



GUN FREE KITCHEN TABLES

A project of Isha L'Isha Haifa Feminist Center

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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



REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR: MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

I find the past year or rather the past sixteen months still difficult to reflect on; Still too large-
looming and close-up, still too inexorably ongoing, and still too heartrendingly, unimaginably
imaginable. It is clear, without claiming a symmetry of any kind, that on either side of the
borders stubbornly unrecognized by the state of Israel, the events of these months have
totally ruptured the fabric of reality and society—for citizens and for subjects of military rule,
for Palestinians and for Jews, for diverse groups and for individuals. Having said that, though,
a specific campaign of devastating, arbitrary, disproportionate, unhinged militarized violence,
has been practiced over all these months by the state whose citizenship I hold. It is that state,
its government and its army, from which I, as a citizen, can and must demand accountability.
It is that state for whose deeds I share responsibility. I must watch, record and study, invoke
the feminist method of naming what I see, and publicly, explicitly call out my state and its
actions. As a dear friend of mine put it, this is the least I can do, this is the most I can do.
Accordingly, as early as November 2023 and repeatedly since, I have named the warfare
conducted by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank a genocide, which I (and
many others) fully believe it to be, beyond its obvious, appalling breaches of international
conventions and law.

Concurrently, over these months, Israel has implemented hyper-armament among its Jewish
citizens, effectively privatizing human and public security in a handover of (supposed)
responsibility and accountability to individuals armed with guns. Public debates have largely
ignored this reckless gun drive, conducted under the pretext of wartime emergency. It has
been sidelined by the oversize dimensions of warfare and by the relentless government push
to dismantle the separation of powers and with it any chance of democratic rule. But I view
mass civilian armament as, among other things, a distinct extension of the genocidal
campaign embroiling the whole of historical Palestine. Applying different means, it is a policy
that directs devastation inwards, towards the state's Palestinian citizens. It knowingly feeds
and enables the criminal gun violence now controlling and decimating entire Palestinian
communities in Israel. It further forfeits the lives of Palestinian citizens through exposing them
to random shootings by Jewish gun bearers who go unpunished when they claim a sense
that their lives were in danger. Finally, the hyper-armed, volatile circumstances generated by
this policy pose a serious risk of encouraging a civil war, perhaps by no coincidence.

Guided by these views and a determination to resist the processes underway, I envision and
support both a complete end to Israel's warfare (which at present is almost totally one-sided)



and an "expiration date" for mass civilian armament. The latter, formulated by the core staff of GFKT, has joined many members of the GFKT Coalition in repeated public calls to hold the government to its claims of mass armament as an exceptional emergency measure. As such, we have claimed, it must be reversed in tandem with a return to relative calm. The state must devise and publicize clear plans for resuming and greatly improving its responsibility for public and human security. Hundreds of thousands of guns should be re-called, collected, safely stored and later destroyed. Responsible, thoroughly trained and fully accountable state agencies, rather than random individuals, should be charged with the measured, careful, socially sensitive and strictly rare deployment of armed violence, if and when necessary. Holding such a vision is difficult in today's reality, but it is a vital necessity.

Rela Mazali

Co-Founder & Coordinator, Gun Free Kitchen Tables

GUN FREE KITCHEN TABLES

Gun Free Kitchen Tables (GFKT) was founded in 2010 as an independent project under Isha L'Isha Haifa Feminist Center to challenge Israel's steadily loosening gun policy. GFKT was the first (and for many years the only) small arms disarmament and gun control initiative in Israel. Our mission, informed by a feminist analysis of militarization, is to disarm civil spaces and tighten gun control in Israel and the territories under its control. Steering a coalition of 20 local feminist, human rights, and social change organizations and drawing on their diverse perspectives and expertise, GFKT amasses and shares a distinct body of knowledge on small arms proliferation, policies, and impacts. Through persistent work, GFKT has become a widely acknowledged leader in promoting intersectional gender- and minority-aware gun control. Extending beyond Coalition members, our extensive network of organizations and groups with distinctly different perspectives unites a vibrant civil society movement in opposition to proliferating small arms.



