

הקרן החדשה לישראל
New Israel Fund
الصندوق الجديد لإسرائيل

Highlights of Recent Activities



November 2010

The New Israel Fund is deeply grateful to all those who support the NIF mission of advancing freedom, justice, and equality for all Israelis. At this challenging time, NIF is at the forefront of defending Israel's democracy and promoting a shared and just society as the only long-term potential for achieving and maintaining peace and prosperity. Your support is vital.

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

Since the beginning of the year, we have seen in Israel a marked political and cultural shift that threatens the very democratic and egalitarian traditions for which we have been working during the past 31 years. NIF is now working in an increasingly hostile environment, where defense of basic democratic rights cannot be taken for granted. NIF has had to expend considerable resources responding to orchestrated efforts by right-wing organizations and political figures to de-legitimize and de-fund NIF and our family of organizations. NIF has acted to debunk the lies and distortions, and continued to voice our pride in the vital role played by human rights organizations in a democracy.

NIF and our flagship grantee, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) are also leading lobbying efforts to modify a bill currently up for discussion in the Knesset that would impose draconian restrictions on NGOs that deal with 'political' activity broadly defined as "influencing public opinion."

Unfortunately, these are not isolated efforts to silence internal critique and diversity of opinion. In the past year, we have seen interrogations and arrests of peaceful human rights demonstrators, and attempts to censor academic debate. In addition, an onslaught of anti-democratic bills are up for discussion in the Knesset, such as an amendment to the law criminalizing human rights activists who help asylum-seekers; a proposed "loyalty oath" for non-Jews seeking citizenship; proposed legislation that would enshrine in law the monopoly of the Orthodox rabbinate on Jewish conversion, and more. All of this makes the role of NIF at this moment more crucial than ever.

Disturbingly, these events point to an underlying common denominator: **the weakening of the democratic political culture in Israel.**

Moreover, the attempt to portray civil society organizations as a threat distracts the public's attention from the real threats to Israel, not only from Iran and others who seek Israel's demise, but also from dangers to Israeli society from within. These include defective governmental norms, deepening conflicts between population groups, an alarming rise in intolerance and outright racism, as well as widening gaps in income, access to education and health care, and a growing housing crisis.

To counter these trends, NIF is launching a range of proactive programs that bring organizations and activists from different sectors together to:

- Mount public campaigns to raise awareness of the deterioration of Israel's democratic system;
- Advocate among decision-makers to oppose problematic legislation and regulations;
- Mobilize new constituencies to join the campaigns;
- Pursue litigation to oppose regressive laws or support enforcement of previous court orders;
- Strengthen organizations working together to create a newly-empowered movement for equality and social justice in Israel.



NIF has responded to this very strong emerging picture by beginning to allocate much more significant resources to defending our values, standing up for democracy and the rule of law, and supporting a robust marketplace of ideas.

Under new leadership both in the U.S and in Israel, the New Israel Fund continues to be the leading force working to address these real challenges. NIF's main task today is to defend the role of civil society to protect individual freedoms, and to safeguard the vestiges of the social safety net.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NIF CORE PROGRAMS

Following is a select sample of achievements that NIF grantees have secured in the past year, thanks to the support of committed donors like you.

Social and Economic Justice

While Israel celebrated acceptance into the OECD in May 2010, the fruits of economic growth have not been shared among Israel's rapidly growing population. With 20% of Israelis living below the poverty line, Israel has the highest poverty rate of any OECD member and nearly double the OECD average of only 11%. Also, public social spending in Israel is only 16%, some 5 percentage points below the OECD average. NIF's Social and Economic Justice program aims to promote a social justice agenda for Israeli society that will salvage the social safety net, protect social rights and create broader opportunities for the less privileged.

Recent highlights of NIF and SHATIL activity include the following:

Gas Royalties and Social Justice: NIF launched a public campaign that can change the face of Israeli society for generations. Focusing on the unprecedented profits that will be realized from the discovery of an enormous natural gas field off the coast of Israel, a new Civil Action Forum (CAF) with 20 NGOs, is advocating for increased royalties and taxes due to the government, which would provide significantly increased revenues for public benefit. The current antiquated law is far below international standards.¹ The Sheshinski Commission, set up by the Finance Ministry to re-examine the royalty and tax structure on oil and gas discoveries, recently submitted its recommendations to the government in this spirit. It has recommended keeping gas royalties at 12.5%, but also introducing a new tax, which will only kick in after the gas exploration companies have recouped 150% of their investment, increasing gradually from 20% to a ceiling of 60%. Estimates are that the new tax would earn the public coffers \$500 million annually on the Tamar gas field alone. This figure will become much higher if, as expected, even larger gas fields are discovered in the coming months.

