



## **REPORT OF ACTIVITIES**

**JANUARY-JUNE 2015**

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), founded in 1972, is Israel's oldest and largest human rights organization and the only one dealing with the entire spectrum of rights and liberties in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) under its control. As an independent and non-partisan organization, ACRI's mandate is to ensure Israel's accountability and respect for human rights by addressing violations in Israel and in the OPT. ACRI also educates the public about human rights and civil liberties. In a democracy with no constitution set in a diverse and polarized society, ACRI plays an essential role by promoting universal human rights and defending the human rights and civil liberties of all persons, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background. During the current reporting period, ACRI continued to utilize our unique combination of litigation, advocacy, education and public outreach tools in our efforts to protect and promote human and civil rights in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the first months of 2015, ACRI underwent an organizational restructuring, following a strategic process that included a comprehensive reexamination and reevaluation of organizational priorities in which the board of directors, the senior management, and the staff were all engaged. The change in the organizational structure that was implemented increased ACRI's effectiveness, and left more room for flexibility and for more rapidly reacting to unanticipated issues and violations of rights, through activities not originally included in our annual work plans.

ACRI now has two legal departments: one devoted to human rights in Israel and another devoted to human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The department of Human Rights In Israel contains five distinct units: a unit focused on civil and political rights, a unit focused on immigration and status, a unit focused on social and economic rights, a unit focused on the rights of the Arab minority, and a public hotline. ACRI also has a robust Human Rights Education department, as well as a Public Outreach department that engages in policy advocacy, communications via traditional and new media, and grassroots campaigns. Additionally, in the first months of 2015, ACRI established a team dedicated to Operations and Human Resources, and also expanded its Resource Development and International Relations department.

In March, elections were held in Israel, and a new Knesset was elected. ACRI's staff has been preparing to contend with new anti-democratic legislative initiatives that are expected to emerge from the new Knesset and government. This winter we were confronted with a divisive elections campaign that underscored the importance of protecting Israel's fragile freedom of speech, and this spring we have already witnessed measures by the new government to curtail this and other rights. Civil society's role as the guardian of Israel's democratic institutions has never been more crucial. ACRI is ready to work with a broad spectrum of individuals and institutions to ensure that universal rights are protected.

Additionally, we have continued to witness the rising trend of increasing racism and legitimization of racism that manifested last summer, a worrisome phenomenon which ACRI is combating through legal interventions and litigations, policy advocacy, anti-racism education, and public outreach efforts. While we continue to work on a wide range of issues, the fight against racism and discrimination – as well as to safeguard freedom of speech – are flagship issues in our 2015 work plan.

We accomplished a tremendous amount in the first half of 2015. Some of ACRI's significant accomplishments and activities during this reporting period are described below, and include successes that impact the lives of millions of Israelis and Palestinians. Not only are we reacting to violations of rights as they occur, but also, simultaneously, enacting a proactive strategy to reinvigorate the human rights discourse in Israel.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISRAEL**

ACRI's Department of Human Rights In Israel deals with the full spectrum of human rights and civil liberties issues, and contains five distinct units. The Civil and Political Rights unit addresses a wide gamut of civil rights and liberties including, *inter alia*, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of protest and assembly, privacy rights, rights in the criminal process, the right to political representation and others. The Immigration and Status unit contends with the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, as well as with a wide range of other issues pertaining to immigration policy and the population authority. The Social and Economic Rights unit works to safeguard and advance basic rights including, *inter alia*, the right to live in dignity, the right to housing, to water, to healthcare, and to education. The Arab Minority Rights unit combats discriminatory laws, policies and practices to which Israel's Arab citizens are subject, and promotes equal rights for Israel's Arab citizens, including equality in allocation of public resources, in accessibility of public services, and in representation on the national and municipal levels. Finally, ACRI's Public Hotline enables individuals and groups to turn to us for information about human rights and for legal assistance in cases where their rights have been violated.

### **Civil and Political Rights**

#### **❖ Freedom of Speech and Expression**

**Police Brutality against Israelis of Ethiopian Origin:** Following the police's violent repression of large-scale demonstrations held in April and May by Israelis of Ethiopian origin in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv, specifically to protest longtime police brutality towards the community and discriminatory treatment from the authorities, and given police use of riot control measures – including stun grenades

tossed without prior warning by mounted police – which resulted in dozens of injured protestors at those demonstrations, ACRI collected testimonies from protestors and on May 18<sup>th</sup> sent a [letter](#) to Israel Police Commissioner Yohanan Danino, expressing grave concern over the excessive force exhibited by the police, and noting that crowd dispersal tools must be used by the police in a measured manner, with prior warning, and according to [Israel Police procedures and regulations](#). In our letter we noted that the police appear to have acted contrary to its regulations, and thereby leading to an escalation in the level of violence at the demonstrations. We requested that the Commissioner initiate a systematic review of police use of crowd dispersal measures.

**The Boycott Law:** In 2011, the Knesset passed the [Anti-Boycott Law](#), which creates a private civil right of action against individuals or organizations who call for a boycott of the State of Israel or Israeli settlements. The law also enables the Minister of Finance to impose financial penalties, including the removal of tax exemptions, on NGOs that call for a boycott. ACRI submitted a [petition](#) seeking the law’s invalidation to the High Court of Justice, on behalf of several civil society organizations, including three that have called for economic boycott in order to fight the occupation. We maintained that the law violates freedom of speech, and intentionally conflates expression that opposes the government with expression intended to harm the state. On April 15, 2015, the High Court handed down its [ruling](#), rejected our petition, and let the Anti-Boycott Law stand. However, the Court invalidated an important clause in the law, which would have allowed plaintiffs to pursue a civil case without having to prove actual damages, i.e., without showing that they suffered any actual harm from the call to boycott. Nonetheless, by letting the law stand, the Court’s ruling effectively approves of silencing of a legitimate form of political protest, as the severe sanctions authorized by the law create a chilling effect on speech.

**Free Speech on Campus:** At a March 9 hearing at the Supreme Court on ACRI’s [appeal](#) from a lower court’s ruling that let stand a clause in the University of Haifa charter whose removal ACRI sought because it grants the President of the University power to indefinitely suspend public activity on campus, the Supreme Court [criticized the university’s practice](#) of restricting public activities, and gave it 60 days to alter its charter so as to align with principles of free speech. As a result, the university formulated an amendment to the clause, which requires the President to publicize decisions to restrict public activity and the reasoning behind them, and limits the time frame for which public activity may be suspended. Although ACRI remains concerned by the university’s excessive power to profoundly infringe on free speech, the amendment will clearly mitigate the potential harm to free speech on campus, and is a significant improvement, which directly emanates from ACRI’s legal intervention.

#### ❖ **Rights in the Criminal Justice System: Rights of Suspects, Detainees and Prisoners**

**Warning Talks by the Shin Bet (GSS):** On May 28<sup>th</sup>, the High Court of Justice held a hearing on the [petition](#) that ACRI submitted in 2013, against the General Security Services (GSS) practice of summoning political activists for “friendly warning talks.” In the petition, ACRI argued that summoning activists for “warning talks” violates basic rights including freedom of speech and protest, the right to privacy and liberty, and the right to due process. At the May hearing, the GSS admitted that

it lacks the authority to compel citizens to attend such talks and respond to questioning, and yet nonetheless summons political and social activists to such talks. The GSS provided the court with privileged information including privileged regulations on summoning activists for talks, and a further hearing was scheduled for a later date.

