

**P r o t e c t i n g
and P r o m o t i n g**
Human
Rights
and C i v i l L i b e r t i e s

Annual Report 2005
The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)

Executive Director's Message

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present ACRI's annual report, which provides a summary of our key activities and achievements during 2005. ACRI's work in this past year has been set against the backdrop of social, economic, and political trends that pose a myriad of challenges to human rights and democracy and have created an increasingly polarized and fractured society. The ongoing tensions in the region have exacerbated the rate and scope of human rights violations taking place in both Israel and the occupied territories and perpetuated a climate in which discriminatory acts and policies enjoy a degree of legitimacy. One issue warranting special concern is the worrying upsurge in racism and discrimination against the Arab minority, who are increasingly viewed as a "demographic problem" by policy-makers and large sections of the public.



This precarious situation has been further compounded by the economic downturn coupled with the government's socioeconomic policies. Drastic cuts in welfare benefits and social services have contributed to the ever widening gap that exists between the rich and the poor and pushed hundreds of thousands of Israelis below the poverty line.

In this challenging context, ACRI's concerted efforts to protect and promote the rights of **all** members of society are now more critical than ever. This work would not be possible without the generosity and commitment of our supporters. On behalf of everyone here at ACRI, I would like to extend our deep appreciation for your ongoing support and interest in our work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rachel Benziman' in Hebrew script.

Rachel Benziman
Executive Director

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The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) is Israel's leading human and civil rights organization and the only organization dealing with the entire spectrum of rights and liberties issues in Israel and the occupied territories. ACRI's work encompasses litigation and legal advocacy, education, and public outreach as the most effective way in which to build toward our long-term vision of a just and democratic society that respects the equal rights of all its members.

As a fledgling democracy without a constitution, and an increasingly segmented and polarized society, Israel needs an organization such as ACRI that is committed to promoting the universality of human rights and defending the rights of all, regardless of religion, nationality, sex, ethnicity, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background. As an independent and non-partisan organization, ACRI fills this vital need by using its multi-pronged strategy to advance the concept of civil and human rights as an integral part of democracy.

Founded in 1972, ACRI has built its reputation by:

- ▶ bringing precedent-setting litigation to the Supreme Court;
- ▶ providing expert opinions before the Knesset;
- ▶ drafting and critiquing proposed legislation;
- ▶ issuing and disseminating high-profile reports on the status of civil and human rights;
- ▶ offering free legal information and advice through our public hotline;
- ▶ creating human rights education programs for both the Jewish and Arab school systems that foster respect, tolerance, and co-existence;
- ▶ conducting human rights training workshops for the security forces;
- ▶ and initiating public outreach campaigns to raise awareness of key civil and human rights concerns.

ACRI's 46 Jewish and Arab members of staff include attorneys, fieldworkers, public hotline coordinators, public outreach and media professionals, and educators. ACRI also enjoys the crucial support of dozens of highly

qualified and dedicated volunteers. In three regional offices located in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, ACRI's staff and volunteers work intensively to foster a culture of human rights in Israel.

Our Board of Directors, which includes leading figures from the fields of law, academia, civil society, social work, and the media, determines the policies and priorities for ACRI's professional staff. Board members are elected for two-year terms of office and volunteer their time.

ACRI's work is supported by donations from individuals and foundations in Israel and abroad, and by annual dues and contributions from our members. We do not accept any government funding. ACRI's annual income in 2005 was \$1,754,000*.

*** ACRI's full audited financial accounts for the year ended December 31, 2005 will be available in June 2006. Please let us know if you would like to receive a copy.**

Legal

DEPARTMENT

ACRI's Legal Department provides free legal representation for hundreds of plaintiffs every year on a broad range of issues and is highly regarded in the Israeli legal community for its professionalism and commitment to bringing precedent-setting cases to the Supreme Court.

The Legal Department advocates on behalf of individuals and groups whose rights have been violated while promoting core civil and human rights values and principles. ACRI works not only to establish legal precedent, but also to ensure its implementation within Israeli society. ACRI works in this way to hold government ministries and other state authorities accountable – to redress violations of rights and to advance issues of fundamental principle. ACRI accepts legal cases that have the potential to set precedents, raise issues of principle, and impact and effect broad policy change. ACRI's influence is visible in court decisions, the policy arena, and within government agencies.

ACRI's legal work, in addition to redressing injustice on an individual and societal scale, contributes significantly to the heightened awareness of and commitment to civil liberties and human rights issues within Israeli society.

Key highlights of ACRI's legal activities and achievements in 2005 include:

Social and Economic Rights

► Safeguarding Workers' Rights

ACRI continued to highlight the widespread and severe violations of the basic rights of subcontracted workers, who generally derive from the weaker population groups in society. In November 2005, ACRI filed a claim in the Tel Aviv Labor Court on behalf of five security workers employed by the Supersol supermarket chain through a contractor. The plaintiffs, all of whom are immigrants from the former Soviet Union, are demanding almost 200,000 NIS in compensation for the wide-scale infringement of their employment rights, including: payment for overtime, sick days, holidays, transportation, and pension fund membership.

► Workers' Rights Public Information Notice

ACRI, as a leading member of the Forum for the Enforcement of Workers' Rights, played a key role in bringing about the amendment to Israel's *Minimum Wage Law*, compelling employers to post details about the law's requirements. According to the amendment, the information must be made available in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and English and detail hourly, weekly and monthly minimum payment rates as legislated by the Knesset while providing workers with information about measures to take if the wage laws are not respected. ACRI helped to draft the final version of the public information notice that was authorized by the Ministry of Justice in early 2005, and has since been widely distributed for the benefit of workers across the country.

