



# THE ASSOCIATION FOR CIVIL RIGHTS 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

In the beginning of 2021, as COVID-19 cases continued to decline and civilians returned to stepping outside without masks, life in Israel seemed to resemble a pre-pandemic normalcy. The underlying reality, though, was far from normal. Israel's socioeconomic gaps continued to widen, and as the country went on two full years and four elections without a stable government, ACRI continued to work around the clock to improve lives, expose rights violations, and set precedents.

While COVID-19 and the response of the Israeli government to the health, economic, and political crises exacerbated threats to Israeli democracy and the country's most vulnerable communities, the unprecedented violence infecting Israel's mixed cities since March 2021 punctured the idealistic notion of a true shared society. ACRI's legal, policy, and educational work continued to safeguard Israel's democracy, protect civil liberties, and advance human rights, leading with equality above all.

In June 2021, the formation of the "government of change," after nearly two years and four elections without a stable government, provided new impetus to ACRI's work to protect and advance the civil liberties and human rights of all people living in Israel and the Occupied Territories. However, the Israeli government's response to new variants of COVID-19 and the ongoing economic and political crises exacerbated threats to Israeli democracy and the country's most vulnerable populations. During this ongoing time of crisis, ACRI's legal, policy, and educational work safeguarded Israel's democracy and advanced human rights for all.

*Noa Sattath stepped into her role as Executive Director in November 2021.*

“ As we anticipate the next 50 years, our goals are to strengthen our standing as a critical institution in Israel, broaden our reach, and face head-on the human rights challenges of the 21st century—from the entrenchment of the Occupation and the profound human rights violations it entails, to the new and emerging threats to privacy in the digital age.

- Noa Sattath, Executive Director



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS	3
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS	7
STATUS AND IMMIGRATION	9
ARAB MINORITY RIGHTS	11
THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES	14
POLICY ADVOCACY	16
PUBLIC HOTLINE	17
EDUCATION	18

# CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

## OPERATION GUARDIAN OF THE WALLS AND CIVIL UNREST

As violence and civil unrest escalated throughout Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in May 2021, ACRI responded to ensure that human rights and civil liberties were protected, appealing to:

- the Chief of Police regarding [acceptable police procedures during demonstrations](#).
- the Chief of Police and the Police Legal Advisor [to demand the police desist from removing political signs from residential homes](#)
- the Attorney General to demand that [the General Security Service \(Shin Bet\) desist from sending threatening text messages to Arabs who worshipped at the al-Aqsa Mosque](#).
- [the Attorney General and Prime Minister](#) asking that they immediately and unequivocally make clear that all commanders and police are obligated to act in accordance with the law and within the authority given to them, as well as that the Israeli Police are required to protect the lives and well-being of all residents regardless of nationality or origin, following the [Prime Minister's remarks that Border Police need not fear investigative committees](#).
- the Minister of Defense [to cancel the declaration of a civil emergency and curfew in Lod](#), which was enacted outside the given legal authority, and to act in accordance with established police authority and powers to deal with disturbances.
- to the Civil Service Commissioner and the Attorney General, along with Kav La'Oved, regarding [the political persecution of Arab workers in the Ministry of Health](#), demanding refinement of guidelines to prevent witch-hunts of Arab civil servants for political speech and activities.

Additionally:

- ACRI joined a letter with peer organizations calling for [an Iron Dome to be placed in the Negev and to protect unrecognized Bedouin villages](#), as well as to place temporary shelters in all Bedouin villages in the Negev regardless of their recognition status.
- ACRI responded to educators and parents, [providing anti-racism pedagogic tools and curricula](#) during weeks of unprecedented inter-communitarian violence.

“ Once again, it is clear that the attempt to uphold the policy of occupation, while at the same time enjoying peace, democracy, and reasonable relations between the Arab and Jewish populations is doomed to fail. Citizens of Israel, Jews and Arabs, ordinary men and women are standing together in the streets, making every effort to show that the sane majority is desperate for change.

- Sharon Abraham Weiss, Former Executive Director (2014-2021)



## EXPANSION OF SURVEILLANCE POWERS

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the Israeli government continued to expand its surveillance powers and violate basic human and civil rights.

The most notable example is the non-consensual, indiscriminate tracking of civilians by the General Security Services (Shin Bet). Throughout the year, ACRI continuously petitioned against this anti-democratic use of surveillance power. On March 1, 2021, we [succeeded in ending the program](#) through litigation in the High Court of Justice, which supported our claims that the surveillance program severely violated human rights. Having learned about the vast pool of data that the Shin Bet stores on civilians throughout this process, ACRI is working on further action to limit the State's use of surveillance, collection of data, and the infringement on the right to privacy.

On November 21, 2020, [ACRI filed two petitions regarding facial recognition technology—the first such petitions in Israel](#). ACRI is now working on an overarching strategy to ensure that the government employs transparency and accountability in order to continue using these technologies. On January 1, 2021, [ACRI and Privacy Israel petitioned against the Israeli Police's use of a surveillance system](#) that tracks, records, and stores the movement of civilians' vehicles, allowing the police to construct a massive database mapping a person's whereabouts and storing video and stills of passengers.

## PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

**June:** Throughout 2021, due to the use of the General Security Services' database for monitoring the spread of COVID-19, ACRI learned that the **communications data of all civilians** is stored in the GSS database on a regular basis, allowing for quick and easy access to not only communications data, but also location and contact-tracing data. [ACRI appealed to the Attorney General](#) against this severe violation of civil rights and demanded the GSS cease operation of the database and regulate its future use through legislation.

