

## ARTICLE

# The 'Nation-State Law' and non-Jews belonging in Israel: Druze loyalty, citizenship and positionality in the Jewish state

Doron Eldar<sup>1</sup> | Gay Young<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social and Economic Geography, Kulturgeografiska Institutionen, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, American University, Washington, DC, USA

**Correspondence**

Gay Young, Department of Sociology, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20016, USA.  
Email: [young@american.edu](mailto:young@american.edu)

**Abstract**

This paper probes the relationship between nationalism and belonging. In the context of the enactment of the 'Nation-State Law' in Israel, it addresses a twofold question: how do members of the Druze community articulate the minority group's sense of belonging to the national community, and what do their constructions of belonging suggest about how Druze might shape and secure their belonging in the Jewish nationalist project? Our analytical approach draws on theoretical accounts of the politics of belonging and nationalist projects centred on culture and political values; civic identifications and attachments; and the racialized positioning of social groups. The analysis of 18 semi-structured interviews evoked four metaphors through which we elaborate the impact of the Nation-State Law on Druze belonging and explore the implications for Druze engagement with this Jewish nationalist project. We envision the possibility of Druze pursuing a transversal intersectional political project of belonging as non-Jews in Israel.

**KEYWORDS**

belonging, Druze, Israel's Nation-State Law, liminality, nationalism

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In July 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed the *Basic Law: Israel – The Nation-State of the Jewish People*, known as the ‘Nation-State Law’. The Law’s major provisions include reserving the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel solely for the Jewish people; designating Hebrew as the official language of the state, demoting Arabic, which had been an official language; and affirming the state’s view of development of Jewish settlement as a national value (Adalah, 2018). Within weeks, opposition to the Law took the form of public protests. Among the largest was one organised by Druze community leaders, attracting over 90,000 demonstrators, a sizable number of whom were Jewish Israelis, to Tel Aviv’s Rabin Square. An ethnic-religious Arab minority of about 120,000 people, the Druze are distinctive both for aspects of their cultural-religious beliefs and practices and for the conscription of young Druze men to serve in the Israeli military.

The history of the Jewish people since antiquity has prompted conceptualizations of nationalism among thinkers from the late 18th century to contemporary time (see Ozkirimli, 2017). Smith (1995) analyses Jewish nationalism as a ‘special subtype’ of nationalisms, that is, ethno-religious diaspora nationalism. Zionism, he argues, not only fit the modern world of nationalisms but also encompassed the myths, memories and yearnings of the Jewish people (Smith, 1995, p. 17). Israeli political scientist, Berent (2010), presents critical analysis of the effects on nation-shaping of the ‘post-independence “Zionist” ethos’ in Israel. He argues that understanding Israel as ‘belonging to the entire “Jewish People”’ precludes recognition of an Israeli territorial nation and that identifying nationality with religion, rather than with citizenship, makes for a ‘unique’ ethnic nationalist project (Berent, 2010, pp. 657, 659). Berent (2010, p. 663) specifically points to ‘individuals of Arab origin who are citizens, speak Hebrew and also serve in the army’, suggesting their ‘Israelisation’, who are excluded, nonetheless, from the national collectivity as delineated by religion or descent. Extending analysis of nationalism by diasporic Israeli sociologist Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 11), we suggest the Nation-State Law illuminates a crucial ‘fiction’ of the nation-state: that is, the assumption of ‘complete correspondence between the boundaries of the nation and the boundaries of those who live in a specific state’. In virtually all cases, Yuval-Davis maintains, some people are viewed as rightfully belonging to the hegemonic nation and other people, although residing in the state, are viewed as not belonging or belonging ‘less’ to the national community.

Thus, the enactment of the Law and Israeli Druze reactions to it presents an opportunity to consider the ‘mutually constitutive relationship’ between nationalism and belonging (Knott, 2017). Through analysis of 18 semi-structured interviews with members of the Druze community in Israel, we seek to address a twofold question: how do these minority group members, located in varying social-political positions, articulate Druze sense of belonging to the national community, and what do these various constructions of belonging suggest about how Druze might shape and secure their rightful belonging in the Jewish nationalist project? Our analytical approach to these questions draws on theoretical accounts of nationalist projects and the politics of belonging centred on culture and political values; civic identifications and attachments; and/or the racialization of social groups (Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2011). We also provide context for our questions by appraising the place of the Druze minority in Israel before the passage of the Nation-State Law, with attention to the historiography of the Druze value of loyalty to the Jews and the Israeli state; the process of Druze identification as Israeli citizens, including the role military service plays; and the circumstances of Druze particular positioning not only as non-Jews but also as non-Arabs in Israeli society. Guided by this conceptual and contextual framework, we offer analysis of the interviews, elaborating the Nation-State Law’s impact on Druze belonging through four metaphors and, in turn, exploring their implications for Druze engagement with the nationalist project represented by the Law. Departing from analysis by others (such as Halabi, 2018b, who argues that in times of crisis Druze turn to traditional intracommunal hierarchies of control), we extend the interviewees’ accounts to envision the possibility of Druze pursuing a transversal intersectional political project of belonging in Israel (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

## 2 | NATIONALIST PROJECTS AND BELONGING

We locate our thinking about nationalism among approaches focusing on nationalist representations and on experiences of social groups marginalised in nationalist projects. Accordingly, we conceptualise nationalism as a discourse, a frame of reference, which is socially constituted and rooted in social structures and practices but also laden with emotion. Our analytical concerns veer towards questions of how and by whom nationalist projects are constituted and sustained—or challenged and resisted (see Ozkirimli, 2017). Our conceptualization of belonging comprises active and dynamic processes rather than belonging as a passive and fixed condition (Knott, 2017). Below, we draw out ideas from Yuval-Davis (1997) on the multidimensionality of nationalist projects and on the requisites and politics of people's belonging to specific collectivities with clearly delineated boundaries (Yuval-Davis, 2011). We then return to the contention that understanding nationalist projects of belonging requires attention not only to the hegemonic nationalist discourse, as represented in the Nation-State Law, but also to the experiences and interpretations of that discourse by 'others', such as the Druze, who lack specific requisites of belonging and exist beyond the boundaries of the national collectivity.

Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 21) claims that one dimension of nationalist projects emphasises the lineage of the people. Whether formed on the basis of shared blood/genes or a myth of common origin, such projects generate the most exclusionary conceptions of the national community. Another dimension of nationalist projects deems symbolic heritage to be the 'essence' of the national community. Constituted by elements such as customs and traditions, this project may open the possibility of assimilation into the dominant group. A third dimension of nationalist projects centres the civic. A construction of the national community based on citizenship involves not only a political entity, that is, the state, but also place and territoriality as defining the boundaries of the national group.

Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 12) also focus on three possible requisites or 'analytical facets' of belonging: people's social locations or racialized positionings; their identifications and emotional attachments; and their political and ethical value systems. The last of these, holding a common set of values, such as democratic values or valuing loyalty, can signify belonging and may be used to *judge one's own* or others' belonging. Or identification with or attachment to particular collectivities based on shared language and/or experiences, for example, may allow for assimilatory or *voluntary* constructions of belonging. In contrast, social positionings, in particular those related to ascriptive characteristics, such as 'race' or origin, as requisites of belonging make for *boundaries* that are less 'permeable' than those inscribed by shared values or identifications (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 21).

Different facets of belonging often undergird different political projects of belonging. Such differing projects of belonging construct both differential boundaries for and essential qualities of the national collectivity. While interconnections often exist among political values, identities, and positionings in political projects of belonging, contestations may occur among varying constructions of belonging. These constructions specify what is required of an individual or a social group to be entitled—or what is *perceived as entitling* her/him/them—to belong to the collectivity. In some cases, demands for or commitments to values of loyalty and solidarity flowing from a belief in common destiny may be considered requisites for belonging. Alternatively, joint cultural commemorations or a common language may demonstrate the requisite attachments for belonging. Most narrowly, common descent—or even a myth of common descent, which positions an individual or social group closer to the dominant collectivity and distances them from marginalised collectivities—makes for what is required to be considered as belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

We foreground two additional issues of analytical usefulness: the relationship between citizenship and entitlement and the differentiation between identifications and positionings. First, the idea of being a citizen entails a sense of entitlement to certain rights. However, a controversy has emerged in the context of neoliberal states: that is, do rights and responsibilities exist as independent aspects of citizenship, or do citizens' fulfilment of responsibilities condition their rights (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 58)? Second, the differentiation between identifications and positionings may be obscured when constructions of identity are forced on people and become enmeshed in their social positioning. Not all identifications are freely chosen, and people's internalisation of forced constructions of identity depends on configurations of power relations (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 17). At the same time, even the seemingly most ascriptive

social positionings, based on 'race' or gender, are subject to contestation (Yuval-Davis, 2011, pp. 12–13). Thus, the differentiation between identifications and positionings serves marginalised people's potential for struggle and resistance in the context of political projects of national belonging.

Our analytical concern goes beyond establishing membership in the national community and extends to understanding the ways social groups participate in nationalist discourse (Ozkirimli, 2017). Taking the Nation-State Law as an aspect of the process by which the dominant nationalist project establishes its hegemony, we seek to elaborate how those excluded from the hegemonic discourse, in this case, the Druze in Israel, participate in the process of challenging the dominant nationalist project of belonging. Against this backdrop of nationalist projects and belonging, we turn now to discussions of Druze loyalty, identification, and positionality as they influence Druze belonging in the Israeli polity and society.

### 3 | A HISTORY OF LOYALTY

Scholars generally locate the beginning of the Druze religion and community in Egypt in the early 11th century. Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi Amr Allah (996–1021) consolidated the belief system out of Ismaili teachings, an offshoot of Shia Islam, but with Christian, Gnostic, and neo-Platonic elements as well. This new faith community experienced harassment from both Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and by the middle of the 11th century, the Druze migrated from Egypt to the mountains of the southern Levant (Court & Abbas, 2014; Miles, 2019, 2021; also Firro, 1992). Notable then, and today, is the relatively closed nature of the Druze community, based partly on the doctrine that one cannot convert to the Druze religion, and their 'unequivocal' loyalty to family, clan and community (Court & Abbas, 2014, p. 492).

Today, Druze number about one million globally; they are concentrated in Syria (about 500,000), Lebanon (about 350,000) and Israel (about 145,000, including those in the Golan Heights) (Central Bureau of Statistics 2021). Not only have state lines divided the Druze community but also colonial legacies and geopolitical relations in the region have differentially shaped processes of Druze identification and loyalty (Miles, 2019, 2021; also Halabi, 2014). The common characterisation of Druze as loyal to the state in which they reside likely oversimplifies their political behaviour and certainly obscures the complexity of Druze ethnicity in contemporary Israel. As Hajjar (2000) asserts, Palestinian Arabs composed the indigenous majority population in historic Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, and based on common language and culture, the Druze in Israel are part of that community. We discuss this tension in sections below, but first, we consider the history/historiography of Druze loyalty to the Jews and the Israeli state.

According to Druze historian Firro (2001), the Druze largely distanced themselves from the Zionist-Palestinian struggle during the British Mandate in Palestine (1918–1948) (see also Halabi, 2018b). As a Jewish victory in the 1948 war became apparent, the Druze shifted from neutrality to support for the emerging Israeli state. This shift appears both rational in the face of violence, deportation and dispossession (Aboultaif, 2015) and incentivised by assurances that Druze villages and farms would not be harmed (Halabi, 2018a, cites Parsons, 2000).

Another widespread narrative constructs the Druze move to support the Jews as a collective welcoming of the establishment of the Jewish state because it ended centuries of Muslim domination and persecution (Hajjar, 2000). Promoting accounts of the Druze and the Jews as persecuted minorities against Arab-Muslim oppressors has constructed Israel as a protector of the Druze community (Aboultaif, 2015). Moreover, this trust and loyalty in the face of shared persecution have been constituted in a 'blood covenant'. An oft-told story claims the Old Testament figure Moses married the daughter of the central Druze prophet Nabi Shu'ayb, believed to be the Old Testament figure Jethro, confidant and father-in-law of Moses. While this story lacks historical corroboration (Firro, 2001, p. 41; also Parsons, 1997), the transfiguration some decades ago of the shrine to the prophet Nabi Shu'ayb in the Galilee upholds the ongoing ideological and political significance of the covenant. That is, the shrine provides the site

for yearly celebrations of solidarity of Druze and Jews in Israel and for other ritualised expressions of Druze loyalty to the state, including the swearing-in of Druze conscripts to the Israeli military (Hamdy, 2008; Khnifess, 2015).

