

THE ISRAELI DRUZE: “NEITHER HERE NOR THERE”

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## INTRODUCTION

I spent the summer of 2017 immersed in a community I was completely unfamiliar with prior to my summer experience. This community is the Druze of Daliyat al-Carmel, a village on Carmel Mountain a few miles southeast of Haifa, Israel. My interest in the Druze community developed over the summer as I observed individuals' earnest loyalty to Israel, lack of empathy for Palestinians and apparent disconnect from Arab-Israelis. The Druze are Arabs by ethnicity, yet their allegiance lies with the state of Israel. Since 1956, the Druze men in Israel have been required to serve in Israel's national army the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as a part of the nation's mandatory conscription law, giving them a common experience with other Israelis who are also required to serve in the IDF for two to three years (depending on one's sex) after turning 18. Service in the IDF requires the Druze to fight against Arabs in Palestine who some Druze consider to be their brothers. Other Druze, however, reject their Arab heritage and claim Druze or Israeli as their main identity.

Unlike most Israelis, the Druze are not Jewish but are a part of a religious minority with early roots in Islam, which begs the question that this thesis seeks to answer: *How do the Druze fit into a society created to house and defend the Jewish people?* Israel lacks an official constitution, but its Proclamation of Independence declares that the "Jewish State" is a place for "Jewish people to be masters of their own fate[...] in their own sovereign nation," (Proclamation, 1948). Though the Proclamation makes mention of minority groups and their equal right to citizenship, the nation's intentions are clear: Israel aims to provide a safe community in which the Jewish people will thrive. The Proclamation's promises "to guarantee freedom of religion" and "ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all of its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex," veil the nation's true intentions of offering preferential treatment to its

Jewish citizens, (Proclamation, 1948). The vast majority of inhabitants of Israel's 1967 lines, approximately 81%, self-identify as Jewish, (Pew, 2016). Many questions arise from the unique paradox of Druze service to a Jewish state, and this thesis seeks to examine the place of the Druze community in Israel. The crux of this work is a case study of media articles that reflect Jewish and Arab-Israeli responses to the fatal shooting of two Druze police officers at an Islamic holy site in Jerusalem by three Arab-Israeli shooters from Northern Israel.

The thesis begins with a brief history of the Druze in general and the Israeli Druze in specific to provide a better understanding of the niche community. Existing literature regarding the identity of Israeli Druze is used to establish a framework of their identity before diving into Druze identity as perceived by their surrounding populations. As scholars Baumeister and Muraven write, "identity is a set of meaningful definitions that are ascribed or attached to the self," developed through "adaptation" for population groups to succeed in their environment (Baumeister et al., 1996). This sink-or-swim mentality is demonstrated in the Druze community by its compliance with the mandatory conscription law and their pragmatic willingness to adopt the Hebrew language in addition to their mother tongue Arabic. The Druze are a part of a religious minority and are originally from Egypt. The religion emerged from Islam in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century and welcomed anyone to join until they stopped accepting converts a little less than 50 years later in about 1050 AD (Hitti, 1996). Though Druze participation in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the years leading up to 1948 is disputed, it appears the Druze were neutral until they made an agreement to ally with the Jews in 1948 (Aboulatif, 2015; Halabi, 2014). Druze scholar from Dalijat al-Carmel Rabah Halabi is not alone in believing that this decision sealed their fate and was the foundation for the development of the Druze's unique identity (Halabi, 2014). Israel systematically separated the Druze from the other Arabs in the area by including them in

mandatory conscription and developing a separate education system for Druze children in which the government sought to inspire national pride and allegiance to the Jews by teaching the similarities between the Druze and Jewish people of Israel and dissimilarities between them and, to quote Halabi, the “other Arabs,” (Halabi, 2014). Israel even changed the legal description of Druze nationality presented on birth certificates and identification cards from “Arab” to “Druze,” essentially creating a Druze nation (Halabi, 2014).

The thesis next answers the question: *What is the IDF?* Though Israel’s military has earlier roots in the paramilitary group known as *Haganah*, the Israel Defense Forces, itself, was founded in 1948, and the Defense Service Law of 1949 initiated Israel’s conscription law (Hofnung, 1995). The Druze population was added to the mandatory conscription law in 1956 for disputed reasons. Some sources claim that the decision was an effort to include the Druze community in the practice of the majority, while others believe Israel seeks to manipulate the Druze by forcing them to risk their lives in the military without adjusting its stance on the purpose of the State of Israel. These competing narratives are discussed later at length. The IDF aims to protect the State of Israel and “thwart all enemy efforts to disrupt the normal way of life in Israel,” which indicates no intention to care for the needs of the Druze. As a minority group that makes up just 2% of Israel’s population and occupies secluded villages such as those on Mt. Carmel in the Haifa district, the Druze share no part in “the normal way of life in Israel.” The Pew Research Center reports that 83% of Druze disclosed that “all or most of their close friends belong to [the Druze] community,” (Pew, 2016). The IDF is an entity created to protect Jewish people and Jewish life by preserving Israel as a “home for the Jewish people,” (IDF Ethics online October 10, 2017).

The IDF claims that one of its main goals is to protect the Jewish state, so the logical question is: *Where do Druze Israelis fit into this narrative?* This question can be split into two questions: 1) *Why were Druze Israelis first included in mandatory conscription?* and 2) *What part do they play in the IDF and why?* Hofnung argues that Israel decided to include the Druze in mandatory conscription because they wanted to prevent discrimination against the Druze for not having served in the army (Hofnung, 1995). Others say that the Israelis see the Druze as expendable labor to be dispensed against the Palestinians (Aboulatif, 2015). Regarding the second question, the Druze soldiers served only in their own special unit *Herev*, also called the Sword Battalion, until 1972 when they finally were allowed to disperse among all of the other soldiers (Hofnung, 1995). Service in the IDF is seen as a right of passage for Israeli youth and a necessary sacrifice if one wishes to reap the full benefits of Israeli citizenship (Halabi, 2014). Participation in the IDF opens the door to numerous military benefits and has had a huge impact on the economy and unemployment rate in Druze villages in Israel. Other Arabs, though, can join the IDF through voluntary service only.

