

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

We don't know who she is, but we know we can save her life...



Gun Free Kitchen Tables

June 2021

A project of Isha L'Isha Haifa Feminist Center

A Word from our Team

The year 2020, which became "the year of the pandemic," made GFKT's calling especially urgent. We are doing our utmost to disarm homes and streets in Israel, or at least to reduce their levels of armament. This became doubly vital in conditions of multiple sources of stress, of families' confinement, of – for many – economic deprivation. We achieved some results, but the policy of mass civilian armament remained intact, and it was in this context that the number of women shot dead with licensed guns in 2020 more than doubled. Meanwhile unlicensed ("illegal") arms continued plaguing Israel's Palestinian citizenry, virtually unaddressed by the government and police.

As we prepare to send you this report, yet another ceasefire stops another period of horrific bombing visited upon the people of the Gaza Strip and of far less destructive but still lethal rockets fired into Israel. As claimed in an op-ed by GFKT Coordinator, recently published (in [Hebrew](#) and [Arabic](#)) on Haaretz news site, "Israel's small arms policies and its war policies are directly and intricately linked." The same "algorithm," as it were, guides policy-making in both these areas, manifesting zero interest in violence reduction and preserving lives. Supremacy and expansion and, above that, staying in power, all trump lives and block any possible moves towards negotiated political solutions. And thus today, under the weight of violence, bombs and guns, the situation in the region is fast unravelling.

While this reality is at once enraging and profoundly sad, discerning and acknowledging it is vital to any chance of changing it. GFKT's court case against small arms policy, is now at the very forefront of efforts to stop this downward spiral. A recent [Haaretz editorial](#) demonstrated the influence of these efforts on media and public discourse. As did interim decisions (though not yet rulings) handed down by the court earlier this year. These successes are not enough. But they do demonstrate that change is possible and that consistent work, firmly grounded in reality, can make inroads in destructive processes.

Sincerely, Rela Mazali, Adv. Meisa Irshaid, Hedva Eyal, and Heidi Paredes



About Us

Founded in 2010, Gun Free Kitchen Tables (GFKT) is a small arms disarmament and gun control initiative. We challenge claims that more guns mean more security, we work to disarm civil space in Israel and the territories under its control. With its feminist analysis of militarization and its effects on human security, GFKT problematizes and disrupts the normalization of guns in Israeli society.

GFKT opposes reckless small arms practices and policies - in street protests, courtrooms, classrooms, and parliament. Careful coalition work and close coordination with Palestinian feminist groups in Israel, sustain and steadily expand the local movement for gun control.

The GFKT Coalition is proud to represent 17 feminist, civil society and human rights organizations and groups (including three groundbreaking ones that have meanwhile closed their doors¹). We employ multiple strategies including research, independent monitoring and fact-finding, interventions for preventive legislation and policymaking, advocacy, court petitions and civil suits exacting accountability.

GFKT Coalition Members

Abraham Initiatives; Association for Civil Rights in Israel; Coalition of Women for Peace; Hollaback Israel; Isha L'Isha Feminist Center; Israel Women's Network; Itach-Maaki: Women Lawyers for Social Justice; Kulan; L.O.: Combating Violence Against Women; New Profile; Noga: The Israeli Center for Rights of Crime Victims; Organization of Murder Victims' Families; Physicians for Human Rights; Politically Coret; Psychoactive; Tmura: The Antidiscrimination Legal Center; Women and Their Bodies.

266,408 Licensed civilian firearms: including private & company guns as well as guns owned by settlers in both sides of the Green Line (2016).

26,500 firearms of Police, Border Police, Prison Services, Knesset Guard (estimation).

25,000 Military firearms (estimation).

The number of women shot dead with licensed arms in 2020 is 2.5 times the average number of the 4 preceding years.

400,000 Unlicensed firearms (held mostly by Palestinians in Israel) in 2013

100 people were killed in Palestinian communities inside Israel, 90% of whom were shot dead.

¹ The Coalition of Women for Peace, Noga, and Hollaback.

