

1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008

Celebrating



years
of achievement



The Israel Democracy Institute

1991

Beginnings

The Israel Democracy Institute is founded by two visionaries at an historic meeting in Jerusalem. Dr. Arye Carmon, an Israeli academic who founded the Israel Diaspora Institute, and Mr. Bernie Marcus, an American entrepreneur who co-founded The Home Depot, decide to establish a policy research institute dedicated to ensuring Israel's survival as a vibrant democracy. They envision an activist think tank that will serve as a non-partisan agent of change and support Israel's overburdened leadership with critical thinking on mid- and long-term policy solutions.

IDI's founding group of supporters includes Joseph Flom, Gershon Kekst, Arthur Liman, Louis Perlmutter, Henry Rosovsky and Irving Shapiro.

1992

Empowering the Legislature

IDI launches the Legislative Assistants Program to provide the understaffed Knesset with professional research support. Eight years later, Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg incorporates this highly acclaimed program into the newly formed Research and Information Center, and the legislative assistants, formerly trained at IDI, become a regular part of the Knesset staff.

Former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz meets with IDI's founders at Stanford University and agrees to serve as the Institute's Honorary Chairman.



1993

Promoting Sound Economic Policy

At the request of Finance Minister Avraham (Baiga) Shochat, IDI organizes the first annual Caesarea Economic Policy Planning Forum to facilitate an exchange of ideas in anticipation of the national budget planning process. Experts from the academic world, the Bank of Israel, the Ministry of Finance and the business community meet to draw up policy recommendations in key areas of Israel's economy. The Caesarea Forum quickly acquires a reputation as the most important economic conference in Israel.

George Shultz becomes the first recipient of IDI's prestigious Democracy Award at a gala event in Tel Aviv attended by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

1994

Reforming Israel's Legal Code

With the passage of two Basic Laws by the Knesset in 1992, Israel's constitutional era begins. Two years later, in preparation for the eventual enactment of a constitution, IDI establishes the Center for Constitutional Principles and their Implementation to devise proposals for revising Israel's outmoded legal corpus in accordance with constitutional principles. Over the next decade, IDI

researchers, under the guidance of Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer, conduct much of the basic research on such fundamental values as freedom of speech, human dignity and equality. Their work informs public opinion, legislation in the Knesset and rulings of the Israeli Supreme Court.

... ית הוו
... אל לבין הפלסטיני
... שבפועל עשויה הכרעה כזו
... גייה הנודונה בטיפולוגיה המרכז
... ירעל הראל הוגיש את הו
... ייררו ע



1995

Facilitating Dialogue and Debate

IDI inaugurates the George Shultz Roundtable Forum. Originally designed to accommodate the Knesset's desire for an extra-governmental venue for brainstorming and reasoned debate, the Forum becomes a major hub of dialogue in a divided society. The Roundtable assumes particular importance in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, when public figures from across the ideological spectrum gather in this singular setting to engage in frank discussion of the tragedy's implications for the future of Israeli democracy.

Thanks to the generosity of Bernie Marcus, IDI moves into its present quarters on Pinsker Street in the tranquil Talbimah neighborhood of Jerusalem.

1996

Easing the Tensions between Religion and State

Following Rabin's assassination, IDI forms a new research center and public forum devoted to easing the tensions between religion and state in Israel. Over the years, the Center for Religion and State, headed by Professors Aviezer Ravitzky and Yedidia Stern, produces a series of groundbreaking legislative and other proposals on conversion, the Sabbath, civil union and the scope of judicial review in a Jewish and democratic state. The Ne'eman Commission's proposal on conversion emerges largely as a result of these efforts.

That same year, IDI publishes the first edition of *The Seventh Eye*, a singular forum for journalistic self-criticism, peer review and exploration of media ethics. The journal soon acquires a professional reputation for incisive analysis, and its articles are cited in Supreme Court rulings, legislative proposals and scholarly articles. It also becomes a key teaching aid in Israeli universities. In 2008, *The Seventh Eye* moves to the web, garnering accolades as one of the most unique websites in the world of journalism.

1997

Leading the Struggle for Electoral Reform

IDI launches a vigorous campaign against the "two ballot system". Introduced in 1996 with the aim of strengthening the executive branch by enabling direct election of the Prime Minister, the new system shatters Israel's large political parties and ushers in an era of political instability. In 2003, IDI's campaign bears fruit with the repeal of this bill by the Knesset.