Despite transactional characterizations of the community's loyalty—for example, as extracted by the state through a relationship of 'protector-client' (Hajjar, 2000, p. 306) or as fostered by a 'structure of opportunity' the Druze perceive within certain institutional arrangements (Khnifess, 2015, p. 44)—Druze loyalty emerges as complex. Indeed, a former mayor of a Druze town acknowledges the complications of loyalty when one claims, as he does, a multifaceted social identity, that is, as Druze, Arab and Israeli (Pullum, 2020, p. 59). This understanding of loyalty raises key issues about Druze identification and positionality in the Israeli polity and society, as we address below.

## 4 | EQUALITY IN ISRAELINESS

Key analysis of Druze identification as Israeli theorises the process of identity construction as occurring in the realm of the social, where historically situated subjects constitute their identities in a context of complex power relations—between majority and minority ethnic groups, in particular (Halabi, 2014; Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018). Policies and practices of majority group institutions, that is, institutions of the Israeli state, have figured fundamentally in the process of constituting the identity of the Druze minority (Halabi, 2014; also Miles, 2020). Two policies crucial in this process are compulsory conscription of young Druze men into the Israeli military, which the state mandated in 1956, and setting up a distinct education system for the Druze, whereby the state separated Druze youth from the general Arab school system in 1976. Those key institutions have operated to shape Druze identification as Israeli and, significantly, their expectations for equality as citizens.

Military service is widely regarded as fundamental to belonging fully to the Israeli polity. Conscripting Druze men serves the purpose of including non-Jewish minorities in the Israeli state's most important institution and thereby increasing this group's sense of belonging to the state (Khnifess, 2015; Miles, 2020, 2021). Saba-Sa'di and Sa'di (2018, p. 825), drawing on Kimmerling (2001) recognise 'two codes' as defining 'Israeliness': that is, Judaism and the military. Being non-Jews makes disciplining Druze with the military ethos all the more important for their Israelization. In addition, the separate, state-run education system for Druze youth prepares them for military service and, more broadly, bolsters Druze identification with the State of Israel (Halabi, 2018a; Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018). All of which contributes to their 'comfort' with living in a state self-defined as both democratic and Jewish (Miles, 2021, p. 370).

Khnifess (2015, p. 46) frames the fact that the state has 'allowed' young Druze men to serve in the Israeli military alongside Jewish youth as a key element in the state's 'policy of accommodation' to the Druze community. To be sure, military service shapes the life chances of Druze men by opening up crucially important opportunities both in some branches of the military and in the security sector, accounting for about 40% of Druze men's employment (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018; also Miles, 2021). Some Druze maintain military service an 'obligation they fulfill in exchange for rights' as Israelis (Hajjar, 2000, p. 312), but others assert they are 'not being granted the rights to which they are entitled' as citizens who serve in the military (Halabi, 2014, p. 275).

Military service not only raises Druze expectations for their integration into Israeli society and polity but also conveys Druze consent to Israeli policies which oppress Palestinians in Israel and under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018; also Miles, 2019). Mitigating the 'dilemma' posed by the latter has been a central intention of the separate (from the Arab) education system for Druze youth (Halabi, 2018a). Through both formal and informal curricula, the Druze education system aims to strengthen Druze identification with the Israeli state, to validate the special relationship between the Druze and the Jews and to cultivate an Israeli-Druze consciousness (Halabi, 2018a; Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018).

Militarization of schools is central to promoting identification with the state, and the task of the Druze education system is to teach the 'official version' of Israeli military service (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018). The curriculum also accentuates what Druze and Jews have in common, in which the military figures prominently. Popular myths and

metaphors, such as, 'the Druze as a brave, warrior ethnicity', convey a shared, militarised history. Crucially, the Day of Remembrance for Fallen Soldiers of Israel, the chief commemorative event in Druze schools, marks the sacrifice of both Jewish and Druze youth for the Israeli state (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018, p. 828; also Miles, 2019, 2020). If military service reinforces Israeliness among Druze men, training Druze women, who staff Druze classrooms, in Israeli teacher-training colleges has been key to fostering Israeli-Druze consciousness among schoolchildren. Gaining proficiency in Hebrew and familiarity with Jewish Israeli culture and society in these institutions prepares Druze teachers to impart an Israeli sensibility to Druze youth early on (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018, p. 825).

Commitment to military service as endorsed by the Druze education system has underpinned Druze identification as Israeli and their expectations for equal citizenship. Conscription and separate education also form key elements of state policy intended to define boundaries between the Druze and Palestinians in Israel. In the next section, we consider the process and consequences of state institutions positioning Druze as a distinct—and purportedly privileged—minority group in Israeli society and polity.

## 5 | POSITIONALITY AS FAVOURED

Enactment of the Nation-State Law makes explicit the Zionist intention of turning a religious category into a national category, reserving the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel solely to the Jewish people (Adalah, 2018; also Berent, 2010). Since the earliest days of the state, this project has been paralleled by policies intended to turn Palestinians in Israel into members of separate religious communities—without national identity—defining them and then dividing them (Shihade, 2012; Yiftachel & Segal, 1998). With regard to Druze, specifically, the state 'favoured' them with recognition as an autonomous, non-Muslim religious group in 1957, and shortly thereafter, in 1962, the state replaced 'Arab' with 'Druze' as the 'nationality' classification on Druze identity cards. Such policies deliberately segmented the Palestinians in Israel, disconnecting them as well as differentiating some groups as having 'special' relations with the Jewish state (Hajjar, 2000; Kanaaneh, 2010; Miles, 2019).

By extracting Druze from the Arab 'nationality' category, the Israeli state both constructed them as 'non-Arabs' and invented for them a new 'national' identity (Hajjar, 2000; also Firro, 2001; Hamdy, 2008; Hazran, 2019). The defining of official categories for segmenting a population is political and entails emphasising particular differences between people while obscuring others (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018). In this case, institutionalising Druze sectarian particularism transformed features of their tradition into 'eternal Druze traditionalism' and constituted Druze as 'an ontologically essentialist group' (Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018, pp. 818, 826). Nonetheless, the contradictions and ambiguities of their positioning as a favoured minority—as non-Arab Arabs—emerge in Druze systemic relations with the state and in everyday life (Hajjar, 2000; Kanaaneh, 2010; Miles, 2021).