The essay culminates in a case study of the 2017 shooting of two Druze police officers in Jerusalem. After completing three years of mandatory service in the IDF, many Druze soldiers opt to continue serving in the IDF, while others are recruited by the police. Police work can be a dangerous occupation, and two members of the Druze community experienced the full capacity of this reality. In July of 2017 two Druze police officers stationed near the Lions' Gate at al-Aqsa mosque were killed in the line of duty by three Arab shooters from Umm al-Fahm, a predominantly Arab city in Northern Israel near Haifa, who had smuggled makeshift automatic weapons, a pistol and a knife into the holy site. The shooting of the two Druze police officers was followed by a shootout between Israeli police and the gunmen and resulted in the deaths of

two Israeli policemen and all three gunmen and the injury of another policeman. Located in the heavily politicized Old City in Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque is considered Islam's third holiest site following the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The al-Aqsa mosque attack provoked a wide range of reactions and incited political and violent retaliations. The Israeli government responded by cancelling Friday prayers at al-Aqsa mosque for the first time in 17 years. This incident serves as an effective case because it sparked many discussions about the Druze community—a group that does not frequently receive national media attention. To further examine Israelis' and Palestinians' opinion of the Druze, the thesis examines both sides' popular responses to the shooting by analyzing media reports following the event. Some Druze Israelis report that they have been called “traitors” by Palestinians and Arabs in Israel, while Israelis supposedly treat Druze and other Israeli soldiers equally. The case study compares and contrasts newspaper articles from Jewish and Arabic sources to develop a general consensus of the two sides' opinions on the Druze in Israel through their reactions to the two fallen Druze officers.

## **FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY**

### Framework

This analysis must be framed within a discussion of the Israeli state and the non-Jewish minority structure within the nation. Jewish and Arab populations in the area experienced a major paradigm shift in 1948 at Israel's founding when the minority became the majority and vice versa. The Jews had claimed a land for themselves that celebrated a Jewish population majority. The State of Israel was founded upon contested land in 1948, and Palestinians and Arab-Israelis have yet to cease resisting the foundation of this new nation. When Israel declared nationhood, many Palestinians who had been living in a sovereign nation of their own found themselves stuck in the new Jewish nation Israel. Faced with the decision to continue resisting or submit to those who they considered invaders by becoming Arab-Israelis, some Palestinians chose to continue the resistance movement and others, largely members of the so-called "Moderate Camp," chose a practical approach, adopting the title Arab-Israeli. They chose to focus on uplifting Israel's Arab population by contributing to the civic needs of their communities rather than resistance mobilization, (Rekhless, 2007). Israel has constructed its nation in such a way that there is a clear division between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens, a phenomenon exemplified through its conscription laws that determine who must serve in the military based primarily on his or her religious affiliation and secondarily on one's ethnic origin. They have used the Defense Service Law as a tool to enforce its "divide-and-rule" policy. In the 1930s, Jewish leaders gathered to discuss tactics to suppress the Arab rebels and secure a future nation for themselves. They devised a council to manage such affairs, and it determined that the best strategy would be to subdivide the minority communities to prevent alliance against the

Jews (Gelber, 1995). To do so, Israeli government made calculated efforts to place a wedge between the Druze and the rest of the Arab population.

Broadly, all Israeli Jews and all male Druze are subject to mandatory conscription. Arab-Israelis living inside Israel's 1967 borders, on the other hand, are not. They are permitted to serve voluntarily, but the Israeli government intentionally excluded them from mandatory participation in Israel's security forces, (Hofnung, 1995). This tangible example of Israel's majority-minority premise offers an insightful framework through which to examine Israeli Druze identity. Mandatory conscription is a tool for developing unity, loyalty and nationalism, and it plays a powerful role in the development of identity, both personal and externally perceived (Hofnung, 1995). Conscription laws have been implemented throughout history for a number of reasons as direct as quickly building up a strong military and as complex as strategically selecting specific groups of people to include (and exclude) in the development of national identity and nationalism, which is the case in Israel (Aboulatif, 2015). Halabi writes that Druze identity is "constructed as a direct result of policies and expectations of members and institutions of majority groups" (Halabi, 2014). He describes the disconnect that the Druze community feels from both Arab-Israelis and Jews as being in limbo, "neither here nor there." Halabi has described the Druze as a "minority within a minority," but this concept can be taken a step further (Halabi, 2014 pp 268). More accurately, they are a "minority within a minority *within a minority.*"

Those within the Druze community were popularly labeled by Jewish politicians and leaders as "negative forces" or "positive forces," those who hinder the state's progress or those who adapt to the Jews' plans for the Druze (Firro, 2001). Jewish leaders decided to shape Druze politics by rewarding good behavior by cooperating with "positive forces" and punishing bad

behavior by refusing to negotiate with “negative forces,” (Firro, 2001). Druze leaders who were considered “positive forces” were called upon to assist Israel with its struggle against the Arabs in the late 1930s. Publicly, the Druze remained neutral to the cause until it was safe for them to more officially declare allegiance to the Jews at the close of the 1948 war. This is an oversimplification of the history, but even those who chose to side with the Arabs did so only temporarily and did not represent the majority. Israel convinced Druze leaders that it was in their best interest for their two minority groups to ally. Druze who opposed this proposition were labelled “negative forces,” while those who acquiesced were considered “positive forces” and became delegates to encourage the rest of their community to join the Jewish cause. Jews initially scouted the Druze because they were fellow minority populations in a tense environment. Before the Jews became the state majority in 1948, a Jewish-Druze alliance was mutually beneficial because it strengthened the fight against Palestinians and other Arabs prior to the Arab-Israeli War.

Key to understanding this thesis is knowing that the Druze communities in each nation vary, and those residing in Israel are especially distinct. The Druze community as a whole is a unique group, but the Druze community in Israel is even more specialized because of the efforts that the Israeli government has exerted to intentionally mold them into the type of Israeli citizens they want the Druze to be. By reinforcing the Druze’s wanted behaviors, such as loyalty to Israel and the Jewish cause, Israel intensified the power rendered through its divide-and-rule policies. Central to this concept is the Druze tradition of *taqiyya*, or “dissimulation,” (Firro, 2001 pp 47). Because the Druze have experienced extreme religious persecution since the religion’s founding, the religion permits the Druze to adapt to their surroundings for their own protection. Though outsiders have misconstrued the particularities of this concept, it was vital to the Israeli

government's strategic approach to develop policies directed at the Druze. Israeli scholar Haim Blanc developed a report of their "behavioral patterns" that primarily was established through the lens of *taqiyya* (Firro, 2001). The Druze's willingness to adapt to survive gave Israel a powerful tool to manipulate its Druze population.

### Methodology

The Israeli Druze in this thesis are referred to simply as "Druze," and the reader should remember that the analyses and assertions here refer only to the Druze living in Israel, *not* in the Golan or the West Bank or any other area outside of Israel. Arabs living in Israel, the non-Druze Arab populations residing in the State of Israel, are referred to as "Arab-Israelis." Those living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are referred to as "Palestinians." This is an oversimplification of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at large because many Arabs living inside the 1967 borders self-identify as Palestinian, but this terminology is the clearest and simplest way to refer to these populations in relation to analysis of Druze identity. Israel refers to the Green Line or 1967 borders that were recognized from the 1949 Armistice Agreements until the Six-Day War in 1967. This territory excludes the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

The theoretical frameworks employed focus on the minority relationships developed by Israel, and these distinctions are exemplified through Israel's Defense Service Law that determines who is mandated to serve in the IDF. The IDF, in a sense, has become one of Israel's biggest cultural connectors. As an institution created by and *for* the majority people, it has a strong hold on the nation as a whole and a big impact on the minority groups. For this reason the IDF, its mission and Druze participation in the service are central to this thesis. For many soldiers, especially the Druze, the IDF serves as a pipeline to Israel's security services, which include the police and border patrol. Because of the personnel overlap between the IDF and the

post-service security forces, these institutions are perceived as extensions of the IDF. This phenomenon explains the relevance of the case study involving the deaths of two Druze police officers in Jerusalem. Comparison and contrast of the Arab and Jewish responses to the shootings conclude this thesis. Palestinian sources from Gaza are included because the beliefs of Palestinians fall closely in line with those of many Arab-Israelis due to the unique nationalistic conflict in Israel and Palestine that causes some Arabs living in Israel to identify as Palestinian rather than Israeli.

