

Yedioth Ahronoth – November 22, 2021

Anyone But Mansour

By Afif abu Much

- The Knesset ratified, in a preliminary reading, a bill tabled by MK Ayman Odeh to build a hospital in Sakhnin. The bill passed by a majority of 51 with 50 opposed, after MK Mazen Ghanaim of the UAL, a former mayor of Sakhnin, broke coalition discipline and voted with the opposition, causing a surprise loss for the coalition, which was opposed. But what was particularly noteworthy, without a doubt, was the spectacle of the opposition, in all of its factions - extreme right-wing, the Likud and the Joint List - celebrating victory together upon hearing the voting results read out in Arabic by MK Ahmad Tibi, who was presiding over the plenum. First of all, any bill meant to help develop Arab society is welcome—since it has been suffering from institutional exclusion since the state’s establishment. It makes no sense that in the year 2021, there is not one hospital in any Arab town.
- Yes, hospitals, commercial centers, and anything else that can provide employment opportunities and public services in Arab towns should be built—not to mention that municipalities and local authorities would be strengthened by the high city taxes that such ventures would provide. But that said, one cannot help but wonder about the choice of Sakhnin specifically by the Joint List: was this a choice based on purely germane reasons or were there political reasons for it? Was this an attempt to embarrass the coalition in general and the United Arab List (UAL) specifically, using the weak point of MK Ghanaim? After all, the situation prompted him to announce the next morning: “If I have to face the same test again—I will resign from the Knesset.” It seems to me that the Joint List is trying to embarrass the UAL and its chairman, Mansour Abbas and make it look bad among the Arab public.
- In other words, if the Jewish center-left adopted the slogan “anyone-but-Bibi” in the last decade, even at the price of the former Yesha Council becoming prime minister (Bennett), their slogan is now “anyone-but-

Mansour” - even if it means voting against unprecedented budgets for Arab society and joining forces with people who constantly call them “terrorist supporters.” This is all with the goal of toppling the coalition in which the UAL is a member. This attests to the magnitude of the earthquake that Abbas caused in internal Arab politics. Whereas in the past there was a tacit arrangement in Arab society that ranked Hadash at the top and in which MK Tibi—whose political savvy cannot be questioned—was the media star, after Abbas claimed center stage and refused to accept the existing situation, as former UAL chairpersons had and to make do with being elected to Knesset and receiving funding for the party, now there is a new reality.

- **The UAL has become the party leading Arab society, in contrast to all the predictions—and Abbas has become the most covered Arab figure in the media, for better or for worse. As a result, all relevant considerations have vanished. There are people in the Joint List who have done insane things because of their wanting to embarrass and bring down Abbas, no matter the price. The second side of the coin is: if the Arab MKs are considered by Netanyahu to be kosher for toppling the government, why should they be disqualified by the Likud and its partners when they form a new government?**

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