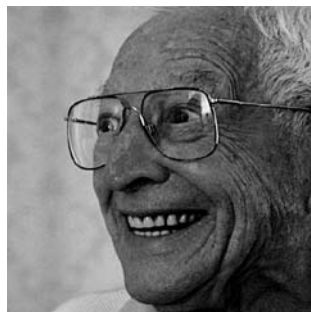


האגודה לזכויות האזרח בישראל  
جمعية حقوق المواطن في اسرائيل  
The Association for Civil Rights in Israel



Annual Report 2008

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## ACRI's Mission Statement

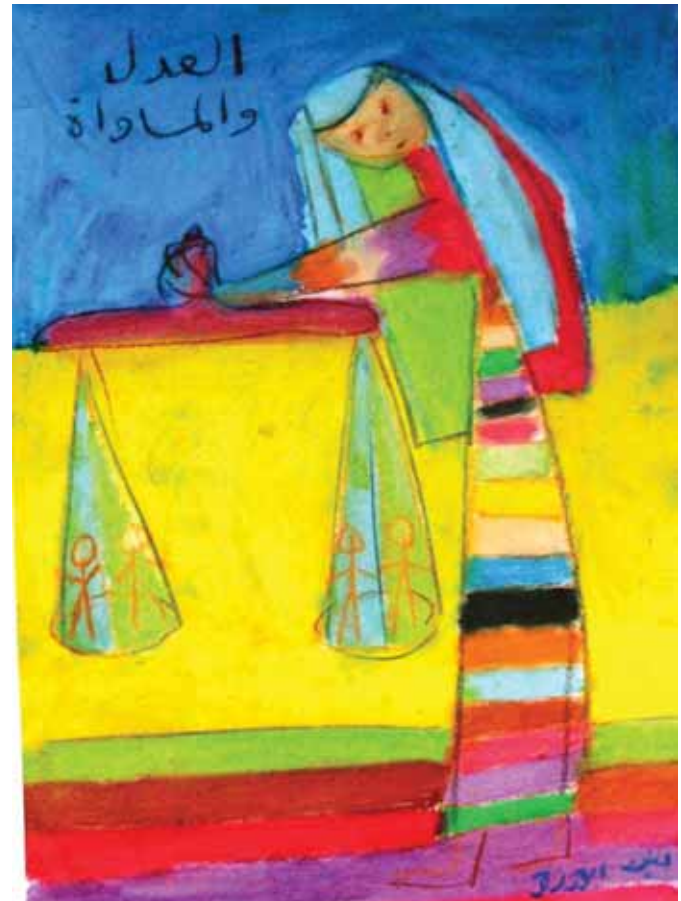
Respect for human rights enables different people to live together, serves as the basis for a healthy and stable democracy, and is the key for realizing the freedoms, dignity, and equality to which all people are inherently entitled. In Israel, a country embroiled in ongoing conflict, composed of many diverse groups, and lacking a written constitution, the struggle to ensure human rights for all presents significant and ever-changing challenges.

Since its establishment in 1972, the mandate of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) has been to protect and promote human rights and civil liberties, wherever they are violated by Israel or on its behalf. To this

end, ACRI conducts legal, educational, and public programs including precedent-setting litigation, a public hotline, innovative educational workshops, advocacy, high-profile media and internet campaigns, and much more.

ACRI is the only organization that deals with the entire spectrum of human rights issues in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Thanks to our groundbreaking achievements we have earned the reputation as Israel's leading human rights and social change organization. With your help, we will continue to lead the struggle for a just and democratic society that respects the human rights of all persons.

# Protecting and Promoting Human Rights for All



Two examples of art works produced by school children within the framework of ACRI's seventh annual Children Draw Human Rights Program in 2008. Both pieces explore the right to equality.



ACRI's Executive Director, Hagai El-Ad, at a Protest against the "Hot Return" of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

# A Message from Hagai El-Ad

## ACRI's Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It has been almost a year since I assumed the position of Executive Director at ACRI, and the time has most definitely flown by. I am incredibly proud to be part of such a prominent and dynamic organization – one that leads its field through the hard work of the outstanding team of dedicated professionals who make up ACRI's board and staff. I spent my first months at ACRI familiarizing myself with the vast body of work – both past and present – that makes up ACRI's legacy as Israel's oldest, largest, and leading human rights organization.

ACRI's unwavering goal is to defend human rights and civil liberties even in the most complex and difficult times. The past year presented many challenges, and unfortunately the forecast for 2009 does not seem any less challenging. During these trying times, as Israel faces mounting pressures of conflict, internal disputes and economic hardship, core democratic values are increasingly threatened. But we have learnt through painful experience that respect for human rights, steadfast commitment to equality, and the necessity of democratic principles are not matters of convenience nor can they be brushed aside temporarily. Our future is not at risk because of these principles. Rather, these are the very values that not only safeguard our future, but also make it a future worth fighting for. Our growing concern for Israeli democracy is founded on the alarming facts and trends to which we are exposed on a daily basis, through our extensive legal, public, and educational work. Our inspiration

to continue struggling against these challenges is derived from our faith in ACRI's values and in our ability to educate, engage, litigate, and effect real and lasting change.

In the face of all these challenges, ACRI is continuing the critical work that we have been doing, for over thirty-six years. We are not only addressing the ongoing - and new - challenges that we encounter, but are also planning to strategically expand our purview and increase our efficacy. Our priorities for the coming year include strengthening our capacity to effectively engage the Israeli public so as to mobilize broad-based and active support for our mission of fostering a culture of human rights; and creating permanent inter-departmental teams that will work collectively and strategically to advance key human rights issues using all the tools, skills, and expertise at our disposal so as to ensure maximum impact. All of these processes are designed to make ACRI an even more effective and innovative human rights organization than it already is today.