The case study employs analysis of the most-circulated newspapers from both Arabic and Jewish media. A total of six media articles--three Arabic and three Jewish--are cited from different news sources. The Arabic-language news sources employed will be called "Arabic" media regardless of whether the sources originate in Palestine (West Bank or Gaza Strip) or in Israel. Other sources will be referred to as "Jewish" media, as to demonstrate that they represent the "majority," Israeli opinion. Three sources from each side are compared and contrasted, and neutral article from British media outlet *The Guardian* is used as an example of non-biased reporting. Though it is impossible to actually report without bias, the U.S. article comes close to meeting this goal. *The Guardian* article lays a baseline to demonstrate where the Israeli and Palestinian articles stray from factual reporting.

Israeli news sources are translated by the news source itself or a third party from Hebrew to English and include *Israel Hayom* or "The Times of Israel," a relatively new, conservative, U.S.-owned source that has the largest daily circulation in Israel; *Haaretz* or "The Land," Israel's oldest newspaper; and news articles from the website of Israel's largest non-governmental organization *Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael – Jewish National Fund* (KKL-JNF) that was originally

founded in 1901 as the Jewish National Fund, which bought land from Arabs in Palestine and sold it to Jewish immigrants for little profit in an effort to promote Jewish settlement in the area.

Palestinian news sources are written in Arabic and interpreted by me with the help of Dr. Luca D'Anna. They include news articles from *al-Jazeera*, *al-Quds* and *al-Hadath*. *Al-Jazeera*, or *The Island* in English, is a popular international media source rooted in the Arab world. *Al-Quds*, or *Jerusalem*, was founded in 1951 in East Jerusalem, and now the newspaper has the largest circulation in Palestine. Though it is privately owned, it has ties to the Palestinian Authority. *Al-Hadath*, or *The Event*, is an Arabic weekly newspaper in Amman, Jordan. It is included because Palestinians have a huge presence in Jordan and the online reporting resources from inside Palestine are limited.

Through defining Druze history and exploring Israel's policies, this thesis analyzes the impact that these issues have on Druze relations today and how that informs Arabs and Jews perceptions of them. The examination of Israel's mandatory conscription policies and the IDF code of ethics and mission statement formulate a large portion of the conclusions found in this thesis while the other part is advised by the case study. Analysis of Arabic and Jewish media responses to the killing of two Druze police officers serves as tangible evidence of other Israelis' perception of their fellow Druze citizens.

## CHAPTER 1

### **The Israeli Druze**

After the larger Druze community fragmented and individual communities descended from the mountains in the Greater Syria region approximately 350 years ago, the groups dispersed themselves and settled in the surrounding area. The Druze evolved into a less homogenous group when they settled in different nations throughout the region. Perhaps through the Druze tradition of *taqiyya*, each community became loyal to the nations in which they resided. Many of them have made their new homes in what is now considered the Northern District or, more specifically, the Haifa, Akko and Kinneret sub-districts of Israel. According to Israel's CBS, these sub-districts are home to 91.4% of Israel's Druze population, and with a few exceptions, the populations of most of the villages in this area are more than 99% Druze, (CBS, 2005). Since the Jews' victory in 1948, the Druze have been considered an ally of the Jews, and they even serve in Israel's national army. Many Druze feel a sense of detachment from their Arab heritage and self-identify as Israelis; however, the Druze have little in common with the majority of Israelis who all share a cultural connection through Judaism (Halabi, 2014). Through their inclusion in the mandatory conscription law, though, Israel's Druze population is placed in a unique position in which they are able to share in majority Israeli culture without actually being a part of that majority, a position scholar Rabah Halabi of Druze village Daliyat al-Carmel calls "neither here nor there," (Halabi, 2014).

#### Location

The Institute of Druze Studies estimates that there are about one million Druze, with the majority living in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. Six to seven percent of the total Druze population resides in Israel (IDS April 12, 2018). According to a study conducted by the Pew

Research Center, there are approximately 130,000 Druze living in Israel, composing roughly 2% of Israel's population (Pew, 2016). The majority of Israel's Druze reside in the North on Mt. Carmel outside of Haifa, in the Galilee region and in the occupied Golan Heights. According to the CBS, about 8.6% of Israel's total Druze population live in the occupied Golan Heights, a region whose ownership has been contested since the release of UN Resolution 242 that sought to make peaceful settlements for the disputed lands claimed in the Six-Day War in 1967 (CBS, 2005). Syrian citizens still compose the majority of the disputed territory, and some Druze in the Golan refuse Israeli citizenship because they still consider themselves Syrian. The Golani Druze are excluded from analysis because many of those in the occupied Golan Heights hold starkly different opinions, which upholds the notion that the Druze are nationalistic.

## History

Druzism dates back to the year 1017 in Egypt under the leader Caliph al-Hakim who was a central part of the religion's development. He later came to recognize the religion nationally and began to promote religious freedom, an important liberty for followers of such a small religious minority (Aridi September 10, 2017). The religion originated from a subgroup of the Shia sect of Islam called Ismailism, and the founder of Druzism, along with al-Hakim, was an Ismaili scholar named Hamza ibn Ali ibn Ahmad. The name Druze is a derivative of Hamza's apprentice Mohammad ad-Darazi, who ironically turned against the religion sometime after it became his namesake (Hitti, 1996). In contrast to popular belief, however, Druzism is not a sect of Islam but is its own religion. After separating from Ismailism, the religion combined elements of Judaism and Christianity and was influenced by Greek philosophy and Gnosticism. Like the religions from which it is derived, Druzism is monotheistic. The other main tenet of Druzism is belief in reincarnation (Halabi, 2014). The religion closed to converts in the year 1043, and

proselytization has been forbidden ever since (Aridi September 10, 2017). This explains the small size of the Druze community worldwide. Though al-Hakim afforded the Druze the right to practice their religion during his rule, the Druze have experienced persecution from surrounding majority religions throughout history. Their historical adherence to *taqiyya* allows them to assimilate to the majority and hide their true beliefs and quell their religious identity to avoid conflict.

