

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

We don't know who she is, but we know we can save her life...



Gun Free Kitchen Tables
April 2022
A project of Isha L'Isha Haifa
Feminist Center

A Word from our Team

Dear friends and supporters,

In an unprecedented report on gun crime in Israel, the Knesset Center for Research and Information revealed dramatic rises in the number of gun victims over the years 2017 to 2020: The number of gun victims (both killed and injured) rose by 72% among Palestinian citizens of Israel and by 49% among Jewish citizens of Israel. This data reflects two related and lethal trends. First, it reflects the overall rise in gun crime in Israel and in the number of those affected by it, across ethnic and national groups. Second, within the context of a general, steep rise in gun crime, the data demonstrates a sharp disparity between the Palestinian citizenry of Israel and its Jewish community. The underlying structure of racialized discrimination against Palestinians, surfaces in the levels of gun violence practiced within and upon the community.

These data provide official support for key claims which GFKT has been making for years. That is, that the accelerated proliferation of small arms is increasing gun violence across the board and that these circumstances compounded by discriminatory enforcement is raising gun violence levels exponentially within Israel's Palestinian community, in particular.

As the events of May 2021 chillingly showed, these interconnected trends are positioned to explode into horrific violence on both a local and country-wide scale. These are the unfolding developments that Gun Free Kitchen Tables (GFKT) is making every effort to stem.

And yet, the very existence of the Knesset Center report and the data it amassed and published are direct results of 10 years of GFKT's work, framing the relevant questions and putting them to government authorities again and again, pushing for improved data collection and increased transparency on gun crime, gun licensing and small arms proliferation. As you'll see below, in 2021, we made a point of recognizing and celebrating this decade of work and the slow, difficult but solid change it is making.

Sincere thanks to all of you for your interest and support,

Rela Mazali, Meisa Irshaid, Hedva Eyal, and Heidi Paredes



About Us

Founded in 2010, Gun Free Kitchen Tables (GFKT) is a small arms disarmament and gun control initiative. We challenge claims that more guns mean more security, we work to disarm civil space in Israel and the territories under its control. With its feminist analysis of militarization and its effects on human security, GFKT problematizes and disrupts the normalization of guns in Israeli society.

GFKT opposes reckless small arms practices and policies – in street protests, courtrooms, classrooms, and parliament. Careful coalition work and close coordination with Palestinian feminist groups in Israel, sustain and steadily expand the local movement for gun control.

The GFKT Coalition is proud to represent 20 feminist, civil society and human rights organizations and groups (including three groundbreaking ones that have meanwhile closed their doors¹). We employ multiple strategies including research, independent monitoring and fact-finding, interventions for preventive legislation and policymaking, advocacy, court petitions and civil suits exacting accountability.

GFKT Coalition Members

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Abraham Initiatives | L.O.: Combating Violence Against Women |
| Achoti | New Profile |
| Association for Civil Rights in Israel | Noga: The Israeli Centre for Rights of Crime Victims |
| Coalition of Women for Peace | Organization of Murder Victims' Families |
| Forum of Hope | Physicians for Human Rights |
| Hollaback Israel | Politically Corret |
| Isha L'Isha, Haifa Feminist Center | Psychoactive |
| Israel Women's Network | Shavot - The Centre for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere (WIPS) |
| Itach-Maaki: Women Lawyers for Social Justice | Tmura: The Antidiscrimination Legal Center |
| Kulan | Women and Their Bodies |

GFKT National Coalition Partners

Beyond the official member organizations of GFKT Coalition, we also conduct coordinated work with 3 Palestinian feminist organizations in Israel (Altufula, Women against Violence, and Women against Weapons) and with the Palestinian-Jewish Mahapach-Taghir organization. Numerous independent activists are also affiliated with GFKT.

¹ The Coalition of Women for Peace, Noga, and Hollaback.