**Prisoners' Access to Academic Studies:** This April, following an additional hearing on its 2012 ruling, that was held in 2014 pursuant to [ACRI's request](#), the High Court of Justice [rejected](#) ACRI's [petition](#) regarding prisoners' access to academic studies, and upheld a sweeping ban prohibiting prisoners designated as "Security Prisoners" from taking correspondence courses at the Open University.

## ❖ Privacy Rights

**Privacy Rights of Mental Health Patients:** During 2015, as part of a reform in Israel's mental healthcare system, responsibility over mental healthcare services is scheduled to be transferred from the Ministry of Health to the country's Kupot Cholim (health maintenance organizations), and as part of the process, the Ministry of Health instructed the governmental mental healthcare clinics to transfer to the Kupot Cholim information on psychiatric and psychological care being provided to the insured. ACRI wrote to the Ministry of Health and the Attorney General, demanding that such transfer of information be conditional upon the informed consent of each and every patient. After the Ministry of Health rejected our demand, the Attorney General intervened and temporarily halted the reform process so as to examine the issue, and ultimately, as a result of our efforts, restrictions were placed on the transfer of information, so as to guarantee that a patient's medical information would not be given out before the patient is given an opportunity to understand the ramifications of such a measure and to object to it.

**Confidentiality in the Workplace:** In April, the National Labor Court accepted our [joint request](#) with Kav LaOved – Worker's Hotline to join as amicus in an appeal from a lower court verdict that allowed for a biometric time clock in the Qalansawe municipality. In our brief we maintained that this verdict is unprecedented in that it allows the employer to cross without impunity the boundary between the employer and its employees' bodies. We also addressed the issue's gender dimension and noted that most complaints that ACRI and Kav LaOved receive regarding privacy violations in the workplace are from women who feel humiliated, vulnerable and helpless as a result of the exposure and their relative powerlessness at work. The Attorney General then submitted a [position](#) that incorporated central portions of our claims, including our points regarding the severe violation of the employees' basic rights, and the illegality of compelling employees to provide biometric imprints for a time clock at work.

**INCLO Conference on Surveillance:** In March, attorney Avner Pinchuk participated in the INCLO convening in New York devoted to issues of surveillance and privacy, and spoke about ACRI's advocacy effort and public campaign to halt the Ministry of Interior's plan to implement a biometric database for the population. INCLO, the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations, was founded in 2013 by independent national human rights organizations from ten countries, in response to

increasing restrictions on personal freedoms and on civil protest, to serve as a forum for information sharing and joint action on issues of common interest, such as repression of speech, police brutality, privacy rights and religious freedom. In addition to ACRI, current INCLO members include the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Argentina), the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Kenyan Human Rights Commission, the Legal Resources Centre (South Africa), Liberty (United Kingdom) and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties. Human rights organizations from Russia and India have recently been approved to join INCLO as full members.

## **Immigration and Status**

**Deaths at Dangerous Unregulated Daycare Centers:** Over 3,000 infants and toddlers of migrant workers and asylum seekers in Tel Aviv spend very long hours daily in over 70 unsafe, unregulated daycare centers (called “Babysitters” by the migrant worker and asylum seeker community), where hazardous conditions prevail, and a severe shortage of staff exists. (Dozens of other such daycare are located outside of Tel Aviv, throughout Israel.) After three babies died in the South Tel Aviv “Babysitters” in February, and two more babies died in March, ACRI established a task force comprised of experts from the fields of education, welfare, psychology, economics and law, which formulated a plan for a systemic solution to the problem. The task force engaged in intensive policy advocacy vis-à-vis relevant governmental offices as well as the UNHCR. Simultaneously, ACRI launched an extensive public awareness raising media campaign, to press on the State to take responsibility through regulation and by providing safe appropriate alternatives. We also employed a strategy of grassroots mobilization, and our staff partook in organizing a joint demonstration of migrant workers, asylum seekers and longtime residents in South Tel Aviv, demanding a solution. The issue indeed received widespread media coverage, and our advocacy efforts vis-à-vis the authorities were fruitful. In early April, the government announced allocation of 56 million NIS to establish alternative daycare centers adopting the “Unitaf” model which our task force of experts had proposed.

**Petition Against New Anti-Infiltration Law:** In December 2014, the Knesset passed a new version of the Anti-Infiltration Law which allows for detention of asylum seekers in the “Holot” facility in the Negev. ACRI, along with partner human rights organizations, filed an [expedited petition](#) to the High Court of Justice [calling for the invalidation](#) of the latest amendment to the Anti-Infiltration Law, and for an interim order to delay the implementation of the law with regards to those who are yet to be summoned to the Holot Detention Facility. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, the High Court of Justice issued a temporary injunction prohibiting the State from sending new asylum seekers to the Holot detention facility. In early February a hearing was held on our petition, and we submitted briefs both before and following the hearing. We are currently awaiting the court’s ruling.

**No Heat in Winter in Detention Camp for Asylum Seekers:** When the Israel Prison Service (IPS) failed to provide heat to the approximately 2,300 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers held in the

Holot Detention Camp in the Negev desert (and whose detention ACRI has aimed to end, via a High Court of Justice petition against the anti-infiltration law) during the cold winter months, ACRI, along with The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, petitioned the High Court of Justice in January demanding that heat be provided to the detainees. The Holot detention camp is located in a part of the Negev desert known as particularly cold in the winter, especially at nights, and the detainees had to contend with bitter cold temperatures. Our swift legal intervention received extensive media coverage, and yielded an immediate result, which truly helped the approximately 2,300 asylum seekers directly affected: Shortly after we filed the petition, the IPS quickly rushed to install air conditioners with heating and cooling capacity in all the detainees' rooms, and in early February our petition was deemed unnecessary and was nullified.

**Forced Deportations to a “Third Country”:** In April, ACRI, in conjunction with five other human rights organizations and the program for refugee rights at the Tel Aviv University law school, [petitioned](#) the District Court in Be'er Sheva against the new policy that allows for deportations of asylum seekers to a third country against their will, and to cease from imprisoning asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea for refusing to be deported to Rwanda and Uganda. A few weeks later, the court withdrew our petition as unripe, after the State announced that it would hold a hearing before imprisoning the asylum seekers.

**Assisting Migrant Workers' Families with Ministry of Interior Proceedings:** Over the reporting period, ACRI handled multiple requests for assistance from migrant workers' families, including 35 requests for help obtaining permits of residence, 25 cases seeking to extend permits, 30 requests for assistance with verification of documents, two cases involving paternity disputes, and 10 requests for help with national health insurance and healthcare rights. Additionally, in May ACRI held an information session for families that have received residency status, on their rights and obligations as residents, the procedure for renewing residency status annually, travel abroad and other relevant topics.

**Quarterly Newsletter on Immigration Policy:** As part of a joint two-year project, ACRI, the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel jointly publish “The Migrant,” a quarterly newsletter devoted to central issues in Israel's migration policy, laws and regulations, and to the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, with articles written by renowned experts in the field. Over the reporting period, we published a [Hebrew](#) and an [English language version](#), each of which was sent to approximately 300 subscribers in Israel and overseas.

**Lectures:** Our staff members gave multiple lectures on immigration and status issues at various venues and settings, including at schools, for other NGOs, and for foreign journalists. In May, attorney Oded Feller lectured on immigration and asylum issues at a continuing education program for Administrative judges. In March, Rotem Ilan gave a presentation on the topic of asylum seekers at a New Israel Fund event in San Francisco. In April, she spoke about ACRI's work before the Board of Governors of “Yad HaNadiv” and members of the Rothschild family. Also in April, she conducted a tour of the unregulated daycare centers in South Tel Aviv for the management of the Samuel Sebba Trust.