These challenging times do not only bring new difficulties. They also endow our work with added meaning, relevance, and a sense of urgency. With your support, we will continue to work toward building a just and democratic society in which all people can live in dignity.

Thank you for joining us in our struggle.

Sincerely,

Hagai El-Ad  
Executive Director

# Educating for Human Rights

Highlights of ACRI's Educational Activities during 2008

## "Children Draw Human Rights"

In 2008, ACRI ran our highly successful "Children Draw Human Rights" program for the seventh year. This year, 600 children participated, representing 16 Arab elementary schools from all over Israel: Haifa, the North, Ramle, Jerusalem, and the Negev. The program began at the start of the school year with ACRI staff training teachers on how to teach human rights through the arts. Students then produced pieces of art in numerous media, including digital art, and each school held its own human rights-

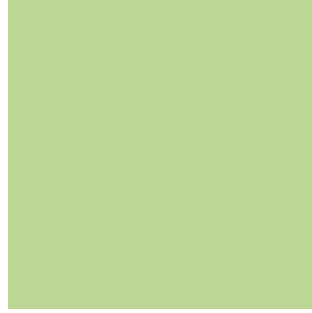
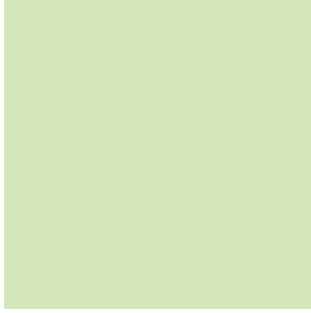
oriented event to display the children's art. At the same time, ACRI convened a selection committee to choose the best artworks from all the participating schools. The winners had their works displayed at a festive exhibition in Ramle in December 2008, which drew some 400 students, family members, and members of the public. This is the largest human-rights education program of its kind in the Arab school system in Israel, and has proven to be a resounding success among teachers and school children



*Now in its seventh year, ACRI's annual Children Draw Human Rights Program is highly acclaimed within the Arab school system.*

Photo courtesy of Melanie Takefman





across the country. We are now planning to further expand this innovative program to incorporate Jewish schools as well as to encompass additional Arab schools. It all begins today, with children drawing a different future; tomorrow, they will help create that future.



Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

## Human Rights Training Program for Civics Teachers

Civics teachers exert enormous influence on their students by teaching them about the processes of Israel's democracy as well as individuals' potential to effect change as engaged citizens. ACRI was chosen by the Education Ministry to play a leading role in training middle school teachers to teach civics classes, as part of the Ministry's introduction of

the civics curriculum into middle schools. ACRI launched a new program for Arab and Jewish middle school civics teachers, highlighting the importance of human rights and civic engagement in democratic societies. We made a special effort to target schools in Israel's periphery, where students – and entire communities – often suffer from acute discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and so on. ACRI's program is succeeding in empowering participants to effectively foster the attitudes and behavior needed to uphold human rights and democratic values among the thousands of Jewish and Arab youth with whom they work.

## Bringing Human Rights into the Classroom

During 2008, ACRI provided intensive 56-hour training programs in human rights education for a total number of 311 Arab teachers from schools across the country. ACRI's highly acclaimed education programs in the Arab school system equip participants with the skills, tools, and knowledge to empower their students to know their rights and respect the rights of others. The workshops focused on the human rights situation in Israel and throughout the rest of the world, while exploring the role of educators in fostering a culture of human rights and combating intolerance, discrimination, and rights violations. A special emphasis was laid on human rights issues directly affecting Israel's Arab minority.

## Training for Prison Staff

At the request of Israel's Prisons Commissioner, ACRI launched a ground-breaking human rights training program for the staff of prisons in which Palestinian security prisoners and detainees are incarcerated – an unprecedented initiative demonstrating ACRI's recognized credibility and professionalism. Prison officials play a key role in ensuring that the human rights of persons who have been deprived of their liberty by imprisonment or other forms of detention are respected and upheld. In Israel's volatile security climate, however, the fundamental rights of Palestinian security prisoners and detainees held in Israeli jails are routinely violated. In a series of interactive workshops, participants explore fundamental human rights principles, engage in role-playing exercises, and openly discuss human rights dilemmas that have arisen in the course of their work. The training programs have provided ACRI with an important opportunity to sensitize prison personnel to the importance of upholding human rights principles while carrying out their trying daily duties. This is just one of a number of human rights training programs that ACRI provides each year for hundreds of personnel from different branches of the security forces, including the Police Force and the Border Patrol.

## Empowering and Engaging Youth

2008 saw ACRI expand the key target groups of our educational programs to include youth activists. ACRI is now working with more than 120 high-school graduates living and volunteering in peripheral and underprivileged communities during their gap year between high school and army service. Activists receive ongoing training from ACRI in the field of human rights, and subsequently develop their own youth-driven advocacy projects to benefit the communities in which they are working. Youth activists are uniquely situated to implement and pass on information about human rights. As recent high school graduates, they have both the respect and the attention of younger students, which allows them to instill the children in their communities with respect for human rights. As youth about to enter the army, they can bring sensitivity and awareness of human rights to their fellow soldiers. And as activists, they are in a position to become influential in their communities and to serve as engaged and active citizens committed to promoting human rights for all.

ACRI believes that to foster a culture of human rights and to bring about real and lasting social change in Israel, we have to work in the educational arena to advance the key values we advocate for in the legal and public arenas.



## Personal Story:

### Safeguarding the Right to Demonstrate on University Campuses

Amit Deutscher was one of several students at Ben Gurion University in Be'er Sheva who, upset by the unjust employment conditions of subcontracted workers in the university, decided to organize a demonstration on campus in support of the workers' rights. However, upon approaching the university authorities, the students were told regulations prohibited campus demonstrations concerning political or controversial issues. Their request was denied out of fear of "public disorder".