Perhaps because proselytization is forbidden, the Druze religion is shrouded in secret, and few people, including some Druze themselves, know the specifics of the religion. Many non-devout Druze know very little about the religion, yet they are still a part of the community because being Druze is about much more than the religion. Even though few Druze identify as devout, a survey conducted by Pew shows that 72% of Druze in Israel say being Druze is “very important” to them, (Pew, 2016). Religion is but a part of what it means to be Druze. Describing what it means to be Druze is difficult, and Halabi’s interviews of 50 Israeli Druze shows that some associate being Druze with culture, some see it in a “social sense” and others view it as a “lifestyle,” (Halabi, 2014). Ancestry seems to be the root of their community. Because conversion to Druzism is impossible, Druze living now are direct descendants of the original Druze community. Pew reports that only 1% of married Druze say that their partner is non-Druze or non-religious, and they are “strongly opposed” to intermarriage, (Pew, 2016). Though there are a few cases of inter-marriage, marrying someone outside of the religion is forbidden in Druzism and typically results in expulsion from the community.

#### *Taqiyya* and the Jewish-Druze Alliance

As stated, the Druze compose a meager 2% of Israel’s total population. By law, the Druze are defined as “Arab,” like most other non-Jewish Israeli inhabitants, are also classified as

“Arab,” but, under Israel’s divide-and-rule policy, this group is subdivided into Bedouin or Bedu, Circassian, Druze and Muslim. Laws like Israel’s Defense Service Law impact each of these groups differently. Throughout the pre-Israel Palestinian-Jewish conflict, the Druze in the region were largely neutral toward the issue. However, when forced to choose, Druze leaders chose the side of the Jews (Aridi September 10, 2017). In 1930, Jewish leaders (and future Israeli politicians) devised a special council of members of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council called the Joint Bureau for Arab Affairs to determine how to manage affairs with the Arab rebels (Gelber, 352). In the Joint Bureau’s attempt to manage the Arab community and prevent mass insurgency, discussions of a potential Jewish-Druze alliance commenced. They quickly discovered the Galilee Druze’s potential to serve the State and ally with the Jews and began manipulating the community to launch that potential alliance. After Israeli scholar Blanc presented the Joint Bureau with his analysis of Druze behavior, Jewish leaders became aware of the *taqiyya* principle and sought to use it as an alliance tool (Firro, 2001).

The relationship began with a gesture of goodwill on the part of the Jews. In July 1930 a Druze man murdered an Arab policeman, instigating the majority-Arab police force’s violent retaliation against the village in which he resided. Druze delegates travelled to Jerusalem, seeking assistance from the Joint Bureau and, though the Joint Bureau provided no tangible assistance at that time, the Druze were grateful to them. A Joint Bureau member wrote to a leader in the Jewish Agency, stating, “It is worthwhile to gain their friendship...” and that the Druze delegates “believe that [the Joint Bureau’s and the Druze’s] fraternity will grow further,” (Gelber, 1995). Words like “fraternity” and “brotherhood” are frequently used to describe the relationship between the Jews and the Druze. The Joint Bureau, and eventually Israel, capitalized on the informal alliance and pursued further relations with the Druze. This was strategically

beneficial to both sides, but especially to the Jews. Prior to 1948, they were the minority in a hostile environment surrounded by enemies, and allying with another minority group had great strategic benefit for the Jews. The Druze, however, were not at the same risk of persecution and violence. It is unclear exactly why the Druze initially chose to actively cooperate, but they could sense the potential benefits of a Jewish-Druze alliance. Additionally, they were living on land that was in the middle of the Palestinian-Jewish conflict. Their livelihoods would be impacted by the outcome of the ongoing conflict if their land was divided and given to other states to manage, like other parts of Palestine and Syria in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.

*Taqiyya* allowed, perhaps even *encouraged*, the Druze to ally with the Jews. Because the Jews and the Druze were *both* minority communities, the Druze could not publicly support the Jews or advertise that they were cooperating with the Joint Bureau. That would have put the Druze community at great risk of attack by Arab rebels. In 1948, though, this changed. When Israel was founded, the Jews shifted from minority to majority in their new territory, and the Arabs became the minority at risk of persecution. At this time, the Druze felt it was safe to announce their commitment to the Jewish people. When Israel was founded the Jewish minority became the majority, and Arabs shifted from majority to minority. Only 160,000 Arabs remained within the borders of Israel by 1949 (Cleveland, 1986). Outsiders' understanding of *taqiyya* and what it means to the Druze community is very limited, but the principle of *taqiyya* as outsiders understand it fits smoothly into this narrative. The Druze use *taqiyya* as an assimilation strategy that safeguards their community from persecution. A public Jewish-Druze alliance only came to fall under *taqiyya* when the Jews became the majority population in their territory.

The Druze commitment to the Jewish people is now termed the “Covenant of Blood” (Nisan, 2010). The Jewish-Druze relationship is founded on a handshake and a promise of fraternity.

This lack of clarity leaves the Druze community in the peculiar situation they are in now, tangled in a web of Arab and Druze and Israeli identities.

#### Druze as a Nationality

Druze scholar Rabah Halabi states, citing the 2012 Central Bureau of Statistics, all of the approximately 120,000 Druze living in Israel today are “original residents of Palestine,” (Halabi, 2014 pp. 268). In 1957 the Israeli government deemed the Druze a distinct ethnic minority upon request of its leaders. Since that time, Druze birth certificates and driver’s licenses state that their *nationality* is Druze, (Halabi, 2014). Clearly, there is no nation of the Druze, so this decision is peculiar. One explanation is that Israelis did this to strategically separate the Druze from the Arabs as a tool to further triumph over the Arab minority. The Druze have a separate school system and curriculum that includes the history of the Jewish-Druze relationship in Israel. It teaches young school children that they are brothers with the Jews of Israel. The kinship taught in school urges children to be loyal to the State of Israel and the Jewish cause. Some Druze are even eager to uphold their end of the Covenant by serving in Israel’s military (Halabi, 2014).

## CHAPTER 2

### **The IDF: Preserving the “normal way of life in Israel”**

Rampant anti-semitism throughout Europe beginning in the nineteenth century forced Jews to flee their homes. By 1948, more than half a million Jews had sought refuge in the historic land they once called home according to statistics published by the Jewish Virtual Library (*JVL* “Aliyah Bet” online April 10, 2018). For nearly 1,200 years, Arabs had resided in the area and the Jewish community was but a small minority in Palestine (Cleveland, 1986). Waves of immigration disrupted the status quo in Palestine and sparked a bitter struggle for dominance between the Arabs and the incoming Jews. This struggle, complicated by the trainwreck of empty promises made by Britain to conflicting parties, soon turned into an international source of hostility and violence that sparked major wars between Jews and Arabs in the area. War comes with a need for a military--a position that the Jews filled with the *Haganah*, a paramilitary group of devoted Jewish immigrants dedicated to fending off Arabs for the sake of the Jewish cause. Founded in 1920, the *Haganah* later developed into Israel’s national military of today (Cleveland, 1986). During Defense Minister David Ben-Gurion’s speech presenting the bill that introduced mandatory conscription, he stated that the IDF’s objective is to “maintain[sic] national independence against any external coercion,” (Hofnung, 1995).

