A New Vision – Promoting a Political Horizon and Curbing Annexation

A Strategic Plan Ahead of the September 2024 Round

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**1. Introduction**

The major innovation of this program, as set out in this document, is that it brings together for the first time two areas of work– promoting a political horizon and fighting the occupation – under a single concept, which sees the vital link between establishing a positive concept that promotes a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and curbing annexation efforts in the Occupied Territories.

The goals of our plan are particularly ambitious. It will involve a large number of players, and its success depends on many factors that directly impact us (the war that could break out in the north and expand into a regional conflict, the results of the United States elections, developments in the Palestinian arena, etc.).

However, we believe that we have a role in which we can make an impact – albeit a modest one. That role is to develop an infrastructure for coordinated, multifaceted, and strategic action. NIF will then be the organizing force of this broad and ambitious initiative – but of course will not take it upon itself to do everything.

Against this background, it should be noted that in recent years, there has been a real and significant bolstering of Shatil’s anti-occupation organizing work, in addition to a significant strengthening of the joint work in this area between the grants department and Shatil. This is now being recognized by all the key players in the field. As a result, we have a full mandate to take on the task of coordinating efforts to curb annexation efforts in the Occupied Territories.

The Fund also has another relative advantage in the form of its work with thinktanks on the issue of democratic infrastructures. This enables us to make a more significant entry into the political arena. This has already begun with the establishment of a joint political-security department with the Berl Katznelson Foundation and Mitvim – The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies.

Further, NIF now also enjoys increased legitimacy among more mainstream bodies, such as Darkenu and Commanders for Israel’s Security, which in the past were less inclined to cooperate with us.

All this strengthens NIF’s position in the arena, and will enable us to made a modest contribution to the most significant and vital task for Israel’s future and security – the promotion of a political settlement that will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**2. Background – the October 7 war as a “point zero” in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the struggle against the Occupation.**

During 2023, Israel’s far-right government worked hard to advance its “regime coup” This move sparked intense and unprecedented public opposition, with hundreds of thousands of Israelis taking to the streets every week in impressive displays of power. Alongside the “regime coup,” the government also pushed ahead with a “settler coup.” This involved dramatic changes in the structure of the regimes in the Occupied Territories, and the promotion of de facto and de jure annexation. This move, although no less dramatic than the “regime coup” in terms of its effects on Israeli reality, received far less attention and public opposition.

As a result, during 2023, NIF – through its Grants Department and Shatil – sought to bolster opposition efforts and worked to curb the “settler coup” on the ground (primarily through the defensive envelope project, by bolstering activists in the territories, and by providing a number of emergency grants to human rights activists); support for amplifying anti-occupation voices within the general protest movement (mainly through the Anti-Occupation Bloc) and strengthening other anti-occupation initiatives. At the same time, NIF supported efforts to develop a new political paradigm for the center-left (primarily through a strategic partnership with the Berl Katznelson Foundation and Mitvim, by establishing a joint political department).

The massacre of 7/10 and the war that broke out in its aftermath put a spoke in the wheel. The “regime coup” was put on ice, and the protests ground to a halt (until they resumed again). All public attention was directed to the war and to the plight of the hostages. The war, with its disastrous results, and the public earthquake that occurred in its wake, have marked a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the struggle against the Occupation.

In the context of the dramatic changes that the war has sparked within the Israeli reality, it is possible to identify different—even opposing—trends. On the one hand, there has been a shift to the right within Israel’s frightened and angry public opinion. The messianic right sees this moment as a tremendous opportunity to realize its goals, and is working to effectively advance its ideas of occupation-expulsion-settlement, both in Gaza and the West Bank. This intense activity by the right is taking place on an ideological, public, and political level, as well as through strategic activity on the ground, where increasing settler violence has already caused the displacement of 16 West Bank communities since October 7.