**Hanukkah-Christmas Festival:** On December 27<sup>th</sup>, ACRI's Israeli Children Project, along with women leaders from the migrant worker and the refugee and asylum seeker communities, organized a holiday party for children from those communities and the public at large, with live music, games and activities for children, a raffle, and traditional foods. Over 1,400 people attended the event, held at a South Tel Aviv community center, and we raised 18,000 NIS. The party's purpose, besides fundraising, is to raise public awareness of issues affecting those communities, and to broaden our base of support.

## **Social and Economic Rights**

### **❖ The Right to Live in Dignity**

**Water Disconnections:** As of April 2015, the water corporations can no longer disconnect debtors from the water supply due to poverty and inability to pay. No person can now be completely disconnected from the water supply unless the water corporations receive special permission to do so from a public committee that will be established at the water authority. Disconnections will be authorized only in cases of debtors who have means but refuse to pay, and will not be authorized for debtors who lack the means to pay, or who owe less than 1,000 NIS. This significant achievement is the result of ACRI's longtime legal and advocacy efforts. In February, at a special hearing held during the Knesset recess, the Knesset's Economy Committee approved of new regulations that limit the power of water corporations to disconnect debtors from the water supply. Promulgation of regulations followed several years of intensive advocacy efforts by ACRI, as well as a 2013 [petition](#) to the High Court of Justice, which held a hearing on our petition in January and pressed the government to complete the authorization process. In April, once the new regulations were in effect, ACRI wrote, published, and distributed a new [rights handbook](#) for persons and families whose water was disconnected.

**Electricity Disconnections:** Given our aforementioned success ending water disconnections to debtors, ACRI (as part of our work in the Electricity Forum, a group of civil society organizations and activists promoting the right to electricity) has begun compiling testimonies from people living in poverty whose electricity has been disconnected by the electric company due to debts and inability to pay. We have found that this practice particularly impacts women, especially single mothers living in poverty. Our aim is to publish a booklet presenting such testimonies, in order to raise public awareness of the topic and raise awareness among policy makers, and we expect to publish it this summer. Additionally, ACRI is preparing a petition to the High Court of Justice on the matter, which we expect to submit this summer.

**Professional Trainings for the Unemployed:** ACRI is drafting a comprehensive report on professional trainings and other services provided to unemployed persons by the Ministry of Welfare, which we intend to use for policy advocacy purposes. The report will include testimonies we are now compiling.

**South Tel Aviv Project:** ACRI has embarked on a project – in collaboration with “Achoti” (a Mizrahi feminist organization) and “Power to the Community” (an Achoti-sponsored venture, involving neighborhood residents, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers) – to address the longtime neglect of South Tel Aviv neighborhoods on the part of the authorities, and the violations of the residents’ rights. The project deals with the rights of all South Tel Aviv residents: longtime residents and newcomers, as well as migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. ACRI is currently preparing a report mapping the problems in South Tel Aviv’s neighborhoods, and focusing on inequality in the allocation of resources in the city (between its northern and southern neighborhoods), on disrepair and neglect of infrastructure, and on gaps between the city’s north and south in education, healthcare, housing and safety. The report will include analysis of information that we received in response to our freedom of information requests to the municipality, the police, the Ministry of Health and other authorities on issues pertaining to welfare, healthcare, budgets, and demographics.

**Demonstration: Save Our Children:** In April, as part of our South Tel Aviv Project and our Israeli Children Project, our staff organized, along with “Achoti,” “Our Future,” “The center for Eritrean Women,” a group of Filipino women activists, and various independent activists, a joint demonstration to protest the deaths of several infants from the asylum seeker community in the unregulated daycare centers in South Tel Aviv. The demonstration, held on April 19<sup>th</sup> and entitled “Save the Children of South Tel Aviv,” was attended by approximately 300 protestors and received widespread media coverage. The message we aimed to convey was that neglect of South Tel Aviv neighborhoods by the authorities endangers children from all the different communities residing there, and places their lives at risk. Towards the demonstration, we took part in formulating a [position paper](#) outlining demands for improving the living conditions of all residents of South Tel Aviv.

## ❖ The Right to Housing

**Housing Rights and Policy:** Over the reporting period, ACRI engaged in legal interventions and policy advocacy efforts to advance the right to public housing and affordable housing, to protect the rights of homeless persons, and to combat discrimination in planning, building and housing. In February, ACRI published its response to the State Comptroller report on Israel’s housing policy; our response was cited widely in the media, and [an article](#) authored by attorney Gil Gan-Mor, director of our housing rights program, appeared on the first page of the Ynet portal the day after the Comptroller issued his report.

**Discrimination in Housing:** In February, we [wrote](#) to the Israel Lands Authority demanding that it instruct a company that has fielded an acquisition team to compete in a tender for a construction project



in Kiryat Gat to cease its marketing campaign which targets only potential purchasers who are Orthodox (National Religious), and to clarify that such a campaign violates an explicit condition of the tender, whereby marketing must be conducted without unacceptable discrimination. The topic elicited a public debate in the Orthodox media. The Ministry of Justice has yet to state a position on the matter. Should the company conducting the discriminatory marketing campaign win the tender, we will consider litigation in the matter.

**Rights of Homeless Persons: Opposing the Criminalization of Panhandling:** ACRI filed a [request to join as an amicus](#) in a case in which the Public Defender is representing a homeless man accused of the crime of public nuisance, which carries a sentence of up to one year in prison, because he was panhandling at an intersection in Be'er Sheva. In our submission, we maintained that there is no room to prosecute a person for panhandling or begging, and it is unacceptable to criminalize panhandling, which homeless people undertake in order to subsist and survive, rather than to handle the problem of homelessness via tools such as housing and welfare policies. Subsequently, we participated in a conference held by the Public Defender's office on the issue of criminalization of poverty.

**Bill on Rights of Homeless Persons:** ACRI, in collaboration with the Homelessness Forum, completed the first draft of a first of its kind legislative initiative, dealing with the rights of homeless persons and the State's obligations towards them. We have circulated the draft to experts for comments, and after we include revisions, we intend to advance the bill in the Knesset.

**Lecture for Social Workers:** ACRI conducted a lecture on housing policy and the right to housing for twenty community social workers in Rosh HaAyin. The knowledge that the social workers gained from the lecture empowered them and provided them with new tools and perspectives to utilize in their work with lower income populations.

## Arab Minority Rights

### ❖ The Right to Equality

**Racial Profiling at Airports:** Deployment of new technology for security checks at Ben Gurion airport, Israel's main airport, following ACRI's [2007 petition](#) to the High Court of Justice regarding racial profiling to which Israel's Arab minority is subject at airports, is a significant achievement of our Arab Minority Rights unit. This March, after eight years worth of hearings and submissions on the petition, the High Court of Justice handed down its [judgment](#), which asserted that rendering a substantive legal ruling on the legality of the profiling is now redundant, given the changes introduced to the airport screening process since ACRI's 2007 petition was filed. ACRI was awarded litigation costs, as an acknowledgment of the contribution our petition made to change in this area. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done to end the unacceptable ethnic discrimination to which Arab citizens are subject at Israel's airports.

