

There is no revolution without Meretz

1. The State of Israel

The State of Israel is a democratic country, the country of the Jewish people and all its citizens.

1.1 The national home for the Jewish people and for all its citizens.

Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, the country in which the Jewish people realizes its right to collective self-definition, and in addition it is a country belonging equally to all its citizens. All citizens of the country are entitled to equal status, without distinction on the background of religion, nationality, sexual preference, gender identity, or any other difference. The right of the members of the Jewish people to a national home, and the right of all of Israel's citizens to full partnership in the sovereignty of their country do not negate each other, and they are both subject to the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, in which it was declared that the State of Israel:

“Will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”

1.2 A democratic country

1.2.1 Democracy

Democracy is not the rule of the majority but rather the rule of the people, that is – all its citizens. The role of the national and ruling institutions is not to advance the interests and values of the majority group, coincidental or permanent, but rather to advance the public interest (the good of all). For this purpose, there are various limitations in a democratic country about the manner in which the government institutions can realize their power. The erosion of these restrictions brings the deterioration of a democratic regime into a regime of majority tyranny over the majority and dictatorship of the government over the citizen.

1.2.2 A democratic space

Tolerance for a broad range of positions and ideas is an essential condition for the existence of a functioning democratic space. In the absence of acceptance of the voices of the opposition as legitimate by the government, public discourse is paralyzed, and citizens cannot truly realize their right to self-rule. The prevailing phenomenon of marking political adversaries as traitors, and the denunciation of any position that does not align with the government's position as subversive, foreign, and unpatriotic, gnaws away at Israeli democratic foundations and will probably lead in the end to an election process of an empty ballot box.

In recent years we have witnessed limitations on spaces for public discourse, with any public expression needing to undergo a test of loyalty and to align with the values of the government. The increasing threats to freedom of expression, academic freedom, freedom of thought and creativity, make Israeli society provincial and withdrawn, suppressing thought and science, harming technological innovation and the economy, and distancing Israel from the vision of the founders of Zionism and of the Declaration of Independence. In an open society with self-confidence, criticism is not perceived as a threat to the existing order, but rather as a contribution to public discourse that is the lifeblood of a democratic country.

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1.2.3 Independence of the judicial system

In order to restrain government institutions from exploiting their power negatively, a democratic country is in need of an independent judicial system that is not subject to the whims of the government. Erosion of the independence of the judicial system is a significant danger to the freedom, honor and welfare of all citizens of Israel.

Meretz will fight to prevent unneeded political involvement in the judicial system and political influences over judges. Meretz will fight against the politicization of the Attorney General in various government ministries and in the Knesset and will protect their independence. Meretz will object to the Law of Recommendations and will act to cancel it.

1.2.4 Independence of the Gatekeepers

The independence of the gatekeepers – among them the Attorney General and the legal counsels of government ministries – is an integral part of the judicial system. The subordination of the legal counsels to the authority of government ministers is significantly damaging to the freedom and sovereignty of the citizens of Israel.

Meretz will object to the “Attorneys General Law” and will act to remove it from the agenda.

1.2.5 Protection of civil society and worker organization, and independence of the media

An active and involved civil society is a fundamental component of the public life of a democratic country. The current government has promoted a series of legislative steps with the objective of narrowing the work of civil society organizations by discrimination between organizations identified with the government and those that are not. These steps significantly harm the freedom of citizens and the vitality of public discourse in Israel.

Meretz will act to cancel the Obligation of Discovery Law with regards to anyone supported by a foreign government entity (the new “Associations Law”). Meretz will act to legislate a law of transparency in contributions to association, placed on the Knesset table by Meretz in the outgoing Knesset, which will apply requirements of transparency to associations and organizations in an equal manner, including right-wing organization currently benefitting from immunity.

Meretz sees the increasing trend of organization of workers in workplaces as a welcome trend that should be strengthened and encouraged. The organization of workers is not only an economic step of workers. It also expresses democratization of the workplace and as such of the lives of citizens. Meretz will object to legislation that attempts to harm organizing efforts of workers and their right to strike and will support legislation intended to strengthen these rights.

