



The spectacle of the proceedings of the Central Elections Committee (CEC) on 19 December was not only a manifestation of the prevailing hostility towards elected Arab representatives in the Knesset, but also of the right-wing's vociferous opposition to the legitimate struggle of Arab citizens of Israel for equal citizenship. The disqualification process that unfolded this month is a direct extension of the Knesset's enactment of 20 discriminatory, anti-democratic laws in the last few years, including the "Nakba Law", the "Anti-Boycott Law", and the "Admissions Committee Law".

The pandemonium in the CEC shows how grave the situation has become: the committee members had no interest in discussing the substance of the disqualification motions or in examining the evidence before them, but merely wanted the session to descend into attacks and incitement against Arab Members of Knesset (MKs). There are some right-wing politicians who believe that the CEC constitutes a platform for personal and politically-motivated attacks and waging witch hunts. Adalah believes that serious efforts must be invested in cancelling the disqualification process in the CEC – a process that involves members of the coalition trying to delegitimize members of the opposition – and that it should be transferred to a professional committee to prevent it from being hijacked as a platform for incitement against certain segments of the electorate, in particular Arab citizens. The Chair of the Committee, Supreme Court Justice Elyakim Rubenstein, repeatedly prevailed on the committee members to conduct a serious, objective debate on the subject matter at hand, as it appeared on the agenda, but without success.

Article 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset provides that an MK or political party can be barred from running in the elections if they demonstrate, through their words or actions, directly or indirectly, that they negate the definition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, if they are deemed to support an "armed struggle" against Israel by an "enemy state" or a "terrorist organization", or if they incite to racism. Over the past ten years this article has been used repeatedly against Arab candidates and political parties before every round of Knesset elections for calling for "a state for all its citizens", for example, or for expressing any criticism of Israel's Occupation or support for the Palestinian national struggle for independence. Therefore, the elected representatives of the Arab national minority in Israel find themselves having to justify their struggle for full equality and defend their demands for the right to dignity, in case their positions are deliberately misconstrued as a negation of the state or as support for terrorism. Article 7A clearly requires the minority to yield to the ideology of the majority. Thus there is no escape from the conclusion than that this article must be cancelled.