Human Security & Gun Violence

The challenge: Gun violence, with both licensed and unlicensed arms, inflicts continual damage, shatters, and takes many lives in civil society in Israel and the territories it controls. In recent years, gun licensing and proliferation have radically expanded, with small arms multiplying in civilian hands, present everywhere in civil space and with gun violence affecting tens of thousands of lives. Through three successive Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020, violence against women spiraled.

In Palestinian communities inside Israel, discriminatory non-enforcement allows stockpiling of unlicensed guns, not least in the hands of criminal organizations, terrorizing the population. A wave of increasing violence has resulted in over 100 killed in 2020, 90% of whom were shot dead.

The following are statistics on women's gun deaths in 2020:

- 12 women were shot dead: Five women were shot with licensed guns, while 7 women were shot with unlicensed guns.
- The overall number of women shot dead in 2020 is 1.5 times the average number of women shot over the 4 previous years.
- The number of women shot with licensed arms was 2.5 times the average number of women shot with licensed arms over the 4 previous years.

Our data is based on a data set which GFKT obtained from the Israel Police.

Our response: In 2020, GFKT offered a first-of-its kind mine of information on small arms proliferation in Israel's civil spaces through its new website in [Hebrew](#), [Arabic](#) and [English](#). In addition, we collected telling personal testimonies from women and men who have been directly affected by the presence of a gun. We will publicly launch the testimony collection in 2021 and along with striking visual representations especially created by students of the course: "Field Studio-Design for Social Change" at the Visual Communications Department of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design.

Archive of Personal Testimonies



Some of the work created at the annual course on “Field Studio-Design for Social Change” is showcased in this report. Led by lecturers Ruti Kantor and Aviv Alhasid, the 2020 course focused on local gun control issues. Students had the opportunity to learn about the personal stories of women (and some men) from Israel about how guns affect their lives and create visual representations of some of the testimonies.

Both, the testimonies on personal experiences with gun violence collected by GFKT and the creative work developed by students of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design will be soon presented on a special-purpose platform at our new website.



Disarming Civil Space – Gun Law & Regulations

The challenge

For over two years Israel has been without a functioning parliament and government, despite four rounds of elections. This has not, however, suspended or held up the machinery set up by the previous Minister of Public Security to grant more gun licenses under a much-broadened criteria. While no working legislature means that a new firearms law is on hold, pro-gun policy is still in effect: The state has reported significant rises in private civilian gun licensing; Over one-hundred-thousand new gun licenses have been issued in the past five years and the percentage of applications approved has risen; Increasingly loosened licensing criteria go hand in hand with an atmosphere of sanctioned small arms abuse by military, police, border police and sometimes civilians.

Our response

In 2020 we employed legal action extensively to stem this ominous tide. GFKT's petition to the High Court of Justice (filed November 2018) is still in progress, contesting Israel's small arms policy and distinctly shifting views and discourse on the issue. While the state has requested that the petition be dismissed outright, Israel's Attorney General has adopted one of its three demands and (in early 2021) judges championed an additional demand. During 2020, the GFKT Coalition submitted two responses rejecting state claims and asking for a prompt ruling. The next court session is scheduled for 2021.

Our work to achieve policy change also targets the municipal level. In 2020 we inaugurated a Forum of City Council Members and Community Activists. As a result, two of Israel's major cities adopted significant motions changing their small arms policies and a third town is currently considering a similar motion. In addition, to address the escalation of gun violence during the pandemic, GFKT asked for disarmament of guards and soldiers in public and private spaces. As a result, security firms were instructed to collect the arms of furloughed guards and soldiers deployed to assist policing lockdowns were disarmed.

Additional Information on Key Activities

The Petition to the Supreme Court

In late 2018, GFKT led and filed a petition to the High Court of Justice, contesting Israel's small arms policy. The petition demanded:

- 1) the cancellation of the newly expanded licensing criteria,
- 2) instating licensing criteria into legislation, and
- 3) the cancellation of the minister's Executive Order authorizing employees of security firms to bear company arms indiscriminately.