That same year, the Institute initiates a series of historic meetings between Jewish and Arab intellectuals in an attempt to pave the way for a common framework for majority-minority relations in Israel.

At a gala ceremony attended by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, IDI presents the second Democracy Award to Edward Shevardnadze, President of the Republic of Georgia, for his role in ending the Cold War and strengthening democracy in Georgia.

IDI publishes a position paper proposing a legal framework to regulate the activities of Israel's General Security Services (GSS). In 2002, the GSS Bill, based in part on the paper's recommendations, becomes law.

1998

The Road to Constitutional Democracy

IDI begins the long journey toward an Israeli constitution. At their annual retreat in the summer, the Institute's Senior Fellows decide to lay the intellectual groundwork for a constituent assembly that would complete the unfinished business of drafting a constitution for Israel. Two years later, in 2000, Justice Meir Shamgar, President Emeritus of the Israeli Supreme Court, assumes leadership of a public council

comprised of 100 luminaries from across the ideological spectrum to take part in this historic effort.

1999

Taking the Pulse of Israeli Democracy

IDI acquires the Guttman Institute for Applied Social Research, the most important public opinion research center in Israel. The Guttman Center, as it is henceforth called, strengthens IDI's research and polling capabilities. The Center conducts regular surveys of trends and attitudes in Israeli society, presents valuable data on economic conditions, and evaluates the quality of Israeli democracy in comparison with other democracies.

As Israel's hi-tech industry takes off, IDI launches the Business and Democracy Project to examine

the troubled relationship between the modern corporation and Israel's democratic order. The project yields innovative proposals for dealing with over-regulation, the concentration of wealth within Israeli society and the centralization of power within Israeli corporations.

On the occasion of the adoption of the Legislative Assistants Program by the Knesset, IDI International Chairman Bernie Marcus receives the Knesset Appreciation Award.

2000

Deepening Civil-Military Relations

At the initiative of the Chief of Staff of the IDF, General Amnon Lipkin Shahak, IDI hosts a special conference on the role of women in the armed forces. This becomes the first in an annual series of prestigious colloquia dedicated to exploring challenges that lie on the seam between civil society and the military. The Army and Society Forum brings the army's top brass together with representatives from Israeli

academia and civilian society to discuss such topics as the future of reserve duty, the role of the media in wartime, and the motivation of Israeli youth for military service.

2001

Launching a Constitutional Revolution

IDI launches a major public campaign around the country to raise awareness of the need for a constitution embodying broad societal consensus. Two years later, in 2003, the Senior Fellows of the Institute begin work on a draft constitution for the State of Israel based on the discussions of the Public Council headed by Justice Shamgar. In 2005, at the conclusion of two years of arduous debate, IDI presents the Government of Israel with a full draft

of a constitution, including revolutionary proposals on the relationship between religion and state in a Jewish and democratic polity. This draft is widely recognized as the singular embodiment of the difficult compromises necessary for a constitutional order that is potentially acceptable to the vast majority of Israelis. It quickly becomes the basis for the constitutional deliberations in the Knesset.