Meanwhile, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has once again become the focus of public discourse, amid the collapse of the years-old notion that the conflict could be managed. There is a high probability that a significant political opportunity will soon arise against a background of substantial international pressure. In the United States, there are already calls for the creation of a “Biden Doctrine” – a new American doctrine for the Palestinian Authority, which will include a cessation of war, progress toward a political solution vis-à-vis a (“renewed”) Palestinian Authority, and regional normalization.

This moment can be seen as a “point zero,” in which narratives are created, perceptions are born, and great ideas rise and fall. And in this moment, significant action is needed – a wide-ranging, positive initiative to establish an ideological alternative and influence public discourse, shift stances, and re-normalize the idea of a two-state solution, while assimilating the concept that only through a political settlement can security be guaranteed. It is essential that the drift to the right in public opinion is halted, and misguided ideas – such as population transfer and resettlement of Gush Katif – are curtailed. Moreover, we must ensure that rightwing moves to initiate irreversible changes in the region are stopped.

It is time to reassess the strategy of NIF and Shatil on these matters.

**3. Overarching goal**

To establish the conceptual, public, and political conditions that will enable future political solutions to be realized, such that anticipated political opportunities will not be missed – and thus to guarantee real security for Israel, alongside peace and justice for both nations. To achieve a different reality, NIF believes it is necessary to promote a positive political view on the question of a political settlement alongside activities whose main purpose is to curb far-right deportation and annexation efforts in Area C and in East Jerusalem, and to prevent (as far as possible) initiatives in the area that would hamper a two-state solution.

**4.** **Objectives**

The main objective is the mobilization of the Israeli public in a way that will lead to a majority in the Knesset that is supportive of a two-state solution. To achieve this, we have identified two intermediate goals:

* Revive the peace camp and building an effective movement on the left.
* Put the demand for a political solution on the agendas of the political center, centrist voters, and the protest movement.

Another, no less central goal that the program strives to achieve is the actual curbing of measures that frustrate a political solution – that is, measures to achieve annexation and the expulsion of Palestinian communities.

**5. The theory of change: construction//containment – complementary strands of the same initiative.**

The assumption is that only a combination of positive action to present a political-security alternative and the creation of conditions on the ground that facilitate a political settlement will enable the promotion of a different political reality for Israelis and Palestinians. After years of activity on the ground, we recognize that it is not enough either to promote a political vision while the shifting reality on the ground prevents that vision from being realized, or to oppose the occupation without a political action plan.

Now, in a way that is different from past efforts, we seek to combine these two approaches. We propose a combination of (1) promoting ideas and principles, public and political consciousness, in support of a political settlement; and (2) curbing deportation and annexation, will help create the conditions that will enable the anticipated opportunities to be realized. In order to respond to threats and increase the potential for exploiting opportunities, we propose acting through two central and complementary streams, in a kind of pincer movement.

1. Construction – “Political horizon:” the formation of a positive political vision and perception, which will provide real answers to questions of mutual security requirements, the lack of trust, political and policy needs, and international forces. Proactive action to influence public opinion, with a view to bolstering support for political processes and belief in their feasibility, while re-identifying the center-left with a rich and well-founded concept of security.

2. Today, public discourse is (almost) entirely “abandoned” to rightwing discourse, with its ideological concepts of deportation-conquest-settlement alongside fascist ideas of “total victory” and “living forever by the sword” are being poured into the public arena and are feeding and fueling the rightward drift of public opinion and the political sphere.

The purpose of this stream of action is to provide an effective response to these trends, to curb the drift to the right, and to help build a camp that supports a political agreement. The main activities in this stream will include significant research-based media and public-facing work to influence public opinion, building a rich and professional body of knowledge and policy that will work to reframe political discourse in the political arena, and working with and within the political and international arenas, etc.

3. Containment – “Sticks in Wheels”: at the same time, action is required in order to keep in check moves from two realities on the ground—curbing the transfer in the West Bank (in particular in Area C), East Jerusalem, and Gaza; restraining the takeover of land by settlers and creeping annexation, as well as ongoing actions to fight the Occupation and its injustices, and to reduce the suffering it causes.