**July:** ACRI learned that the powers of the GSS doubled since 2004, without regulating these powers in legislation. Immediately, [ACRI filed a petition](#) to the High Court of Justice to **repeal the functions of the GSS** that were authorized by government decision in secret, without public or parliamentary discussion.

“

*"In the past year, we have waved quite a few red flags. The use of the GSS database for the purpose of COVID-19 surveillance revealed the existence of a secret, powerful, and invasive mass surveillance project."*

*- Atty. Gil Gan-Mor,  
Director of Civil, Political and Socioeconomic Units*



”

# FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PROTEST

During the first half of 2021, ACRI took the following steps to protect the rights to speech and protest:

- Following the detainment of a protestor waving a Palestinian flag during a demonstration in Sheikh Jarrah, [ACRI appealed to the Legal Adviser of the Police](#) on January 4, 2021 against this consistent, tacit policy of the Jerusalem Police barring the display of the Palestinian flag.
- On January 28, 2021, [ACRI appealed to the Police Commissioner](#) against the use of water cannons and “skunk” water as an enforcement and punishment mechanism against entire religious neighborhoods in Jerusalem intended to deter citizens from being in the public space.
- Following cases in which protesters were ordered to remove protest signs in the public sphere, [ACRI appealed to the municipalities of Jerusalem and Netanya](#) in December 2020 and February 2021, arguing that local authorities cannot restrict nor regulate the freedom of expression, and have no authority to require licensing of temporary protest signs. Following our appeal, the Jerusalem Municipality dismissed the fines levied against activists on May 25, 2021.

Protest in Sheikh Jarrah.  
Photo by Emily Schneider, ACRI



**November:** A [protest camp was set up in a public park](#) by women, mostly single mothers, facing eviction in **Jaffa** to bring attention to the housing crisis faced by Jaffa's Arab residents and the difficulty in securing affordable housing in the city. The Municipality threatened and fined the women, demanding that they evacuate the area and cease the protest. On November 21, ACRI appealed to the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality to permit the protest camp to continue for a reasonable time and to provide the women and children with shelter from the weather as needed. [Since then](#), some families agreed to leave the park in exchange for socioeconomic assistance, while others have been sleeping in the park's public shelter due to the weather.

**June:** [ACRI appealed to the Deputy Attorney General and State Attorney](#) on August 22, 2021, after several cases in which the Police banned demonstrators from displaying the Palestinian flag in **Jerusalem**—including confiscating the flags and detaining the flag-wavers. In one case, three Palestinian high school students in East Jerusalem were detained and interrogated for waving the Palestinian flag at a high school graduation party—a new, and absurd, escalation in police harassment and restriction of Palestinian freedom of expression and their rights to national identity.

The Jerusalem Municipality is responsible for systemic harassment of protesters and activists by consistently removing protest signs and oftentimes fining the activists. On June 20, [ACRI filed a petition to the Jerusalem Administrative Court on behalf of four activists](#), demanding the Municipality end this practice of restricting freedom of expression and the right to protest. On December 5, the Court accepted the petition, ruling that the Municipality's policy violated the freedom to protest.



## FIGHTING POLICE MISCONDUCT: RACIAL PROFILING

Racial profiling is a [systemic, long-standing problem, specifically impacting minority groups](#) such as people of Ethiopian, Arab, and Mizrahi origin. Common Police practice includes detaining people on the street, requiring that they present identification, and checking the police database on them solely because of their appearance. This conduct is based in racial and national discrimination, and further alienates communities from law enforcement, hinders community-policing efforts, and causes law enforcement to lose credibility and trust among such communities.

In an effort to combat racial profiling, ACRI petitioned the High Court of Justice on August 18, 2019, along with the Association of Ethiopian Jews and the Public Committee against Torture in Israel, to demand that the Court prohibit the police from detaining people on the street without suspicion that they committed a crime, for the purpose of presenting identification.

On January 25, 2021, [the High Court of Justice handed down a landmark decision on our petition](#), reducing the range of cases in which a police officer can require a civilian to present identification. What's more, the Court ruled that in the case of detaining a civilian to request identification, the Police must refrain from questioning the civilian or checking his or her criminal record or other personal information in the database. This long-awaited reform will greatly impact the most vulnerable populations—particularly Arabs, Ethiopian-Israelis, and Jews of Mizrahi descent. This is an important step toward eradicating racial profiling and discrimination by the police.

Additionally, ACRI filed a tort claim against the police on behalf of a 16-year-old boy of Ethiopian descent who was subject to three unnecessary cases of search and interrogation by police officers in his own neighborhood, despite a clean record. On March 5, 2021, the Magistrate's Court in Tel Aviv-Yafo acknowledged the significant harm racial profiling caused the boy, and ruled that the Police compensate him in the amount of NIS 20,000.

## FIGHTING POLICE MISCONDUCT: PROTESTS AND ARRESTS

**July:** On July 8, 2021, ACRI [appealed to the Police Commissioner](#) regarding the use of **batons** as a means to disperse protests, following reports that the Israel Police are being trained to use batons and are expanding the use of batons to deal with non-violent protesters who do not pose a threat to individuals nor property.

**October:** The Israel Police updated their policy regarding **body cameras** to permit officers to easily obtain footage for use in defamation lawsuits filed by police against civilians who criticized them. On October 20, ACRI [appealed to the Israel Police's Legal Advisor](#), demanding the Police repeal this policy and establish a procedure for citizens' to access this footage. The appeal noted that this policy contradicts the intent of the body camera project: to promote transparency and accountability in police work.

