

The Financial Times Calls Israel A “Segregated Society”

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Adam Levick of CAMERA [dissects a recent article](#) on Israel in the *Financial Times*. The headline of the story in the *Financial Times* is “The Arab medics battling coronavirus in Israel’s segregated society.” Levick notes:

The article itself, reported from Haifa, the city that’s arguably the most successful model of Jewish-Arab coexistence in the country, attempts to sell the narrative of Israeli racism advanced in the headline by twisting evidence to the contrary.

First, let’s look at this paragraph from the piece, written by Jerusalem correspondent Mehul Srivastava:

Arabs make up only a fifth of Israel’s population, but represent half the country’s pharmacists, a quarter of its nurses and just under a fifth of its doctors, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. Some of the nation’s largest hospitals have Arab doctors heading major departments, and the country’s leading virologist is Arab.

Do these facts not suggest that medical careers, among the most prestigious and best paying are wide open to Arabs, whose percentages in the medical professions (doctors, nurses, pharmacists) are equal to or greater than their percentage of Israel's total population? And Arab doctors have no glass ceiling; they head major departments in the largest hospitals, that treat both Jews and Arabs. Surely this is evidence against the charge that Israel is an "apartheid" society where Arabs are kept down.

The journalist then tries to undermine such impressive facts pointing to Arab opportunity and achievement in Israeli society in the following sentence:

Arabs are disproportionately represented in the medical community because attaining professional qualifications has been one way to push back against political marginalization, Arab doctors said. [emphasis added]

This attribution of a political motive as explaining why Arabs become doctors in Israel is absurd. Arabs become doctors in Israel for the same reasons that people become doctors anywhere: they are drawn to the work, some to the clinical practice of medicine, and others to medical research, work that they find both interesting and fulfilling; the profession is prestigious and well paid. As doctors, they play an important role in society. Arabs do not become doctors as a way to "push back against political marginalization." They become doctors because they want to; there is no political subtext to be teased out. It makes no sense to claim that Arabs who enter the medical professions are protesting "marginalization." They are taking advantage, rather, of the fact that they are not marginalized, that all careers, even the most prestigious, with the greatest responsibilities and rewards, are open to them. Israeli Arabs become doctors in large numbers not to protest "political marginalization," but

because they can.

The journalist advances this sweeping generalization about the personal motivations of Arab healthcare professionals, despite seemingly having only interviewed a handful of doctors for the article. Moreover, a report by the respected (left-leaning) Israel Democracy Institute offered a different explanation for why so many Arabs choose these professions:

The choice of young Arabs ... to enter paramedical professions is an expression of their desire to integrate more fully into Israeli society, to play a significant role in it, and to hold positions of responsibility. These are not jobs held by people who care only about themselves and their community, but rather – require engaging with, and even contributing to society at large. [emphasis added]

This explanation is both true and obvious. It is offered, please note, by a “left-leaning” group, the Israel Democracy Institute, that ordinarily would be glad to find fault with Israel. Israeli Arabs enter the medical professions for all the reasons that Israeli Jews do, and in such a profession they are also able to “integrate more fully into Israeli society” rather than reject it. Is that an illegitimate goal?

A fundamental element of anti-Israel bias involves, when faced with alternative explanations for any given phenomenon, promoting the one that shows Israel in the least favorable light.

The reporter then cites the following quote to advance the desired narrative:

In Kafra Qara, an Arab town south of Haifa with so many medical professionals that residents call it the city of doctors, Jameel Mohsen was more critical. “As an Arab, other jobs are closed off to us, so we became doctors,” he

said, peeling off layers of protective equipment after setting up a Covid-19 ward at the Hillel Yeffe Medical Center, where he is head of infectious diseases. [emphasis added]

Goodness, we are supposed to believe that becoming a doctor is a profession of last resort, which Israeli Arabs choose only because, as Jameel Mohsen claims, “other jobs are closed off to us, so we became doctors.” Imagine the scornful laughter that would greet any newly-minted doctors elsewhere in the world who claimed that they became doctors only because “other jobs are closed off to us.” How many people in the real world “reluctantly” become doctors, and only because they have no alternative, and how many are overjoyed to have that opportunity?

The claim, by the Arab doctor, that there are professions “closed off” to Arab citizens of the state is an outright lie, one that the reporter fails to challenge.

Further, there’s been a plethora of evidence in recent years pointing to Arab Israelis’ incredible success in various high-paying and prestigious sectors, such as high-tech and academia.

There are no professions in Israel “closed off” to Arab citizens. They can be, and are, physicists and physical therapists, writers and painters, athletes and software developers, lawyers and judges. They teach in the same university departments as Israeli Jews, work in the same high-tech companies, care for patients in the same hospitals. They serve in the Knesset, where the Arab Joint List is the third largest party. They sit on the Supreme Court. They represent the country as high-ranking diplomats. They can even serve in the IDF, if they desire, and some have attained the rank of major.

The journalist [for the Financial Times] then asserts that “despite claims from Mr. Netanyahu and his rightwing political allies that Arabs were ignoring health directives, none of the Arab majority cities, even the densely populated neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, have had major outbreaks.” [emphasis added]

This isn’t true, as The Times of Israel reported:

Bnei Brak [an Orthodox community] continued to be the large community with the highest rate of infection, followed by the Arab Israeli community of Deir al-Asad in second place. A ministerial committee on Friday declared Deir al-Asad and Bi’ina as “restricted areas” amid fears of a coronavirus outbreak there.

