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| **SOCIAL CHANGE DOMAIN** | | | | | | | |
| **STRATEGIES** | | | | | | | |
| Safeguarding Civil Society and Activists: The Civil Society Protection Hub | **Advancing Religious Freedom and Fighting Religious Extremism** | | Combating Crime & Violence in Palestinian Israeli Society | Strengthening Anti-Racism Initiatives & Organizations | Fighting the Occupation | | Promoting Shared Society |
| Advancing Equity in Land, Planning & Housing | | Strengthening Gender Equality NGOs | | Safeguarding Human & Civil Rights | | Strengthening Palestinian-Israeli Society | |
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| **The organization was established in:** 1984   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **NIF Funding Type** | **Past Years of Support** | | General Support | 1993-2021 | | Project Support | 2016-2013 |   **DA Support (in 2022):** $51,890  **Rapid Response Support (in 2022/23):** $10,000  **Link to Organizational Website:** <http://www.datumedina.org.il/>  **Link to Proposal:** <https://nif.my.site.com/Portal/a0NAb000000QKMo?srPos=19&srKp=a0N>  **Link to Interim Reports:** <https://nif.my.site.com/Portal/a0N3X000019mvro?srPos=15&srKp=a0N> | | | | | | | |
| **INTRODUCTION** | | | | | | | |
| **The overall current expected impact of the program as a strategy for advancing NIF’s overall mission of a just and democratic Israel is:** Policies against religious coercion and unequal distribution of resources as well as those supporting religious tolerance will be measurably advanced. Religious extremism in Israeli society will be reduced. | | | | | | | |
| **The grantee uses strategies of:** Legal activity, advocacy activity, public campaigns, operation of a hotline | | | | | | | |
| These are the goals of the organization and then some relevant benchmarks outcomes on the way to achieving the goals:  The ultimate goal of the organization is the promotion of religious freedom in Israel and full equality for non-Orthodox movements. Other goals are preventing racist practices and expressions in the public sphere (mainly by rabbis and extreme religious organizations) and preventing the exclusion of women in the public sphere.  Intermediate objectives to achieve the goal:   * Adoption of a policy – by the government and by local authorities – that promotes religious freedom and equality for non-Orthodox movements * Success in legal proceedings (class actions and tort claims) against entities that act in a racist way or in a way that excludes women * Disciplinary and legal measures taken by the government against rabbis and organizations that act and express themselves in a racist manner | | | | | | | |
| **Main Indicators for the grant include** (among others, the total list of indicators and targets can be found in the Salesforce):   * The number of legal cases that the organization manages and the degree of success in them * The scope and quality of media coverage of the organization's activities * The number and scope of public campaigns | | | | | | | |
| **Added value of this grant (for the project and in general) include that:**  IRAC is the main legal organization in the sphere of promoting religious freedom in Israel. It has developed expertise in a variety of legal actions (petitions to the High Court, class actions, tort claims) and manages to influence policy with legal tools. IRAC also plays a key role in the sphere of combating racism, which is high on its list of priorities. IRAC collaborates with a variety of organizations – both in the sphere of religious freedom and in the sphere of combating racism.  בתקופה זאת כאשר הממשלה הנוכחית נותנת לגיטימציה מובנית לגזענות ועליונות יהודית, ואנו רואים עליה בתופעות של גזענות ממוסדת - המאבק המשפטי והציבורי של המרכז הרפורמי בתופעות ממסדיות של גזענות חשוב מאין כמוהו. | | | | | | | |
| **(For organizations receiving support 5 or more years) Significant PAST achievements - relevant to this program or not - of the grantee since NIF began support include:**   * 2011 – Declaring as illegal gender segregation and exclusion of women on buses, on flights, trains and in cemeteries and on signs calling for modesty * 2013 – Start of state funding for Reform and Conservative religious services * 2015 – End of women’s exclusion at the Haredi radio station "Kol Barama" (following the filing of a class action suit by the organization) * 2019 – Disqualification of racist candidates (Kahanists) from running for the Knesset * 2021 – Recognizing Reform and Conservative conversion for the purposes of the Law of Return | | | | | | | |
| **PROGRESS** | | | | | | | |
