

NEW
PROFILE

Movement for the Demilitarization of Israeli Society



Annual Activity Report 2011

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present you with this report on the activities of New Profile, the feminist movement working to demilitarize Israeli society, in 2011. The period of the report covers a year in which a wave of popular protests and revolutions swept the globe, and the Middle East in particular. Israel has also had its ripple in this wave – the relatively massive J14 protests, in which many New Profile activists also took part. But by now, those protests have gone almost without a trace. Israel is on its way to electing a new, even more extremely hawkish, racist and anti-democratic parliament and government than the one it has now, and to kick off the election campaign, the Israeli government and military had orchestrated another round of hostilities, with a brutal assault on the people of Gaza and its suburbs.

In the midst of that assault, the small anti-Occupation movement in Israel did its best. We participated in demonstrations and faced police brutality, ran an ad opposing the assault in a daily newspaper, spoke to the few who would listen. But in New Profile, we did one more thing: our Counseling Network quickly and effectively responded to a wave of calls from Israeli reservists, who were given an emergency call-up to join the planned (and eventually canceled) land invasion of Gaza, and decided they will not go. This was one effective thing we could do, one way out of the helplessness and hopelessness of the situation. This was also part of our daily routine work, and it is this routine work that the activity report before you focuses on.

Indeed, 2011 was, relatively speaking, an ordinary year in New Profile's work. We started a new bilingual youth group for young Palestinian and Jewish women in the city of Haifa and we created a new digital version of our exhibition, documenting military presence in Israeli public space, culture and education, for an international audience. But apart from that, New Profile's educational work kept the pace from previous years. We continued to counsel and support people refusing to serve in the Israeli military as before. We also continued the hard work of trying to make ourselves, as a movement, as an organization, as a group of people, live up to the feminist values and ideals we hold dear. All this is documented in the report below, which also shows that even when the work is routine, the accomplishments it brings with it, when we stop to look back at them, are far from trivial.

Finally, we should emphasize that all this work, and all these accomplishments, are made possible and sustainable not only by our activists' devoted work, but also by your support – in listening to what we have to tell and spreading the word, in giving us the occasional positive feedback, in bringing our message (and some of our activists too) to audiences in your home countries, in making financial donations – in short, by reminding us that we are working for a good and important cause, and that even in bleak times, our efforts are not in vain.

Thank you!

New Profile activists.

This report was prepared by New Profile's fundraising team: fundraising@newprofile.org.
Contact New Profile at info@newprofile.org. Our website: www.newprofile.org/english.

Table of Contents

Section Title	Page
Who we are	3
How we work	3
The context we operate in	3
What we do	4
Working towards our goals	5
Counseling network	5
Legal aid: Supporting conscientious objectors	5
Making militarism visible	5
<i>Exhibition</i>	5
<i>Publications</i>	6
<i>Media interviews</i>	6
<i>Talks and workshops</i>	6
<i>Research</i>	6
Youth groups	6
The alternative summer camp for youth	8
Countering sexual harassment in a militarist society	8
We wish to thank	9
<i>Funders</i>	9
<i>Networks and partners</i>	9
Donating to New Profile	10

Who we are

New Profile is a feminist movement working towards a new profile for Israeli society, one that is de-militarized and civil-oriented rather than military-oriented. The movement is open to both women and men and the ages of our activists range between 18 and 81. New Profile has been around for 14 years, and counting. We manage to keep going because of our lateral organizational structure (see below), inspired by our feminist values, and also thanks to the regular influx of young activists, most of whom we first contact as beneficiaries of our youth work, our refuser support network, or both. And while conflicts of interest and disagreements sometimes arise in New Profile, as in any organization, our commitment to feminist values and organizational principles allows us to deal with them in a way that preserves both the movement's stability and its egalitarian organizational structure.