Human Security & Gun Violence

The challenge: Gun violence, with both licensed and unlicensed arms, inflicts continual damage, shatters, and ends many lives in civil society in Israel and the territories it controls. In recent years, gun licensing and proliferation have radically expanded, with small arms multiplying in civilian hands, present everywhere in civil space and with gun violence affecting tens of thousands of lives:

In 2021 the number of gun licenses' applications spiked after May 2021, with 19,375 requests for personal firearms made, more than double the number in 2020.

In Palestinian communities inside Israel, discriminatory non-enforcement allows stockpiling of unlicensed guns, not least in the hands of criminal organizations, terrorizing the population. **The year 2021 ended with a grim figure of 122 Palestinian citizens of Israel murdered, mostly with guns. This toll exceeds last year's record of 113 victims.**

In relation to women, **out of 22 women killed in 2021, six of them were shot dead.** Two of the women were shot with licensed guns. One of the shooters tried to shoot himself after the murder, bringing the total of "murder-suicides" with a gun to seven since 2016. All the guns used in these circumstances have been licensed.

The [murder of Diana Dedabayev](#) and the order issued by the High Court on GFKT's court petition generated considerable media and public interest. Diana Dedabayev (referred to by her maiden name, as requested by her family), was shot dead by her husband with his police gun. Sadly, Diana was one of six women murdered with a gun in 2021 (out of 22 women reported murdered by the "Tizkor" memorial project and media). Two of the six were murdered with licensed firearms.

Ignoring these facts, economic considerations continue to play a central role in justifying an extended exception to the law that allows security firms to store their weapons in guards' homes. The economic burden on companies to safely store weapons far from homes has been assigned a higher priority than the security of women and families

Powerful image from GFKT's Event in November 2021 honoring 16 Days to End Violence Against Women while marking ten years of work.



Our response: GFKT offers a first-of-its kind mine of information on small arms proliferation in Israel's civil spaces through its website in [Hebrew](#), [Arabic](#) and [English](#).

In November 2021, a decade after GFKT's founding, we launched the [online Testimony Collection](#) in Hebrew, Arabic and English. These are telling personal testimonies mostly from women and from some men who have been directly affected by the presence of a gun. This growing collection already offers a previously untapped, undervalued and gender-aware source of knowledge about guns in everyday life.

Pushing Back Violence for Ten Years

GFKT invited supporters and activists to a solemn but heartening event honoring 16 Days to End Violence Against Women while celebrating ten years of GFKT small arms disarmament work. The evening, created by producer Galia Aviani, took place on 21 November at the Yaffa Arabic-Hebrew Theater. It was a powerful, moving cultural activism event attended in person (despite Covid) by over 40 participants and aired [live on Facebook](#).

The event included a combination of cultural activism and direct advocacy for social-political change. It featured a selection of testimonies from our online collection read by GFKT Legal Advisor Meisa Irshaid and Producer-Director Osnat Trabelsi, poetry reading by Jaffa-based feminist Palestinian poet Ayat Abu Shamis, and scenes from a new play by playwright and director Hannah Vazana Grunwald, narrating the murder of Esti Aharonovich who was shot by her husband in 2018. The event also included a digital display of [Bezalel students' artwork](#) inspired by the testimonies.

This event and the testimonies represent so much of what we have achieved over the last ten years: bringing a focused, gun control movement into being where none existed, gaining the trust of women from across Israeli society, creating platforms for them to tell essential and previously unarticulated stories on how firearms affect their lives, generating the first feminist academic studies of small arms reality in Israel, working with a growing number of diverse groups and activists to seed and nourish a broad-based feminist community working to change culture, laws, and policies around guns and violence.

GFKT's Event in November 2021 honoring 16 Days to End Violence Against Women while marking ten years of work.



