**Yuli Tamir, President of Beit Berl College**

1. **Please introduce the candidate’s general biographical background, what she did before becoming an activist, etc.**

I am submitting myself as a candidate for the Truth to Power award. If I win, I plan to use the prize money to establish a framework that will protect teachers’ ability to speak truth to power - a necessary act in these difficult times. I have been a social and political activist since my youth. In the late 1970s, I was among the founders of Peace Now, one of the first civil movements in Israel to support peace initiatives and oppose the occupation. Despite being the only woman among the founders, I refused to give up my right to voice my opinion. At that time, when women’s voices were silenced even within the liberal-democratic camp, I managed to establish my leadership position. I believe this opened the door for many female peace activists who followed me.

As part of my work with Peace Now, I insisted that a peace movement must engage in dialogue with its Palestinian counterparts. My meetings with Dr. Issam Sartawi (along with Dedi Zucker) led to my expulsion from the movement. I returned to Peace Now only in 1988 after the movement decided to shift its focus to the occupation and work for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

In the 1980s, I completed a Ph.D. in philosophy at Oxford University focusing on the topic of liberal nationalism. During this time, I also gave birth to my daughters Carmel and Tal and served as a research fellow at Princeton and Harvard. After Rabin’s assassination, I returned to Israel with the intention of re-entering public life. Throughout my years of activism, I have championed human rights, with a particular emphasis on advancing social and economic equality in Israel. During my tenure as president of the Civil Rights Association, I worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the importance of safeguarding the rights of all Israeli citizens, Jews and Arabs alike.

In my political roles in the Knesset and government, I advocated for women’s rights and minority rights. Together with my colleague Eti Livni, I successfully introduced an amendment to the Women’s Equal Rights Law, aligning it with UN Resolution 1325, which emphasizes the inclusion of women in decision-making processes of national importance.

As Minister of Immigration and Absorption, I strengthened the representation of the Ethiopian community, who has been marginalized within the ministry, then controlled by the Yisrael Beiteinu party. In the Knesset, I consistently supported initiatives to promote Israel’s cultural diversity and advocated for marginalized groups.

During my tenure as Minister of Education, I made significant efforts to enhance civic and democratic awareness among students. I initiated a comprehensive overhaul of civics studies, doubling their scope to underscore the foundational importance of democratic values. Additionally, I emphasized the need for fair, respectful, and equal treatment of Arab citizens of Israel, recognizing them both as individuals and as an indigenous minority. As part of this initiative, I reintroduced topics such as the Green Line and the future of the occupied territories into the curriculum, and an attempt was made to incorporate the Nakba in textbooks.

In recent years, I have served as President of Beit Berl College, which stands as a stronghold for shared Jewish-Arab life. During this challenging period, Beit Berl College has become a model community that offers equal opportunities to all its members. The college has navigated the difficult time since October 7 while maintaining its inclusive and respectful set of values. In a collaborative effort, the college staff drafted a code of ethics that serves as an exemplary model for Jewish-Arab discourse, granting space to the rights, pain, and hopes of both peoples.

1. **How does the candidate’s activity align with the criteria for the prize: courageous, impactful, committed, inspiring? Please detail each criterion.**

Speaking truth to power has been a guiding principle in my life. I stood against the founders of Peace Now, arguing that peace is not just a men’s issue. I confronted my colleagues in Peace Now, insisting that there can be no peace without dialogue with the Palestinians. I protested against the slogan Ehud Barak promoted as Prime Minister, “One Nation, One Draft,” arguing that it was a dangerous and fundamentally flawed social and moral concept. I pushed for changes in civic education, keeping national service girls from teaching Jewish heritage in secular state schools, and more.

My strong criticism of Israel’s teacher training system (as outlined in my article in N12) reflects my refusal to collaborate with the systemic misrepresentation of the quality of teacher training in Israel. In my view, speaking truth to power in matters of education and teacher training is as important as the fight for peace and equality in the country. In fact, the two are intertwined, and achieving one is not possible without addressing the other.

