



עמותת אזרחים למען הסביבה בגליל

مواطنون من أجل البيئة في الجليل

Citizens for the Environment In The Galilee

Annual Report 2007



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BACKGROUND

Citizens for the Environment in the Galilee (CFE) is a non-profit environmental organization founded in 1990 by Jews, Arabs and Druze residing in the Western Galilee, working together for the protection of the environment, nature and natural resources. We are motivated by the understanding that acting for coexistence between people, communities and religions in the Galilee, and between them and the environment, will help protect the land for all its inhabitants.

The Galilee, which is considered to be one of Israel's last remaining green areas, has been intensively developed in the past decades. Due to insufficient enforcement of environmental laws, population growth, lack of proper planning and environmental education and limited citizens' awareness, the Galilee has been affected by major environmental problems. These include severe industrial pollution, sewage and waste problems and deterioration of water resources. All of these together pose increasing risks to the population's health.

CFE is well known as an active, efficient and influential NGO. We work in different fields for the sake of our cause: the protection of air, soil and water quality and the prevention of the destruction of the natural landscapes in the Galilee. We conduct research and monitor the status of environmental pollution and its influence on the health and well-being of the local population. We use legal proceedings and lobbying, and we make use of local and national media to promote our goals. We co-operate extensively with other organizations and authorities. We also conduct educational programs to raise the awareness of children and adults about environmental risks and sustainable development.

CFE's work is an example of true coexistence between Arabs, Jews and Druze, and the combining of environmental goals with social justice.

In 2007 CFE received **the Green Globe Award** for environmental organizations for its determined and intensive work and tireless efforts to protect the environment.

SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY

The Galilee has been intensively populated in recent decades. It also contains a multiplicity of industrial zones, set up through national and local policies. A serious lack of supervision and enforcement of these industrial zones has resulted in severe air and water pollution, as well as waste and noise hazards that cause significant continuous harm to residents, the environment and workers. Due to this lack of supervision, most industrial areas already have severely polluted soil and water (ground water, river and sea) which will take many years to heal.

In many of the cases we addressed involving environmental hazards created by industry, we found complex ties between capital and government—ties that as citizens we found difficult to approach, and that were obstacles to our

work. Residents are faced with a lack of information, making them unable to influence decision-making and management problems in the industrial zones.

However, today business organizations as well as the authorities do invest more than they have before on social issues, and are directing attention to issues of justice and environmental conduct.

This year, as in previous years, we have continued to accumulate much more information on the dangers and hazards resulting from industries in the region. The biggest problem that we have found is that the government is imposing minimal regulations on these industries, and setting minimal standards. Compounded with this, there is little effort from government officials to check and enforce these weak regulations and very little citizen awareness. This is creating a situation where the industries are self regulating and polluting more or less however they want with no one blowing the whistle. This is truly a third world situation.

Industrial Zone Research

In the northern district of Israel, which constitutes one third of the state, there are 900 industries, of which 400 are located in the Western Galilee. Industries in the Western Galilee are mostly clustered in nine industrial parks. We focus on industries in the Western Galilee with potential negative environmental impacts. These were classified by industrial branch and not by size.

During 2007 CFE has formulated a three year project plan, aiming to cooperate with the industrial and business sectors, with the purpose of raising environmental awareness and diminishing hazards in industrial practices.

In 2007 we focused on surveying industrial hazards and began GIS mapping the industrial zones in the Western Galilee. During 2008 our projects will focus on the continuation of GIS mapping, as well as analyzing environmental hazards. Both projects will aim at a dialogue between industrialists, local authorities, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection in order to reduce those hazards.

This project is funded by the Green Environmental Fund and CFE is pursuing additional funding for the continuation of these projects.

Confronting the Industries

2007 was characterized by several major achievements in fighting polluting industries. These achievements were gained mainly due to persistence, cooperation with other organizations, and very extensive field work by our volunteers and activists dedicated to the cause. Below are examples of our work.