How we work

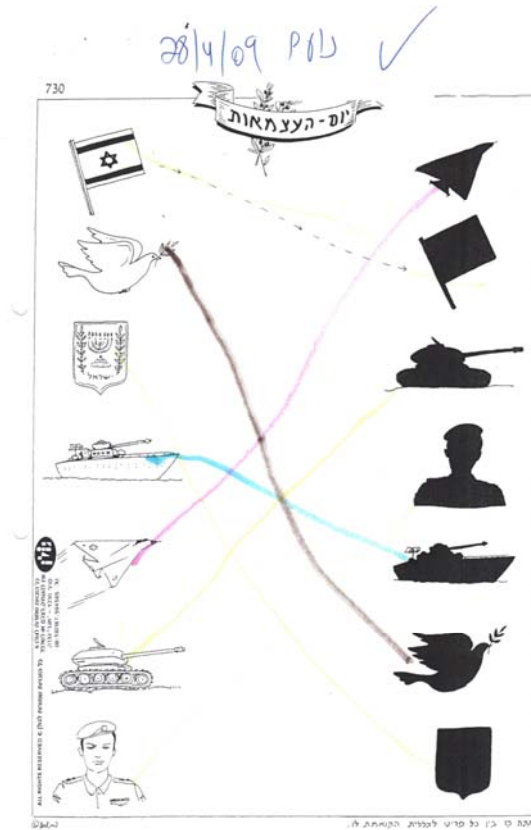
As a feminist movement New Profile does not have a formal hierarchic leadership, instead, decision-making is lateral and consensus-based. Such a decision-making process requires a safe space and time for discussion and these take place at our monthly general meetings, open to all activists. Attendance varies from month to month but a core of 20 members is usually present. At the same time, day-to-day functions in the movement are fulfilled by teams, rather than individuals. The various working teams hold their own meetings (open to all) to decide on specific projects. Much of the work done in New Profile, including administration, is undertaken by volunteers, rather than paid staff, but four of our ongoing projects, have paid (part-time) coordinators. These paid positions are open for all New Profile activists, as well as to other people in our broader network to apply to and are taken for a period of up to two years to allow rotation. All activists (employees and volunteers alike) have the support of their peers in teamwork, joint deliberation, and joint learning.

The context we operate in

2011 saw a continuation of the trend of increasing militarization of the Israeli school system by the Ministry of Education and the Israeli military, as well as high politicization of the educational system. The plan to rank Israeli high school teachers by the percentage of combat soldiers they produce from among their graduates is now being implemented and the teachers will receive financial incentives accordingly. The ministry of education has also declared school trips to the West Bank city of Hebron so that students will "feel their connection to the city of patriarchs". All this makes New profile's work at times more difficult, but also increases the need for it.

The Israeli government and the legislation it promotes seem to continue moving more and more towards the far right, restricting possibilities of protest and resistance from the left and from civil society. These developments may also have a legal and financial effect on New Profile's work once some of the laws that were recently passed get implemented, and have already had a social effect as a part of the de-legitimization of dissident voices in Israel, including New Profile's. The legislation in question includes a law known as "the anti-boycott law" which was passed in July 2011. The law enables the filing of civil lawsuits against individuals who call for boycott of products from West Bank Jewish settlements, or of Israeli produce more generally; Another law would divide all non-profit organizations receiving funding from foreign state entities into three categories: (1) Those that will be completely banned from receiving it; (2) Those that will be allowed to receive it by virtue of being also funded (now or in recent years) by governmental sources in Israel; (3) All the rest – which will be taxed (on this kind of income) at a 45% rate, unless they get a waiver from the Knesset. New Profile would be in the first category, of organizations that "Are against the existence of the state of Israel, support armed struggle against Israel, promote criminalization of politicians and soldiers under international law, **support refusers** and a boycott of Israel" [emphasis added]. Even though the bill has not yet passed, mentioning

supporting armed struggle in the same sentence with supporting those who refuse to perform military service has its social effect, and New Profile was given as an example of one of the organizations that would be completely banned from receiving such funds. According to yet another bill, Israeli citizens who have completed military or national service will be given preference when applying for positions in the public service, which discriminates against ethnic minorities and other individuals exempt by law from military service.



