

Israeli Democracy Giving Opportunities

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We are experiencing an unprecedented constitutional and social crisis in Israel, with the government’s proposed judicial reforms and exacerbated societal tensions. Below is a non-exhaustive list of organizations that are working to address immediate needs around this crisis and splits in Israeli society, and to fortify democratic values and institutions in the long run. This memo is organized around the following categories: **(1) Protests and Grassroots Initiatives, (2) Advocacy and Think Tanks, (3) Change Agents, (4) Social Trust, (5) Media and Information, (6) Watchdog Organizations, and (7) Civic Education.** *(This does not include other medium and long term needs, such as municipal elections (coming in October 2023) and civic education.)*

1) Protests and Grassroots Initiatives

These are the most time-sensitive given their planned activities during this period of negotiations and ahead of the expected upcoming Knesset votes.

Central Headquarters (Fiscal sponsor: Blue White Future)	Fundraising goal: TBD
Founded by a handful of activists and philanthropists, the Central Headquarters (HQ) serves as the main logistical and support hub for the entire protest movement, including the Saturday evening protests and the large-scale Disruption Days. What began in Tel Aviv in January has grown to more than 50 local initiatives across the country, culminating in the massive protests following Gallant’s firing. HQ offers support to any local initiative as long as it is committed to the Declaration of Independence and is non-violent. It provides a number of support services: (1) legal (e.g., guidance to organizers around messaging or individual protestors); (2) logistical (e.g., buses, banners, shirts, flags); (3) marketing/communication (e.g., speakers, media spotlights); (4) financial; and (5) coordination (e.g., centralizing information on protests).	

Guarding Our Shared Home	Fundraising goal: TBD
Founded in January 2023, Guarding Our Shared Home is a Jerusalem-based, volunteer-run initiative that organizes the weekly protests in front of the President’s Residence. It seeks to support Jerusalem’s diverse residents — political right and left, religious and secular, Jewish and Arab — to better understand and vocalize their concerns about the judicial reforms. Its core activities include organizing: (1) weekly protests; (2) in-person and virtual educational events; (3) small group discussions in person and via Whatsapp groups in Hebrew, English, Arabic, and Russian; and (4) social media campaigns and communication efforts.	

Darkenu	Budget: \$3M (likely \$3.5M)
Founded in 2003, Darkenu seeks to organize and amplify the “moderate majority” of Israelis who are committed to Zionism and democracy so they can exert influence on government policy and the public discourse. Darkenu is the Israeli branch of the OneVoice movement. Former MK Rachel Azaria became CEO in 2022. Darkenu has a listserv of more than 200,000 activists, and in the near term is prioritizing: 1) Campaigns: It is organizing the “ Supreme Court is our Shield ” campaign (an army reference) to reach centrist and right-wing voters who may be compelled that soldiers/reservists could be charged in	

international courts in the absence of an independent judiciary.

- 2) **Protests:** Darkenu is leading the protests in front of the homes of Likud MKs.
- 3) **DemocratTV** (democratv.org): This is the only independent Israeli media channel, with more than 7,000 individuals who invest monthly, plus thousands more viewers. DemocratTV broadcasts the protests.

In the future, Darkenu will likely focus on addressing the fractured social fabric that fuels some of the anti-liberal values on the rise in Israel.

2) Advocacy and Think Tanks

These advance the intellectual frameworks for a healthy democracy, with immediate opportunities to promote their ideas and longer term work to develop and build support for such concepts.

Israel Democracy Institute (IDI)	2023 Organizational Budget: \$13.8M 2023 Center for Democratic Values Budget: \$2.37M
<p>Founded in 1991 and led by former MK Yohanan Plesner, the Israel Democracy Institute is a non-partisan think tank that seeks to strengthen the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. It does this by conducting research, educating and influencing decision-makers, drafting policy papers, and documenting and analyzing public opinion on relevant topics. Yohanan and his team have been very involved in the negotiations hosted by President Herzog. IDI's work is organized across five centers: Democratic Values and Institutions; Governance and Economy; Shared Society; Security and Democracy; and Public Opinion.</p> <p>IDI has a particular desire to grow its Center for Democratic Values and Institutions, which aims to strengthen the state's commitment to democratic values (e.g., rule of law, separation of powers) and combat populist legislation and racism. Its current priorities include educating decision-makers on the government's reforms through briefings, policy summaries, clarifying red lines, and drafting alternative policies. It recently expanded its target audience to the broader public and is working to make this complex issue digestible and accessible. The Center is increasing its digital presence (e.g. recent example) and creating targeted messaging and events (e.g. for Likud voters or Arab society) to expand the public pressure against the reforms.</p>	

Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI)	Budget: \$5.5M
<p>Founded in 2002 by the Jewish Agency, the Jewish People Policy Institute is a centrist and independent think tank that deals with the continuity of the Jewish people. Its work is organized across four centers: (1) Jewish Identity in Israel and the Diaspora; (2) Cohesiveness; (3) Resilience (against anti-semitism); and (4) Infrastructure (e.g., information gathering on the Jewish people). Since becoming Executive Director in 2021, Prof. Yedidia Stern has elevated the profile of JPPI. He and JPPI are focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Convening a group of 10-15 experts — many current and former deans of Faculties of Law — to create an alternative proposal that maintains the independence of the Supreme Court and ensures the protection of minority rights. In the long-term, this group may seek to draft a “skinny” constitution.● Expanding its campaign, “No to coercion and violence, yes to dialogue” calling for compromise.	

<u>The Berl Katznelson Center</u>	Budget: N/A
<p>The Berl Katznelson Center (BKC) aims to lay the building blocks - ideas, policies, and leaders - for a thriving, democratic, and Jewish state of Israel that is committed to socio-economic justice, equality, tolerance, and pluralism. Established in 1944 to commemorate the life and work of Berl Katznelson, one of Israel’s progressive Zionism pioneers, it works to realize his vision of a center for political thought and leadership. BKC invests in young leaders, influencers, and thinkers via leadership programs that educate, cultivate, and train the next generation of diverse progressive Zionists. These leaders are integrated into central spheres of influence: IDF, public sector/civil service, local, and national positions. Additionally, BKC invests in ideas and policies by shaping and disseminating relevant and current practical research, policy analysis and policy analysis, and by forming central ideas and recommendations for policy action.</p>	

<u>Shalom Hartman Institute</u>	Budget: \$40M
<p>The Shalom Hartman Institute (SHI) – founded in Jerusalem in 1976 – works to amplify liberal Jewish values in the public and political spheres, and to combat the polarization of Judaism and democracy. SHI operates as both a research center and as an educational center, promoting the basic values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Judaism and State Policy Center (JSPC) is developing narrative “toolboxes” to equip influencers and decision makers with the knowledge to effectively address key issues on the table, including new approaches to the Law of Return and to proposed changes to the status quo on religion and state. The toolboxes will include resources and explanatory documents that present alternative approaches and narratives to reframe these issues in order to promote liberalism in Israel. ● SHI is mobilizing its network of principals and teachers to use the Jewish idea of <i>machloket</i> (debate or dispute) as a tool to help address political polarization within student bodies. SHI is also building a larger activist network to serve as a central address for influential Jewish leaders – teachers, principals, policy makers, rabbis, and change-agents – who are committed to advancing liberal Jewish and democratic values in Israel. ● The Center for Shared Society is piloting new initiatives to build the social fabric between Jewish and Palestinian Israeli influentials, principally in the education system. These relationships, built with an emphasis on narrative, values, and identities, are vital elements of a liberal democratic society. 	

<u>The Institute for Israeli Thought</u>	Budget: N/A
<p>The Institute for Israeli Thought was established two years ago to create and shape a political worldview based on setting permanent state borders, transiting to regional elections, drafting a constitution, and birthing a civic Israeli nationality. It is led by top intellectuals and public figures who are relevant to the promotion of a new Israeli political perspective. The Institute's senior fellows are Professor Avner Ben-Zaken, Prof. Eva Illouz, Prof. Joseph Zeira, Prof. Haviva Pedaya, Dr. Tamar Hostovsky Brandes, Mr. Mordechai Cohen, and Mr. Jalal Ayoub, attorney at law. It has held dozens of conferences on topics such as establishing an Israeli republic, social sentiments that are vital to the existence of civil society, separating religion and state, structural reforms in local government, Israel’s land policies, and the need for a constitution. Alongside their other activities, they</p>	

are focusing on drawing up a social contract of Israeli society that could serve as an outline and precursor of a constitution.