The most recent struggles I’ve led, which have received public attention, include my refusal to hang the slogan “Together we will win” in the college, preferring the collaborative and constructive slogan “Together we will grow from this.” Additionally, I took a firm stand against harming innocent civilians in Gaza and made clear statements about the consequences of Israeli society ignoring the hunger in Gaza.

In my opinion, these examples (and many others) demonstrate the variety of situations in which I have fearlessly spoken truth to power.

1. **What is the candidate’s most impressive achievement?**

In retrospect, my greatest achievement has been instilling in the younger generation the belief that the struggle for democratic values is a fight that should never be abandoned. Every day, I’m approached by young individuals seeking direction, viewing me as a symbol of unwavering activism coupled with faith in our ability to influence the country we live in. I make sure to dedicate time to them and guide them along the way.

1. **What personal price has the candidate paid?**

I’ve paid a price for my convictions since my days of being ousted from Peace Now; from demands from right-wing individuals to remove me from my role as Minister of Education, to ongoing persecution by the current Minister of Education who is making significant efforts to force me out of my position. It should be noted that these pressures have never influenced my stance or actions.

1. **How will the prize impact the candidate’s activity? If awarded the prize, how will you use it?**

If I win the award, I intend to establish a fund to protect civics teachers in particular, and teachers in general, who are threatened because of their support for issues related to democracy and human rights. Teachers who prioritize democracy and human and civil rights are subject to criticism and threats and often find themselves silenced. Currently, there is no support system for teachers advocating for democracy and human rights. I intend to use the prize money to help establish such a system.

**Israel Frey, Journalist and Activist**

1. **Please introduce the candidate’s general biographical background, what he did before becoming an activist, etc.**

Israel Frey, born in 1987, is an independent journalist, Haredi-Israeli columnist, and political activist primarily focused on the struggle against the occupation and working to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Frey was born in Safed and raised in Tel Aviv in a Haredi family. He was educated in the institutions of the Gur Hasidic sect and studied at yeshivas in Haifa and Bnei Brak, as well as at the Haredi branch of the Betesfer School of Advertising. He is married and has two children.

Frey began his journalistic career at the Haredi weekly *Bakehila*. In 2016, he worked as a reporter and editor for the local religious press network *Kav Itonut Dati.* However, he was dismissed from the Haredi media network in June 2020 due to right-wing pressure, after having criticized prominent rabbis from the religious Zionist movement on his Twitter account for defending settlers who attacked soldiers at the Kumi Ori outpost.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Frey distinguished himself with his coverage of the virus’s impact on the Haredi community. He notably stood out for his bold and exceptional criticism of Haredi rabbis regarding their handling of pandemic regulations and violations. His remarkable journalistic efforts earned him the Isaac Livni Free Media Award in June 2021.

In October 2020, he joined Democratic TV as a journalist, covering various topics including issues concerning the Haredi community and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, Frey was fired from the channel at the end of 2022 following a controversial statement in which he referred to a Palestinian terrorist who refrained from harming civilians as “a hero worthy of a medal.” Subsequently, in December 2022, he was summoned for police questioning regarding the statement but refused to appear. As a result, he was arrested after he agreed to a meeting with someone posing as a media source, who turned out to be a police officer.

In October 2023, just days after October 7, Frey attended a small public event where he was asked to recite the Kaddish prayer. Frey chose to recite Kaddish not only in memory of the Israeli victims but also in memory of all the innocent victims of the war, including women and children in Gaza. As a result, right-wing extremists spread his address and personal information, and dozens of right-wing activists came to demonstrate outside his home, threatening his life and shooting fireworks at his house, where his wife and children were present at the time. Frey fled his home and has not returned due to concerns for his safety. More than six months after the incident, he remains in hiding.

