



محامون من أجل إدارة سليمة  
Lawyers for Good Governance  
עורכי דין לקידום מנהל תקין

## TRANSPARENCY MONITOR 2017 ENGLISH ABSTRACT

### **Lawyers for Good Governance – Background**

"Lawyers for Good Governance" (LGG) is a non-profit organization founded in 2014 by Arab lawyers and based in Nazareth. **Our main objective is to advance principles of good governance and fight corruption within Arab society in Israel, particularly in Arab local municipalities.** The work that we do is vital to the socio-economic advancement of the Arab society and we are the only organization addressing the issue of corruption specifically within Arab society.

LGG operates in two main domains: The first is the legal domain. Through our confidential hotline, we receive complaints from the public regarding suspected corruption or maladministration, offer legal advice and initiate legal proceedings against the local municipality. The second is increasing public awareness. LGG disseminates educational materials, operates an active Facebook page and delivers public lectures to raise awareness of the meaning of good governance, its importance and how it can be achieved.

### **The Value of Transparency**

In the operation of public institutions, transparency is absolutely critical. It is an essential tool in combating corruption and cultivates trust between the public and its elected representatives. Transparency grants legitimacy to the governing bodies and encourages greater civic engagement, which strengthens the democratic process. Furthermore, in the technological era, transparency is a pre-condition for E-Government.

From a legal perspective, transparency is intrinsic to the fundamental freedom of expression: If the public is not allowed access to information on the way in which its governing bodies operate, how can they scrutinize and voice their critique of these bodies? Moreover, the very information that the public requests is actually public property. When public institutions grant the public access to that information, they are simply giving back the public what was theirs to begin with.

### **Transparency within Arab Local Municipalities**

Our report, 'Transparency Monitor 2017' is part of a wider initiative to tackle the lack of transparency within Arab local municipalities. This report, written for the first time, will be updated and re-published annually. In this report, we have elucidated the concept of

transparency, how it has evolved over the years and its meaning in today's society. We have also outlined, as a way of clarification and for the convenience of Arab local municipalities, the legal obligations and responsibilities of local municipalities.

## **A) Methodology**

We conducted a comprehensive analysis of the websites of all **85** Arab local municipalities and have evaluated the degree to which each municipal website has met its legal requirements vis-à-vis transparency.

The Law in Israel stipulates that every local municipality must operate a website that provides citizens with full access to vital information such as the municipality's annual budget, protocols etc. We have enumerated the **26** items of information that municipalities are legally obliged to include in their websites and ensure that remain up-to-date. We have also added a further five items to this list. These are items which we consider to be equally important, despite the fact that municipalities aren't legally obligated, in the strict sense of the word, to provide this information.

We have presented the results as a "Transparency Scale", which has been developed as follows:

**1. We divided the 31 items of information that should be included in every website into three groups, depending on their importance and developed a point system accordingly.**

- **Key Items:** We have classified **17** items of information as "Key Items"
  - The inclusion of these items on municipal websites is required by the Law.
  - Each of these items are worth **6** points.
  - For 8 of these items, we have awarded an additional **3** points if the information provided also related to previous years.
- **Sub Items:** We have classified **9** items of information as "Sub-Items".
  - The inclusion of these items on municipal websites is required by the Law.
  - Each of these items are worth **4** points.
- **Additional Items:** We have included an additional **5** items of information
  - The inclusion of these items on municipal websites is NOT required by the Law.
  - Each of these items are worth **2** points.
  - Municipalities are awarded an additional point if the information provided also related to previous years.

The maximum number of points that a local municipality could score is **177**.

Each local municipality received two scores: a) the total points accumulated out of 177 points and b) a percentage score.

2. After all the websites of Arab local municipalities were assessed and were awarded a score, we divided the municipalities into four groups based on their scores:

- 82% or higher
- 66%-81%
- 50%-65%
- Below 50%

## B) Results

The results are unfortunately rather bleak.

- **9 out of 85 Arab local municipalities do not even have a website.**
- **Not a single Arab local municipality received a score above 66%.**
  - **Only 6 Arab local municipalities scored between 50%-65%.**
- **The overwhelming majority (70 Arab local municipalities) scored under 50%.**

These results reveal a gloomy picture in which it would seem that most Arab local municipalities have not yet internalized the importance of transparency or their legal obligation to uphold it. We also suggest that lack of transparency in Arab local municipalities hints at the larger problem of lack of good governance and a lack of understanding of the values that public institutions embody.

## C) Recommendations

Throughout the report we noted that it would actually take minimal effort and investment of resources on the part of the municipalities to meet the legal requirements for transparency.

Therefore, despite this gloomy picture, rectifying the situation should be rather easy. **We therefore encourage Arab local municipalities to use this report as a tool to assist them in increasing their transparency and in meeting their legal requirements.** This is our main recommendation to Arab local municipalities and the ultimate purpose of producing this report.

However, over the years, Arab local municipalities have consistently neglected their minimal, legal obligations in transparency, indicating that the problem runs deeper. The municipalities' disregard of transparency requirements is indicative of a more fundamental lack of understanding of the public nature of their work, their public mission and the fact that they exist solely for the service of the public. **We therefore recommend addressing this issue by raising public awareness of the role of municipalities and leveraging public pressure on the municipalities to change their attitudes.** We hope that this report will also serve as a tool in the hands of the public empowering them to stand up, demand their rights and hold Arab local municipalities to a higher standard.

Please click here for the full report in [Hebrew](#) or [Arabic](#)