



האקדח על שולחן המטבח
Gun Free Kitchen Tables

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

November 24, 2014

Dear friends and supporters of Gun Free Kitchen Tables (GFKT),

Severe Backlash:

Following [a murderous attack](#) at a synagogue in Har Nof, Jerusalem ended when the attackers were shot and killed, Israel's Minister of Public Security [announced](#) that he intended to consider easier gun licensing as well as retracting his recent (July 2013) prohibition on security guards taking guns home. Twenty-four hours later, deliberations were apparently over. On November 19th, in a radio interview shared with Smadar Ben-Natan of GFKT, the CEO of the Israel Security Association, representing about 100 private security guard firms, disclosed that these had already received authorization to allow guards guns to go home. This hasty decision was taken despite zero murders with a security guard's off-duty gun since implementation of the prohibition in July 2013, in stark contrast to the eight victims murdered by such guns in the twelve months preceding implementation. It was taken despite the fact that 2014, now nearing its end, may prove to be the first year *in over a decade* (since 2002 at least) with not one murder carried out with a security guard's off-duty gun.

We are witnessing severe backlash threatening to re-accelerate and badly expand small arms proliferation throughout the country and to further loosen oversight of these arms. The pretext of improving security totally overrides the human security of women and families who stand to host guards' guns in their homes and completely ignores international [findings](#) that show undermined security and rising crime rates in conditions of intensivied small arms proliferation. The minister's instant "solution" is in direct contradiction to clear evidence that widespread and easily available small arms pose a risk and *not* a means to security.

The mercurial policy-making of the Minister of Public Security is an obvious extension of a summer of violent belligerence and rising militarism in Israel. It is also fed by the fear sown, more recently, by a series of attacks on Israeli civilians. His current knee-jerk return to handing out small arms far and wide is driven by politicians, himself included, who (once again) peddle armament and blustering toughness as security measures, in particular before possible elections, with an eye to their voters. By now, it's been officially [announced](#) that thousands of people who were previously ineligible for private gun licenses will begin to be granted these. This expansion of almost automatic authorization for bearing arms includes, among others: any military officer who is still listed in the reserve forces, special unit 'graduates,' and ex-security guards employed by the Airport Authority.

GFKT responded to these steps immediately on publication with a strong letter to the Minister of Public Security. The letter, formulated in urgent consultation with GFKT Campaign activists at the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (Debbie Gild-Hayo and Laila Margalit), is attached below in English (translation mine).

The letter was dispatched, as well, to Knesset Members and to the Chair of the Knesset Committee for Interior Affairs. GFKT activists are preparing to testify before the committee yet again at its next meeting, this coming Tuesday.

Concurrently, the letter was sent to media outlets, resulting in about 10 items presenting the GFKT messaging. Smadar Ben-Natan gave a [TV interview](#) (on the popular London & Kirschenbaum news magazine; as of minute 33), [radio](#) interviews were given by Galit Lubetzky (on IDF Radio, Yael Dan's midday program) and by Smadar, and an [op-ed](#) by me, Rela Mazali, was aired on the Local Call news site. Links to the various media items featuring GFKT are available on the [GFKT Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#) (operated by Galit Lubetzky and Moran Carmel).

The struggle to prevent backslide in the rare step achieved in the summer of 2013, following years of effort—that is, disarmament of tens of thousands of homes and significant reductions in over-armament of the civil sphere, is partly a struggle over public opinion. The GFKT Facebook page and Twitter account are a window onto public opinion on arms control and arms proliferation (even if a limited and not necessarily representative one).

Each of us is urgently invited to join the Facebook page or the Twitter account and add her opinion.

Please don't abandon these venues to the opponents of gun control.

Abiding Achievements:

Despite this murky wave, or maybe due to it, it is evident that the GFKT Campaign can note some abiding achievements that aren't about to dissolve or disappear with every vote-courting decision by the minister in charge.