The goal of this stream of action is to ensure conditions on the ground that can respond to growing settler violence, and curb the expulsion of communities, the “silent transfer,” and the accelerating annexation, and thus enable the existence and development of Palestinian urban, industrial, and agricultural areas in Area C and East Jerusalem, with the understanding that such development is a necessary and critical condition for the realization of any future political solution.

The main activities in this stream include grant support for the work of Yesh Din, Breaking the Silence, Ofek (led by Yehuda Shaul), Haqel: In Defense of Human Rights, and Rabbis for Human Rights, coordination of a CEOs’ forum for human rights organizations, as well as support for protective presence activists, activists involved in escorting shepherds, and solidarity activists, whose very presence on the ground constitutes a significant barrier to deportation and annexation efforts. This includes direct support for activists (such as assistance with travel and getting to actions; improving personal security; debriefing and communications; improving conditions for those on the ground; and training), alongside deepening the strategic significance of this activity – including by bolstering the connection between on-the-ground activity, legal work, the work of policy forums, and diplomacy.

We expect that coordinated and synchronized action of the work of activists on the ground, and of organizations working to promote diplomatic, legal, policy, and public work, will shift the balance of power on the ground. It will have the power to curb rightwing initiatives and even roll back the gains already made by the right (as is happening, for example, in the South Hebron Hills, where this type of coordinated activity is proving effective).

Both streams complement and support each other. Attempting to undertake action in one stream while neglecting the other will merely produce incomplete work that does not adequately address the reality on the ground. Thus, if we undertake work to promote political ideas without also acting to curb the expansion of the settlements and annexation, we may encounter a situation where it is not possible to implement those political ideas. By the same token, containment activities on the ground that are not accompanied by positive, conceptual, and public action will not last long, and will end up being eroded. In order to create suitable conditions for a political settlement, we must curb the right’s annexation efforts and also promote a political stance that supports an agreement, both in public opinion and in dialogue with political leadership.

**6. Support for significant public campaigns**

A key strategy to achieve the two intermediate goals of the new plan – reviving the peace camp and building an effective movement on the left, while putting the call for a political solution on the agenda of the political center – will be significant support for largescale public campaigns.

The peace event that took place in Tel Aviv on July 1, in which dozens of organizations participated, entailed significant organizing efforts by Shatil over almost half a year, and the financial support of NIF. This is the first significant gathering that heralds the revival of the peace camp. Currently, a joint action plan is being developed that will continue efforts to establish this movement.

In addition, it is essential to promote significant public campaigns that target centrist voters, while addressing the concept of achieving national security based on a political settlement, a regional alliance, and a roadmap that will lead to a two-state solution.

The findings of research by the aChord Center show that security is the most important issue for Israelis. There is an unprecedented level of negative sentiments among Israelis toward Palestinians, and a lack of trust in the two-state solution as it stands alone. Despite this, according to the research data, the majority of the Israeli public (53 percent) supports a political settlement that includes the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of normalization efforts with moderate Arab states and their recognition of the State of Israel. Among centrist voters, the percentage of those who support such a package is between 70 and 80 percent.

However, the leaders of Israel’s centrist parties do not promote the two-state solution/ regional alliance as a key part of their agenda. This is likely because they still hold the old view that engaging in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will paint them as “leftwing” and cause some of their supporters to distance themselves. Further, there is currently no significant public campaign that puts this issue on the public agenda from a center-left perspective.

We believe that, in order to create a significant effect, more than one campaign is required: first, since several different campaigns will produce a greater effect than just one, and second because there is a wide spectrum of target audiences (from the soft right to the left), and separate campaigns can focus on different segments.

We are currently engaged in intensive discussions about four such campaigns that we are positively considering supporting. We also intend to examine support for additional campaigns that directly promote the two-state solution as part of the revival of the peace camp.