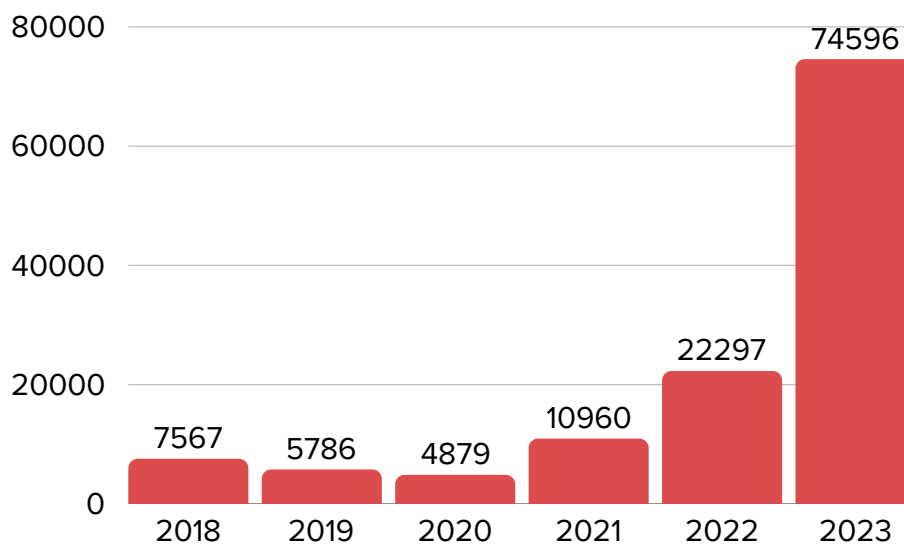
THE CONTEXT:

CIVILIAN ARMAMENT AS AN UNRECOGNIZED CRISIS

Since 2018, Israel's governments have adopted a consistent policy of increased civilian armament, but this trend accelerated dramatically following the events of October 7th, 2023. The government's failure to protect Israeli communities created widespread public anxiety about security, which was exploited to loosen gun licensing regulations drastically and swiftly.

The rise in proliferation has been staggering. Private gun license approvals increased by 334% in 2023 compared to the previous year, with the number of license holders jumping by 40% in that single year. Civilian companies authorized to arm employees increased their armed workforce by nearly 30%, and newly established "security squads" armed approximately 13,000 volunteers with rifles. This massive expansion occurred despite the state controller's criticism of significantly reduced mental fitness checks by gun licensing authorities in spite of rising post-trauma, depression, and anxiety.

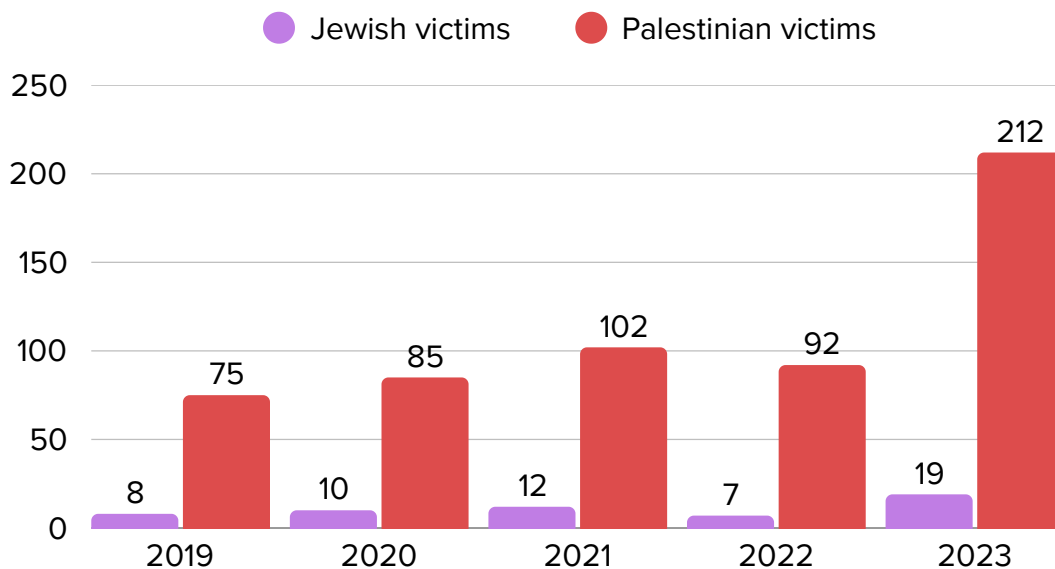
Number of private gun licenses approved by year:





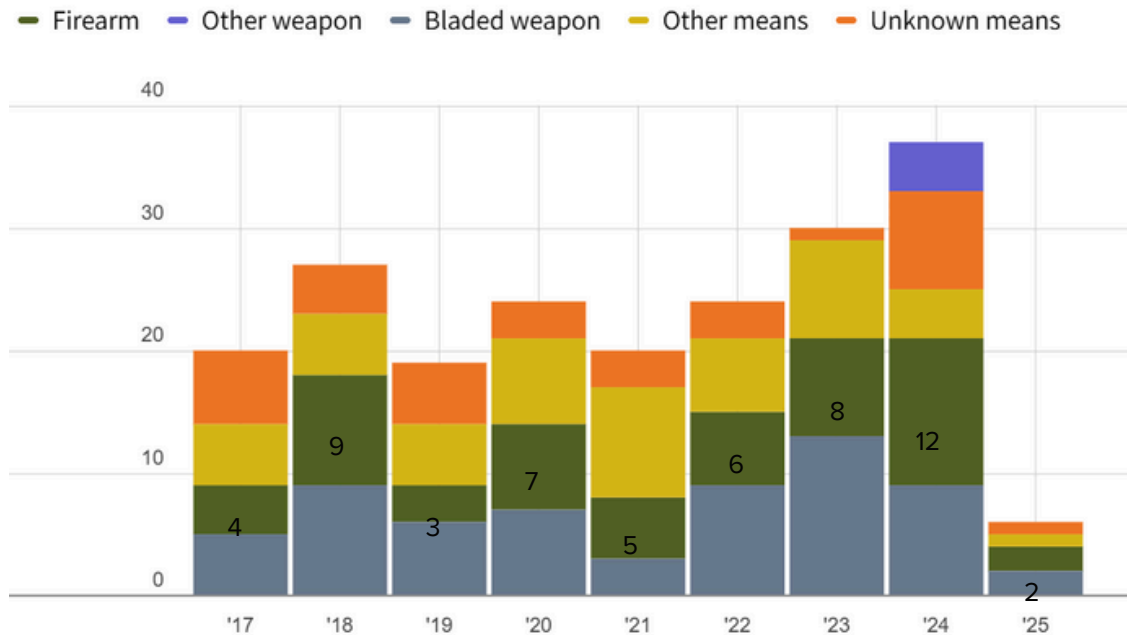
While largely still unrecognized by the Jewish majority, the proliferation crisis is already generating grave consequences. One of these is severely increased inequality. Gun murders in Israel doubled between 2021 and 2023, with Palestinian citizens bearing a disproportionate burden of this violence. Though representing just 20% of the population, Palestinian citizens accounted for 91% of gun violence victims in 2023. Women, particularly Palestinian women, have faced increasing threats from armed partners and family members. Women's criminal murders in Israel reached an all-time high in 2024, and almost one-third of them (12 women victims) were killed with guns; all of these Palestinian citizens. The crisis extends to youth as well, with twenty minors killed with guns between 2020 and 2023. Among minors hospitalized with gun wounds, 91% were from Israel's Palestinian minority.