Though the following is an oversimplification of an extremely complicated history, it suits the needs of this paper. Great Britain’s Palestinian Mandate was never granted freedom in the way it was supposed to. Britain abandoned its mandate with no working government and no consensus between Palestinians and Israelis. After Britain’s sloppy exit Israel was founded in 1947 upon the declaration of David Ben-Gurion, terms that were controversial and not universally accepted. The Israelis’ organization, finances and military far surpassed that of the

Palestinians, and they continued to assert their dominance and maintain their nation. The nation developed a sense of community by uniting over the Jewish cause. This major conflict, like most others in the region, excludes the Druze community. The Druze had been in Israel for more than 200 years by the time the Arab-Israeli conflict emerged, (Halabi, 2014). Yet, the Druze are not a part of the popular narrative that describes the two-sided tug of war that was Israel's tumultuous twentieth century. Examining the establishment and development of Israel's national military hints at the status of the Druze in the newly established Jewish homeland.

Israel wasted little time in building up its military. The roots formed by the *Haganah* grew into the powerful national military known as the Israel Defense Forces or IDF. The Defense Service Law initiated mandatory conscription in 1949 (Defense Service Law, 5746-1986). The law implicates all Israeli citizens including non-Jews; however, there are a number of exclusions and exemptions determined by nationality, religion and gender. Exemptions include devout Israelis and women who are mothers, pregnant or married (Hofnung, 1995). Arabs, Circassians, Bedouins and Druze are also exempted but allowed to serve on a voluntary basis (Hofnung, 1995). This segmentation is a prime example of Israel's divide-and-rule policy. Not only has Israel subdivided an already meager minority, but it also has established a legal division between the Druze and Arab-Israelis. The part of this particular exemption regarding the Druze changed quickly, but Arabs were never included in conscription (Hofnung, 1995). Though Arabs may volunteer for the IDF, lawmakers determined it unwise to require an unwilling group of people to serve, and they also feared the complications that could arise so long as they (the Arabs) were the enemy (Hofnung, 1995). For disputed reasons, the Druze were written into Israel's mandatory conscription law seven years later in 1956 upon request of Druze leaders. The law implicates only Druze men, as the Knesset granted Druze women full exemption from service out of respect

for Druze tradition and religious convictions. Until the 1970s most Druze soldiers served in a special coalition composed mainly of Druze before being integrated into the mainstream IDF. The Druze are now dispersed throughout the IDF's brigades.

Like most other national militaries, the IDF was established to protect the nation and its people, but this does not detail who its people are. One assumption is that it protects everyone who resides in Israel. Examination of the IDF's mission statement and code of ethics, found on an Israeli government website dedicated to the IDF, provides a little more clarity. The IDF Mission is as follows:

*To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel.*

*To protect the inhabitants of Israel and to combat all forms of terrorism which threaten the daily life. - IDF Mission online, October 10, 2017*

This mission statement affirms the original assumption that the IDF aims to serve all who live in Israel, except perhaps those who pose a threat to the State. The IDF Mission does not define what constitutes as a threat, though, and this vague language can be used to serve for or against minority populations. However, there is much more to the IDF's core than simply its mission statement. The Mission is supplemented by a code of ethics that includes a proclamation of The Spirit of the IDF and an outline of the IDF's Basic Values that provide more of an explanation.

The main objective of the IDF is stated as follows in the code of ethics:

*The goal of the IDF is to protect the existence of the State of Israel and its independence, and to thwart all enemy efforts to disrupt the normal way of life in Israel. - IDF Ethics online October 10, 2017*

This leaves one to wonder “What is the ‘normal way of life in Israel’ and who exists outside the norm?” The logical assumption is that the norm is established by the majority: the Jewish people.

The code of ethics is much lengthier than the IDF Mission and raises many questions as to what and whom the IDF was actually designed to protect. The two focus on the State of Israel being a national home for the Jewish people--exclusive and controversial rhetoric and colonial meddling which took root in the Balfour Declaration in which Great Britain implied it would support establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Spirit of the IDF calls upon soldiers to “...fight, to dedicate all their strength and even sacrifice their lives in order to protect the State of Israel... as a Jewish and democratic state,” and one of the Spirit’s four founding principles is “The tradition of the Jewish people throughout their history,” (IDF Ethics online October 10, 2017). The Basic Values express the same sentiments designed to evoke nationalism through religion. The Druze are not Jewish and therefore do not share the same traditions and do not consider Israel the motherland of their religion. This causes one to question what benefits the State of Israel in general and the IDF in particular offer to the Druze in exchange for the potentially lethal sacrifice of their service.

Learning more about the origins and the creed of the Israel Defense Forces leaves us only with more questions as to why the Druze began serving and continue to serve so willingly. So far, little has been explained regarding Palestinians’ and Israelis’ perception of their Druze neighbors. We do know, however, that Druze participation in IDF service indicates that Israelis trust the Druze’s allegiance to Israel far more than they trust the Arabs’. The next chapter discusses the Druze’s role in the IDF to discover what the IDF means to the Druze and, inversely, what the Druze mean to the IDF and the nation it protects. It also compares Druze

service to that of the Arabs to further piece together the larger puzzle of Arab-Israelis' and Jews' relationships with the Druze.

### CHAPTER 3

#### **Druze Role in the IDF**

The Druze community is a noticeable asset to Israel in its service to the State through the Israel Defense Forces. Though they are but a small minority population, the Druze compose a disproportionately large percentage of the IDF. Eighty percent of eligible Druze men choose to list, which is higher than the national average according to the *Times of Israel* (May 18, 2015). Druze participation began with a small number of volunteers who offered their service to Israel following the war of 1948. Their commitment to and participation in the IDF has developed substantially over the last several decades, and Druze men now serve in almost every part of Israel's national defense. At the end of their required service, many Druze veterans choose to transition into other sectors of Israel's security forces, the unit that the two Druze policemen were serving in (Firro, 2001). The so-called Covenant of Blood between the Jews and the Druze is alive and well in a very literal sense in the Druze's willingness to die for their country and their Jewish brothers.

Israel's Druze population was added to the nation's mandatory conscription law in 1956 upon request of community leaders, seven years after the law was instituted for Jewish Israelis in 1949 (Hofnung, 1995). Only Druze men are implicated in this law as Druze women are exempted due to religious beliefs that forbid women to participate in activities associated with military service. The Druze initially served in their own majority-Druze battalion known as the Sword Battalion or *Herev* but were later allowed to assimilate into the IDF at large, (Hofnung, 1995). The rationale behind including the Druze in 1956 is unclear. Scholars Menachem Hofnung and Eduardo Wassim Aboulatif offer competing narratives. The former asserts that Israel had benevolent intentions in its decision, but the latter claims Israel aimed primarily to

exploit the labor of a people that matters little to the nation. Hofnung argues that, for the Druze, military service is essential to the procurement of “material rewards,” such as lower unemployment rates and the opportunity to assimilate into majority Israeli culture and society. He writes that the compulsory conscription law promotes “collective tolerance and coexistence in an ethnically and ideologically divided society,” (Hofnung, 318) It is uncertain whether or not this was the actual reason for amending the Defense Service Law, but Hofnung raises a valid point. Intentional or not, IDF service has brought many benefits to the Druze of Israel.

