

הקרן החדשה לישראל
New Israel Fund
الصندوق الجديد لاسرائيل

SHARED SPACES SHARED SOCIETY

New Strategies for Building a
More Just and Democratic Israel

Shared Spaces, Shared Society: New Strategies For Building a More Just and Democratic Israel

The Background

The deepest rift in Israeli society is between Jews and Arabs. It is rooted in a long history of discrimination and conflicting narratives, and further exacerbated by conflict between Israel and its neighbours and the prolonged Occupation.

Progress on the policy level is slow, but nonetheless significant. For example, a groundbreaking, multi-billion shekel development plan for the Arab sector recently passed in the Knesset, thanks in part to the efforts of Sikkuy and other NIF grantees (although it remains to be seen how it will be implemented).

Despite such gains, a spate of anti-democratic bills and the rise of xenophobic discourse among Israel's leaders continue to further deepen the divides. This includes laws that erode the equal status of Palestinian Israelis, as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu's Election Day video warning of Arabs going to the polls "in droves." These messages reinforce the idea that Palestinian Israelis are, at worst, traitors, and, at best, simply do not belong.

While there are no easy remedies, these challenges reaffirm our commitment to advancing a shared society in which all citizens have an equal voice and an equal stake in the country's future. And we see hope in the growing numbers of groups and activists involved in these efforts. They are creating microcosms of shared society throughout the country in which Israelis of diverse backgrounds work together in common cause, based on values of equality, justice and inclusion.

The New Israel Fund's **Shared Spaces, Shared Society** initiative seeks to energize and expand this movement which has sprouted throughout Israel in response to the deepening divides.

This proposal presents you with three examples of the types of programs NIF is funding to create shared spaces and build a shared society in Israel:

- Ensuring that All Voices are Heard: *Broadening the diversity of faces and voices seen and heard in the Hebrew media to reflect Israeli society*
- Building Shared Spaces at the Local Level: *Creating and expanding shared and equal public spaces based on fairness and diversity*
- Combating Racism Through Sports: *Educating against racism through the national arena of soccer*

We have set a goal of raising \$250,000 to help fund the creation and expansion of shared spaces through projects like these, and we need your help now. Please contribute generously today to help NIF invest in projects that transform the social fabric and the political landscape of Israel.



Jewish and Arab students speak Arabic on Jerusalem's light rail to protest violence against Arabic-speakers and send a message of inclusion and mutual respect.

“The creation of a shared Israeli identity and a shared Israeli hope is a mighty and noble process which will take a generation.”

— Israeli President, Reuven Rivlin

Shared Spaces, Shared Society:

Ensuring That All Voices Are Heard

Broadening the diversity of faces and voices seen and heard in the Hebrew media to reflect Israeli society

The media is the most significant arena in which the public's views and opinions are shaped. In this space, Jews rarely encounter Arabs except in the context of the conflict and its ramifications (violence, terrorism, war, and discrimination against Palestinian Israelis).

Only 2% of the material published in the Hebrew media relates to Arab issues. The media rarely exposes Hebrew speakers to the human side of their Arab fellow citizens, interviews Arab experts, or features contributions that Arabs make to Israeli society. The media almost completely ignores the fact that Palestinian citizens of Israel have expertise in a wide variety of fields. They rarely, if ever, invite an Arab accountant to talk about taxes, an Arab doctor to speak about her specialty, or an Arab lawyer to address a legal question that does not touch on Arab-Jewish relations. The lack of media coverage of the Arab sector and the absence of Arab experts on issues other than the conflict, perpetuate the separation between the communities and create obstacles to achieving a truly shared society.

NIF's Media as a Shared Space project is based on the premise that promoting greater and more balanced Arab representation can transform the media into a shared national space. That is the goal of two NIF grantees:

Sikkuy: Sikkuy has been working since 1991 to develop and implement projects to advance equality between Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel. The organization is working with editors, producers and hosts of high-profile radio and TV shows, encouraging them to invite more Arab guests and commentators and include them in discussions on issues in addition to the conflict.

When a study performed by Sikkuy revealed that only a tiny fraction of participants in the radio and TV shows monitored were Arab, Sikkuy set out to establish a database of Arab experts and make it available to editors and producers. **In the first two months of this initiative, the number of Arabs interviewed in the Hebrew-language media increased by 50%.**

The Abraham Fund Initiatives (TAFI): Founded in 1989, TAFI is dedicated to furthering coexistence and equality between Israel's Arab and Jewish citizens. The organization strives to expose Israeli journalists and writers to various topics regarding Palestinian Israeli society in order to increase media coverage of these issues, which tend to receive very little exposure within mainstream Israeli society, and particularly within the Hebrew media.