Scholars have long viewed as rhetorical the Israeli state's positioning of Druze as a special minority (Yiftachel & Segal, 1998; also Hamdy, 2008). As non-Jews, Druze face discrimination that is comparable to that endured by other Arabs in Israel (see Berent, 2010). For example, the state invests minimally in Druze village infrastructure and underfunds their municipal services, and the Druze have not escaped state confiscation of their land (Hajjar, 2000; Miles, 2021; Yiftachel & Segal, 1998). Since the early days of the state, policies of Judaization—of the Galilee, in particular—have entailed extensive expropriation of village land. The commonly offered estimate of Druze land confiscated for Jewish settlement and development stands at two thirds (Firro, 2001; Khnifess, 2015). Druze have challenged this discrimination by demanding the state make good on its promise of civil equality with Jews—especially in light of Druze (men's) military service (Hajjar, 2000; Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018).

The situation of state and social discrimination has led some observers to assert the Druze inhabit the 'worst of both worlds' (Hamdy, 2008, p. 413): deliberately differentiated from Palestinians in Israel; and not fully included in the state and society with which they identify. Druze men's substantial *and* constricted dependence on the military-security sector for livelihood presents a case in point. The Druze do not 'fit' on either side of the social-political, and essentialized, Jewish Israeli/Arab Palestinian divide. From her interviews with Druze translators in Israeli military

courts, Hajjar (2000, p. 322) relates one translator's telling disclosure: 'When I am in Tel Aviv I am a Jew. When I am in Rame [a mixed town in northern Israel] I am an Arab. When I am in Julis [a Druze village] I am a Druze'. Typically framed as contradictory, reading these multiple identities, instead, as expressing Druze positionality in the interstices of key social differences in Israeli society indicates their liminality.

Liminality is often understood as being 'betwixt and between' conventionally assigned social positions (Turner, 2011 [1969]), which fittingly describes the Druze in Israel (Halabi, 2014). Liminality also emerges as a place of becomings and of possibilities for resistance and activism (see Carlson et al., 2020). This framing suggests the potential for Druze using their in-between place of social liminality to destabilise Jewish exclusivity and domination in the Israeli polity and society. We take up this point below in the analysis of the interviews.

## 6 | METHODS

From late 2019 through the summer of 2021, Eldar conducted (and recorded with permission) 18 semi-structured interviews with members of the Druze community in Israel, many of whom had participated in public discourse on the Nation-State Law. These 'expert informants' were chosen purposely: some, engaged in public discourse, were already known to Eldar; others, engaged and not engaged, were recruited through those contacts, and still others, engaged via either mainstream or social media, were approached directly by [Eldar]. This strategy encompassed individuals with a range of perspectives from a variety of social locations in the community and differing relations with the Israeli state. They include individuals located in: the academy or as public intellectuals (3); community or social service (4); the military-security or education sectors (4); politics at various levels (3); and the private sector or professions (4). There were 8 women and 10 men among the interviewees—two thirds of whom were in their 40s and 50s (seven and five, respectively) with four in their 30s and two over 60 years of age. Interviewees were living in 11 different localities in northern Israel: seven in Druze towns, three in mixed Christian-Druze-Muslim towns and one in a predominantly Jewish town. Most interviews lasted between 1 to 2 h, although one was about 30 min, and another ran 3 h. The recorded interviews were translated from Hebrew into English (by Eldar and a professional translator) and transcribed (by Eldar) for analysis. When presenting interviewees' ideas, we identify them by their first names.

The intention in the interviews was to uncover how members of the community articulate views circulating in this minority group regarding the Nation-State Law and what these varying views of the Law suggest about how the community might go forward to reconstitute the place of the Druze in Israel. The ideas of a diasporic Israeli sociologist (Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2011) as well as a Druze public intellectual (Alhalabi, 2018) inform our approach to analysing Druze reactions and possible actions in the face of the Nation-State Law. We attend to theorising of three aspects of nationalist projects of belonging: political values of loyalty and solidarity; social-political processes of identification and attachment; and the social location or racialized positioning of social groups. An assessment of Druze reading of the Law adds crucial substance to that framework: the Law betrays the 'blood covenant' in which the Druze tied their fate to that of the Jews; it generates a profound loss of Druze sense of Israeliness and of rightful inclusion in the Israeli state; and it augments existing factors compelling Druze to reconsider their status as a favoured minority in Israel. We elaborate Druze reactions—and the actions they suggest—in terms of four metaphors for the Law. Three draw on the ideas outlined above; that is: the Law produced a *wound* given Druze loyalty to the Jews; the Law felt like a *slap* in the face of Druze identification as Israeli; and the Law sent an overdue *wake-up* call to recognise Druze actual positioning in Israeli society. The fourth emerged from the interviews themselves: the Law heightened Druze experience of *in-betweenness* in Israeli society and polity; that is, the Druze place surfaced as one of liminality. We turn now to the interviewees' articulations of these metaphors.

## 7 | ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 7.1 | The value of loyalty and the Nation-State Law as a wound

A leading narrative about Druze reactions to the passage of the Nation-State Law is expressed by two men—Aref in the private sector and Adel from the military-security sector. Despite the injury inflicted by the Law, and in line with much scholarly analysis (Hajjar, 2000; Khnifess, 2015; Miles, 2020, 2021), they declare Druze loyalty to the Jews and to the Israeli.

We who gave our blood ... we were deeply hurt .... We stood by the Jews before the state was established, and we helped the Jews to establish it .... My attitude toward the state did not change. Loyalty did not change. (Aref)

The Druze, who supported you [Jews], and who are ... loyal—all of a sudden, you've abandoned the Druze? ... [Nonetheless,] our loyalty to the state ... will remain ... [because] for Druze, loyalty is a foundational value. (Adel)

They seek similar redress in the form of an amendment to the Law, which recognises Druze, specifically—a widely held 'hope', according to Miles (2021). While noting the dominant narrative regarding loyalty and the blood covenant between the Druze and the Jews, Hadiya, a young woman professional—and community activist—expresses her rejection of this way of reforming the Law.

