

## Activity Report January – May 2018

June 2018

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) is a policy driven, non-profit organization protecting the human rights and civil liberties of all people living in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Since its founding in 1972, ACRI has worked with the courts, the Knesset, government agencies and civil society to tackle the most urgent injustices in our country. We uphold the pillars of democracy by demanding duty bearers to change policies and practices that violate rights and liberties, especially where harm is caused to marginalized communities, and by advancing a public discourse of human rights using litigation, and policy advocacy, and education.

The president of ACRI's board is accomplished and outspoken author Sami Michael, and as of 2017 the Chairperson is Rachel Liel. Rachel is joined by 11 dedicated board members – all of whom are human rights activists from academia, civil society, and the law profession.

ACRI is a member of INCLIO – the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations – together with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Liberty (UK), the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), and similar organization from Argentina, Colombia, Egypt, Hungary, India, Ireland, Kenya, Russia, and South Africa.

Thanks to the generous support of the New Israel Fund, ACRI was able to promote and secure the most pressing human rights issues facing Israel today. The following report highlights ACRI's activities and achievements during the first half of 2018. The report is divided into ACRI's eight priority areas:

1. Arab Minority Rights
2. Social and Economic Rights
3. Civil and Political Rights
4. Immigration and Status
5. Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
6. Public Hotline
7. Human Rights Education
8. Public Outreach

## 1. Arab Minority Rights in Israel

**The Right to Protest:** In parallel to the Palestinian protests along the Gaza border, which began on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2018, groups of Israeli citizens – both Jews and Arabs – began holding legal demonstrations and vigils condemning the loss of life and violence against civilians, and demanding accountability. In Haifa, a legal demonstration held on May 18<sup>th</sup> was dispersed with violence, and Police arrested 21 demonstrators, among them Jafar Farah, Director of Mossawa, the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel. According to reports, the Israeli Police used severe violence against the unarmed demonstrators, and Farah's leg was broken. ACRI joined 37 civil society organizations in issuing an urgent appeal to [the Attorney General and the Israeli Police Chief](#) in which we demanded immediate personal intervention in order to investigate and justify the detention and injury of Mr. Farah and others. We also demanded that law enforcement agencies respect freedom of protest and expression, and the rights of civil society organizations to organize protests and demonstrations.

### Other interventions protecting Arab minority rights in Israel

- ACRI appealed to the Be'er Sheva Municipality and Ministry of Interior demanding the establishment of a **Muslim cemetery the city** to enable Arab Muslim residents to be buried in accordance with their religion.
- We continue to work for **equitable allocation of the municipal library's resources in Be'er Sheva**, including the purchase of books in Arabic, accessibility of facilities, and activities for Arab residents.
- ACRI revealed that [Arab taxi drivers servicing Ben Gurion International Airport](#) were being rejected because of racist demands from passengers who refused to travel with an Arab cab driver. Following ACRI intervention, the Director General of the Israel Airports Authority deemed that this selection practice is against airport regulations.
- ACRI continues to resist the [Nation-State bill](#), which subjugates Israel's democratic character to its definition as a Jewish state, and includes numerous discriminatory provisions.

### The Rights of the Bedouin Population in the Negev

- In cooperation with Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights, ACRI launched [an interactive map in Arabic and Hebrew](#) that presents the impact of the government's planning policy on the unrecognized villages in the Negev.
- We continue to accompany the residents of the unrecognized villages, especially the residents of Wadi al-Na'am, the Negev Highlands, and Umm Matnan, in their **struggle for recognition and through planning procedures**, including public participation in meetings with planning authorities and the Bedouin Authority.
- We approached the Economic Affairs Committee and demanded that it act to promote **public transportation** in the unrecognized villages of the Negev, and to eradicate discrimination against residents of the area.



## 2. Social and Economic Rights

**The Right to Health:** In November 2017, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health announced a national nursing plan, which responds favorably to [ACRI's ongoing campaign to reform the nursing system](#). In March 2018, the Knesset approved amendments to the National Insurance Law and the State Budget Law that anchor the plan, based on an increase in the amount of hours of caregiving, improving nursing services, and eliminating the obligation for the elderly's children to pay for hospitalized nursing care. ACRI worked closely with the organization Ken LaZaken (Yes! To Seniors), and participated jointly in intensive discussions in the Knesset, and in presenting position papers.

