



Annual Report 2015 New Israel Fund of Canada
הקן החדשה לישראל

About New Israel Fund of Canada

Since its founding in 1985, New Israel Fund of Canada (NIFC) has worked tirelessly to uphold the vision of Israel's founders for an equal and democratic society. NIFC works with Canadians and Israelis who are advocating on behalf of civil and human rights, promoting religious tolerance and pluralism, and working to further strengthen Israel's social and economic fabric. These NIFC-supported projects and organizations are at the forefront of Israel's advancement toward socio-political equality and inclusivity for all of its people, regardless of religion, race, gender, or national identity.

Building bridges between Canadian communities and Israeli organizations, NIFC supports on-the-ground Israeli project funding, leadership development, organizational support, and coalition building. NIFC's work to uphold a democratic Israeli society focuses on five major issues: women's rights, civil and human rights, religious pluralism and tolerance, social and economic justice, and Canadian outreach and education.

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Women's Rights



Social and Economic Justice



New Israel Fund of Canada
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Civil and Human Rights



Religious Pluralism and Tolerance



Canadian Outreach and Education



Women's Rights

The Israeli Declaration of Independence states "Israel will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or gender; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture." And yet, in spite of this assurance of equality, women in Israel are still treated as second-class citizens, facing discriminatory practices and laws that limit their power and voice. It is specifically women from ethnic and religious minorities who contend with disproportionately high rates of unemployment, discrimination around economic and health issues, and obstacles to accessing welfare supports and legal rights.

NIFC-supported organizations empower Israeli women, helping to give them a voice in their private lives and in the public realm, and advocate for women who aspire to community leadership and government roles. As a leading funder of organizations that strive for gender equality, NIFC plays a vital role in the move to create a truly equal and just Israeli society for all.



Success Story: Increasing Educational Opportunities for Women with Mahapach-Taghir

Mahapach-Taghir (which means "radical change") is an NIFC-supported, grassroots, feminist, Jewish-Arab organization which gives marginalized Israeli women the opportunity to earn a post-secondary degree at a local college or university. The program works to empower these women with socio-economic and educational opportunities, helping them to seek out scholarships, create personalized work plans, and build support networks. Women in this program also forge their own partnerships inside their communities, strengthening the links between women, and investing in a shared future where all of Israel's citizens are positioned to create change and build an equal and just society.

Civil and Human Rights

While the Israeli Declaration of Independence assures equality for all its citizens, LGBTQ and other minority groups in Israel face discrimination and prejudice on a daily basis. NIFC works to counteract systemic bigotry and intolerance by funding and training organizations to address rights violations of minority groups. Advocating for the support of minorities, in both the public and private realms, NIFC-supported organizations stand up for democratic values and agitate for a fundamental change in the way Israeli society sees and cares for its more vulnerable populations.



Success Story: Creating Anti-Racism Education Curriculum

In March of 2015, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) published an educator's handbook to address racism in the classroom. Israel's longest-standing human rights and civil liberties organization, ACRI was founded in 1972 with the mission to ensure Israel's respect for human rights, and to educate the public about human rights and civil liberties issues. ACRI's Human Rights Education programs promote a civil rights education for students and educators, working to introduce high quality pedagogical materials in Hebrew and Arabic into the Israeli school curriculum.

The textbook, "A Lesson for Life: Anti-Racism Education from Kindergarten to High School," was distributed to senior officials in the Ministry of Education, and to teachers and professors of education at Israeli universities. ACRI has also run training sessions to familiarize educators with the book's content and its hands-on approach to anti-racism education. The book was translated into Arabic later in 2015, adapted to the particular needs of Israel's Arab population.

Religious Pluralism and Tolerance

As a Jewish and democratic state, the only stream of Judaism that Israel formally recognizes and funds is Orthodox Judaism. Even the Jewish practices that are sanctioned are strictly regulated by the powerful rabbinic courts, leaving many Orthodox Israelis feeling powerless and marginalized. Israelis who wish to practice a different stream of religion or spirituality face challenging exclusions from their own religious practices and traditions, such as marriage and burial customs. Non-Orthodox Israeli Jews and non-Jews wishing to practice a faith outside of the state-sanctioned religious framework face intolerance and discrimination, and struggle daily to be accepted and respected. NIFC-supported programs promote religious freedom and coexistence, embracing a diverse range of Jewish practices to create an environment of religious tolerance and pluralism.



Success Story: Victories for Women in Orthodox Courts

Late in 2015, the NIFC-funded organization Mavoi Satum successfully advocated for a 48-year-old Israeli woman to obtain a legal Jewish divorce through an alternate Orthodox court system—the only legal avenue for a divorce recognized by the state.

In early 2016, a groundbreaking decision from Israel's High Court ruled that women could now hold the position of rabbinical court director. The decision came after Mavoi Satum director Batya Kehana-Dror's application had been rejected on the basis that she had not held the positions of rabbinical court judge or municipal chief rabbi—two positions that only men can hold.

Founded in 1996, Mavoi Satum advocates for women who have been denied a legal Jewish divorce, taking on cases of individual women and providing them with legal representation and counselling services. The organization is dedicated to achieving broader reform within Israel's marriage and divorce legal systems through public awareness campaigns and legal work.

Social and Economic Justice

In tandem with a burgeoning economy, income inequality in Israel is among the highest in the Western world. Nearly one in five Israelis lives below the poverty line, and many citizens do not have access to basic services. NIFC-supported programs aim to tackle the root causes of poverty and social inequalities, working to ensure social and economic justice for unemployed and low-income citizens, single parents and the elderly, Israeli Arabs, and new Israeli immigrants. These programs work to alleviate poverty and discrimination, and to create opportunities for all of Israel's citizens to access education, jobs, affordable housing, public services, and health care. NIFC-supported programs give disadvantaged Israelis from all regions and sectors much-needed support and an opportunity to have their voice heard.



