



**The Israeli-Europe Policy Network Seminar**  
**Minorities in Israel and the EU:**  
**Impacts on Constitutional and Foreign Policy Issues**  
**Herzliya, October 22, 2009**

*Summary*

*Session I: Muslim Minorities in Europe*

Following a formal welcoming of all participants at the IEPN workshop by the Head of the representative of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Israel, **Dr. Ralf Hexel**, **Prof. Stephan Stetter**, European coordinator of the IEPN, and **Dr. Roby Nathanson**, Israeli coordinator of the IEPN, gave a short overview on the history of the IEPN and its main activities since its inception in 2003. The new IEPN website, which creates a stage for IEPN events, papers and discussions, was presented.

The session then turned to the presentation and discussion of the new IEPN working papers which were written by key experts working on EU-Israeli relations.

**Mr. Christoph Moosbauer**, European coordinator of IEPN and former member of the German Bundestag, presented a paper by **Prof. Dietrich Thränhardt** of the University of Münster, Germany, on Turkish immigrants in Germany and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After outlining the history of Turkish immigrants in Germany and their integration into German society, the paper turned to the issue of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli feeling among these immigrants, and argued that such feelings are not prevalent among Turkish immigrants, who are more concerned with issues directly pertaining to Turkey such as relations with the Armenians or the Kurds. After the presentation of the paper, the discussion focused inter alia on new statistical data which suggest that at least among the young immigrant generation growing up in Germany, there is growing interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a rise in anti-Israeli sentiments.

**Dr. Nathan Sznajder** of the Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo, Israel, commented on this paper with insights on European attitudes towards Muslim minorities and their relations to the historical Jewish minority, on the axis between particularity and universalism. In the search for a common European identity, European society speaks of integrating minorities while recognizing their otherness. This resolve, however, frequently submits to Universalist ideas which urge minorities to give up their particularity, celebrating the culture of minorities, while forgetting the people themselves that were part of this culture –in the case of both Jews and Muslims.

European society is urged to acknowledge the particularity of the groups composing it, while the minorities must learn to accommodate European culture into their own.

The ensuing open discussion focused on the extent of anti-Semitism among the Muslim community in Europe, on the possible radicalization of the new generation of minorities, especially concerning Holocaust education in Europe.

The second paper on Arab Immigrants in the EU and their political views, by **Dr. Christina Slade** of City University London, was presented by **Prof. Stephan Stetter**. The paper sums up a study on the television watching patterns of Arab immigrants in Europe. The study found that the immigrants can be clustered into two major groups of viewing behaviour: in the first, termed *bi-cultural*, the immigrants are integrated into their new country but also have strong ties with their former place of residence, including frequent visits; this behaviour is typically characteristic of immigrants from North Africa. In the second, *transnational* group, typically composed of Middle-Eastern immigrants, there are fewer ties with the home country, but stronger links to global Arab networks.

In her comment on this paper, **Prof. Elise Brezis** of Bar Ilan University, Israel outlined various effects of the majority on immigrants and vice-versa, focusing on the economic dimension. These include effects of culture, such as the number of children and the status of women and peer-group effects of having a small, well-bounded community working inside a larger one. Further open discussion expanded the issue to cultural consumption patterns of Arab minorities in other countries, such as Israel and Britain, finding much in common between them.

### ***Session II: Muslim Minorities in Israel***

The Session opened with a paper by **Prof. Zeev Segal** of Tel Aviv University, on Israel's constitutional perspective regarding minorities. The paper focused on the response of the Israeli Supreme Court to the challenge of integrating the Arab minority, especially in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The paper underscored the Supreme Court's commitment to rights of minorities according to the succinct formula from Israel's declaration of independence: "Israel is a democratic and Jewish state." This is taken to mean that the public nature of the state is Jewish, while maintaining all the human and civil rights of all citizens.

In his comments on the paper, **Prof. Stephan Stetter** acknowledged the resolve of the Supreme Court in defending minority rights, but pointed out that the situation on the ground regarding discrimination of minorities is often much bleaker. Furthermore, he drew attention to the importance of affirmative action for the advancement of minorities, beyond the protection of their civil rights. Further discussion of the paper drew comparisons between the situation in Israel and that in Europe, and commented on the real impact of Israel Supreme Court decisions on minorities.

Focus on this subject continued with the paper presented by **Prof. Amal Jamal** of Tel Aviv University, criticizing the EU's hesitant action regarding discrimination of minorities in Israel. The EU presents itself as a normative actor in the international arena, and it upholds liberal ideals of opposition to discrimination. Nevertheless, it fails to tie the level of economic cooperation with Israel to the compatibility of Israel's actions with the EU's values. The EU prefers to continue "playing a game" in which it publicly calls upon Israel to change its policies towards minorities, but in fact fails to follow up on these calls. The paper urges the EU to take a more active role as a normative player in the region.

Comments on the paper stated that on the European level, policy regarding minorities is always declaratory, because of Europe's colonial past and the present condition of minorities in Europe. Other points discussed were Israel's democratic status vis-à-vis different dimensions of democracy, and the advantages and risks of external intervention in the state of minorities in Israel.

### ***Session III: Roundtable: The Future of Minorities and Democracies***

This session's keynote speaker was former Interior Minister, **MK Ophir Pines-Paz**, who in his capacity as Interior Minister was responsible for many aspects of minority policy.

MK Pines-Paz stated that Israel's obligation as a democratic state is that all its minorities receive equal civic rights; national rights for the Arab minority, however, can only be fulfilled in a future Palestinian state. The Arab minority are inherently discriminated in the present system for various reasons, the most severe of these being their exemption from army or national service, which bars them from entering Israeli society as equals. Various budgetary measures discriminate these minorities as well. Moreover, very little is being done to integrate the Arab minority by affirmative action. The prospects for the future are not optimistic, as no significant change in policy can be expected from the current government.

Further discussion noted the relative lack of international interest in the issue of Israel's Arab minority, seen as secondary to the Palestinian issue. The participants underscored the importance of the application of existing laws in order to put an end to discrimination.