One of the most visible benefits is the sharp decrease in unemployment in Israel’s Druze villages, (Hofnung, 1995). These new employees also had the opportunity to capitalize on social benefits such as retirement plans. Other benefits are less tangible but very important to the Druze psyche. IDF service functions as a right of passage for Israeli youth; when the law changed, the Druze community was invited into popular Israeli society for the first time. Through the IDF, Druze youth share a common experience with other Israeli youth that fosters interaction between the two groups and promotes inclusion of the minority community. Halabi conducted interviews with many Druze in his community, and one Druze soldier stated that he has been looked down upon by Israelis when using public transit without wearing his uniform because he looks Arab . When he travels in his IDF uniform, however, he has been recognized as a Druze and thanked for his service (Halabi, 2014). Examples like this demonstrate the Druze transformation from the “other” to fellow citizens through IDF service. If it were not for their fraternization with mainstream Israelis in the IDF, the Druze might have remained a complete enigma to other Israelis.

Druze inclusion in the service indicates Israeli officials’ opinion of the Druze community and ability to trust the minority group. Arabs are not afforded that same right, and they

collectively express disdain for Druze IDF soldiers. Some even consider them traitors. Perhaps as important as the Druze position in the IDF is the Arabs' role, or lack thereof. Arabs were originally excluded from the Defense Service Law. Unlike the Druze, though, the law never was amended to include mandatory service for this population group. They are permitted only to serve under voluntary circumstances (Hofnung, 1995). Including the Druze and excluding Arabs may serve as the facade for an Israeli scheme to separate Arabs from the Druze and other Israelis or simply a practical precautionary measure designed to prevent a conflict of loyalties between Arab-Israelis and their close Palestinian brothers. Some Druze and Arab-Israelis claim that Druze soldiers are placed in areas of higher conflict to ensure intimate battles between the two communities. They believe that the Israeli government is using Druze service to create friction between the two communities by pitting the Druze against Arab-Israelis and further isolating them from their Arab heritage. This claim may hold merit considering the disproportionate percentage of Druze serving throughout the IDF in general and even more so in specific sectors of the service. For example, 40% of the soldiers serving in the IDF's border security unit are Druze, (Hofnung, 1995). Either way, the strategy behind the policy decision to include in mandatory conscription Druze and not Arabs is highly political. It perpetuates the calculated block Israel wedged between the Druze and the Arab population that began when Israel instituted a separate school system and invented a nationality for its Druze community. It also prevents Arabs from participating in Israeli life and reaping the benefits of full Israeli citizenship unlocked for the Druze when mandatory conscription was introduced to them in 1956.

IDF service is one of the few ways in which the Druze can have a typical Israeli experience. It draws them down from the secluded villages they spend the majority of their lives in, requires them to use Israel's national language Hebrew (rather than their mother tongue

Arabic) so they have the option of linguistically assimilating into their country, and demonstrates the Druze commitment to Israel and their stable commitment to the Covenant. Mandatory conscription for the Druze improves their relationship with Israelis by allowing them to become acquainted with the Druze through their shared experience. It promotes trust between the two groups and gives the Druze a sense of belonging. On the other hand, IDF service strains relations between the Druze and Arab-Israelis. Some Arab-Israelis hate the Druze for defending their enemy country and others simply feel an unwanted sense of detachment from their Arab brethren. The extent to which military and security service influences the Druze experience and their relationships with the surrounding populations is explored in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Case Study: 2017 Shooting of Two Druze Policemen in the Old City**

Using various media outlets from Arabic and Jewish resources, this chapter examines the responses of these two communities in an attempt to analyze the opinions of each side regarding Druze police officers and the Druze community in general. Not surprisingly, the responses from Arab-Israelis and Jews differ greatly. Beyond the reporting disparities that arise from the hostility between the two groups in question, the majority of media articles from both sides express the public's general reaction to the event as a whole and, by omission, reveal the indifference with which most Arab-Israelis and Jews regard the Druze community. Most articles ignore the victims' Druze identity and focus instead on the repercussions and consequences of the shooting or on praise for the sacrifice these two fallen policemen made and the sacrifices of all who defend Israel and its people. This chapter compares the portrayals of the attack and analyzes the ways in which they are reflective of the larger perceptions of the Druze community.

#### The Sources

The news articles vary in their reports of the incident in typical he-said/she-said fashion, differing especially in the portrayal of which group (the shooters from Umm al-Fahm or the Druze policemen) was the antagonist. Each side attempts to subtly propagate its own political agenda. For that reason, newspapers and articles from across the political spectrum are used. It is worth noting that the quality of journalism and accessibility to articles of the Jewish sources surpasses that of the Arabic ones, perhaps due to laws that restrict production, distribution and content of Arabic newspapers. This could also reflect the issue of relativity and newsworthiness. The deaths of Israel's security forces members may be more important to Jews than to Arab-Israelis because the security forces are designed to protect the Jewish state.

Arabic media sources' reactions to the attack can be divided into three main categories: those who see the deceased Druze soldiers as simply Israelis, as victims of the State of Israel or as enemies of the Arab-Israelis and Palestinians. The first category of responses ignores that the Druze are a minority community and are not a part of the Jewish majority that Arab-Israelis generally oppose. The news articles in this group typically focus more on tangential issues, such as the amplified security measures at al-Aqsa Mosque added after the attack. Seeing media responses that fall in the second category is more rare; the Druze are not frequently seen as victims. Not many Arab-Israelis feel sympathy for Druze soldiers in general, and that sentiment is carried over into Arab-Israelis' reactions to this particular event. The few sources that do report that the soldiers are victims spin the narrative to focus on the hypocrisy of seemingly empathetic Israeli reactions to the death of Druze men serving their State, circling back to the common politicized rhetoric that opposes Israel and all things Israeli. The third category is most common for any sources that looked beyond the Druze's supposed Israeli identity. Many Arab-Israelis view Druze Israelis as a force more threatening than other Israelis, a narrative reflected in the media's reaction to the attack. These articles focus on the innocence of the Arab-Israeli attackers, or "martyrs" as this media references them, even twisting the facts to present them as innocent.

