



Gun Free Kitchen Tables

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

Activity Report

January 2010-March 2011

Since its foundation in January 2011, "Gun Free Kitchen Tables" has succeeded in introducing a relatively unknown topic into both public and government agendas, while highlighting a previously undiscerned phenomenon of preventable murders with the guns of off-duty security guards. It has already begun to raise awareness in civil society in Israel to the highly gendered risks involved in a fast-growing industry of private policing (or security guards) and the resulting proliferation of small arms.

Presently, Gun Free Kitchen Tables is, as far as we know, the sole disarmament and arms control project in Israeli civil society. An anomaly in westernized civil societies, this glaring lack stems directly from the deep running militarization of Israeli state and society. The project is accordingly a groundbreaking campaign to place small arms control and disarmament firmly on the public and government agenda.

Gun Free Kitchen Tables conducts close and regular contacts with the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and with other organizations and individual activists working for arms control and disarmament world-wide, including, for example, the Swedish group SweFor.

Sarah Masters, Director of IANSA, wrote of the project last July that, "After 4 months of very effective concentrated work it is clear that it is possible to create actual, tangible change." (See: <http://www.iansa-women.org/>)

Project History & Structure

- A first study of the domestic private policing (or security guard) industry in Israel, authored by project co-founder Reli Mazali, published in November 2009 by the U.N. University Press,¹ identified a previously unrecognized phenomenon of murders with the guns of off-duty security guards, among whose victims women were and are distinctly over-represented. In addition, the study revealed and emphasized the

- failure of Israel's executive authorities to implement a 2005 ministerial resolution to drastically reduce the practice of security guards taking "their" weapons home after duty. Following publication, Gun Free Kitchen Tables co-founder, Atty. Smadar Ben Natan, proposed an action project demanding implementation of this decision and advancing disarmament of the civil sphere in Israel;
- By the end of February 2010, the "Isha L'Isha Haifa Feminist Center," had approved the project and offered it a supportive home; Isha L'Isha assigned responsibility for ongoing contact with the project to Tsameret Herskho and Hedva Eyal; the project was also accompanied from the outset by Ruti Gur, Khulud Khamis and Slava Greenberg;
 - The first fourteen months of work on Gun Free Kitchen Tables have included:
 - Four months of both co-founders' salaried work at full planned capacity (a half-time job for Rela Mazali and a quarter-time job for Smadar Ben Natan)
 - Ten months of both co-founders' continuous volunteer work on the project, at varying volumes;
 - This format continues at present, in an ongoing effort to ensure funding for the planned volume of salaried work.
 - The work of Gun Free Kitchen Tables is enhanced by contributions of time and effort on the part of additional activists, including members of Isha L'Isha, of the Coalition of Women for Peace, of New Profile and of independent activists; the number of activists involved with and committed to the project is growing steadily.

Results

To date, Gun Free Kitchen Tables has achieved the following results and galvanized the following actions:

A constantly expanding knowledge base:

- A detailed expert opinion mapping the laws and regulations pertinent to the licensing of security guards' small arms, to the licensing of private policing (or security guard) companies, and requiring the collection of arms from each guard at the end of work shifts;
- Continuation of the study originally motivating the project, including data collection on shootings with the arms of security guards in general and, in particular, on shootings with guards' guns after duty, mainly in the home-family context;
- A paper in Hebrew, by Rela Mazali, presenting an adapted and updated version of the original study, commissioned for a collection on women and capitalism forthcoming with the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem;
- A fact sheet serving as a basis for Gun Free Kitchen Tables advocacy work;

Advocacy targeting decision-makers and authorities:

- A letter to three government ministers and key members of parliament (Knesset) presenting central factual and legal findings and demanding urgent enforcement of the laws and regulations prohibiting the guards from taking home arms between work shifts;
The letter observed November 25th, the International Day of Struggle Against Violence Against Women and cited two shootings occurring shortly before that date, in September and November 2010;
- Supportive responses to our letter from eight Members of Knesset, including the Chair of the Committee of Interior Affairs and the Environment, MK David Azoulay, who forwarded queries on the topic to the Acting Deputy CEO of the Ministry of the Interior;
- A commitment of one of the MKs who wrote us in answer, to request a report on the subject from the Knesset information and research center;
- Informative responses to some of the questions raised by our letter from senior officials from the Ministry of Law, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Welfare, following queries submitted in response to our letter by Knesset Members and ministers;
- A meeting with the former Deputy Chief of Police, Dan Brinker, also formerly CEO of the Ministry of Public Security after heading the 2005 inter-ministerial Committee for Examination of the Licensing of Firearms to Guards, which recommended far-reaching reforms in the industry;
- A request submitted to the Israel police force under the Freedom of Information Act for full gender disaggregated statistics and details on the police handling of murders with arms registered to security guard companies;
- A meeting with Brigadier General Meir Ben Ishai, Head of the Security Division of the Israeli police force; Ben Ishai told us explicitly, "on the record," that, "There is good reason to reduce the number of weapons of self- defense throughout the state of Israel." Moreover, Ben Ishai noted that the facts and context presented by Gun Free Kitchen Tables had introduced a new perspective into his work;
It should be noted, in this context, that as of March 1st, responsibility for the licensing of security guards and security guard companies *has shifted to the Ministry of Public Security* in charge of the police. This seriously enhances the importance of Brigadier General Ben Ishai personally, and of the police force in general, in supervising and enforcing regulations in the security guard industry. In addition, ongoing at the moment is a far-reaching reform of the field. This fact in combination with the shift of responsible ministries opens up a unique window for intervention and influence on the part of civil society organizations such as Gun Free Kitchen Tables.