**November:** ACRI found that the use of **chokeholds** are used by the Israel Police as a routine means for minor offenses and dispersing protestors. On November 4, 2021, ACRI, along with several partner organizations, [appealed to the Minister of Public Security and the Commissioner of the Israel Police](#) to stop the use of chokeholds during arrests.

# SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

## THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

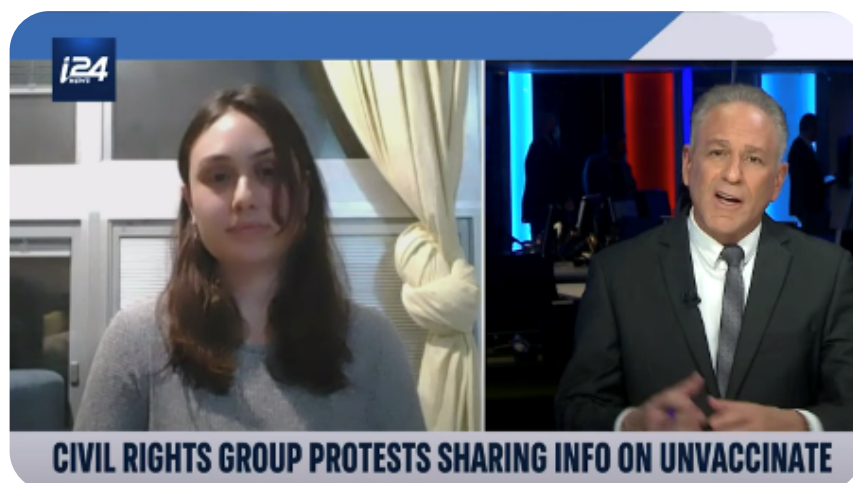
**Vaccinating the Prisoner Population**: On January 10, 2021, ACRI, along with four other human rights organizations, petitioned the High Court of Justice demanding that the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) vaccinate the entire prisoner population according to the vaccination priority set by the Ministry of Health, with an emphasis on prisoners aged 60+ and those in high-risk groups. Following the submission of the petition, IPS began vaccinating prisoners and, within two weeks, updated that all prisoners who consented to receive the vaccination had received the first shot—74% of the prisoner population. The petition was then dismissed.

## THE GREEN PASSPORT AND TRANSFER OF VACCINATION INFORMATION

ACRI is working on a case-by-case basis [to resolve civil rights issues related to vaccinations that infringe on the rights to privacy, freedom, equality, movement, expression, and employment](#). The Green Passport system was rolled out in early February 2021; while the system was in place, only those who presented an official certificate either of vaccination or of recovery from the COVID-19 virus were allowed access to certain entertainment halls and gyms.

ACRI closely followed the consequences of this system and the potential for discrimination against those who cannot get vaccinated—such as those 16 years old and under and people with certain health conditions—and populations that are generally less likely to get the vaccination, such as the Ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities.

On February 2, 2021, ACRI and the Worker's Hotline for Refugees and Migrants appealed to the Attorney General [requesting that he publish a statement on the illegality](#) of employers obligating their employees to share their vaccination status with them or requiring that they get the vaccination as a condition of their continued employment.



ACRI's Director of International Relations Maya Fried on i24 News, discussing the Green Pass system and the transfer of private medical information to local municipalities and the Ministry of Education.

Alongside this system, the Knesset passed legislation in late February that authorized the transfer of private medical information regarding vaccination status to local municipalities and the Ministry of Education. On March 1, 2021, ACRI, along with Physicians for Human Rights in Israel, petitioned to the High Court of Justice against the law as a violation of the right to privacy and a precedent violating medical confidentiality.

On March 9, 2021, [the High Court of Justice put out an interim order and a conditional order in support of our petition](#). The Court put the onus on the State to justify the need for the law. In the meantime, the Ministry of Health is prohibited from transferring private medical information until the final verdict is handed down.

## THE RIGHT TO HOUSING: ENDING DISCRIMINATION FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

On April 4, 2021, the Tel Aviv-Yafo District Court accepted ACRI's petition against the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality's conditions for participating in affordable housing lotteries. The petition argued that these conditions, which excluded people over the age of 45 and those who have not worked full-time for 18 months out of the last three years, constitutes age discrimination and indirect discrimination due to disability.



When Margaret wasn't entitled to affordable housing in Tel Aviv, she turned to ACRI to fight housing discrimination. Photo: Margaret Ben-Hamo

Tel Aviv Municipality's most recent lottery for affordable housing, intended only for Arab residents of Jaffa, eliminated the criteria that excluded people over the age of 45, as well as criteria for a child up to the age of 12. However, there was still a condition for earning capacity, which excludes people with disabilities and retirees. ACRI immediately appealed to the municipality and received a response on May 20, 2021, that this condition would be removed.

## HISTORIC RULING FROM THE HIGH COURT: ELECTRICITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT

**October:** The High Court held its final hearing on ACRI's petition against the Electricity Authority's policy and practice of disconnecting electricity as a form of debt collection. Initially filed on July 7, 2019, the petition demanded the Electricity Authority be prohibited from disconnecting people from electricity due to debt, and that disconnection due to debt should only occur following a hearing and assessment of the finances, health, and circumstances of the household. Following the first hearing, [the Court issued a conditional order](#) requiring the Electricity Authority to justify their policy.



