



---

## **SOCIETY AGAINST POLITICS: EXCLUSIONS FROM ISRAEL'S #J14 MOVEMENT**

CALLIE MAIDHOF

*MAHINDRA HUMANITIES CENTER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY*

---

### **Abstract**

In the summer of 2011, a movement known by the hashtag #J14 swept across Israel. At height of #J14, thousands of people were camped out in tents on Tel Aviv's swanky Rothschild Boulevard, and smaller encampments peppered the green space of nearly every city in Israel. The Saturday night protests in Tel Aviv drew upwards of 300,000 people, who made a broad call for "social justice," with specific demands focusing on skyrocketing housing prices, health care, childcare, and the overall high cost of living. Notably absent were any demands addressing the myriad of issues facing non-Jewish citizens of Israel, as well as the question of the ongoing occupation. In this article, I will consider the #J14 movement in terms of how civil society operates as an ideological construct, making possible some alliances (however counterintuitive) while excluding others from public debate all together. Following Mamdani's argument that civil society as a concept is premised on exclusionary practices, I argue that mobilization in the name of civil society will not only reproduce these exclusions, but also widen the gap between those who do and do not receive crucial state services.

### **Keywords**

Israel-Palestine; anti-politics; movements; civil society; ethnography

### **Corresponding author:**

Callie Maidhof, Email: [cmaidhof@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:cmaidhof@fas.harvard.edu)

This research was funded by a fellowship from the Sultan Program in Arab Studies at the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Thanks also to Kfir Cohen, Candace Lukasik, and other participants in the CMES Junior Scholars Lunch, who provided valuable feedback on an earlier version of this article.

In the summer of 2011, a movement known by the hashtag #J14 for July 14, the first day of the protests, swept across Israel. At height of #J14, thousands of people were camped out in tents on Tel Aviv's swanky Rothschild Boulevard (renamed "If I were a Rothschild" after the famous song from *Fiddler on the Roof*, "If I were a Rich Man"), and smaller encampments peppered the green space of nearly every city in Israel. The Saturday night protests in Tel Aviv drew upwards of 300,000 people, who made a broad call for "social justice," with specific demands focusing on skyrocketing housing prices, health care, childcare, and the overall high cost of living. This was a moment of social upheaval both regionally and globally. #J14 followed quickly on the footsteps of the Arab Spring, and just as Israel's social movement began to lose steam, protesters in New York settled into Zuccotti Park, launching Occupy Wall Street. Like these other movements, #J14 based its claims on an ideal relationship between society and state, stepping into the role of the desperate voice of populism against a corrupted and out-of-touch government which had failed to provide for the basic needs of its people.

In a society notorious for its political bickering and seesawing polls, the #J14 movement achieved a stunning 90 percent support of the Israeli population, indicating not only the support of Jewish Israelis, but also their non-Jewish counterparts. I watched the coverage of the events on television from a family living room in Tsufim, a quickly growing settlement just a few kilometers east of the Green Line, which at the time was home to some 1,250<sup>1</sup> residents, about equally split between self-identified "secular" and "religious" Jews. I watched the protests with a large family with teenage and adult children, about half of whom lived at home. They kept the television on during most waking hours outside of Shabbat, and on this occasion it competed for attention with family gossip and the teasing of siblings. We watched the aerial coverage of the massive crowd and I asked what they thought of the movement.

Moshe, the family's gentle, balding patriarch, who keeps a bulletproof vest in the closet, gave me a look of pride. "I think it's good what these young people are doing," he said. "It's hard out there now."

The answer came as a surprise. The movement was broadly identifiable as leftwing, and, although its aims were focused elsewhere, it nonetheless made use of anti-settler rhetoric. I asked Moshe if that worried him. The family balked at the question.

"No, no," they assured me. "They're not talking about us."