"The success of our campaign so far has proved the vital importance of civil society in Israel and its ability to bring about significant social change. We have created a climate in which public opinion strongly supports higher government revenues, and we supplied professional information to the Sheshinski Committee."

SHATIL's Programs Director Avi Dabush

Flawed Wisconsin Plan Cancelled: The government decided to shut down its privatized Welfare-to-Work program which, despite modifications last year, had continued to abuse numerous vulnerable participants. This decision follows years of close monitoring, community organizing and intensive advocacy by [SHATIL](#) together with NIF grantees such as [Community Advocacy](#) and [ACRI](#).

¹ Israel's lawmakers in 1952, apparently believing that Israel was poor in natural resources, enacted a law that demanded a mere 12.5% in royalties from mining companies, while the companies also receive tax benefits on sales. Thus the total revenues to public coffers is only 32%, compared to the average of 53% among other Western countries with similar fiscal regimes, as revealed in a report by the Knesset Research and Information Center. Haaretz, July 25, 2010.

Desegregating Schools: NIF grantee [Noar K'halacha](#) exposed widespread discrimination against Mizrahi children in religious schools and won a court case against a Haredi school network that refused to integrate its Mizrahi pupils with their Ashkenazi peers. The Ashkenazi-Haredi parents refused to comply with the court order and were sent to jail. Following protracted negotiations, the Ministry of Education discontinued State funding of the school, but permitted it to continue to operate privately. The case was widely reported in the media and it exposed the increased disregard of the ultra-Orthodox public for the state and court rulings. NIF grantees continue to advocate on behalf of all disadvantaged groups to ensure equal treatment both in law and in practice.

NIF grantee [Tebeka, the Legal Center for Ethiopian-Israelis](#) successfully petitioned the High Court to impose financial sanctions on schools which discriminate on ethnic or religious grounds, and won cases on behalf of Ethiopian-Israeli families in Arad, Petach Tikvah and Beer-Sheva whose children were denied registration to local schools.



Protestors holding a sign: "Black Baby, White Baby, Created in the Image of God" in a rally against racially segregated kindergartens.

Model Programs for Youth at Risk: In 2010, a government study showed that [Israeli Association for Immigrant Children](#) 'Night Owls' program reduced juvenile delinquency by 74% and the Knesset Committee for Absorption and Immigration recommended that the government provide funding to continue and expand the program. Moreover, an external evaluation of [SHATIL's Back from the Edge](#) project, which recently completed its first phase, found that it contributed to improved scholastic achievement, prevented school drop out and strengthened participating pupils' self confidence. Several of the project's models are now included in the government-sponsored Schmidt Program for youth-at-risk.

Lack of Affordable Housing: In recent years, mortgage banks have evicted an average of 2,000 Israeli families per year, and, the number of families at risk of homelessness is climbing. In recent years, Israel's housing policies have changed drastically with reduced assistance to apartment buyers, privatization of the mortgage market, cutbacks in rental assistance for disadvantaged populations, and elimination of public housing. NIF grantees chalked up a success last year when the Knesset enacted a new law requiring banks to ensure that homeowners have alternative accommodations before evicting them to homelessness.

Thousands of citizens are now joining a SHATIL-led Coalition to modify a land and planning reform bill being advanced by the Government (see below: Environmental Justice). The Coalition, and NIF grantees [ACRI](#), [Movement for Dignified Living](#), [Association for Distributive Justice](#), [Community Advocacy](#) and [Bimkom: Planners for Planning Rights](#), submitted a recommendation to add an Affordable Housing section to the reform bill, which currently favors high end real estate development over housing for the middle and lower classes.



Haim Bar Yaakov, Director of the [Movement for Dignified Living \(MDL\)](#), with his children. NIF's campaign poster says: "We Will Not Remain Silent in the face of poverty and suffering".

Advancing Arab Women remains a high priority for NIF in light of the shortage of job opportunities in the Arab sector and an unemployment rate of 82% among Arab women. NIF supports a national advocacy project run by [Women against Violence](#) aimed at finding jobs for university-educated Arab women, with a focus on civil service. NIF also supports women's economic empowerment initiatives such as [Awareness for You](#) in the Triangle region, which trains women to manufacture and sell handmade products. NIF grantee [Achoti](#) sells the merchandise in its Fair Trade Store in Tel Aviv, the first of its kind in Israel, while a second store is set to open in Abu Ghosh.

