

NEW PROFILE | The Movement to Demilitarize Israeli Society

2014 - New Profile Narrative Report

Dear Partners,

2014 was an important year for New Profile - full of challenges, inner observation and new directions. The movement went through a profound change: many activists left and others came along; our education project was redesigned; new activities were established and planned, and the movement's discourse and goals were re-examined. We truly believe that this change - that is still in the making these days - is for the best, for it is affected by important, justful trends in the critical discourse in Israel. Our belief is that this process, even if it is drastic, is actually an important instrument to keep the movement close to its values of feminism and anti-militarism. A political movement, we believe, must be dynamic and attentive to outside tendencies in order to do its proper work.

During the year, New Profile discussed the revival of the Mizrahi discourse with serious consideration. In the Jewish society in Israel, critical political discourse is mostly associated with the upper classes; left-wing organizations are often a part of the Jewish-Ashkenazi Elite, which means, managed by white people. During the last few years, the Mizrahi political discourse reviewed the ethnic discrimination, oppression and unequal resource distribution within the Israeli society, and brought them to light. New Profile movement's members started examining the movement with this perception, thinking of ways to make it not-as-white. This process made us see that up until now, New Profile wasn't addressing the wide population in its discourse - especially looking at its education project. This political discourse made us think about the movement's accessibility: we've considered the possibility that we were being too exclusive during the years, and asked ourselves who are the people who we cooperate with by default, what is our target audience, etc.

One of this process' results was the decision to redesign our education project. For a few years, the core of New Profile's education project was "Alternative Wednesday", the youth group in Tel-Aviv. The group did well: It held many members, who were revealed to a many different struggles and adopted a critical discourse. But the participants were mainly from high socio-economic class and the critical discourse remained within this small, consistent group of young people. Since we believe that the anti-militarist struggle is connected to all portions of society, we want New Profile's activism to meet many different people, from a wide diversity of populations. Therefore, the 3 youth groups in Israel's different areas has stopped meeting, and 2 co-coordinators were hired in order to map the options of education activities, and think of a new, more inclusive project to help New Profile's ideas get to a wider audience.

The new Outreach Project is another result of New Profile's process during the year, as a part of The Counseling Network for Military Exemptions (formerly, The Counseling Network for Refusers). The project addresses marginalized youth, for that group is at high risk to desert military service, frequently in order to work to support low-income families. Therefore, many of whom are imprisoned. Through this project we identify these teenagers and help them access New Profile for help dealing with the military - if they do seek for an exemption. This is a significant achievement, not only in its practical aspects, but in the political and educational aspects: marginalized youth often receives a very militaristic education, and the education system along with the army promise them success through military service. That promise is usually false, and may end with difficult results. Therefore, New Profile's alternative information is highly important. Our Outreach Coordinator was hired during August, and her work was defined as a pilot-project. She made contact with youth-at-risk frameworks and educators, and a major part of the youth she met got to our Counselling Network and were aided by us.

As to New Profile's education activity, up until 2014 summer the projects were managed as usual: 3 active youth groups were held in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and Pardes-Hana, and a group of volunteers was working in preparation for the 2014 Alternative Summer Camp for Youth. But during the war on Gaza, starting in July 8th, the ministry of education banned any outdoor youth activity for security reasons, and the summer camp was cancelled. 2 seminars were arranged during Hanukkah and Sukkot to replace the cancelled camp, roughly by the same group. During these months New Profile made a decision to cancel the youth groups and rebuild the education project. In continuation to that, we have decided to stop our support in the Alternative Summer Camp for Youth. While we do believe it is an important project, we thought we should focus on a different pedagogical program, and the summer camp had a numerous elements we did not wish to take responsibility on. Our 2 new education co coordinators, as we mentioned before, were hired with the request to map and rebuild the movement's education project. This process is still in the making nowadays.

The Counseling Network for Military Exemptions, by it's new name, kept its regular work, aiding approximately 1,400 young people seeking for military exemption through the year. During the war on Gaza its work was especially crucial, for it helped many reserve soldiers not to be sent to war. This year we have also counselled and supported few political refusers: Omar Sa'ad, Uriel Ferara, Orwa Saif and Udi Segal, all were publicly refusing to recruit in protest of the IDF policy. The Counseling Network also produced new cards, stickers and booklets to address different audiences, taking in consideration different cultures and socio-economic classes.

In the matter of cooperations with other organizations, New Profile and the movement Orfud established a continued cooperation. Orfud is a political Druze refusal movement, that emphasize national palestinian discourse within the Druze society. For that, they deliver assistant to young Druze wishing for an exemption from the IDF. New Profile's Counseling Network activists have trained Orfud's members during 3 sessions to support this project sharing our information. Another cooperation with HRA has also dealt with the subject of the IDF and the Druze minority: a research regarding Druze refusal, that is now waiting for distribution. One more minor connection was made when representatives from the Counselling Network met

with a representative from a Jewish Orthodox community to deliver military exemption and imprisonment manuals. Those cooperations come additionally to our long lasting collaborations with other left-wing organizations, such as Yesh Gvul, Coalition of Women for Peace, Shministim etc.

A few of the movement's activities this year focused on capacity building. The movement's members went on a tour in different cities in Israel - Tel-Aviv, Be'er-Sheva and Jerusalem - observing different aspects of militarism in the urban space. The movement members have also went on a weekend in Neve Shalom for team building and inner learning.

As in any other year, New Profile was managed in a non-hierarchical feminist method. All of the important movement decisions mentioned above were discussed and accepted in our general assembly, gathers once a month, and carried out by the relevant teams and employees. Our lively discussion enables each of the movement's members to voice her stance equally. We see this organizational structure as a key to keeping the movement dynamic and attentive, and yet connected to its core values.

After this fruitful year, full of ideas and new paths, we look hopefully to the future activity of New Profile and excited to see what tomorrow brings.