

SISO Activity Report

SISO began its activities in earnest in the spring of 2016. The goals were as follows:

1. To use the 50th anniversary date to build Collective Impact of Israeli organizations;
2. To mobilize Diaspora Jews to speak out – to reach new audiences and to empower the already-convinced to take action in coordination with others;
3. Creating and injecting new messaging – SISO developed three core messages, based on consultations with partners, academic research and empirical testing of public opinion:
 - The Jubilee mitzvah – linking 50 years of occupation with the Jewish commandment to "consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants";
 - The cost of the occupation, not only for Palestinians but for Israelis as well;
 - Hope and possibility. Conflicts end. It happened in Northern Ireland and in many other intractable conflicts around the globe. It will happen here.

From June 2016-June 2017, SISO conducted the following activities:

- Building organizational infrastructure and communication tools;
- Building and cultivating the 50-Out Network of Israeli organizations;
- Launching the Call of Israelis to Diaspora Jews;
- Convening our network in Washington DC;
- The Jubilee Haggadah and Passover Seder Project;
- A climax of events in May and June – in Israel, around the world, and in traditional and social media

This report reviews these activities, draws some lessons and lays out SISO work plan through the end of 2017.

Building SISO's infrastructure

In this past year, SISO succeeded in establishing a formal infrastructure, strategic partnerships and communication tools. The organization was registered as an Israeli amuta in November 2016 and has three paid staff. In addition to the Israeli board of directors, SISO formed an International Steering Committee, half of whose members are Israeli individuals and the other half are individuals linked to Diaspora partner organizations. SISO established some level of cooperation with key Jewish organizations abroad: J Street, Truah and Ameinu in the U.S., Yahad (UK), JCall (Europe), JSpace Canada, and Habonim-Dror and the New Israel Fund globally.

SISO representatives met with hundreds of activists and leaders in Israel and the Diaspora to promote the activities of SISO and build partnerships. SISO succeeded in establishing and/or energizing bases for

liberal Jewish cooperation and coordination across different countries. In a relatively short period of time, SISO has generated name recognition and links to Jewish communities across the world.

SISO built a website as well as a social media presence: our Facebook page has over 2,400 followers and our Facebook posts reach over 35,000/month. SISO also maintains Twitter and Instagram accounts and sends out a monthly newsletter to 5,000 supporters in Israel and globally.

The 50-Out Network

SISO enlisted the active partnership of Shatil to build a network of organizations for coordinated action around the 50th anniversary of 1967. A Steering Committee was formed that included representatives of SISO, Shatil, the Parents Circle, Neve Shalom and the Peace NGO Forum. Through a series of meetings, the network grew to include some 40 organizations.

A high-point in the activities was the meeting in March 2017 at Neve Shalom, attended by over 100 participants, representing over 40 organizations. Organizations presented their plans around the 50th anniversary and the meeting was an important opportunity for networking and creating partnerships among the organizations. Several people with expertise in Israeli civil society commented that this level of coordination was unprecedented.

This is not to say that the coordination fulfilled our, ambitious, expectations. First, we did not succeed in involving Arab civil society in this initiative. Second, many of the biggest NGOs participated only partially in the network. Thirdly, most organizations saw the coordination as more technical (event-planning) rather than substantive (building common strategy and messaging).

In the spring of 2017, the 50-Out Network focused primarily on the 50-Out Website (see below on the June peak activities).

The Israeli Call to the Diaspora

In September SISO launched its public activities with publication of a call by high-profile Israelis to Diaspora Jews to work together to end the occupation. This was the first time that such a call was issued. It generated media attention and opened the door for cooperation between liberal Israelis and their Diaspora counterparts.

The recruitment to the call was conducted by a core of high-level volunteers who mobilized to recruit 500 signatories, including many of Israel's leading scientists, artists and public figures.

Both the list of names and the text has served us well. Throughout the year, we enlisted individuals from this list to advance SISO's message in various ways. We also continued throughout the year to encourage Diaspora Jews to sign a response, committing to work with Israelis to end the occupation. To date, over 3,000 people have signed this response.

Meeting in Washington DC

SISO convened a one-day workshop in Washington DC, as well as leading a panel at the National J Street convention. In addition to participants from the U.S., SISO partners attended from Paris, London, Rome, Toronto, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo.