Kindergarten worksheet. Provided by: Amir Terkel

What we do

Most of our work centers around three main projects: a) educational work with youth; b) raising awareness to militarization in the Israeli society; and c) support for young people who choose to avoid military service in Israel. These projects follow naturally from our main goal of de-militarizing Israeli society. In the last few months we have also experienced a renewal of interest (largely from our younger generation of activists, most of whom did not serve in the military) in working to end conscription in Israel. We hope to be able to do more towards this end in the coming years.

New Profile's work is on-going and at times painstaking. The fruit it bears are not the kind of results one sees immediately. However, discussing the question of mandatory military service and women's part in a militarist society has an impact on many of those who meet with us, strengthening the discourse which questions the militarist culture and order of Israeli society. New Profile has done much to forge alternatives to the prevalent militarist public discourse in Israel, both on the ideological and on the practical level. It is to a large degree thanks to our work that many young Jewish Israelis today feel, or discover, that they have the choice not to join the military, and it is to a large degree thanks to our work that people in Israel have begun to question the militarist mindset that is still dominant in Israeli society. Indeed, even the words "militarism" and "militarization" only became part of the political lexicon in Israel in recent years, in large part due to our efforts. Such increased awareness of alternatives to militarism is a crucial step on the way to the demilitarization of

Israeli society – a process that would affect the rights of all individuals in this region, but of women and other victims of patriarchy in particular.

Working towards our goals

Counseling network

New Profile's counseling network was established in 2001 and has operated since with the aim of supporting young people in Israel, who choose to avoid military service. It is the only organizational structure in Israel, and one of only a handful in the world, that supports draft resisters of all kinds. The network is run mostly by volunteers, most of whom received counseling from the network in the past. In addition two quarter-time coordinators allocate the work between the volunteers and organize meetings for the volunteers to learn from each others' experiences. Counseling is provided by phone, e-mail, in face-to-face meetings, and via a web forum. All in all, we estimate that between 5% and 10% of people opting to avoid military service in Israel approach New Profile – a huge level of outreach by all standards.

In 2011, we estimate that approximately 1,500 people approached New Profile's counseling network to obtain information about possible venues for exemption from military service. Beyond that, many made use of the information New Profile's counseling network provides through its website and web forum, without contacting us directly in any way.

Figures for 2011: Counseling Network website and web forum statistics

New Topics opened on the web forum:	774	
Page views for the forum:	305,430	(unique views: 255,714)
Page views for the website:	13,658	(unique views: 11,769)

Legal aid: Supporting conscientious objectors

New Profile works closely with several lawyers and law firms to provide legal support and counseling to conscientious objectors and other individuals refusing to perform (or continue performing) military service and, when necessary, conducting legal correspondence on their behalf. The legal network is coordinated by one quarter-time staff, herself a lawyer. An important aspect of the legal network's function is to visit refusers incarcerated in Israeli military prisons. Lawyers are allowed to visit inmates at any time, while other forms of contact inmates have with the outside world are more restricted and may sometimes be denied altogether by prison authorities. Lawyer visits are thus also an important part of the moral and practical support that New Profile provides to refusers.

In 2011, NP supported many refusers. One case we supported was the Druze refuser Ajwad Zidan who served 7 terms of imprisonment. Another case was a 27-year-old medicine student who was to start his military service after a deferral for studies. The student declared his refusal to serve and was in and out of prison for over a year, spending over 150 days in prison altogether. Although he requested not to make a public campaign around his refusal, New Profile lawyers visited him and attempted to ease his prison conditions.

Making militarism visible

Exhibition

In 2011, New Profile's Hebrew exhibition "Study War No More", showing militarist images in culture, public space, and daily life in Israel, was translated into English and digitized by New Profile activists on the *Exhibition team*. The Exhibition can now be found on our website (<http://www.newprofile.org/english/?cat=11>). The exhibition continues to be a central tool for presenting New Profile's work and analysis in Israel and abroad and the digitized format helps spread our message to wider audiences. It is also instrumental in furthering dialogue on this matter and in allowing international activists who are interested in the matter to further their research autonomously.