2002

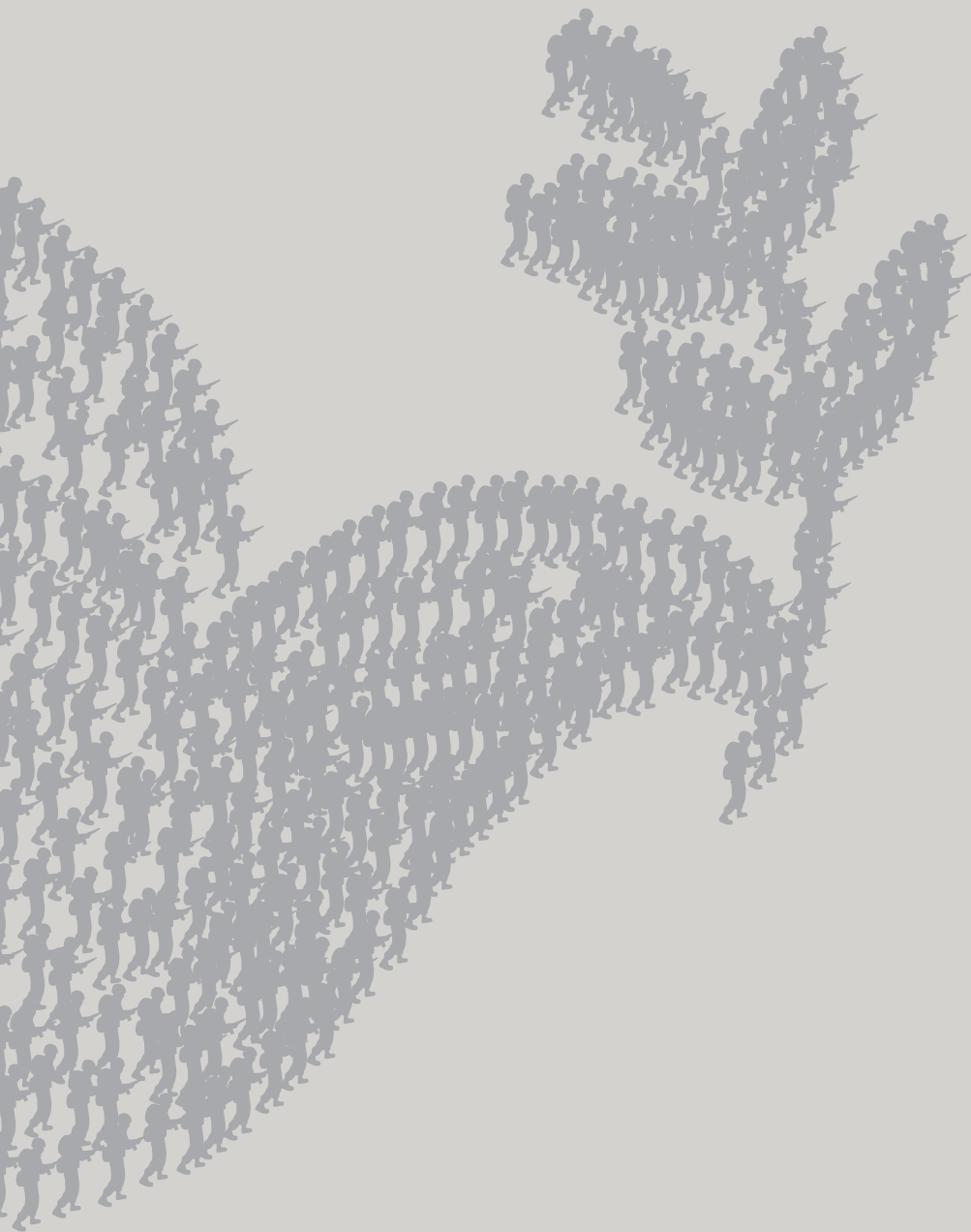
Preparing Israeli Children for Citizenship

Acting on the belief that the path to active citizenship begins in the home and at school, IDI pioneers a new civics program in the Israeli public school system. Designed to teach young Israelis about democracy and to encourage them to engage actively and responsibly in the public sphere, the program's seminars, curricula and textbooks are eventually adopted by 240 Jewish, Arab and Druze schools throughout the country.

Former Israeli Minister of Justice Haim Zadok becomes the third recipient of IDI's Democracy Award in a gala ceremony attended by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.







2003

Confronting Terrorism

In response to a relentless wave of suicide bombings, Israel goes on the offensive. IDI establishes the National Security and Democracy Program in order to help Israel fight terrorism without compromising its democratic values. Backed by a public forum of prominent experts from the military, the intelligence community and academia, IDI researchers launch a comprehensive review of the means employed

by Israel in the fight against terrorism. They produce innovative proposals for measures and legal structures to counter terrorism effectively while balancing security and human rights.

IDI presents the first Democracy Index to President Moshe Katzav in a ceremony at the President's residence in Jerusalem.

2004

Reducing Inequality

IDI launches a research effort to combat the growing gap between rich and poor in Israel. Research focuses on evaluating existing programs, introducing new ideas to reduce inequality, and drafting proposals for reform. Projects include an assessment of pricing structures for utilities, a study of employment programs for vulnerable populations, an investigation of the determinants of financial crises in municipal authorities, and a proposal for the inclusion of social rights in the constitution.

