

# NEW PROFILE UPDATE

December 1, 2009

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This time, for a change, we're bringing you (at least some) good news.

As you may recall, this past year New Profile faced a two pronged attempt to forcefully silence and suppress our work towards demilitarizing state and society in Israel. First, in the spring of 2008, a right-wing nonprofit petitioned the High Court of Justice to order the authority in charge to cancel New Profile's nonprofit status, which would have effectively blocked our access to funding. Then, in September 2008, the State Prosecutor's Office announced a criminal investigation of New Profile, followed, in April 2009, by a highly publicized and dramatized police "raid," during which eleven activists were summoned and held for interrogation.

Many thousands of you responded to our call for support, distributed and backed up throughout the world by sister-organizations and individuals. You demonstrated, wrote protest letters to Israel's authorities while expressing and extending your support for us in many thoughtful and inventive ways. This period has been an exceedingly trying one for all of us and your steady, visible support has been a lifeline. We can't thank you enough.

Now for the good news:

**On November 1, 2009, the State Prosecutor's Office finally notified the High Court of Justice that it was terminating the criminal investigation of New Profile with no charges whatsoever, due to lack of culpability and lack of evidence.** Following the closure of the criminal investigation, the outstanding issue of New Profile's non-profit status has now been returned to the jurisdiction and discretion of the official in charge of registering and monitoring all nonprofits in Israel (the Fellowship of Societies Registrar). Based on the (non-)findings of the criminal investigation, attorneys Gaby Lasky and Smadar Ben-Natan, the lawyers steadfastly and impressively representing New Profile, filed an immediate request that the High Court reject outright the still outstanding petition against New Profile. On November 23 2009, the High Court judge announced his decision to await the Registrar's response. **Accordingly, at this point, a final decision on New Profile's nonprofit status is still pending** and the movement may still find itself effectively stripped of a legal funding channel.

Nevertheless, we are greatly relieved by the termination without charges of the criminal investigation and by its clear vindication of New Profile as operating within the law. This does not, however, detract from the complex aftermath of the experience, in particular for those of us whose homes were searched by police, whose personal computers and other materials were confiscated, who were escorted or summoned to police headquarters for interrogation, fingerprinting, etc.

As we've clarified in previous updates, New Profile's persecution, its attempted stigmatization and the implied accusations of high treason conveyed by the highly dramatized criminal investigation, all form parts of a consistent fabric, rather than an isolated incident. **The persecution of New Profile is but one instance of the heightened government repression of opposition and legitimate political discourse.** It is a single manifestation of the overall, ongoing harassment of citizens who dare to question government and military procedures or suggest alternative options. Repressive measures are directed, most pronouncedly, at Palestinians living in the occupied territories—including the Gaza Strip, to which Israel continues to apply its lethal siege—but also at dissenting Palestinian citizens of Israel, dissenting Jewish Israelis and international peace workers.

While predominantly dedicated to Israel's actions in Gaza earlier this year, and clearly indicating that these were in violation of international humanitarian law, the recent report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, headed by renowned jurist Richard Goldstone, also noted the suppression of dissent inside Israel. The report documented the systematic state abuse of power via the legal system and police force aimed at silencing protest. Many peaceful protesters, the report said, were detained pending trial, presented as gravely endangering the public, and charged with serious offenses rather than the relatively minor misdemeanors previously customary in such cases. The report expressly cited the persecution of New Profile ([www.newprofile.org](http://www.newprofile.org)) and Breaking the Silence ([www.shovrimshatika.org/index\\_e.asp](http://www.shovrimshatika.org/index_e.asp)) while emphasizing both the crucial importance of critical discourse in Israel and its systematic suppression (see: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC\\_Report.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC_Report.pdf)).

The Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) has documented an escalation of state violence against left wing activists since Israel's incursion into Gaza in December 2008 (see for instance: <http://www.acri.org.il/eng/story.aspx?id=652>; <http://www.acri.org.il/eng/story.aspx?id=543>). Adalah, The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, has issued a comprehensive report on the state repression of dissident Palestinian citizens of Israel, particularly university students, titled "Prohibited Protest" (see: [http://www.adalah.org/features/prisoners/GAZA\\_REPORT\\_ENGLISH\\_FOR\\_THE\\_NEWSLETTER.pdf](http://www.adalah.org/features/prisoners/GAZA_REPORT_ENGLISH_FOR_THE_NEWSLETTER.pdf)).

In our updates over the past year, we have listed many instances of this state campaign of repression. Here is a brief follow-up on some of them:

- 1) Ezra Nawi has been sanctioned by the court—allegedly for assaulting a police officer, but in fact for working non-violently to resist the dispossession of Palestinians in the South Hebron Hills; last month he was both fined and sentenced to a month in prison (see: [www.supportezra.net](http://www.supportezra.net)).
- 2) Samieh Jabbarin, a Jaffa based theater artist, was finally released earlier this month, after 10 months of house arrest on similar charges; allegedly assaulting a

police officer. His trial is set for January 2010 (see, for instance: <http://www.israeli-occupation.org/2009-11-20/samieh-jabbarin-released-from-house-arrest/>)

3) Anarchists Against the Wall have been facing increased "legal" persecution, jail sentences and physical attacks by the military and police over recent months. Statistics on the number of activists indicted and standing trial—many on charges similar to the above—are available on their website (see: [www.awalls.org](http://www.awalls.org)) "and still counting". Yet persevering, Palestinian, Jewish and international activists continue to hold non-violent protests every week in the villages of Bi'ilin, Ma'asara, and Ni'ilin. More recently, activist Matan Cohen, 22, who was shot in the eye by Israel's Border Police in 2006, lost the lawsuit he had filed against the state. Moreover, the court ruling instructed that he pay the sum of 50,000 NIS (\$13,500.00).

4) The Shministim, a group of Israeli teenagers declaring their refusal to serve the occupation, some of whom face incarceration for their beliefs, are now receiving jail sentences. As we write this letter, Conscientious Objector Or Ben-David is serving one more of the successive two to four week prison terms that the army usually metes out to these young refusers (see: [www.shministim.com](http://www.shministim.com)).

And in an additional, exemplary case:

5) Mohammad Othman, a Palestinian human rights activist, is currently being transferred to so-called "administrative detention", amounting to detention for an indefinite period on unpublicized suspicions, without charges or trial, following 61 days of detention and harsh interrogation by Israeli authorities, after returning to the West Bank from a human rights advocacy trip to Norway (see, for instance: [http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/publish/article\\_1237.shtml](http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/publish/article_1237.shtml)).

We wish to point out that the attempt to criminalize New Profile and the distinctly stepped up drive to silence and stop active dissent in Israel seem to suggest that the authorities are seriously worried about a growing opposition. The surface of Israeli society as we know it seems to be cracking open. A current intensive government campaign to convince young eighteen-year-olds to comply with conscription law and enlist (see for instance: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1128737.html>) is, apparently, just one more piece of evidence that the hold of entrenched mindsets and habits is weakening.

Each of you is crucial to this ongoing process, wherever you are; spreading critical analyses and information, engaging, offering and inventing support in various ways.

New Profile's website features continuous updates on imprisoned Conscientious Objectors ([www.newprofile.org/english](http://www.newprofile.org/english)) and how to support them as well as other New Profile activities. Our listserv provides daily updates in English on occupation,

resistance, and Israeli militarization (subscribe via our English homepage, at the bottom right corner: <http://www.newprofile.org/english/>).

Also, please, if you're able, circulate this letter further—to friends, family, activists, colleagues.

Thank you,

Ruth Hiller, Rela Mazali & all the activists of New Profile