According to the Zionist narrative, the Druze were always loyal to the Jews. They saw themselves as this persecuted minority group, just like the Jews saw themselves .... They made a covenant of blood .... Druze leadership itself is Zionist .... And that's why they were willing to agree on legislation that would give equal rights just for the Druze. *I cannot accept that under any circumstances [her emphasis].* (Hadiya)

Two other women, Ebtesam and Gadeer, an academic and a politician, respectively, also engage the notion of the blood covenant. Although both allude to the transactional quality, if not the taken-for-grantedness, of Druze loyalty to the state (Hajjar, 2000; Khnifess, 2015; also Miles, 2020), one denounces the undemocratic and crass reward system it involves, while the other takes a pragmatic view of how to deepen belonging—through state rewards for loyalty.

But the basic assumption [on the part of Druze leadership] was ... we have a covenant of blood, and now you're tearing it up .... And the response at the time from ... people in government [was], 'Okay, what do you want? How much money do you want? What roles do you want?' ... this sort of rhetoric that ... gets into bargaining—not based on democracy and ... equal rights. (Ebtesam)

I don't want to die with you. I want to live with you. Change that terminology from the covenant of blood to the covenant of life. And ... with 2 billion shekels [invested in] ... the Druze community ... it would send a message to all other minority groups in Israel, 'See, loyalty pays'. It contributes to a sense of belonging. (Gadeer)

Other interviewees also address the issue of how to understand Druze continued loyalty to the state despite being aggrieved by the Law. Like some scholars (Hazran, 2019), a middle-aged man academic, Salim, points to Druze existential position in the Middle East, taking a 'realist' political stance. Shakieb, a middle-aged man professional,



pushes further the derogatory view of Druze as mercenaries (Aboultaif, 2015; Miles, 2020, 2021) and casts their loyalty as that of state 'guard dogs'.

[You cannot] ignore the reality: the Druze are being persecuted across the Middle East .... And in this reality, we have an ally—that's not fair, [that's] dishonest, racist, but it's an ally .... And I don't think if we quit the State of Israel, that covenant with it, we will find any alternative. (Salim)

As far as the state is concerned, it is great that such a loyal demographic will continue operating as the national guard dogs ... because the state needs loyal guards [in the security forces and the prisons], and the Druze have proved they are faithful guard dogs. (Shakieb)

Finally, observations by two Druze politicians (connected to different secular Israeli parties), about the nature and consequences of the Law, are telling in their difference. The man, Amir, frames the Law as politics as usual under Prime Minister Netanyahu even while characterising the Druze as part of the 'body and soul' of Israel. The young woman, Gadeer, points to limits on Druze integration in society, claiming the Law marks a crucial divide in Druze life in Israel.

The whole thing [the framing of the Nation-State Law] is inseparable from elections [and] slogans .... Only this time, it was on a larger scale. And it affected people who are part of the body and soul of this country. (Amir)

The Nation-State Law is the breaking point [as far as Druze continued integration into Israeli society]. Ask any Druze who lives in Israel, 'What is the turning point in [your] eyes?' and they will tell you it's the Nation-State Law ... life is now divided into before and after. (Gadeer)

This section brings into view the significance of Druze loyalty to the Jewish people and to Israel. The argument about loyalty as a political value that is key to projects of belonging helps makes sense of Druze pained responses to the exclusion they experienced with the passage of the Law. The demand for their explicit recognition in the Law flows from their assertion of loyalty to the state. The 'blood covenant' between the Druze and the Jews, which Alhalabi (2018) argues was broken by the Law, provided a crucial rationale for loyalty of each group to the other. The Nation-State Law revealed the asymmetry of this loyalty—taken for granted by the state—and the limitations of loyalty as a path for non-Jews' integration into the hegemonic nation (Berent, 2010). Going forward, strategies for continuing to engage with the Israeli nationalist project on its own terms or for developing a new, Druze political project in a changed political reality may draw on different values. This issue prefigures themes we develop in the next sections.

## 7.2 | Civic equality as Israelis and the Nation-State Law as a slap

We open this discussion of the second narrative about Druze reactions to the Nation-State Law by giving voice to Amal, a middle-aged man and former officer in the Israeli military. Institutions of the Israeli state, foremost among them the military, have explicitly operated to constitute Druze identity as Israeli (Halabi, 2014; Khnifess, 2015). Thus, Amal objects to the Law's exclusionary framing of national identity; emphasising citizenship and reasserting Druze identification as Israeli, he says, 'This law, [defining] the identity of Israel, is leaving me and 20% of its citizens out of its identity .... Druze are Israelis, and we remain Israelis'.

Amir, one of the politicians, echoes the argument by Saba-Sa'di and Sa'di (2018) regarding the centrality of Druze military service to their 'Israeliness'—not only for men but also for women.

One of the most important components of the Israeli identity is military service. And that service sets apart those who are *Israeli* from everyone [else] who has citizenship .... [And] it's an inseparable part of [Druze women's] identity. Every mother has a son in the army; every sister has a brother in the army. (Amir)

And Salim, a middle-aged man academic, underscores the thoroughgoing nature of this understanding of Druze identity as Israeli as opposed to Arab (see Miles, 2020). He claims, 'I conducted research [revealing the vast majority of Druze in Israel] see themselves as either "Israeli-Druze" or "Druze-Israeli" .... And only on the third level, [do a mere 11%] see themselves as "Arab"'. Thus, Marzouq, an older man public intellectual, elaborates the Law's blow to Druze identity. Extending the analysis of Rabah Halabi (2014) and Saba-Sa'di and Sa'di (2018), he not only relates experiences of the Law's stripping away Druze Israeli identity but also asserts the deliberate formation of Druze identification as Israeli in abnegation of Palestinian identity.

Many people tell me 'I have no identity now because I sought to be Israeli. I agreed to that ... for so long. And now they've taken it away; I have no other identity'. ... The Druze identity has evolved through the establishment's ideological, political construct [of Druze] opposite the Arab Palestinian identity. (Marzouq)

In the context of the Law's enactment, the contention that Druze military service and their identification as Israeli makes for full integration in a democratic, civic nation has been utterly rebuked, according to Rami Zeedan (2020), if not exposed as impossible (Berent, 2010). Thus, Salim maintains Druze commitment to military service provides false hope for more democracy, asserting, 'Those who served for years in the military ... feel themselves to be Israeli in the deepest sense of the word. These people still have hope. I think this hope [for more democracy] is baseless'.

