

AFSC's program in Israel is designed to counter militarization and promote the equal rights of all citizens of Israel. AFSC has chosen to work through the following partner organizations:

The Druze Initiative Committee

The Druze Initiative Committee supports those Druze citizens of Israel who refuse to serve in the military.

The Arab Druze minority lived in historic Palestine on the current territory of Israel before Zionist immigration began. Already in the 1930s, the Jewish leadership in Palestine were making efforts to distance the Druze community from the rest of the Palestinian community through presenting the Druze faith as unique and distinct from Islam and exerting influence over the Druze leadership. After the creation of the state of Israel, this policy of divide and rule continued and the Druze were singled out for greater financial and political support than other Palestinians. They were registered as a separate ethno-religious group in Israeli official identification documents ("Druze", not "Arab"), and a separate education system was created for them. A further step in their separation from other Palestinians was the introduction of military conscription for Druze men in 1956.

The Druze community showed considerable resistance to conscription, and within 2 years the first Druze youth organization supporting refusal of military service was established, and from it grew the Druze Initiative Committee which is still active. Today, the Druze Initiative Committee supports Druze conscientious objectors, and is also involved in other political and social work such as opposing the confiscation of Druze land for the expansion of Jewish towns.



Members of the Druze initiative committee in a demonstration against land confiscation

Over the years, Druze refuseniks suffered harsh treatment from the military system. Druze refuseniks were given prison terms double or more than those of other refuseniks. Between 1958 and 2006 the young men of the town of Peki'in alone (with 5,500 inhabitants, 3,800 of whom are Druze, and only the men are called up) spent a total of 540 years in military prison. The Druze Initiative Committee works not only in supporting refuseniks, but also to challenge the militarization of Druze education. Samer Swaid, Secretary of the Druze Initiative Committee, remembers that during his own school years the only career advice on offer was from four military recruiters and the only work experience visits he made was to military camps and bases.

As AFSC has a long history of supporting conscientious objectors, we are keen to give organizational support to raising up the voices of young Druze conscientious objectors.

Baladna

Baladna, Association for Arab Youth, seeks to represent a new generation of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Palestinian citizens of Israel are those Palestinians who remained in the borders of the new state of Israel in 1948, some stayed in their houses, and some were internally displaced during the war. For almost 20 years these Palestinians were put under military law, and only in 1966 did they eventually become equal citizens by law. In practice the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who today make over 20% of the population of Israel, are still discriminated against in the allocation of governmental budget, lands and services. They are particularly at risk from the growing trend within Israel towards racism and the "judaization" of the remaining Palestinian urban and rural areas within Israel.

AFSC has been working with Palestinians living in Israel since 1950, and supporting them in their efforts to maintain their access to land and their livelihoods, as well as their political, cultural and social identity. Today we work with Baladna to promote equal rights for both the non-Jewish and the Jewish citizens of Israel and to resist the militarization of Israeli society.

Baladna aspires to offer Palestinian youth living in Israel a non-partisan forum in which to nurture individual and collective identity. In particular, it has explored ways in which young Palestinian citizens of Israel who experience systematic marginalization and discrimination can constructively resist these trends without themselves resorting to violence. Since 2004 Baladna has shared its experience and conducted training programs with the AFSC Palestine Youth Program.



Young Palestinian musician playing in Nadi Baladna centre

Nadi Baladna hosts many workshops, concerts, cultural and social events for the Arab youth community. The centre in Haifa also offers an open platform for new Palestinian youth artists.

Baladna- Association for Arab youth also maintains an active campaign against the militarization of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Since the founding of the state of Israel, the Palestinian citizens have been exempted from military service. The current Israeli government has proposed legislation to extend the obligation of state service to the Palestinian citizens of Israel. While there will be an option of civic service, the project is partially funded by the Ministry of Defense, and the military will decide who will be obliged to serve in the military and who in civic service.

For more information about Baladna please visit their website: <http://www.momken.org> or contact them directly: info@baladnayouth.org



New Profile

New Profile is a feminist movement founded in 1998 to counter the militarization of Israeli society. Its name derives from the fact that every high school student in Israel is given a medical profile by the army. This profile serves to determine the placing of each soldier in either a combat or non combat unit and also identifies those unfit for military service.

Congscription in Israel is only part of the militarization of Israeli society. It is present in the educational system, media, advertisements, street names, political discourse and even social struggles. New Profile seeks to raise public awareness about the intrusion of militarism into so many aspects of life in Israel, to make militarism visible, and to give youth an alternative.

New Profile hosts youth groups in major cities in Israel, giving youth a safe space to make up their own minds with regard to their conscription at the age of 18. For the past eight years New Profile has also organized a week long summer camp.



The New Profile Summer camp 2012



An Israeli conscript soldier on duty during a demonstration against the Separation Barrier Palestinian village Ma'asara, April 2012
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The New Profile consulting network assists people who do not wish to serve in the army. The network offers information that the army does not, and supports youth from the moment they make the decision not to serve, through the legal process of acquiring the status of conscientious objector or release on grounds of not being mentally fit, until they are released from the military system. The network works with anyone who wishes to be released from military service: youth before conscription, soldiers during their service and reserve service soldiers.

New Profile supports conscientious objectors when they are imprisoned for their refusal to serve in the army by providing legal and other technical support, and also by providing political support, including liaising with the media and organizing support demonstrations.

New Profile have a portable [exhibition making militarism symbols in everyday life visible](#). The exhibit has been shown in schools, youth groups, galleries and pre-military academies, many times accompanied by workshops given by New Profile activists. The exhibition, originally in Hebrew, has also been translated into English and is now being translated into French as well.



A canon placed in a playground. Taken from the New Profile exhibition

AFSC was itself founded by conscientious objectors during the First World War. It has been a supporter of New Profile since its beginning in 1998.

For more information about New Profile please visit their website: <http://www.newprofile.org/english/> or contact them directly: info@newprofile.org

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