When Sigal's water and electricity was disconnected, ACRI fought for her right to live in dignity all the way to the High Court. Photo: Sigal Ananya

Following the hearing, [the High Court accepted ACRI's position](#) (January 2022) that the right to electricity is inextricably linked to the rights to health and a dignified life and ruled that the Electricity Authority must amend the standards for electricity disconnection; collect debt through a means other than disconnection; and is forbidden from disconnecting people without a fair hearing.

“We hope that the ruling, which opens with the words ‘Let there be light,’ brings in a new era when it comes to protecting vulnerable populations from electricity disconnections.”



## REGULATING WELFARE AND HEALTH SERVICES

**Health Services:** On July 29, ACRI [published comments on the health-related chapters](#) of the proposed Arrangements Law, specifically implications on the rights to health and equality in health services, with emphasis on strengthening the public health system and reducing gaps in access and quality of health services between the center and periphery of the country.

**Welfare Services:** Currently, the State of Israel has no obligation to provide welfare services, but rather they are provided on the basis of regulations, procedures, and the capacity of local authorities to finance and deliver services. Recently, the State began to formulate the Welfare Services Law. ACRI [sent a series of principles to the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Social Services](#) to ensure that welfare services will be regulated and provided in a means that is equitable, transparent, and non-discriminatory.

## STATUS AND IMMIGRATION

### HIGH COURT DECISION ON MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND COURT OF APPEALS

In 2019, Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked appointed two judges to the Court of Appeals—which serves as the first review body on most issues regarding immigration and status—due to their alignment with her own conservative, nationalist views.

In May 2020, [ACRI petitioned the High Court](#) demanding that the appointments be revoked and argued that the political involvement of the Minister of Justice in appointing judges diminishes the independence and autonomy intended for the judicial system, especially for a court that deals with human rights and makes decisions regarding immigrants, asylum seekers, status-less family members of citizens and residents, and the status of residents of East Jerusalem.

On April 19, 2021, the High Court decided that the State must amend the law regarding the procedure for appointing the judges. If no actions are taken within eight months, ACRI will appeal again.

### "THE BAN ON FAMILY UNIFICATION"

**July:** The Knesset failed to renew [the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law](#), commonly known as the Ban on Family Unification, which prevented Palestinian spouses of Israeli citizens and residents from acquiring legal status and, thus, their civil rights. Immediately following its expiration, ACRI appealed to the Population and Immigration Authority, demanding that they process the status applications of Palestinian spouses of Israeli citizens and residents. Reports later revealed that [the Minister of Interior instructed the Population and Immigration Authority](#) to continue following the expired law, refusing to process these status applications—and leaving thousands without legal status and civil rights.

**December:** ACRI, with HaMoked Centre for the Defense of the Individual and Physicians for Human Rights, appealed to the Supreme Court arguing that the Minister of Interior's policy should not be permitted to neglect the fact that the temporary order expired, and that the abusive and illegal policy that the Ministry of Interior is abiding by – sending thousands of people to conduct individual legal proceedings before various courts until the matter of their status is further decided in the Knesset – is a violation of their rights. (In January 2022, the Supreme Court sided with the organizations' claim.)

## SEGREGATED EDUCATION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

On November 9, 2020, ACRI, along with the Clinic for Law and Educational Policy at the University of Haifa, appealed to the Minister of Education and the Mayor of Tel Aviv demanding an end to the segregated education of the children of asylum seekers in Tel Aviv. In response, the Tel Aviv Municipality promised that priority would be given to transfer the children of asylum seekers into integrated schools upon request.

The latest appeal, on February 9, 2021, included the names of 286 children whose parents are requesting that their child be transferred into integrated educational institutions.

ACRI is also fighting to end segregation in the special-education school system in Tel Aviv. This comes following [a successful petition against the Municipality of Petah Tikvah and the Ministry of Education](#), which led to ending the policy of segregated kindergartens and the integration of the children of asylum seekers into the same educational institutions as Israeli children.

“There can't be a situation in which one group, because of their skin color, finds itself in 'educational ghettos' for asylum seekers who arrived from Africa. In the most liberal city in Israel, in the 21st century, it's just incomprehensible.  
– Atty. Tal Hassin ([972+ Magazine](#))



**August:** In [Tel Aviv](#), ACRI filed a petition against the Tel Aviv Municipality and the Ministry of Education on behalf of 325 children of asylum seekers, along with the University of Haifa's Clinic for Law and Educational Policy, ASSAF: Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and the Levinsky Garden Library. ACRI demanded that the nearly 7,000 children of asylum seekers living in Tel Aviv-Yafo be immediately integrated into the city's schools alongside Israeli children. Thus far, the Ministry of Education has rejected integration, arguing that it will harm the children's "cultural and family roots."

In [Lod](#), ACRI filed a petition against the Municipality of Lod's refusal to register children in the city's schools based on their ethnic origin and status in Israel, even after the Ministry of Education ordered the Municipality to integrate the schools.

The Municipality immediately began enrolling children thereafter, but more unenrolled children have since come forward and ACRI is working to find solutions for them.



Protest against segregated education, Tel-Aviv-Yafo, 2019. Photo by Oren Ziv, Activestills

# ARAB MINORITY RIGHTS

## ENDING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CITIZENS WITH FAMILY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

On January 18, 2021, [ACRI filed a petition against the Population and Immigration Authority](#) demanding that it stop discriminating against Israeli citizens whose family members are residents of the Occupied Territories. The petition argues that this policy of consistently mandating that citizens prove their center of life is within Israeli borders violates the rights of thousands of citizens, particularly the rights that depend on the presentation of documentation.