Publications

In 2011 New Profile continued to get word out about refusers sentenced to prison terms. Women in Black, Belgium, kindly translate all our updates on imprisoned conscientious objectors into French and publish them in their newsletter; these same updates are also distributed and translated to other languages by activists and groups around the world and used by organizations such as Amnesty International and War Resisters International. New Profile also runs an Alternative information list serve that sends daily updates about the occupation, militarism and the connection between the two, to hundreds of people around the world. Added visibility is also now achieved through Twitter @NewProfileOrg.

Statistics for 2011: New Profile's website, www.newprofile.org

Visits: 154,548	Unique Visitors: 93,007	Page views: 488,999
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Media interviews

New profile has become a point of reference and information for reporters, both in Israeli and abroad, for questions about militarism and draft-resistance. In 2011, New Profile was featured in a three-part documentary created by mainstream Israeli TV persona Haim Yavin, titled "The People's Army".

Talks and workshops

In 2011, New Profile's monthly general assembly decided to create a new paid staff position, a liaison and international network coordinator. The need for this position, developed largely because of new and increased interest in New Profile, in particular, but not only, abroad. The coordinator regularly meets with groups visiting Israel/Palestine, presenting our work, thereby furthering our relations with international activists. She also helps coordinate talks given abroad by New Profile members. In 2011, New Profile was represented in several symposia, conferences, and speaking tours around the world (including events in the UK, France, The Netherlands and Belgium). For each of these, New Profile's *Travel team* chose a different speaker to distribute the role of speaking for New Profile, and the learning experiences that come with it, as broadly as possible among our activists.

Finally, as in every year, several hundred individuals in Israel and abroad attended talks and workshops conducted by New Profile activists. These are coordinated by various teams, including the *Education Team*.

Research

2011 was also very intensive in terms of the number of researchers from Israel and from abroad, who contacted us as part of their research on feminist grassroots movements, on conscientious objection to military service in Israel and on other related themes. This is a sign of growing academic interest in New Profile's work, aims and organizational structure.

Youth groups

New Profile's youth groups project offers adolescents in Israel a free and safe space for studying social and political issues they care about and for open deliberation about their own actions and decisions, including the decision of whether or not to enlist. Our youth groups have been operating in several parts of Israel for many years now, and are among our top-priority activities. The groups themselves are usually active in the course of the school year or parts of it (although some of the groups also continue working during the summer). On average, we aim to open four groups every year. Mostly these are local groups in Israel's main urban centers. Each youth group has two paid facilitators. The entire project has two quarter-time coordinators, who are in charge of locating facilitators for potential new groups, of organizing and leading training meetings for the facilitators and for the project's administration.

In 2011 about 50 individuals participated in New Profile's youth group meetings. This includes a core group of about 35 individuals who took part in the groups' activities on a regular basis.



Summer Camp 2011. Photo: Haggai Matar

An important new development for the youth groups project in 2011 was the creation of a new bilingual (Hebrew and Arabic) youth group for young women in the city of Haifa. The decision to make this youth group bilingual and open for women only reflects the needs and wishes expressed by the group's participants themselves. We decided to open this group in Haifa, a city with both a Jewish and a Palestinian population. The group provides a safe environment for young women to engage in critical discourse and discussion, allowing them to express themselves freely. From our continuous work with youth groups, and from the experience of many feminist movements and groups, we know that many issues which are important to young girls are not discussed because of their assumption that it is "not proper" to bring these issues up in a mixed gender group. Since both military service and the so-called "national civilian service" (currently a state-supported voluntary framework which some officials have proposed to make mandatory for Palestinian citizens of Israel) use prescribed gender roles when appointing youths to different positions, it is thus extremely important to have a space to discuss how this affects young women. Two young girls (17), one Jewish and one Palestinian, were empowered not only to participate but to organize and promote the group successfully, and the group continues to grow and allows more girls to become part of this much needed safe space.