► The Right to Enjoy a Dignified Standard of Living

In December 2005, the Supreme Court rejected ACRI's petition against the government's decision in 2003 to slash welfare benefits. However, the Court recognized the constitutional right to live in dignity and ruled that the state must provide a safety net for its citizens. The petition generated widespread interest in the media and succeeded in stimulating public debate on the role that the state should play in ensuring the basic social and economic rights of its citizens.

“A person's right to dignity is the right to live his life as he sees fits, without financial distress forcing him into insufferable want. This approach interprets the right to dignified human subsistence as the right to be guaranteed the basic material means to exist in the society in which one lives. It is the state's duty to create a framework that will ensure a 'safety net' for society's poorest members, so that their material situation does not degenerate into the inability to ensure a dignified subsistence.”

Aharon Barak,
President of the Supreme Court

Immigration and Access to Citizenship

► Granting Status to Children of Migrant Workers

A grave humanitarian concern is the issue of the children of migrant workers who have lived in Israel for all or most of their lives, and consider themselves Israelis, but have no permanent legal status. In June 2005, the government decided to grant permanent residency status to children of foreign workers and their relatives who fulfilled certain criteria. Although this has enabled some 150 foreign workers families to apply for residency status, it has left hundreds of other families who fail to meet the criteria without status and under threat of deportation. ACRI, together with the Hotline for Migrant Workers, petitioned the Supreme Court to demand the cancellation of two of the government's criteria: (i) the children must have been born in Israel and (ii) their parents must have initially entered Israel legally. Following a hearing of the petition by an expanded panel of seven judges, the court issued an interim injunction against the Interior Ministry's planned detention and deportation of the children of foreign workers and their relatives who are not candidates for permanent residency according to these criteria. The case is pending.

► Protecting the Rights of Abandoned Minors

ACRI appealed to the Supreme Court on behalf of foreign minors who have been abandoned in Israel and are slated for deportation. ACRI and the Hotline for Migrant Workers jointly appealed the decision of the Tel Aviv District Court regarding the deportation of four minors who are all either orphans or were abandoned by their parents in Israel. An estimated 70 abandoned minors are currently facing deportation. ACRI is demanding that the deportation of minors can

Legal Department

only be carried out if it is in the child's best interests and provided that Israeli welfare officials coordinate the deportation with the country to which the child is being sent. The petition has generated extensive media coverage and is being deliberated by an expanded panel of seven justices.

The Rights of Migrant Workers

► Ensuring Access to Attorneys

ACRI, in partnership with the Hotline for Migrant Workers, successfully petitioned the Supreme Court against the practice of prohibiting meetings between migrant workers slated for deportation and their attorneys. Following the petition, the government revised its policy, and migrant workers slated for deportation are now allowed, with some restrictions, to meet with their attorneys at the airport.

Equal Rights for Arab Citizens of Israel

► Fighting the Discriminatory Marketing of Lands

In the past year, ACRI continued to work tenaciously to combat the institutional, legal, and societal discrimination confronted by the Arab minority in all fields of life, with a special emphasis on land, planning, and housing rights. In January 2005, in response to petitions filed by ACRI and other human rights organizations against the discriminatory policy of the Israel Lands Administration which prevents non-Jews from participating in tenders for Jewish National Fund (JNF) land, the Attorney

General issued a groundbreaking directive that all land managed by the Israel Lands Administration, including lands owned by the JNF, will be henceforth marketed without discrimination.

► Challenging Racist Legislation

ACRI continues to fight against the racist and discriminatory *Nationality and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order)* which was originally enacted by the Knesset in 2003 for one year, but has since been extended repeatedly. The law severely discriminates against both Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinian residents of the occupied territories, by sweepingly preventing Palestinians who are married to Israeli citizens (in most cases Arab citizens) from obtaining formal residency status. ACRI submitted a petition to the Supreme Court against this legislation, which has torn thousands of families apart and institutionalizes a form of racial discrimination based on nationality. An expanded panel of 13 Supreme Court justices is deliberating the case. In December 2005, ACRI and Adalah (who also petitioned against the law) submitted joint concluding arguments. The case is pending.

► Promoting the Rights of the Bedouin Community of the Negev

Among the communities that comprise the Arab minority in Israel, the Arab Bedouin of the Negev occupy the lowest rung on the socioeconomic scale and are the most disempowered among the population. They suffer from the government's relentless attempts to relocate Bedouin citizens who live in rural communities throughout the Negev to planned urban townships. Over half of the total Negev Bedouin population of 152,000 lives in approximately 45 unrecognized villages. The government has remained adamant

ACRI works tenaciously to combat the institutional, legal, and societal discrimination confronted by the Arab minority in all fields of life.



in its refusal to recognize these long-standing rural communities as official residential centers, thereby denying the residents any degree of municipal services or infrastructure, such as water, electricity, road networks, sewage systems, schools and health clinics. It is illegal to build permanent structures in these villages, and those residents who do so are forced to live under the constant threat of eviction notices and house demolitions. The authorities continue to create outline and development plans for the region without taking the needs of the Negev Bedouin into consideration.

ACRI works closely with the Bedouin community of the Negev to tackle injustice and enable the marginalized community to access their basic rights and make their voices heard.