Gun homicide victims by community: Jewish, Palestinian





Femicide by type of weapon and year



Source: [Israel's Gender Knowledge Center](#)

Further intensifying the immediate human toll, gun proliferation is also shrinking democratic spaces. In Palestinian communities, hundreds of guns and thousands of ammunition rounds stolen annually from licensed sources fuel armed criminal violence which is also enabled by entrenched state practices of discriminatory, neglectful law enforcement. The dangerous environment this creates shuts down public spaces, public exchanges and debate, and effectively rules out democratic process, even on the basic municipal level. This goes hand in hand with the well-documented, harsh, current suppression by police and government of Palestinian citizens' freedom of speech on social media, in protests, etc. Meanwhile, civilian gun bearers often threaten Jewish left-wing protesters and human rights supporters, creating a climate of fear that undermines civic participation.

Government oversight of gun bearers is virtually nonexistent. An undisclosed list of civilian organizations is authorized to arm employees without proper screening by licensing authorities with primary oversight responsibility delegated to employees within these organizations—creating serious conflicts of interest. Licensing authorities have repeatedly clarified that they do not conduct oversight of private gun bearers after approving their licenses. These systemic failures of supervision have been documented and reported by multiple authorities but continue to go unaddressed.

This context underscores the critical importance of our work in analyzing and identifying failures while envisioning and advocating for change in laws and practices.



REVISING AND REINVENTING STRATEGY

Under its policy of continued warfare, Israel's government has largely paralyzed parliamentary opposition, municipal institutions, and other civil society actors, many of which have been overwhelmed and preoccupied by the pressing demands of "crisis mode." Meanwhile, repeated government measures exploiting the confusion of "war," are concentrating power in the hands of the executive branch and increasing authoritarianism. Democratic practices have been steadily eroded amid rising firearm proliferation, replacing dialogue and civic engagement with armed intimidation and force. Over the past year, honest democratic process has been blocked in parliament by far-right parliament members' verbal attacks against civil-society representatives expressing oppositional views at committee meetings, by Knesset Guard brutally denying entrance to non-violent protest, by national security minister Itamar Ben Gvir boycotting committee meetings while refusing to follow procedures and provide necessary data. Recently, Knesset Member Almog Cohen of the extreme-right party, Otzma Yehudit, even drew his handgun to threaten protestors attempting to block the entrance to parliament. Among other things, gun licensing authorities have persistently ignored a new health questionnaire developed by the health ministry to improve the screening of candidates for gun licenses. In this context, GFKT has refused to become a convenient fig-leaf. We have discontinued direct efforts to achieve policy change. The core team as well as various Coalition members have only attended selected Knesset committee meetings dealing with exceptionally dangerous extensions of gun carry (such as the proposal that all reserve soldiers retain permanent possession of their army rifles).

We have, however, continued to register formal, written objections (known as "comments") to repeated amendments in gun law, further expanding civilian armament. We have maintained this strategy not in hopes of changing policy or blocking amendments but, rather, to document the cumulative, irresponsible, and (in our view) criminal gun policy decisions adopted by the government. Distinctly criminal aspects of this (and last) years' wholesale hand-out of guns to more and more Jewish men (for the most part) have already been exposed in both media and courts and, in some cases, admitted to by national security ministry officials. Recognizing the galloping shut-down of Israel's already racist, undemocratic democracy, and the irrelevance of previous strategies, we have turned the past year into a search for new or amended channels of action. As the map continues to change under our feet, we are still in the middle of this process.



GFKT has retained its commitment to monitoring, analyzing, and addressing the complex issue of civilian armament in Israel. Tracking and documenting developments have become more vital than ever given the hyper-armament crisis. Any future disarmament requires a clear, accurate account of the unfolding small arms reality. Formal objections to authorities, annual requests for information, the responses these elicit from authorities, and independent research, are all parts of the factual-historical record of this critical phase of Israelis' civilian armament.