1. **How does the candidate’s activity align with the criteria for the prize: courageous, impactful, committed, inspiring? Please detail each criterion.**

Frey’s activism aligns impressively with each of the award criteria, demonstrating both courage and impact. Frey expresses himself directly and speaks the truth, even when it is difficult for the Israeli public to hear and sometimes challenging for those who hold views similar to his own. He does not shy away from criticism, whether it is directed at the occupation and its consequences, the political and military leadership, or the society he comes from. He does this while remaining aware of his privilege as an Israeli Jew. After being summoned for questioning and refusing to attend, he noted, “It goes without saying that these practices are implemented in the territories, and if I were Palestinian, this would have happened long ago, and no one would have heard about me – all in an attempt to remove anything that interferes with the grand demolition plan. It’s not a conspiracy theory; it’s what we’re already doing. We can focus solely on public transportation on Shabbat or the LGBTQ+ community or education, but it won’t help.”

Frey’s work has a direct and consistent influence on public discourse and debate. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Frey was a sought-after journalist and interviewee after he dared to voice sharp criticism of the Haredi community and its conduct during the pandemic. His criticism was directed not at the individuals within the community but at rabbis and yeshiva heads, challenging the most powerful figures in the Haredi world. Frey is recognized as a courageous Haredi journalist who remains committed to the truth, even at the cost of being ostracized.

Due to his work, Frey gained significant popularity among various audiences during the pandemic, but this this did not influence his path or cause him to soften his approach in order to continue receiving public admiration. Instead, he used his increased visibility to further advocate against the occupation, a central theme in his work. His outspoken comments frequently ignite vigorous debates on social media and in mainstream media. Often labeled a “traitor” and “delusional,” he faces life threats and intense hostility from right-wing and religious-Zionist groups. Nonetheless, Frey remains unwavering in his convictions, continuing to voice his critical perspectives, all while enduring substantial personal costs.

Frey is in his thirties, and his professional future is still ahead of him. Despite facing complex challenges since October 7 and enduring a barrage of hatred, Frey’s trajectory holds immense promise. He is paving a path for secular and religious youths, activists, and journalists, offering them the chance to engage with reality and uphold the truth, despite the challenges. Frey embodies the ideals of a universal left and is committed to this vision. According to Frey, the pursuit of peace with the Palestinians should be driven by Israeli or Zionist self-interest, but rooted in the values of justice, equality, and the recognition of every people’s right to self-determination.

1. **What is the candidate’s most impressive achievement?**

Although primarily a journalist, Israel Frey’s most impressive achievement is not in his writing or journalistic exposés. His main accomplishment lies in breaking societal norms and embodying a unique, complex, and unconventional figure. In a society that expects individuals like him, especially from the Gur Hasidic community, to conform to specific roles, conduct themselves in a particular manner, and speak in a certain way, Frey boldly defies these expectations, presenting an alternative model – that of a journalist and activist who fearlessly expresses his opinions even when they go against his community’s norms.

Frey maintains leftist views and staunchly opposes the occupation, yet remains committed to studying Torah and embracing a Haredi lifestyle. Deftly navigating between different worlds, he is able to connect with both secular and religious audiences. Thus, Frey’s very persona, his ability to move between the different worlds, and the alternative model he embodies, even if it is seen as irritating, menacing, and extreme, is his most impressive achievement.

1. **What personal price has the candidate paid?**

In the most immediate sense, the last six months have presented a tremendous challenge for Israel Frey. Following his recitation of Kaddish for both Israeli and Palestinian victims, Frey was attacked at his home and has been in hiding since October, moving between various apartments and often relying on the kindness of friends and acquaintances. As a father of two, the persecution he faces has forced him to reduce contact with his children, meeting them in undisclosed locations, and paying a heavy personal and familial price. His son’s recent bar mitzvah required enhanced security to ensure that the celebration was safe for his family, and it currently remains uncertain when and how Frey will be able to return home due to the hostility from his community and neighbors and various threats on his life.

Additionally, Frey has suffered professional repercussions for his outspoken stances. He has been dismissed from both the Haredi media network, due to pressure from religious Zionist figures, and from his role at Democratic TV. These dismissals have severely impacted his livelihood, causing significant financial strain.

1. **How will the prize impact the candidate’s activity? If awarded the prize, how will you use it?**

In the past six months, Frey has not been living in his home; he has lost his sources of income, lost his ability to move safely and freely, and his relationship with his children and family has become difficult, strained, and more distant. In the immediate term, the prize would be a dramatic lifeline for him and would allow him to continue to support his family with dignity.