**Denial of Swimming Pool Subscription to Arab Israelis:** After a family from Tira, an Arab town, turned to ACRI because the country club in Kochav Yair rejected its request to purchase a subscription to the swimming pool on grounds that the club is for local residents only, we discovered that the club does in fact sell subscriptions to Jewish residents of nearby communities. We [filed suit](#) in the Central District Court for Administrative Affairs in 2014 against the country club management and the municipality, for unlawful ethnic discrimination based supposedly on place of residence. In our suit we claimed that the rejection exemplifies a practice of exclusion of minorities from the public sphere. A hearing was held in early 2015, a second hearing was held in June, and cross-examinations are scheduled to be held in July.

### ❖ The Right to Political Representation

**Opposing the Higher Electoral Threshold:** Despite ACRI's exhaustive advocacy efforts, in 2014 the Knesset passed the Governance Law, which includes a provision raising the electoral threshold for the Knesset. In December of 2014, ACRI submitted, along with Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, a [request to join as an amicus](#) in a petition to the High Court of Justice against raising the electoral threshold in the (then upcoming, scheduled for March 2015) elections. We maintained that the higher electoral threshold was intended to hurt, and in fact does hurt, the right of Arabs to political representation, to vote and to be elected. In December a hearing was held on our request and on the petition. In January 2015 the court [rejected the petition](#) on grounds that the issue is unripe, and upheld the law raising the Knesset cutoff threshold from 2% to 3.25% of the population. The higher electoral threshold was likely among the factors leading to the creation of The Joint List, a political party combining three existing Arab parties, which ran in the March 2015 elections.

### ❖ Equality in Allocation of Resources and Services

**Lack of Arabic Books in the Nazareth Illit Public Libraries:** On March 30<sup>th</sup>, ACRI filed [a petition](#) in the Nazareth Administrative Court against the Ministry of Culture and the City of Nazareth Illit, requiring the city [to provide municipal library services in Arabic](#) to the city's Arab residents at the city's main public library and at all of its branches. Despite the fact that Arabs make up 19% of the population of Nazareth Illit, there is not a single book in Arabic in any of the city's public libraries. We requested that the municipality purchase books in Arabic, maintain databases in Arabic, and offer its social programs in Arabic rather than only in Hebrew as it does now. Surrounding our petition, ACRI conducted extensive public outreach, including activities coordinated with the Nazareth Illit Arab community, such as holding an alternative "Story-time" event in Arabic, for Arab children. Our petition and the event received widespread media coverage, including a spot on the [primetime evening news on television](#).

**Arabic Language Signs in Public Transportation:** In December 2014, ACRI [wrote](#) to the Ministry of Transportation demanding that information in Arabic be included in new signs (both traditional and digital) constructed by the Ministry of Transportation. Over the reporting period, ACRI [engaged in correspondence](#) with the Ministry regarding the need to improve Arabic linguistic accessibility in public transportation signage both in Arab cities specifically and throughout Israel in general. In response, the

Ministry of Transportation announced its intention to construct during 2015 approximately 100 digital signs with information in Arabic in twelve Arab cities, and 5,000 non-digital signs with Arabic information at bus stops, and to include Arabic language information on its website by early 2016. ACRI then asked whether signage in Arabic would be added only in Arab communities, or to public transportation stops in all cities and towns throughout Israel.

**Appropriate Representation among Lod's Municipal Employees:** In early 2015, we received a response to the Freedom of Information request we had submitted to the Lod municipality last year, in which we inquired as to the number of its Arab employees. In February, after learning that only 8% of municipal employees are Arabs, we pressed upon the mayor to increase that number and act to advance suitable representation to Arabs among municipal employees. In response, the mayor claimed that the difficulty in recruiting and hiring Arab employees stems from a dearth of Arab applicants. ACRI will continue to monitor the situation.

### ❖ **Planning and Building Rights**

**Position Paper:** In early May, ACRI and Sikkuy [submitted](#) to the 120 Days Team Addressing the housing Shortage in the Arab Sector a [joint legal position paper](#) advocating preferential allocation of land and housing projects to Arab communities. The paper surveys the particular characteristics of the housing shortage in the Arab sector and outlines the State's legal obligations given the current situation, including the obligation to employ affirmative action in allocation of resources for housing in the Arab sector, including preferential treatment for local residents. The paper also includes recommendations for concrete changes in procedures and regulations for allocation of housing resources. In early June, the 120 Days Team (headed by a senior Finance Ministry official) [announced its recommendations](#), among them approval of 17 master plans and of over 20,000 new housing units in the Arab sector between 2016 and 2019.

**Conference:** In early May ACRI and the Arab Center for Alternative Planning held a conference in Nazareth, which focused on the issue of home demolitions and on the appropriate ways to cope with the increase in home demolitions in Arab communities in recent months. Over 100 persons attended, among them heads of municipalities and local councils, engineers and urban planners, representatives of civil society organizations, and activists from groups leading the fight against home demolitions.

**Workshop for Women's Groups:** In June ACRI conducted a workshop for a group of women from Jadeidi-Makr on the topic of planning and building rights, and particularly on their right to voice their position on the plan to build a new Arab city in their vicinity, and the legal options for doing so. The workshop, the first of several, is part of ACRI's joint project with Kayan Feminist Organization.

### ❖ **The Rights of the Negev Bedouin**

**Portable Bomb Shelters for Unrecognized Bedouin Villages:** Last summer, in the midst of Operation Protective Edge, [ACRI submitted an expedited petition](#) demanding that the authorities provide portable bomb shelters to unrecognized Bedouin communities in the Negev, as they were particularly exposed to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip due to proximity and absence of shelters. In July the High Court of Justice held a hearing on our petition and directed the State to respond with a long term solution for the area. Pursuant to our petition, the State announced this March a “plan for protecting the Bedouin population from rocket fire.” In ACRI’s April response we emphasized that the plan lacks clarity and does not include building actual physical shelters that would protect human lives when the civilian population is under attack by rocket fire. A hearing on our petition is scheduled at the HCJ in July.

**Unrecognized Village Challenging Forced Urbanization Plan:** In April, a hearing was held at the High Court of Justice on our 2014 [petition](#) against a regional plan to forcibly transfer the approximately 10,000 residents of the unrecognized Bedouin village of Wadi al-Na’am to an area near the township of Segev Shalom, to a location dangerously close to hazardous facilities. Following the hearing, the HCJ decided to enable the residents of the village to submit alternatives to the location, which would be considered by the planning authorities along with the State’s plan.

**New Family Health Centers in the Negev:** Pursuant to our intervention last year regarding the plans to staff and open three family health centers in the Negev, we received in February a response from the Ministry of Health, whereby the budgetary problem that prevented operating the centers was solved, that one of the centers (in the town of Lakiya) has opened, and that the other two have not been opened due to issues unrelated to funding. We are continuing to monitor the situation.

## ACRI’s Public Hotline

ACRI’s Public Hotline consists of volunteers – among them retirees, attorneys and law students – in addition to ACRI’s staff. An experienced attorney directs and oversees the hotline volunteers and staff. As opposed to our legal work that focuses on precedent-setting cases in an effort to effect changes in public policy, our public hotline is geared towards addressing the needs of individuals who turn to ACRI (primarily telephonically), by giving direct legal assistance, or giving legal advice or referrals. In early 2015, ACRI added a part-time position of an Arabic speaking staff member to our Public Hotline staff, so as to more effectively respond to requests from Arab citizens and from the OPT.