Human Rights and Peace

NIF's Human Rights and Peace Program mobilizes public support for the enforcement of laws, policies and procedures that promote equality and justice, makes legal, legislative and administrative remedies available to those in need, safeguards human and civil rights and promotes peace. A particular area of concern is the ongoing occupation in the West Bank continues to erode the moral fabric and democratic values of Israeli society, whose civilian-soldiers must maintain it while the general public remains largely indifferent to its debilitating effects on the Palestinians. Highlights of NIF activity in this area over the past year include the following:

Thousands March for Human Rights - Israelis poured out into the streets to join NIF's flagship grantee, [Association for Civil Rights in Israel \(ACRI\)](#) for the first-ever Human Rights March in Tel Aviv. Visit ACRI's [blog](#) for details and view [photos](#) and [videos](#) online. The second annual Human Rights March is planned for December 2010.

Court says No to 'Jews Only' Roads: [ACRI](#) won another major victory this year (building on a similar principled ruling the previous year) when the Supreme Court ruled against military orders preventing Palestinians from driving on Route 443, a major highway that connects Jerusalem to the growing Israeli city of Modi'in. Since 2002, the 55,000 Palestinians residents of villages along the 12.5 km of the highway that runs through the West Bank had been denied access to it. In compliance with court orders, the security establishment completed its arrangements in February 2010 and re-opened the highway to Palestinian vehicles.



Fewer Checkpoints: Following years of perseverance by NIF grantee [Machsom Watch](#) (MW), the number of roadblocks in the West Bank has been reduced substantially over the past year, particularly those separating Palestinian villages. MW's cadre of women volunteers continue to observe and document activity at checkpoints and monitor proceedings at military courts. Due to MW's intervention, the police now also relate with greater seriousness to complaints of settler violence filed by Palestinians.

Investigating IDF Actions in Wartime: The IDF revealed that it used the reports of NIF-supported human rights organizations in evaluating its own conduct in its operation into Gaza in 2008, and sought active collaboration from them in helping to formulate the response that was submitted to the UN this year.

Raising Awareness: Over 6,000 people were exposed to the realities of the occupation through [Breaking the Silence \(BTS\)](#) tours in the territories, mainly to Hebron and South Hebron Hills, led by demobilized soldiers. BTS was recently selected by the European Parliament as one of 3 candidates for the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Human Rights in 2010.

Combating Racism: Among many social ills affecting Israeli society, NIF views with grave concern the increased acceptance of formal and informal discrimination among different sectors of society. [The Coalition against Racism](#), brings together 10 leading Jewish and Arab organizations to raise awareness among decision makers and the public at large. At the coalition's initiative, 11 Knesset members joined the first gathering of the new [Knesset Lobby against Racism](#) that was held in March. Moreover, the coalition, together with Mossawa, published the 2009 Racism Report, which surveyed manifestations of racism and attitudes in Israeli society. The report received wide coverage in the Israeli media. In 2010, the Coalition is focusing its efforts on identifying discrimination in private and public institutions. It also received a special grant from NIF to develop a major campaign against the proposed "loyalty oath" amendment to Israel's Citizenship Law. (Does this belong in the shared society section?)

Kicking Racism out of Soccer



Diverse Israeli children took part in a pre-match anti-racism event in which Maccabi Netanya's fans received the Best Behaved Fans Award.

NIF's 'Kick it Out' Campaign against racism in Israel's national sport, now in its sixth successful year, has chalked up important achievements including engagement of fans, clubs and players who condemn racist behavior, and new legislation outlawing racist chants at matches leading to law enforcement and convictions. This year, NIF has begun working with "The Football State," a widely respected association of fans, to organize a series of regional tournaments between fans from Jewish and Arab teams to take place in their respective localities. This initiative has great potential to promote coexistence and social inclusiveness for all ethnic groups.

Bringing Human Rights to Life - ACRI's Human Rights Education Program works directly with youth movements, non-profit organizations and schools with the goal of influencing attitudes towards democracy among the next generation. This year, ACRI developed a human rights training program for teachers in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, and created a new **website** for human rights and civic education.