▲
A new health clinic that was set up in the Bedouin village of Wadi Al-Na'am in January 2006 as a result of ACRI's Supreme Court petition.

ACRI's work in this field focuses on these priority areas:

- ▶ fighting to ensure equitable outline and development plans;
- ▶ securing access to basic services and infrastructure, with a special focus on the right to health and the right to education.
- ▶ gaining recognition for unrecognized villages;
- ▶ and challenging house demolitions.

As a result of ACRI's petition to the Supreme Court demanding the establishment of health clinics in the unrecognized villages, four clinics have been set up and three additional clinics are slated to be opened in the coming months.

ACRI works closely with the Bedouin community of the Negev to tackle injustice and enable the marginalized community to access their basic rights and make their voices heard.

Legal Department

► Access to Education

ACRI successfully petitioned the Tel-Aviv District Court to demand that the Ramle municipal authority continue providing transportation for the school students residing in the Arab neighborhood of Dahmash, near the town of Ramle. The petition was submitted on behalf of 48 schoolchildren who, in the absence of any transportation, are forced to walk five kilometers to and from school every day via dangerous roads and dirt tracks with their school bags on their backs.

► Equitable Access to Counseling Services

ACRI successfully fought to ensure fair representation and equitable access to counseling services for members of the Arab minority. As a result of a petition filed by ACRI in June 2005, the state pledged to appoint four Arab social workers to the special counseling units attached to the family courts. These counseling units were established under the Family Courts' Act and are intended to offer evaluation and treatment to support family members who are involved in legal proceedings in the family courts. A total number of 43 social workers are currently employed in units across the country, only one of whom is Arab. ACRI's petition laid emphasis on the fact that the lack of Arab social workers prevents Arab petitioners who are not fluent in Hebrew from benefiting from the full range of services that are offered by the counseling units. In addition, the social workers who are assigned to work with the Arab litigants are not familiar enough with the cultural norms and nuances that govern Arab family life and are therefore unable to provide their clients with appropriate assistance.

Civil Liberties

In the past year, civil liberties in Israel continued to face an uphill struggle. In this challenging context, ACRI worked intensively to ensure basic civil rights, including: freedom of expression, freedom of information, anti-discrimination, the right to privacy, freedom of assembly, and freedom of movement.

► Civil Rights and the Disengagement

Throughout the build-up to, and implementation of, the disengagement plan, ACRI worked to safeguard the right of anti-pullout protestors to demonstrate and express their opposition within the confines of the law. ACRI submitted a written appeal to the head of the Courts Administration, requesting that the administration stop using the special courts established in the Negev region to hear cases of individuals arrested for protesting government policies and actions, including those arrested during the withdrawal from the settlements in the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank. ACRI drew attention to the fact that the courts were hearing 60 police remand requests at a time and that the judges could not properly prepare for each of the cases being brought before them.

Civil liberties in Israel continue to face an uphill struggle, making ACRI's work to ensure basic civil rights now more critical than ever.

ACRI also submitted an urgent appeal to the Israel Police Chief against the decision to block buses carrying anti-disengagement protestors from reaching a solidarity march north of Gaza. ACRI emphasized the fact that the attempt to prevent citizens from traveling from one town in Israel to another is not legal and represents a severe infringement of the right to freedom of movement.



► Challenging Discrimination against Ethiopian Rabbis

As a result of ACRI's intervention, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry for Religious Affairs pledged to redress the inequitable terms of employment confronted by Ethiopian Rabbis, who are denied social benefits and are paid a significantly lower salary than their non-Ethiopian colleagues.

► The Right to Privacy

ACRI appealed to the Supreme Court on behalf of the security prisoner Tali Fahima, to demand that the Court prohibit the Israel Prison Service (IPS) from releasing slanderous information about her behavior while she was being held in jail during her trial. ACRI also demanded that the IPS take disciplinary measures against those officials responsible for the reports. ACRI's petition stressed that the information released was likely to have fanned the flames of the public's hostility toward Ms. Fahima, and also violated her right to privacy and dignity. The petition drew attention to the IPS's history of divulging damaging information about high-profile inmates to the media.

► The Right to Political Expression

ACRI, together with the non-profit organization, Another Voice in the Galilee, achieved a landmark Supreme Court ruling that activities of a political character must not be prevented from taking place in public buildings and spaces within the jurisdiction of the Misgav local authority. The appeal to the Supreme Court followed the Misgav Local Council's refusal to allow Another Voice in the Galilee to hold an event of a public character in public council property and an unsuccessful petition to the Haifa District Court. As a result of the appeal, the Supreme Court rescinded the ruling of the District Court and ruled that the prohibition on voicing political statements in public council property violates the right to freedom of expression.

Criminal Justice

► Privatization of Prisons

Following a lengthy legal battle and the intercession of the Attorney General, ACRI successfully ensured that a large part of the documentation relating to the tender for building and operating the first private prison in Israel be made available to the public. ACRI highlighted the importance of making the tender transparent and open to public scrutiny so as to safeguard prisoners' rights as well as the public's right to information. After a preliminary reading of the tender, ACRI submitted an urgent letter to the tender committee, demanding changes in the terms of the tender. ACRI drew attention to the fact that the average living space for each prisoner in the private prison to be built near Beer Sheva is smaller than the norm in other countries and even smaller than the space mandated by Israeli law.

