

Conceptual Framework for Minority Rights in Planning and Economic Fields

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Madam High Commissioner

Madam Independent Expert, distinguish participants, minorities and civil society representatives.

Introduction

The “minority question” is among the most critical issues of our contemporary times. Nonetheless, a critical review of the literature on ‘minority rights’ in general and in the field of ‘planning and economic’ in particular reveals a striking lack of comprehensive theory or a holistic conceptual framework on minority rights in these fields. Therefore, based on the existing interdisciplinary bodies of knowledge and practices regarding minority planning and economic human rights, I propose a new conceptual framework for analyzing and understanding minority rights regarding planning and economic aspects. In the following, I will present the conceptual framework and then I will employ it to the Arab Minority in Israel.

In brief, this conceptual framework is a network of interlinked *concepts* that together provide a comprehensive understanding of minority rights. This conceptual framework, however, is not merely a collection of concepts but rather a construct composed of ‘consistent’ concepts in which each plays an integral role and is intrinsically linked to the others. Eventually, the conceptual framework that I suggest for minority human rights is constructed around eight rights, or eight fundamental pillars, that together constitute the conceptual framework. Following that, I will apply this framework to analyze the rights the Palestinian ethnic minority in Israel.

The Rights of the Conceptual Framework

1. The Right to Participation: This right stands against the crisis and the most disturbing problems of minority life. It suggests that minorities should play a central role in any decision that impacts their life and human settlements, such as planning, economic investment, urban development, and environmental policies. Today, participation is even more critical giving the growing impacts of neoliberalism and globalization policies, which have led to a less democratic room for urban residents in general and for minorities in particular.

2. The Right to Space Production: This includes the right of minority inhabitants to physically access, occupy, own, use and produce their environmental and economic spaces. It includes the right to produce urban spaces that meet the needs of the minority social and cultural aspirations. Human settlements, cities and informal spaces are places where people carry out most of their daily life. Apparently, these places are ideal places for constructing human rights for all groups, including minorities.

3. The Right to Unconditional Citizenship: This involves rights, duties and membership in a state, regardless any condition. A restrictive, or conditional citizenship for minorities and indigenous people is a dangerous and inhuman practice.

4. The Right of Cultural, Spatial, and Economic Self-Determination: This right entails the production and reproduction of all aspects of minority life. This emphasizes the right of minorities to produce their human spaces. Thus, it radically expands the scope of rights beyond the conventional schemes. It is about producing minority spaces according to its heart's desire.

5. The Right to Adequate Representation in the Economic and Planning

Institutions: This right ensures the involvement of minority groups in the economic and space production in the city and state scales. It is the right to be part of the economic and development institutional engines. Without an adequate representation, minority will remain behind any economic prosperity.

6. The Right to Share Economic Restructuring and Progress: The domination of contemporary globalization and neoliberal policies have led to the restructuring of state economy. Economies have been moving from Fordist to post-Fordist structures. Minorities have been left behind. Therefore, this right aims to ensure that minorities be an integral part of the economic shift and restructuring of state economy.

7. The Right to Work: This right entails equal and decent work, for women and men. This suggests to ensure their participation in all economic fields including those of high income and new emerging economic branches such as hi-tech.

8. The Right to Fight Inequality: This right ensures the legitimacy of minority groups to fight socio-economic gaps, disparities and poverty.

Assessment of the Rights of Palestinian Minority in Israel according to the proposed Framework

In the aftermath of the war of 1948 between Arabs and Jews, Israel was established and 780,000 Palestinians were displaced. Only 156,000 Palestinians remained within the state of Israel and became Israeli citizens. The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian urban elite and middle class were deported from the country and became refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and nearby Arab countries. The Palestinian Arab

in Israel is an indigenous minority, who formed the majority in Palestine until 1947. Today, this minority constitutes about 20% of the state's population.

Conclusions:

1. The Palestinian minority in Israel lives under a threatened and conditional citizenship. Since its establishment, Israel has been practicing a demographic ideology that aims to keep the Jewish population the vast majority. In Israel, there are some old and new laws that discriminate against the Palestinian minority. The most important are immigration laws, The Law of Return (1950) and The Citizenship Law (1952), which allow Jews to freely immigrate to Israel and gain citizenship, but excludes Palestinians. Recently, the discriminatory Nationality and Entry into Israel Law, which prohibits the granting of any residency or citizenship status to Palestinians from the Occupied Territories married to Arab citizens of Israel was renewed. "The citizenship of Arabs in Israel is so distorted that it can surely be called '*de facto* Class B citizenship'. The shooting to death of 13 Arab demonstrators in the fall of 2000 struck a critical blow to Arab citizenship.
2. The Palestinian collective struggle for equality in the planning and economic field has become a central part of their life and collective identity. They protest against governmental policies related to their urban life and issues of land confiscation, demolition of unauthorized houses and unrecognized villages, economic injustice, and inequality in the governmental resource allocation for Arab cities.
3. The Israeli authorities have confiscated the vast majority of Palestinian-owned lands, which has left the minority with only about 2% of the country's lands, while 93% of all lands in Israel are public lands under direct state control.

4. The economic and spatial interests of the Palestinians in general are not represented in the central government or its powerful ministries. Although Palestinian inhabitants have the right to vote, to be elected to the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), they are outside of the governmental power and are extremely weak in the parliamentary game in Israel.
 5. Israel has a hierarchical and centralized planning system for the use of land. Palestinians are extremely under-represented at the level of government or at the national and district levels of planning committees. Therefore, they have almost no control over their cities' planning and economic development.
 6. There are two economies in Israel: one is the well-developed, modern, Jewish economy, which continues to advance. The other is the lagging, undeveloped Arab economy, which has suffered from institutional discrimination for several decades.
 7. The Palestinian minority employment rate in Israel is highly lower than that of Jews in Israel, and this rate is one of the lowest in the world. As a result, the OECD countries have confronted Israel with the important challenge of employing Arabs and closing the gaps between Arabs and Jews in Israel in the economic arena.
 8. The vast, ever increasing economic gaps between Jews and Arabs in Israel, which exceed those in the OECD countries, are manifested in the following spheres
 - a. Approximately 50% of Arab families live below the poverty line compared with about 15% of Jewish families.
 - b. Only 1% of the employees in the high-tech industry are Arab.
 - c. Only 2% of all industrial zones in Israel are located in Arab settlements.
- The participation rate of Arab women in the labor force in Israel is one of

the lowest in the world, currently standing at 21% as compared to 57% among Jewish women. This rate, which is lower than the average in the Arab world and is far below the average in the OECD countries, has many and varied ramifications, including greater poverty; wider gaps between Jews and Arabs. My study found that 43% of unemployed Arab women are prepared to accept employment immediately if given the opportunity.

Here, I suggest accepting and adopting my proposed framework for minority rights in planning and economic fields.

In addition, I suggest to support the basic rights of Palestinians in Israel in these critical days.