



[Mossawa Center Report Sheds Light on Systematic Inequities in Israel Uncovered by the Iran War](#)

A recent [report](#) by The Mossawa Center has sought to draw attention to systematic inequities affecting the Arab Palestinian community in Israel during the past few weeks since the outbreak of the Iran war. The civil rights organization has documented a host of concerning developments including arbitrary arrests, a consistent failure to protect Arab civilians, restrictions on freedom of the press, and a reduction in resources allocated to the Arab community, among others. While systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel is far from a new phenomenon, within recent weeks, the Iran war has made it even harder to ignore. What is becoming increasingly clear is that inequality is not only social, but embedded in legal systems, public policy, and even protections that are meant to apply to all citizens. Safety should be a universal right, but that is not the case for non-Jewish citizens in Israel.

One notable example of this outlined in the report relates to how Arab civilians in Israel do not receive the same amount of access to bomb shelters – something that is particularly troubling now in the midst of the Iran war. The Mossawa Center detailed that out of more than 11,000 public shelters across Israel, only 37 of those are located in Arab towns. Furthermore, the fact that in mixed cities, Arab neighborhoods specifically suffer from severe shortages of protection infrastructure illustrates the systematic nature of these discrepancies. As alluded to in the report, the gaps represent a blatant inequality in civilians’ right to protection and raise major concerns about the state’s obligations towards all of its citizens, especially during wartime. Back in 2024, these inequities prompted a lawsuit whereby affected citizens argued that the state’s failure to build public shelters in Arab communities violated their civil rights and that this neglect reflects a broader pattern of state discrimination and a failure to treat Arab citizens as equal before the law. Since Israel does not recognize various Arab communities, it also fails to provide water or electricity in these areas, which makes them even more vulnerable during times of war. These communities often have to build without permits because these are repeatedly denied or made nearly impossible to obtain by the Israeli government. As a result, the state views the construction as “illegal” and claims that it is not obligated to provide essential infrastructure like shelters. Unsurprisingly, Israeli courts sided with the government in the denial of public shelters to these areas.

In addition to demonstrating a systematic form of discrimination, inequities like these even directly contradict Israeli laws from decades ago that were meant to establish regulations requiring that new buildings include protected rooms. Despite this, Arab Palestinian citizens are frequently prevented – through legal and financial means – from meeting these supposed guidelines. Israel blocks access to the appropriate infrastructure, with data revealing that more than 70 percent of homes in Arab communities lack adequate safe rooms, compared to only about 25 percent in Jewish ones. This undeniable and significant disparity is an outcome of biased policies that Israel has institutionalized. Some of the most vulnerable communities that suffer include Bedouin ones where citizens often live in temporary or unrecognized structures, many of which lack any access to shelters at all. These communities are incredibly susceptible to missile strikes during wartime and face immense risk because of financial and socioeconomic circumstances as well. Since the onset of the Iran war, stories have circulated documenting how many families have been forced to flee to airports or train stations in order to try to take cover from attacks due to their denial of access to bomb shelters. At the same time, the elderly are often unable to escape because they cannot get to shelter quickly enough.

The discriminatory practices are not only in the form of unequal access to protection, as they also extend to other basic human rights. Recent monitoring by The Mossawa Center shows a sharp rise in arrests of Arab citizens in Israel, often tied to violations of free speech and expression. In one instance, a woman was arrested based solely on the discovery of a Palestinian flag inside her home. Social media posts or even expressions of opposition to the widely criticized Iran war have also resulted in unjust detentions and interrogations. All told, the realities which have unfolded shed light on the systematic injustices that are prevalent in Israeli society and embedded in state and legal institutions.