► The Right to Due Process

ACRI worked intensively to highlight the inherent rights violations in the proposed amendments to the *Criminal Procedural Law*, regarding the investigation of criminal security offences committed by non-residents. In our written appeal to the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice, ACRI addressed the extremely grave ramifications of the proposed amendments, which in effect leave the interrogating officers free to isolate, intimidate, deny due process, and even to torture during the interrogation of non-residents who are accused of security offences.

Gay and Lesbian Rights

ACRI continues our struggle to ensure equal rights for gays and lesbians in Israel. In 2005, ACRI submitted a petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of two homosexual couples, who were married in Canada in an officially recognized ceremony and were issued with a formal wedding certificate, to demand that the Ministry of the Interior's Population Registrar register them as married. The case is pending.



Giora Raz

► The Right to Survivor's Benefits for Same-Sex Partners

For twenty-three years, Giora Raz shared his life with his partner Yaacov Lisboder. In 2002, Yaacov Lisboder was diagnosed with cancer, and had to give up his job at El Al Israel Airlines due to his treatments. Giora Raz also gave up his job so that he could devote himself to providing full-time care for his partner. Following Yaacov Lisboder's death in 2002, Giora Raz lived on his state retirement benefits of 1,300 NIS (\$275) a month. The National Insurance Institute (NII) refused Giora Raz's

requests to be awarded survivor's benefits, claiming that Giora Raz did not qualify as a widower according to the institute's laws.

ACRI appealed to the Tel Aviv Labor Court against the NII on behalf of Giora Raz. ACRI's claim emphasized that the NII's policy discriminated against Giora Raz and his deceased partner on the basis of sexual orientation, and violated Giora's right to receive social security benefits. In response to the appeal, the Attorney General announced in February 2005 that same-sex partners must not be discriminated against in the payment of survivor's benefits. The Attorney General stressed that the purpose of the NII's law is to protect widows and widowers from economic hardship, and should therefore be interpreted as also applying to two men, or two women, who lived their lives as a couple. The Attorney General's statements are expected to have a widespread impact on a host of other benefits awarded to same-sex couples.

Women's Rights

► Subsidized Contraceptives for Women

ACRI, in partnership with other social change organizations, submitted a petition to the Supreme Court demanding the inclusion of contraceptives in the health care basket of services funded by the state. The petition claims that the fact that contraceptives are not yet part of the health care basket discriminates against women and violates their right to health, liberty and dignity.

► Equal Pay for Women

ACRI appealed to the Minister of Education to demand the creation of equal pay criteria for Jewish male and female Religious Studies teachers. The majority of these teachers graduate from religious colleges and seminaries and not from universities. In order to determine the teachers' salary levels according to their academic qualifications, the educational authorities have set up criteria for converting religious studies credits to the equivalent of a B.A., M.A. or PhD. The teachers are then allocated salaries that reflect

the level of higher education that they have achieved. However, according to these criteria, the scale for male teachers reaches the level of PhD whereas the scale for female teachers stops at M.A. level. ACRI stressed the fact that the current criteria discriminate against women and violate their right to equal pay. In response to our appeal, the Ministry of Education has announced that it will set up an advisory committee to examine the issue.

► Women in the Criminal Justice System

ACRI continues to work intensively to advance issues facing women in the criminal justice system. In the past year, ACRI made significant headway in our work to redress the practice of denying female inmates basic prisoners' rights as a means of punishing them for alleged disciplinary infractions. As a result of ACRI's intervention, the Israel Prison Service (IPS) revoked its decision to prohibit a number of female prisoners in the Sharon Prison from meeting with their family members. The 6-month ban on family visits was used as a means of punishing the prisoners for disciplinary offences. In our appeals to the IPS, ACRI drew attention to the fact that the right to family visits is a constitutional right of prisoners and must not be considered a privilege that can be permitted or withheld according to the will of the prison authorities.

Occupied Territories

The Palestinian residents of the occupied territories continue to face insurmountable difficulties in their attempt to access their basic rights such as freedom of movement, education, health and the right to a livelihood. Simple actions such as harvesting olive crops are fraught with difficulties, as Palestinians face attacks by settlers, denial of access to the groves, the usurpation of land, or the uprooting of trees. Even when Palestinian residents issue complaints of violence, the army does little or nothing to penalize the

perpetrators. In addition, the Palestinian population must contend with the violations resulting from the route of the separation barrier. The barrier has had a debilitating impact on hundreds of thousands of Palestinians by destroying their fabric of life and denying them access to their lands and livelihoods, educational institutions, commercial centers, public services, and family members. Against this backdrop, ACRI continues to work tenaciously to protect human rights in the occupied territories.

The Palestinian residents of the occupied territories continue to face insurmountable difficulties in their attempt to access their basic rights such as freedom of movement, education, health and the right to a livelihood.





► The Separation Barrier

Challenging the Route of the Separation Barrier

ACRI's biggest success in this field was achieved through our petition calling for the dismantling of the section of the separation barrier surrounding the Israeli settlement of Alfei Menashe in the West Bank. In September 2005, an expanded panel of nine High Court of Justices issued a landmark decision obligating the state to re-route the barrier. ACRI's petition, which was submitted on behalf of the residents of five Palestinian villages trapped within the enclave created by the barrier, laid emphasis on the fact that the current route of the barrier cuts off over 1,000 local Palestinian residents from the rest of the West Bank and severs them from their social and family ties, agricultural lands, sources of livelihood, commercial centers, educational institutions, and public services. In a unanimous ruling, the High Court of Justice stated that the current route of the barrier is disproportionate as it severely damages the daily fabric of life of the Palestinian villagers and grossly infringes their basic rights. The High Court's decision is of great importance because, for the first time, the court accepted a petition calling for the dismantling of an existing section of the barrier; and secondly, the court ruled that plans for settlement expansion are not legal considerations that can determine the route of the barrier.

