Israel is at a critical juncture in its history. It is in real and immediate danger of becoming an “illiberal democracy” — one whose values are diametrically opposed to those the state was founded on.

Israel’s new governing coalition, the country’s most extreme ever, is waging war on the values we hold most dear: democracy, equality, and justice.

Today, activists, leaders, and everyday Israelis distressed about the trajectory of their country are looking to the New Israel Fund (NIF) for leadership. With over 40 years working in Israel to strengthen civil society, democracy and human rights, NIF is uniquely positioned to lead the resistance to impending challenges.

NIF and our civil society partners have mobilized to counter the government’s radical agenda and its consequences for Israel. We are working around the clock to defend Israeli democracy and strengthen civil society—so that they can survive the current crisis and flourish in the future.

To this end, NIF has created a three-part plan to support a bold, vibrant, and diverse opposition to the government’s agenda, provide fuel for organizing; protection for those defending democracy and those targeted by extremists; and invest in a positive, inclusive vision for Israel’s future.

To implement our multifaceted emergency plan, NIF needs to raise $4.315 million. This will enable us to respond to immediate threats and strengthen Israel’s democratic infrastructure, while continuing to fund NIF’s ongoing programs for equality, social justice, and shared society.

“There are still many people in Israel for whom despair is not an option. For whom apathy or escapism are luxuries they cannot afford and do not want. We are still here... our values and beliefs were not defeated, and they are more crucial than ever before.”

David Grossman
NIF has long employed rapid response grantmaking to confront threats and leverage opportunities as they arise. Over the last decade, this pool has taken on greater significance in responding to the dramatic and accelerating challenges facing Israeli democracy. In light of the current situation, we are tripling this pool from $445,000 to $1.5 million this year and increasing the ceiling for individual grants to $50,000. This will enable us to confront the threats to civil society, Israel’s most marginalized communities, and Palestinians living under occupation. Examples include:

**Funding protests**: Multiple recent grants have supported pro-democracy protests around the country and organized by different groups: women, the LGBTQ community, anti-occupation activists, Jewish-Arab protests, and those in the social and geographic periphery.

**Solidarity with Huwara**: After Israeli settlers violently rampaged in the Palestinian village of Huwara, a grant supported a solidarity visit with residents and a campaign to raise awareness about the occupation and its human rights violations.

**Supporting progressive education**: A grant to support parents and teachers in their efforts to safeguard liberal values and push back against racist and homophobic initiatives in the Israeli education system.

**Mapping threats**: Grants to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), NIF’s flagship grantee commonly referred to as Israel’s ACLU, and the Ideational Center for Liberal Democracy (IDEA) to map the threats posed by the government, educate the Israeli public about them, and coordinate response efforts.

*Cost: $1.5 million*
ESTABLISHING "THE HUB"

NIF is establishing The Hub, which will serve as a center of operations for protecting the pro-democracy organizations and activists pushing back against the government's extremist agenda. It will connect NGOs and activists to a host of NIF-funded resources and services that will enable them to operate safely and effectively amid a hostile environment (e.g., if an activist is arrested at a demonstration, The Hub would refer them to NIF grantee Human Rights Defenders Fund for legal assistance).

The Hub will focus on two primary objectives:

1. Ensuring the safety of frontline activists and organizations and ensuring their ability to operate freely in the current political climate.
2. Responding to threats to freedom of expression and speech, freedom of association, and other civil rights.

**SLAPP Pool:** NIF has also reinstated a dedicated grants pool to support individuals and organizations facing SLAPP (Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation) suits with legal assistance from HRDF and ACRI. These lawsuits chill free speech by silencing journalists, activists, and whistleblowers, and by deterring others from speaking out.

Cost: $1.465 million
NIF is meeting the current moment with the plan outlined above. However, we are also backing initiatives that strengthen the vision and leadership needed to advance a just, inclusive Israel. This aspect of NIF’s work falls into three categories:

**Grassroots Movements and Campaigns:**
NIF believes that citizen-led movements form the bedrock of Israel’s democracy and are essential to mobilizing activists and holding the powerful accountable. Grantees including Omdim Beyachad-Naqef Ma’an (Standing Together), Zazim – Community Action, the Citizens’ Headquarters, and Mehazkim have emerged as the core of Israel’s pro-democracy movement.

**Development of Ideas and Policies:**
The proliferation and clout of right-wing, conservative think tanks is evident: The Kohelet Policy Forum, one of these institutions, essentially drafted this government’s radical agenda.

We are partnering with Israeli liberal think tanks, among them, Mitvim: The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, Zulat – Equality and Human Rights, the Berl Katznelson Foundation, and the Forum for Regional Thinking (FORTH), to provide an alternative vision for Israel’s future and formulate a course of action for realizing it.

**Leadership Development:**
The third aspect of our infrastructure-building work is the cultivation of new progressive leaders and innovative social change strategies. Grantees Qadaya and New Haredim, for example, are dedicated to leadership development for Palestinian citizens and ultra-Orthodox Israelis, respectively, while other programs focus on forging Jewish-Arab political partnership.

**Cost:** $1.35 million