Instead of challenging the Law because the Druze serve in the military, with its now-suspect citizenship entitlements, other interviewees see resentment and indignation resulting from Druze designation by the Law as 'second class' citizens (Miles, 2021; Zeedan, 2020), potentially motivating another strategy for the challenge. A sense of discrimination grips youth in an after-school programme, according to Niveen, the young woman director, '[There was] frustration and disappointment and a lot of confusion .... [They] do not understand much other than that now they are "second class"'. Ameen, a middle-aged man engaged in social service and advocacy, expresses indignation over the Law, and young professional and activist, Hadiya, explicitly calls it a 'slap in the face'.

In the bluntest manner, they said, 'You are not Israeli'. ... A minister in the government even said, 'You are guests here'. ... My family, and many other Druze, have been in [the Galilee] for four hundred years .... [With the Law] we became 'second class'. ... without civil rights. (Ameen)

I think the Nation-State Law is the best thing to have happened in Israel, specifically for the Druze .... [It] gave us a slap in the face—like, 'No, it's the Jewish state!' [*her emphasis*] Either you accept it, and you live here [as] second-class citizens ... [and] they give you crumbs of rights, but it's not your state. Or you fight against it. (Hadiya)

The idea of fighting the Law as a citizen of Israel has taken root in a variety of ways as expressed directly by Shakieb, a professional, who filed a suit with the Supreme Court challenging the Law 'as a citizen, not as a Druze'. In line with Ibrahim Saïd (2020), two women, Gadeer and Ebtesam, one in politics and one in the academy, address ways to fight the Law—by demanding civil equality and democratic rights, respectively.

[My] amendment [to] the Nation-State Law stressed that the aim is civil equality, not national equality ... we're not talking about '[Palestinian] right of return' ... but rather we're talking about full, civil equality .... Okay, it's the Jewish state .... But it's the Jewish state *and*—[but] there is no 'and'. ... They just put a period: The Jewish State. Not a state for all its citizens. (Gadeer)

I think if [Druze leaders] had talked about citizenship ... that could have moved [the protest] forward .... Duties [like military service] are a part of that, rather than the other way around .... And the [youth] should lead. Say, 'I'm a citizen, and I'm a human being; as a human being, a citizen of the democratic state, I deserve rights'. (Ebtesam)

In this section, the social-political process of identification as Israeli grounds interviewees' offended reactions to the Nation-State Law. The state has long engaged in the construction of Druze Israeliness, most explicitly via military conscription. This process represents another key element of political projects of belonging. Like Druze speakers at the Tel Aviv protest (Zeedan, 2020), interviewees expressed indignation over the Law's depriving them of their Israeliness and of their entitlement to inclusion in the state. But few of the interviewees claim military service as the basis from which to contest the Law; they reject the claim that citizens' fulfilment of responsibilities—such as military service—conditions their rights. Instead, they insist on identifying nationality with citizenship not with religion, as does the Law, and appear to call for what Berent (2010) terms an 'Israeli civic nation'. Moreover, the insult of their relegation to 'second class' citizen status has led some to reconsider Druze positioning as a favoured minority in Israel.

### 7.3 | The lie of 'favoured' positioning and the Nation-State Law as a wake-up call

A third narrative about Druze reactions to the Nation-State Law involves Druze realisation they have been duped about their supposed status as a singular ethnic-religious minority in Israel (Hajjar, 2000; Kanaaneh, 2010; Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018). Interviewees in different social locations—in the academy and in social services—express this realisation and characterise the process as waking from false consciousness and seeing their unfavourable circumstances for what they really are.

The Druze [have] lived under false consciousness. They believed that ... the Jews see us as equals ... [and] wanted to believe that the state treats them equally. And the Law ... woke them up. (Salim)

I ask the leaders of the community and its representatives: What advantage did [mandatory] 'recruitment' give us over the other minorities in the country? ... What sets Druze villages apart from [Palestinian] refugee camps? ... We have to wake up! (Heba)

Other interviewees condemn Israeli governments: for their lies, or as Khnifess (2015) frames it, disingenuous Israeli 'politics of accommodation' towards the Druze; for their discrimination and racism against the Druze since earliest days, as Oren Yiftachel and Segal (1998) argue; and for their long-recognised deliberate fracturing of relations between Druze and Palestinians (Firro, 2001; Hazran, 2019). Thus, Shakieb, a middle-aged professional man, suggests that younger Druze are seeing through the history of lies the now-revealed truth that their relation to the state is little more than serving narrow military/security interests (see Aboutaif, 2015).

[Members of the younger generation] understand that we have been lied to all these years .... [And] that the only thing the state nurtured in the Druze community is military service and ... the security forces. (Shakieb)

Moreover, racialized discrimination on the part of Israeli governments is widely perceived not only by scholars (Shihade, 2012; also Hazran, 2019; Khnifess, 2015) but also by interviewees, although their interpretations of racism vary. That is, Nimer, an elder in the Druze religious community, sees religious-based hatred of Arabs; Gadeer, in national-level politics, calls out the result of equating Arab citizens with regional Arab 'enemies'; and Salim, in the Israeli academy, cites the instrumentalization of people for political purposes.

We know ... the difference between the state of Israel, the people of Israel on one side and the racist governments of Israel on the other. [Making a Biblical reference:] They are hugging the Druze 'not out of love toward Mordecai [Druze], but out of hate toward Haman [Arabs]'. (Nimer)

[There is] the Israeli narrative that we're surrounded by hostile countries: 'They're not Swedish; they're Arab'. They struggle to make the distinction between Israeli Arabs—as Israeli citizens with equality—and external enemies. Then you end up with ... racism. (Gadeer)

And when I say 'a racist state' ... I mean ... whether that state conceptualizes citizens as humans or not. [If] some are not fully human to the state, they are instruments ... to use ... to repress the Arabs [or] to show to the world an equal [treatment of minorities by the] state. (Salim)

Echoing various scholars (Hamdy, 2008; Hazran, 2019; Saba-Sa'di & Sa'di, 2018), women interviewees, in particular, perceive the ways state policies and practices have operated intentionally to divide Druze from Arabs and then to use the Druze to repress Palestinians—both citizens of Israel and under Israeli occupation. Ebtesam, an academic, makes a direct point about Palestinian mistrust of Druze. Hadiya, a professional, draws on her activism against mandatory conscription to elaborate Israel's 'dividing and conquering' the Arabs by constituting the Druze as betrayers of the Palestinians.