In response to our petition, Israel's Attorney General has adopted one of its three demands. He determined that gun licensing criteria should be included in the law and reviewed by the Parliament, rather than left to ministerial discretion. In addition, the court has instructed the state to report back on its preparatory work to reduce the number of private security guards bearing arms home after duty.

The state sent a request to the Court to dismiss the petition. In response, the GFKT Coalition submitted two responses rejecting state claims for dismissing the petition. **As the case unfolds, GFKT continues to collect data and monitor developments closely.**

Gun Control at the Municipal Level - Achievements

- The Forum of City Council Members and Activists, launched in early 2020, includes now five municipalities (Tel Aviv, Haifa, Ramat Hasharon, Lod and Mghar).
- In September the **Tel Aviv City Council** passed a groundbreaking motion stipulating that all security guards employed by the city (directly or indirectly) will stop bearing arms after duty. Armed city employees will deposit firearms at designated collection sites on concluding their workshifts. Also, future city tenders for sub-contracting private security firms will assign precedence to firms ensuring the deposit of guards' guns at the end of workshifts. **This is a first municipal-level resolution on small arms policy.**
- In November, a similar decision was taken by the city of **Haifa**. A councilwoman of the municipal council in the Galilee town of **Mghar** has proposed a similar motion which is currently under serious discussion.

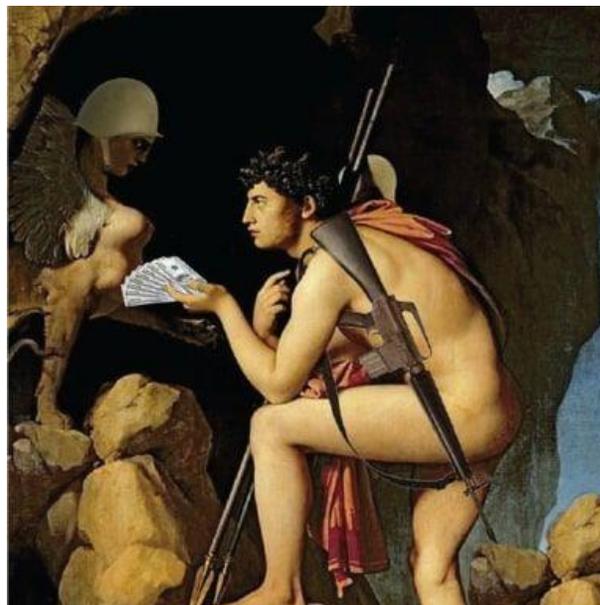
Gun Control under Covid-19 Restrictions

Coronavirus confinement, marked by a sharp increase of violence within families, led GFKT to ramp up its push for the preventive disarmament of homes. Demands were sent to the Ministers of Public Security and of Welfare to instruct private security firms to collect and deposit the firearms of guards furloughed under confinement. Another demand was sent to the Ministers of Defense and Public Security to disarm soldiers deployed to assist policing. **Security firms were indeed instructed to collect the arms of furloughed guards, and the troops deployed were disarmed.**

Transparency & Accountability

The challenge: Authorities in charge of licensing and controlling civilian small arms are not forthcoming with data and information. In some cases, they claim “security risks” involved in disclosing facts and figures on small arms, a common and frequently effective move in a highly militarized state. Other cases seem to indicate severe flaws in data collection. In addition, they are not attuned to feminist and civil society monitoring of their activity.

Our response: we submitted several requests for information on gun crime and gun control in 2020 and reached significant achievements. Information that was being kept confidential (the so-called “Ronen Report”) has been published in its entirety and the last request for information filed was answered significantly faster than in the past.



“Art of Guns”, Slogan Field Studio Course Bezalel

The “Ronen Report”

The Ronen Report was published by the Ronen Committee appointed to examine the implementation of the greatly expanded criteria for gun license eligibility. The appointment of this committee was the result of pressure and opposition from civil society organizations, including GFKT, to Israel’s small arms policy. For more information: read [Haaretz article](#).

