap demagoguery. The Arabs themselves know that the conditions that they would have as residents in Israel are much better than what any other Arabs have in the Middle East. Compared to the many important rights that they would receive, not being able to vote for the Knesset is a small violation of civil rights, and one we should not apologize for. All over the world there are sectors of population with a similar status and the world is quiet. Yes, "the poor of your own city take priority." We must take care of our own people. This is our commitment.

On Passover 5778 we can therefore be optimistic. There is already a Jewish majority in the Land of Israel and with the appropriate Zionist policy of sovereignty and governance, the government of Israel will be able to bring about a solid Jewish majority of 75%. To those who are trying to scare us with the so-called demographic demon, adding more than a million Arabs to their data for political reasons, we say: we survived Pharaoh; we will survive you, too.

For those who would like to see numbers and data, we present some here (thanks to researcher Yoram Ettinger):

From the numbers presented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, which claims that there are three million Arabs in Judea and Samaria, we must deduct the 400,000 Arabs who have been living outside of Israel for more than one year and were included in the Palestinian CBS number. There are also 330,000 Arabs of Jerusalem who are already included within the Israeli population. Likewise, we must deduct about 100,000 Arabs from Judea and Samaria who married Israeli Arabs and have received residency or citizenship and are also already included in the Israeli count. And this is besides another 250,000 Arabs who have emigrated to localities abroad.

Ettinger goes on, adding to the number the approximately 190,000 false births that appear in the Palestinian CBS but for some reason do not appear in the Palestinian Ministry of Health and Education. All of these together bring us to the appropriate reduction of at least 1,270,000 Arabs that the Palestinian CBS adds as a battering ram based on falsehood.

The essence of sovereignty is responsibility for what happens in the field: in controlling the field, in being familiar with the true data and in distributing the correct data without foreign trends that weaken our position.

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