About 80 people attended the workshop, including senior NIF staff, a large contingent from J Street U and representatives of other SISO partners (Truah, JCall, JSpace, J-AMLAT). The day was a valuable opportunity to develop strategy and messaging for our movement.

At the J Street panel, SISO speakers spoke to a packed room about the significance of the 50th anniversary. SISO also had a table to distribute information. This was a valuable opportunity to introduce SISO to a large progressive Jewish audience and we made contact with many influential actors within the Jewish community in the U.S. The response to SISO was very positive.

The Jubilee Haggadah

SISO's flagship project this spring was a Passover Haggadah linking the holiday's traditional themes of freedom and liberation with the need to end the occupation. The Haggadah included contributions from thirty leading Israeli and world Jewish figures and was praised for its extremely high quality. It generated significant media coverage in Israel and was used in hundreds of Passover seders both in Israel and in communities around the world.

A printed version of the Haggadah was available for purchase in English and Hebrew. In Israel the Haggadah was sold in five bookstores in Tel Aviv and three bookstores in Jerusalem. SISO produced Spanish and Portuguese Haggadah supplements in partnership with J-AMLAT. JCall translated some of the texts into French. Digital versions were available in all languages.

Both the New Israel Fund and J Street adopted the Jubilee Haggadah and distributed to their networks. Altogether, 1,200 copies were purchased in Hebrew and 1,100 in English. In addition, some 1,500 people downloaded digital copies in English. The Jubilee Haggadah was used by Jews on all six continents! And through the generous contribution of the New Israel Fund, 100,000 copies of a specially-formatted Jubilee Haggadah was distributed to Israelis through the Hebrew Ha'aretz newspaper.

The Haggadah generated significant coverage in the Hebrew press, with interviews on all the major radio stations, mention in every major Israeli newspaper and a TV interview. The Haggadah also served as the basis for a social media campaign. Altogether the Facebook posts reached 43,800 people. Over 9,300 people engaged with the posts (viewed the video, shared posts, liked, etc.).

SISO held a pre-Passover event together with Meretz in Tel Aviv attended by 200 people. Public Passover seders using the Jubilee Haggadah were held in Paris (120 people), Geneva (50 people), London (85 people), Rome (80 people) and Sao Paulo (150 people). In Boston, SISO activists distributed a SISO Haggadah supplement throughout the week before Passover.

SISO prepared a video summarizing the Passover project with footage from the various events which was distributed on social media.

Forward-looking assessment: The 2017 Haggadah was produced at the last minute, yet still managed to generate extensive interest. It is clear that with enough advance preparation, a 2018 version could both reach an even wider audience – both globally and inside Israel – and be either revenue-generating or at least revenue-neutral. Of the 2,700 people who purchased or downloaded the English Haggadah globally, fully half were not previously on the New Israel Fund mailing list. So it is clear that there is potential to reach a new and larger audience.

May-June climax events

Israeli organizations within the 50-Out Network carried out dozens of activities in the weeks leading up to the 50th anniversary since 1967. Shatil and SISO built and operated the trilingual 50-Out website, which included a calendar of events addressing the 50th year from a critical perspective, as well as messaging around the theme: "Conflicts End." Altogether the website published some 80 events addressing 50 years of Israeli control over the Palestinians (academic conferences, artistic events, protests, tours and more).

Major events include the following:

- Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day event – 5,000 people attended the central event in Tel Aviv, almost exclusively Israelis. 500 Palestinians and Israelis attended the event in Beit Jalla and another 500 in the event in northern Israel. SISO partnered with Combatants for Peace and the Families Forum-Parents Circle in organizing screening events around the world;
- Two States, One Hope Rally in Rabin Square – lead by Peace Now and attended by tens of thousands of Israelis. Despite initial efforts, the Rally was not a joint effort of the 50-Out Network. Part of the reason was a lack of funds to incentivize cooperation;
- Marking the Green Line – Machsom Watch partnered with 50-Out, Givat Haviva and Neve Shalom to organize two days of marches and events, each attended by several hundred people. SISO was instrumental in building this partnership and took part in all stages of the planning.

The New Israel Fund provided a public relations team to advertise the 50-Out website and the various events, including a blog of articles on the Haaretz website. NIF also enabled SISO to give small grants for Facebook advertising of the events. Within 6 weeks, 7,000 people (unique users) visited the 50-Out website, an impressive number for so short a period of time.