In February 2020, we submitted an amended administrative petition, demanding its public release. This step finally forced the Ministry of Public Security to release the report in mid-June, making it fully accessible on the Ministry’s website. This significant achievement was made possible after an information request, two petitions, court discussion, the exchange of three counsels representing the Ministry, and repeated rejections of our demands to review the report and its recommendations.

Later in 2020 we submitted three more requests for information on gun crime and gun control – to the Ministry of Public Security, the Israel Police, and the Ministry of Welfare. Unlike our previous requests, we received responses to these three requests relatively swiftly (though at least one of them is unsatisfactory). **We consider this change in responsiveness an important fruit of our prolonged efforts.**

Collective Power

Jewish-Palestinian Study Group

GFKT facilitates the Jewish-Palestinian feminist study group “Life Without Guns” on small arms activism, which concluded its third year in 2020 and focuses on gun violence in Palestinian society in Israel. A wide variety of issues were discussed in this year’s meetings, including:

- The model of municipal gun control implemented in Oakland California, as well as emerging developments in municipal level gun control work in Israel.
- Unofficial institutions within Palestinian society inside Israel that mediate, judge, and punish crimes.
- Models of transitional justice and the creation and galvanizing of social movements.

Mutual knowledge building on our respective, intersecting, interdependent but different realities has included in-depth analysis of local gun crime and its direct, differential effects on women and men, boys, and girls.



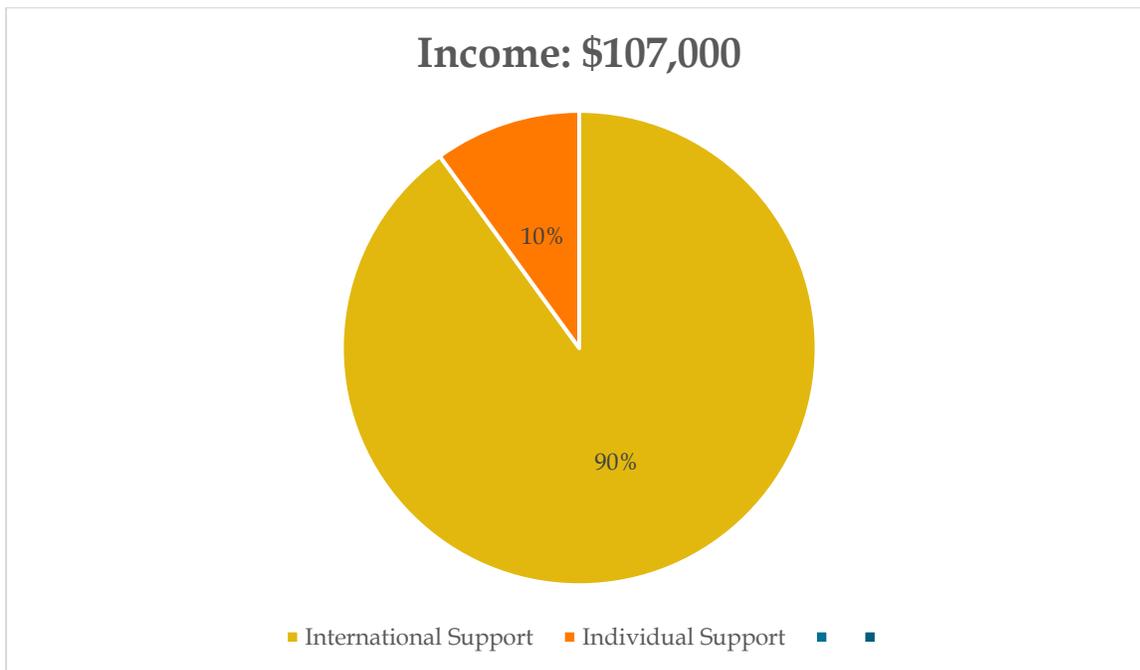
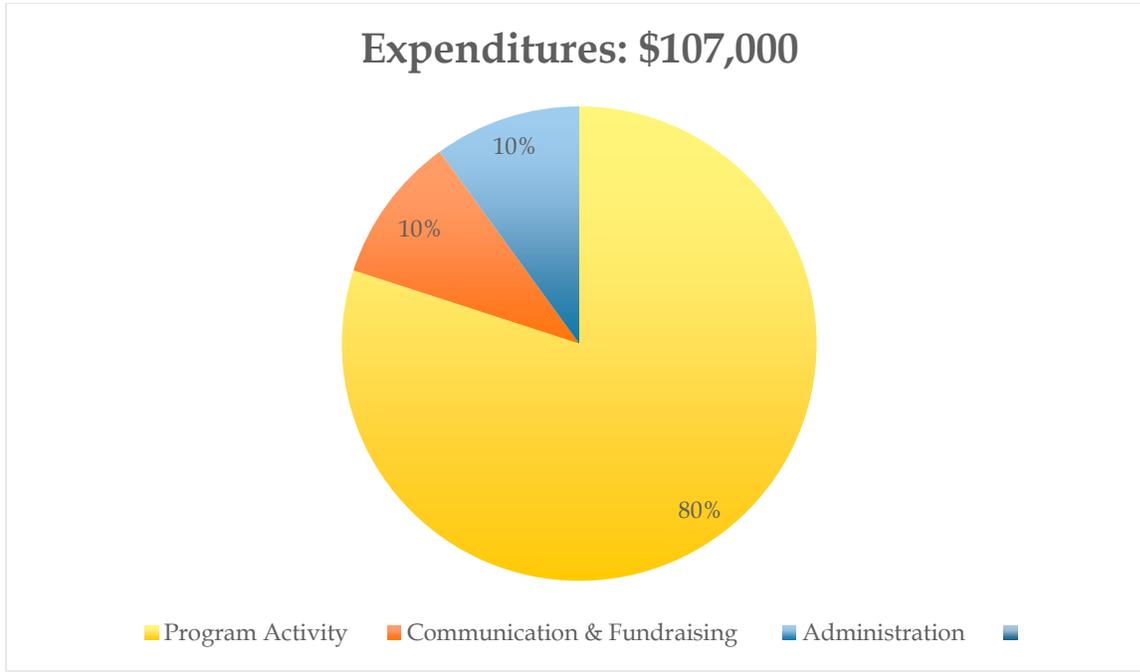
“Big Bus”, Slogan Field Studio Bezael