### More on Social and Economic Rights

- Following ACRI's petition regarding health rights in the periphery, the government has undertaken to establish a rehabilitation center at Poriya Hospital (Tsfat), to serve residents in the north of the country.
- Following ACRI's appeal to the Minister of Justice, a draft law memorandum was published that enshrines **the rights of parents and children** to [legal representation in juvenile courts](#). We submitted comments on a draft being considered by the Joint Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution Committee.
- ACRI filed an administrative petition against the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Finance demanding that **rent assistance stipends be updated** in accordance with market changes in fluctuating rental fees.
- We submitted a request to join the process conducted by the Regional Labor Court regarding the **prevention of income maintenance benefits from being granted to a homeless person**.
- We continued to intensively resist **housing discrimination** as follows: in light of our petition, the State announced that it would reconsider its decision not to fine a company that discriminated against an Arab client in a housing project; a civil suit that we filed against covert discrimination in the sale of apartments to Arabs ended in compensation for the violated couple; we petitioned the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality against discrimination against people aged 45 and over in a lottery for affordable housing in the city.
- The High Court of Justice accepted our position and rejected an appeal by the parents of the Nature School, who sought to conduct a **selection process for children** (aged 5½) who wished to attend the school.
- We participated in an Education Committee discussion, and submitted a position paper against a bill that would allow the Education Minister **to block the entry of organizations and lecturers** whose views are inconsistent with his own, from entering schools.
- We turned to the Minister of Science, demanding that he abolish the condition that **high school students' apprenticeship** in a science mentoring program, be carried out solely by female students.

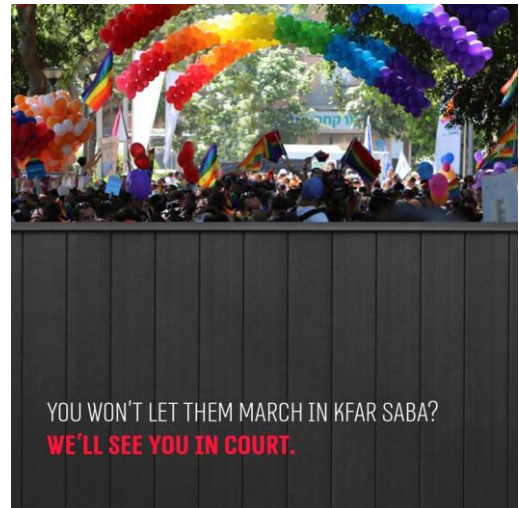


### 3. Civil and Political Rights

**Prisoners' Rights:** In March 2018, the High Court of Justice issued a petition to the State following our petition to allocate three square meters of living space to every prisoner and detainee (the first step [toward expanding the living area to four square meters](#), not including the toilet and shower). Over the past few months since the ruling was handed down, the State did not take significant steps to ease overcrowding in the prisons and detention centers. A week before the deadline expired, it requested to postpone the implementation of the ruling by ten years. We submitted scathing reactions to the Court regarding the request and the inadequate plan presented by the State. We demanded that the Court order it to cease to disregard the most basic right to human dignity, and to ensure a living area of three square meters for every prisoner within three months at the latest.

