

**WE DID NOT COMPROMISE.
WE TOOK ACTION.**

**התנועה
החדשה**
מרצ

The agenda of the New Movement-Meretz is expressed in broad and dynamic parliamentary activity. This brochure provides a look at Meretz's wide range of activity in the previous Knesset – activity that affects the lives of all of us: social issues, the economy, human rights, environmental protection, security and peace, the rule of law, workers' rights, education, Holocaust survivors, subsidies for medication, public housing, religion and state, the Reserve Duty Law, and more. This shows what we have done so far. In the next Knesset, the New Movement-Meretz will continue its diverse work and will not compromise on the things that are important to us all.

Security and peace

The Evacuation-Compensation Law for settlers in Judea and Samaria who reside outside of the security barrier – Meretz sponsored this legislation for settlers who live outside of the barrier and wish to return home. Before the Knesset was dissolved, the government expressed readiness to support the legislation. In the next Knesset, the New Movement-Meretz will make this law the focus of its activity in the area of security and peace.

Winograd Report – Following a High Court petition by Meretz, the Supreme Court ruled that the Winograd Committee must publish the protocols of its hearings on the Second Lebanon War prior to publication of its final report.

Tours of the Gaza border region – Meretz MKs visited the communities of this area in order to study various issues and problems, including fortification, employment and commerce. In addition, in light of the restrictions on tours by leftist activists in the Hebron region, MKs from Meretz toured Hebron and the separation barrier, and lobbied the Ministry of Public Security to cancel the directive restricting visits by leftists.

Rapprochement with the Palestinians – During the past years, Meretz has maintained one of the most stable channels of communication between Israel and moderate Palestinians, facilitating coordination and understanding between the sides.

Questions for the Ministry of Defense – Meretz submitted a series of questions on issues related to the defense forces, including the building of settlements, construction permits and demolition orders in Area C, and the entry of Palestinian children to Israel for medical treatment without being accompanied by an adult.

Fortifying communities near the Gaza border – Following a reservation submitted by Meretz to the 2008 state budget, the prime minister announced that an additional NIS 50 million would be allocated to fortifying these communities.

Social and economic

Fight against the economic decrees – Meretz coordinated and led the opposition's fight in the Finance Committee and in the Knesset plenum against the economic and social decrees in the state budget and associated legislation during the years 2006-2008. Meretz submitted hundreds of reservations and worked to increase the budgets for education, health, social welfare, development of the Negev and Galilee, youth movements and more.

Increasing budget subsidies for medication – As a result of Meretz's efforts, the budget for the subsidized "basket" of medications was increased for 2008-2010 to NIS 500 million in 2008 and NIS 470 million in 2009-2010. At the same time, in order to prevent additional erosion of the public health system, life-saving drugs were removed from supplementary insurance policies.

In addition, Meretz is promoting legislation (approved in its first reading) to amend the State Health Insurance Law by mandating a 2% annual budget increase in order to incorporate new medications and technologies. This update mechanism will facilitate long-term planning. Meretz also led the Health Lobby formed in the Knesset to prevent harm to weaker sectors of society in Israel in the wake of large cutbacks in the health budget.

Tax breaks for child care expenses – Meretz is sponsoring a law that would recognize child care expenses as tax-deductible. The legislation, which was approved in its first reading, aims to lighten the economic burden of child care and provide an incentive for mothers to enter the workplace.

Public Housing Law – Meretz sponsored the law defining a new mechanism for determining eligibility for discounts in purchasing public housing. The law stipulates that the proceeds from the sale of homes are to be used for public housing solutions.

Holocaust survivors – Meretz succeeded in securing the approval of legislation that cancels the disqualification of survivors who were present in Germany on January 1, 1947 from receiving benefits under the Compensation for Victims of Nazi Persecution Law. In addition, Meretz is sponsoring legislation stipulating that the National Insurance Institute refrain from deducting old-age benefits from the sum received under the Compensation for Victims of Nazi Persecution Law.

Higher education – In light of the crisis in the higher education system and the many strike threats, Meretz pushed for legislation that would increase the budget for higher education by NIS 1.8 billion during the years 2008-2013, freeze tuition costs for three years, and strengthen colleges located in the periphery. After the proposed legislation passed its preliminary reading, the finance minister promised to conduct a cabinet discussion on the crisis in higher education.

Human rights

Defense of the Supreme Court and the law enforcement system – Meretz led the struggle against the attack on the Supreme Court's standing as a defender of human rights. In this framework, Meretz demanded in coalition negotiations with the Kadima government the dismissal of the justice minister, who sought to weaken the power and standing of the Supreme Court.

Prohibition on human trafficking – Meretz sponsored legislation prohibiting the trafficking in human beings and setting severe punishment for this crime. This innovative and revolutionary law enabled the state to act in a determined and uncompromising way against those trafficking in human beings: women for purposes of prostitution, migrant laborers, children, and human organs. The law provides for harsh economic penalties, including confiscation of assets obtained in committing this crime.