Israeli sources are an example of diplomacy through journalism, either by referencing the Israel-Palestine conflict or attempting to remind the Druze that their sacrifice to the State is appreciated. Similar to Arabic media, reporting on the fallen Druze police as if they were any other Israeli soldiers is common. These media sources react to the Druze as if they were Jews who fight for the same cause and suffer the same fate when attacked. These media sources thank them for their service and reiterate the sacrifices all Israelis must make for the sake of their

nation. These sources also represent Israel's usual political adage that aims to vilify the Arab-Israelis and Palestinians and profess the injustices Israelis are said to be forced to experience. Few sources examine the Druze soldiers through their own identity lens, but those that do delve into the issue deeper simply highlight the sacrifice that the Druze men make and reaffirm their supposed commitment to the Druze community, a response that is not free of political intent. There are two main Israeli responses. The first is similar to the Arab-Israelis' first response, an analysis of the issue that ignores the unique Druze identity. The second focuses on the sacrifice the Druze make for Israel and the Covenant of Blood that has existed for many years between the Druze and the Jews.

The subset of Jewish sources and Arabic sources that address the Druze soldiers as victims are the closest the two sides come to seeing eye-to-eye, but these, too, are far from congruent. Not only are their intents opposite, but their representations of Druze soldiers is different as well. Arabic sources state that the Druze are victims because they have been forced into service while Jewish sources state that the Druze are victims of Arab aggression. The death of these two Druze policemen is used as just another way to advance a political narrative. Even the sources that focus on the Druze as a distinct community that makes excessive sacrifices to uphold their commitment to Israel are guilty of using this tragedy for political gain. These responses are representative of larger opinion of the Israeli Druze. They are a minority group that is expected to participate in Israeli duties, such as IDF service, to the same level that all other Israelis are and to make the ultimate sacrifice when necessary, even though they do not reap the same benefits of typical Israeli life because of their seclusion in small villages high in the hills, far from interaction with other Israelis. They are commonly viewed as typical Israelis through Arab-Israelis' eyes, too, meaning that they are despised alongside the other Israelis.

## “Martyrs” or “Terrorists”

The most notable difference between the Jewish and Arabic sources is the language with which the news articles describe the two groups of shooters and the event as a whole. The key words employed are “martyr” versus “terrorist” and “attack” versus “terrorist attack.” Arabic sources use the terms “martyr” and “attack” to describe the Arab-Israeli shooters and the event as a whole, respectively. On the other hand, Jewish articles use “terrorist” and “terrorist attack” to describe the same event. *The Guardian* article demonstrates a manner of reporting that simply tells the story rather than attaching a political narrative or theatricalizing it through dramatic rhetoric. In this article, reporter Peter Beaumont employs the term “attack” when referring to the incident in general, refers to the Arab-Israeli attackers as “gunmen” or “attackers” and reports that the Druze soldiers “have been shot dead,” (July 14, 2017). This rhetoric stands in stark contrast to the biased reporting of both Jewish and Arabic sources.

Multiple Arabic news articles discuss the three shooters who killed the Druze policemen as if they were “martyrs”. The word martyr/martyrs, or *shaheed/shuhada’* in Arabic, is somewhat of a loaded term. Depending on the context, it can describe those who are regrettably deceased or religious martyrs who are said to serve Islam through acts such as self-immolation. The opening sentence of the article published by *Al-Quds* begins (translated from Arabic to English) with the phrase “Three young men were martyred...” (July 14, 2017). In the same article, different language is used to describe the deaths of the Druze soldiers. It states “...two were killed...” when referring to the fallen Druze soldiers. *Al-Quds* does not describe the event as a whole as a “terrorist attack”; instead, it employs the common Arabic media term “gunfire operation,” (July 14, 2017). The *Al-Hadath* article uses the same phraseology as *Al-Quds* and the specific Arabic word *shuhada’* to describe the deaths of the Arab-Israeli gunmen, (July 16,

2017). The intention behind the use of the word *shuhada'* is not fully clear, but the reader can infer that the religious connotation is not intended in these articles, making the term less contentious. Although the media is not trying to assert that the deceased Arab-Israelis were religious martyrs fighting in the name of Islam against Judaism; however, it is essential to note that these same articles refer to the deaths of the Druze policemen in a different manner. Both Al-Quds and Al-Hadath use the Arabic word *maqatal al-Druzeen*, or “killing of the two Druze.” The Arab-Israelis were martyred and the Druze were just killed.

Generally, Israeli articles decisively refer to the Arab-Israeli shooters as “terrorists” and the event as a whole as an act of terrorism, intending to accuse the three Arab-Israeli shooters as agents in the terrorism Israelis claim they suffer at the hands of Arabs. The title of *Israel Hayom*'s report labels the event a “terrorist attack.” Throughout this article the Arab-Israeli attackers are referred to mainly as “terrorists” and occasionally as “gunmen,” and the reporters even state, “No terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the attack at this time,” leading the public to assume that the tragedy was an organized attack on Israel by a hate group (July 14, 2017). Though *Haaretz*'s report takes a less aggressive standpoint than that of *Israel Hayom*, it nevertheless refers to the shooters as “terrorists,” (July 14, 2017). The article quotes Jewish Police Commissioner Roni Alsheich's statement that blames the attack on “extremist ideology” and files the event under “the war on terror,” a term that has taken on an explicitly political connotation since U.S. President Bush's employment of the term following the September 11, 2001, attacks (Israel Hayom July 14, 2017). Media use of this term reminds readers of the devastating violence the United States experienced in 2001, and comparing the shooting of two Druze policemen to the 9/11 attack is an inflammatory juxtaposition. The article also quotes one

of the deceased Druze officers' cousins comment that the soldiers are "...victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," (*Israel Hayom* July 14, 2017).

At face value, the opposing descriptions of the men involved in the tragedy represents the extent to which the political views of the two groups are opposed. Digging deeper, though, one notices that the reporting of many of the news articles is solely focused on the broader political strife between Arab-Israelis and Jews and is not concerned with the Druze identity of the deceased. Examination of Israeli news sources reveals that Israelis are not focused on the fallen soldiers' belonging to Israel's Druze community; rather, they are focused on the "terrorist" attacks and the supposed victimization of Israelis by Arabs (July 14, 2017). This same article along with many others fails to mention that the fallen soldiers belong to the Druze community. This represents the previously-mentioned first category of media response for both Arab-Israelis and Jews because they examine the event without focusing on the victims' Druze identity. This category of media leads the reader to believe that the deceased Druze are just like all other Israeli security service members, implying that Israelis either view the Druze as equals or do not appreciate or acknowledge the sacrifice they make to protect their Jewish homeland. It also shows that Arab-Israelis group the Druze with other Israelis, ignoring that they have a distinct identity.

#### Used and Abused

An overarching theme found in Arabic media is that Israel is taking advantage of the Druze to serve a larger political purpose. One article that falls into the second category, that which discusses the deceased as victims, claims that the Druze were forced into conscription by the Israeli government despite protests made by Druze leaders (*Merkez al-Ahram...* July 29, 2017). This same article also argues that Israel intentionally assigns Druze soldiers to border

zones and areas of high tension to increase the number of interactions between Druze security forces and Arab-Israelis and Palestinians. This further divides the people and heightens tension between the two minority groups, giving more power to Israel. This supports the idea that IDF service elevates the status of the soldier and, therefore, gives Israeli Druze access to societal benefits that Arab-Israelis do not have.