## CEASE THE "LAW AND ORDER" CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARAB CITIZENS

On May 30, 2021, ACRI appealed to the Attorney General regarding unlawful detainment of Arab residents as methods of deterrence and collective punishment following weeks of civil unrest. ACRI called on the authorities to cease the detainments immediately, to assess the arrests and police procedure up to this point, and to refine the police guidelines on the matter.

## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BEDOUINS IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

On November 3, 2020, ACRI, along with Bimkom—Planners for Planning Rights, filed an opposition to a local outlining zoning plan on behalf of village representatives for Wadi Alna'am, the largest unrecognized village in the Negev and home to over 10,000 residents. The opposition argues that this plan is discriminatory and violates the residents' rights to equality, health, home, dignity, and to maintain their culture and way of life. Our appeal to the District Planning and Building Committee to approve the plan for the village was rejected and our request for appeal was also dismissed. In response, we are working on a petition to be filed in June 2021.



Photo by Sana Ibn Bari, ACRI

## FREEZING HOME DEMOLITIONS IN THE NEGEV

On November 3, 2020, ACRI, along with Bimkom—Planners for Planning Rights, filed an opposition to a local outlining zoning plan on behalf of village representatives for Wadi Alna'am, the largest unrecognized village in the Negev and home to over 10,000 residents. The opposition argues that this plan is discriminatory and violates the residents' rights to equality, health, home, dignity, and to maintain their culture and way of life. Our appeal to the District Planning and Building Committee to approve the plan for the village was rejected and our request for appeal was also dismissed. In response, we are working on a petition to be filed in June 2021.

# ARAB MINORITY RIGHTS

## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

**August:** [ACRI filed a petition to the Be'er Sheva Administrative Court](#) against the Israel Land Authority, demanding that the "Peretz Bonei Hanegev" construction company be fined for **discriminating against Arab customers**, after several Arab citizens who expressed interest in the housing project were misled by the company, while Jewish customers were able to proceed with purchases. The Israel Land Authority decided not to impose a fine on the company and did not allow ACRI to respond to the company's claims.

ACRI argued that the company discriminated against Arab customers, violated their rights to equality, and violated the right to due process by not permitting ACRI to present its arguments during the proceedings. Following the petition, the State Attorney's Office announced that the Israel Land Authority will reconsider its decision and allow the petitioner's to respond to the decision.

**October:** ACRI received a response on a petition against the Ministry of Construction and Housing, initially filed in the Jerusalem Administrative Court on May 20. The petition demanded the Ministry change its discriminatory policy that requires housing assistance documents, including those proving eligibility be submitted in Hebrew.

This policy required that documents be translated into Hebrew at the applicants' expense. The petition argued that this policy discriminated against Arab applications, preventing an already disadvantaged population from accessing their rights, especially in light of the high rate of poverty, significant housing crisis, and low rate of exercising their rights among Arab society. Following the petition, the State Attorney's Office ordered the Ministry of Construction and Housing will translate eligibility documents from Hebrew into Arabic.



© Yellow1972 | Dreamstime.com

## THE NATION-STATE LAW

**July:** [the High Court provided a ruling on ACRI's petition](#) demanding the repeal of the Nation-State Law, initially filed on December 23, 2018.

In the petition, we argued that the law enshrines the institutional and ongoing discrimination against the Arab population in Israel as an official policy—and even to the utmost degree as a Basic Law, therefore enjoying special protection. Furthermore, the law makes no reference to the democratic character of the State of Israel nor to the status of minorities in the country. It fails to mention any commitment to ensuring the individual and collective rights of all citizens of Israel and, instead, recognizes that the national right to self-determination is reserved only for Jewish citizens.

On July 8, the High Court provided a ruling on ACRI's petition. The High Court refrained from ordering a repeal, but its interpretation largely emptied the law of its racist consequences. With the law being stripped of its racist implications, ACRI is monitoring its implementation and will act if rights are violated.



# ARAB MINORITY RIGHTS

## MILITARY EXERCISES IN UMM AL-FAHM

**November:** The IDF held military trainings in Umm al-Fahm, the second largest Arab city in the country, to simulate combat with Hezbollah. As a part of the training, soldiers and armored vehicles patrolled the city throughout the day and into the night.

ACRI [appealed](#) to the Minister of Defense, the IDF Chief of Staff, and the Commander of the Northern Command to cease training in the city and ban military trainings in Arab localities, which violate Arab citizens' rights and increase feelings of exclusion and discrimination.



“*The entry of soldiers and military vehicles into an Arab city, the image of its streets as a battlefield...leave little to the imagination regarding how Arab citizens at large, and residents of Umm al-Fahm in particular, are perceived and presented. This message was not solely sent to residents of the city, but also to all citizens of the country.*”

- Atty. Gadeer Nicola, Director of Arab Society Unit



## CRIME IN ARAB SOCIETY

**August:** ACRI learned that the Prime Minister supported authorizing the General Security Services (GSS) to eradicate crime in Arab localities. ACRI immediately [appealed to the Attorney General to oppose this act](#), noting that the use of GSS tools for civilian matters is undemocratic and violates the civil rights of Arab citizens and residents. ACRI rejects the government's framing of crime in Arab society as a matter of "security," as it is the result of decades of systemic government neglect.