* The joint political-security unit of the Berl Katznelson Foundation and Mitvim – the campaign will ask the Israeli public to choose between two conflicting approaches: that of the extreme messianic right versus that of the security and pragmatic camp. The campaign will include: billboards, banners, newspaper ads, a mini-site, and video clips. The campaign will be accompanied by the joint unit’s policy promotion work (which has already begun) among politicians from the center and left, as well as journalists.
* Darkenu, Commanders for Israel’s Security, and the Day After the War Forum – the campaign is shared by three organizations, each of which brings to the table its own unique added value. It will position the regional alliance as a basis for Israel’s own security, and promote a shift in discourse and policy toward the Palestinians. The campaign will include: a media campaign (billboards, social media, banners, video clips), training politicians and public figures as spokespeople who can present the regional alliance concept, holding house meetings, conferences, and public events.
* Have you seen the Horizon Lately – a media campaign (billboards, banners on websites, digital ads) that will position the desire for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a central part of the identity of Israel’s liberal democratic camp. It will be based on various binary questions, the answer to which should be clear to members of this camp. Some of the questions will address liberal issues such as freedom of religion, gender equality, and the independence of the judiciary, while others will deal with issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the end of the war.
* Civil Headquarters – the main theme of this campaign is similar to that of Have You Seen the Horizon Lately, but uses a different strategy that complements it. The campaign will include a multifaceted initiative—disclosed and undisclosed media, digital, and on-the-ground advertising – to introduced political discourse into the mainstream of the protest movement. The campaign will be based on creating and cultivating partnerships, including training speakers who have legitimacy among the target audiences to encourage as many people as possible from the liberal democratic camp to adopt political narratives.

**7. Areas of action, main strategies, and key partners**

Areas of action in which we will work to achieve our goals:

Israeli society – a public and ideological drive among Jewish and Arab society: building a peace movement on the left, promoting public support for a political agreement among centrist audiences through significant campaigns, boosting the connection between events in the Occupied Territories (annexation, deportation, settler violence, etc.) and promoting a future political settlement.

The political sphere, policy change – promoting policy and motivating elected officials to adopt the two-state solution, and moving the center and left political leadership “a step to the left”; adopting a clear political agenda that includes curbing developments in the Occupied Territories while promoting a political solution.

The international arena – promoting an international policy to curb annexation and deportation, and build a political horizon. Synchronization between local and international actors, while working to generate legitimacy for international measures.

In each activity area, activities are planned with different strategies: conceptual, policy promotion and political work, public work via significant campaigns and communication, on-the-ground activities and organizing, legal work, and international lobbying, while working to synchronize and integrate these efforts into targeted strategic action.

Below is a breakdown of the various activity areas, strategies, and key partners in both streams:

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| Spaces | Construction – political horizon | Containment – “sticks in wheels” |
| Israeli public | Objectives:1. An effective, Jewish-Arab peace camp that mobilizes leftwing audiences around calls for a political settlement.
2. Broad public support for a political settlement among center-left audiences. Establishing the concept that security will only be guaranteed through a political settlement in center-left audiences.

Strategies:* Conceptual development – formulating a vision, directions and work plans to end the conflict.
* Significant public campaigns.
* Organizing – mobilization – building power and creating a public movement that calls for a political settlement.

Partners:* Conceptual – the Berl Katznelson Foundation + Mitvim, the Forum for Regional Thinking, the Day After the War Forum, A Land for All.
* Public campaigns – Civil Headquarters, Have You Seen the Horizon Lately, Darkenu, Commanders for Israel’s Security, The Day After the War Forum, Coalition of peace camp organizations.
* Organizing – Standing Together, Women Wage Peace, Peace Now, A Land for All, Anti-Occupation Bloc, “unorganized” activists.

Desired intermediate outcomes:* Putting the call for a political settlement on the agenda of the protests, and making it part of the liberal camp’s identity.
* Connecting significant Palestinian-Israeli actors as partners in the peace camp.
* Positioning the regional alliance with a political horizon for the Palestinians as a solution among mainstream audiences.
 | Objectives:1. Containment on the ground of the population transfers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem with the help of a protective presence and protest activities on the ground;
2. Public perception of settler violence and annexation as “security terrorists.”