The article that does mention the fallen policemen's Druze identity was published by *Keren Karemeth Lelsrael Jewish National Fund* (September 18, 2017), which aims to increase resources dedicated to the Druze minority as a demonstration of Israel's commitment to minority groups. The article focuses on Israel's commitment to their Druze "brothers" and their appreciation of the Druze security officers' allegiance to the state, essentially paying lip service to a political narrative that maintains the Druze's marginal status in Israeli society by praising them just enough to imitate inclusion.

Ignored

News articles regarding the shooting were surprisingly scarce. What was not scarce, though, were responses to the consequences of the shooting and the larger political scene in the area. This demonstrates Arab-Israelis' and Jews' indifference to the Druze community. The majority of the Arabic media articles focus on Muslims' outrage toward the cancellation of Friday prayers at al-Aqsa mosque immediately following the attack and the supplemental security measures, such as the addition of metal detectors, Israeli security forces implemented at the mosque. This is not necessarily an indication that Arab-Israelis dislike the Druze, but it does demonstrate that they have little regard for the Druze as a unique community. Most articles make mention that the policemen are from the Druze community but only in conjunction with the most basic information needed to complete the articles--the names and hometowns of the deceased.

Though this does not seem extraordinary, it is significant. This implies that they view the Druze policemen the same as any other Israeli policemen, which suggests that the Druze--like the Jews--are Arab-Israelis' enemy.

Jewish articles focus on the so-called "war on terror" that they say defines the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, using the tragic deaths to further the popular political narrative that claims that the normal way of life in Israel is under threat from Palestinian aggression, which ignores that the attackers were Arab-Israelis and the victims were *Druze* policemen rather than members from Israel's majority group. While Druze service is appreciated, Israelis largely ignore the marginalization of the Druze population.

#### Conclusion

The Druze are used by both sides as a medium to convey a larger political narrative. Both sides use the attack to criticize the incessant Israel-Palestine conflict and to demonize their respective enemies (each other). In response to the attack and other similar attacks in the past, Arabic sources raise important injustices toward the Druze, but they are discussed not in an effort to promote equality for the Druze community but to expose the hypocrisy of the Israelis' response to the shootings. On the other hand, Israeli news sources advertise the commitment to solidarity made by Netanyahu and other government and community leaders, harping on the supposed proclamation of brotherhood between the Jews and the Druze. Politicized articles from each side claim to seek justice and equality for the Druze; however, the minority community will be forgotten as soon as it no longer is useful for political discourse between Arab-Israelis and Jews.

## CONCLUSION

Like many Jewish IDF soldiers, the Druze put service to their country above their own lives. Through this solidarity with the Jewish community and the State of Israel, the Druze demonstrate their commitment to their fellow citizens and the nation that houses them and offers them religious liberty. The sacrifice that the Druze offer to the State is clear; however, the benefits Israel offers to them in return are less forthright. Their service is the key to Druze inclusion in a phenomenon that dominates Israeli society, but it does not fully unlock the door to normal Israeli life and full social acceptance. The Druze community remains a social pariah that is tucked away in the hills of the Galilee invited to join Israeli life only for a short stint of military service. Through their commitment to service, the Druze maintain the sacred promise to their Jewish brethren in Israel established through the Covenant of Blood, but the Jews seem to remember the pact only when necessary to maintain the facade that the agreement is mutual. When a tragedy results in the ultimate sacrifice, Jewish media proved that Jews give little more than lip service to their oath to the Druze.

The Druze have been used by the Jews since before the State of Israel was founded. In the 1930s, the relationship between the Druze and the Jews was more co-beneficial, though. The relationship was founded upon a minority survival pact when the Jews, too, were a minority in the area and were being violently persecuted after flooding into the Palestinians' territory. Post-1948, though, the Jews switched from minority to majority, but the Druze maintained their alliance with the Jews, even strengthening their commitment to the Jews by making it a public pact. The relationship became more exploitative as Israeli society progressed. The Druze maintained their quiet life secluded in their villages, venturing down to serve their nation and sacrifice their lives. That the Jews are taking advantage of the Druze is not apparent until a

tragedy like the al-Aqsa shooting in July 2017. After the fatal shooting of the two Druze police officers, Jewish media responses offered just enough sympathy to ensure the Druze feel that they are making a valuable contribution to Israel's security forces, but the kind words they offer to the fallen officers' families are simply lip service.

Overall, Arabic and Jewish media responses to the incident reflect the indifference both sides feel toward the Druze community. The Druze are caught in the middle of the larger Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Though Jews consume the vast majority of the Israeli population, Arab-Israelis combined with Palestinians make a larger community. Because Arabs living inside the borders of Israel sympathize so closely with Palestinians, Arab-Israelis feel a similar sense of detachment from the Druze, even though they are all Arabs, a link that was forcefully removed from memory through Israel's divide-and-rule policy. The Israelis succeeded in their attempt to break the non-Jewish minority into even smaller groups. They further succeeded by turning those minorities against one another and ensured that relations between the Arab-Israeli and Druze minorities were so hostile that the two groups never would unite to fight against the Jews and the State of Israel. Arabic media articles' use of the word "martyr" to describe only the three Arab-Israeli shooters and not the fallen Druze policemen demonstrates Arab-Israelis' sentiments toward the Arab-Israeli population and the Druze population. The Arab-Israeli shooters were martyrs because they were defending their Arab brethren from the tyranny of Israel. They refer to the deaths of the two Druze as simply a "killing," ignoring that the Druze officers were unexpectedly murdered in the line of duty.

Arabic media largely ignores that the victims are police from the *Druze* community, not from the Jewish group they see as their oppressors. Despite Israel's successful attempt to establish a distinct identity for the Druze by establishing a new nationality and system of

education for the Druze community, Arabic media muddles together the Druze with the Jews because they are fighting for the same nation that they perceive as oppressive. Druze participation in the IDF and, consequently, other branches of security forces like the police allies them with the Jews in a concrete fashion. To Arab-Israelis, the IDF gun aimed at their Palestinian brothers could just as likely be manned by a Druze soldier as by a Jewish soldier. Within the IDF and Israeli society, though, there is a distinct differentiation between the Jewish population and the Druze. The Druze look like the Arab-Israelis and are treated the same by the Jews when met in passing. The Druze are not appreciated by the Jewish majority unless they are putting their lives at stake for the Jewish cause and the Jewish nation. Druze are excluded by Arab-Israelis because they are viewed as the enemy, and they are social pariahs among other Israelis because they look different and practice a different religion, leaving the Druze *neither here nor there*, caught in between the hostile struggle between Arabs and Israelis.

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