Defending Children's Rights: The State accepted recommendations by **Hotline for Migrant Workers** and **ACRI** to give residency to foreign children in the country over 5 years, which enabled granting of Israeli residency to 800 children of foreign workers. While rejoicing in this achievement, the struggle goes on for 400 more children who do not meet the criteria and are due to be expelled this year. The NIF family continues to protest the planned deportation, which has aroused considerable controversy.

Shared Society

The New Israel Fund (NIF) is intensifying efforts to nurture a shared society that honors the dignity and human rights of all its members, provides equal rights to all, and is a tolerant society that honors differentness. Recent events highlight the distance Israel must still travel to realize this vision. NIF is working hard to build bridges and to address the most pressing needs of excluded communities.

Highlights of recent NIF and SHATIL achievements include the following:

High Court Rules Against Selective Tax Break - In response to petitions by **Adalah** and **ACRI**, the High Court ruled in September 2010 that provision of tax benefits to certain communities (per Amendment 146 to the Income Tax Act) is unconstitutional because principles of equality were not used in formulating the criteria, and not one Arab town was included despite widespread poverty in the Arab sector.

Public Transportation services will finally be offered to several Arab towns in the North and Center of Israel, an outcome for which veteran NIF grantee **Kayan** had been working for five years. The lack of public transportation in Arab towns has been documented as a serious obstacle to employment and education opportunities, particularly for women.

Paved roads in Unrecognized Villages In response to petitions by **Adalah**, **the Follow-Up Committee for Arab Education**, and the **Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages**, the High Court ordered the construction of a safe access road to the primary school and service center in the unrecognized village al-Sayyid, which the local

and national authorities had all refused to do. Subsequently, the Government allocated NIS 18.7 million to implement the ruling. NIF believes that this ruling will serve as an important precedent for additional suits.

Combating Discrimination in Employment: NIF grantees [Adalah](#) and [Sot el Amel](#) (Laborer's Voice), succeeded in reinstating the rights of 130 Arab workers who were collectively fired from Israel Railways. Furthermore, following a petition on the matter filed by NIF grantees, in February 2010 Israel Railways cancelled the new criteria requiring railway workers to have performed military service, which discriminates against the vast majority of Arab citizens of Israel who are exempted from military service.

Promoting Government Investment in Arab Sector: NIF grantee [Mossawa](#) publicly challenged the funding allocated by the State to invest in 13 Arab localities to address issues of jobs, housing, transportation, and security. Mossawa revealed that more than 90% of the announced spending (NIS 745 million of a total of NIS 800 million) included sums already approved as part of the 2010 development budget for Arab localities. Mossawa and other NIF grantees are now advocating for full funding of the plan and to have the decision anchored in the Budget Law to ensure implementation.

Saying “No” to Home Demolitions: Over the last year, the government has pursued vigorously the policy of demolition of unauthorized housing in Arab localities.² NIF continues to respond to this issue and to support strategic partners that deal with it by raising awareness as to how the policy fails to take into account the State's planning failures as the most important reason for infractions of the law and urging the government to stop the policy. In particular, the Negev has become a hotbed of activity as intensive efforts are underway to appeal and influence the implementation of recommendations made by the government-appointed Goldberg Commission to "settle" land claims of the Bedouin. As a result of the current crisis in Al Arakib in the Negev (where the JNF plans to plant a forest on lands inhabited by Bedouin for over a century), a new forum led by [Adalah](#), [ACRI](#) and [Negev Coexistence Forum](#) has been set up to facilitate joint action on the issue.



[Negev Coexistence Forum](#) activists build a playground on the site of repeated home demolitions in the unrecognized village of Al Arakib

Dignity in Dahmash - The unrecognized neighborhood of Dahmash, located between Lod and Ramle, is not included in State plans and thus lacks basic infrastructure and municipal services. While owned by the residents, the land is designated for the most part by the state as agricultural; thus the residents (post-1948 internal refugee families) cannot obtain permission to build legally or expand their homes. With SHATIL's support they have long waged a campaign to have their neighborhood recognized, and have submitted their own alternative plans to the authorities.

“We’ve poured our soul into Dahmash,” said Buthaina Dabit, Director of [Shatil’s Mixed Cities Project](#). The 600 residents of the neighborhood together with over 1000 other Jewish and Arab Israelis marched with the residents and gathered in dignified daily protests over several weeks. This is a real model of ‘think global, act local’, because a positive response by the state to the Dahmash struggle will mean there is hope yet for the state’s relationship with its Arab citizens around the issues of land, planning and building.” The District Planning Committee’s cavalier rejection of the residents’ planning proposal signaled a green light for the planning authorities' bulldozers to demolish the homes. Only a court appeal could avert this injustice. A temporary holding order has been issued.