The first of these is the existence, today, of a broadbased, aware, alert and committed coalition and network of activists. Many women and men are currently paying attention to, and following, developments bearing on small arms, exchanging information and maintaining contact with the GFKT staff and team as they take part in thinking, in planning and in action. The moment the minister announced his plans, partners and supporters of the Campaign started contacting staff to offer help and to share ideas for practical steps. This process spotlighted the existence of an information and action network that was non-existent before the start of the Campaign.

The second clear achievement of GFKT is a change of consciousness whose dimensions extend far beyond the active network. This change is visible, among other things, in the level of immediate media interest in a seemingly technical, administrative move such as changed directives for gun storage and gun licensing. Various media channels are already showing a skeptical (and often critical) approach to the superficial, automatic equation of arms with security. Beyond the media, among the actual operators and bearers of guns, critical attitudes are also spreading, as is evident for instance in the recent [report](#) that the majority of security guards are ignoring their renewed authorization to take home guns, or in the opposition to this renewed authorization on the part of the Israel Security Association. ISA CEO, Pini Schiff said,

“Decisions shouldn't be made an hour after a terror attack ... such decisions have to be carefully considered ... [and concerning] civilians carrying guns ... civilians are not security forces ... there are professionals for every need ... security and guarding should be left to the professionals.”

The expanding discussion and the critical discourse on small arms is also reflected in the continuous and recently spurting growth of the Campaign's new media activity. The GFKT Facebook page reaches almost 3,000 subscribers and the number of Twitter followers recently rose by 70% to 475.

For the occasion of November 25th, the International Day Against Violence Against Women, I'm wishing us all here a first full year in over a decade without one murder with guards' off-duty guns and a strong stand against accelerated armament.

Yours,
Rela



A title in Yediot Acharonot reading: **“Trigger Happy,”**
The caption on the red circle begins: **“The Arms Race”**



Detail: A quote from Smadar Ben-Natan: **“Guns can kill everyone, not just terrorists. Citizens are entitled to much more than protection from nationalist terror. They are also worthy of protection from the daily terror in families. More arms will just fan the flames.”**

To:
Mr. Yitzhak Aharonovitch
Minister of Public Security

November 18 2014

By fax #: 02-5811551

By email: iaharon@knesset.gov.il

Mr. Minister,

Re: Directives on the small arms of private security firms

1. This appeal of the Gun Free Kitchen Tables coalition is a request that you reconsider your reported intention to allow security guards to bear arms after-duty, due to the worsening security situation in Israel and the terrible terror attack carried out this morning in a Jerusalem synagogue.
2. Since August 2013, when your ministry first took strong steps to enforce Clause 10c of the Firearms Act, not one person has been murdered in the private sphere by a security guard with the gun entrusted to him for his work. This optimistic fact is made all the more significant in face of the eight murders with such arms in the twelve months preceding August 2013. The considerable drop in mortalities is also a distinct indication of a drop in other injuries sustained through the gun violence of off-duty guards. To the best of our knowledge, since the summer of 2013, there have been no such injuries.
3. The Talmud states (in Sanhedrin) that “Whosoever preserves a single soul as though he had preserved a complete world.” Alongside the mourning for those who lost their lives, leaving behind widows and orphans, it is imperative to remember, value and bless the lives of those saved by the policy of the ministry and the Arms Licensing Branch. That said, the problem in question does not seem require a choice between the lives of different people, for among the many groups bearing arms in the public sphere – police, soldiers, on-duty guards and people with private licenses – armed security guards are often the least skilled.
4. It is wrong to overturn such a good policy, inducive to such deeply significant results, due to incidental events. This is doubly so when in the absence of any factual basis indicating the need for such measures and especially given that the policy overturned has been clearly anchored in law since 2008, which it is meant to implement. While their voices go virtually unheeded, the blood of victims murdered in the private, family sphere is no less red (and of course no more so), than the blood of victims murdered on nationalist grounds.
5. Despite rising propagandist calls after the tragic murder this morning, we call on you not to give in to pressures applied by interest groups who, it would seem, were merely awaiting an apt opportunity to undo the ministry’s laudable policy, one tried and proven over 14 months now.

Very sincerely,
Rela Mazali,
Atty. Smadar Ben-Natan
Atty. Galit Lubetzky