**October:** The Ministry of Justice responded in agreement with ACRI's position and stated that the GSS will not be authorized to respond to crime in Arab society.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental risks disproportionately impact the most vulnerable populations in Israel, especially Arab society.

**June:** ACRI learned that wastewater ponds run by the Kolchei HaNegev Company in the area of the Dimona Municipality were unfenced and directly endangered residents of nearby Arab villages such as Qasr al-Sir, especially children. [ACRI appealed to the Mayor of Dimona](#) demanding the ponds be fenced immediately. Following the appeal, the ponds were promptly fenced off.

**October:** For years, ACRI has been advocating against the construction of a phosphate mine in Sde Barir in the Negev. The mine will not only lead to the demolition of homes and displacement of residents, but will also expose all residents in the area to significant health risks. Initially filed on June 21, 2019, [the High Court rejected ACRI's petition](#) on October 11, 2021, but included provisions on health-related issues. Now, [the construction of the mine has been halted](#) at the request of the Environmental Protection Minister.

# THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PALESTINIAN WORKERS INJURED IN WORK ACCIDENTS

On February 2, 2021, ACRI petitioned the High Court of Justice against the National Insurance Institute's discriminatory policy not to insure Palestinian workers in Israel, which especially impacts those injured in work accidents in Israel and the settlements. In the petition, ACRI argues that the present situation violates the right to health, equality, property, and privacy of Palestinian workers who were injured in work accidents in Israel and in the settlements, discriminating against them in comparison to Israeli workers and migrant workers in Israel. On May 4, 2021, we received preliminary responses from the National Insurance Institute and Clalit Health Fund stating that the responsibility is on the Ministry of Health. The petition is ongoing.

## STOP FIRING LIVE AMMUNITION AT PALESTINIAN WORKERS CROSSING THE FENCE

On February 9, 2021, ACRI, along with Kav LaOved, appealed to the Commander in Chief of the Central Command and the Chief Military Prosecutor demanding the end of the policy to fire live ammunition at Palestinian workers crossing through the separation fence in the northern West Bank, as well as to investigate the shootings and prosecute the soldiers and their commanders. The extent of cases in which live ammunition was fired at Palestinian workers demonstrates that this is a deliberate policy and requires systematic and comprehensive examination.

## EAST JERUSALEM

**The Right to Protest in East Jerusalem:** Palestinian residents in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem, have been protesting against home evictions for over a decade with weekly protests.

On April 19, 2020, [ACRI successfully appealed to the Department of Justice](#) regarding restrictions on demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of May 2021, the Israeli Police have deployed large forces to disperse the non-violent protests. ACRI received testimonies that the police fired water cannons and skunk water into closed structures, endangering children and the elderly, and threw stun grenades at non-violent protesters without warning. Throughout the week, The Israeli Police used these same dangerous crowd control measures, including checkpoints and barricades, water cannons and skunk water, stun grenades, tear gas, and sponge-coated bullets against Palestinian worshippers in the Old City and Al Aqsa Mosque.

Following an escalation in police brutality against protesters throughout East Jerusalem, on May 10, 2021, [ACRI appealed to remove the checkpoints and barricades at Sheikh Jarrah](#) that [violate the freedom of movement and expression](#). We continue to appeal against the use of skunk water and violent crowd control measures used by the Israeli Police against protesters throughout Israel and especially in East Jerusalem. Additionally, ACRI is filing a Freedom of Information request into the Israeli Police's use of crowd control methods in East Jerusalem.

**Access to Emergency Services:** On March 15, 2021, ACRI appealed to the Mayor of Jerusalem, the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Command, the Fire and Rescue Commissioner, and the Minister of Internal Security, demanding the establishment of a coordination mechanism to allow the immediate entry of firefighters and rescue crews into Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the separation wall and under the authority of the Israeli government. This comes following incidents in which emergency services were blocked at checkpoints and unable to reach their destination or arrived significantly late.

# THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

## PALESTINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

**October:** Minister of Defense Benny Gantz declared six Palestinian civil society organizations operating in the West Bank as terrorist organizations. ACRI immediately released a statement in solidarity with these organizations and called upon the Minister of Defense to reverse the decision. ACRI joined leading Israeli human rights organizations in opposing this assault on Palestinian civil society and the authorities' ongoing campaign to delegitimize human rights organizations. ACRI also led members of the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations (INCLO) in [opposing this assault on Palestinian civil society](#).

**November:** Two weeks after six Palestinian civil society organizations were labelled as terrorist organizations, a [report](#) revealed that NSO Group's Pegasus spyware was found on the phones of employees from these organizations. ACRI [appealed to the Attorney General](#) on November 8 to immediately end the use of Pegasus spyware in the Occupied Territories.



Representatives from ACRI, alongside leading Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, standing in solidarity against the Israeli government's targeting of Palestinian civil society.

## CHECKPOINT 300

Every day, thousands of Palestinians pass through Checkpoint 300, which is notoriously overcrowded with inhumane conditions that pose risk of injury, suffocation, and the spread of COVID-19. ACRI initially filed [a petition](#) to the High Court in December 2020, demanding the Police and Civil Administration to improve conditions and allow women, children, and the elderly to pass through a humanitarian route.

**October - December:** ACRI [submitted testimonies to the High Court](#) that illustrated the inhumane conditions were a result of the checkpoint's operations. A hearing was held on December 20, and, on January 3, the High Court rejected our petition, but agreed with our claims and provided recommendations to remedy each of the issues addressed in ACRI's petition, including to reduce overcrowding and allow women to pass through the humanitarian route. ACRI continues to monitor the conditions at Checkpoint 300 and the implementation of the Court's recommendations.