Deutscher and fellow students turned to ACRI, which filed a petition with the Be'er Sheva District Court. In April 2008, the Court issued a precedent-setting ruling ordering the university to allow its students to hold the demonstration within the university campus, and to remove from the university's statutes the anti-democratic clause banning demonstrations concerning political or "controversial" issues. In the ruling, the court stated that the right to demonstrate, including the right to demonstrate on political and controversial matters, is enshrined in Israel's Rights of the Student Law, and banning such demonstrations cannot be justified in the name of maintaining the public order. Following the court decision, Knesset members from across the political spectrum submitted a bill intended to further safeguard the right of university students to hold demonstrations on campus.

"People are always complaining that university students in Israel are not socially involved," said Deutscher. "In our case, however, students wanted to demonstrate and protest – but the university tried to keep our mouths shut. This

case is about freedom of speech and legitimate, democratic battles. It cannot be called off under the pretext of public disorder."



Photo courtesy of Mike Horton

" This case is about freedom of speech and legitimate, democratic battles. It cannot be called off under the pretext of public disorder."

This story is one of some 3,000 annual inquiries made to ACRI's Public Hotline by telephone, email or regular mail. Dozens of hotline volunteers in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa provide free-of-charge guidance and assistance in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian and English to individuals from all walks of life inquiring about their rights.

The hotline staff deal with a wide range of topics, including the right to equality - discrimination on the basis of gender, nationality, age; social rights - the right to education, housing and health; freedom of speech and the right to demonstrate; religious freedoms; and so forth.

The hotline is an indispensable communication channel between ACRI and the general public, and an important medium for civic empowerment. In addition to providing callers with the necessary tools and knowledge to access their fundamental rights, the hotline also enables ACRI to identify trends relating to human rights issues.

At times, the hotline also serves as a source of potentially precedent-setting cases to be pursued by ACRI in the legal arena. Read on in this report for further personal stories of people who realized their rights through ACRI's Public Hotline.

# Promoting Human Rights in the Legal Arena

Highlights of ACRI's Legal Activities during 2008

## Advancing the Right to Housing

ACRI has achieved several impressive successes in our struggle to ensure the right to adequate housing. As a result of a petition submitted by ACRI to the Jerusalem Administrative Court, the Housing and Construction Ministry published all of its criteria and procedures relating to housing assistance on its website, a step which eases the procedures for applying for assistance for hundreds of thousands of Israelis. Also, following pressure from ACRI, the Knesset's Constitution Committee announced the implementation of a legal reform so that banks will not be

allowed to neglect their responsibility to find alternative housing for people who have been evicted from their homes after being unable to repay their mortgages.

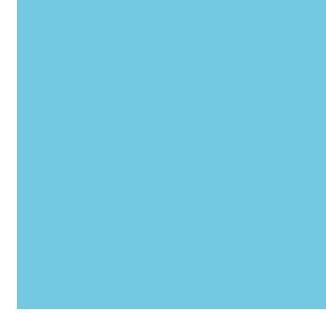
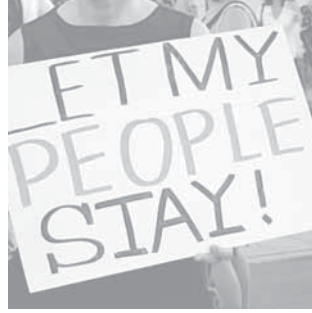
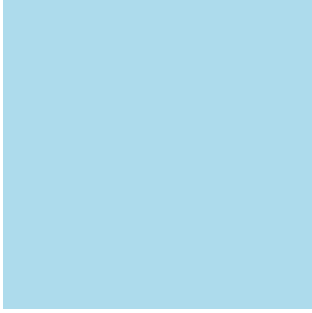
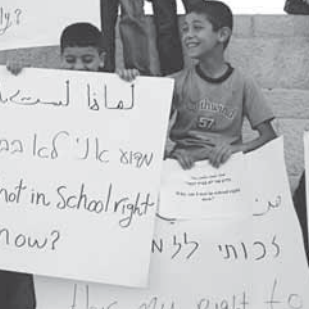
In addition, on August 24, ACRI submitted a petition to the Tel Aviv Administrative Court against a discriminatory tender by the Tel Aviv Municipality for a housing project in the city's center that would limit buyers to hi-tech and other high-income professionals. Israel's housing market is characterized by a steady trend toward further segregation, based not only on ethnic lines but also on socio-economic status. ACRI believes that non-discrimination in housing is key for establishing a stable and diverse society, and is thus continuing to fight for equal housing rights for all Israelis.



Photo courtesy of Oren Ziv / Activestills.org

## Protecting the Rights of the Negev Bedouin

In 2007, the Knesset announced it would establish a committee to work with the State Bedouin Authority to recommend solutions for the unrecognized Bedouin villages of the Negev. The committee, directed by Judge Emeritus Eliezer Goldberg, granted ACRI the right to testify before the committee during its research phase. Our staff testified before the committee in May 2008, and in July we submitted a 27-page policy paper, detailing problems and proposing solutions. On December 11, 2008, the Goldberg Committee released its findings in a widely-publicized report. Following the release of the report, ACRI called on the State to adopt the recommendation to recognize the villages and



to work to find solutions in the short-term for the lack of basic services there. We will continue to work intensively on behalf of the Bedouin population of the unrecognized villages to seek a just solution for the planning crisis in the Negev in cooperation with our local partners.

In September 2008, ACRI partnered with Physicians for Human Rights and the Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages in the Negev to submit a joint petition to the High

Court of Justice demanding the construction of a health clinic in the unrecognized Bedouin village of Tel Al-Melach. The 1,500 village residents and residents of the surrounding areas do not have access to a health clinic, despite the Health Ministry's commitment to set up a health clinic for this community, a declaration made in response to a previous ACRI petition.