1. "Hod Plada" Factory

Towards the end of 2006 research concerning this steel recycling plant, located in the industrial zone south of Acco, was published in the media. In the beginning of 2007 this research resulted in a large scale claim through the courts: citizen representatives sued for the amount of 1.1 billion NIS. We accompanied this process, legally and publicly, as a joint action within the

Coalition for the Public Health. We also attended meetings and professional sessions with the factory owners and the Ministry of Environmental Protection. We appealed to the Supreme Court together with "Adam Teva Vadin" to urge the process of cleaning the mountain of toxic waste left in the site since the days of "Kiryat Haplada".

We are pleased that there have been significant changes arising from this intensive environmental campaign. The factory installed all the technologies we recommended in order to prevent the continuation of severe contamination of dioxins and heavy metals. However we are sad that there is still extensive contamination from the factory that remains unsolved and it is still polluting the environment. We will continue our efforts towards cleaning up the site and preventing the perpetuation of the contamination.

2. A Waste Incinerator Facility that was built close to the village of E'blin was supposed to incinerate radioactive waste, hospital waste and other hazardous materials. CFE exposed the date that the incinerator was due to be opened, which was unknown to the public, and initiated public activity to prevent the owners from burning such materials. Together with the residents of the area we protested in a large scale demonstration in March and we called the Ministry of Environmental Protection to tighten the requirements to prevent air pollution and to forbid burning of radioactive waste. Eventually the residents were promised that no hazardous materials will be burnt in the incinerator.

3. IMC factory in Tziporit industrial zone was built against the regulations of the industrial zone. This factory melts aluminum and such a process is known to pollute heavy metals. As representatives of the public at the regional building committee, we objected to granting the factory a license. We succeeded in delaying the opening of the factory. The problem still exists and the campaign to prevent the factory from opening is still in process.

4. The Compost Factory in Hosen is yet another example of a successful cooperation with the residents and our activists. This factory produces an unbearable smell everyday, all daylong. We assisted the residents in a public campaign, research, legal steps and media involvement. The subject is still under investigation.

5. Tefen Industrial Zone is one of our long battles. The factories in Tefen industrial zone are polluting the soil and ground water of the region, but claim they are environmentally friendly and that they work according to regulations from the Ministry of Environmental Protection. A task force to resolve these issues was formed, which included representatives of the industrial zone, the factories, CFE and local residents. This forum met once a month during the year in order to regulate the relationships among the parties. Simultaneously, CFE has issued requests for information based on the Freedom of Information Act, and has demanded that information regarding the discharge rates of hazardous materials from those factories be given to us. We are currently processing the data in order to make it available to the public.

WATER RESOURCES

The Galilee is the largest source of fresh unpolluted water in Israel. The constant need for additional water sources and lack of governmental supervision and policy creates a situation where the last fresh water resources are being dried out and or polluted, in some cases irreversibly.

Part of the CFE's activity in the water field was funded by the Tal Foundation.

Springs in the Western Galilee

In October 2006 springs in the Western Galilee were deluged and severely polluted by untreated industrial and residential sewage. This was the cumulated result of years of neglect of water pollution. Since this contamination event in the Western Galilee, drinking water has not yet been pumped from Ein Ziv (in the Kziv stream) Kabri Springs, and Gaaton. These water sources used to contribute to 30% of the drinking water for residents of the Western Galilee. Currently Mekorot, the National Water Company of Israel, is pumping well water and bringing it to this area. The losses resulting from this situation are both enormous water losses and a devastating loss to Israel's economy.

Citizens for the Environment in the Galilee warned about the extensive pollution for many years, and this year CFE acted on various public levels to change the perception among the authorities in order to deal with the pollution.

Mekorot warned that if the pollution continued there might not be enough water to supply all the needs of the Galilee, and hundreds of thousands of residents will suffer water shortage. In order to prevent such a scenario, Mekorot is planning to connect the polluted area to the main national water pipe in order to run fresh water from the north. The economic costs of this are much greater than the investment that would be needed in order to find a sustainable solution to the sewage problem in the region. We continue to alert and notify the public by publishing information at every possible opportunity.

