



## State admits move to boost Arabs in civil service is not working

By [Zvi Zrahiya](#), Haaretz Correspondent

The number of Arab citizens employed by government ministries has not changed despite a government decision to increase their numbers, Deputy Civil Service Commissioner Ya'akov Berger told the Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee on Wednesday.

Currently about three percent of civil service employees are from the Arab sector.

This is a very low rate compared to the overall Arab population in Israel.

Berger, however, said he does not see how it would be possible to achieve the goals set by the government for increasing Arab representation in the civil service. The government seeks to raise to eight percent the number of Arabs in its service.

Berger noted that in 2004, 249 Arab employees joined the civil service. This figure is some 5.6 percent of the total number of 4,468 new employees.

He said that the Housing Ministry took on just one new Arab employee out of a total of 106 in 2004; the Health Ministry hired 129 Arabs out of a total of 1,790 new employees that same year; the Transportation Ministry took on four Arab employees out of 35; the Interior Ministry hired six Arabs out of 94 employees; the Labor Ministry took on eight Arab citizens out of a total of 119 in 2004.

Five years ago, the government decided to reserve 75 civil service positions per year to new employees from the Arab sector in order to meet the goal it set for itself. This goal, however, was not met and the affirmative action program is set to expire next month.

Balad MK Azmi Bishara, chairman of the Knesset subcommittee monitoring the employment of Arabs in the civil service, maintains that government ministries have not internalized their legislated obligation to achieve the adequate representation of the Arab population in the civil service.

Bishara said the vast majority of positions reserved for new Arab employees are not senior posts but rather low-level positions. He also announced he will appeal to the government to approve -before the coming elections - the Civil Service Commission's proposal to continue reserving positions for new Arab employees on a yearly basis. Bishara fears that, if the program is halted, government ministries will not hire new Arab employees of their own accord.