The independence of the media is a fundamental component of a democratic society. Meretz objects to steps intended to harm the independence of communications bodies and to subordinate them to political interests.

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2. The Rule of the State of Israel

2.1 Human and Civil Rights

The recognition of human rights is based on the sovereignty of people being people and on the belief in significant equality between all people. This perception is founded on the awareness of suffering of others, striving for the integration of personal freedom and social solidarity, and deviating from the conservative outlook of rights as a demand for non-involvement on the part of the state.

This view of human rights is grounded in four layers:

1. Fundamental rights of people, such as freedom of opinion and conscience, freedom of religion and from religion, freedom of movement, the right to respect and the right to integrity of the body.
2. Civil rights, such as the equal right to political participation, the right to assemble and the right to vote and be elected, freedom of expression, the right to strike, the right to be protected by fair laws, and the right to organize politically.
3. Group rights, such as the right to preserve a language and cultural institutions (as long as these traditions do not harm the rights protected in the previous layers).
4. Social rights, such as the right to exist honorably and to work, the right of housing, the right to education and the right for health services, as well as the rights of various population groups such as women, LGBTQ people, retirees, national minorities and people with limitations.

These rights are interdependent, and they should be seen as an integral array. The prolonged occupation of the territories severely harms these human rights, and ending it is an essential condition to guaranteeing human rights in Israel. The broad gaps in the Israeli economy also threaten both the democratic rule in Israel as well as the extreme lack of equality negating the democracy embedded in these gaps.

Fundamental rights of people, citizens, and many social rights and civil rights in Israel are not anchored in law, among them: freedom of expression, freedom to assemble, and the freedom to organize. Many rights are frequently violated in Israel: the right to a fair trial is violated in the execution of arrests without trial (administrative detainees); the right to organize is harmed constantly in the system of work relations between employers and their employees; the right to organize and the right to representation is prevented from dozens of villages in Israel, who are not recognized by the authorities. Israel is not only responsible for the human rights of its citizens. It is also responsible for respecting the rights of tens of thousands of work migrants and asylum seekers found within its borders, Palestinians married to Israelis and additional residents who are not citizens. As long as the occupation continues Israel is also responsible for the human rights of the residents in the occupied territories under its control

Meretz will act to stop the distinction between citizens and those who are not citizens in everything related to preserving human rights. Meretz will continue to act to protect all human rights in the territories, to ensure freedom of movement in the territories, to remove roadblocks and to stop the policy of assassinations, as well as vigorous enforcement of the law on settlers who harm Palestinians and their property.

A commission of human rights must be established in Israel that will warn about the violation of rights and will be an address for public inquiries on the topic. The commission will be an independent body, with clear enforcement authorities and an appropriate budget that will be determined by the Knesset, to which it will submit reports. In the early 1990's Israel committed, together with many other countries in the world, to establish such an institution, but has not yet done so.

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The central roles of the commission will be:

- Warning about the violation of human rights
- Submitting an annual report to the Knesset about the status of human rights in Israel
- Acting as an address for anyone whose rights have been violated
- Identifying rights violations, especially in sectors where there is neglect
- Following legislation that might harm human rights
- Encouraging expansion of legislation protecting human rights with reference to legislation around the world expanding human rights

In addition, Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Expansion of the rights protected in Israeli law in accordance with the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations.
- Legislating a basic law of social rights that will include the right to health, to education, to housing and to honorable existence, to organizing and to strikes.
- Anchoring the Fourth Geneva Convention in Israeli law.
- Allocation of resources to operate the law, legislated at the initiative of Meretz, prohibiting human trafficking.
- Nullification of the declaration of a state of emergency in Israel, which has been in effect for 70 years so far.
- Nullification of the remaining parts of the Haganah and mandatory regulations for emergencies and replacing them in Israeli law, to preserve a reasonable balance between human rights and security needs and to guarantee judicial review of any use of these regulations. Receiving information in the framework of the freedom of information law from security bodies also.
- Legislation of a new law of citizenship, separate from the Law of Return, which will regularize the conditions and tests for receiving citizenship, including giving citizenship to children born in the country whose parents are not citizens.
- Meretz will protect the separation between government authorities and will act to respect their independence.