Additionally, if this prize is awarded to Israel, it would provide him with the encouragement and public support he so desperately needs from the political left to which he belongs. The radicalization characterizing Israeli society since October 7 has naturally affected those who see Frey as a “traitor.” In recent months, he has faced increased attacks and vilification, enduring harsh treatment not only from his own community but also from a broad spectrum of groups including right-wing individuals, centrists, journalists, and even some left-leaning and center-left individuals who had expected Frey to “wake up” or at least adopt a more pragmatic silence. However, true to his nature, he has continued to defy these expectations.

The award, if given to Frey, could help restore at least some of the legitimacy he previously enjoyed, strengthen his standing among like-minded audiences, and affirm to Frey himself that his work and voice are heard, important, and deserving of recognition.

**Avner Gvaryahu, Executive Director of Breaking the Silence**

1. **Please introduce the candidate’s general biographical background, what he did before becoming an activist, etc.**

Avner Gvaryahu, born in 1985 to a national-religious family, is married to Noa Landau, an Israeli journalist and deputy editor of *Haaretz*, and is father to Adam. Avner enlisted in the IDF’s Egoz unit in 2004, where he served as a soldier and commander. Following his military service in the alleys of Nablus and Jenin, he joined Breaking the Silence in 2010, quickly becoming a key figure within the organization. Initially working as a researcher, he later took on roles managing relations with the Jewish diaspora and leading the public department. In July 2016, he was appointed executive director of Breaking the Silence, a position he is currently completing. Gvaryahu is also trained as a social worker, having pursued his bachelor’s degree in the field while engaging in anti-occupation activities, and later completing a master’s degree at Columbia University in New York. Prior to his involvement with Breaking the Silence, he worked at Please Touch, a center for the deaf and blind.

1. **How does the candidate’s activity align with the criteria for the prize: courageous, impactful, committed, inspiring? Please detail each criterion.**

Avner Gvaryahu is a leading voice against the occupation. During his tenure at Breaking the Silence, he endured severe personal attacks, including from former military comrades. While studying for his master’s degree in New York, the Im Tritzu campaign targeted him personally, using menacing graphics on posters and spreading them on social media, making his face one of the most recognizable in the campaign against Breaking the Silence. Overnight, Gvaryahu became one of the most threatened and vilified figures among large segments of the Israeli public, many of whom had never heard his name before. Since becoming known to the Israeli public, he has increased his public engagements and sharpened his messages, becoming a sought-after interviewee who inspires many people, especially young adults. As the chair of the organization’s board, I have been following his evolution since he joined Breaking the Silence. Avner is a natural leader, admired by many young people who see him as a role model. I believe this is only the beginning of Avner’s journey in Israel’s public sphere. He has great promise, representing the type of leadership we need at critical moments in Israeli society. With Avner’s tenure as Executive Director of Breaking the Silence coming to an end, I’m not sure what his next steps will be. However, whether he stays in the non-profit sector or enters politics, I am confident that Avner will continue to lead the pursuit of a fair and just society for all Israeli citizens for many years to come.

1. **What is the candidate’s most impressive achievement?**

I asked Avner this question, and this is his response: “The greatest crisis I managed was leading Breaking the Silence after the major public attacks against us. Essentially, I steered the organization through a trauma that paralyzed parts of it and pushed away potential bodies and partners from working with us. The right wing tried to isolate us, or at the very least, create a public “tag mechir” (“price tag”) for anyone who interacted with us, and the center-left was unprecedentedly sensitive to this. In two major areas of activity, we were truly in crisis. The first and most important was the number of witnesses who wanted to speak with us, and the second was the amount of public activity we conducted and the audiences we engaged with. Both were at an all-time low for the organization. My greatest achievement was emerging from this crisis by combining these two challenges to create a joint solution: strengthening and expanding our educational work, especially through short-term in-depth programs (e.g. Beyond the Green Line). These programs not only deepened our ties with educational institutions but also opened the door for former soldiers who, after getting to know us, wanted to testify. In fact, this struggle allowed us to publish extensive reports (such as those exposing new surveillance technology, in-depth reports on home invasions, and, of course, an organizational response with up-to-date information on settler violence), in addition to creating the Breaking the Silence Friends community and our witness community. These two communities on one hand strengthen us publicly and on the other connect more people to our circles of activity. These actions not only enabled Breaking the Silence to return to where we were before the attacks but to triple our educational outreach, double the number of witnesses per year, and expand the audience directly engaged with the occupation and motivate them to act, all while preserving our public and international power.