Protection of the rights of refugees from Darfur, Sudan – Meretz initiated public and parliamentary activity on behalf of these refugees – to prevent their deportation, provide shelter and protect their rights in Israel. Among other efforts, Meretz initiated a discussion in the Knesset plenum on the government's failure to solve the problems of the refugees.

Gay Pride parade – Meretz supported and participated in Gay Pride parades held in Israel's three largest cities and fought against the prejudice and ignorance that sought to muzzle the freedom of expression and legitimacy of the homo-lesbian community.

Citizenship Law – Meretz filed a High Court petition against the Citizenship Law's provision that prohibits Palestinians who marry Israeli citizens from living with their spouse in Israel.

The Armenian genocide – As the result of an initiative by Meretz, the Knesset decided, for the first time in its history, that one of its committees would convene a discussion about the Armenian genocide.

Integrity and preserving the rule of law

Capping wages in the public service – Meretz is promoting legislation that would set a maximum wage in the public sector in light of salary excesses and the growth in wage disparities in the public and private sector. The legislation has passed its first reading.

Mandatory suspension of an employee indicted on charges of abuse – Meretz sponsored legislation stipulating that in certain circumstances, when a state employee is indicted for abuse, the employee will immediately be suspended or transferred to another position.

Government corruption – Meretz conducted a lengthy public and parliamentary campaign to end the term of former president Moshe Katsav due to criminal suspicions pending against him. In addition, Meretz demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Olmert in light of the numerous criminal investigations and accusations of corruption.

Stripping the benefits of officials convicted of serious crime – Meretz led the Finance Committee to approve a measure that would deny former government officials the right to benefits including an official residence, office services, car and transportation expenses, telephone expenses, etc. – if convicted of a crime that entails moral turpitude or a crime defined by the Finance Committee as justifying the denial of these benefits.

Workers' rights

Rights of workers – Meretz is sponsoring legislation stipulating that the employment of workers by labor contractors would require special registration and a deposit that would enable payment of workers in the event the contracting company shuts down. The legislation passed its first reading.

In addition, Meretz is promoting legislation that would guarantee severance pay for an employee after at least three years of work, even if the employee resigns. The legislation passed its first reading.

Meretz initiated a series of discussions in the Knesset plenum and in the various Knesset committees on the arbitrary conditions of employment and dismissal of workers hired via labor contractors.

Wage discrimination between men and women – Meretz fought to eliminate the discrimination in salaries between men and women among students employed in the public sector.

Restricting dismissals due to fertility treatments – Meretz pushed for legislation aimed at protecting women who undergo fertility treatment from being fired (even when not missing work for these treatments). Israeli law currently does not accord protection in the case of employers seeking to “get rid of” women slated for maternity leave.

Environmental protection

Reducing the use of plastic bags – Meretz is sponsoring legislation that would minimize the damage caused by uncontrolled use of plastic bags. The proposed law prohibits the distribution of standard plastic bags free-of-charge, and encourages the use of biodegradable and reusable alternatives.

Applying the Deposit Law on large bottles – As a result of Meretz's work vis-à-vis the Environment Ministry, the Deposit Law will soon be applied to beverage bottles of 1.5 liters.

Planning and Construction Law – Meretz led the enactment of legislation mandating transparency in the hearings of planning and construction committees, and anchoring the right to examine relevant planning documents. The law also requires planning and construction institutions to write protocols and record meetings. These changes will facilitate the flow of information between the various entities involved in regional planning and construction and improve the efficiency of their work.

Environmental battles – Meretz initiated a petition of MKs calling for a halt to construction on Palmachim Beach and its designation as a national park. Meretz also submitted many parliamentary questions to the ministers of Environment, Interior and Construction & Housing on the issue of construction at Palmachim Beach. Meretz also played an active role in fighting against the construction of a coal-driven power plant in Ashkelon and a phosphate mine at Sde Barir, near Arad.

Religion and state

Struggle against the Nahari Law and funding for independent ultra-Orthodox schools that are not under state supervision – Meretz led the fight against legislation sponsored by Shas and United Torah Judaism that would compel localities to allocate equal funding for non-state schools. This would mean transferring hundreds of millions of shekels from municipal budgets to independent schools that are not subject to oversight by the state.

Core curriculum in ultra-Orthodox schools – Meretz demanded that the Education Ministry reinstate the core curriculum in the small yeshivot of the ultra-Orthodox education track in order to create uniformity and mandate the study of general and essential subjects. The High Court severely criticized the non-integration of the core program of studies in these yeshivot.

Additional activity

Legislation against violence and racism in sport – After years of discussion vis-à-vis the government, Meretz succeeded in passing a series of laws that mark a fundamental change in preventing violence and racism in sport. The legislation grants extensive powers to law enforcement and judicial-legal authorities, as well as harsh punishment, in order to eliminate the phenomenon of violence and racism on the playing fields.

Meretz led the push for the Consumers' Council Law – This legislation strengthens the independent status of the Consumers' Council and loosens its ties to the government.

Meretz led the fight for the Reserve Duty Law and Insurance for Reservists Law – This legislation gives reservists the same death and disability benefits as career soldiers, as well as financial compensation for those serving long periods of reserve duty and for students. This represents a real revolution in the way the state treats those who serve it.

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