Over the reporting period, ACRI processed 900 individual requests for assistance. ACRI’s ability to assist in most cases is usually limited to providing detailed information and explaining how best to maximize civil rights when dealing with governmental authorities. We also refer individuals to legal aid clinics and other rights organizations. However, where the authorities violate an individual’s rights in a particularly egregious manner, we intervene by writing letters or filing legal petitions and appeals. The following are some examples of topics and cases in which ACRI intervened:

**The Rights of Wards:** ACRI is part of a coalition of attorneys, civil society organizations, and human rights activists that debated the Ministry of Justice's proposed amendment to the law dealing with legal guardianship, [formulated comments](#) on the amendment, and is drafting an alternative bill to advance in the Knesset, that would better protect the rights of wards. Requests for assistance that have been received by our public hotline indicate that numerous elderly, ill and disabled wards have guardians who exert control over their bodies and property, often with no consideration to their wishes and needs.

**Water Disconnections:** During the months of January-March, before the new regulations making it more difficult to disconnect debtors from the water supply took effect in April, the water corporations were particularly vigorous in disconnecting debtors' water supply or threatening to do so. Dozens of debtors turned to our public hotline. We advised some of them on ways to reach arrangements for reasonable payment plans. In four particularly difficult cases, we intervened on the debtors' behalf directly with the relevant water corporation and the water authority, requesting that those debtors' water not be shut off.

**Equality for Same Sex Couples:** ACRI intervened with the Population Authority demanding that it grant Israeli citizenship to a Moroccan partner of an Israeli citizen without requiring him to renounce his foreign citizenship, just as a partner in a male-female couple would not be required to renounce foreign citizenship when receiving Israeli citizenship by virtue of relationship status.

**Freedom of Speech at Schools:** ACRI wrote to the Director General of the Ministry of Education, calling attention to the need to amend the national student council charter, as it contains provisions prohibiting political activism that have a chilling effect on the students' ability to exercise their freedom of expression.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

ACRI's Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) department addresses violations of rights by the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories through legal interventions and policy advocacy, and raises public awareness of those violations via education and public outreach. ACRI engages in legal interventions, policy advocacy and public outreach to address a wide range of rights violations in the West Bank, including forcible displacement of Palestinian residents of Area C. ACRI also engages in legal interventions, policy advocacy and public outreach to address rights violations by the authorities in East Jerusalem, including the failure to provide municipal services.

### **❖ Operation Protective Edge**

In January, after receiving a response from the Attorney General to ACRI's query regarding the use of the "[Hannibal Protocol](#)" during Operation Protective Edge in Gaza last summer, we issued a [press release](#) stating that the Attorney General must clarify that in any future military action undertaken to thwart a soldier's kidnapping, it is necessary to avoid risking the life of the kidnapped soldier as well as to avoid use of massive gunfire in heavily populated areas, and that the Chief of Staff must clarify this to all levels of the military command. In February we sent a letter to the Attorney General to this effect. In January, Director of our OPT department attorney Tamar Feldman was interviewed on radio and on prime time TV news, regarding ACRI's demand that an investigation be launched into the use of the "Hannibal Protocol" during Operation Protective Edge, given the high risk of civilian casualties.

## ❖ The West Bank

**Two Systems of Law Report:** Following the successful launch conference that we held at Tel Aviv University in December 2014, we received positive feedback regarding the open dialogue that took place among senior government and military officials, legal experts, and academics, and over the reporting period, we continued to distribute our report, "[One Rule, Two Legal Systems: Israel's Regime of Laws in the West Bank](#)," which we published in [Hebrew](#), [English](#) and Arabic. The report explains how decades of "temporary" military rule have given rise to two separate and unequal systems of law that discriminate between the two population groups living in one territory – Jewish Israelis, and Palestinians. The legal differentiation is not restricted to security matters but rather touches upon almost every aspect of daily life. Over the reporting period, we held meetings with new members of Knesset to brief them on our report, addressed [current events](#) that exemplify issues discussed in our report, and raised public awareness of the issue via [articles](#) on the topic. Our aim is that the concept of the existence of two distinct legal systems in the West Bank will enter the public discourse.

**Rights of Palestinian Minors in Criminal Proceedings:** In March 2015, ACRI published online, on our website, a rights handbook in [Arabic & Hebrew](#) and in [English](#) intended to clarify for Palestinian minors and their parents what their rights are in the process of detention, arrest and interrogation by Israeli police or military forces operating in the West Bank. We printed a [pocket-size printed version](#) that combines Arabic and Hebrew, and also produced magnets with vital information. We have begun distributing the rights handbook to individuals and groups in the West Bank, via our fieldworkers and the fieldworkers and volunteers of B'Tselem and other human rights organizations. In May, our staff began to conduct workshops for minors and their parents in the West Bank where we distributed hundreds of copies of the printed version. We held a workshop in a village in the Ramallah area, for minors and parents from villages in the area, and are planning to hold additional workshops in the coming months, both for minors and their parents, and for attorneys who represent minors in the criminal justice system.

**Data on Minors in the Criminal Proceedings:** In March, ACRI submitted Freedom of Information requests to the military and to the police, seeking statistical data on detention, arrest, interrogation and

trials of Palestinian minors in the occupied Palestinian territories. Thus far, we have received only a partial response from the police, and we will continue to pursue the information.

**The Right to Protest in the Occupied Palestinian Territories:** In April, we printed, in Hebrew and English, the position paper we had published electronically in October, “[The Legal Status of the Right to Demonstrate in the Occupied Territories](#),” a paper asserting legal grounds for the right to protest and demonstrate in the OPT. We have since distributed dozens of copies to policy makers, to diplomats, to other human rights organizations, and to jurists who participated in our training on International Humanitarian Law. An [Arabic language](#) version is available on ACRI’s website. We have also disseminated the Hebrew, Arabic and English language versions via social media such as Facebook.

**Tours for Diplomats and International Organizations:** Between January and May 2015, our staff, along with the organization Military Court Watch (MCW), conducted three information sessions and tours for diplomats and international NGOs, to increase international awareness of violations of human rights in the military justice system in the OPT. This includes tours to the Ofer prison, an Israeli incarceration facility in the West Bank holding approximately 1,500 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

**The Rights of Palestinians in Area C: Forcible Displacement, Expulsions and Home Demolitions:**

**Firing Zone 918:** In January 2013, ACRI filed a petition against the State’s plan to expel approximately 1,000 Palestinians living in rural villages in the area known as Firing Zone 918. We are currently engaged in an ongoing mediation process with the State, which began in November 2013 after the High Court of Justice appointed a mediator for the case. An agreement was signed whereby no homes would be demolished during the mediation period. The High Court has granted an extension for the mediation to continue through October 2015.

**Connecting the Village of Al Aqaba to the Water Grid:** ACRI is preparing to petition to the High Court of Justice to compel the Civil Administration to connect the Palestinian village of Al Aqaba (located in the West Bank’s northern Jordan valley) to the water grid. Over the past few months, our staff has compiled testimonies and drafted affidavits from the residents of the village, collected samples of water from the cisterns and containers used by the residents to store the water they purchase, obtained an expert opinion indicating that this water is unfit for drinking, and begun drafting the petition which we intend to submit soon, prior to the court’s summer recess.