Disarming Civil Space – Gun Law & Regulations

The challenge: The [criteria for gun ownership](#) have been significantly expanded since 2018 by former Public Security Ministers Gilad Erdan and Amir Ohana. In 2021, MK Ohana went on to form a gun-rights caucus in the Knesset for [“the promotion of the right to self-defense in Israel.”](#) At least 22 of the 120 Knesset members have joined. Together with the pro-gun lobby, these actors are seeking to expand the criteria even further to allow and encourage more and more average citizens to possess and carry firearms. These changes have effectively resulted in significant rises in private civilian gun licensing and an increase in violence.

Our response: Our petition to the High Court of Justice (filed in November 2018) contested the authority of a single minister to decide on the criteria for gun licensing and made history. On 21st July 2021 we were informed that the state accepted GFKT's demand to instate into law (as regulations) the criteria of eligibility for a civilian gun license. This was one of three demands presented in our court petition. As a result, these criteria will no longer be the exclusive purview of one minister. They will be decided through an open and democratic process in the Knesset Committee of Public Security².

For the first time ever in Israel's history, eligibility criteria for civilian gun licenses will be decided in a democratic parliamentary debate.

In preparation for the upcoming debate, the GFKT Coalition advocacy in Parliament and government was supported by the first part of a concerted commercial media and social media campaign for responsible gun licensing, in November and December 2021. This resulted in extensive media coverage in different media outlets in Hebrew. We were also invited to present our message on the Knesset Channel leading up to a discussion of the Committee planning to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 to provide full equality for women in matters of Peace and Security. Once the debate begins in the Knesset, we will be submitting the first comprehensive set of feminist demands regarding gun licensing in Israel. Bolstered by the second part of our public campaign in both commercial and social media, we will be breaking the mold that dismisses and silences women's views on firearms.

² Our court petition challenged three components of Israel's small arms policy: 1) The Executive Order, issued by the Minister of Public Security, a legal mechanism that allows security firms to send guns home with guards, although it is against the law. 2) The dramatic expansion of licensing criteria, a decision taken by the Public Security Minister. 3) The fact that the minister had full and exclusive authority to decide on this extreme policy reversal.

Additional Information on Key Activities

Media and Advocacy Campaign

In October 2021 we held a series of consultative meetings with members of the GFKT Coalition to formulate our advocacy plan. In November and December 2021, we ran the first part of the campaign with important achievements:

- The GFKT media campaign led to the publication of a series of op-eds and articles, on and around the International Day to End Violence Against Women, boosting our call for preventive gun licensing criteria. Some of the articles include:
 - Articles in Ha-Makom ([2 December - Hebrew](#); [24 November - Hebrew](#))
 - Article in Ha'aretz (24 November - Hebrew)
 - Article in Globes ([25 November - Hebrew](#))
 - Radio segment in Nobex Partners ([26 November - Hebrew](#))
- In December 2021, feminist organizations AITufula (a member of Women Against Weapons) and Itach-Maaki (a member of the GFKT Coalition) convened sister organizations to discuss a response to a government call for proposals for a Plan of Action towards implementing UNSCR-1325 (see above), issued by the Authority for Advancing Women's Status. Clearly reflecting years of GFKT work, the material circulated and shared by the organizers included a focus on small arms disarmament and gun control. GFKT participated in the discussion and signed a joint letter sharply criticizing the depoliticized approach taken by the Authority in framing the Plan of Action, which was moreover sub-contracted to a private company. Leading up to a discussion of these issues by an appointed committee, GFKT was represented on the Knesset TV Channel by Adv. Netta Loewi. ([The interview - in Hebrew](#) - from minute 48:21).



Gun Control at the Municipal Level - Achievements

On 27 July during a meeting with GFKT, Moria Shlomot and heads of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa's municipal Security Department **claimed to have reduced the number of armed guards from about 350 just a few years ago to 197 at present. This important development presents the continuing and growing recognition of firearms as a risk factor and increasingly preventative policies initiated in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipal institutions.** This update presents a quantitative change, not a qualitative one. While disarmament and stricter exercise of controls is good, it is not an implementation of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality's decision to collect arms at the end of work shifts. Despite this significant change in the numbers of guns city hall is deploying in civil spaces, this is not yet a structural change.