| **Overall Progress Evaluation:** Fully Met Expectations  **Explanation re. Score:**  The IRAC has maintained its relevancy by continuing to pursue its main strategy—legal struggle. The organization has been successful in preventing numerous racist policies from being enacted by institutions and their encroachment upon liberalism, even under the current government and despite the war. IRAC was a prominent force in the struggle for the return of the hostages through outreach to the Reform communities. The organization also played a pivotal role in mobilizing Reform Jews to join the fight against the proposed judicial reform. It likewise made an impact in local municipal elections by putting pressure on candidates to commit to freedom of religion and equal rights for members of all religious congregations.    **Main Progress in 2022/23:**  **Outcomes:**   * Thanks to the organization’s appeal to the Attorney General, the “Rabbis Bill,” which in its current iteration would allow the Shas-controlled Ministry of the Interior to channel funding to neighborhood Rabbis, was blocked. * In January 2024, IRAC’s legal efforts led to the indictment of Bentzi Gopstein, director of the Lehava organization, on charges of incitement to terrorism, violence, and racism. In April, Gopstein received a light sentence of 260 hours of community service and four months’ probation. Furthermore, following the sanctions enacted against Lehava by the US and the EU, IRAC contacted all eleven banks and seven credit card companies and demanded that they refuse service to Lehava, Gopstein, and any organization through which they might funnel funds. IRAC also approached the Associations Registry to demand that Keren Le-hatzalat Am Israel (“The Foundation for the Rescue of the Nation of Israel)—an organization channeling funds to Lehava—be dissolved and contacted representatives of all major social media (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram) to request that Lehava’s and Gopstein’s accounts be blocked. * Appeals on the part of the Israel Religious Action Center prevented the transfer of a total of 50 million dollars in funding to the “exempt” institutions (ultra-Orthodox educational institutions that do not teach the core subjects and are not supervised by the Ministry of Education) during the war and amidst general budget cuts. * IRAC’s legal action led to a historical verdict when the courts decided in favor of allowing the LGBT-oriented “Tipuley Harama” (“Lift Therapy”) parties to be held next to the Tower of David in Jerusalem, despite pressure from Rabbis, which had led the venue to cancel the parties in the first place. Thanks to IRAC’s appeals, the party eventually took place, which was a major victory for the LGBT community in Jerusalem. * July saw the inauguration of a budding joint project between IRAC, Peace Now, and the Berl Katznelson Foundation—“Budget Watch,” which aims to monitor state budget changes.   **Outputs:**   * Since October 7, IRAC and the Reform Movement have been conducting Sabbath and Havdalah ceremonies at the Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, bringing out thousands of Reform community members to demonstrate for the return of the hostages. * IRAC submitted appeals for the ineligibility of members of the Otzma Yehudit (“Jewish Power”) party to present their candidacy in local elections in Ma’ale Adumim and Jerusalem—but the appeals were denied. * The organization has produced a 100-day action plan for local council members to promote religious freedom in their municipalities. The document has been propagated in over five cities by members of the Reform community. * The petition campaign launched by IRAC to stop the Israel Prize from being awarded to Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef collected over fifteen thousand signatures. * The organization launched a twelve-episode podcast dealing with issues of state and religion in collaboration with the 103fm radio station. | | | | | | | |
| Particular **challenges and/or significant program or organizational changes:**  Like other civil society organizations, the IRAC staff and the Reform movement community were directly and indirectly affected by the war, both in terms of lives lost as well as staff recruited into the reserves. With the help of Shatil, the Center and its team managed to face the challenges this presented. As part of the struggle for the return of the hostages, starting on October 7, IRAC and the Reform movement invested many resources in the endeavor to sound a Jewish call for the return of the hostages and the signing of a deal. | | | | | | | |
| **2022 Organizational income:** $1,919,000  **2023 Expected Organizational Budget:** $2,692,000 | | | | | | | |
| **2023 RECOMMENDATION** | | | | | | | |
| **2022 Grant:** $**50,000**  **2022 Grants from Other Programs:** $45,000 (from the Strengthening Anti-Racism Initiatives and Organizations program – approved in March 2023)  **2023 Staff Recommendation:** $**50,000**  **% of NIF Grant out of Total Organizational Budget**: 1.8**%**  **Explain Staff Recommendation:**  Despite the current political climate and faced with an unfriendly government as well as attacks on the legal system, the Israel Religious Action Center has continued to have significant and effective successes in promoting a liberal society and fighting racism. We see the organization’s line of action—mobilizing members of the Reform communities in Israel to action (initially against the judicial reform and now for the promotion of a deal for the return of the hostages and resistance against the government)—as effective and bearing fruit. We believe that investment in the field will yield significant achievements.  **Recommendation of Board/Grants Committee 2023:** | | | | | | | |