3) Change Agents

Beit Prat	Budget: N/A
<p>Beit Prat works to create a growing movement of young adults forging a moderate center that champions vibrant engagement with Judaism, individualism together with dedication to community, and Zionism coupled with respect for the dignity of every human being. Its core program is its Beit Midrash (in Elul and another six month program), reaching more than 200 people annually. Among many other programs, Beit Prat and its founder, leading author and scholar Dr. Micah Goodman, are working actively with alumni in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Beer Sheva to develop guiding principles for a new form of Zionist democracy and to work bottom up to activate a center in Israel that will champion the core values of equality and justice upon which Israel was founded. It also supports alumni to create their own activities relevant to its mission. Micah is also involved behind the scenes, working with Israeli elected leaders and their advisors to define their own values in order to identify shared opportunities to advance democracy in the country.</p>	
IDEA: The Center for Liberal Democracy	Budget: \$1.6M NIS
<p>Established in 2017, IDEA works to promote democratic values by strengthening the democratic-liberal political camp. Its training programs have supported the leadership of more than 500 senior leaders from civil society, government, media, education, and private sector. It then leverages its network to support members to create programs and initiatives.</p>	
Tzedek Centers	Budget: N/A
<p>Tzedek Centers is a national grassroots movement of local activist communities established in 2016. It conducts leadership programs training citizens to join together, create shared visions, and work to promote change in their communities and cities. Inspired by the Jewish tradition of Tikkun Olam and the Israeli Declaration of Independence, Tzedek Centers work as a national network to promote democracy, equality, and solidarity in Israeli society. The 8 current centers are home to thousands of activists and over 130,000 citizens who have taken part in leadership programs, public events, and campaigns.</p>	
The Israeli Movement	Budget: \$1.2M
<p>The Israeli Movement works to strengthen local democracy and increase representation and civic participation in Israeli society. It provides training and support to local activists and neighborhood councils, consults with council members to foster democratic processes, and facilitates public awareness campaigns and communication efforts to influence public opinion and changemakers. It is currently active in 19 cities across Israel.</p>	

4) Social Trust

aChord: Social Psychology for Social Change	Budget: \$4.4M
<p>aChord Center specializes in the social psychology of intergroup relations. Established in 2015 by Prof. Eran Halperin, a professor of psychology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, along with Prof. Tamar Saguy and Dr. Michal Reifen-Tager, the Center's unique added value is in developing innovative, evidence-based, practical knowledge and tools to improve intergroup relations by utilizing cutting-edge social psychological theory and data.</p> <p>Prof. Halperin built the Center out of concern for the disconnect between research-based knowledge on intergroup relations and the actual work being done in the field. The high levels of tension, prejudice, and negative emotions between groups are one of the most pressing sets of social issues in Israel today. Bound up in this set of issues are numerous subtle and deep-seated psychological factors that underlie and influence intergroup relations. Yet currently, the many organizations and programs that aspire to enhance social cohesion within Israeli society lack the socio-psychological knowledge and tools that can significantly increase the effectiveness of their work. The Center aims to fill this gap.</p> <p>aChord's services are varied, and tailored to specific challenges and fields. Currently, the Center conducts research, develops training sessions, offers intensive workshops, designs tools, and consults numerous organizations, helping them address psychological barriers in their work with social groups. The Center works in collaboration with the PICR research lab. Home to more than 30 researchers from Israel and abroad, it is one of the leading research labs in the world in the development of effective socio-psychological interventions.</p>	