## EAST JERUSALEM

Palestinian residents of Jerusalem face [systemic discrimination and neglect](#) in nearly all areas of life, especially in policing where they are subject to over-policing and disproportionate use of force.

**October:** ACRI [appealed to the Minister of Public Security](#) against the Police's use of riot control measures, including water cannons and skunk water, in response to gatherings of Palestinian youth in the area of the Damascus Gate.

**November:** ACRI [petitioned the High Court of Justice](#) demanding that cameras be installed in police booths located at the entrance to the Damascus Gate. These police booths have become sites of enormous police brutality and installing cameras will deter Police from engaging in violent conduct.



Police in Damascus Gate Plaza, 2021.  
Photo by Jared River

# POLICY ADVOCACY

## MUNICIPAL POLICING

The municipal policing project, passed as a temporary order in 2011, expanded the powers of municipal inspectors. Since 2011, it has operated as a temporary "pilot" program to monitor and examine the program's effectiveness. Despite no evidence of its effectiveness, the program has expanded to more than 70 local authorities. Data collected on the program reveals a trend of rising enforcement in Arab localities where municipal policing is present, and declining enforcement in Jewish localities. This year, the Ministry of Public Security intended to make municipal policing permanent. In response, ACRI submitted comments to the Ministry of Public Security, participated in Knesset discussions, and opposed a proposal to extend the program to regional councils.

**July:** The Finance Committee agreed with our position and extended the program by temporary order for another year, rather than make it permanent. Since then, ACRI has continued to hold meetings with the Minister of Public Security and his staff on the matter and submitted a proposal to end the municipal policing program, to cease its expansion, or at the least to ensure non-discrimination in the program.

## EQUALITY IN THE BASIC LAWS

Since the enactment of the Nation-State Law, ACRI and partner organizations have advocated for the need to enshrine equality into Israel's Basic Laws, which serve as the basis for a future Constitution. In the previous and current Knesset, several bills were proposed to enact the Basic Law on Equality. ACRI addressed each of these proposals and participated in Knesset discussions.

**September:** ACRI participated in a discussion held by the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee on the need to enshrine the right to equality in the Basic Laws and, ahead of the discussion, submitted a position paper detailing the necessity and urgency of a Basic Law: Equality, emphasizing that it is especially important due to the diverse nature of Israeli society and in light of the enactment of the Nation-State Law as a Basic Law.

## SAFEGUARDING DEBTORS' RIGHTS

**July - December:** For years, ACRI has been monitoring legislation to privatize debt collection through **private collection companies**. In July, the new Knesset reintroduced the privatization of debt collection to the legislative agenda. ACRI attended all legislative proceedings and Knesset debates on the matter and held meetings with the Chairman of the Interior Committee, as well as other Knesset Members. On December 2, ACRI submitted comments to the proposed legislation, which have since been incorporated into the proposed legislation, including: restricting enforcement by private companies, increasing supervision and oversight, and safeguarding the rights of people in debt. ACRI continues to monitor the proposed legislation.

**August:** ACRI learned that the Enforcement and Collection Authority intends to use **body cameras** for debt enforcement and collection officers. ACRI expressed support for this initiative, on the one hand, as it has the potential to protect debtors' rights and prevent unnecessary instances of violence in highly charged situations. On the other hand, there is significant potential for violating civil rights, especially the right to privacy. On August 10, ACRI [appealed to the Enforcement and Collection Authority](#) with a series of principles, including protecting debtors' privacy, preventing the misuse of documentation, requiring consent to be filmed, and ensuring oversight over the program. ACRI continues to monitor the initiative.



# PUBLIC HOTLINE

Since the start of the COVID-19 vaccination program in Israel, the Public Hotline received 120+ complaints and questions regarding discrimination against unvaccinated employees, mostly from workers in the private sector. In the second half of 2021, ACRI's Public Hotline received approximately **50 inquiries per week** and took on **78 cases**.

## POVERTY



Poverty-related issues were the most common inquiries, including public housing, debt, and social security rights.

## STATUS



Inquiries related to the Ban on Family Unification were the second most popular topic of inquiry during the reporting period.

## COVID-19



Inquiries related to COVID regulations and implications in the workplace have been frequent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ASSISTING VULNERABLE WOMEN

ACRI's Public Hotline frequently receives inquiries from vulnerable women, including survivors of domestic violence, sex work, and trafficking.

In one case, a resident of Gaza fled to Israel to escape life-threatening violence from her father and brother. Once in Israel, she was forced to engage in prostitution. ACRI appealed to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Occupied Territories on her behalf and, as a result, she received a residency permit, allowing her to access and receive welfare. ACRI continues to assist her with legal matters.

In another case, a mother and her daughter fled to Israel to escape violence and sexual abuse by a family member. The mother and daughter waited months to receive welfare services. ACRI has successfully assisted the family with accessing medical care and registering the daughter for the education system. Now, ACRI is appealing to the Ministry of Welfare, demanding they receive welfare services, as well as against a complaint regarding the mother's parenting that a social worker submitted without speaking to the mother in her native language.

## PALESTINIANS EXCLUDED FROM GREEN PASSPORT

Many Palestinian residents of Israel, the majority of whom are married to Israeli citizens, contacted ACRI's Public Hotline due to [being unable to access the Ministry of Health's Green Pass](#). This not only barred access to certain public places, but also jeopardized Palestinian residents' access to employment and services.