Photo courtesy of ActiveStills

## Ensuring Access to Dead Sea Beaches

In June 2008, ACRI submitted a petition to the High Court of Justice against the prohibition on Palestinians from entering the beaches on the northern Dead Sea, their only entry point to the sea. The petition highlighted the fact that the checkpoint was established following complaints by Israelis managing beaches in the area, who claimed that a "mix" of patrons at their beaches hurts business. Not only do such restrictions constitute a severe infringement on freedom of movement, but the racist basis for the violation makes it blatantly illegal. As a result of ACRI's petition, the army lifted these movement restrictions.

## Defending Workers' Rights

In April 2008, the Tel Aviv Administrative Court ordered the Bat Yam Municipality to cancel an employment contract for cleaning services worth NIS 18 million (approx. \$4.5 million), because it was evident that the selected manpower agency hired by the municipality would not be able to pay the cleaning staff even the minimum wage required by law. ACRI, along with Kav LaOved (Workers' Hotline), submitted expert testimony showing that the rights of the subcontracted workers employed by the winning contractor were systematically violated, with workers earning 30% less than the minimum wage and working 14-hour days. In a precedent-setting ruling, the court instructed the municipality to cancel the tender, while placing the responsibility for ensuring that subcontracted workers are paid lawful wages and benefits on the public authority that orders a service through a contractor.

## Advancing the Right to Health

In March 2008, ACRI and the Tel Aviv University Law Clinic and Physicians for Human Rights submitted a petition to the High Court of Justice demanding that the State force local authorities to provide free comprehensive dental care to school-aged children, as they are obligated to do according to the National Health Law. Today, only 30% of local authorities provide children with regular dental check-ups and treatment; this engenders unlawful discrimination against children in their access to health care based on their place of residence. The petition is currently pending.

ACRI won a major victory in June when a draft bill to increase the universal basket of health services automatically by 2% each year was passed in its first reading in Knesset. This landmark victory was the result of an intensive campaign by ACRI and our partner NGOs to highlight among decision makers the dangers of an increasingly privatized health system that gravely violates the right to health of weaker segments of society. The proposed legislation would guarantee that critical medications and new technologies will be included in the basket and be made available to all Israelis, regardless of the Finance Ministry's regular interventions. It was particularly remarkable that members of the coalition voted for the bill and against the government's position, demonstrating their strong conviction that the new legislation is essential to Israel's health system. The bill, if legislated, will save the lives of thousands of Israelis, for whom life-saving services and medications have become unattainable with the proliferation of supplementary health insurance.





*ACRI is working intensively to promote the right to health for all members of Israeli society.*

Photo courtesy of Keren Manor/Activestills.org



Photo courtesy of Miki Kratsman

## Fighting Against Separate Road Systems in the West Bank

In March 2007, ACRI submitted a petition to the High Court of Justice against the discriminatory prohibition on Palestinian movement on Route 443 in the West Bank, which has been in effect since the end of 2000. ACRI filed the petition on behalf of six Palestinian villages along Route 443 and 18 local Palestinian residents.

Until 2000, Route 443 constituted a main thoroughfare for some 160,000 local Palestinian residents, and connected them to the town of Ramallah which provides them with essential social and commercial services; however, the highway is now designated for the exclusive use of Israelis who use the road to commute between the coastal plain and Jerusalem and vice versa. ACRI argues that the long-standing and sweeping ban on Palestinian traffic severely violates basic human rights including the right to freedom of movement and the right to a livelihood, represents blatant and systematic discrimination on the basis of national origin, and is in breach of international humanitarian law.

In two Court hearings and detailed additional information submitted to the Court since the petition was filed, ACRI emphasized the far-reaching ramifications of a Court decision granting legal approval to the policy of separation on the basis of national origin. ACRI further challenged the State's unlawful expropriation of land belonging to the civilian population under occupation for the creation of a road serving Israelis only. Following the second hearing in March 2008, the Court issued an interim decision without making any reference whatsoever to ACRI's principled arguments, and granted the State six months to report

progress on the construction of an alternative road for Palestinian use. The high-profile case, which is still pending, generated widespread media attention and public debate, both domestically and internationally, including a front page article in the New York Times.

## The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age: Challenging the "Big Brother" Law

In April 2008, ACRI petitioned the High Court of Justice against the Communications Data Law – 2007 (nicknamed the "Big Brother Law"), which grants the police and other investigatory bodies a far-reaching license to receive private and confidential information from phone companies and Internet providers.

The law, which entered into force in June 2008, enables the gathering of information on the geographical whereabouts of individuals (through cell phones' GPS systems and/or network communication towers); the names of people and organizations a person has spoken with over the phone; the websites and web pages a person has visited; and the names of people with whom a person has corresponded via email.

In the latest court hearing, before an expanded panel of 7 Supreme Court Justices, ACRI was joined by representatives of the Israel Bar Association and the Israel Press Council who expressed deep concerns over the lack of protection for the confidentiality of lawyers and journalists within the framework of the law. The petition is currently pending.