#### Additional efforts to protect Civil and Political Rights in Israel

- As part of the **Docu-Rights Project**, generously supported by the New Israel Fund, [ACRI is launching a mini-site](#) with useful information on riot control measures. During this reporting period, ACRI held meetings and trainings for protest groups and activists and distributed rights handbooks and other informative materials. The project documented 13 protests including Ethiopian-Israelis protesting the captivity of Avar Mingistu held in Gaza, and protests in Haifa against the civilian casualties in Gaza. ACRI assisted 90 activists from across the country.
- In late May, [ACRI petitioned the High Court together with IGY](#) - Israel Gay Youth, and the Israeli Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Association, against the prohibitive security demands the Police placed on organizers of the **first Gay Pride Parade in Kfar Saba**. As a result, the Police took full responsibility for securing the Gay Pride Parade, which included funding the security measures they demanded of IGY.
- ACRI objected to two bills that seek to violate the **right to privacy**. ACRI submitted comments to a bill that permits the preservation of data, including the detailed location, of emergency callers. ACRI emphasized that the effectiveness of an emergency call center must be balanced with the guarantee to the right to privacy. Moreover, ACRI objected to a bill that would allow prisons to use phones that use voice recognition, which would have sweeping effects on the right to privacy of prisoners.
- We regularly participate in **three of the Ministry of Justice's forums**: the Public Council for the Protection of Privacy; the Transparency Forum of the government's Freedom of Information Unit; and the Public Committee on Digital Publication of Court Rulings.



#### 4. Immigration and Status

In January 2018, Israel began to implement its plan to **forcibly deport asylum seekers from Israel to Rwanda** without their consent. The State demanded that asylum seekers leave or be arrested, and indeed arrested several hundred people. ACRI participated in the public protest against the expulsion, and in March we petitioned the [High Court of Justice with fellow organizations](#). At the beginning of April, the Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior announced that the agreement with Rwanda had collapsed, and thereafter that there was no agreement with Uganda. All prisoners were therefore released. The Prime Minister then announced an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), according to which half of the asylum seekers would be transferred to Western countries and half would be absorbed in Israel. This agreement was then revoked by the Prime Minister less than a day later.

##### Further actions on this issue of status

- ACRI followed through on our petitions in demanding that **legal aid** be granted to foreign citizens residing in Israel, demanding the annulment of a regulation preventing migrant workers, asylum seekers, and Palestinians, from **accessing Labor Courts** and demanding the nullification of the '**deposit fund**.' We also continued to manage legal proceedings initiated by Kav LaOved on the matter of arranging the arrival of migrant workers through **bilateral agreements**.
- We asked to join a case as a 'friend of the court,' along with the Aids Task Force, to appeal the hearing of an Israeli citizen and his Ukrainian wife, for whom the Population and Immigration Authority refused to **arrange status** on the grounds that she did not report her health status in contending with HIV and hepatitis C, to the Ministry of the Interior. Following the hearing, the Court ordered the Authority to grant the appellant a work permit enabling her to stay in the country throughout the subject's reexamination.
- We submitted reservations, in cooperation with Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, and HaMoked: Center for the Defense of the Individual, to a bill permitting **revocation of residency on account of a breach of trust**. We maintain that a minister should not be permitted to revoke the permanent residence of a person due to a breach of trust, through an administrative decision, regardless of the duration of their stay in Israel and the circumstances of receiving permanent residence. The law passed in March 2018.
- In cooperation with Adalah, we represent Ala'a Ziwad, an Israeli citizen convicted of involvement in a terror attack, in a proceeding filed against him by the Minister of Interior **to revoke his citizenship**. Our position is that criminal law, not revocation of citizenship, is the means to address grave offenses, and that revocation of citizenship discriminates against Arab citizens, based on extraneous and disproportionate considerations.
- ACRI continues to accompany a number of **stateless persons** through the process of regulating their status in Israel.



