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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
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SR on freedom of religion or belief
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Oral statement submitted by Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status.

Badil wishes to focus on inequalities between Jewish citizens of Israel—the majority—and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, a national minority, comprising 20% of the total population and belonging to three religious communities: Muslim, Christian and Druze. Their status under international human rights instruments to which Israel is a State party is that of a national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minority.

However, despite this status, the Palestinian minority is not declared as such in the Basic Laws of Israel. Israel defines itself as a Jewish state which makes inequality a practical, political and ideological reality for Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are marginalized and discriminated against by the state on the basis of their national belonging and religious affiliation as non-Jews.

The Jewish character of the state of Israel is evident in numerous Israeli laws and discriminate the Palestinian minority on religious basis; laws such as *The Chief Rabbinate of Israel Law – 1980*, *The Flag and Emblem Law – 1949*, and *The State Education Law – 1953* give recognition to Jewish educational, religious, and cultural practices and institutions, and define their aims and objectives strictly in Jewish terms, while no similar laws providing similar legal recognition to the religious and cultural rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel have been legislated.

This discriminative state of affairs is far plainer in school education system; *The State Education Law – 1953* sets educational objectives for state schools that emphasize Jewish history and culture. Article 2 of the law specifies that the primary objective of education is to preserve the Jewish nature of the state by teaching its history, culture, language, etc. Students in Arab state-run schools receive very little instruction in Palestinian or Arab history, geography, literature and culture, and spend more time learning the Torah than the Qur'an or the New Testament. Additionally, while state religious schools established only for religious Jewish students maintain autonomous control over their curricula, the curriculum for Arab state schools are entirely determined by the state.

We urge the Human rights council to urge the state of Israel to halt all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief which are manifested in school-related laws and regulations.