The question of whether Arab communities are “ignoring” coronavirus “health directives” is difficult to answer now because, at the time of this writing, the index of compliance run by the Health Ministry and the Local Government Center hadn’t yet published data on major Arab cities.

The article continues:

But for Osama Tanous, a fiery 34-year-old pediatrician who cites the Indian leftist [and BDS supporter] Arundhati Roy as an inspiration ... the sudden elevation of Arab doctors to national saviors will not usher in new equality for Arab communities. Instead, he said, it will be used to justify continued prejudice. “Israel has a way of celebrating good Arab doctors, while discriminating against all other Arabs, so that doctors become the ambassadors of this beautiful Israeli system of coexistence,” he said, referring to a flurry of recent articles in Israeli newspapers praising Arab medics. “It makes it appear that now that you have Arab doctors saving Jewish lives, and helping Israel at a time of national crisis, therefore it is time to stop being racist against them – this is a very slippery and dangerous

notion" [emphasis added]...

In this version of an ad hominem and intellectually unserious argument, the charge is that Israel cynically highlights Arab success in the healthcare industry to whitewash the discrimination they face. Moreover, The Financial Times fails to reveal that this "fiery" Arab pediatrician is an activist with Al-Shabaka, a radical NGO which uses rhetoric that includes accusations of "ethnic cleansing," "apartheid," and "genocide" against Israel, and which opposes the existence of a Jewish state.

Would the resentful Dr. Tanous prefer that the Israelis pay no attention to the achievements of Arab doctors during this coronavirus outbreak? Wouldn't they then be accused of "racism" for ignoring the role of those Arab doctors? Why is celebrating the success of Israeli Arabs in healthcare a "cynical" attempt to "whitewash the discrimination they face"? Aren't their successes, as doctors, evidence of the lack of that discrimination? Tanous claims that "Israel has a way of celebrating good Arab doctors, while discriminating against all other Arabs." Israel does not discriminate "against all other Arabs" [except doctors]. If he has the slightest evidence for his claim of widespread discrimination, Dr. Tanous should bring it forth. Adam Levick has unearthed the information – not mentioned in the *Financial Times* article – that Dr. Tanous is an activist with Al-Shabaka, **an NGO which has claimed that Israel is guilty of ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and genocide.** Mention of this connection would have alerted readers to Dr Tanous's long history of vilification of Israel.

More evidence attesting to Tanous's radicalism is found in the last paragraph of the article:

For Mr Tanous, the pediatrician, interactions between Arabs and Israelis are always political. "It's just another level

of us having to prove ourselves,” he said. “Prove that we can get into medical school, prove that we can be a part of this national effort to fight the epidemic, just so that we can be granted equality by our occupiers.” [emphasis added]

Dr. Tanous sees everything that happens to Israeli Arabs as reflecting Israeli oppression. The opportunity to become a doctor is described as “us [Arabs] having to prove ourselves.” But that is exactly what all candidates, everywhere in the world, have to do to be accepted into this or that program: they must “prove themselves” – that is, demonstrate that they are capable of practicing the profession for which they wish to prepare. The Israeli Arabs, like the Israeli Jews, apply and, just like the Jewish applicants, some get into medical school. Dr. Tanous insists that Arabs “must prove that we can get into medical school.” Of course. He makes it sound as if a special burden has been placed on them. But that’s what an admissions application is all about – offering evidence of fitness for study – and that requirement is the same for everyone. Arab applicants, just like Jewish applicants, have to “prove themselves able” to handle the work. The Arab doctors are not being asked “to prove that we can be a part of this national effort to fight the epidemic.” They are being asked to participate, just like the Jewish doctors, to the best of their ability and their specialized training, in treating the victims of the coronavirus. Nothing sinister about it. Dr. Tanous interprets the most ordinary and sensible demands as somehow being occasions where Israeli Arabs, but not Israeli Jews, must constantly “prove themselves.” That’s only his resentful imagination at work, so quick to claim the putative mistreatment of Israeli Arabs by Jews, where there has been none.

The fact that Tanous, a full citizen, would characterize fellow Arab citizens as living under “occupation” is a an apt illustration of how, by largely relying on fringe, radical

voices, The Financial Times obfuscates the fact that Israel's healthcare system, as even the New Israel Fund and Haaretz columnists have boasted, serves as "model of coexistence" in the region.

In Israel, all professions, including medicine, are open to Arabs, just as they are to Jews. Arabs are to be found – let's repeat this from above – working in high tech, in academia, in manufacturing plants, in hospitals, in law firms, in accounting firms, in hotels, on television and radio, in grocery stores, at car dealerships, in hospitals, in schools. They own businesses big and small. They sit in the Knesset, serve on the Supreme Court, work as diplomats, and if they wish they can serve, too, in the IDF. Yet the *Financial Times* has thechutzpah to describe Israel as a "segregated" society.

The Israeli media have naturally celebrated the Arab medical personnel who have been helping to combat the coronavirus. Is that a bad thing? Should they not pay tribute to them? Is it being done for a sinister reason, as Dr. Tanous claims, to make it seem that there is no discrimination against Arabs in Israel because there are so many Arab doctors who are being praised? Is there really discrimination against Arabs? What professions does Dr. Tanous wish to claim are off-limits to Arabs? And why does he describe himself as working –in Haifa – under "occupiers"? Is it his position that Israel, even behind the Green Line, is an "occupying power"? That would necessarily mean, according to him, that the Jews have no legitimate claim to any part of the Land of Israel. Is that the kind of source for information about Israeli Arabs and Jews on which a reporter for the *Financial Times* should rely?

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