I begin with this rather strange moment precisely for its strangeness, for the way that it sideswipes our expectations about social movements and Israeli politics, without ever fully meeting them. Looking back on the upheavals of 2011 from the brutal political landscape of 2016, we may rightly call into question the narratives that underscored these movements, asking what, as the title of this special issue puts it, is the role of civil society in these uncivil times. To answer this question, I turn first to ethnographic data collected during the summer of 2011. During that summer, I was on a short-term "pre-field" research visit of two months, in preparation for my larger project on suburban settlement growth in the West Bank. I spent the first month visiting different settlements adjacent to the Green Line, chuckling about accounts coming out of Tel Aviv of the so-called "cottage cheese riots" over the rapidly rising price of everyone's favorite dairy product. At the time, Alon Idan, a columnist for Israel's respected leftwing newspaper Haaretz, criticized the protests for being based not on action, but on nonaction, and therefore could not possibly serve as a launching pad for a "civil revolt"—a view that, as I will argue, was

---

1 As of May 2015, this number had reached 1,622, representing nearly 30% growth in just four years (B'tselem 2015).

as much justified as it was proven wrong by #J14.

By July 14, I had “settled in” to a furnished basement in Tsufim, where I conducted interviews with my settler hosts and their friends. Although the settlement serves as a bedroom community on Tel Aviv’s extended periphery, to me as a politically and socially isolated newcomer without a private car, nothing could have felt further away than that bustling urban center. Still, I watched with interest as the protests grew and took hold first in Tel Aviv, and then spread across the country. When I saw photographs of Rothschild’s tent city, I boarded the bus to see it for myself—the first and least formal of several research visits to Rothschild Boulevard and to the Saturday night protests. My attention to this movement was in this way framed by my research location in the settlements. While this may distinguish me as a researcher—wouldn’t research on these protests be more aptly located primarily on Rothschild, or at least in Tel Aviv?—it is hardly a unique positioning. #J14 may be associated principally with Tel Aviv, but it was watched and supported by Israelis across the country, including many of the more than half-million settlers who lived in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Thinking about this movement from the vantage point of the settlement project is thus a crucial exercise in locating it in the larger question of Israeli politics, which in turn highlights the stakes of the exclusions I will describe below. In this article, I will consider the #J14 movement in terms of how civil society operates as an ideological construct, making possible some alliances (however counterintuitive) while excluding others from public debate all together. I will do this, first, by considering #J14 on its own terms. #J14 represents the mobilization of civil society around an imaginary of liberation and struggle outside and against the state. The movement relied rhetorically on a normative distinction between “political” and “social” demands that at once reflects a unique Israeli deployment of these terms and also sheds light on broader political schematizations in other global contexts. I examine this distinction in relation to Hannah Arendt’s work (1958) on what she called the “rise of the social” (p. 38). #J14 protesters demanded certain protections from the state on the basis of their social belonging as well as their fulfillment of basic obligations to that state. Bringing this back to the settlements allows us to consider how these demands reproduced the constitutive exclusions of the Israeli state, in which racial and religious discrimination is housed in the most basic institutions of a modern democracy.

### Civil exclusions

Although civil society has been a central concept in political theory since Hegel, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has argued that the notion acquired new purchase with the Eastern European uprisings of the late 1980s. For many international observers and scholars of other regions, the uprisings marked a shift from a perspective centered on the state to one on society, “from a strategy of armed struggle that seeks to capture state power to one of an unarmed civil struggle that seeks to create a self-limiting power” (p. 14)<sup>2</sup>. The emancipatory potential of civil society against state was in this moment cemented in the public imaginary; movements such as #J14 draw from this well.

Understood as the locus of liberty and democracy, civil society is thus a powerful ideological construct. But in practice, what Mamdani called “actually existing civil society” has been produced through processes of exclusion. Habermas’s public sphere (1991) is famously a masculine, bourgeois space (Ryan, 1992). And in Mamdani’s post/colonial African context, civil society emerged from the highly racialized institutions of the state. If this is what civil society

---

<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian revolution, in which a popular uprising provided the context for a military coup, makes for an interesting counterpoint to this.

looks like, it—at best—offers democracy only to some.