Palestinians don't trust the Druze, because they know it's those same police officers who are oppressing them in demonstrations, and the same soldiers who are stopping and arresting their sons. (Ebtesam)

[Along with others, she] set up an organization against mandatory conscription in 2014 .... We were active out in the field ... organizing workshops, lectures [to expose the purpose of Druze conscription] .... Depending [on] the audience ... Palestinians in Israel, Palestinians in the West Bank ... and Druze living in Israel ... [workshops focus on] how the Druze ended up not only being conscripted into the army, but also put in points of friction [with the Palestinians, as border police], mostly around Jerusalem and in the West Bank .... Israel is wise in its dividing and conquering .... [It has] created this ... notion that the Druze are traitors, that they've always betrayed the Palestinian people. (Hadiya)

These two women offer other crucial insights about Druze social positioning and how that relates to struggles against domination and marginalisation. Like Hajjar (2000), they focus on complex social identities—as Druze, Arab, Israeli, Palestinian—as well as interconnected political struggles—pro-Palestinian, feminist, anti-racist, anti-ableist, and queer. They assert these identities and struggles cannot be ranked or separated, and thereby evoke a key claim from intersectionality praxis (Collins, 2015).

[In presenting scholarly work] I cannot ignore being a Druze. And I speak the Arabic language, and I'm an Arab. And I cannot ignore the fact that I'm a citizen of the State of Israel. I'm an Israeli Palestinian, I cannot ignore any of those parts. But if you want me to rank them ... I cannot do that. (Ebtesam)

[Using intersectional theory] I can't separate between the feminist struggle and the Palestinian struggle. I can't separate between the Palestinian struggle and socialist struggle .... You can't separate that—fighting in solidarity with workers, the black struggle [or] people with disabilities. ... As far as I'm concerned, you can't separate these struggles in the LGBTQ community. (Hadiya)

This section reveals interviewees' sense of how the Nation-State Law belied Druze official positioning in society and the polity. The state's construction of the Druze as a singular, 'favoured' ethnic-religious minority group illustrates the notion of contrived social positioning, which moves a social group closer to the dominant group and distances it from marginalised groups. This process does not erase the non-belonging of non-Jews (Berent, 2010). Interviewees emphasised Druze realisation of the dishonesty of this positioning, marked by discriminatory and racist government policies and practices, which have served to constrain Druze material and political options. Some interviewees specifically denounce the government's forced construction of Druze as 'non-Arabs'—especially in service to the state's interest in repressing Palestinians. The contesting of forced identification and essentialized positioning carries potential for marginalised groups' resistance to the dominant nationalist project. That is, giving political definition to a group's complex social location can enable collective, intersectional struggle against common conditions of exclusion. We explore this theme in the next section on Druze liminality.

#### 7.4 | The Nation-State Law and in-betweenness as a place of agency

This final narrative about Druze reactions to the Nation-State Law emerged from multiple interviewees' assertions that the passage of the Law heightened Druze experience of 'in-betweenness' in Israeli society and polity. A frequently quoted depiction of liminality, offered by Victor Turner (2011 [1969]), asserts: 'Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention, and ceremonies' (p. 95). Echoing Halabi (2014), this interpretation of liminality is reiterated, first, by Lamees, a woman professional, whose concern is Druze social non-belonging, 'We are the minority that is standing in the middle, equal distance from both [Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs]. Don't belong here and don't belong there'. And then by Salim, a man academic, whose interest is Druze political in-betweenness. 'Our situation is somewhat in-between. [Used by the state and by Arab parties,] the Druze are stuck in the middle politically'.

Another frequently articulated aspect of Druze positioning 'betwixt and between' has taken the shape of an 'inward turn' by members of the community. In this sense, the experience of liminality encompasses a transitional moment of agency marked off by symbolic boundaries that set apart individuals and groups from the larger society (see Carlson et al., 2020). This turning toward the community entails reimagining a 'Druze place' and suggests a response to the crisis of social-political belonging which is not driven by intracommunal hierarchies as in the past (Halabi, 2018b). For Osnat, a local woman politician, the inward turn entails self-examination by members of the community in order to shape the Druze future. Salim further specifies this turning inward as rebuilding the community from the base in order to engage the struggle for Druze equality.

Our future is blurry .... [This requires] our coming together and really think[ing] ... what's best for the future of the Druze community .... We have to take matters into our own hands ... be it political power or something more on the social level. (Osnat)

For the Druze to forge political power that will fight for equality, we first have to resolve our internal problems .... We have to ... start rebuilding our infrastructure, as a community .... And it can only come from the grassroots. (Salim)

As David Carlson et al. (2020) note, scholars have also engaged liminality as an ontological space in which to grasp the existential ambiguity of excluded communities' access to democratic citizenship. In the case of the Druze, Gadeer, the young woman politician, describes the space of liminality in which the Druze exist—between inclusion and exclusion.

[In demonstrations against the Nation-State Law,] on the one hand, you're singing *HaTikvah*; it's an act of belonging. 'I'm still a part of the Israeli Jewish nation'. But then on the other hand, everyone understands it's the start of a new era, in which, figuratively speaking, the Druze community has been thrown into the abyss .... And you realize ... you have a state here that doesn't want full civil equality; [that is,] no real equality between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. (Gadeer)

In line with Gadeer's analysis, scholars have proposed the concept 'social liminality' to convey the condition created by tensions between policies and practices of belonging *and* displacement, situating members of certain communities in a state of social-political in-betweenness (Gonzales et al., 2020). While tensions between belonging and displacement go back decades, the Nation-State Law reinforced the Druze state of social liminality.

All three politicians interviewed address these tensions, albeit differently: Amir notes how Druze have not been included on their own terms in Israeli political parties. He maintains, 'There have been representatives of political parties in the Druze community, [not] representatives of the Druze community in political parties. These are two different things'. Similarly, Osnat, the local-level politician, perceives the community's sense of betrayal, in particular, by Druze leadership. And Gadeer envisions the possibility of a new Druze generation asserting the right to belong to the national community.