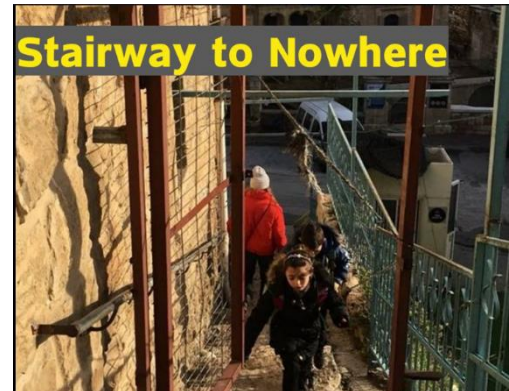


## 5. Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

Since Friday March 30<sup>th</sup> 2018, **dozens of Palestinians were killed and some 3,000 were wounded in mass demonstrations along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip**. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, [ACRI petitioned the High Court of Justice](#), along with fellow organizations, against open-fire regulations given to IDF soldiers. The orders permit lethal firing of live ammunition at demonstrators who pose no threat to human lives, solely because they are classified as 'primary agitators' or 'central rioters,' or due to their proximity to the border fence from within Gaza. We contend that these provisions are contrary to international law, which states that the use of lethal force may be used solely to protect endangered lives, as well as the army's code of ethics, which states that soldiers may not use weapons to harm noncombatants. A hearing was held in May, in which the Court [rejected the petition but sent a clear message to the IDF](#) that more must be done to prevent the loss of civilian lives.

### Additional work to protect human rights in the Occupied Territories

- ACRI petitioned the High Court of Justice against the [closure of a flight of stairs in Hebron to Palestinian foot traffic](#), while Israelis and foreigners have unrestricted access. We declared that restricting movement on the staircase is carried out without an order and therefore without authority, which is not only unreasonable, but also violates the duty of the military commander to respect and protect the human rights of Palestinian residents under international law.
- ACRI petitioned the High Court of Justice against the Population and Immigration Authority, which permits residents of East Jerusalem to receive services solely in the single overcrowded bureau located in Wadi Joz, while all citizens of Israel are [permitted to receive services at any of the Authority's bureaus](#).
- We have closely monitored **legislative initiatives** related to settlements and the West Bank, which attempt to promote annexation of the territories. We participated in discussions at the Knesset and distributed our positions among the authorities and the media.



## 6. Public Hotline

ACRI's Public Hotline is comprised of nine volunteers assisted by ACRI's two legal interns, all of whom work closely with the hotline coordinator. During the reporting period the hotline handled over a thousand requests for assistance in Hebrew, English, Arabic, and Russian. Following ACRI intervention, Amidar **assisted living apartments were repaired and renovated for a number of residents** who live in poverty and in apartments in disgraceful conditions. Along with the Clinic for the Rights of the Elderly and Holocaust Survivors at Tel Aviv University, we are working to amend the company's illegal procedures.

Moreover, assistance and legal advice was provided to **transgender youth** facing discrimination, **Arab citizens** facing racism and exclusion, **impoverished individuals** that had been cut off the electrical grid due to inability to pay, and cases of sexual **harassment of religious women** by Police at the Mount Meron celebrations over a two-year period were investigated.

## 7. Human Rights Education

**Education against racism** is a central part of ACRI's ongoing work in teacher training colleges and with civics teachers. To mark the **International Day Against Racism**, on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, ACRI developed and distributed online Hebrew and Arabic educational materials and held a workshop for some 35 teachers in Haifa. The department also conducted workshops under the banner "*Separation in Israel: Multiculturalism or Racism*" at Tel Hai Academic College and for a group of NIF-Shatil activists in Jerusalem. We also facilitated conferences at the Al-Qasemi College and Kibbutzim College on racial segregation in education, and published an article in Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper.

### Ongoing proactive work in Education

- As a result of the changes in civics studies in Israel in recent years, which have greatly harmed Arab society, we have placed an emphasis on the work of **civics teachers for Arab education**. During the reporting period, we delivered two 30-hour courses to approximately 35 teachers from schools in Sakhnin and Baqa al-Gharbiyye; we continued to accompany, advise, and assist the Forum of Arab Civics Teachers; we developed timely educational materials relevant to the subject of civics; and organized a tour to the Negev, in which approximately 30 teachers studied the array of unique problems faced by the Arab population in the Negev.
- We facilitated **extensive programming in universities, colleges, and teacher training departments** at the University of Haifa, Tel Aviv University, Beit Berl College, Al-Qasemi College, Kaye Academic College of Education, Efrata College of Education, Kibbutzim College, Levinsky College of Education, and Tel-Hai Academic College. Activities during the reporting period included: a compulsory course at the University of Haifa on anti-racist education, in which over 100 students participated; a seminar at Kibbutzim College with the participation of approximately 200 lecturers and students; and facilitation of two round tables at Al-Qasemi College on education for democracy and social involvement in Arab society.
- **'The Workshop' – ACRI's education department's [website in Hebrew and in Arabic](#)**, includes a database of materials on the topics of educating for democracy and human rights, and against racism. The site is regularly updated with lesson plans, posts on topics on the public agenda, ideas for teachers on human rights education, and information on the department's projects, as well as conferences and events in which ACRI partakes. Furthermore, we circulate newsletters in Hebrew and Arabic among thousands of educators. During the reporting period, there were an average of 1,415 unique visitors per month to The Workshop website in Hebrew, and 4,182 to the Arabic website. The educational sites are now being adapted for surfing on mobile phones in both languages.
- **Educational Policy Advocacy**, ACRI works with senior policymakers in the Ministry of Education and teacher training colleges, in order to conduct dialogue on education around democratic values, human rights, and to combat racism. For example, we held a meeting with the Ministry of Justice to address institutional racism within the government and are currently building a training course to help combat this phenomenon.