Examining #J14 in terms of the constitution of civil society is not simply a theoretical move, as it was a crucial part of the protesters' own strategy. If the movement gained nearly unprecedented support from a broad spectrum of Israelis, it was in part due to the advancement of an explicitly social—as opposed to political—agenda. Protesters carefully distinguished between the two, describing their demands as social and even apolitical in nature, even as these demands were directed at political figures—going so far as to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This sometimes-confusing insistence that their economic demands were apolitical in nature drew criticism from the left and suspicion from the right, but did not shake popular support.

#J14 protesters drafted a detailed list of demands for social justice, focusing on economic reform ranging from taking steps to limit inflation, to free education from age three months, to reducing VAT taxes, and halting the privatization of social services such as welfare and mental healthcare. At the center of the movement was the housing crisis that paralyzed Israeli society, particularly in the highly-sought-after areas of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The list deliberately eschewed questions of racial or religious inequalities, as well as the contentious, long-running debates with regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The protest communicated a vision of the middle-class existence to which “the nation” is entitled: affordable, comfortable homes; adequate childcare and healthcare; and so on. #J14 protesters expressed frustration over a political scene dominated by rockets and ever-failing peace talks, to the exclusion of basic social services. This understanding has persisted as a theme in Israeli political discussions, as in this 2014 Haaretz op-ed by Matthew Kalman:

Apart from Israel, the politics of every developed country in the world revolve around economics. That's the basis of the EU, the G8, the Davos Forum, the OECD, the GCC and just about every other powerful gathering on the planet. Wars and revolutions may grab the occasional headline but it's money that moves the people. ...But not in Israel. The mushrooming 2015 budget battle in Israel isn't about jobs, healthcare, education or transport – it's about defense. (2014)

Kalman lamented Israeli politicians' exclusive focus on defense, which, he argued, had created a widening economic gap between the haves and the have-nots—something he ironically referred to as “two states.” In Kalman's view, Israel's economic woes are evidence of political backwardness and misplaced priorities on the part of the state: modern states are (and should be) organized around a national economy, rather than ongoing violent conflict. Kalman's is an appeal for what Michel Foucault (1991) would call “the art of government,” which would involve a restructuring of the state around questions of prosperity expressed in jobs, healthcare, education, and transport. For Foucault, the historical shift to governance crucially entailed the production of populations whose management depended on their designation as either internal or external to the care of the newly formed Westphalian states. Economic caretaking is thus paired with the operation of security on the basis of a defined territory. But Israel has no such neat territoriality: as a state, it has never recognized the existence of its own borders, and its Jewish citizenry remains split as to who or what counts as either “Israel” or “Israeli.” In the absence of clear distinctions of this sort, the discursive opposition between political and social concerns has become a potent shorthand for discerning between “social” matters of the economic wellbeing of Jewish citizens and “political” contentions with regard to Palestinians—with or without Israeli citizenship.

## The rise of the social

The political/social divide also closely adheres to Hannah Arendt's (1958) understanding of these terms, even as the protesters arrive at opposite conclusions. Like Foucault, Arendt hinged her analysis of the economy in part on the transference of this concept from the maintenance of a single family household to that of a national economy. What Foucault identified as a shift in governance, Arendt saw as the soiling of the realm of the political as a sphere elevated above the menial concerns of the body. The Arendtian body is black hole of hunger, thirst, and pain, but in its pre-modern past, its gravitational pull was circumscribed by a strictly defined and shadowy private realm. With the endlessly needy body attended to by the labor of women and slaves, the political of Arendt's idealized Greek polis was the actual sphere of freedom.

