



## Only four out of 104 communities covered by Galilee development plan are Arab

By [Jack Khoury](#) and [Yoav Stern](#), Haaretz Correspondents

The Hadash movement is set to launch its campaign against the new plan for developing the Galilee region, announced last week by the office of Vice Premier Shimon Peres, which the movement says blatantly ignores or discriminates against Israeli Arabs in the north.

The strategic plan offers more than 10,000 housing units in the Galilee and offers incentives to families, primarily from the center of the country, to move to the north.

Hadash, which will announce its campaign against the plan during a conference held this weekend in the lower Galilee town of Kafr Manda, maintains Peres' plan blatantly abandons Israeli Arab communities in the north. Hadash says the plan's declared goal is to ensure a Jewish majority in the Galilee.

"This is the cruelest plan of the past 20 years," Hadash said Wednesday. The movement says Peres' plan completely ignores the needs of Galilee Arab communities and deepens the gaps between Arabs and Jews in the north.

"We are calling on the government to freeze the plan and to open a dialogue with the Arab public with the goal of formulating a plan based on the principles of equality. [Such a plan should be] aimed at closing gaps, expanding the territorial jurisdiction of Arab towns and creating industrial zones," the Hadash announcement said.

Peres' associates are rejecting the claims of discrimination directed at his plan. They say that, following appeals to his office, Galilee Arab communities were integrated into the plan. In addition, Peres is also pushing a number of programs aimed at aiding the Arab sector both in the Galilee and the Negev regions.

His associates said he would not lend a hand to the implementation of a discriminatory plan or policy.

However, an *Haaretz* investigation revealed that of the 104 communities covered by the Galilee development program, only four of them are Arab or Druze towns (Ein al-Assad, Sandala, Moukibala and Taibeh).

Last week, Efrat Duvdevani, Peres' director general, said the Galilee development plan "will incorporate members of civic organizations and representatives of the Arab public."

It was reported last week that Peres' office was to set up a joint team with Arab representatives to bring the issues troubling the population to the attention of the various government offices.

Additionally, a non-profit company will be established to handle Galilee planning for the government, comparable to the company that dealt with Negev planning.

Peres' office is responsible for Negev and Galilee development, and it was harshly criticized recently by the Arab public over the campaign it ran for populating the Galilee. Among other complaints, the campaign was skewered for not presenting any data on aid to the Arab sector.

Peres' office said last week that Peres himself has met lately with the chair of the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee, Shawki Khatib, and with the chair of the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, Hanna Swaid, to discuss Galilee development. Peres said at that meeting that "there is no matter too small for us and no matter too big for us to handle."

Peres' people also met with representatives of Sikkuy, the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality, who presented their views on Galilee development.