² According to Israeli Center against House Demolitions, demolitions through the first seven months of 2010 (232) were occurring at a pace 45% higher than that recorded in 2009.

Jewish Pluralism

While NIF continues to challenge the ultra-Orthodox hegemony over Jewish practice and learning in Israel, Netanyahu's coalition partners, and their increasingly bold and partisan behavior, evince that this hegemony is still very much intact. In response, this year has seen increased activism from the general public with regard to issues of religion and state. Multiple groups are joining together to demand freedom of and from religion, opposing discriminatory allocation of funds, and protesting gender segregation in public places. NIF grantees are at the forefront of these struggles, advocating, educating and mobilizing people to challenge the orthodox monopoly and to defend their rights.

A Window of Opportunity – This month, **NIF and SHATIL's Religious Pluralism Program** convened the leading pluralism organizations in Israel to engage in a strategic joint effort to effect real change in issues of separation of religion and state and freedom of religion in Israel. The participants are united in their belief that due to increased public frustration with the status quo, there is a window of opportunity to achieve these aims and that the organizations need to work in coordination, involving the major actors in Israel and abroad. As a result of the meeting, a newly-created steering committee will devise a shared long-term action plan that will include public campaigns and advocacy aimed at mobilizing public opinion to engage in the issues and influence public discourse toward the next national elections.

Activism in the Streets – A new national grassroots organization, **Yisrael Hofshit (A Free Israel)**, has taken to the streets drawing on the increasing frustration of secular young people over the Orthodox control regarding issues of personal status and public space. Activists have protested issues such as ethnic-segregation of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi girls in schools and gender segregation on public buses, and in favor of maintaining public transport on Shabbat. Most recently, Yisrael Hofshit has launched a campaign against attempts to increase State funded stipends for yeshiva students, which discriminates against university students.

Activism Online: Opposing the Conversion Law – Conversion is a major and ongoing issue affecting hundreds of thousands of Israelis. In recent months, MK David Rotem (Israel Beyteinu) proposed a bill that would give the ultra-orthodox Rabbinate control over all conversions, wiping out the legitimacy that the **Conservative and Reform movements** have managed to achieve for their conversion programs over the years. Close to 50,000 emails were sent to PM Netanyahu opposing the legislation and in Israel hundreds of letters were sent to MKs, Government Ministers and newspapers. The PM decided to postpone the discussion and appointed a committee headed by the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, including representatives of all movements to look for a solution acceptable to all parties.

Women Forced to Sit in the Back of the Bus



The issue of separation of women and men in public buses reached Israel's Supreme Court following a suit filed by veteran NIF grantee **Israel Religious Action Center**. As a result of an extensive public campaign led by the NIF together with a coalition of organizations, the Court instructed Transport Minister to explain why the Ministry is not following the recommendation of the committee that he nominated to stop the separation on over 50 public bus lines. The Minister was also required to address the possibility of allowing privately-run services for those interested in the separated service, but not within the public transport system.

Sponsored by NIF, a demonstration in Jerusalem brought over 1,000 people- Orthodox, traditional and secular alike- to protest State-funded sex segregation in public spaces. The NIF family continues to demand an end to the humiliation and discrimination against women.

New Civil Marriage Laws: The coalition agreements that led to the formation of the current government raised expectations for potential changes to the benefit of new immigrants in the area of not only conversion but also marriage, burial and more. In fact, the Knesset passed a preliminary vote on legislation wherein the union of a man and woman who are both not considered Jewish according to Jewish Law would be entitled to all benefits afforded married couples. Unfortunately, this provides only a questionable solution to the lack of civil marriage options for a few (since the vast majority of those denied the right to marry are couples whereby the halachic Jewish status is in question of only one, either the man or woman) and potentially creates a pariah group within Israel, allowed to wed only among themselves. Shatil is working to revitalize the [Coalition for Freedom of Choice in Marriage](#), focusing on advocacy and also to strengthen organizations, most of which are NIF grantees, that perform alternative marriage ceremonies. The growing number of alternative ceremonies is slowly growing into a groundswell of individuals "voting with their feet" to bypass the Rabbinate and create pressure for change.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