Arendt contrasts this actual freedom with the nominal freedoms of society. "Society," she argues, has been many things: "a society of the faithful, as in the Middle Ages, or a society of property-owners, as in Locke, or a society relentlessly engaged in the process of acquisition, as in Hobbes, or a society of producers, as in Marx, or a society of jobholders, as in our own society, or a society of laborers, as in socialist and communist countries" (p. 31). But what binds the notion of society in all of these cases is society as the location of freedom, held against the state's monopoly on violence (Ibid). Arendt sees this as ultimately wrongheaded: it is society that has invaded the higher realm of the political.

This is what she calls the "rise of the social": the historical moment when the affairs of the household—"housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices" broke "from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere" (p. 38). This is rise of national economies, or the extension of the notion of economy beyond the maintenance of a single household in order to think about, produce, and ultimately intervene upon the vast, densely interconnected web of a "society" in terms of labor, bodies, and things. The national economy reforms the body politic in the image of the family, whose affairs must be managed by the state (p. 29). The "social," for this reason, marks the interpenetration of public and private space and concerns. Privacy—so fundamental to Arendt's Greek polis that it would hardly merit consideration—now becomes a sphere of governmental intervention, precisely as an object that needs protecting.

While Arendt approached the issue of the social with apparent disdain, the #J14 protesters took up the notion with aplomb, demanding the protections of the state as guarantor of economic and personal wellbeing. Although protesters hurled accusations at the state, the state was not ultimately their enemy, but the failing father of the Jewish nation-family. Indeed, as I revisited photographs from this time, I was surprised by the prevalence of parent-child metaphors in the protesters' signs and other public displays. The nation that demanded "social justice" as opposed to political justice was, moreover, a nation of jobholders and taxpayers, deserving of prosperity on the basis of their dual qualifications as both members of an extended Jewish kinship network and as economic contributors to that network.

#J14 was, in this sense, the rise of the social in near pure form, obliterating politics as it abided by a strictly Arendtian political/social distinction (though inverted in its emphasis). Thus while "political" discussions and "political" activists were accepted as a part of the social fabric of the movement, they were marginalized from its broader goals and demands. The exclusion of the occupation and other divisive issues such as the rights of non-Jewish minorities and asylum seekers in Israel was considered key to the movement's success and was enforced by protest organizers. Even many of those from the left were on board with the movement's silence on these issues, for example Ami Kaufman (2012), who argued in the far-left Israeli web magazine,

+972, that to bring in what he called “security issues” would be “the downfall of the social justice movement”.

Kaufman’s classification of these as “security issues” was, by his own admission, a pragmatic move that isolated matters that most Israelis could agree upon—housing costs, healthcare, etc.—from the hot-button issues that to which he may have been sympathetic, but which he recognized as divisive at that political moment. Responding to a colleague’s insistence that the struggle of #J14 is inextricable from the one to end the occupation, Kaufman (2012) wrote, “This may be the right thing to say, but it’s not necessarily the smart thing”.

The reason that this wasn’t “the smart thing” is that, for most of #J14’s participants, it was not a pragmatic decision. Rather, their calls for “social justice” were separate and discrete from any political claims that may be made as to the nature of Israel’s security apparatus. This was reinforced by the police, who largely tolerated the tent cities springing up across the country—including on at least two settlements—but quickly and repeatedly dismantled tents as they began to appear in Tel Aviv’s Levinsky Park, known for its large population of Sudanese and other asylum seekers and migrant workers. Supported by just a handful of far-left activists, these repeated attempts to link the treatment of refugees and foreign workers—many of whom were actually homeless, as opposed to the young Jewish Israelis who camped out on Rothschild—to national cries for “social justice” failed to garner widespread attention or the endorsement of the movement.

