

23.52x12.41	1	5 עמוד	the jerusalem post - front	24/11/2016	56058798-8
2830 - השויות המקומיות חיים ביבס - יו"ר המרכז השלטון המקומי - 2830					

Bibas: Lawmakers seek headlines, but mayors work for the electorate

• By ELIYAHU KAMISHER

Israel's mayors, not Knesset members, truly know and represent Israeli citizens' needs and concerns, Haim Bibas, chairman of the Federation of Local Authorities and mayor of Modi'in-Macabim-Reut, said at The Jerusalem Post Diplomatic Conference on Wednesday.

"More than once, mayors have not hesitated to criticize their party's representatives in the Knesset, for choosing to fan the flames between Jews and Arabs just to grab the headlines and by doing so, cause much harm to society," said Bibas, "We [mayors] can see beyond political views and differences, our mandate comes from

our residents and we work to improve their lives."

Despite what one might gather from the media, the nation's mayors are a leading example of cooperation and progress, he said. "While the headlines in Israel usually show the other side of the picture, the mayors are setting an example of partnership between the various sectors, mutual respect and productive cooperation in Israeli society."

Bibas cited the Arab mayors who paid their respects to the family of Shimon Peres, in contrast to Knesset members from the Joint List who all declined to attend the former president's funeral on September 30.

Numerous mayors have been

investigated, charged, and in some cases convicted of corruption. Among those is Netanyahu's Miriam Feirberg-Ikar, who was arrested and questioned in September, and is under investigation regarding alleged bribery involving a multimillion-dollar real estate deal in her city.

On the status of Arab municipalities Bibas said, "Promoting and integrating the Arab sector in our society is a strategic goal on both the state and municipal level."

In December 2015, the cabinet approved a five-year, NIS 15 billion plan to develop Arab and other minority communities. The development plan faces political hurdles and complex bureaucracy that may prevent



HAIM BIBAS, mayor of Modi'in-Macabim-Reut, says local officials are an example of Arab-Jewish partnership. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

a full allocation of the allotted funds.

"We are fighting to approve all the necessary welfare and education budgets, and recently

we proposed a comprehensive plan to develop the periphery cities, from the North to the South, cities all over the country," Bibas said.