This is coupled with consistent analysis of the effects of civilian armament on local society, through a gender and group-sensitive lens. GFKT's perspective has illuminated often-overlooked gendered and intersectional dimensions of weapon proliferation, highlighting its differential and disproportionate effects on women and marginalized communities and the ... ways in which it reinforces existing power imbalances. Accordingly, we have spotlighted previously unexplored patterns and relationships. We were the first, for example, to recognize the direct connection between gun licensing policies and the spread of unlicensed ("illegal") guns and gun crime within Israel's Palestinian citizenry. A GFKT volunteer in dialogue with GFKT core staff and Coalition members led extensive research into creating gun-free zones in the civil sphere. We view this study as an important foundation for potential future action while keeping it unpublished at present to preclude backlash.

While GFKT has always directed much of its advocacy towards, and through, civil society organizations who then convey our perceptions and knowledge to their constituencies, the past year saw an added emphasis on this strategy. By building collaborations with CSOs who agree with our mission, or with aspects of it, despite adhering to diverse political outlooks, we have been able to continue amplifying our messages and creating a broader disarmament movement.



GFKT RESPONSES IN 2024

Insisting on Transparency

Reviewing and collating data from multiple sources, GFKT continued to monitor legislation, document criminal gun violence, gun deaths, and injuries, as well as continued collection of personal testimonies.

- 5 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act to: the Health Ministry, the police, the army, and the Ministry of National Security (for key findings, see our October 2024 Update).
- An administrative petition against Israel's Health Ministry elicited the requested (though poorly disaggregated) data.
- Official launch of the Magrefa (the Rake), the GFKT AI-based tech tool for independent data collection on local gun crime and gun violence in civil spaces in partnership with the Disrupt Foundation.



Magrefa launch at Disrupt Foundation's offices



Sharing and Distributing Knowledge

Sharing findings, data, and analysis with relevant stakeholders in the field, while encouraging them to adopt and integrate these into their activities.

- Actively sharing our findings and messages with over 20 civil society organizations and groups in and beyond the GFKT Coalition, while consulting some on specific initiatives addressing civilian armament; Continuing and new collaborations with the Israel Democracy Institute, the Rackman Center, Sikkuy-Aufoq, and others; Filling a leading role in civil society networks focused on disarmament, such as the one led by Shatil.
- Continued collaborative work with Palestinian sister organizations and activists through Women Against Weapons and independent activists enabling a steady flow of information sharing, joint learning, and imagining new initiatives.
- US officials and legislators were alerted to abuses with US-exported firearms through collaborative efforts of GFKT and a team at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).
- Outreach, discussions, and joint efforts with international figures and organizations, including Prof. Jonathan M. Metzel and others, engendering joint action as well as a prolific exchange of ideas and knowledge.
- Distributing new findings through periodical “Updates from the Kitchen Table”: May 2024 and October 2024.



The Annual Conference of the Association for the History, Sociology & Philosophy of Science at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (see below).



Advancing Civil Society Engagement

Many civil society actors have reached a belated recognition of the ongoing crisis of civilian armament. Given GFKT's consistent building and sharing of knowledge and analysis, many of our views and messages have been integrated into their publications and activities.