For many, the exclusion of these foreigners—as of the occupation—was neither pragmatic nor due to a lack of sympathy, but because these issues were discrete and unrelated to the social concerns of the movement. Although many more seasoned activists and politicians were unconvinced by the movement’s claim to be non-political, I’d like to linger a moment and take this claim at face value in order to better understand what constituted “politics” as opposed to the “social” at this moment in Israeli society. Taking seriously this claim, we are faced with a conception of the “political” and the “social” in Israel to be narrow, scarcely overlapping fields. Examining who or what may be included in these different sets of debates illuminates the contours of controversy in Israel as well as the dynamics of inclusion in or exclusion from Israeli “society,” and by extension, who may legitimately make demands on the state. The #J14 movement highlights a distinction between the simple demands or rights secured by citizenship and one’s ability to make additional claims upon the state both as a public, and in the public space.

### **“The nation demands social justice!”**

As the tents spread from Rothschild Boulevard to encampments across the country, “The nation demands social justice!” became the rallying cry that moved a nation. For observers from the left, the call may have felt counterintuitive, coming from a country strikingly dominated by its right wing. For some, “social justice” may ring of civil rights and claims for the protection of minorities. But for participants in #J14, social justice meant something very different. The “nation” or “people” of the protesters’ rallying cry was not a nation of all of its citizens, but rather a decidedly Jewish nation, excluding around one-quarter of the state’s population, and, as earlier mentioned, eschewing question of the ongoing occupation all together. To call this “social justice” was to exclude the proponents of political justice, whether in Jenin or in Haifa. For those protesters I spoke to, this was the threshold of politics: engagements with Palestinians. Everything up to that point was simply “social,” and foreign workers simply didn’t even register. In this conception, the “social” is, in effect, an apartheid sociality: a space where protesters hoped for—and largely achieved—a general consensus through the maintenance of an almost

exclusively Jewish conversation.

While for Arendt, the political was the location of freedom, protesters identified the social as the space where they could be freed from the agonistic domain of politics, allowing them to form what might otherwise be viewed as unlikely alliances between those from the political right and left. Like the Occupy movement that would follow shortly on #J14's heels, protesters relied on an expansive and populist notion of the middle class to garner mass support in a time of a serious urban housing crisis. For the majority of #J14 participants, the conflict only mattered insofar as it related to state budgetary considerations and what is considered by many to be the provision of a welfare state for settlers and religious Jews at the expense of secular, middle class Israelis. As far as the movement was concerned, the moral or political dilemma that may be posed by settlers was not the issue—rather, it was the disproportionate level of funding required to keep these settlements in place. Middle-class participants in these protests expressed frustration that at the same time they couldn't afford their own rent, they were effectively subsidizing settlers and religious Jews through their tax dollars.

This is not to say that as individuals or even segments of the movement, protesters didn't hold serious political or moral concerns about settlers, or other forms of justice, such as political justice for Palestinians or non-Jewish citizens of Israel. The thousands of protesters camped out in Tel Aviv came from a variety of political perspectives—especially from the left. A “1948” tent joined the encampment early on, where both Jewish and Palestinian protesters urged others in the movement to include Palestinian issues in aims of the movement. The tent became a site of endless argument, but it was tolerated and ultimately subsumed in the apolitical landscape of #J14.

Whereas Arendt lamented the making-public (or making-“social”) of concerns that were previously private and familial, #J14 flipped her formulation on its head. Not only did protesters foreground social demands, but they essentially privatized political opinion, deeming it individual and ultimately marginal to the collective action of the movement.

### **Settler solidarity**

The partitioning of social from political concerns in this way draws a line around the collective, marking areas of a shared public good as distinct from the agonistic domain of politics. It is the latter that appears by its very contentiousness to threaten to fracture society and cripple collective action—endangering the public good. But who is party to the public good? Who is included (and who is excluded) from civil society? Protestors' signs frequently featured metaphors illustrating Arendt's extension of the private domain of the family into the realm of governance, posing, for example, Netanyahu as the deadbeat dad of the languishing nation. To be on the inside rather than the outside of that family means the ability to make certain claims of the state—to participate in civil society grants a person rights and privileges withheld from outsiders. Therefore, when protesters claimed that everyone was entitled to affordable housing may be a matter of social justice, only certain people (and not others) count as “everyone”. To suggest that Palestinians—who are barred from purchasing all but about 6 percent of the land—should have equal access to that affordable housing, veers into the realm of political justice, outside the scope of #J14 and the concerns of this particular formulation of civil society. Basing claims on the struggles of civil society, in this case, not only excluded a variety of actors from these claims, but precluded as well the formation of other forms of political solidarity.