New Member of Knesset (Labor) Naama Lazimi, has announced the establishment of a lobby for removing guns from the civil sphere. Before being elected to parliament, MK Lazimi was a member of the GFKT Municipal Forum, acting to roll back small arms proliferation in Haifa, where she was on the City Council.

Transparency & Accountability

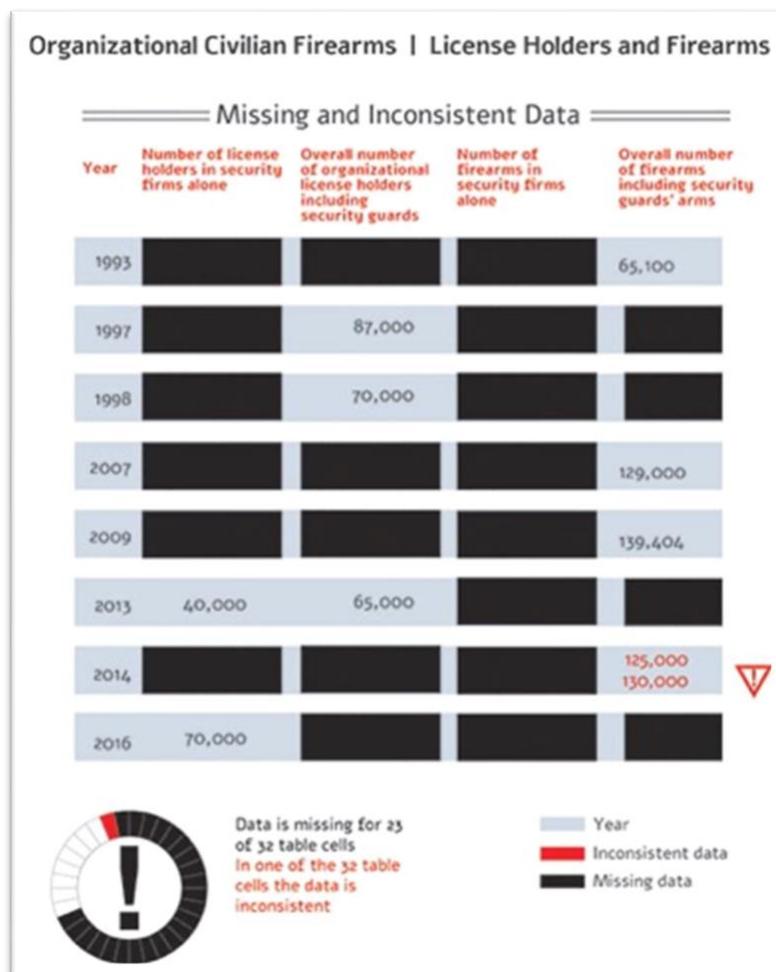
The challenge: Authorities in charge of licensing and controlling civilian small arms are not forthcoming with data and information. In some cases, they claim “security risks” involved in disclosing facts and figures on small arms, a common and frequently effective move in a highly militarized state. Other cases seem to indicate severe flaws in data collection. In addition, they are not attuned to feminist and civil society monitoring of their activity.

Our response: we submit repeated requests for information on gun crime and gun control.

While stemming the proliferation of guns and gun-violence is difficult and slow, the work of GFKT has already led to increased transparency and improved information on gun violence in Israel.

During the escalation of violence in May 2021, GFKT [monitored and reported](#) on events as they unfolded, warning that the government’s ongoing push for small arms proliferation was severely heightening the risk of eruptions of civilian gun violence .