**Freedom of Movement for Palestinians in the West Bank:** Following ACRI’s September 2014 request to the deputy military legal counsel for Judea and Samaria to cancel new restrictions that were placed on Palestinians residents’ access to route 443 and to change the manner in which soldiers carry out security checks at the checkpoints, it appears that some of the restrictions were eased in 2015, and more Palestinian vehicles have access to the road. However, as the situation is far from satisfactory, we are considering submitting a new petition to the High Court of Justice on the issue. On a separate matter, in March we sent a letter to the military legal counsel for Judea and Samaria regarding our repeated requests to remove the blockade at the entrance to the village Deir Istiya, which violates its residents’ rights, and in April we wrote to him and demanded removal of the blockade at the entrance to the village Hizma – where a sign explicitly stated that the blockade was intended to punish all villagers

for crimes that some of its residents are suspected of committing – and to avoid such collective punishment measures, which violate international law.

### **The International Humanitarian Law Project:**

**Training for Legal Professionals:** During the months of March through May, ACRI and the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) conducted a comprehensive training in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for 22 legal professionals, including attorneys from human rights organizations, from the private sector and the public sector, from the government and the military prosecutor's office, and from academia. We held six full-day sessions, which included lectures by a wide variety of experts from academia and civil society as well as high ranking military officers, such as the military legal counsel for Judea and Samaria, and the president of the military court of appeals.

**Workshops for Youth:** Over the reporting period we held 10 IHL Education programs at pre-military academies. Approximately 250 pre-military academy students participated in our multi-session workshops. Additionally, our staff members gave four lectures on International Humanitarian Law: at two pre-military academies, at Sadaka-Reut, a Jewish-Arab youth group working for co-existence, and to students in a Masters' program on human rights at the College of Management.

**Lesson Plans:** We are in the process of developing two new lesson plans that we plan to integrate into our IHL Education program. We have almost completed preparing a lesson plan on the topic of the two systems of law in the West Bank. Also, we have begun collecting data and materials for a lesson plan on the impact of armed conflict, and of occupation specifically, on women and children in conflict areas.

### **❖ East Jerusalem**

**Police Brutality in Dispersing Demonstrations:** Over the reporting period, we continued to monitor the police's use of riot dispersal measures in East Jerusalem and to compile testimonies on unlawful use of excessive force. Our aim in doing so was to demonstrate to the police and the Attorney General the unacceptable results, which include numerous severe injuries and harm to residents. In writing to the Police Commissioner and the Attorney General, our purpose is to effect change in police conduct by influencing the police to alter or update their regulations and guidelines, to hold appropriate trainings, and to strengthen their reporting and monitoring mechanisms. We focused particularly on the use of sponge-tipped bullets and of skunk water:

**Use of Sponge-tipped Bullets against Demonstrators:** ACRI compiled over fifteen testimonies and in March sent a [letter](#) to the Police Commissioner and the Attorney General regarding the dangerous use of new black sponge-tipped bullets for riot dispersal in East Jerusalem, demanding cessation and reexamination of this harmful practice that has caused severe injuries to adults and to five children including, in several cases, loss of eyesight. So as to raise public awareness of the issue, we engaged in media outreach in Hebrew, Arabic and English, which positioned ACRI as the exclusive expert on the topic. In May, attorney Anne Suciú presented [our work on this issue](#) before a forum of fellow civil rights organizations at an INCLO conference in Argentina.



**Use of Skunk Water as Riot Control Measure:** In February we wrote to the Police Commissioner (as a follow-up to our correspondence from August and November 2014) expressing our concern over the excessive use of skunk water as a crowd dispersal measure in heavily populated neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, that have been drenched in the foul-smelling liquid spray. This practice has affected tens of thousands of residents, particularly children, pregnant women, the elderly, sick and disabled, and caused health problems, including difficulties in breathing. Our persistent letters succeeded in bringing about change: The police began a process of examining and updating its regulations on the use of skunk water, particularly the prohibition on spraying homes and crowded urban locales, and meanwhile made its use conditional on authorization from a district commander or deputy commander. In March we submitted to the police, per its request, video documentation demonstrating excessive use of skunk water, and the detailed testimonies we compiled on the issue. We are continuing to monitor the issue.

**Arrests of Children:** This concerning phenomena led us to gather information and data both through freedom of information requests that we have submitted to the authorities on the one hand, and through contact with the residents on the other hand, from whom our fieldworker is collecting testimonies. We are focusing particularly on nighttime arrests and on the lack of parents' presence during interrogation, and are planning to discuss these topics with officials at the Ministry of Justice and the Public Defender.

**Freedom of Movement:** In February we met with senior military and police officials to advocate for ameliorating the conditions at the Qalandia checkpoint and Shuafat Refugee Camp checkpoint, so as to mitigate violations of freedom of movement of the residents of East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier. The meeting was attended by representatives of the neighborhoods' residents.

**Petition on Water Shortage in East Jerusalem:** In January the High Court of Justice held a hearing on our 2014 petition concerning the severe water shortage and faulty supply affecting 60,000-80,000 residents of East Jerusalem neighborhoods east of the Separation Barrier. We argued that any solution must involve connecting the homes to the water grid and supplying running water (many residents now have no choice but to buy large containers or bottled water), as the right to water is a fundamental right bound with the rights to health and dignity. The court accepted our position that upgrading the main pipes, as the authorities proposed to do, would not suffice to solve the problem, and ordered the sides to meet to formulate a possible solution. In February and March we held several meetings with the Israel Water and Sewage Authority and HaGihon (Jerusalem's water utility), but they were intransigent. In May we submitted to the court our response, including an expert opinion from a water engineer, who opined that the water authority's proposal will not solve the problem, and stated that the residents currently consume only half of the amount defined by the World Health Organization as satisfying the basic right to water.

**Welfare:** In March we submitted a Freedom of Information request inquiring as to the staffing of social workers in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services offices in East Jerusalem. We were told

that while the government approved adding 30 staff positions between 2014 and 2018, the government has yet to provide the necessary funding. Meanwhile very few social workers are handling a large case load, in an area where 75% of the population lives under the poverty line.

**Family Health Centers:** In April we wrote to the Director General of the Ministry of Health inquiring if there was a plan to address the severe shortage of family health centers in East Jerusalem, if any funding for new clinics was included in the 2015 budget, and why two new clinics had not yet opened in East Jerusalem as had been promised in the summer of 2014.

**Ambulance Services:** We also wrote the Ministry of Health requesting data on ambulance evacuations of sick or injured persons in East Jerusalem in the past couple of years. In February we met with the Director of the Red Crescent, and learned from him of problems that arise during emergency evacuations by ambulance in East Jerusalem.

**Education in East Jerusalem:** In 2011, ruling on [a petition filed by ACRI](#), the High Court of Justice gave the Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Education five years to resolve the severe shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem. In March we met with senior education officials at the municipality and clarified that the responsibility for implementing the ruling lies on the municipality too, not only on the Ministry of Education as they claimed. We also wrote again to the Ministry of Education, inquiring as to its plans for implementing the court's ruling.

**Postal Services in East Jerusalem:** In January, the High Court of Justice held a hearing on our 2010 petition regarding the lacking postal services in East Jerusalem, with the mayor of Jerusalem and the director of the Israel Postal Company in attendance at the justices' request. Following the hearing, the court instructed the postal company to fulfill its duties to provide adequate postal services in East Jerusalem. The court emphasized the important role of the Ministry of Communications, as regulator, in ensuring that postal services are indeed provided as required. Our petition has led to much progress, particularly to naming of many previously unnamed streets, but far greater improvement is needed. In May we wrote to the postal company and the Ministry of Communications and presented testimonies we compiled about specific problems with services at the Herod branch and in Beit Safafa and Beit Hanina.