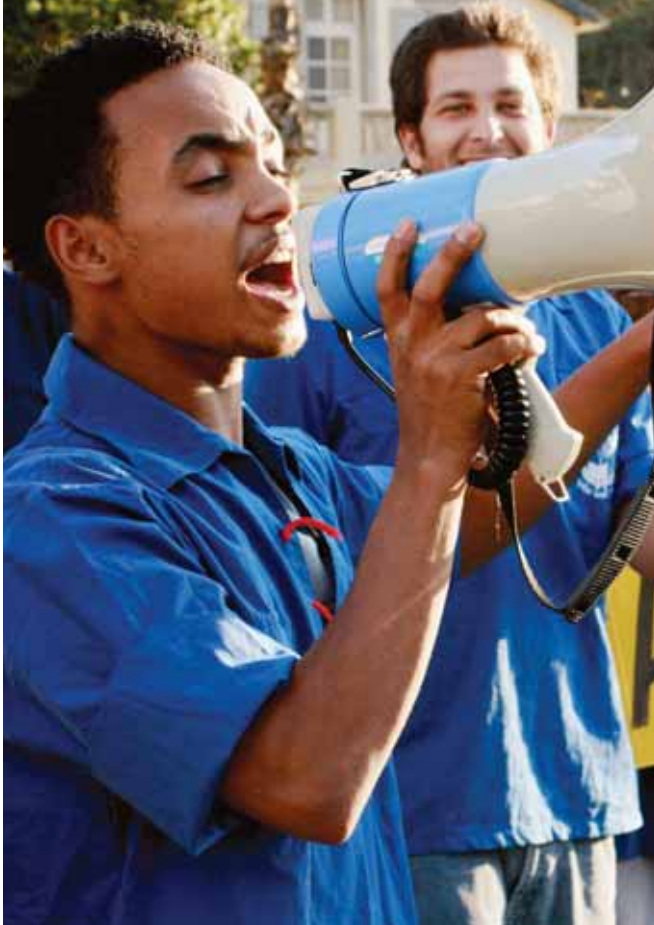


Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

## Preventing Expulsion of Asylum-Seekers from Eilat

In November 2008, African asylum-seekers living and working in Eilat, attempted to renew their visas with the Ministry of Interior only to discover that they were no longer permitted to reside or work in the city. On December 12,

ACRI and eight other human rights organizations petitioned the High Court of Justice against the Interior Ministry's decision to expel some 2,000 men, women and children who had relocated to Eilat following the encouragement of the authorities (including the Interior Ministry). The new ministerial decree would strip them of housing, work, education, and medical care, while placing them under the threat of arrest.

The petition paints a worrying picture of the chaotic maneuvers of the state to reach a suitable arrangement for Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers, who have fled their war-stricken countries and cannot return to their homelands for fear of their lives. The court handed down an interim order averting the planned expulsion, and the petition is pending.

## Workers' Rights and Freedom of Expression

In August 2008, ACRI appealed to the Tel Aviv Magistrates Court, requesting that the court categorically reject a libel lawsuit filed against a woman who had published unflattering stories on her blog concerning the unjust work conditions set by her former employers.

The blogger had sued her former employers – a subcontractor company – in the Labor Court. The libel suit was filed as part of their attempt to scare her and other employees who would dare stand up for their rights. This legal tactic has been nicknamed SLAPP – Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation, and is a tool used to ensure employees' obedience. The court responded favorably to ACRI's appeal, and the subcontractor company's demand of NIS 100,000 compensation fees was rejected.

## The Right to Political Activity

In April 2008, ACRI appealed to Israel's Attorney General in response to the General Security Services' (GSS) investigations of Balad Party members and its attempts to block contacts with former Knesset member Dr. Azmi Bishara. This was officially explained by the claim that all contacts with Dr. Bishara are liable to lead to recruitment by Hizbullah. ACRI's intervention stressed that such a claim was unfounded, and that measures of this kind violate the rights to freedom of expression and political activity. ACRI demanded that the Attorney General order the GSS to immediately refrain from actions that are liable to discourage people from engaging in political activity in general, and involvement in the Balad Party in particular.

## Protesting Against Knesset Authorization of Biometric Database

In October 2008, the Knesset passed in a first reading the Biometric Database Law, which would contain sensitive information including the fingerprints and facial features of all residents and citizens of Israel. ACRI and other defenders of civil liberties believe the proposed law to be a dangerous precedent that will infringe on the right to privacy of all members of Israeli society, enshrined in the country's Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. The biometric database would also make it easier for criminal elements to commit identity theft because intimate personal data about individuals will be concentrated in one location.

ACRI claims that once criminals gain access to biometric information, the damage caused to victims could be extremely harmful and irreversible. ACRI is ardently

campaigning against the biometric database, and our vocal opposition has succeeded in placing this issue high on the public agenda.

## Demanding Justice in Ni'ilin

ACRI and three partner NGOs submitted an urgent petition in August 2008 to the High Court of Justice against the Judge Advocate General's decision to prosecute a battalion commander and soldier, who shot a Palestinian with a rubber bullet at close range while the latter was handcuffed and blindfolded, for "unbecoming conduct," a light offence that does not result in a criminal record. Consequently, the HCJ ordered the State to respond to the petition within 21 days and issued an interim order, suspending military court proceedings until further notice.

ACRI submitted the petition together with the Public Committee against Torture in Israel and Yesh Din, as well as B'Tselem, the organization responsible for documenting the shooting. In a hearing on the petition in September 2008, the three justices emphasized the cruelty of the commander and the soldier's actions. The petition is still pending.



Photo courtesy of Niv Hachlili

## Access to Education in East Jerusalem

On September 22, ACRI submitted a petition to the Jerusalem Administrative Court on behalf of 17 school-aged East Jerusalem children for whom the Jerusalem Municipality did not find places in public schools, thus violating its legal responsibility to provide free education to all school-aged children. As a result of the lack of public classrooms in East Jerusalem, some of the petitioning children had to enroll in private schools, forcing their parents to pay costly tuition fees; others remain at home, outside of any educational framework. This is the third year in a row ACRI has submitted a petition on behalf of

dozens of children left out of the education system by the Jerusalem Municipality. ACRI demanded that the Jerusalem Municipality find places for these children immediately in public schools, provide them with remedial classes for the courses they have missed, and reimburse parents for the payment of private-school tuition fees. As a result of the petition, all students on behalf of whom ACRI appealed were offered places in public schools. Still, thousands of school-aged children remain outside of any educational framework in East Jerusalem. ACRI continues to work tirelessly to bring about a real and lasting change to this untenable reality.