Palestinians may be excluded from this civil society, but settlers are not. While #J14 criticized

settlers and religious Jews for taking more than their share of the national good, settlers have more in common with the movement than one might suppose. Despite widely held assumptions about settlers, according to which violent religious fanatics plant themselves on the Palestinian hilltops in the dead of night before defending themselves with Uzis and sniper rifles, the majority of settlers live in large, suburban settlements, mostly clustered around Jerusalem and the Green Line. These settlers—religious and secular alike—claim to have moved to the West Bank for “quality of life” purposes, as opposed to the fulfillment of an ancient, biblical claim on the land.

In suburban settlements such as Tsufim, settlers do not consider themselves political on account of their actions. Nor did they feel excluded by the protesters anti-settlement rhetoric. Watching the massive Saturday night protests on television, settlers told me that they were living on the settlements for the same reasons that others took to the streets: to secure a better standard of living in the face of skyrocketing housing costs. This, they told me, was not a matter of ideology or even “politics” – they were doing what was necessary for themselves and their children.

Asking around Tsufim, I received roughly the same answer from everyone I spoke to. Residents of the settlement did not feel that they were addressed by the #J14 anti-settler rhetoric, and they were overwhelmingly in support of the social protest movement. Armed with this curious bit of ethnographic data, I headed to Tel Aviv to talk to some of the protesters who had set up camp on Rothschild.

The encampment stretched for miles along the wide pedestrian median of Rothschild Boulevard. The sidewalk cut a path between rows of small, domed tents marked with handwritten cardboard signs and professionally printed square blue with white numbers, mimicking the state-issued address signs that are posted on buildings across the city. These minor residences, sleeping one or two people, were broken up by larger encampments and community spaces hosting music, art installments, scheduled political conversations, speakers, social services, and issue-specific campaigns. As I meandered between the tents, I asked protesters what they thought about support from these “borderline” settlers in places like Tsufim. To my surprise, they echoed the same sentiments as the settlers themselves. Moshe and the other #J14 supporters I spoke to in Tsufim were not deluding themselves when they told me that they weren’t the real settlers addressed by #J14 protesters. Recognizing the reasons behind suburban settlement on the edges of the Green Line, most of the protesters I talked to, told me that they were really talking about what they called “ideological” settlers, who identify with the national-religious settler movement, and not the innocuous and nonideological suburbanites of the Seam Zone.

The stance of the #J14 protesters revealed itself not only to be apolitical: it was against “politics” as such. In the context of the settlements, religiosity itself becomes associated with agonistic politics; it is this characteristic that divides “ideological” from suburban settlers. In many other respects, they are the same—most importantly, in the massive impact on the nearly two and a half million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. But building a movement on the basis of social, rather than political, solidarity, privileged (Jewish) identity over the political consequences of participants’ actions on people outside of the collective of civil society.

### **Secular anti-politics**

While privileging Jewish identity, #J14’s stance was nonetheless adamantly secular. According to what José Casanova (1994) referred to as the “differentiation thesis” of secularization, religion has not necessarily declined in importance in the modern world, but it has been evacuated from politics and separated into a discrete—and private—sphere (p. 19). In contrast, the secular Israeli understanding of settlements espoused by both the #J14 protesters and their supporters across the Green line, links together religion and politics, insisting on the political nature of Judaism

when carried into the West Bank. In other words, religion and politics belong on the same side of the social-political divide; neither belongs in the sphere of civil society, at least not when it comes to leveraging demands.

