

ANCEMENT OF

Report for
**THE UNITED NATIONS DIVISION FOR
WOMEN**

By:
THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Part I:
**An Overview of Trends Towards the Achievement of Gender Equality and the
Advancement of Women**

The State of Israel is pleased to present this overview of trends towards the
achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women in our country. In

briefly, we will note here only its most significant developments. These
trends which indicate the trends of progress among women in Israel.

In Israel, more than 100 laws relate, directly and indirectly, to the advancement of
women, in the aggregate, they encompass nearly all aspects of women's lives
an excellent legal foundation for gender equality. In this report, we note
most recent legislation and amendments and discuss their effect on women.

March, 1998, marking International Women's Day, the Knesset (the Israeli

parliament) voted unanimously to
establish the Authority for the Advancement of the
Status of Women. As a statutory
body, it will be established and maintained by law, this will

prove to a vital force for women's
The Authority, established a
and the government no longer view the advancement of women as a "women's issue", but

as a challenge to society as a whole, and a goal to
which the entire society must make a commitment.

The functions of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women
include: evaluation of policy regarding gender equality and the elimination of

discrimination against women; coordination and promotion of cooperation between state,
municipalities, and others, advising the ministries on the implementation of

establishment of special programs and services for women which promote
by proposal of legislative measures for the advancement of women and the

elimination of discrimination; provision of information and tools necessary for the
of these goals to the government. Furthermore, the Authority will

be empowered by the law to hear and public awareness of violence against

women through use of the educational systems and the media and to advance activities designed to decrease all forms of such violence.

The Authority has established an advisory committee, composed of representatives of all of the governmental ministries and ministries, statutory authorities, and women's

The Authority's program for 1999 has included:

- * Enforcement of laws relating to women's rights

- * Equal opportunities, prevention of discrimination, and activities to

- * Institution of a Program for Gender Equality in the Schools, currently

- implemented throughout the educational system, from pre-schools through

- colleges throughout the

- * Consolidation

- of women in the various

- to reach populations.

- * Establishment of an informative website for

- * Initiation of a project of informative and educational

- social servants and in the IDF.

- * Sponsorship of a series of literacy projects for

- sectors; this program is the result of the express requests

- * Sponsorship of a series of employment and

- of women's training on skills needed for income and

In 1994, the Knesset Committee on the Advancement

of Women's Rights (standing committee) and the Committee

initiated a number of positive legislative advances, the

introduction of the bill for the establishment of the Advancement

of the Status of Women. In addition, the

table of focus public attention on issues relating to women

in the 2000s, and women's rights in the 2000s.

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the polarized character of Israeli politics, the women parliamentarians have
a unique cross-party coalitions. Women who represent parties with

radically different ideologies and views have been able to overcome
the face of objections by the "father" parties, in order to act concertedly to liberal
women's inalienable human rights and to further gender equality.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak has appointed two women as Cabinet Ministers and a
third as a Deputy-Minister.

Furthermore, in the local and municipal elections, two women were elected
mayors of large cities in Israel, and the 1998 local elections brought about a 40% increase
in the numbers of women serving on local and municipal councils.

We credit much of these achievements in women's leaderships to the active and
determined collaboration by the largest women's organizations, who, like the Women
members of Parliament, have been able to put aside organizational and ideological
differences and to work together to promote women who run for political office and
increase public awareness of, and commitment to, the need to increase the numbers

women elected to public office.

Violence against women is changing in Israel. While in the past violence was
and even subtly encouraged, extensive media campaigns, efforts by women's
organizations, efforts by men who have established organizations against male
and the courageous women who have come forward and publicly accused their
have changed this attitude. "Women as Victim" is no longer acceptable within

indicated that the campaign against violence against women is
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agencies are devoted to eliminating violence
against women in a
proposed mechanism
services to women
office sponsored a national media campaign regarding violence against women, including

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In March, 1998, the Israeli Parliament passed a far-reaching sexual harassment law, one of the most comprehensive laws of its kind in the world. The law provides a broad definition of sexual harassment, making such harassment both a criminal and a civil offense. Offenses are de-

ons where women are more likely to be victims. Offenses are de-

Centers and shelters have also been set up to meet the needs of specific populations, in particular the ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities; in the near future, a mobile violence-prevention unit will serve the Bedouin community, whose women are usually unable, for reasons of culture and distance, to reach services provided in the cities and towns. These projects reflect our recognition that services must be culturally-synoptic and responsive to the particular needs and beliefs of the different cultures represented in Israel's multi-cultural society. Most of the shelters receive 75% public funding; some, including those that serve the minority populations, receive 100% public funding.