Strategies:* Support, protection, and bolstering of protective presence activist groups.
* Communication and public-facing work.

Partners:* Groups of activists in the West Bank (the protective envelope project for activists in the Occupied Territories), human rights organizations (CEOs’ Forum), Breaking the Silence, Torat Tzedek, Yesh Din, Haqel.
* Public work – Civil Headquarters, the Hub for the Protection of Civil Space, human rights organizations.

Desired intermediate outcomes:* Delegitimization among the moderate right of settler violence and messianic concepts.
* Coordinated and strategic action against settler violence.
* Strategic and coordinated action against settler groups in East Jerusalem.
* Replication of the holistic work model of presence and legal action from the South Hebron Hills to other areas.
* Preventing the deportation of additional Palestinian communities and protecting communities that have returned.
* Increasing the number of activists on the ground with a protective presence.
* Creating a protective envelope to support Israeli activists in the West Bank.
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| Political stream | Objectives:1. The adoption of the political issue as a central issue by center-left politicians.
2. The adoption of measures in support of a political settlement.

Strategies:* Direct work with the center-left leadership.
* Promotion of Knesset-government policy.

Partners:* Berl Katznelson Foundation + Mitvim, Peace Now, the

Geneva Initiative.Desired intermediate outcomes:* Commitment of politicians on the left to Yesh Atid to the issue of construction and containment.
* Expanding the number of Members of Knesset from the left who talk about a two-state political solution.
* The adoption of a regional alliance solution with a political alliance for the Palestinians and its promotion by an alternative government.
 | Objectives:1. Curbing legislative and policy initiatives regarding annexation.
2. Canceling the annexation of the Civil Administration to the Ministry of Defense and all the actions taken to promote annexation, given appropriate political conditions.

Strategies:* Policy promotion
* Legal – use of legal tools to stop deportations in the West Bank.
* Development of sophisticated legal systems (such as the South Hebron Hills model).

Partners:* Joint lobbyists of the human rights organizations, the Civil Rights Association, the Hub for the Protection of Civil Space, the joint unit of the Berl Katznelson Foundation and Mitvim. In relation to Gaza – Gisha, Physicians for Human Rights.
* Legal – Yesh Din, Heqel, Peace Now, LEAP, Bimkom, the Hub for the Protection of Civil Space.

Desired intermediate results:* Cancelation of annexation measures (if there is a different government)
* Restraining settler violence by the authorities through enforcement.
* The courts prevent the deportation of Palestinian communities.
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| International | Objectives:1. Coordination of international policy promotion efforts to promote a political horizon.
2. Public work to create Israeli legitimacy for accepting international proposals, not isolation.

Partners:* Mitvim, the Geneva Initiative, ECF, JSTREET, NIF-USA.
 | Objectives:1. Containment of settler violence and population transfer, through support for Israeli forces working with international actors.
2. Public work to create Israeli legitimacy for the steps that the international community takes regarding law violations, and preventing alignment with an isolation mentality.

Partners:* Ofek, Shaqued Morag – joint lobbyist of human rights organizations in Brussels, Breaking the Silence, Peace Now, ECF.
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**8. What will the Fund’s Work (Grants and Shatil) Include as Part of the New Program?**

* Providing grants in accordance with the strategic plan.
* Centralizing support and the protective envelope project for protective presence activists in the West Bank.
* Coordinating joint forums (CEOs’ forum, Political Horizon Forum, the Tent Camp coalition, activist groups).
* Creating useful connections between the action streams and various action strategies (e.g., connecting activists on the ground with Anti-Occupation Bloc activists, to generate partnerships and power multipliers, connecting actors in the occupation with those in the political-security domain.)
* Recruiting and harnessing camp organizations for the general movement, creating effective information channels.
* Assisting and providing flexible support for the growing forces on the ground; bolstering forces on the ground.
* Managing a “joint headquarters” for synchronizing and coordinating actions in the “shared space” (activities and needs that are not met by a particular organization, synchronization between shared functions) (there is a question mark over this).
* Creating joint infrastructures for transferring information and activity.