Betzet Stream

We worked jointly with the residents around the **Betzet Stream** to save the stream and to stop the over pumping of the stream's water by Mekorot. One of the possible results of our activities is that Mekorot will start pumping down stream, allowing the water to run through the stream before using the water. This will achieve two very important goals: first it will allow the water in the stream to refresh the ground water and prevent it from salting, and second it will preserve one of the last most beautiful streams in the region.

International Water Day

On **International Water Day** in March we held a special tour for journalists, teaching them first hand of the water resource situation in the region. We met with various representatives from local authorities who described the situation. We showed them the state of the streams and pointed out sources of pollution to the ground water.

Water Stoppages

Another aspect of the water issue is **water stoppages**. Due to decades of negligence, and poor management by local municipalities in the region as well as major budgetary problems, over 50% of the Arab villages and cities in the region are on the verge of bankruptcy.

This causes several problems. The main one is collective water stoppages—to all village residents. As the municipalities do not pay their debt to the Mekorot Company, Mekorot closes the water supply to those municipalities on a regular basis. This, of course, leads to conditions similar to some third world communities: schools and businesses close, and life at home is impossible without water for washing and cleaning.

Citizens for the Environment in the Galilee has worked tirelessly on the issue of promoting public awareness in order to put pressure on, and with the hopes of finding a solution jointly with, Knesset members and representatives of municipalities in the region. In October we held a survey of water breaks in the Arab sector in the region. The results were shocking and were published in all media sources and in a special session held in the Knesset. Simultaneously we worked together with Knesset members all year to change the legislation and to reduce the residents' dependency on the authorities as far as water supply is concerned. We are still working on this issue together with other organizations in order to find a solution to the problem. In a survey conducted at the end of 2007 we discovered that the water stoppage issue for now has almost entirely ceased.

LEGISLATION AND LEGAL ACTIONS

Environmental Information Law

During 2007 CEF urged the workers of the Ministry of Environmental Protection to establish as law the Environmental Information Bill—a bill which CFE introduced and promoted in the Knesset during 2005. In May 2007 we appealed against the Ministry of Environmental Protection to the Supreme Court regarding those regulations and we hope that in a short while those regulations will be published and implemented.

Polluters Shall Pay Bill

Another achievement during 2007 is the fact that CFE introduced the Pollutant Shall Pay Bill and that this important bill has passed in the first hearing in the Knesset. This bill takes away the economic profitability that encourages pollution of the environment from municipalities and factories. We hope to pass the bill in the second and third hearings during 2008.

Support for the Haifa Bay Residents in their Representative Appeal against the Hod Plada Factory

As mentioned above, at the end of 2007 a representative claim was brought to the court against Hod Plada—one of the most polluting factories in Israel.

This was the highlight of a year's work of fighting to close this polluting factory—of which the pollution affects the health of hundreds of its workers and tens of thousands of residents in the area.

In inspections taken during 2006 it was found that the factory discharged over ten times more than its allowance of dioxins to the air, creating an immediate health hazard to the environment and the population around. As a result of our public campaign and public exposure of the issue:

- A. A discussion took place in the Knesset concerning the factory and its pollutants, and
- B. CFE has appealed to the Supreme Court together with "Adam Teva Vadin" to urge the process of cleaning the mountain of toxic waste left on the site since the days of "Kiryat Haplada".

SEWAGE AND WASTE DUMPS

Many municipalities find themselves with no proper sewage systems, waste disposal systems and infrastructure. Many of the local authorities lack the financial capabilities and the infrastructure to maintain suitable sewage and waste systems under proper management. As a result residents are exposed to significant environmental health hazards. CFE is continuing its efforts in order to solve those issues together with the municipalities and with the assistance of its volunteers and the local residents.