ALLMEP	Budget: approx. \$1.6M
<p>Founded in 2006 and headquartered in Washington, DC, with offices in Europe, Israel, and Palestine, the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) is the Middle East's largest and fastest-growing network of peacebuilding organizations. It envisions a Middle East in which its community of Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilders lead their societies toward and beyond a sustainable peace. With a coalition of over 150 organizations — and tens of thousands of Israelis and Palestinians — ALLMEP fosters cooperation that increases impact, adds stability in times of crisis, and builds an environment for peace over the long term.</p> <p>Peace is a long-term process of building trust between peoples through grassroots engagement as much as top-level negotiations. ALLMEP's theory of change is rooted in the strength of people-to-people partnerships at this grassroots level. ALLMEP provides essential services, collaborative opportunities, and strategic programming to its member organizations from both the cross-border and shared society realms, so that the ALLMEP community can be at the vanguard of genuine societal transformation, laying the foundation upon which a direct peace process can take shape. Additionally, ALLMEP works internationally to raise funds for peacebuilding work, educate key audiences, including opinion makers, elected representatives, government officials, American and international funders, and the international community about the critical opportunities and needs of people-to-people efforts in the region.</p>	

<u>The Fourth Quarter</u>	Budget: approx. \$2.5M
<p>The Fourth Quarter is an Israeli grassroots movement, founded by Yoav Heller, Ella Ringel, and Ori Herrman, we that aims to produce an updated political and democratic model for the country as it enters the “fourth quarter” of its existence. They aim to create broad agreement to build alliances between different communities by restoring trust between them. In the past 11 months, the movement has recruited over 4,000 supporters, held 175 salons, and conducted 14 seminars, with more than 1,000 participants. Over 80 percent of seminar participants have so far remained active. As the political situation and street demonstrations continue, the movement is experiencing growing demand from people who want to do something beyond the protests by joining salons and seminars. As a result, the organization is preparing itself to scale both financially and operationally.</p>	

<u>The Jerusalem Model</u>	Budget: approx. \$700,000
<p>The Jerusalem Model connects more than 250 social entrepreneurs who leverage Jerusalem’s diversity to uplift their communities and the city overall. Participants are of diverse socioeconomic and political backgrounds and include Ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews, immigrants, LGBTQ individuals, Palestinian Muslims and Christians, and more. All hold strong identities as Jerusalemites and seek to build alliances and shared value-based partnerships based on their commitment to a vibrant Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Model is actively engaging members from the ground up in a spectrum of organizing, learning, shared language, activism, and more, to build a more durable democracy in Jerusalem and Israel. Working groups of members lead projects or organizations that directly impact their community, neighborhood, or constituent group.</p> <p>The complementary Jerusalema program is a nonpartisan accelerator for those who plan to run for neighborhood, municipal, or national elected office. Jerusalema offers skills development in working with those who are different from you to create change. It also builds strategic relationships, engages participants in hands-on case studies, exposes them to a diverse array of Jerusalem neighborhoods, and provides instructions in the tactics of running a political campaign.</p> <p>With Jerusalem’s system of neighborhoods, the nature of its public space, and its low socioeconomic status, tens of thousands of people are directly and indirectly impacted by the Model.</p>	

<u>Merchavim: The Institute for the Advancement of Shared Citizenship in Israel</u>	Budget: approx. \$1.35M
<p>Founded in 1998, Merchavim is led by CEO Adv. Michal Pinchuk. It works to strengthen the cohesion of Israeli society for the benefit of all citizens, and is dedicated to promoting diversity, inclusion, and greater fairness in classrooms, communities, and society.</p> <p>In partnership with the Ministry of Education, Merchavim works to integrate teachers from the Arab sector, Ethiopian-Israelis, and teachers with disabilities into the state education system. In addition, Merchavim staff conduct trainings and continuing education courses for teaching staff on diversity and inclusion, conducts</p>	

training in public and private organizations to implement principles of diversity and fairness, and trains representatives of youth organizations to implement shared society values into informal education organizations.

In 2023, Merchavim entered social tourism with its “Shared Paths” program, which conducts physical tours, virtual tourism activities, and meetings in Arab localities throughout the country to strengthen familiarity with Arab society and promote a shared society.