2005

Promoting Solidarity

The planned disengagement from Gaza polarizes society, bringing Israel to the brink of civil war. Recognizing the danger, IDI swings into action. In April, IDI Fellows meet with leaders of the settler movement and reach agreement on a framework for legitimate protest. In June, an IDI conference highlights the sensitive role of the media in the pending disengagement. In July, the Caesarea Forum deals with the economic implications of the evacuation of Gaza. Finally,

in the aftermath of the withdrawal, IDI brings together key figures from the Right and the Left to heal the wounds inflicted by the uprooting of the Gaza settlements.

Justice Meir Shamgar, President Emeritus of the Israeli Supreme Court, receives the fourth Democracy Award for his role in promoting a constitution for Israel.

2006

Impact at the Top

Following the debilitating stroke suffered by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in early 2006, IDI is invited to draft a "first hundred days" plan for acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. In conjunction with the Prime Minister's Office, the Institute launches the Prime Minister's Conference to support informed policy-making within the executive branch. In a series of meetings, IDI Fellows engage the Prime Minister and his staff in study and discussion of topics ranging from conversion policy to the Sabbath Law. The Conference achieves particular

prominence as the first high-level collaborative forum for addressing the problems faced by Israel's Arab minority, institutionalizing meetings between representatives of the Arab sector and senior decision-makers.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert establishes the National Economic Council based on the recommendations of an IDI policy paper.

2007

Promoting Structural Reforms in the Economy

IDI publishes a comprehensive proposal for reform of Israel's annual budgetary process. Based on detailed research and comparison with OECD countries, the proposal seeks to preserve fiscal discipline within a more transparent and cooperative approach to decision making, thus enabling a truer reflection of national priorities in the budget. Soon afterward, IDI completes a prescient proposal on regulation of Israel's capital market. Predicated on a comparative analysis of various international models, the proposal aims to reduce the risk of financial meltdown in a globalized world by unifying and modernizing Israel's numerous regulatory bodies.

Following an IDI sponsored conference on Israel's Arabs citizens, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert establishes the Economic Development Authority in the Minority Sector within the Prime Minister's Office.

2008

A Blueprint for Political Reform

The global economic crisis, the deteriorating security situation, and multiple corruption scandals destabilize the Israeli political system. With elections scheduled for early 2009, IDI assembles a blueprint for comprehensive political change in Israel, which is designed to serve as a reference for future decision makers and legislators. Based on nearly two decades of comparative research conducted at IDI, the blueprint aims to strike a balance between effective government and meaningful

representation. The proposal includes vigorous measures to bolster the stability of coalition governments, restore the centrality of the major political parties, and redress the imbalance of power among the three branches of government. It endorses mechanisms to decentralize political authority and enhance transparency and accountability, and calls for the introduction of regional constituencies as well as extensive revision of the primary election system.

And Beyond...

In recognition of eighteen years of outstanding contribution to state and society, IDI wins the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement — the highest honor bestowed by the State upon any individual or organization. The award strengthens IDI's resolve to persevere in the struggle for a better democratic future for Israel.

In the month leading up to the national elections, more than 800,000 voters use IDI's Election Compass to orient themselves within Israel's political landscape. The Compass—an interactive web-based tool designed to promote informed voter participation in the electoral process—enables citizens to identify the party that best suits their views based on a detailed questionnaire.

At 61, the State of Israel is still a young democracy struggling to survive in a hostile environment. For the foreseeable future, Israel's leaders will have to contend with one of the most complex and overloaded public agendas of any nation in the world. Despite the enormous challenges ahead, we at IDI remain confident in Israel's ability to adapt and thrive, and will continue to do our utmost to ensure that our children grow up in a model democracy that is secure, prosperous and sound.

"[The 2009 Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement: Special Contribution to Society and State is awarded to IDI,] the center with the greatest professional and public influence on the constitutional and democratic discourse in Israel, for its important three-tiered activity—information, research, and dialogue with decision makers and implementers—for its evident contribution to Knesset legislation, to structural reforms in the executive branch, to curricula in secondary schools and institutions of higher education, and to the facilitation of dialogue at the heart of the rifts in Israeli society, and for the development of a cluster of programs, the most prominent of which are the Caesarea Economic Forum, the Prime Minister's Forum, and the crowning endeavor—Constitution by Consensus."

The Israel Prize Award Committee

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