

## **Press Release April 27, 2009**

Uri Avnery: Police offensive against New Profile activists – a violation of the Freedom of Speech. This assault on the adherents of peace and democracy follows after Lieberman took over the police and state prosecution.

"The police assault on activists of 'New Profile' and 'The Center for the Defence of the Individual', the detention of activists, among them grandmothers, and confiscation of computers constitutes a severe attack on the Freedom of Speech in Israel" warns Uri Avnery of the Gush Shalom movement. "The activity of New Profile – an organization which opposes the militarism of Israeli society and gives counseling to Conscientious Objectors – is considered by the police to be 'incitng to shirking' - a severe legal charge.

Just a few weeks have passed since the Netanyahu-Lieberman government took office (or should one say Lieberman-Netanyahu) – and already a brute offensive is launched against the adherents of peace and democracy. Indeed, the appointment of the new Minister of Police was from the ranks of the party headed by Lieberman.

Details from the New Profile press release:

This morning police descended upon the homes of activists in New Profile, a feminist movement whose proclaimed aim is "civil-ization of society in Israel" and "opposition to the undue influence of the military on daily life". Five activists were detained and interrogated in the Ramat Hachiyal Police Station. Amongst those interrogated: Analeen Kish, aged 70, a ceramics artist, daughter of a family of the "Righteous among the Nations" who converted to Judaism after her marriage to Holocaust survivor Dr. Eldad Kish, active in organizations of Dutch Holocaust survivors in Israel.

Additionally detained for interrogation were Amir Givol, a resident of Jerusalem, Sergei Sandler, a resident of Be'er Sheva, and Roni Barkan, a resident of Tel Aviv.

The computers of all those interrogated were taken by the police, as were computers belonging to their partners and children – in one case the computer of a fourth grade pupil, the daughter of one of those interrogated. The computers of family members were returned after the activists were released on bail.

All five were interrogated at a station in the Yarkon Region of the police. At the conclusion of the interrogation they were released on bail and under "limiting conditions" – in particular, a prohibition upon making contact with other members of the movement during the next 30 days, which implies a severe disruption and partial paralysis of its activities.

Also raided were the offices of the 'The Center for the Defence of the Individual' in East Jerusalem – an organization mainly involved in helping Palestinians who encounter difficulties with the military government's bureaucracy. The police tried to confiscate the Center's computers too. Center activists refused to hand them over, as much of the material in these computers was given to its lawyers as part of a lawyer-client relations, which police is not entitled to access.

Attorney Smadar Ben Nathan, who is representing New Profile, said that the investigation of the police is focusing on the website of New Profile, which has links to other sites on the internet. Ben Nathan added that the New Profile Movement is a recognized non-profit association which acts openly and publicly, in accordance with the law, and the use of a criminal investigation in this context is invalid and exaggerated, and stands in opposition to freedom of expression.

New Profile had stated that the police acts confirm what they had been contending for many years, i.e. that the militarization of Israeli society harms the sacred principles of democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of political association, and that those who believed that criminal charges are only trumped up "only" against Arab citizens of Israel saw this morning that none of us can be certain that s/he can freely express a dissident opinion.

Other peace groups can only concur.