

Your Impact in Israel

NIF Report from Mickey Gitzin

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As one of the New Israel Fund's (NIF) steadfast supporters, you are instrumental in everything we do here in Israel in our ongoing mission to safeguard and advance Israeli democracy. And each year, I'm proud to share highlights of some of our most important accomplishments with you.

This year, however, my report to you has special significance. Thanks to your support in this extraordinarily difficult year, NIF rose to the innumerable challenges that the COVID-19 crisis threw our way.

First and foremost, your support enabled us to provide emergency aid to many organizations whose survival was threatened by this unforeseen crisis. In addition to emergency funding, Shatil, NIF's action arm in Israel, provided vital guidance to the directors of these organizations as they navigated the numerous changes wrought by the pandemic and ensuing economic challenges.

In turn, these organizations, strengthened by the years of support they received from NIF and Shatil, jumped into action to fight for the civil liberties and democratic norms that were being threatened by the government's response to the health emergency:

- Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Shatil-led Southern Health Coalition has mobilized to ensure that regional health needs are addressed, including ensuring government provision of personal protective equipment for all ambulance crews in the Negev, convincing the Ministry of Health to run Arabic-language campaigns on COVID safety for Bedouin populations, and the establishment of drive-through COVID testing facilities in Be'er Sheva.

- At a time when the legitimacy of dissent was under assault, often under the guise of COVID-19 restrictions, Shatil and NIF grantees defended Israelis' freedom to protest. Through judicial petitions, ACRI and Adalah secured the right to protest under lockdown, in accordance with public health measures, and enabled the mass protests against government corruption and failures in managing the COVID-19 crisis to continue. The Shatil-led Forum for the Freedom of Protest trained activists on their rights and on options for recourse when those rights are violated. Together, these efforts have helped thwart the government's antidemocratic policies, and mitigated the chilling effect of over-policing.

- A group of twelve doctors from NIF grantee Physicians for Human Rights Israel was the first delegation of medical professionals to reach Gaza since the coronavirus pandemic began. The doctors delivered medical equipment and medications, performed examinations and surgeries, and provided mental health training for Gazan medical professionals.

The examples of NIF grantees stepping up to protect vulnerable populations and defend democracy during this health crisis are too numerous to list. And each and every one of them was made possible because of your support.

But even as NIF and our grantees dealt with these unprecedented challenges, we continued to make progress on the issues at the core of our ongoing work.

With your help, we helped bring about key victories that reinforce Israel's democratic character, including:

Overturing the "Expropriation Law":

Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the law which retroactively approved illegal Jewish settlement construction on private Palestinian land was unconstitutional, in response to a petition filed by NIF grantees Adalah, ACRI, Yesh Din, and others.

Combating violence against women:

The Knesset Finance Committee approved the allocation of NIS 100 million (\$30.7 million) for a national plan to combat violence against women, thanks in part to the tireless efforts of Israel Women's Network, Women Against Violence, and Al-Tufula Center. These funds were previously earmarked but were never allocated; the organizations will continue to monitor the issue and advocate for the transfer of funds.

Protecting the rights of asylum seekers and migrant workers:

The High Court struck down the "Deposit Law," which required refugees and asylum seekers to place 20% of their earnings in a locked account to be retrieved only if they leave Israel. While this law had been in effect since 2017, its impact was even greater during the coronavirus outbreak with its heavy economic toll. The court ruled the law, which NIF and its grantees had long been working to counter, unconstitutional, and ordered the state to return the funds within 30 days, which (in cases where the money was indeed deposited by employers) it did.

As difficult as the last year was, it showed us all the strength of the movement that we are growing. And with your support, we'll continue to mobilize Israelis around the issues they care about, build a collaborative ecosystem in which activists from all parts of Israeli society work together to advance key issues, and amplify voices for equality, justice, and inclusion.

Your support in 2021 is more important than ever before. Please continue to support our efforts to advance a better, more just, and more equal Israel.