*NIF's investment in environmental justice is leveraged by its association with other funders through the **Green Environment Fund (GEF)**, which awards over a million dollars a year to initiatives that address issues of open space, water resources, air pollution, environmental education and more. In addition, Shatil trains environmental activists in the periphery and facilitates coalitions on burning social-environmental issues.*

New GEF focus on impact: After almost a decade of investment, GEF has been a key factor in the creation of an environmental movement in Israel, resulting in increased public awareness to environmental issues and growing public involvement in local and national campaigns. In consequence, a growing body of laws and regulations has been promulgated, providing increased protections for environmental resources and open space, and broader acceptance and adoption of private behaviors supporting the environment among the general public and business communities. These achievements notwithstanding, during the last year a growing understanding has emerged amongst the GEF partners to the need for a new type of thinking in order to escalate impact on wider sectors of society and help create significant sustainable change. New funding guidelines focus on strategies that reflect this thinking. Furthermore, GEF now coordinates the Green Foundations Forum in Israel, which meets bimonthly for networking and joint action.

Highlights of recent activity include the following

Monitoring Hazards: A damning report from GEF grantee [Coalition for Public Health](#) proves the clear connection between air pollution and children's health, for example in Haifa, where children are exposed to 6-10 times the accepted air pollution levels. The report details the cocktail of polluting materials in the air and demonstrates that in places where pollution was reduced, health levels improved. The release of the report drew great media attention and requests for cooperation from the Ministries of Health and Environment.

Industrial Silence—Who Oversees Industries? - [Citizens for the Environment in the Galilee \(CFE\)](#) revealed that most factories in the North do not meet the stipulations set for them in their business licenses (e.g. to conduct required tests, frequency of tests, staying with pollution limits and reporting test results to supervising authorities) both for air pollution and sewage. In addition, while most factories abide by global standards for sewage regulations, most air pollution prevention standards established for Israeli factories are outdated and less stringent than global standards. For many factories, no stipulations were set for air pollution. The report also revealed that there is no government office that enforces the law and keeps the factories liable to the conditions set in their business license. By law, the Ministry of Environmental Protection is meant to fulfill this role, yet it is unable to carry out the task due to an insufficient budget. The result is a loss of their credibility, which damages their deterring ability and capability to manage legal proceedings against polluting factories. Positive reactions to the report came from all angles – journalists reported that no other report brought such

serious responses from a ministry, factories published the measures they are taking to address the mishaps and factory directors are now eager to cooperate with CFE. CFE is also cooperating with the State comptroller. CFE is about to publish a second report addressing 24 additional sites, amongst them a hospital which, in environmental terms can be a severe source of pollution.

Ministry of Environment Invests in GEF grantees: In the past year, GEF has expanded its role and influence by working closely with the new Minister of Environmental Protection. Fourteen new joint projects were approved with environmental organizations at a cost of over NIS 2 million (with 50% to be paid by the Ministry), and with GEF's input, the Ministry continues to explore investment in green NGOs. The funds will be used for public events, campaigns, seminars, films as well as projects meant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2009/10 the Ministry injected large sums into GEF grantee **Green Network** which runs environmental education programs in schools throughout Israel. The Ministry has also taken the lead vis-à-vis other government bodies, setting targets for the reduction of use of electricity, water, paper consumption and waste production.

Protecting Public Beaches: After two years of public struggle to stop a private holiday resort being built within 100 meters of the Palmahim beach, this November, the Cabinet ordered the Planning Committee to revoke the building permit. This is an unprecedented victory for the public. The Coastal Protection Law - which came into force only after the construction plan was confirmed - imposes strict limitations on construction within 300 meters of the water line. Following the Cabinet's decision, the Environment Minister instructed the Parks Authority to submit an alternative plan, in which part of the contested ground will be turned into a national park and the rest will remain an open public ground. This success is a prime example of GEF's proactive strategy, facilitating networking between grassroots activists (**Public Committee to Save Palmahim**) and a professional organization (**Israel Union for Environmental Defense** in this case).

Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, the state comptroller, the environmental protection minister, Knesset members and environmental organizations all helped us to return the beach to its true owner: the public,"
- **Public Committee to Save Palmahim.**

Preventing pollution: Coalitions of environmental activists supported by SHATIL are united in opposition to the creation of a polluting coal plant in Ashkelon. Also in the south, the SHATIL Environment Coalition submitted a petition to the High Court demanding a government response to hazardous chemical accidents in the Ramat Hovav Industrial Zone. The petition received wide media attention.