Success Story: Launching a Coexistence Website in Hebrew and Arabic

On November 16, 2015, the UN International Day of Tolerance, Shatil, the organization that leads the Education for Shared Living Forum project, launched the Learning to Live Together website. An educational resource promoting tolerance and coexistence, this website is an indicator of major progress in the education of young Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens.

The Learning to Live Together site, which also serves as the home for a social awareness campaign of the same name, is a joint project of NIFC-supported Shatil and other Israeli NGOs. It is considered one of the top social justice initiatives to come out of Israel in 2015. The site provides Hebrew and Arabic educational materials, such as curricula from the Ministry of Education's Shared Living and Citizenship Department, and suggests a range of activities and lesson plans that promote understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence among Israel's Jewish and Arab populations.

Canadian Outreach

Our year-round events in Canada raise awareness of the work done by NIFC's Israeli partners, creating important dialogue about the issues facing Israeli society today. The discussions inspired by these NIFC events embrace all perspectives, providing inclusive spaces for genuine inquiry into Israel's challenges. NIFC's Canadian events strengthen the connections between Israel and diverse Jewish communities across the country, giving Canadians who care about Israel's future a place to come together and give voice to the issues that matter to them.



2015 Events

Against the Grain: Orthodox Feminism in Israel featuring Hannah Kehat of Koleh, Israel

Food For Thought: A New Generations Shabbat Dinner Series at several locations across Canada, for participants under 40

Laughing While Crying, a conversation with authors Sayed Kashua, Haaretz columnist and creator of *Arab Labor*, and Canadian author Nancy Richler

Annual Shira Herzog Symposium featuring Aluf Benn of *Haaretz*, Ronit Heyd of Shatil and Jonathan Kay of *The Walrus*

From the Back of the Bus to the Top of the Agenda featuring Anat Hoffman of the Israel Religious Action Center

Mussa, Israeli Movie Night



Social Justice Fellowship

The NIFC Social Justice Fellowship engages young Canadians in Israel's movement for social change, giving college and university graduates the opportunity to spend 10 months in Israel working alongside Israeli social change organizations. Participants in this one-of-a-kind experience join a group of post-university fellows who spend four days a week on the front lines of social change in Israel. These young agents of change learn on the job, receiving leadership training while contributing to the efforts of NIFC partners at some of Israel's leading Israeli non-governmental (NGO) social change organizations.

The NIFC Social Justice Fellow (SJF) for 2015-16 is Enbal Singer, who recently graduated from Montreal's McGill University with a degree in Political Science and a minor in Canadian Ethnic and Racial Studies. Enbal, who was born in Tel Aviv but grew up in Canada, has spent years volunteering and working with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Israel, the US, and Canada. The issues around refugees resonate with her so much that, on her return from Israel, she plans to attend law school and focus her studies on refugee and immigration law.

For her fellowship, Enbal is working in the Refugee and Asylum seekers sector at NIFC-supported Kav LaOved (Workers Hotline), where she will talk to workers about their rights and help advocate on their behalf. She will also prepare reports on Kav LaOved's work for the US Embassy. She looks forward to regaining her Hebrew fluency, and is excited to immerse herself in the SJF's unique, tailor-made experience where she can help effect positive change in Israel.



2015 Projects

Civil & Human Rights

- Public Education for Access to Social and Economic Rights with Adva Center
- Research and Public Education for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy with Molad
- Public Education for Human Rights with Association for Civil Rights in Israel
- Strengthening Refugee Organizations and Initiatives with Shatil

Religious Pluralism & Tolerance

- Public Education on Pluralism with Hiddush
- Training Community Leaders from a Traditional Mizrahi Perspective with Memizrach Shemesh
- "Time for Action" Campus Activities with Ne'manei Torah V'Avoda (NTV)
- Celebrating Diversity with the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)

Social & Economic Justice

- Outreach to Disadvantaged Citizens in the North and South with Social Economic Academy
- Nurturing Community Leadership in Common Cause with Shaharit
- Cooperative Development Center with AJEEC
- Capacity Building for Israel's Non-Profit Organizations with Shatil

Women's Rights

- Mentoring Orthodox Women Project with Kolech
- Women's Leadership Training Institute with Mahapach-Taghir
- Civil Liberties Law Fellow Program with New Israel Fund

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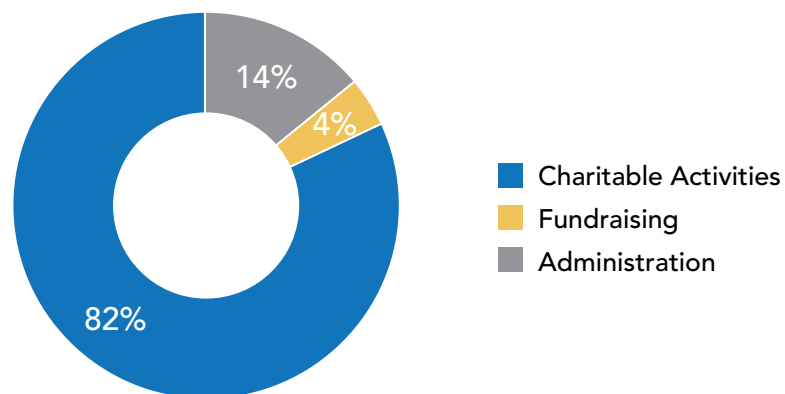
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