



# The Social Guard: The Jump Ahead Year

## A Summary of 2016

The Social Guard is a volunteer-based organization committed to changing the relationship between the Israeli public and its representatives, promoting social justice and equality and buttressing Israel's democracy. Created following the civil awakening of 2011, the Social Guard offers Israelis an innovative model for engagement with the legislative process: Our activists monitor parliamentary committee hearings, they analyze and follow proposed bills, present them in accessible form to the public, and publish segmented analyses of individual MKs' performance. Beyond our direct impact on legislation, the Social Guard has become a major source for mainstream media, and has been invited to participate in various educational frameworks.



In Israel, like elsewhere in the world, it feels that the rift between citizens and their government is continuously widening. Significant socio-economic gaps and the influence of private interests on policy-making are almost expected phenomena in Israeli national and municipal politics. We at the Social Guard fight every day to expose the cynical interests and the misleading influences that deepen the chasm between a government and its citizens. In our work we help hundreds of women and men, Arab and Jewish, elderly and youth, to understand how to stand their ground and have the political system serve them fairly.

This is possible due to the generous donations of several foundations. We are honored to have their support and proud to be delegated with this essential responsibility to make the Israeli democracy accessible to all Israelis and to promote in it socio-economic justice, political accountability and social cohesion.

Nirit Moskovich, Executive Director

The Social Guard is grateful for the generous support of:



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## The Social Index Cements Its Authority



This year the [Social Index](#) took another step en route to become the gold standard for evaluating the work of MKs. Last summer the Index was in the center of a fierce argument on several mainstream media outlets about what is the best way to convey the work of the MKs to the public. Alternative Indexes, created by other organizations, were published following ours, such as the Neo-Liberal Index. While none of these were as comprehensive as our original, they signify that the message gets through to the public - **it is up to us to make sure the Knesset and government work for the benefit of all Israelis, and civic engagement is critical to make sure that happens.**



## We Keep Improving Our Monitoring on the Budget

The Social Guard has been keeping close tabs on budgetary committee hearings in the past few years. Three years ago we led the fight for more transparent budgetary transfers in the Knesset Finance Committee; two years ago we discovered that the government's intention to make self-employed citizens eligible for unemployment support will be funded by unfairly taxing only the

self-employed; and last year our activists revealed that the government is planning to decrease its participation in funding medical procedures, making it harder for people to receive referrals to treatments (see graphics above). Next year will be especially exciting, as we begin a joint project with two of our friend NGOs: the Public Knowledge Workshop and the Movement for Freedom of Information. The goal of the project is to improve our year-round monitoring on the budget and on budgetary transfers, and teach NGOs how to follow and influence budgetary articles that specifically matter to them.



## A New Front in the Work of the Social Guard: Municipalities

In October 2016 the Social Guard began work in municipalities. We joined groups of activists from two places: the northern seaside town of Nahariya, and the Israeli-Arab village Jisr A-Zarka. We expect to add several more municipalities during 2017 and 2018. Our Municipal Department coordinator meets with local activists in each of these places on a weekly basis and guides them on how to organize and how to impact the work of the municipal council and city hall. The local activists make use of the tools that the Social Guard has developed in the last 5 years: attending and speaking in council meetings, demanding transparency in all municipal work, and monitoring various types of legislation.

In the first time the Social Guard's activists in **Nahariya** arrived to a municipal council meeting hired guards prevented them from entering the room where the meeting was held; this is an outright violation of Israeli law. When we posted the [video](#) of this incident on Facebook, people from all over Israel informed us that similar breaches of the



law occur in their hometowns as well. We've put together what people told us about their municipalities and presented it in a special session held by the Knesset Committee on Transparency. **Simply by standing their ground, the activists in Nahariya became the spearhead to a country-wide effort to promote transparency and civic engagement in municipalities.**

**Jisr A-Zarka** has one of the highest poverty rates in all of Israel. The main challenge in working with the people of Jisr is their lack of trust in government - local and national. The Social Guard's activists in Jisr focus their work on education. For starters, they demanded to review the protocols of the local council's education committee, but were answered that the committee have not convened in three years. Following this revelation and publicizing it on social and local media, the education committee held a session and we expect it to continue to meet regularly. Following this small triumph, one local activist said, **"In the last few weeks I learned that if we together stand our ground and don't let go - the sky is the limit to what we can do in Jisr"**.



## Strengthening the Future of Democracy: Building the Social Guard's Education Front

The last year saw the Social Guard get more involved in the field of education. As part of a project with the [CET](#), we've developed educational materials that draw on what we learned about Israeli democracy and the ways to get involved in it.



Our Education coordinator met on a weekly basis with students in two high schools. His work with the students (one group is seen in the photo on the left visiting the Knesset) was a pilot en route to develop a 10-week course that will help students to better understand the parliamentary arena. In the next school year we will expand this program to many more high schools from various communities all over Israel.

## Recognized as Experts and Helping Friends

The Social Guard is no longer the newest kid on the block. **We've monitored a thousand committee sessions, analyzed nearly a thousand legislation bills and mobilized hundreds of volunteers.**

In the past year we were approached by numerous NGOs and government officials who sought our advice and know-how. The Tel Aviv Municipality, for example, asked us for information on current socio-economic legislation, and MKs called to consult with us how they can improve their Social Index rating.

But Most of all we're proud to impart our knowledge and experience to young organizations looking for ways to make their voice heard. Two such examples are a group of ultra-orthodox women who asked us to guide them how they can push their agenda in the Knesset, and an organization of students studying to become social workers who seek our tutoring on how to mobilize and impact parliamentary procedures. **It is our honor, privilege and duty to usher them into the parliamentary arena.**