Women Against Weapons (WAW)

Women Against Weapons (WAW) was born from the GFKT-facilitated study group (see above). In early 2020, Women Against Weapons emerged as a more visible and formally defined feminist action group for disarmament and the eradication of armed crime in Israel, particularly within Palestinian society. Its evolution constituted a shift from a feminist group focused primarily on knowledge building to one for combined learning and focused action.

Still as a study group in 2020, Women Against Weapons formulated a policy brief on ending gun violence in Palestinian society in Israel. The group secured the endorsement of some 30 organizations, including the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel and the National Committee of Mayors of Arab Municipalities in Israel. Equipped with this document, activists affiliated to GFKT and WAW took a very active, impactful "seat at the table," of discussions led by the National Committee of Mayors of Arab Municipalities. The significant presence of expert feminist women at a forum discussing a traditionally masculinized set of subjects was unprecedented. This Committee was designated as the government’s civil society liaison for finalizing and implementing a government program-in-the-making for stopping gun crime in Palestinian society inside Israel.

Financial Overview 2020



Thank You!

GFKT National Coalition Partners

Beyond GFKT Coalition's member organizations, we conduct coordinated work with 3 Palestinian feminist organizations in Israel and with the Palestinian-Jewish Mahapach-Taghir organization. Numerous independent activists are also affiliated with GFKT.

Supporters, Partners and Donors in 2020

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<i>Barbara Kane</i>	<i>Sandra Wallenstein</i>
<i>Kvinna till Kvinna</i>	<i>Terry & Carol Winograd</i>

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Your help will enable us to continue disarming civil space and promoting human security.

A tax-deductible contribution can be made via our [home page](#) or sent to the **New Israel Fund, marked donor-advised to Isha l'Isha for Gun Free Kitchen Tables POB 96712, Washington DC 20077-7438**

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But we know we can
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Gun Free Kitchen Tables Coalition
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