**[East Jerusalem 2015 – Facts and Figures Report:](#)** In May, shortly before Jerusalem Day, we published, in Hebrew, Arabic and English, [East Jerusalem 2015 – Facts and Figures](#), a report of over twenty pages, including [infographics](#), on the concerning human rights situation for Palestinians in Jerusalem, who suffer from persistent poverty and neglect from the authorities as well as from increased violence and brutality on the part of the police and security forces. In the report we described the faulty infrastructure and the problems and neglect in education, planning and building, water, sanitation, sewage, welfare and allocation of resources, all leading to prevalent and persistent poverty. We also discussed prevailing police brutality, including use of excessive force in dispersal of demonstrations, violations of rights

during detention, arrest and interrogation, and measures that hurt the entire population like use of skunk water and blockades of neighborhoods. We disseminated the report and infographics via [social media](#). The report received very extensive coverage in the Hebrew, Arabic and English language media, including in the [New York Times](#).

## HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

ACRI's Human Rights Education department develops and disseminates pedagogical materials, conducts human rights trainings for educators, for youths and for others, and advocates for initiation and implementation of educational policies that would promote human rights norms and democratic values.

Over the current reporting period, the department published a seminal book on anti-racism education, published other pedagogical materials, organized numerous workshops and lectures at educational institutions throughout Israel, advised schools, youth movements and teachers' colleges, operated the Workshop website in Hebrew and in Arabic with posts for educators examining human rights ramifications of current events, and conducted dialogue with policy makers on human rights education.

### ❖ Pedagogical Materials

**Text Book on Anti-Racism Education:** In March, ACRI's Human Rights Education department published "[A Lesson for Life: Anti-Racism Education from Kindergarten to High School](#)," a unique and comprehensive book providing teachers with practical tools to cope with racism in the classroom, and methods to impart anti-racism values and integrate teaching against racism into a variety of disciplines. This book is a capstone feat, the culmination of several years of work, and examines in depth such questions as: How can we teach opposition to racism and to discrimination while teaching various disciplines at school? How ought a teacher, or kindergarten teacher, address a racist remark uttered in the classroom? When and how is it appropriate to stray from the planned lesson plan and deal with the meaning of racist conduct in the classroom? Which messages, overt or hidden, are conveyed in existing text books?

Our book combines theory and practice to create a holistic approach to coping with racism from kindergarten through high school, presents a range of perspectives that challenge common assumptions regarding anti-racism education, and contains effective suggestions for coping with racism and with similar isms, and ideas for integrating education against racism into teaching different disciplines such as mathematics, languages and sciences. The lesson plans and articles in the book were written by leaders in the field of anti-racism education from the school system, from academia and from civil society, who worked with ACRI's Human Rights Education department staff. The book reflects our department's view whereby each and every teacher can contribute to teaching against racism.

The book was printed in Hebrew in March, and was made available on ACRI's website in June. ACRI has begun distributing the book to senior Ministry of Education officials, to school principals, and to teachers and kindergarten teachers, as well as to professors of education at universities and teachers' colleges. Additionally, ACRI's Human Rights Education department has begun conducting trainings and lectures for teachers and other educators, on the content of the text book and the approaches presented therein.

An Arabic language version will be published and printed soon, most likely in July. The Arabic language version will not be a literal translation, but rather will be a translation adapted appropriately to the needs of the Arab population. Towards that end, we recruited senior educators from the Arab sector, who will thoroughly examine the book's content and substance.

**Pedagogical kit for Anti-Racism Education in Sociology:** As part of our collaboration with the Supervisor of Social Studies at the Ministry of Education, ACRI developed [three lesson plans](#) for integrating anti-racism education into the teaching of high school sociology. The Supervisor launched our materials in March and recommended that teachers incorporate them into the teaching of sociology.

**Educational Kits for Youth in Arabic on Rights vis-à-vis the Police:** During this reporting period, ACRI continued to distribute to educators and to youth its educational kit for youth in Arabic, on rights during interactions with the police and rights vis-à-vis the police.

**Pedagogical Kit for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination:** Towards the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in March, ACRI produced [lesson plans](#) for schools (in two languages, Hebrew and Arabic) in order to encourage the school system to mark that day.

### ❖ **Trainings, Workshops and Conferences for Educators**

**Trainings and Workshops:** Over the course of the reporting period, ACRI conducted workshops for dozens of teachers at schools throughout Israel, in both the Jewish sector and the Arab sector, trainings that focused on methods for coping with racism, teaching tolerance, and imparting democratic values. Our workshops for Arab teachers also addressed teaching students on their rights vis-à-vis the police. ACRI also launched a new long-term training program at the teachers' colleges, for students in the elementary education program. The workshops, focused on coping with racism in the classroom and imparting democratic values, were held at the Kibbutzim College, at Levinsky College, and at Beit Berl College. Over 100 future teachers are expected to attend our trainings at teachers' colleges in 2015.

**Police Project:** ACRI conducted two full-day human rights seminars for 32 cadets at the new National College for Policemen in Beit Shemesh, one for 32 cadets and another for 30 cadets.

**Workshops for Youth:** During this period, ACRI conducted a workshop for 15 Arab youths, on human rights in general, and on their rights during interactions with the police specifically.

**Conferences:** On March 24<sup>th</sup>, ACRI held a [joint conference](#) with the Ministry of Education and the Kibbutzim College, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and addressing tools for educating against racism and coping with rising racism and with racism in the classroom. The 150 participants included teachers and students from teachers' colleges as well as Ministry of Education officials.

We co-organized and partook in the February 16<sup>th</sup> conference "[Choosing Education for Co-Existence](#)" that was organized by the Coalition for Education for Co-Existence (a coalition of several organizations, among them ACRI) and featured a debate among candidates from various political parties. Additionally, our staff members participated in panels at various conferences and presented lectures at diverse venues.

**Roundtables: Human Rights Education in the Curricula at Teachers' Colleges:** During this reporting period, we met with several senior policy makers at the Ministry of Education, to try to affect policy regarding the training given to students at colleges of education on teaching democratic values.

We held a roundtable together with the Open University, the Israel Democracy Institute and the Lautman Foundation, that dealt with the question of how Israeli teachers can be taught to impart democratic values. Approximately 30 senior staff from several teachers' colleges participated in the discussion, the result of which will be a position paper that will be published soon and will include specific policy recommendations.

We also held a roundtable at the Kibbutzim College, attended by staff from several teachers' colleges, on the topic of training Bible teachers to integrate imparting democratic values into their teaching, and about speaking about "the other" while teaching Bible & religion in school. A second session will be held at the end of June, and we expect to produce a position paper with specific recommendations.

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, we held a roundtable meeting at the Oranim Academic College of Education, with senior lecturers in the faculties for English teachers at various teachers' colleges, to discuss the training given to future English teachers, and ways to integrate teaching democratic values into their curriculum. The

importance of this endeavor lies in the fact that there is a uniform curriculum for English teaching at all schools throughout Israel.

#### ❖ Website:

The “Workshop” – an Educational Site for Democracy and Human Rights – is a portal on ACRI’s website dedicated to ACRI’s human rights education activities, that renders our pedagogical materials and lesson plans easily accessible to educators and to the public at large. During the current reporting period, we published on the site the Hebrew language version of the book we produced, several pedagogical kits we developed, posts on human rights issues arising from current events, and updates on various departmental activities. The Arabic language site contains some materials that we developed specifically for the Arab community, tackling contemporary issues affecting the Arab sector. Between January and April:

- Our [“Workshop” site in Hebrew](#) had an average of 1,741 unique views per month.
- Our [“Workshop” site in Arabic](#) had an average of 2,209 unique views per month.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

ACRI’s Public Outreach department engages in policy advocacy vis-à-vis the Knesset, the government, and other authorities, in communications and public awareness-raising via traditional media and new media, and in grassroots mobilization and campaigns.