This is an anti-politics resolute in its secularity, at the same time that it reinforces the exclusivity of the Jewish nation. Emptied of religious content, Jewishness becomes a privileged ontology, which entails a set of rights along with an entry pass to Israeli civil society. The exclusion of Palestinians and other non-Jews from this civil society—including the exclusion of the one and a half million Palestinian citizens of Israel—thus enables the neat compartmentalization of political violence and social justice. Severing one from the other (political violence against Palestinians and others versus social justice for Jewish Israelis) precludes any discussion of the rights of Jews and non-Jews in the same breath.

### **Political justice in uncivil times**

The anti-political rhetoric of #J14 protesters was immediately legible to and shared by the Jewish Israeli public. When I asked Israelis who weren't involved in the protests (both on and off the settlements) about what seemed like obvious omissions in the protesters' demands, they treated the question as non sequitur. Moreover, on the settlements where I conducted my fieldwork, a lack of politics was a part of how they identified as a community, as well as one important aspect that differentiated them from the "real" settlements deeper into the West Bank. Even when it came local elections, parties gained the support of their constituents by avoiding "political" debate, in favor of broad, vaguely formulated promises regarding the economic welfare of the community. Interviewing monitors at a polling station on election day, I explained that I was there to study the politics of the community. They smirked. "There are no politics here."

The discursive distinctions between the political and the social in Israel rely upon and produce understandings of who does or does not belong in Israeli society and, by extension, which populations are deserving of the attention and caretaking of the state—and which are the object of security measures. These rhetorical oppositions not only provide the framework for political debate in Israel, but also shape practice within and beyond the political sphere. Settlers and protesters share in a rhetorical strategy that cements their status as members of a civil society as well as their ability to make claims on the state. The circumscription of the political and the rhetorical separation of certain issues as sites of contestation—security, occupation—from others reinforces the boundaries of the Jewish nation and the commitment of the Israeli state to this nation, to the exclusion of citizens and other "residents" who, in this sense, do not belong.

The demands of #J14 are familiar—access to affordable housing and social services, a halt to privatization, etc.—as well as the form that the protests took. But what is unusually evident about this movement is the way that these demands (successful or not) were exclusive to a single segment of the population. Taking seriously Mamdani's critique of civil society as a vehicle for change in the direction of rights or justice, I suggest that the exclusions of #J14 aren't unique to Israel, although they might be more extreme. Rather, there is a flaw in the model. If civil society is premised on exclusion, then any mobilization in the name of civil society will not only reproduce exclusionary practices, but also widen the gap between those who do and do not receive crucial state services.

None of this is to suggest that popular mobilization in the manner of #J14 is either futile or counterproductive, or to dispute the potency of their demands. But civil society—particularly in such "uncivil times"—may be the wrong starting point for such mobilizations. Rather than seek social solidarity or social justice, I would point us to political solidarity and political justice, forging more stable movements on the basis of a common political vision rather than mere identity

politics. This is not a narrow understanding of politics such as in Israel, which would simply invert the focus of the protesters' demands, or an Arendtian politics understood as severed from the concerns of the body. Instead, it insists on solidarities beyond those immediately available on the basis of mere proximity or racial or religious affinity, and on doing the work that #J14 protesters refused, that of building common vocabularies and political understandings.

### References

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- B'tselem. (2015). Statistics on settlements and settler population. Retrieved from <http://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics>
- Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (2004). *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*. Michel Senellart, ed. Graham Burchell, trans. New York: Picador.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Idan, A. (2011). Israel's Cottage Cheese Protest Is Anything but Civil Revolt. *Haaretz*, 22 June.
- Kalman, M. (2014). Israelis are afraid that the two-state solution is already here. *Haaretz*, 22 September.
- Kaufman, A. (2012). Why J14 movement should keep occupation off the agenda. +972, Retrieved from, <http://972mag.com/why-j14-movement-should-keep-occupation-off-the-agenda/49659/>
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ryan, M. P. (1992). Gender and public access: Women's politics in nineteenth-century America. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (259-288). Cambridge: MIT Press.