1. **What personal price has the candidate paid?**

In 2016, the organization faced severe attacks from right-wing groups, known as the “Mole Campaign,” which heavily impacted several activists within the organization. However, Avner’s case seems unique; he was the target of a personal campaign against him, with members of his unit publishing an open letter claiming that his testimony about service in the territories was false. Avner stood steadfast against the attacks and proved the truth of his statements. It seems that this was only the beginning of a traumatic period. Since 2016, Avner has had to live with constant threats against him and his family; at times, the organization has had to provide him with personal security due to concerns for his safety. It’s important to understand that public exposure of Avner’s scale naturally results in many doors closing – a reality, I believe, that activists of his stature take into account.

1. **How will the prize impact the candidate’s activity? If awarded the prize, how will you use it?**

In addition to recognizing and appreciating his years as a prominent activist against the occupation, with all the complexities and challenges this entails, I firmly believe the prize will provide a crucial platform for Avner’s future public activism, both within Israel and internationally. The fight against the occupation is conducted on many fronts and in various ways. Avner has faced many challenges in recent years, and there are many ways he can advance the cause.

**Einav Zangauker, mother of the hostage Matan Zangauker**

1. **Please introduce the candidate’s general biographical background, what she did before becoming an activist, etc.**

Einav Zangauker, 45, is a destitute single mother from Ofakim. Her eldest son, Matan, worked in Kibbutz Nir Oz to support the household, his mother, and his two sisters, one of whom is coping with muscular dystrophy. Matan and his wife, Ilana, were abducted from the kibbutz on the morning of October 7. Ilana has since returned from captivity and is actively involved in the fight for Matan’s release. Since her eldest son was abducted, Einav has led an unwavering, unapologetic struggle for his and the remaining hostages’ return from Hamas captivity. She voices sharp criticism towards Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom she has voted for all her life. Being a right-wing woman, she was invited to meet him, along with other right-wing parents of hostages. Even then, she seized the opportunity to tell him the truth: “I gave you the mandate, and I will take it away from you.” In the weeks that followed, while most families gathered at Hostages Square, Einav barricaded herself in front of the Begin Gate at the Kirya, almost completely alone, together with her daughters, wearing shirts with her son’s picture. Her calls for the public and the hostages’ families to join her in an “impolite” protest led the masses to Begin Road.

1. **How does the candidate’s activity align with the criteria for the prize: courageous, impactful, committed, inspiring? Please detail each criterion.**

Just one conversation with Einav is enough to understand that no one is braver than she is and no one is more inspiring, although she would readily give up all these titles if she could. She didn’t choose these battles; they were thrust upon her. She is a lioness of a mother, crying out for the return of her son in a country that has normalized mothers crying out for the return of their children. Her charisma, coupled with her straightforward speech and genuine disappointment as someone who has always voted for the Likud and admired Benjamin Netanyahu, brought the masses to the streets. She directs criticism toward a camp that does not accept criticism well, and has already been labeled a “criminal” by the prime minister’s trumpeters. Her ability to critique her own political milieu, in a town that is entirely right-leaning, is unparalleled in bravery. Despite the criticisms, and despite she and her daughter having tasted the harsh hand of the police (Einav was hit by a water cannon at a protest, and her daughter Natalie was arrested for questioning without cause and banned from protests for 15 days - protests demanding that her brother be brought home), she refuses to be silenced. She refuses to succumb. She stands tall against a heartless government and toxic propaganda machine intent on silencing her, voicing a loud and clear opposition to callousness and calling to support the values that define us as the society we are. Or as she put it in an interview I conducted with her for *Yedioth Ahronoth’s* weekend supplement:

“Independence Day celebrations?! Over my dead body. Not going to happen. We’re in the middle of a war for our independence, for our sovereignty. How are we going to celebrate when they’re over there, in body parts in Gaza, not brought for burial, when we have children over there? They don’t have independence and we’re going to celebrate here? Not going to happen. They want to normalize the situation. That’s the agenda. If Miri Regev is planning a ceremony, what am I meant to gather from that as the mother of a hostage? That any minute now my son and all the hostages will be back home? Should I maybe go to the seamstress and order a new suit? That’s not the situation. They’re trying to normalize this situation, that the war is not expected to end any time soon because they’re insisting on Rafah, insisting on getting the senior leaders, and I say – this situation will not be normalized! The government will not sit comfortably in their seats while my son is in captivity, and there will certainly not be any Independence Day celebrations! What independence?! Our independence took a big hit when the Nukhba terrorists got in. The countries of the world are about to impose a ceasefire on us, so are we an independent state? My Prime Minister needs to stop butting heads with every international ally that has given us legitimacy for military action. Who is he punishing by leaving Galant to deal with plans for a ceasefire but not allowing the professional delegation to go? He’s punishing my son. The more he punishes Matan and doesn’t take action to bring him home, the more obvious it’s becoming that he’s exploiting what happened on October 7. October 7 was like drawing a joker card for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In a properly functioning democratic state, he would have handed in the keys and said, ‘I failed, I take responsibility and I stepping aside, please convene a national emergency government.’ But what does he do? He demeans the commander in chief, demeans the military rank, and Sara expects a thank you! We wrote a letter to Blinken, 80 families of hostages, asking for Biden to put pressure on our prime minister, because apparently he’s swayed by political considerations, and we want to reach an agreement that will lead to the release of all the hostages, not a humanitarian deal for 40 hostages and then having to wait another half a year to get the gears moving again. And Matan wouldn’t be included in the humanitarian deal, because it’s for the elderly, wounded, female soldiers, and children who are still in captivity. My struggle won’t end when I hear there’s a deal.”

Einav continues to fight every day, every hour, for her son and for the future of the country. For our ability to call ourselves Jews and Israelis in the future.

1. **What is the candidates most impressive achievement?**

Bringing masses of citizens to the streets. Moving the protest from Hostage Square to Begin Road and Kaplan Street. Expressing a clear voice against the right-wing government and its leader, from within the right-wing camp, at a time when even the moderates in the Likud don’t dare to criticize him. At a time when the return of the hostages has been politicized, Einav stands as a mother, as a woman, as a Mizrahi, and as a right-winger, shouting out her pain.

1. **What personal price has the candidate paid?**

The price Einav pays for being a right-winger, a “Bibistit” (confirmed Netanyahu loyalist) who stands against the right-wing camp and against Bibi, is clear. Beyond being labeled a “criminal” by his supporters, beyond her daughter already being arrested and banned from demonstrations whose sole purpose is to voice the pain of the families of the hostages and the anguished public - Einav is a destitute woman from a right-leaning town. Her environment, her milieu, is not one that embraces her for her public criticism against the Prime Minister. They would prefer her to remain silent. Given her status – as a Mizrahi, right-wing, destitute woman - perhaps it would be better for her to remain silent rather than risk losing what little she has left. But Einav is a courageous woman who ignores all this, focusing solely on the return of her son and all the other hostages.

1. **How will the prize impact the candidate’s activity? If awarded the prize, how will you use it?**

For Einav, this prize would literally be a lifesaver. She is currently living in her car, going from protest to protest, and she and her daughters shower in an apartment in Tel Aviv belonging to generous people who have offered their help. At the end of the day, Matan was the breadwinner of the family; he was the one who bought a wheelchair for his sick sister. The prize would enable Einav to sustain and support her family, allowing her to continue her just and incredibly important struggle, not only for her own sake but for Israeli society as a whole. It might even encourage her to translate her activism into political power. Moreover, I believe that winning this prize would be a significant gesture of support from the camp, a form of acknowledgement and solidarity that isn’t always readily extended to those crossing over from the opposing side.