- A two-part lecture series for women's groups and activists on civilian armament, new developments since October 7, 2023, and future activism at Isha L'Isha Feminist Center.
- A follow-up panel on the topic on the occasion of the International Day to End Violence Against Women.
- A report on the impact of the ongoing war on women, including references to GFKT data and messages by Israel's Gender Knowledge Center (a GFKT Coalition member) and Adva Center.
- A report by Israel Women's Network (a GFKT Coalition member) cited civilian armament as a contributing factor to the rising levels of violence against women (see: The Quiet Front).
- A Hebrew University gender studies course incorporated texts by the GFKT team.
- A keynote on firearms and public health was presented by GFKT's Hedva Eyal to a large, diverse audience at *The Annual Conference of the Association for the History, Sociology & Philosophy of Science* at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.
- The Medicalization of Civilian Armament Proliferation of Weapons in the Civilian Space, Violence and the role of the Medical Community by GFKT and Physicians for Human Rights (a GFKT Coalition member) problematized physicians' involvement in gun licensing.
- The 'Israel is Arming' Campaign: A recipe for rising crime and violence among Palestinians, authored by GFKT's Meisa Irshaid, was commissioned and published by Mada Al Carmel.
- Talks by GFKT's Rela Mazali were presented at Whose War Is This? Feminist Perspectives on the Present conference at the Van Leer Institute and at the International Women in Black Conference.
- A critical analysis of Israel Police practices by Debbie Gild-Hayo, of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (a GFKT Coalition member) spotlights mass civilian armament as one of the ways in which Itamar Ben-Gvir, previous Minister of National Security, turned the police force into his politicized militia. In a whole chapter on the privatization of public security, ACRI also emphasized central GFKT messages in their report: One Year of War: The Collapse of Human and Civil Rights protections in Israel and the West Bank.
- Jonathan M. Metzel's article, published in Zocalo Public Square recognizes the dangerous similarities in US gun culture and the culture developing in Israel, following months of exchanges with GFKT.



Media Outreach to Enhance Public Awareness

Both local and international venues have featured GFKT findings and messages, including, for example:

- The Trace: January 29
- Haaretz: February 9
- Arab48 podcast interview with GFKT's Meisa Irshaid: April 15 (Arabic)
- Los Angeles Times: May 5
- Haaretz published an op-ed by GFKT's Reli Mazali: August 5 (Hebrew)
- The Hottest Place in Hell: September 7 (Hebrew)
- Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung published articles by Meisa Irshaid and Reli Mazali: September 25 (German)
- Rashuot: October 15 (Hebrew)
- Dvar1: November 25 (Hebrew)
- Occupied Thoughts, a podcast by the Foundation for Middle East Peace: December 16

Addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Civil Society Organizations

Several years ago, an incident in one of the member organizations of the GFKT Coalition led the GFKT core team to initiate a multi-organizational peer-learning process also including experienced independent activists. The result is a convention laying down guiding principles for organizational responses to occurrences of sexual or gender-based violence within the organization. After three years of work, the inter-organizational working group submitted a draft of the convention to several organizations, discussed their responses, and revised the convention accordingly. To date, 8 organizations have committed to the convention, which has also occasioned new working relations for GFKT with organizations such as the Human Rights Defenders Fund and the Gila Project for Trans Empowerment.



WE COULDN'T DO THIS ALONE

With 20 member organizations of the GFKT Coalition, with numerous committed volunteers (contributing to fact-finding, media outreach, analysis, resource development, and legal work), and an extended network of engaged organizations beyond the Coalition, as isolated and silenced as we may feel at times, we know that "we make a multitude," as the saying goes. We are deeply thankful and humbly indebted to each and every person and group who has stood with GFKT throughout 2024. During a year marked by unprecedented challenges to our mission of disarming civil spaces, your and their collaboration has been invaluable.

In times when government oversight is virtually absent and gun proliferation continues to shrink democratic spaces, our partners' integration of newly critical perspectives on civilian armament into their work has helped keep and spread this vital discourse in the public sphere. Through our collective efforts, we have continued to document the alarming expansion of the current gun craze and its disproportionate impacts, particularly on Palestinian citizens and women. The foundations we have laid together through information sharing, joint analysis, and advocacy will prove essential as we hold onto hopes for creating safer, gun-free civil spaces.

Even as dialogue and civic engagement are increasingly suppressed, we refuse to be divided and ruled and we partner with many others in addressing the complex issue of civilian armament from a feminist and human rights perspective. For this solidarity, we remain profoundly grateful.