In particular, we would like to cite a unique shelter for abusive men who have been removed from the home by court injunction: in this shelter, the men receive group and individual treatment, as well as consciousness-raising and behavior modification opportunities. We are hopeful that this innovative project will lead to the development of new models and modalities of treatment.

We note with satisfaction that attitudes among the police have changed significantly. Local police officers undergo extensive training regarding domestic violence and, over the past few years, the police have added nearly 180 investigators to their ranks. In addition, representatives from the NGO's and the Authority continue to provide

training for police, national judges, and others who deal with violence against

Women in the Armed Services:

The military is a central institution in Israeli society. Since Israel maintains near-universal conscription, military service is a rite of passage and a source of legitimacy and status in adult life. Israel is the only Western democracy with compulsory conscription for

women, however, service in the

In response to a decision by the Supreme Court, reviewed its admission procedures and now enables all women who meet the initial requirements to take the entrance exams for pilot training. Furthermore, the air force

made numerous changes in programming and education in order to enable the female recruits to better integrate into their units and to enable the previously all-male crews to adjust to the presence of women and the social and hierarchical changes that this entails, indicating a commitment to a gender perspective among the senior military personnel.

In addition, the military has increased the number of positions open to women in

publicized its

in all its branches, have made awareness and

social violence its hallmark as important and emphasized part of

for conscripts and officer alike. All recruits, male and female, participate

of empowerment and awareness.

ion, Academia and Research. At the initiative of the Authority for the

of the Status of Women, the Ministry of Education has voiced its

o improving gender equality in the school system. A unique program

ity 2000, which involves educational programs for boys and girls, as well as

is been instituted in several schools throughout the country. Within the

pecially-designated unit has been charged with increasing the numbers of girls

o pursue technological and scientific studies.

level of higher education, there has been a tremendous increase in the

numbers of students who wish to study feminist studies and/or topics related to women

and a concomitant increase in research and discourse. Four Israeli universities, and

to enable

of students, institutional recognition, etc. At present, these differ widely

the women's studies programs to assess the best path for their own futures, to establish at

for the

most fundamental departments, and per

establishment of cabinets and/or teach

Part II: Financial and Institutional Measures

2. The Authority has commissioned a gender-perspective review of the current proposed budget and the budgets of the various ministries. This review will be presented to the Prime Minister, as part of the Authority's mandate to advise the Prime Minister on policies relevant to the advancement of the status of women.

3. a & b: As noted above, the establishment of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women is a critical step towards the achievement of gender equality in Israel. The efforts by the Authority to institutionalize follow-up to, and implementation of, the Platform for Action and the National Plan have been described above. The Authority is responsible for the follow-up to all relevant conferences and for the coordination of financial efforts to global conferences.

4. Throughout Israel's history, women's NGO's have always played a major role in advancing the status of women in Israel. In changing the public perceptions of women, promoting women's role in the public and private spheres, operating hot-lines for victims

of sexual violence, etc.
nearly 100 women's organizations are active within Israel;

deal with women's issues as part of their broader commitment.
organizations vary tremendously in size, ideology, socio-economic

s, etc.
h women's organizations have played in

ing issues of concern to women to the public.

and government agencies, both the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women and the Parliamentary Committee for the Advancement of Women work closely with them. By mandate, the Authority is charged with coordinating the efforts of these organizations, and the larger organizations are represented at the Authority's Advisory

Council. Similarly, the Parliamentary Committee has provided for the regular and ongoing involvement of these organizations in its deliberations and in the formation of policy recommendations, legislative initiatives, etc.