The Druze community feel like they've been betrayed twice. First time was by the state and the Knesset. And second time, it was [the Druze] religious leadership, social leadership, political leadership, who betrayed them ... [by] not really thinking about general interests [of] the entire community. (Osnat)

One day, there'll be a generation that will get up and say, 'That's enough! No one's doing us a favor by letting us be here. What we're demanding is equality. We demand a shared life'. (Gadeer)

These critiques of conventional Druze politics and traditional leadership added to a vision of politicised youth suggest the space of social liminality can spur action to challenge political structures (Lea, 2014). Rather than invoking patriarchal order and discipline as a response to Druze positioning at the interstices of power relations in Israeli society and polity, feminist Israeli scholars suggest Druze women's liminality provides a place of agency from/with which they may create new forms of power (Abu-Rabia-Queder & Weiner-Levy, 2013; Barakat, 2021). These scholars recognise possibilities in the complex realities Druze women in Israel face in their daily lives, situated as they are in the spaces between cultures and structures of inequality. Ebtesam, an academic, proposes the multifaceted social identities of Arab, Israeli-Palestinian, Druze women as spaces of liminality, engendering possibilities for resistance to domination and exclusion.

And you have to consider the multiplicity and the complexity that women [identifying as Arab, Israeli-Palestinian, Druze] confront—in order to recognize their place [in society]. [With this understanding], I think the resistance [to Israeli domination] will be more effective, more inspiring and more challenging. (Ebtesam)

This final section explores the idea that the Druze in Israel inhabit a space of liminality—a place in-between formalised positions in society. Interviewees suggest the enactment of the Nation-State Law intensified Druze

experience of this liminality. What they describe as the ensuing inward turn to the community itself represents liminality as separating from society in order to initiate a communal transition and to contemplate what sustains the community (Carlson et al., 2020). Although they do not use the phrase 'social liminality', interviewees make clear the condition of Druze social-political in-betweenness stems from contradictions in Israeli policies and practices of inclusion and marginalisation. They convey the equivocal condition of the community's access to democratic citizenship rights. The space of social liminality also comprises another quality, which was articulated in reference to the liminal space inhabited by Arab-Israeli-Palestinian-Druze identified women in Israeli society. That is, agency: their liminality contains possibilities for collective resistance and may enable intersectional challenges to dominant social-political structures including those within their own community.

## 8 | CONCLUSIONS

Our broad intention in analysing Druze responses to the enactment of the *Basic Law: Israel - The Nation-State of the Jewish People* is to advance understanding of the relationship between nationalism and belonging. Probing nationalist projects of belonging requires attention to the ways marginalised social groups, who are regarded as outside the boundaries of the national collectivity, such as the Druze in Israel, experience and interpret hegemonic nationalist discourse, such as the Nation-State Law. Druze accounts of contesting and challenging the dominant nationalist project of belonging depict both their conflicts and compromises with the hegemonic discourse (Ozkirimli, 2017).

To approach Druze re/actions to enactment of the Law, we have drawn on theorising of nationalist belonging centred on political values, identifications and attachments, and the positioning of social groups in the polity (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Members of the Druze community whom we interviewed problematized the value of loyalty to the Jews and the Israeli state as well as Druze identification as Israeli citizens and their particular positioning as an ethno-religious minority community in Israel. In Druze perceptions, the Nation-State Law inflicted profound damage to the decades-long pact between the Druze and the Jews. Thus, the unfolding Druze political project of belonging may turn on different values. One possibility suggests engaging with the Israeli polity on the basis of allegiance to the value of democracy. Other alternatives include commitment to re-envisioned Druze communal politics of belonging or even reinvention of belonging through their own identification and positioning as Arab and, for some, as Palestinian.

Of these three directions, the first is premised on the idea that Druze identification as Israeli citizens forms the basis for both their belonging and their rights as minorities in an Israeli 'civic' nation (Berent, 2010; also Zedan, 2020). This demand for civil equality is not conditional but arises from citizens' entitlements within the framework of a democratic state. At the same time, Druze express keen awareness that their official, privileged positioning vis-à-vis other Arab citizens of Israel insulates them little, if at all, from systemic, racialized discrimination. Contesting the state's nationalist project of Druze belonging, which has forced them into a particular positionality expressly intended to separate them from other Arab minorities, entails alternative political definitions of the group's complex social location and identification.

Another formulation of Druze place in the Israeli polity revealed in this study involves Druze social-political in-betweenness; that is, not having a place in the essentialized duality of either Jewish Israeli or Arab Palestinian. This liminal state emanates from contradictions in Israeli policies and practices of both inclusion and marginalisation of the Druze. One key response to this situation proposes an 'inward turn' to contemplate what sustains the community, which could mean entrenching patriarchal order or engaging a communal transition that advances the position of youth and women in moving toward a new political project of belonging (see Faraj-Falah & Maman, 2019). The latter is not guaranteed as illustrated by interviewees' reports of threats to young Druze women by 'traditional' members of the community in reaction to their political activism. Nonetheless, encompassing potential for resistance and challenges to dominant social-political structures, liminality raises the possibility of enabling collective, intersectional struggle against conditions of exclusion experienced by members of marginalised groups. That is, an inward turn may advance what Yuval-Davis (2011) calls transversal politics of belonging.

According to Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 203), transversal political projects of belonging recognise boundaries as ‘shifting, contested and porous’ not natural or essential; such politics are also ‘situated’ and ‘multilayered’, contextualising communities in terms of intersectional power relations. Transversal politics engage participants who belong to different collectivities in political dialogue, but participants appear not as ‘representatives’ of but rather act as ‘advocates’ for communities. Their ‘solidarity is bounded by common political values’ and informed by ‘recognition of ... differential [social] locations and identifications’ (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 175). Building on interviewee Salim’s arguments, participants in such a project might include Jews who reject the prevailing ultra-orthodox definition of who/what qualifies as Jewish (Ethiopian-descended, non-ultra-orthodox women, LGBTQ-identifying) and, thus, also seek to challenge the exclusionary Law.

The politics of Druze belonging in Israel continue to take shape in the context of an extreme religious-nationalist government and the ongoing war in Gaza. Calls for repeal of the Nation-State Law arise not only from its harm to the Druze community, and as Druze soldiers die in war, but also from the Law’s potential as an ‘anchor’ for further anti-democratic actions. Thus, Druze reconsideration of their place in Israel may form part of a wider transformation of Israeli society and polity (Haaretz, 2023). We view Druze embrace of a transversal political project of belonging as a potential path toward more fully inclusive democracy in Israel.

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## ORCID

Gay Young  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8584-6096>

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