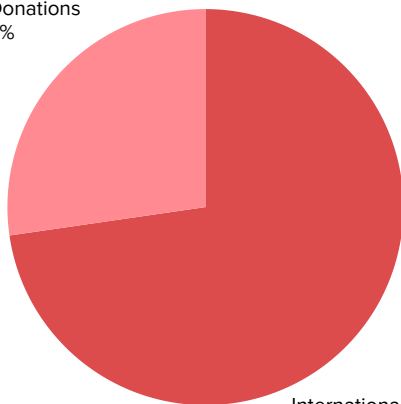


GRATITUDE:

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2024

Total Revenue: \$43,826*

Individual Donations
27.3%

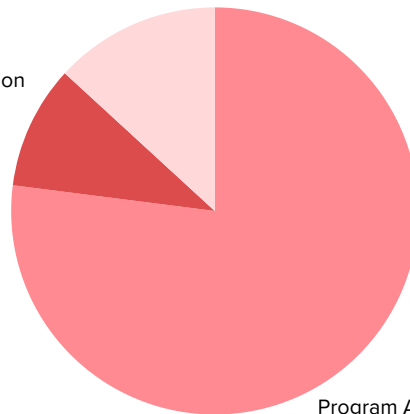


International Funds & Foundations
72.7%

Total Expenditure: \$120,039

Fundraising & Reporting
13.2%

Administration
9.8%



Program Activism
77%

*Several grants received towards the end of 2023 enabled us to allocate about \$75,000 to cover expenses in 2024.

GFKT continues to grow our local and international circles of support. **To all of you who supported our work in 2024, thank you! Your friendship and support have continued to strengthen our resolve and increase our impact at this historic juncture!** GFKT's 2024 supporters are listed in alphabetic order:

Annina Truninger
Ari Weisbard and Rebecca Ennen
Arlene Avakian
Avigail Adam
Barbara Kane
Chana Kronfeld
Cynthia H. Enloe
David Gaba
Debby Lerman
Debra Kolodny



Gila Svirsky
Ivy Sichel
Jonathan Jacoby
Jordan Mann
Kathy Ferguson
Louis Blumberg and Ellen Friedman
Luiza Edery
Medico International
Mediterranean Women's Fund
Nan Gefen
Nancy Bernstein and Robert Schon
Or Biron
Orly Lubin
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung with funds of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and
Development of the Federal Republic of Germany
Sandra Wallenstein
Sara Anne Minkin
Sarah Brammer
Sarah Gottesman
Sarah Gundle
Shelly Berlowitz
Shir Ben Or
Terry Greenblatt
The Disrupt Foundation
The Maypole Fund
Women's World Day of Prayer - German Committee
Yudit Yahav

thank you



Donate to Gun Free Kitchen Tables

Donate by PayPal or Credit Card:

[Donate by PayPal or Credit Card](#)

*For monthly donations, check the box on the form after clicking this button.

Donate by Direct Bank Transfer through the following details:

- Isha L'Isha Feminist Center (for Gun Free Kitchen Tables)
- The First International Bank of Israel (code 31)
- Neve Shaanan Branch (code 007)
- Account #: 413461
- Swift code: FIRBILITXXX
- IBAN: IL380310070000000413461
- 1 Natan Komoi St., Ziv Center, Haifa 3276101, Israel

For US tax-exempt contributions of over \$100 you can donate via New Israel Fund:

Checks of \$100 or more can be sent to:

- The New Israel Fund
- PO Box 70358, Philadelphia, PA 19176-0358, USA
- In the memo line, write: "Donor Advised for Gun Free Kitchen Tables"

[Donate by Credit Card via NIF](#)

*Please use the "Give in Honor" option offered. The "Honoree Name" is: Gun Free Kitchen Tables. Check the box to notify us and add the email address: resources.gfkt@gmail.com