ACRI co-organized a demonstration at the start of the 2008/9 school year protesting against the severe shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem.

Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

The wide array of legal landmarks brought about by ACRI in the past 36 years have played an enormous role in protecting and promoting human rights in Israel and the Occupied Territories, and have earned ACRI a solid reputation for professionalism, integrity, and effectiveness.

### Privatization and Human Rights

In recent years, the pace of privatization in Israel has accelerated, with the privatization process beginning to infiltrate into the sphere of social services. In light of the growing commodification of these critical and essential services and its potential impact on the realization of human rights, ACRI has pioneered a new initiative that seeks to ensure that human rights considerations are incorporated into the privatization process and the public discourse that surrounds it. In 2008, we submitted two interventions - one to the Attorney General and a second to the Knesset chairperson and all Knesset members - proposing steps to protect human rights in the process of legislating laws relating to privatization. Since then, Knesset members have consulted ACRI staff and the documents regarding the legislative process.

Access to justice is a key example of yet another sphere threatened by the privatization process; receiving professional and unbiased interpretation services in court is vital for guaranteeing access to justice for all in the court system. Following an ACRI intervention demanding that court interpretation services, which were privatized in 2003 and have been suffering severe problems ever since, be subject to full court supervision, the Director of Courts in December 2008 requested that the Finance Ministry grant him the authority to devise a new, independent tender that will ensure the professional quality of interpreters and their ethical obligations. ACRI also intervened before the Water and Sewage Council against a proposed pricing scheme which disregards the socio-economic levels of residents of various areas, effectively charging members of certain weaker communities more for water services. In addition, ACRI intervened to the authorities to ensure proper monitoring of privatized educational programs, which often expose children to inappropriate content and are not offered equitably..



## Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism

For many years, ACRI has worked tenaciously in the legal and public arenas to ensure that Israel strikes a balance between protecting national security and upholding human rights and the rule of law. ACRI firmly believes that in order to protect democratic values and contribute to sustainable security, it is essential that Israel's efforts to combat terrorism and protect national security respect human rights. In a joint petition to the High Court of Justice with Adalah and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, ACRI called on the court to address human rights violations being committed under the banner of national security and counter-terrorism. The petition argues that a recently-enacted law dealing with the detention and interrogation of terror suspects (and others suspected of a wide range

of "security offences") violates fundamental rights and is therefore unconstitutional. The law allows detainees to be held up to 96 hours, under certain circumstances, without any judicial review. Once the detainee has been brought before a judge, the court can lengthen their detention for up to 20 days, and in certain cases can lengthen it in their absence. Since security detainees can also be prevented from meeting an attorney for up to 21 days following their arrest, the result of the new law is that individuals can be held in total isolation for up to 21 days, during which time they will see a judge only once. In addition to the risk of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, this kind of incommunicado detention greatly increases the risk that torture and other illegal interrogation methods will be used to extract information.



Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

# Pregnant = Unemployed?

## Ensuring Women's Employment Rights

Etti is a highly-regarded kindergarten teacher who was employed as a temporary worker. Routinely, her employers renewed her short-term contract. However, after Etti notified them she was pregnant, her employers refused to renew her employment term, under the false pretence that her work was unsatisfactory and parents had been complaining.

Etti called ACRI's Public Hotline, inquiring about her rights. ACRI lawyers intervened with the employers as well as

to the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor, demanding Etti's rights be respected. The parents of the children at the kindergarten also demonstrated their support, sending a letter to the employers praising Etti's work and protesting her dismissal. Thanks to ACRI's intervention, the Ministry ordered Etti's employers to renew her contract, and Etti returned to work at the kindergarten.



Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

## “Your headscarf is scaring our customers”

### Battling Religious Discrimination in Public Areas

In August 2006, at the height of the Second Lebanon War, 26-year-old Nejmeh Adawi, a Haifa University MA student, stepped into Broadway Bagel restaurant in Haifa to meet her university tutor. Wearing a Muslim headscarf, Adawi was confronted by a restaurant worker who demanded she leave immediately. “You are scaring the customers” he said, telling her that “everything that is happening now is entirely your fault. Just get out, you are unwanted here.” One of the restaurant owners stood nearby and passively supported the worker’s insults.

Adawi decided to take legal action, and ACRI petitioned on her behalf to the Haifa Magistrates Court. It was the first court appeal to base its claims on a law, initiated by ACRI, and enacted by the Knesset in 2000, forbidding discrimination in public places on the basis of race, religion, nationality, gender, and other criteria. The Court ruled in Adawi’s favour, ordering the restaurant owners to pay NIS 2,000 compensation fees and to publish an apology letter in the popular Israeli newspaper, Yediot Aharonot.

“The incident was like a slap across the face,” Adawi said. “It made me confront reality and showed me that regardless of what I do, there will always be those who will see me as an outsider... It is so insulting to be in a place where you are unwanted, and it is terrible when you are not viewed as a person with a name and a soul but as part of a collective, a large body with no face. I hope the apology will prevent such behavior in the future.”



Photo by Yaron Tzur-Lavi, courtesy of Hayir-Colbo archive

# Putting Human Rights in the Public Spotlight

Highlights of ACRI's Public Activities during 2008

## Human Rights Week

December 10, 2008 was the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. ACRI celebrated Human Rights Week on December 7-11 with a host of dynamic public events and media outreach programs throughout Israel, as well as the wide dissemination of new videos and our annual State of Human Rights Report.



*Renowned Singer Mira Awad Performing at ACRI's Human Rights Week concert in Ramle*

Photo courtesy of Mike Horton

This year, ACRI concentrated its activities in the city of Ramle, under the headline: "Ramle: City of Rights." Ramle is a Jewish-Arab city located in the center of the country, but socially and economically on the periphery. ACRI cooperated with local community organizations and youth movements to raise awareness of human rights among the city's diverse population. During Human Rights Week, ACRI staff members and volunteers offered Ramle residents free advice on human rights and civil liberties at information booths spread out across the city. Using music as a means to bring people together and celebrate the importance of human rights, ACRI organized a Hebrew and Arabic hip-hop concert in Ramle to mark the opening of Human Rights Week.