During the course of the hearings on the Alfei Menashe petition, demolition orders were issued for five buildings in the village of Wadi a'Rasha, among them buildings

belonging to three of the residents who were personally involved in the submission of the petition against the route of the barrier in the area. These demolition orders were clearly meant to deter Palestinian residents from becoming involved in any future legal action against the barrier. Following ACRI's petition to the High Court of Justice on this issue, the Court issued an interim injunction prohibiting the demolition orders from being carried out while the petition is pending.

Throughout the last year, ACRI continued to litigate five petitions (originally submitted in 2004) concerning the route of the barrier, including a petition concerning A-Ram in Jerusalem. Toward the end of 2005, ACRI filed two new petitions challenging the route of the barrier in the section between Tulkarm and Qalqiliya, on behalf of residents of the neighboring Palestinian villages. All of these cases are pending.

The Permit Regime

The territory between the separation barrier and the Green Line ("the seam zone") has been declared as a "closed military area." Palestinians cannot enter or continue to reside in this area without a permit issued by the army. The closure of the territory and the associated permit regime impose extreme restrictions on freedom of movement, and have turned the lives of Palestinians living near the separation barrier, and those who make a living from farming in particular, into a bureaucratic nightmare. During the past year, ACRI



continued to gather extensive information and closely monitor the implementation of the permit regime and the operation of crossing gates which severely violate the rights of the local Palestinian population.

ACRI originally submitted a petition challenging the permit regime and a petition against the policies and procedures of the crossing gates to the High Court of Justice at the end of 2003. ACRI has now submitted an amended and updated petition to the High Court of Justice addressing both the permit system and the crossing gates.

► **Harvesting Rights**

The Israeli security forces take little or no action to redress settler attacks against Palestinians and their property and bring those responsible to justice. When trying to prevent confrontations between settlers and Palestinians, the security forces resort to forcing the Palestinians to leave their lands to prevent being

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A Palestinian family in the village of Wadi a'Rasha in the Alfei Menashe enclave.

attacked. As a result, thousands of Palestinian farmers have been cut off from their lands and their main source of livelihood. ACRI continues to monitor the situation and gather extensive information to be used in both our appeals to senior government and security officials and in our litigation efforts. In September 2005, as a result of a petition submitted by ACRI and Rabbis for Human Rights, the High Court of Justice severely criticized the closure of agricultural lands in the West Bank, and demanded that the state specify the steps that it intends to take to enable Palestinian farmers to harvest their olive crops and access their lands throughout the year with full protection from attacks by the local settler population.

► The Right to Compensation

ACRI, together with eight other human rights organizations, filed a petition to the High Court of Justice demanding that the Court declare void the amendments to the *Civil Torts Law (Liability of the State)*, which block Palestinians from receiving compensation from the state for damages inflicted by the Israeli security forces, even those incurred outside of the context of a military operation. The petition emphasizes that the law grossly violates the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It also breaches basic rights in contravention of Israel's *Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty*, and is therefore unconstitutional. The petition further stresses that the law sends out a dangerous message that the lives and rights of those injured in a "Conflict Zone" have no value, as the courts will not come to their aid, and those who have caused their injuries will face no punishment. As a result, the law is both immoral and racist. Through public outreach activities, ACRI is enhancing public awareness of this critical issue to dovetail with our litigation.

► Planning and Housing Rights

In response to a petition submitted by ACRI, in partnership with Rabbis for Human Rights, the High Court of Justice issued an interim injunction to prevent the demolition of homes and related structures in the West Bank village of Hirbat Tana that were re-built after the army previously destroyed them. The petition demands that the state prepare a detailed outline plan for the village and issue building permits to the village residents. Without an outline plan, the residents are not legally entitled to build in their village. ACRI's intervention is therefore critical to the resolution of the untenable situation of the residents, who are systematically prevented from obtaining building permits, but face house demolitions and heavy fines if they dare to build "illegally."

Who We Are... ACRI's Legal Department

Attorney Dana Alexander – Legal Dept. Director

Attorney Dan Yakir – Chief Legal Counsel

Sharon Abraham-Weis - Attorney

Firas Alami - Field worker

Khulood Badawi - Field worker

Auni Banna - Attorney

Efrat Bergman – Trainee

Azem Bishara – Attorney (since August 2005)

Sonia Boulus – Attorney

Fatmeh El-Ajou – Attorney (until August 2005)

Oded Feller - Attorney

Tammy Katsabian - Trainee

Lila Margalit – Attorney

Avner Pinchuk – Attorney

Michal Pinchuk – Attorney

Alif Sabag – Field worker

Banna Shoughry-Badarne – Attorney

Limor Yehuda – Attorney

Public Outreach

DEPARTMENT

It is ACRI's strong belief that a public more aware of the complex fields of civil liberties and human rights will become better equipped to stand up for its rights and more fully prepared to respect the rights of other members of society. To this end, ACRI's Public Outreach Department was established ten years ago to promote ACRI's message and vision among a broad-based audience.