In response, ACRI appealed to the Ministry of Health to change the policy and issue Green Passes to Palestinians living in Israel who are insured through Israel's health funds and have been vaccinated, tested, or recovered.

## SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHTS OF DETAINEES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

ACRI appealed to the Chief of Police of the Judea and Samaria District Police regarding the payment of bail for Palestinian detainees, demanding that it be possible to make the payment remotely. Today, a Palestinian must travel to the police station, pay at the post office, and return to the police station, which requires significant travel through the West Bank and entry into the Beit El settlement, which is complicated for Palestinians. This complicated procedure prolongs detention periods and violates the rights to liberty, equality, and dignity.

# EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

(JANUARY - JUNE)

## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

As the education system swung in and out of distance-learning due to COVID-19, ACRI sustained its efforts to broaden the department's reach, as best exemplified by the success of our online campaign for the International Day for the Elimination Against Racism, held annually on March 21. The campaign involved a number of artists, creators, and YouTube stars popular among children in Jewish and Arab communities throughout Israel, including [Yossi Zabari](#), [Tamer Nafar](#), [Tom Trager](#), [Lana Meinart](#), [Anat Hadid](#), [Ranin Bsharat](#), and [Ari Marzuk](#). These influential celebrities shared their own personal experiences and sent a clear message against racism on their YouTube and Instagram channels, receiving over 105,000 views during the campaign. Based on these videos, ACRI prepared educational lessons in Hebrew and Arabic on the importance of combating racism and distributed these lesson plans to thousands of teachers.

### RESPONDING TO RACIST INCITEMENT AND CIVIL UNREST

- Organized an online meeting for educators on how to deal with racism in the classroom
- Assisted Tel Aviv University's Department of Education with organizing an online meeting for their students on dealing with the wave of racism and violence
- Advised Achva College in dealing with faculty and students following the civil unrest and hostilities
- Wrote a letter with the Human Rights Education Forum regarding a principal from Ra'anana throwing stones at Arabs in Lod.
- Participated in a demonstration with other organizations in front of the Ministry of Education regarding the principal from Ra'anana.
- Organized an online meeting for educators dealing with racism and violence in the classroom.
- Guiding the Arab Civics Teachers Forum in scheduling meetings and creating appropriate materials for educators.

### ANTI-BIAS TRAINING IN SOCIAL SERVICES

ACRI, in collaboration with the Committee on the Integration of Israeli Citizens of Ethiopian Descent into Israeli Society in the Prime Minister's Office, is working on a task force to teach and promote effective ways to deal with biases that impact the provision of social services.

The team is developing a model for dealing with biases—personally, professionally, and organizationally—among social service providers, and will monitor its implementation. This educational, anti-bias training will be carried out systemically throughout the social service sector.

ACRI held five meetings with staff members representing all local authorities in various fields, including education, welfare, police, and health. Additionally, we have led five meetings specifically on recognizing biases in personal and professional work.

### DEVELOPING LESSON PLANS ON THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN

ACRI is working in collaboration with Shatil and IDEA: The Center for Liberal Democracy to develop educational lesson plans regarding the exclusion of women. Meetings and working groups focused on political education, the history of exclusion of women, multiculturalism, and a case study focusing on exclusion in the IDF.

Moving forward, educators will submit lesson plans to be tested and approved by the forum, with a target audience of teenagers in educational institutions. Beginning next school year, these plans will be available for widespread distribution through an online, common database.

# EDUCATION

FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
(JUNE-DECEMBER)

# הסדנא الورشة

מרחב חינוכי לדמוקרטיה וזכויות אדם  
فضاء تربوي للديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان



ACRI's Education Department engaged Jewish and Arab educators, teachers-in-training, and students:

- 72 participants in continuing education courses for teachers, such as "Racism in Education" and "Activist Pedagogy and Active Citizenship"
- 129 participants in workshops for teachers-in-training, including "Cultural Sensitivity" and "Education Against Racism" workshops
- Over 100 participants in pre-military preparatory courses on human rights and international law
- 300 participants in a conference on the legal and pedagogical aspects of freedom of expression of teachers
- 540 students participated in a conference on Climate and Human Rights for International Human Rights Day
- 150 members of the Human Rights Education Forum
- 280 members of the Arab Civics Teachers Forum

## "TEACHER, ARE YOU ALLOWED TO SAY THAT?"

ACRI produced a [rights booklet](#) and [podcast](#) on [freedom of expression in the education system](#) as a guide for educators, including resources on what is permitted in school and outside of school, as well as guidance on responding to potential rights violations.



"Teacher, are you allowed to say that?": ACRI's campaign on freedom of expression in Israel's education system



"The biggest threat to human rights in the 21st century is the climate crisis"

## POLICY

- **July:** appealed to the Minister of Education to promote anti-racism and democracy education.
- **October:** sent a proposal to the Chairman of the Education Committee on all education issues
- **November:** participated in a discussion in the Knesset's Education Committee on climate education.
- **November:** assisted the Ministry of Education with a [publication](#) on anti-racist education

## EDUCATING ON CLIMATE JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

To mark International Human Rights Day on December 10, ACRI's Education Department held a conference on climate justice and human rights for educators and students, which was joined by the Minister of Environmental Protection, Minister of Regional Cooperation, and climate activists. ACRI produced and distributed age-appropriate lesson plans, including videos and interactive lessons, for all schools in the country in [Hebrew](#) and [Arabic](#). The conference was attended by 540 students, along with their teachers.