ACRI's State of Human Rights Report – 2008 assessed Israel's implementation of the core tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the world's primary human rights document. ACRI's report is the most comprehensive account on the state of human rights in Israel and the Occupied Territories. The report received extensive and high-profile media coverage, and was widely acclaimed by decision makers, opinion shapers, and other influential figures within Israeli society.

ACRI produced and widely disseminated a short animated video in Hebrew and Arabic depicting the array of human rights issues, and reinforcing the key notion of the universality of rights. The video was accompanied by a

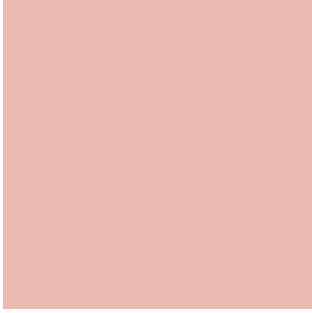


Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

high-profile Internet campaign to mobilize support for ACRI's work. ACRI also produced three public service announcements designed to raise public awareness of human rights week and human rights in general.

As part of our Human Rights Week celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ACRI produced a visually engaging poster in Hebrew and Arabic depicting a selection of rights enshrined in the Declaration through colorful illustrations. The poster was sent to a total of 8,500 schools, youth movements, and other educational institutions. Each poster was accompanied by a booklet containing guidelines for teachers on how to use the poster to teach children and youth about human rights. The guidelines were divided into 15 lessons. The feedback from educators has been outstanding; the use of artistic representation – and specifically the accessible and universal format of illustrations – was lauded as a highly effective medium of bringing the theoretical notions of human rights to life. The Education Ministry commissioned its own educators to run workshops for teachers on how to use the poster in the classroom.

### Internet Campaign marking 8 years since the Events of October 2000

Ever since the horrifying events of October 2000, in which 13 individuals – all except one Arab citizens of Israel – were killed by police during demonstrations in the country's North, ACRI has been a leader in seeking justice for the victims and in promoting true equality for Israel's Arab citizens – two of the chief conclusions outlined by the Or Commission, the national inquiry committee that was set up to investigate the events. In October 2008, to coincide

with the Jewish High Holy Days, a time when many Israelis speak of forgiveness and reflection, ACRI launched a public campaign under the headline of "October – A Good Time for Introspection" in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. The campaign materials – including a written report and an animated online presentation – highlighted the fact that since 2000, gaps between Jewish and Arab citizens have only increased, in contrast to the Orr Commission's recommendations. ACRI's statement was released – ominously – hours before the onset of violent riots between Jewish and Arab residents of Acre on Yom Kippur Eve.

### Right to Housing Campaign

In July 2008, ACRI released a groundbreaking report entitled "Real Estate or Rights: Housing Rights and Government Policy in Israel," urging the government to take responsibility for safeguarding the right to housing of all Israelis. The report found that although the government neglects its obligation to ensure the right to adequate housing for all Israelis, it is the poor and Israel's minority populations who suffer the most. The report received widespread attention in the Israeli media, and among key decision-makers. ACRI also infused the public campaign with cutting-edge multimedia elements including a photo gallery built in cooperation with ActiveStills and an animated film about the housing crisis in Israel, created by the animator of the award-winning film "Waltz with Bashir."



Photo courtesy of Yotam Ronen / Activestills.org

## Mobilizing the Media

ACRI's work and the issues that we are addressing continued to generate ongoing coverage in a broad array of Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and international media outlets. ACRI's communication staff work directly with Israel's top editors and journalists to ensure that human rights issues are high on the media's agenda. In December 2008, the Ha'aretz editorial entitled "Dangers to our Democracy" was a reflection on the state of Israel's democracy, inspired by ACRI's State of Human Rights Report – just one example of how ACRI's voice echoes onwards.

## International Women's Day

In honor of International Women's Day on March 8, ACRI produced a 16-page supplement in Arabic in collaboration with our partner NGOs containing articles and essays on issues affecting Arab women in Israel. Topics ranged from the problems facing Arab women in relation to the ongoing violent conflict and in personal status issues to the difficulties facing Arab women in Israel who want to work outside the home. Ten thousand copies of the supplement were distributed through local Arabic-language newspapers and another 3,000 copies were distributed to professors, students, activists, and NGOs as well as to people who attended events marking International Women's Day.



Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer



## Promoting Awareness of International Humanitarian Law

Through our International Humanitarian Law (IHL) project, ACRI aims to raise awareness of the principles and values that form the basis of IHL, a collection of rules with the fundamental purpose of alleviating human suffering in times of conflict. In the framework of this highly successful project, ACRI works with key agents of social change - pre-army youth, social activists, educators, members of youth movements, students, and journalists - through educational workshops and seminars, the production and dissemination of high-quality informational and educational resources, and public events in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. In 2008, the

IHL project expanded its activity significantly, reaching close to 2,000 Israelis from diverse ethnic, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds. Also in 2008, ACRI launched the first phase of its Training of Trainers program, designed to provide a select group of NGO professionals and activists with in-depth knowledge of IHL in order to help them integrate this knowledge into their work; the program, which received rave reviews from participants, includes a practical component wherein participants implement the knowledge accrued through an educational or outreach program designed to promote IHL principles. All of the IHL project's print and multimedia materials are available on ACRI's website.



Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

## A Short Interview

with a Long-Standing Volunteer at ACRI: Yael Ben-Yehuda

*Yael Ben-Yehuda is a seventy-year old volunteer for ACRI's Public Hotline. A retired radio broadcaster, Yael has been volunteering at ACRI for four years.*



Photo courtesy of Mirah Curzer

**Q: What brought you to ACRI?**

A: Since I retired I wanted to do something for others, and I looked for different things. Here I can identify with people, with problems... And I felt that I want to fight the authorities in the place or in the points that they are not doing the right thing for their citizens. And I felt that here I can fight.

**Q: What's it like to volunteer with ACRI?**

A: When you're a part of an organization like ACRI everybody shares the same goal. The people come from all over and speak different languages and you know everybody's different, but they have something in common because they care about the same things. And you come and you get the feeling that we're doing this together... everybody shares the same goal... As a volunteer when I come here it's always pleasant to meet the people because they appreciate what you are doing, and everyone is working in the same direction. Everybody is fighting together, and it gives you a strong feeling, and a nice feeling that you're not alone.

**Q: What was the most memorable case that you handled through the hotline?**

A: There was a case with a Bedouin doctor in the South. He became an observant Muslim, and he needed to go to the mosque every Friday at noon. And his clinic was open until one o'clock. So he couldn't stay the whole day; he wanted to leave at twelve, and his employers wouldn't let him. So first of all I had to study about the importance of that prayer in the teaching of Islam. And that was interesting in itself. It took some time, you know, the people I spoke with

transferred me from one person to another, but in the end, they let him leave in time so that he could take part in the prayer on Friday. I was very happy.

**Q: What do you think is the most important aspect of ACRI's work?**

A: People get lost in the system. So you have to help those people that fell, you know, through the cracks of the system and nobody takes care of them. And you have to fight for that because it's not self-evident. It might sound self-evident, but it's not, because the system doesn't look out for the people who are left behind. They look at the people whom they see. The others they can ignore. And that's when we come in.

We, ACRI, come and say, "Listen, you forgot that old lady. She stayed back there and she didn't get her support or she didn't get the medical treatment she should have," or so on. And that's something you have to fight for. You have to write and write again and call again, and it's often hard work.

In general I know that the most important thing is that there is an address for people. For instance, in the case of a complaint against the police (who can be very arbitrary), many times you can turn to us and tell us. And we tell people how to file a complaint, where to go, what to do.

People know – I guess many people know about the activities of ACRI, and in case of problems they turn to us, even to ask for other contacts. But they know they can come to ACRI and get answers. Sometimes an answer to the question itself, sometimes we can tell them where to go and what to do. And that's very important.

“ In general I know that the most important thing is that there is an address for people... They know they can come to ACRI and get answers. Sometimes an answer to the question itself, sometimes we can tell them where to go and what to do. And that's very important” .

## ACRI in Numbers: 2008

43 staff members

54 volunteers supporting our broad range of activities

More than 60 court petitions litigated in 2008

600 children from Arab elementary schools participated in ACRI's "Children Draw Human Rights" Program

762 Jewish and Arab teachers and youth leaders participated in ACRI's educational programs

987 ACRI-related items in the Hebrew, Arabic, Russian and international media

1,913 people attended ACRI's educational workshops and public events on International Humanitarian Law

3,063 new inquiries handled by ACRI's Public Hotline

8,500 Hebrew and Arabic posters marking the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were distributed to schools, community centers, youth movements, and educational institutions throughout the country

12,600 subscribers to our e-newsletters in Hebrew, Arabic, and English



*ACRI's Chief Legal Counsel, Attorney Dan Yakir, in the Supreme Court*

## Thank You!

The achievements detailed in this report, along with the many others from ACRI's 36-year history, could not have been brought about without the dedication and generosity of our community of supporters in Israel and abroad.

We are especially grateful for the unflagging partnership and support of the New Israel Fund (NIF), which plays an essential role in making our work possible.

We also wish to acknowledge the support of the following major donors who contributed to ACRI during 2008:

The Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation  
The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Christian Aid  
The Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation  
Diakonia  
The Lois and Richard England Family Foundation  
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED)  
The Ford Foundation  
Forward Association  
Foundation for Population, Migration and the Environment  
The Humanitarian Trust  
Kerk in Actie  
The Netherlands Embassy  
Oxfam GB  
The Royal Norwegian Embassy  
Spanish Cooperation Office - AECID  
War Child Holland

In addition, ACRI would like to express our deep appreciation to all those donors who wish to remain anonymous and to all our individual donors, members, and volunteers. Thank you so much for your steadfast support throughout the years.

# Support ACRI

Please support our efforts to protect and promote human rights and civil liberties in Israel and the Occupied Territories by making a contribution towards our work.

For more information about how you can get involved, please contact:

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Israel  
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Email: [gila@acri.org.il](mailto:gila@acri.org.il)

To sign up for our bimonthly email newsletter in English, please email [news@acri.org.il](mailto:news@acri.org.il).

## **Direct Donations**

To donate to ACRI directly, please send a check to ACRI at the above address.

## **Tax-Exempt Donations**

In the USA, tax-exempt donations to ACRI may be made via the New Israel Fund (NIF) or via P.E.F Endowment Funds (for donations from other countries, please contact us for further details).

US-based donors are kindly requested to **clearly mark gifts as donor-advised to ACRI** and mail them to:

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Attention: Zhanna Tatarov  
PO Box 91588  
Washington, DC 20090-1588  
USA  
Tel. 202-842-0900; Fax 202-842-0991  
Email: [info@nif.org](mailto:info@nif.org)

Or send to:  
P.E.F. Endowment Funds  
317 Madison Avenue, Suite 607  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

## Thank you!



Photo courtesy of Rita Yurkovich

Protecting Human Rights.  
Strengthening Democracy.  
Building a Better Future.

האגודה לזכויות האזרח בישראל  
جمعية حقوق المواطن في اسرائيل  
The Association for Civil Rights in Israel



For more information about ACRI and to find out about how you can get involved, please contact:

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