ACRI's Public Outreach Department:

- ▶ generates high-profile media coverage for all of ACRI's activities;
- ▶ coordinates ACRI's public hotline;
- ▶ runs a project to raise awareness of the principles and values of International Humanitarian Law;
- ▶ publishes reports and information pamphlets;
- ▶ organizes lectures, panel discussions, conferences, film screenings, exhibitions and other public events throughout the year;
- ▶ and advocates before decision-makers and policy-makers.

The public outreach team works closely with ACRI's legal and education teams to place key human rights concerns high on the public agenda.

Media Coverage

ACRI recognizes the vital role that the media plays in shaping public opinion; a crucial element of our public outreach work therefore involves generating ongoing media coverage of the key issues that ACRI addresses and the activities undertaken in order to protect the rights and liberties of all members of society. ACRI's work appears on an almost daily basis in a wide range of domestic print, broadcast, and electronic media. In addition, last year ACRI introduced a monthly electronic newsletter in Hebrew and a bimonthly electronic newsletter in English that are widely circulated to thousands of subscribers. In 2006, ACRI intends to launch an electronic newsletter in Arabic.

▶ Weekly Radio Program on Human Rights

For almost ten years, ACRI has featured in a weekly radio program specially dedicated to human rights issues. "Human Rights Corner" is broadcast on Thursday afternoons on Israel's leading radio station, Reshet Bet. Each week, a different member of ACRI's staff discusses a topical issue relating to our work.

▶ Targeted Outreach to Specific Population Groups

2005 saw ACRI successfully develop and implement two pilot public outreach initiatives specifically targeting the Russian-speaking community and the Arab minority. These two population groups suffer from various forms of discrimination and human rights infringements that are particular to each group; both groups are at risk of becoming even more disadvantaged as a result of their lack of access to information about the fundamental rights and liberties to which they are entitled.

ACRI therefore appointed two public outreach coordinators who themselves derive from these communities and who possess first-hand knowledge

Cell space in planned private jail too small, ACRI says

Government drops key residency bill

Legislation would have made it easier to expel non-Jewish foreigners

Court orders Ramle to renew bus service for Arab children

Gay couples get housing benefits

State drops DNA test for children of unmarried mixed couples



RIGHTS GROUPS are petitioning the government's strict criteria for foreign workers' children to obtain residency permits. (Israel Sun)

High Court tells state to reroute fence

Basic rights for Bedouin

Gov't lifts ban on residential status for married citizens of Arab states

Poverty goes to court

Petition: Ease contraception access or face high abortion rate

and experience of the specific needs and issues that their communities face. Through generating sustained coverage in the Arabic-language and Russian-language media about aspects of ACRI's work that are most relevant to the target communities, and by organizing conferences addressing issues that directly affect them, ACRI has significantly expanded its reach within these two population groups.

ACRI's Public Outreach Department generates extensive coverage of our work in both the domestic and international media.

Public Outreach Department



► Public Hotline

An important communication channel between ACRI and the general public is our public hotline, which handles complaints and referrals from individuals whose human rights or civil liberties have been breached. The hotline, which is accessible in Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian, is staffed by a committed team of staff members and volunteers. The hotline team work from ACRI's offices in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa, and provide free legal advice and assistance to hundreds of callers each month. In 2005, ACRI received **over 5,000** referrals via the hotline covering a diverse range of

issues, including: discrimination on the basis of national and ethnic origin, age, gender, or religion; social and economic rights; forced institutionalization; citizenship and residency rights; abuse of foreign workers; and complaints of police brutality. In addition to providing callers with the necessary tools and knowledge to access their fundamental rights, the hotline also serves as a means of enabling ACRI to identify trends relating to human rights issues in Israel and as a source of potentially precedent-setting cases to be pursued in the legal arena.

It is our strong belief that a public more aware of and better educated in the complex fields of civil liberties and human rights will become better equipped to stand up for its rights and more fully prepared to respect the rights of other members of society.

► Case Study: Tatiana's Story

Tatiana Pesrenko immigrated to Israel from the Ukraine six years ago with her Israeli husband. Two years ago, Tatiana's nine-year-old daughter from a previous marriage, Veronica, finally joined her in Israel following a lengthy legal battle over custody in the Ukrainian courts. Tatiana was in the final stages of the naturalization process when she was informed by the Population Registry that the process was being halted, and that if she wanted Israeli citizenship she would have to consent to the deportation of her daughter.

Through our public hotline, Tatiana turned to ACRI for assistance. In the months that followed, ACRI concurrently spearheaded a media campaign and advocated before policy-makers on behalf of Tatiana. In response to ACRI's intervention, which highlighted the illegal and unethical nature of the Registry's demands, Tatiana has now received citizenship status and Veronica has received formal status entitling her to stay in the country with her mother. ACRI's efforts also enhanced public consciousness of the wider phenomenon of the Ministry's practice of illegally imposing preconditions on applications for citizenship made by persons who are legally eligible for status in Israel.



▲ Tatiana holding her Israeli identity card, which she received following a long struggle against the Population Registry.

► International Humanitarian Law Project

ACRI continues to expand our International Humanitarian Law Project which was launched in June 2004. The project seeks to raise understanding and awareness of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) among a selection of target groups (with an emphasis on pre-army students) within Israeli society. In the past year, ACRI successfully conducted dozens of training workshops, provided educational resources, and organized engaging and diverse public events across the country. A highlight of the project was ACRI's production and distribution of a Hebrew-language manual on *Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts* – marking the first time that such a comprehensive educational resource on IHL, tailored for an Israeli audience and context, has been made available in Hebrew.