Participant Testimony:

My name is Ilya Fox, I'm 18 years old, from Jerusalem. I attended meetings of New Profile's youth group for 16 weeks. I feel that in 16 weeks I learned much more than in 12 years in school. At first glance, it might seem like we are not a very diverse group because almost all of us come from the same part of the political spectrum but after every meeting I was surprised to know how much I learned from my friends and how many sides, which I didn't even think about, each subject has. We discussed sensitive issues which are mostly not discussed in "ordinary" groups, such as: Is it right to go to the army? Is Police brutality legit? Abortion and Surrogacy, Nationalism and Collective memory. When I first decided not to enlist, New Profile was the first address I appealed to for support. I can tell with full confidence I feel more confident about my decision after I met more youth, who are not going to the army too and after we discussed this subject from different perspectives. I think it's really important for this group to continue to receive more people who don't feel comfortable with mainstream discourse and provide them with a supportive environment.

The alternative summer camp for youth

The Alternative Summer Camp for Youth brings together young people interested in working for social change. It is a safe and fun place for teenagers (roughly in the age range of 15–20)

Participant Testimony:

My name is Liora Sarah Ferrero. I arrived to New Profile after my political perceptions changed and I wanted to find a place that would suit my opinions and where I could learn new and exiting things. In New Profile I met good friends that have stayed with me until today, and learned to shape my opinions. I learned new things and found a new world where I feel that I belong, in a society I don't really feel I belong in, or my opinions don't belong in. I feel I have found a place where I can express my opinions and think without feeling guilty. In the meetings every week we speak of a different subject, sometimes we have activities and games, sometimes movies and tours, but there is always free discussion in the end. Each person expresses their opinions and thoughts freely without having anyone belittle them, and together we try to reconcile our differences. We don't always find common ground, but we do always come out with a lot of food for thought. All in all, I really enjoy the meetings, and I and the others in the group don't want the meetings to end.

to deal with such complex issues as the occupation, feminism, ecology, militarism and more. The number of participants varies from year to year, but is typically around 80–100. The camp succeeds in creating not only an environment for learning and discussion, but also a special atmosphere of freedom and solidarity. Most of the camp's participants evaluate it as an immensely meaningful experience for them. Many of them have become central activists in movements for social change in Israel in recent years. The camp is organized by a team of volunteers, occasionally assisted by temporary paid staff.

In 2011, 75 individuals (not including the volunteer staff of approx. 25) took part in the Alternative Summer Camp for Youth. Additionally, and following the Summer Camp, *participants* organi-

zed a smaller 2-day seminar in the Hanukah holiday (December) for about 40 participants from all over the country. The seminar took place in Jerusalem and focused on political issues relevant to life in Jerusalem through workshops and tours.



Winter Seminar 2011. Photo: Haggai Matar

Countering sexual harassment in a militarist society

In a militarized society such as Israel's the culture of sexism embedded in militarization permeates every aspect and part of society, including left-wing groups and activist organizations. Within these, no less than within other social institutions, harassment works to subordinate women and is destructive to democratic organizing and activism. To the best of our knowledge, New Profile is the first activist group in Israel to take on such work within its community. The work is slow and painstaking, fraught with conflict, but members of the working group nevertheless feel it is achieving some progress.

A final project we wish to report for 2011 is an NP-initiated discussion group (now also co-led by activists who are not New Profile members), made up mostly of women, that has been meeting periodically to talk about and study sexual harassment *inside the Israeli left* and to create practical models for dealing with this problem. The group that started as a response to a particular incident, grew into a proactive discussion and learning group that has empowered its participants, as well as building tools for the rest of our political community. One of the reasons New Profile picked up this issue was that it is linked to our discussion of sexual violence within and by the military.