In recent months, TAFI opened an Arabic course for Israeli journalists, with about 100 signing up. In addition, a daylong seminar was offered for the Channel 2 news team to further expose them to issues facing Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The initiative is launching



The A-LIST, Sikkuy's online database of Arab experts on diverse topics.

“[We must] insist on creating a joint Arab-Jewish voice and to demonstrate that ... there is a desire to live in peace on both sides.”

— *Rawnak Natour,*
Co-Director of Sikkuy

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workshops that will examine the existing obstacles to coverage of the Arab sector in the Hebrew-language media with the aim of drafting a fair-coverage agreement.

Building a shared society demands that diverse voices be heard. This work, which you have helped fund, is diversifying and democratizing the Israeli media.

Building Shared Spaces at the Local Level

Creating and expanding shared and equal public spaces based on fairness and diversity

Israel's Jewish and Arab populations live in separate neighborhoods and towns, and rarely encounter one another as peers. This is one of the main difficulties in establishing a true shared society.

But an increasing number of local initiatives are underway that seek to create shared and equal public spaces based on common interests, fairness and diversity. By expanding shared access to the places where people live, work, shop and play, these local groups are building the infrastructure through which more interactions can take place, and more bonds can be formed.

That is the goal of **Givat Haviva**, and its program, "Neighboring Jewish and Arab Towns Create Shared Public Spaces."

Founded in 1949, Givat Haviva is dedicated to creating a shared future and shared society in Israel, based on principles of equality, cooperation, empowerment and understanding. Through this program, the organization is working to link Jewish and Arab communities at all levels, moderate meetings of local leaders, and bring together professionals to advance shared objectives such as tourism and education.

The initiative's successes include:

- Facilitating cooperation between the Menashe Regional Council and the town of Baqa al-Gharbiya toward the establishment of a park, which will include a pedestrian trail and bike path to be enjoyed by all residents of the area.
- Advancing a plan between 13 Jewish localities and the councils representing five Arab villages to pave a road and build a soccer field that would be accessible to all.
- Working with the grassroots initiative, Neighbors for Peace, to create a new shared industrial area in the Wadi Ara area.

These programs advance collaboration between neighboring Jewish and Arab authorities and increase cooperation through networking and community organizing. While such encounters alone are not enough to reduce historical tensions, stereotypes, and suspicions, they go a long way toward increasing understanding and strengthening moderating voices.



A tour group visits Arab and Jewish towns as part of a project to build bridges between neighboring Jewish and Arab communities.

“By carving out common civic spaces [we might] alter what has become an unsupportable dualistic reality which belies the fundamental interests of Arabs and Jews alike.”

— Naomi Chazan,
Former Knesset
Deputy Speaker,
Past NIF President

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Combating Racism Through Sports

Educating against racism through the national arena of soccer

Soccer in Israel has a paradoxical nature: On the one hand, it is an arena of rare integration and common love of the sport, and, on the other, it has been a backdrop for racism and violence.

For over a decade, NIF's Kick it Out (KIO) campaign has been working to confront racism in Israel through Israel's most popular sport. This campaign seeks to counter prejudice and intolerance and educate for inclusion and solidarity through this unique shared public arena.

Campaign efforts have included:

- Engaging the Israeli national soccer teams to be examples of equality, inclusion and coexistence under the banner of "We're All Equal; We're All One Team." A video promoting this message has now been viewed by over 200,000 people.
- Compiling weekly reports for the media on racism and violence in stadiums, and advocating for stronger punitive measures against teams whose players or fans take racist actions.
- Advocating for soccer as a uniting force in an often-divided country, including efforts that helped compel the Israel Police to reverse an earlier decision to cancel matches between Arab and Jewish teams.

KIO is significantly reducing racist incidents at matches, creating broad public awareness of the issue, and rallying players and fans from across the political and social spectrum around a message of inclusion.

We Need You with Us

NIF is working to combat racism, foster inclusion and understanding, and build the shared spaces where Israelis can recognize that their country's diversity is one of its most important assets, and which can serve as a model for the country.

But to make these initiatives a success, we need your immediate help to raise \$250,000 before December 31st. Please make an especially generous gift to the New Israel Fund right away. We need you with us!

Your investment in this initiative will help us reinforce our funding of Sikkuy, The Abraham Fund Initiatives, Givat Haviva, Kick it Out and other organizations and programs working to transform Israeli society from the inside out by creating a new paradigm for relations between Israel's Jewish and Palestinian citizens.

Please, make your most generous contribution today. Thank you for your partnership in advancing a shared society in Israel.



Jewish and Arab children play soccer together as part of NIF's Kick It Out campaign.

**“Our children
and our grand-
children will
continue to live
in this land,
Arabs and Jews.
We have no
choice but to
choose life. Let
us choose life.”**

— MK Ayman Odeh,
Chair, Joint List