An unprecedented report titled [“Firearm offenses – Data and actions taken by authorities”](#) (Hebrew) published by the Parliamentary Center for Research and Information in August 2021, clearly presents gun crime as a national issue. This framing provides a strong basis for challenging perceptions and policies that promote small arms proliferation. While the report does not mention GVKT explicitly, **it exhibits distinct traces of our work**, including comparative data demonstrating the severe consequences of small arms proliferation in Israel across diverse communities.



Collective Power

Jewish-Palestinian Study Group “Living Without Guns”

In 2021 we held two study meetings:

1. Attended by 14 GFKT activists, new investigative work on the leakage (or flow) of military arms and ammunition into criminal hands and organizations, predominantly among Israel’s Palestinian citizenry was carried out by GFKT activists, presented, and discussed at the meeting.
2. Expanding on the first study meeting we contextualized the activities of organized crime in colonial and post-colonial societies. Dr. Eilat Maoz spoke about the topic based on her PhD dissertation on connections between colonization and organized crime, following extensive work in Jamaica.

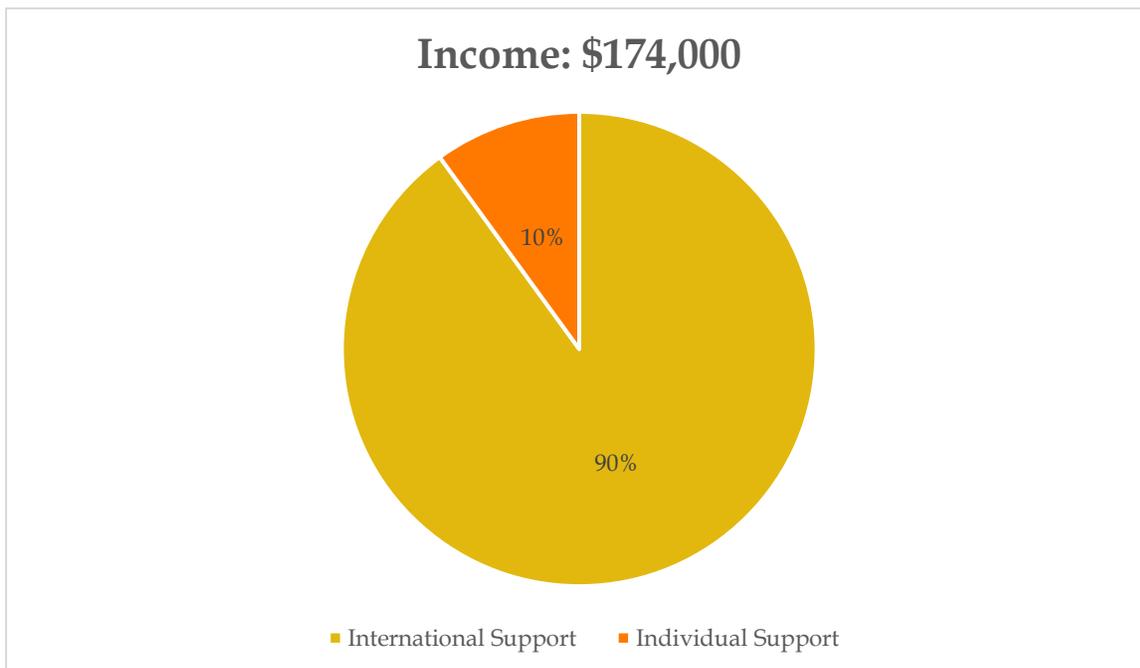
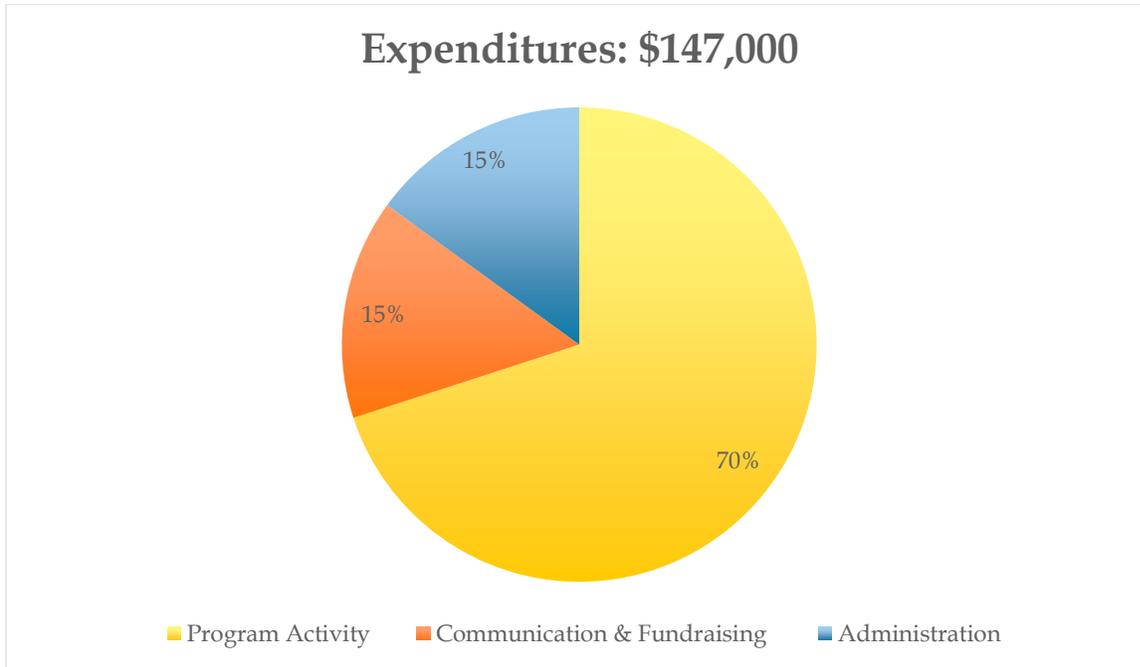
Women Against Weapons (WAW)