Public Exposure & Establishment of a Support Base:

- Media coverage of the topic in five media items reporting on the project, on the letter to government ministries and/or on the findings presented by the letter; These included: an op-ed in *Yediot Acharonot*, a major, mainstream evening newspaper, an appearance on TV

Channel 23 on the news magazine, "A New Order," moderated by Gal Gabai, a citation, by journalist Anat Saragusti on Keren Neubach's radio magazine (Channel B) "Agenda," and a double spread interview in the local weekly *HaSharon Time*;

- Five lecture/presentations reaching audiences of some 120, held at: the NGOs Isha L'Isha, Coalition of Women for Peace, Salon Mazal, in a private home, and at the Sixth Lexical Conference for Political Thinking at Tel Aviv University (the last talk is available online on the website of the TAU Lexical Project);
- A Gun Free Kitchen Tables Facebook page, compiled and launched with the help of Keren Yeriel, a volunteer activist, for the occasion of the International Day of Struggle Against Violence Against Women; A variety of pertinent materials posted since on the page has received lively responses; the page has been viewed by hundreds of "visitors" and "liked" by over one-hundred readers;
- The project is gradually amassing a broadening circle of activists and volunteers committed to its success.

Fundraising:

- Over 14 months (including four months of salaried work at full project capacity) the project has submitted grant requests to 19 funding organizations; one of these, approved in the summer of 2010, provided the project with a grant of \$ 10,000; 2 more requests have recently been approved; 6 requests are still outstanding (with varying chances of success); ten requests were rejected;
- Gun Free Kitchen Tables received extensive support and counseling in our fundraising efforts from a number of experienced activists from sister-organizations including Isha L'Isha (Khulud Khamis equipped us with swift and vital information, documentation and counseling), Coalition of Women for Peace (Inna Michaeli read, edited and suggested options), New Profile (Ruth Hiller provided personal contacts), Urgent Action Fund (Terry Greenblatt offered significant, supportive counseling) and from individual women with extensive knowledge of the field, including Gila Swirsky and Vanessa Farr.

Future Plans and Work-in-Progress

Advocacy targeting decision-makers and authorities—

- We recently approached the CEO of the Ministry of Public Security, recently assigned responsibility for the entire industry, pressing for enforcement of the resolution to discontinue the practice of guards' taking home guns after work shifts;
- We recently petitioned the Chair of the Knesset Committee of Interior Affairs requesting inclusion of the topic on the agenda of a forthcoming committee meeting and offering to testify at the meeting;
- We are currently awaiting additional relevant statistics following our detailed request from the Israel Police Force under the Freedom of Information Act.

Public Exposure & Establishment of a Support Base:

- Two additional lecture/presentations are already scheduled for early April, one to be held at the Tel Aviv University Feminist Forum, the other to be hosted by a group of Palestinian and Jewish women from Akko;
- Presentations are already planned, though not yet scheduled, at the Tel Aviv Rape Crisis Center and with the "Inclusive Security" women's group;
- We are currently negotiating additional lecture/presentations at rape crisis centers in towns and cities throughout Israel and with a group of Palestinian women from the Wadi Ara area;
- In anticipation of November 25th 2011, the International Day of Struggle Against Violence Against Women, we plan to position the Gun Free Kitchen Tables demand, that security guards no longer take home company guns, as a central call and slogan supported by a broad spectrum organizations and individuals.

An Additional Strategy Under Development:

Gun Free Kitchen Tables has begun examining and developing practical methods for empowering the surviving family members of women or men who were murdered or killed with the gun of an off-duty security guard.

Fundraising:

- Two of our grant requests have recently been approved; together they will provide the project with \$ 10,000;
- Following extended dialogue with another funding organization, we hope for an additional affirmative answer, in the near future, to an outstanding grant request;
- Additional grant requests will be sent out in the coming weeks based on the present report and the view we hope it affords of the activities and significant potential of Gun Free Kitchen Tables.

¹ Rela Mazali, "The Gun on the Kitchen Table: The Sexist Subtext of Private Policing in Israel, in: Vanessa Farr, Henri Myrntinen & Albrecht Schnabel eds., *Sexed Pistols: The Gendered Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons*, 2009, Tokyo, N.Y., Paris: U.N. University Press, pp. 246-289.