Throughout 2011 there were several cases of exclusion of women in public spaces that received public attention and led to public discussion. The issue of segregated buses (men in the front and women in the back) in the Jewish-Orthodox community is one example that received much media coverage. Physical attacks against women (including little girls) who do not dress “modestly” enough by some religious standards were also reported in the news. In the military, stories of religiously observant cadets leaving ceremonies because women were singing in them (for what they claimed to be religious reasons) prompted a campaign of women’s singing in public spaces as a form of protest, bringing up other women’s rights issues as well. Though New Profile views these phenomena with extreme concern, it is important not to forget the militaristic culture that these events evolve in and the “behind the scenes” level of the public discussion around the issue as well. Such trends already existed before, yet did not receive widespread attention from the mainstream media. To understand this sudden interest in women’s rights in the Israeli public, one should take into account the fact the long-standing drive to force conscription on ultra-Orthodox Jewish men. Much like the Palestinian community living within Israel and not conscripted, the ultra-Orthodox community is discriminated against while being branded “parasitical”. While the singing voices of women in uniform became the center of a heated (even if one-sided) public debate, the much graver issue of sexual violence in the military, which cannot be blamed on the ultra-Orthodox, is hardly ever discussed, and has never been picked up by major media outlets in Israel. Rather than viewing all the above phenomena and practices out of true concern for women’s rights, the issue came to public attention now precisely because of the drive by some political circles to force conscription on the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel.

We wish to thank

Fellow activists, friends, family members and all those who have supported us over the years!

Funders

The main funding organizations that supported New Profile during 2011 include: Brot für die Welt (Germany), HEKS/EPER (Switzerland), The Global Fund for Women (USA), Refuser Solidarity Network (USA), SIVMO (Netherlands), Palästina-Friedenstiftung Rachel Corrie (Germany), Quaker Peace and Social Witness (UK), Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund (USA). In addition, New Profile receives donations from individual donors, both in Israel/Palestine and abroad.

Networks and partners

Our connections with international and local organizations abroad include: War Resisters International, International Action Network on Small Arms, Child Soldiers International, The International Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Women Peacemaker Program, Conscience and Peace Tax International, Quakers United Nations Office in Geneva, The Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, The World Council of Churches, Interfaith Peace Builders, Jews with a Different Voice (EU), The Refuser Solidarity Network (USA), The American Friends Service Committee (USA), The Fellowship of Reconciliation (USA), Jewish Voice for Peace (USA), Jewish Peace News (USA), Jewish Peace Fellowship (USA), DAM – Dialogues Against Militarism (USA), Resource Center for Non Violence (USA), Connection e.V. (Germany), Quaker Peace and Social Witness (UK),

Responding to Conflict (UK), Quaker Voluntary Action (UK) Women to Women for Peace (UK), SweFOR (Sweden), Cristina Freds (Sweden), *Trop c'est Trop* (France), Not in my Name (Italy).

In Israel and Palestine, New Profile is in regular contact and cooperation, among many others, with: The Coalition of Women for Peace, the Druze Initiative Committee, *Gush Shalom*, *Yesh Gvul*, Defence for Children International – Palestine, the Recognition Forum, The *Siraj* Center for Holy Land Studies, the Arab Human Rights Association, *Kayan*, *Adrid. Sabeel*, The *Al-Tufula* Center, *Qiar*, *Sadaka-Reut*, Anarchists against the Wall, *Ta'ayush*, *Machsom* Watch, *Isha L'Isha* – Haifa Feminist Center, the Gun-Free Kitchen Tables campaign.

Donating to New Profile

All the work described in this report was made possible, of course, thanks to the hard work of New Profile activists, but also thanks to the organizations, funds and individuals who donated money to keep us going.

Tax-deductible contributions to New Profile in the US can be made on the website of the Refuser Solidarity Network (<http://www.refusersolidarity.net/>). In Canada, you can make a tax-deductible contribution through La Galerie Fokus: Fokus Galerie Charity registration no. 13245 0230 RR 0001 Plauteau Mont-Royal 68, ave. Duluth E. Montreal, Quebec H2W 1G8 Canada.

In all other countries, you can make a donation to our bank account (please notify us first at info@newprofile.org):

Bank HaPoalim
Account Number 421121
Branch 769
Trumpeldor Street
Ramat HaSharon, Israel
Sortcode/Swiftcode: "POALILIT"
IBAN: IL56-0127-6900-0000-0421-121

Or send us a check to:

New Profile,
POB 3454,
Ramat Ha-Sharon 47100,
Israel

Thank you very much for your attention and support!