2011 NIF PLANS AND PRIORITIES

With a huge task ahead NIF will remain at the forefront of defending Israel's democracy and promoting a shared and just society for all its citizens. The following are a sample of NIF's plans and priorities for the coming year.

In the prevailing political climate in Israel, the efforts of NIF and its family of grantees to uphold the rights of minorities and vulnerable populations and to defend freedom of speech and dissent take on an even greater significance. The current trends place a huge challenge before Israeli society to maintain the system of checks and balances, to defend the role of civil society and the judiciary, and to save the remaining vestiges of the social safety net. Due to the combination of the social, political and economic realities, we must seek to promote broad based collaborations to achieve our aims. This focus on coalition-building and networking will be expressed in all of our issue areas, with a focus on human rights and social justice organizations.

The following are key areas for NIF's activity in 2011:

Defending Democracy and Combating Racism: NIF is concerned about the increasing legitimacy of racist and discriminatory attitudes and practices among the Jewish-Israeli public. According to the 2009 Democracy Index, **38% of the public believes that Jewish citizens are entitled to more rights than non-Jewish citizens.** In response, NIF is increasing its investment in proactive public education through our "We Will not Remain Silent" campaign, as described above. NIF will also support innovative initiatives in the field, including several robust new coalitions of Jewish and Arab groups, working to combat racism in employment, education, politics, media, sport and more. Additional new initiatives of NIF grantees target key audiences such as the Russian-speaking sector and the National Religious public, with the aim to combat racism.

Garnering Public Support - One of the most burning issues facing Israel is whether we can build a shared society and social cohesion when we are comprised of such disparate groups with different world views. We should take into account the demographic trends which predict that in 2030 more than 50% of the population will be ultra-Orthodox and Arab, and another 15% will be from the former Soviet Union,. To date, NIF has employed three means for realizing its goals in building a civil society in Israel: grant-making, capacity building, and in-house projects. These are responsible for significant achievements and great successes, and are still necessary tools in NIF's toolbox; however we believe they are no longer sufficient. **It is clear to NIF that a key strategy must be to reach out to the Israeli public in new and innovative ways,** with a focus on key target groups. We have informally called this our "fourth line of work" – new and improved efforts to promote the values that we stand for in the market place of ideas in Israel and beyond, and an amplified and strategically-designed effort to defend our sector, our organization, our values and our work. Components of an enlarged communications effort, now a part of NIF's core program rather than a support function, will include in 2011:

- Building and/or rebuilding a constituency for NIF work and ideas in the Israeli public through social networks, interactive events, launching short-term advocacy campaigns on specific issues, and other tools;
- Pro-actively projecting the values that underlie our endeavor into the public sphere in Israel and the US through PR, communications, media, and education; and
- Increased defensive communications capacity in both Israel and the US– a "virtual war room," opposition research, and the ability to respond rapidly to misinformation.

Social Justice: In 2011, NIF's Social Justice Program will implement the priorities determined by the strategic planning process, as follows: 1) Housing, Land and Planning, and 2) Employment and Dignified Living (including welfare, income and food security). With a greater focus on impact, NIF will give priority to projects that bring together grassroots and professional organizations and that forge social solidarity among diverse sectors.

In particular, the Issue of housing has been gaining increasing attention on the public agenda. A recent mapping of housing organizations conducted by the Community Planning Lab at the Technion (supported through NIF by the Ford Israel Fund) in 2009 showed that while there are many organizations working on individual aid and community development strategies, there is a need to strengthen the policy change strategies in the housing field. Two new NIF grantees are addressing issues of housing including [The Coalition for Affordable Housing](#) which combines proactive endeavors on the national and local levels and works with “unexpected” elements such as contractors and financial institutions. Its activity, if successful, could induce a substantive change in housing policy and promote spatial justice, as well as greater social cohesion.

Replicating the Activism Grants Model: In 2011, the new Social Activism program launched in 2010 will continue to encourage grassroots organizing activity which involves new sectors in social change activism. Moreover, since the activism small grants model has proved successful in mobilizing new constituencies and in encouraging grassroots activism on the local level, NIF has decided to replicate the model in 2011 for both the Human Rights and Palestinian Society Programs.

Palestinian Society Program: In addition to strengthening key organizations working on a national level, in 2011 NIF will continue to prioritize the promotion of inter-organizational collaboration, including major grants to joint projects in mixed cities supported partially by your special gift (see special grant report), to be accompanied by intensive Shatil guidance on these and other collaborative efforts.