▲ ACRI's comprehensive manual on *Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts* has been widely distributed among NGOs, journalists, educators, and students throughout the country.

Public Outreach Department

▶ Human Rights Week in Israel

A major highlight of ACRI's public activities is our annual celebration of International Human Rights Day (10th December) with a full week of public events and activities designed to bring ACRI's message to the widest audience possible. In December 2005, to coincide with Human Rights Week, ACRI published its *Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Israel and the Occupied Territories*. The report received widespread media coverage and public attention.

ACRI also organized a well-attended series of public events across the country in Hebrew, Arabic and Russian, including: a panel discussion featuring senior army officials, human rights lawyers, and journalists discussing the vagueness and secrecy surrounding the Israel Defense Forces' open-fire orders; a conference in Arabic and Hebrew analyzing the effects of the Wisconsin Plan for the Unemployed in Nazareth; and a conference in Russian addressing the basic rights of sub-contracted workers, in particular those working in the field of security.



ACRI's panel discussion on the vagueness and secrecy surrounding the IDF's open-fire orders.

▶ Policy Advocacy

ACRI works to sensitize key decision-makers and opinion shapers to human rights issues by appearing regularly before various Knesset committees in order to provide expert testimony on proposed legislation and to serve as a conduit of human rights information.

ACRI is also an active member of a number of coalitions and forums of civil society organizations seeking to advance issues such as workers' rights, Bedouin rights, the rights of Arab women, and social and economic rights.

▶ Information Center

ACRI's Civil Liberties and Human Rights Information Center serves as a clearinghouse for information on civil liberties and human rights in Israel and the occupied territories. It continues to fill the need for a general and comprehensive database regarding the state of human rights in the region, and to respond to requests for information from civil society organizations, legal professionals, academics, students, journalists, and decision-makers.

The Information Center includes ACRI's library and archives, which comprise a collection of close to 3000 books, and hundreds of research journals, periodicals and multi-volume series and constitutes the largest civil liberties and human rights collection in Israel.

The Center also includes ACRI's website in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, which is updated on a regular basis and features reports, publications, and press releases issued by ACRI; petitions and court decisions; academic articles relating to human rights issues; international treaties and conventions; comparative rights legislation from other countries; and useful links to relevant websites. In 2006, ACRI will launch our redesigned website which will offer greater functionality, faster access, and more intuitive navigation.

Who We Are... ACRI's Public Outreach Department

Miriam Leedor – Public Outreach Dept. Director

**Hagit Adiv – Public Resources Development
Officer – Israel (since October 2005)**

**Yoav Aptowitz – Public Hotline Coordinator
(Jerusalem)**

**Batya Aviram – Development Officer - Israel
(until June 2005)**

**Daniela Bamberger-Enosh – Director of Policy
Advocacy**

**Tal Dahan – Coordinator of the Information
Center**

**Vladik Kraskin – Public Outreach Coordinator for
the Russian-Speaking Community**

Yoav Loeff – Spokesperson

**Eva Mousa – Public Outreach Coordinator for
the Arab Minority**

**Hadar Namir – Public Hotline Coordinator
(Tel Aviv)**

**Ronit Piso – Coordinator of the International
Humanitarian Law Project**

**Alif Sabag - Public Hotline Coordinator
(Haifa)**

**Naama Yashuvi – Director of the Information
Center**

**Miriam Zagiel – Development Officer – Israel
(since December 2005)**

Education

DEPARTMENT

ACRI's Education Department was founded in the belief that in order to foster a culture of human rights and bring about real and lasting social change in Israel, ACRI has to work in the educational arena to advance the key values it advocates for in the legal arena. ACRI's Education Department works tirelessly to promote a commitment to human rights principles within Israeli society, with a special focus on three primary audiences – teachers in the Jewish and Arab school systems, security forces personnel, and social and community workers.

Each year, ACRI's education team conduct hundreds of human rights training programs across the country, produces high-quality educational curricula in Hebrew and Arabic, and organizes conferences and lectures on human rights education.

Human Rights Education for Security Force Personnel

ACRI was the first and remains one of the few human rights organizations in Israel to work with the security forces – influencing those professionals who are in a position to directly impact human rights in their day-

to-day work. ACRI runs human rights seminars and workshops for security force personnel (including the border patrol, the police, and the prison service), who operate within a challenging and fraught reality that often leads to human rights abuses and violations. ACRI's workshops seek to enable security professionals to develop a deeper commitment and understanding of the importance of protecting human rights while strengthening their ability to take human rights concerns into account when confronted with dilemmas and difficulties in the course of their work.

In the past year, ACRI's education team conducted training workshops for more than 1,000 personnel from the police force, the prison service, and the border patrol.





In order to foster a culture of human rights and bring about real and lasting social change in Israel, ACRI works in the educational arena to advance the key values it advocates for in the legal arena.

Every year, to mark International Human Rights Day, ACRI's Educational Department produces a poster based around a different human rights theme which is then widely disseminated among the education community. In 2005, ACRI's poster focused on the right to family life, and was distributed to over 1,500 educational institutions throughout Israel.

Education Department

Educating for Human Rights in the Formal Education System

In recent years, surveys conducted in Israel have indicated the extent to which students of all ages are reluctant to embrace principles of democracy and equality even in their own schools. Given the enormous impact teachers and school peers have on the development of a student's identity and belief system, the school provides fertile ground for attempting to shape ideals and reinforce important principles, such as the need for respecting human rights and equality.