SISO commissioned a PR firm for English language press and social media. These activities included:

- Production of materials for campaigns on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram;
- A press briefing on the price of occupation, featuring Adva Center's new report;
- Publication of dozens of opinion pieces, TV and radio interviews, and quotes of SISO experts in articles in the English-language press.

SISO also worked with partner organizations and activists around the world to organize delegations to Israeli embassies and consulates. Altogether, fifteen different cities (in North and South America, Europe, Australia and South Africa) drafted letters on the harmful implications of the occupation and requested meetings with Israeli diplomats to discuss the issue. In July SISO will issue a press release to generate coverage both in Israel and in the global Jewish press about the delegations. We will also conduct a social media campaign around these letters under the hashtag #BecauseWeCare.

Several events are still in production for the summer, including an event in the Israeli Knesset and a workshop for local change agents on the price of occupation (see below).

July-December Activities

SISO activities for the remainder of 2017, as detailed below, build on the capacity developed over the past year, with a focus on strengthening the global progressive Jewish community and linking Israeli and

Diaspora initiatives. Our Board will convene in September for a daylong strategy discussion regarding SISO's future beyond 2017.

Price of Occupation

SISO has identified a vacuum in the Israeli public discourse: there is almost no attention to the price Israeli society pays for its continued military rule over the Palestinians. SISO will address this vacuum, partly by encouraging development of new data, but primarily by ensuring that existing data effectively enters the public discourse and is leveraged by various actors.

In June, SISO worked with the Adva Center to produce an interactive version of their new report: *The Occupation: Who Pays the Price? The effects of the occupation on Israel's society and economy*. SISO convened a briefing to present the report to the English-language press. In addition, Prof. Bar-Tal enlisted over a dozen Israeli academics to each write a short overview of the topic from their area of expertise (the effects of the occupation on Israeli society in terms of education, welfare, national identity, gender, rule of law and more).

In July SISO will convene a workshop for Israeli bloggers, Facebook influencers and civil society actors. Presentations by Adva, Molad and Professor Bar-Tal will lay out the existing data. A public relations expert will facilitate discussion about how to make this data accessible and impactful to the Israeli public discourse.

Throughout the fall, SISO will work with partners to translate this information into campaigning materials.

Supplements for the High Holidays and Hannukah

The Passover Haggadah project demonstrated that there is a demand for high quality original content linking Jewish tradition to the message of saving Israel and stopping the occupation. SISO will develop such content both for the High Holidays and for Hannukah. A High Holidays supplement will include prayers, readings and sample sermons for rabbis. The Hannukah project will develop a ceremony around the theme of "The Eight Candles of Responsible Judaism."

For both holidays, SISO will distribute the materials in Hebrew and English and organize holiday events (both physical and virtual) that link Israelis and Jewish communities around the world.

Collective Impact - Building the Israeli democratic camp

The 50-Out website is a valuable tool for progressive organizing. SISO has taken full responsibility for the site, as Shatil no longer has capacity to devote to this project. SISO is exploring with partner organizations how this platform might serve as a portal for the broader democratic camp.

Over the past few months, several initiatives have emerged to unite progressive forces in Israel, involving both civil society and political activists. SISO is involved in several of these initiatives, and working to ensure dialogue and coordination between them.

Strengthening the Diaspora-Israel partnership against the occupation

This past year has shown that different Diaspora communities have different needs. Progressive Jews in small Jewish communities (South Africa, South America and elsewhere) are extremely isolated and thirsty for links to progressive Jewish organizing. This is not the case in large Jewish communities like the

United States, where many progressive Jewish groups are active. However, there are groups in all the Jewish communities who are looking for ways to take action and make an impact. All can benefit from powerful new content (such as our holiday projects and messaging on the price of occupation) and from links with Israeli initiatives.

SISO will continue its coordination with partners around the world in accordance with their needs:

- Working to develop progressive voices in more peripheral communities. Over the next few months we will put special effort into supporting progressive organizing in South Africa, and we will continue our coordination with J-AMLAT in Latin America.
- Leveraging partnerships to strengthen ongoing work in well-established progressive communities. One example is our project to support Open Hillel in their campaign against the major grant of Naftali Bennett's Mosaic Fund to Hillel International. SISO is recruiting Israeli academics to a petition against Hillel accepting this grant, linking efforts of Naftali Bennett to silence free debate inside Israel (such as his proposed Code of Ethics for Universities) to his efforts to limit such debate among Jewish students abroad. This is a good example of SISO's value added by bringing Israelis to support existing efforts.