
ALEXANDER LOKSHIN. ARABS IN ISRAEL. SOME ASPECTS OF THE ETHNOCONFESSIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF ARAB-ISRAELI SOCIETY

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Alexander Lokshin,

PhD(History), Leading Research Associate,
Department of Israel and the Jewish Communities,
Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS,
e-mail: ale-lokshin@yandex.ru
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Abstract. In the article, the author, based on the works a number of Russian and Israeli researchers, presents the confessional structure, some aspects of the legal status, political aspirations of the Arabs in the state of Israel, the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem. The chronological framework of the article mainly covers the last decades, but, if necessary, by 1948–1949 – the time of the formation of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war. In the context of the ongoing large-scale armed conflict between Israel and the Hamas movement, the sharp aggravation of the internal political situation in Israel itself, and the situation in the Middle East as a whole, real opportunities for reaching a compromise in the near future in solving the problem of Arabs in Israel seem unlikely.

Ethno-demographic Factor

The total population of the State of Israel, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of the country, at the end of 2023 was 9 million 842 thousand people. Of these, 73,5 per cent Jews, 21 per cent Arabs, 5,5 per cent – others. In 2023, the population of Israel increased by 179 thousand, which meant a population growth of 1,9 per cent. The increase in numbers was due to natural growth and 28 per cent due to repatriates. However, when compared with 2022, the growth rate decreased. About 75 per cent of the Jewish population today, is made up of native Israelis, and more than half are second-generation (at least) Israelis. According to CSB forecasts, by the end of 2024, the total population of the country will reach 10 million people [1].

The Arab population of Israel currently numbers about 2 million 100 thousand people. About 213 thousand people in Israel are foreign workers. And without them, the Jewish state is the 100th most populous country in the world. Jewish immigration is the most important factor influencing the country's population growth.

The CBS report states that in 2023, about 45 thousand repatriates arrived in Israel, while in 2022 – 73 thousand. In 2023, 70,3 per cent came from Russia, 4,5 per cent – Ukraine, 3,8 per cent – Belarus, 2,1 per cent – France [2]. Since the fall of 2023, there has been a decrease in the rate of repatriation, which can also be explained by security problems associated with the military actions of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against the Hamas movement.

7 million 208 thousand people are defined as “Jews”. According to published data, official Israeli statistics imply those who fall under the traditional religious definition of Judaism, namely, children of Jewish mothers and persons who have undergone giyur (religious conversion to Judaism). At present, about 75 per cent of the entire Jewish population are native Israelis, and more than half are Israelis in at least the second