Addressing violence in Palestinian Society - For the past three years there has been a steady increase in crime and violence but the 2009 rise exceeded that of the two previous years. In addition to overall crime data, the disproportionate involvement of Arabs in crimes of violence bears note, far exceeding their share of the population.³ Factors that influence the rise in the level of violence in Arab society include social gaps, unemployment and poverty. During 2011, NIF will support efforts to reduce violence in Palestinian society combined with young leadership development, on the premise that work with future leaders can help modify the trend.

Promoting a legal strategy to address the Bedouin lands struggle - For many years, NIF has supported organizations active in defending the rights of the Negev Bedouin, mainly through strategies of planning and community organizing. After years of believing that legal strategies regarding land ownership were hopeless due to a complex and often undocumented history, new attorneys have come on board (including Michael Sfar) with new evidence obtained from official UK archives, and discomfited Israel's own expert state witnesses. In 2011, NIF is supporting the legal team of the [Land Forum](#), which believes that the outcome of the current high profile case, and / or some other principled case, will to a large extent determine the fate of the other thousands of cases that have not yet been decided and that will affect the State's policy about filing additional countersuits.

A solution to the question of the ownership of the Bedouin lands in the Negev is a key element (along with the preparation of an outline plan) for putting an end to the severe infringement of the basic rights of roughly half of the Bedouin population of the Negev: some 76,000 men and women, citizens of Israel, who suffer blatant discrimination and are deprived of basic rights such as water, electricity, roads, sewage, and adequate health and education services. Beyond the question of rights, there are grounds for fearing that this discrimination, exacerbated by the government's policy of demolishing villages, could lead to a reprise of the events of October 2000, this time in the Negev.

Shared Society: NIF is boosting efforts to support and cultivate a shared society based on equality and justice. SHATIL will continue to facilitate broad based local coalitions in mixed cities such as Acco and Haifa, which struggle

³ 8.5% rise in crime in the Arab sector in Israel in 2009, as compared to 2008. 41% of murder suspects were Arabs, as were 36% of those suspected of attempted murder, 36% of aggravated assault, 41% of arson, 36% of robbery, and 43% of aggravated robbery.

to ensure equity and justice to their Arab minorities. SHATIL is also planning to launch its new [Shared Society Leadership Initiative](#), while NIF grantees are advancing employment and leadership opportunities for Arab women, monitoring the Ministry of Education plans to invest greater resources in Arab education, promoting housing rights for Arab citizens and more.

Public campaign for religious freedom: Shatil and the NIF in Israel have identified a window of opportunity to promote joint dramatic action by pluralistic organizations in the form of a broad public campaign in 2011 to effect real change in the field of freedom of religion, especially in the run-up to the next national elections. Initial consultations are underway, and currently include coordination of the activity against the proposed law to continue the exclusive funding of stipends to yeshiva students. The activity, to be coordinated by SHATIL, will include design of a major public and media campaign to place freedom of religion at the center of the next general election campaign. It will also coordinate lobbying of the large parties to ensure that issues related to freedom of religion rank high on their platforms and to attract key players in US Jewry as partners in both advocacy efforts and financial support.

International cooperation for liberal Orthodoxy - Pursuing the trend to bolster the links between the liberal Orthodox sector in the United States and the liberal Orthodox sector in Israel, NIF and Shatil are in the forefront of plans for an International Conference on Social Justice and Halacha in summer 2011 which will bring together important partners in Israel (such as Rabbis of the Tzohar movement), North America (Rabbi Marc Angel's Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and the International Rabbinic Fellowship) and the UK (various Orthodox leaders of UK Jewry). The Conference will mark the launching of joint projects between Israeli NGO's and partners abroad to enhance the progressive forces within the Orthodox world.

CONCLUSION

Under new leadership both in the U.S and in Israel, the New Israel Fund continues to be the leading force working to address the current challenges. Recent events—mainly the increased threats to democracy and human rights, and the shredding of Israel's social safety net—throw into sharp relief the vital work that remains to be done. The ongoing and core work of NIF and SHATIL positions us well to address these challenges. It also shapes and motivates how we do so. Much inspiration can be drawn from the activities of the family of organizations supported by NIF and SHATIL's programs. All are working towards a better future in which all Israelis, Jewish and Arab alike, can focus their efforts on building a shared society based on equality, justice, freedom and dignity for all.