

STRIVING FOR EQUALITY

At the turn of the century, only 3.7% of Israel's government employees were Arabs. Arabs held only 50 out of 5000 university faculty positions and 48 of the country's 61 poorest towns were Arab.

Nevertheless, the previous decade had already seen significant improvements.

Between 1992-2002, the proportion of Arabs employed in the civil service increased by 300%, from 2.1% to 6.1%. A 2000 law requires that minorities have "appropriate representation" in the civil service and on the boards of government corporations. In 2004, it was mandated that every state-run company's corporate board had to have at least one Arab member by August and that by 2007, 8% of civil servants had to be Arabs or people from other minorities.

When the central Bank of Israel was accused of having an anti-Arab discriminatory employment policy, the bank's governor ensured that tenders were advertised in the Arab-language press (reiterating that the Bank of Israel hired "according to criteria of merit, and ignores differences in religion, sex, race or nationality").

The first Israeli Arab was appointed to the high court of justice in 2003 and 2005 saw the appointment of the first Arab director-general of a government ministry. In 2007, Raleb Majadele became the first Arab Minister in an Israeli government.

Other ethnic minorities benefit from the government's upliftment initiatives. In February 2008, the government authorized a five-year plan aimed at alleviating poverty levels and integrating marginalized Ethiopian immigrants,

including assistance in areas such as housing education and employment.