[The Portland Trust](#)

Budget: approx. \$4.1M

The Portland Trust works in both Israel and the Palestinian territories to catalyze and ensure delivery of economic and regional development projects designed to promote long-term peace, social trust and stability in the region. In recent years, Portland has placed a particular emphasis on integrating women and disadvantaged groups into the tech workforce, leveraging its network and partnerships in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, the Middle East, the UK and around the world. Since its inception, Portland has played an impactful role in the region, including in the development of Rawabi, loan guarantee schemes, microfinance and the founding of Tsofen, Bridges Israel and Social Finance Israel.

5) Media and Information

Freedom of the press and addressing disinformation is critical to educating and organizing the Israeli people, both for short term needs related to current Knesset efforts, and long term building of a healthy democracy .

[Movement for Freedom of Information](#)

Budget: \$350,000

Founded in 2004 by leading journalists and lawyers, the Movement for Freedom of Information seeks to promote transparency and accountability in public institutions. The organization represents civil society organizations, journalists/media, and the public to petition relevant government bodies for information, submitting more than 300 requests and 25 legal petitions per year. With a 90% success rate, the organization’s recent victories include publication of permanent entry holders to the Knesset, crime data, police practices, and government discussions on COVID. Moreover, the organization trains and educates journalists about submitting information requests, legalities (e.g., libel laws), and utilizing big data. It is experiencing a significant increase in information requests from the field, and hopes to grow its capacity (currently at five staff) quickly.

[Shomrim: The Center for Media and Democracy](#)

Budget: N/A

Founded in 2019 by Laura and Gary Lauder and in partnership with respected Israeli journalists, Shomrim (The Guardians) is an independent, non-partisan news organization promoting investigative journalism and transparency. Inspired by ProPublica, it seeks to dispel fake news and promote democratic discourse. Recent exposés include identifying NGOs that work with Forum Kohelet, MKs’ conflicts of interest, and the anonymous donor supporting Yigal Amir. As part of its endeavor to promote transparency, Shomrim also monitors the parliamentary activity of every MK (e.g., attendance, proposals, voting).

6) Watchdog Organizations

These serve as a check against human rights violations and poor governance and hold officials accountable.

Movement for Quality Government in Israel	Budget: \$2.8M
<p>Founded in 1990, the Movement for Quality Government (MQG) in Israel is an independent, non-partisan, public interest organization that seeks to expose and address public corruption and regulatory issues and promote strong governance. It is a membership organization of 30,000 citizens; members contribute more than 50% of its budget. MQG is organized in four units:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Legal: MQG utilizes a multi-pronged approach that includes drafting policy, exposing corruption, protecting whistleblowers, submitting petitions to the courts, and educating politicians (especially municipal leaders) about strong governance.2) Education: It presents at mechinot and schools about civic engagement, rule of law, and accountability.3) Field work: It organizes protests, conferences, and events.4) Communication/Public Relations: It works to share its work with the general public. <p>In this current crisis, MQG is submitting petitions to the Supreme Court (e.g., against efforts to subordinate the police to politicians), hosting conferences about the current legislation, leading some of the protests, and working with other players to submit alternative policies.</p>	

Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)	Budget: N/A
<p>Founded in 1972, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel is the oldest non-governmental human rights organization in Israel. It pursues change through advocacy and litigation, focused on the Arab minority, migrants and refugees, the occupied territories, and social, economic, and political rights. It also promotes human rights education through teacher-training colleges, universities, and the Ministry of Education.</p>	

7) Civic Education

Migdalar	Budget: N/A
<p>The Migdalar was founded as a liberal democratic education center that aims to: 1) convene, network, and serve as a hub for non-formal liberal democratic education organizations, 2) integrate the variety of content that civil society organizations teach today in non-formal education programs, and 3) direct, improve, and pool different resources – materials, content and more - for activity that promotes high-quality liberal political education in the non-formal education field in Israel.</p> <p>The Migdalar forum is a network of leaders and functionaries in non-formal education. Members meet for training sessions which involve learning from peers. This shared space helps develop a shared vision and language for the many decentralized, small, and otherwise weak non-formal education organizations.</p> <p>Migdalar is a joint project of IDEA: The Center for liberal Democracy and Hechalutz.</p>	