## 8. Public Outreach

ACRI is actively combating legislative initiatives that threaten to **shrink democratic space in Israel**. During the reporting period, we worked intensively against the **Override Clause** (granting the Knesset the ability to override laws that the courts have ruled illegal). We submitted position papers, held meetings, and participated in sessions attempting to block various initiatives, including: the proposed Nation-State Bill; a bill that seeks to prohibit certain organizations from entering schools; a bill that seeks to abolish tax exemption for some civil society organizations; and restricting Knesset members' trips abroad in accordance with the identity of the inviting party. In March, ACRI published [an overview of all antidemocratic initiatives](#) before the Knesset.

- **Communication:** During the reporting period, ACRI was referenced in hundreds of press items in the Hebrew and Arabic press, including news reports on our activities and responses to issues on the public agenda. Members of ACRI's staff were frequently interviewed by leading media outlets, and published opinion pieces. In response to the emphasis the public outreach department placed on the translation of materials into Arabic in 2017, and on the establishment of contacts with leading media outlets among Arab society, there has been an increase in both interest regarding Arabic content produced by ACRI, as well as requests from the Arab media.
- **Social Media:** Likes for ACRI's **Hebrew Facebook** page increased from approximately 75,000 to over 80,000. Among the topics that received notable exposure during the reporting period were: the Override Clause; firing at demonstrators along the border fence with Gaza; neglect of the Amidar apartments; discrimination against East Jerusalem residents through services provided by the Population and Immigration Authority; and the deportation of asylum seekers. ACRI's **Arabic Facebook** page increased from approximately 22,000 to 24,000 likes. Topics that received considerable exposure (some 10,000-20,000 views and hundreds of likes) during the reporting period were: a call to share discriminatory experiences during security checks at airports; ACRI's petition to the High Court of Justice against the closure of a staircase in Hebron to Palestinians; Land Day; and ACRI's petition to allow residents of East Jerusalem to receive services at all the Population and Immigration Authority's offices. ACRI's **English Facebook** page rose from approximately 12,000 likes to 15,000. On **Twitter**, we have approximately 22,600 followers in Hebrew and 3,780 in English.
- **ACRI's website:** The website is updated daily in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, with ongoing information on court hearings, Knesset work, and other activities. During the reporting period, the **Hebrew site** gained an average of 22,666 unique viewers per month; the **Arabic site** an average of 3,247 unique viewers per month; and the **English site** an average of 2,015 unique viewers per month.
- ACRI's **newsletters** are sent out regularly to about 13,200 subscribers in Hebrew and 3,200 subscribers in English. The **Knesset newsletter** is sent out weekly to approximately 3,700 subscribers in Hebrew and about 1,000 subscribers in English. In addition, the international communications list has approximately 680 subscribers.
- ACRI staff members hold lectures and regularly participate in conferences and events on human rights, law, and current events. On International Women's Day, marked annually on March 8<sup>th</sup>, we held the 2017 Emile Grunzweig Human Rights Award Ceremony. Following the awarding of the prize, we held a panel on the struggle against prostitution.