#### ❖ Policy Advocacy

In the past six months, we pursued our ongoing advocacy efforts vis-à-vis national, regional and municipal authorities on the multiple, diverse issues described above and our work within several networks and coalitions. In addition, given that during this period elections for the Knesset were held and a new government was formed, we put particular emphasis on the elections and on preparing for a potential wave of anti-democratic legislation.

**Elections:** Towards the March elections, we sent letters and position papers to, and met with, candidates and officials from political parties across the spectrum, and requested that they add to their party platform and campaigns topics on our agenda, such as combating poverty, improving access to healthcare and elder care, promoting affordable housing, increasing direct employment of contract workers, and passing a Basic Law on social rights. We also co-organized, along with partner organizations in coalitions of which we are member, several conferences attended by candidates from

different political parties. After the elections, we conducted working meetings with new members of Knesset, to familiarize them with ACRI's work.

**Anti-Democratic Legislation:** During the elections and subsequent establishment of a new government, we prepared for an anticipated onslaught of anti-democratic legislative initiatives from the new Knesset, by meeting with members of Knesset and politicians, businessmen, journalists, and fellow non-governmental organizations, and drafting a document outlining major areas of concern. ACRI coordinated efforts to combat such legislation with approximately twenty other Israeli civil society organizations.

### ❖ Public Campaigns

**Elections Campaign:** In February and March, towards the March elections, we launched an [online campaign](#) on our website and on social media, calling on the public to set priorities for the next government by selecting three of ten topics we presented. On average, over 10,000 people were exposed to the campaign on social media each day, and over 300 responded to our poll.

**“Kolot from Holot” – Voices from Holot Campaign:** In January, we launched a joint campaign with six fellow NGOs, seeking to grant a voice to asylum seekers imprisoned in the Holot and Saharonim detention centers, by posting on the campaign site quotes from interviews with asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea and calling on viewers to select a quote and disseminate it, on behalf of the asylum seeker, on social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and to thereby lend their voice to the voiceless. Hundreds of people participated in the campaign, including politicians and celebrities, and it received [significant media coverage](#).

### ❖ Media Outreach

From January through June, ACRI continued to have high profile exposure in the Hebrew, Arabic and English language media. This included reports on ACRI's litigation work in the courts and its policy advocacy work, ACRI's reactions to prominent issues in the news, op-ed pieces written by ACRI staff members, and coverage of events that ACRI initiated or in which ACRI participated. Among the diverse topics with respect to which ACRI was mentioned more than once were the [Boycott Law](#), [freedom of speech at universities](#), the [anti-infiltration law](#), use of [sponge-tipped bullets in East Jerusalem](#), ending water disconnections to debtors without means, [racial profiling at airports](#), deaths of infants at [unregulated daycare centers](#) in South Tel Aviv, [discrimination against Arabs at the Kochav Yair country club](#), our response to the State Comptroller's report on housing, the [lack of books in Arabic at the Nazareth-Illit public libraries](#), and others. Our presence in the Arabic language media grew in particular, as our Arabic language spokesperson's position expanded during this reporting period.

## ❖ Website, Social Media and Newsletters

**Websites:** ACRI's websites in Hebrew, English and Arabic are updated daily with the latest information about court rulings, Knesset decisions and ACRI's activities. All of ACRI's publications are made available online, with our websites widely recognized as a clearinghouse of information about human rights. ACRI's online presence grew during this reporting period. From January through May 2015:

- ACRI's [Hebrew website](#) had an average of 19,417 unique views per month;
- The [English website](#) had an average of 2,457 unique views per month;
- The [Arabic website](#) had an average of 2,316 unique views per month;

**Social Media:** ACRI operates Facebook pages in three languages, and Twitter accounts in two languages. ACRI utilizes social media to raise awareness of rights violations and of ACRI's reactions to them, to inform the public of prominent issues impacting human rights in Israel and in the territories under its control, and to mobilize the public to action. Our presence on social media also expanded over the reporting period.

### **Facebook:**

- The number of "likes" on our Hebrew page increased from 11,880 to 12,636.
- The number of "likes" on our English language page increased from 4,525 to 4,566.
- The number of "likes" on our Arabic language page increased from 4,250 to 4,307.

### **Twitter:**

- Our Hebrew Twitter account grew from 7,747 to 8,772 followers
- Our English language Twitter account grew from 2,319 to 2,621 followers

### **Newsletters:**

Over the reporting period, we sent several electronic newsletters in Hebrew to approximately 12,000 subscribers, among them: Our [Pre-Elections Poll](#), A [Passover Wish from ACRI President author Sami Michael](#), [After the Elections – Continuing the Fight for Human Rights](#), and others.

We also sent several electronic newsletters in English to approximately 3,635 subscribers in Israel and overseas, among them: [Upcoming Elections](#), [Free Speech on Campus](#), and [Airport Profiling](#), and [In The Aftermath of the Israeli Elections](#).

Additionally, we periodically sent newsletters with briefings and updates to some 760 subscribers in the international press and media.

Through a combination of online and offline tools, our public education efforts have provided useful information to Israeli and foreign-based supporters of human rights in Israel.

## ❖ Events

In February we held a special event, now in its second year in light of its 2014 success, "[Gaga Aguda](#)." Ohad Naharin and the world renowned Bat Sheva dance company gave a "[Gaga](#)" (dance style) lesson for 650 participants at Hangar 11 at the Tel Aviv port, with all revenues donated to ACRI. All expenses



surrounding the event – the location, the publicity, the music and the dancers – were donated to ACRI as well. In addition to raising 25,000 NIS, the event increased ACRI’s visibility.

## **NETWORKS AND COALITIONS**

ACRI continues to be a member of several civil society organization coalitions and networks, in which our main role is formulating and executing the policy advocacy strategy. These coalitions include: The National Coalition for Direct Employment, The Forum for the Enforcement of Workers’ Rights, The Ten-Community Forum, The Coalition of Organizations for Equality and Justice for the Bedouin, The Forum for Responsible Planning, The Gun on the Kitchen Table Coalition for improved gun control, The Coalition for Education for Co-Existence, The Coalition for Affordable Housing, The Network for the Advancement of Health Equity in Israel, and The Forum to Combat Poverty.

Over this reporting period, ACRI also became active in a new coalition – Open Democracy – which contends with transparency and public participation in the government’s activities. Additionally, ACRI has launched a partnership with the Adam Institute, to capitalize on our combined expertise in the realm of anti-racism education.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES**

In January 2015, Attorney Tali Nir replaced Gili Re’i as Director of ACRI’s Public Outreach Department. Until then, Ms. Nir had been Director of ACRI’s Social and Economic Rights Department. Also in January 2015, Oded Feller, previously Director of ACRI’s Immigration and Status Program, assumed the role of Director of ACRI’s Department of Human Rights In Israel.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above report details our accomplishments and activities in the first months of 2015, but we are fully cognizant of the many challenges that remain, as the first half of this year has seen the initial rumblings of a new wave of threats to Israel’s democratic character. As Israel’s premier human rights and civil liberties organization, ACRI is poised to meet those challenges in the remainder of 2015 and beyond.