The **City of Shagor** in the Galilee (which combines three villages: Majd-El-krum, Dir-El-Asad, and B'eene) lacks the infrastructure to maintain a reasonable sewage system. In addition, the local slaughter houses run their sewage (many times including blood) through the local sewage system, i.e. through the canals and streets of those villages, causing immediate health and environmental threats.

Mosquitoes carrying the Nile Fever virus were found in this region. Children playing in the streets often come in touch with the open sewage. The smells are impossible and all the sewage runs open into Beyt-Hakerem Canyon Nature Reserve. This canyon, which once was the pearl in the crown of the area for tours and hikes, is being destroyed by the sewage, but can still be saved if appropriate actions are taken at the right time.

Residents of **Hurfesh** asked CFE to assist them publicly and professionally in an effort to put an end to the sewage running in the middle of the village and into the sources of the Kziv stream. In addition we were in contact with other villages in order to eliminate the sewage problem, such as **Rameh, Peqi'in, Mailiya and Arabe**.

The same reasons of lack of infrastructure and finance have led to the creation of unsupervised **waste dumps** around the region. These waste dumps are illegal, and are being used illegally by the local authorities. Those dumps are a serious environmental hazard due to several reasons.

- A. None of the materials brought to the dump are supervised;
- B. The materials can be hazardous materials from factories and industries;

- C. Liquids leak and can and do reach the underground water sources;
- D. The materials are a major fire risk in the summer; and
- E. They spread diseases to local inhabitants.

During 2007 CFE collected data about waste dump fires and published them. The environmental pollution from such fires is significant. First because of the immediate damage to the residents' health in breathing the toxic gases discharged during the fires, second because of the environmental damage of wild fires, and third because these fires of course contribute directly to global warming.

In addition we have conducted a survey in Arab villages concerning environmental hazards disturbing residents. As a consequence of the survey's results we have contacted all Arab municipalities in the region and asked them to distribute a brochure we have prepared especially for their residents, concerning the hazards of burning waste. We have also begun holding meetings with representatives from municipalities in order to solve the problems.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

It is important to point out the general support grant from the Beracha Foundation, which enabled us to continue to work on a variety of CFE typical issues.

Regional Building Committee

Together with the Nature Preservation Society we continue to represent the public in the regional building committee. CFE's representative, Ronit Shermayster, takes part in the various meetings of the committee and represents the local residents and organizations in the committee.

Cellular Antennas

The range of CFE's tasks included also this year the issue of radiation from Cellular Antennas. We were approached by residents of the region requesting our assistance in helping them deal with issues concerning cellular antennas. These issues varied from questions concerning legislation, radiation from illegal antennas and fighting the cellular companies in their actions to put up new antennas near schools and houses.

We held public talks on the issue of cellular antennas and our representative took part in discussions with the Interior Committee of the Knesset regarding regulations that the Ministry of Environmental Protection should set for non-ionizing radiation.

A cellular antenna hidden in one of the chicken coops in the village of new Peqi'in was an excuse for the riots that took place in **Peqi'in** in October 2007. As our office is located in the village, we were almost forced into the events as mediators. For several weeks afterwards CFE was the address to which all the media and interested parties referred to in the Peqi'in issue. We also

conducted research on the events that led to the riots, which were broadcasted on TV and published in newspapers. The research indicated that several Jewish extreme right wing elements stirred the pot and intended to buy houses for right wing Jews in Peqi'in, thus shaking the harmonious balance of residents in the village.

Part of the Cellular Antennas activities was funded by She"li Foundation. The Peqi'in research was funded by Levi-Lassen Foundation.

Public Awareness and Working with the Media

During 2007 we continued the intensive work in this sphere. In the past years we have become the source of knowledge on issues such as health, environment and society for journalists in the local and national media. We are constantly approached by various newspapers, TV and radio stations and internet newspapers which have each created a special section for environmental issues. There is much more interest from the media and the public on environmental issues than in years past, and we use it continuously to leverage and distribute our messages.