Since the creation of our Education Department over ten years ago, ACRI has conducted workshops, seminars, and lectures on the subject of human rights and civil liberties for thousands of Jewish and Arab teachers and students across the country. Although the messages and values underpinning our educational activities are the same, ACRI strives to create programs and resources that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of each of the target groups with which we work:

Jewish School System

▶ Human Rights Educational Programs

During the past year, ACRI conducted intensive human rights education programs for hundreds of junior and senior high school teachers in the Jewish education system. The programs are designed to enable teachers to integrate human rights principles into their everyday curricula and teaching practices.

▶ Promoting a Commitment to Human Rights Among Pre-Army Students

In 2005, ACRI conducted a training program for twelfth grade students who are preparing for their military service to increase their awareness and commitment

to human rights. The program presents the participants with potential dilemmas that they are liable to face, and provides them with effective tools to deal with these situations from a human rights perspective.

▶ Workshops on the Dilemmas of Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, ACRI launched an innovative new training program for 150 teachers from Jewish schools across the country, which focuses on the dilemmas arising from Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state. The workshops explore these dilemmas through the prism of human rights.

▶ Bringing Human Rights into the Classroom

In June 2005, ACRI published an updated version of our *Book of Ideas for Teachers*, a user-friendly handbook equipping teachers with information, practical activities and lesson plans to enable them to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms among their students. The book locates human rights issues and dilemmas within the specific social, cultural, political, and economic context of Israel and is carefully designed to permeate the entire school curricula rather than be restricted to a specific subject area. The handbook was disseminated free of charge among teachers in hundreds of education institutions throughout Israel, and was received with widespread acclaim in the education community. In 2006, ACRI will produce and distribute an Arabic version of the book which will be culturally relevant and appropriate for the Arab community.

Arab School System

In the past year, ACRI continued to expand its educational activities within the Arab school system. Highlights of this work include:

► Educational Resources for Teachers

ACRI continued to produce tailored educational materials in Arabic to equip teachers and educators with the relevant tools to enable them to develop their human rights programs. The engaging written materials are designed to suit the Arab education system, by focusing on the issue of equal rights for Arab citizens of Israel within the wider context of universal human rights.

ACRI continues to expand our annual human rights and art competition for children, which is followed each year by an exhibition showcasing the participants' art work.

► Children's Art Exhibition on Human Rights

For the past four years, ACRI has organized an annual art and human rights competition for hundreds of students in the Arab school system. In the build-up to the competition, the students participate in workshops and seminars to enable them to develop a deeper understanding of human rights concerns which they then explore through their art work. Following the success of our human rights art competition in 2005, ACRI organized a traveling exhibition in schools and community centers in northern Israel. The highly attended exhibition featured the participating and winning entries and also included educational activities and resources to complement the artwork. In the coming year, ACRI plans to expand the project to encompass both Jewish and Arab schools.

► Training for Teachers

ACRI's Education Department conducted extensive training programs for hundreds of Arab teachers and educators from across the country. The workshops focus



Education Department

on enhancing the participants' understanding of and commitment to human rights while enabling them to integrate that awareness into their teaching curricula.

Community Education

ACRI's community education programs focus on key agents of social change – in particular social and community workers – who have a broad impact and influence on the constituencies they serve. The training programs focus on enhancing the participants' understanding of the relevance of human rights discourse and principles to their everyday work so that they can empower their clients to access their rights. This rights-based approach creates a ripple effect which enables ACRI to reach a large audience, especially populations on the economic and geographic periphery. In 2005, for example, ACRI's educational team worked closely with the entire staff of the welfare departments of two communities in Israel (Gadera and Nes Tziona), to enable them to examine their day-to-day professional contact with their clients through the prism of human rights.

Who We Are... ACRI's Education Department

Dubit Ater – Education Department Director

**Tammy Harel – Coordinator of Human Rights Education for the Security Forces
(since December 2005)**

Sharaf Hassan – Coordinator of Human Rights Programs in the Arab Education System

Sharon Razon – Coordinator of Human Rights Programs for Community Workers

Eitan Reich – Coordinator of Human Rights Programs in the Jewish Education System

Noa Sandbank – Coordinator of Human Rights Programs in the Jewish Education System

**Pnina Shavit - Coordinator of Human Rights Education for the Security Forces
(until November 2005)**

ACRI's President

Mr. Sammi Michael

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Public Outreach Department (see page 21)

Education Department (see page 26)

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Gila Orkin – Director of International Relations and Development (since March 2005)

Risa Zoll – Director of International Relations and Development (until March 2005)

Kim Weiss – International Relations and Development Assistant

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Sarit Eliah – Secretary (Jerusalem office)

Maha Hasson – Secretary (Haifa office)

Victor Lederfarb – Financial Manager

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Orit Rozovsky – Secretary (Jerusalem office)

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Thank you...

ACRI's work would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of our supporters.

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The New Israel Fund

In addition, ACRI would like to express our deep appreciation to several key donors who wish to remain anonymous. Thank you so much for your ongoing support through the years.

A Big Thank You to ACRI's Volunteers

ACRI's large team of dedicated volunteers plays a key role in supporting our work by staffing the public hotline, assisting in the information center, conducting community outreach work, and providing pro bono legal assistance. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their invaluable support which means so much to all of us here at ACRI.