Born from the GFKT-facilitated Study Group, Women Against Weapons (WAW) is a feminist Palestinian organization. Breaking a powerful taboo against women "talking guns," in Israel's Palestinian society, WAW emerged in early 2020, as a more visible and formally defined feminist action group for disarmament and the eradication of gun crime in Israel, particularly within its Palestinian community. In December 2021, after a series of internal organizational workshops, the organization decided that its specific intervention would be a focus on politicizing the discourse concerning guns and crime in Palestinian society. This is the site at which the group plans to make its original and unique contribution, as a uniquely feminist group, among multiple groups and organizations currently working on the issue. Most of the current discussion of gun crime in Palestinian society is depoliticized and WAW has set out to contextualize it from a distinctly feminist viewpoint, within the framework of colonialism and militarism.

Solidarity with Councilwoman Fida Shehada in Lydd

During the eruption of violence in May 2021, GFKT stressed its solidarity with activists in Lydd facing threats of gun violence, through official communication and a group solidarity visit. After Councilwoman Shehada criticized the municipal response in Lydd to Jewish right-wing gangs' attacks against Palestinian residents, the Mayor threatened her publicly. GFKT joined the call of Women Against Violence (a feminist Nazareth-based group affiliated with GFKT) and initiated a letter demanding that the mayor be suspended, and the incident investigated. The letter was signed by dozens of councilwomen from all over the country and sent to the Ministry of the Interior and the Attorney General. Following the letter, around 30 activists paid a solidarity visit to Ms. Shehada in cooperation with Isha L’Isha, the Haifa Feminist Centre, on June 15.

Financial Overview 2021



Thank You!

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Your help will enable us to continue disarming civil space and promoting human security.

A tax-deductible contribution can be made via our [home page](#) or sent to the **New Israel Fund, marked donor-advised to Isha l'Isha for Gun Free Kitchen Tables POB 96712, Washington DC 20077-7438**

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