Health

Citizens for the Environment in the Galilee continues to take a leading role in the Coalition for Public Health and sits on its board. This year we took an active part in the resource development activities and the ongoing management of the coalition. CFE's representative, Yaakov Ziv, sits on the Shafir Committee, established by the Ministry of Environmental Protection in order to examine the hazards of the Haifa Bay industries, in war and in peace. As part of the coalition we took part in all public activities organized by the coalition, including protests against the high air pollution discharged from factories in Haifa Bay and in the region of Hovav Heights.

During 2007 we conducted a members' survey exploring the most urgent and important environmental risk factors for CFE's members. The survey's results direct us and assist us in our daily work locating and treating environmental hazards in the region.

Major Research Published During 2007

1. Money Holds the Opinion Holder

We researched and published an article in Globes Business Newspaper on April 18th which was a result of CFE's research on the connections between the industries and the hold they have over scientists and "independent" researchers who are invited to give their professional opinions, concerning environmental and health risks at factories. The research revealed that those "independent" researchers, respected doctors and professors in the Ministry of Health, are being paid by the factory owners to give a biased opinion contradicting their own opinions while holding their title in the governmental agencies.

2. The Israel Cancer Association

We discovered conflicts of interests, negligence in the field of prevention, ignored research and representation of industries on the association's board within the Israel Cancer Association—everything we were not told during their "Knock on the Door" campaign. We publicized through newspaper articles, TV news and radio the ties that the owners of polluting cancer-causing industries have with the association. The research raised a large public echo. Many organizations referred to the President of the State of Israel, who is a patron of the association, requesting him to explore the association. A demonstration was held in front of the association's offices as an initiative of Tel Aviv residents.

3. During 2007 CFE Focused on Breast Cancer and its Environmental Causes

We have analyzed a large number of research papers on the relationship between breast cancer and the polluted environment, and have published articles and opinions. We were also in touch with several overseas organizations which focus their work on the connections between environmental pollution and their health risks. Additionally, we translated several research documents to support our ongoing work.

Coalition for Sustainable Development in the Galilee

The Coalition for Sustainable Development in the Galilee is a grouping of environmental and social organizations from around the Galilee and works jointly to outline the sustainable developmental policy in the Galilee, taking into account the needs of all the residents of the region.

The coalition met several times during the year and various committees were formed. Many meetings were held with various planning agencies and governmental offices, such as the Ministry of Agriculture. The main effort was targeted at influencing the policy of governmental organizations and planning agencies that are currently in charge of preparing special programs for the development of the Galilee. Most of the coordination work of the coalition was done by CFE staff. The coalition was run by a steering committee consisting of six organizations, and coordinated by Liora Aharon. CFE left the coalition in November for basic disagreements, especially with the steering committee members.

In 2007 CFE established The Coalition for Sustainable Development in the Galilee with the support from the Goldman Foundation.

Organizational Change and Structure

As part of the organization's multi-year planning, we began this year to establish a special structure of Jewish-Arab joint management of CFE.

Advocate Jamila Hardal-Wakeem, who served as our legal advisor, was appointed joint-manager together with Liora Aharon. We have also expanded the office staff and we are better able to serve the needs of the local residents: **Anat Galili-Blum** has joined the staff as resource development coordinator, **Michal Weintraub** joined as a researcher and **Joy Strauss** replaced Anat Galili-Blum as the resource development coordinator.

A total of eight employees work in the CFE office. In addition to those mentioned above: Ronit Shermayster is the planner, Koby Azran and Areen Schedy are researchers and Nurit Leshed is the secretary.

The board of directors consists of nine people: Ms. Najat Naamna, Dr. Steven Folder, Mr. Halil Hamud, Ms. Rachel Gazit, Mr. Yizhar Reshef, Mr. Yoav Kelly, Mr. Roi Ben-David, Mr. Jacque Ben Zaken, and Dr. Raja Faraj. Dr. Faraj sits as the chairman.