2.2 Nullification of the Nation State Law

The basic law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People, which was passed in the Knesset in July 2018, is based on the assumption that the Jewish citizens of the State of Israel cannot realize their right in it to national self-definition in the framework of democratic tools. This is a false assumption that undermines the democratic commitments of the State of Israel.

The Nation State Law does not serve public interests or national needs. This is a populist and declarative law with the entire interest of excluding the Arab minority (Muslims, Druze, Circassians and others). Unsurprisingly, the law awakened hurt and insult and aroused broad civil protest. The unnecessary law brought about the sharpening alienation of Arab and Druze citizens of Israel from their country without strengthening even a little the strength of Israel as a national country of the members of the Jewish people.

- Meretz will act to cancel the Nation State Law.
- Meretz will act to anchor the mandatory legal status of the Declaration of Independence in a basic law

2.3 Rights of Arab citizens

Other than the guarantee of full equality for all citizens of the country, Israel will recognize the Arab minority as its national minority with collective rights and will guarantee their right to realize and to express their unique culture and to act in its language, by preserving its status as an official language.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

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- Correcting the discrimination against Arab citizens and development of a broad-scope plan for affirmative action of the Arab population in all areas of life in cooperation with the Arab public.
- Active and ongoing integration of Arab citizens in political and administrative institutions and ensuring fair representation of Arabs in the public arena, based on a law that was legislated at the initiative of Meretz in the year 2000.
- The official calendar of the country will also include Muslim, Christian, and Druze holidays.
- Noticeable allocation of resources to encourage and make present Arab culture both among the Arab public as well as among the general public.
- Prohibition against using Arab nationality as a criterion for carrying out security checks (“profiles”) in general, and in the airport in particular. An end needs to be put to the discriminatory and humiliating attitude Arab citizens suffer during security checks and to determine that the level of checks and their scope will be determined by equal and practical criteria for the entire population.
- Strengthening and improvement of police services given to the overall society in Israel and in it to the Arab citizens of Israel, Israeli from Ethiopian origin and from the former Soviet Union, setting clear criteria to decrease violence and use of illegal weapons in the number of unsolved crimes, strengthening personal security of all citizens.

2.3.1 Repair of discrimination

Throughout all years of the state Arab citizens of Israel have been discriminated against in a deep and methodical way in many fields. The country must take responsibility for the years of discrimination and repair them.

Meretz will act to repair the discrimination, among other things in the following areas:

- Formation of a plan to eliminate socio-economic gaps between Jewish citizens and Arab citizens. The plan will include, among other things, establishment of industrial zones in Arab localities, or converting existing areas to joint areas; re-dividing the assets from yields of municipal real estate taxes between Arab authorities and nearby Jewish authorities, placing clear goals for advancing the employment of Arab academics, to making workplaces accessible to Arab women and eradication of the phenomenon of early retirement of Arab men from the workplace.
- Accelerating a master plan in Arab localities and expanding them in order to allow building permits and solutions for housing, including expansion of the areas of jurisdiction of Arab localities.
- Significant expansion of marketing state lands by leasing (in the 1967 borders), development and construction in Arab localities, by way of removing the barriers causing the deep inequality in allocation of land resources between Jews and Arabs; including Nullification of the convention between the State of Israel and the Jewish National Fund, and subordination of the behavior of the Jewish National Fund and the marketing of land in accordance with the principles of civil equality.
- Forming a plan to regularize registration of land rights, enhancing awareness of the public to the process of land registration and simplification and abbreviation of the process and decreasing costs of registration, so that there will be a significant narrowing of the number of Arab citizens in Israel who live on land that is not registered in their name, that will include, among other things, regularizing the registration of land rights, and simplification and abbreviation of the process and decreasing the costs of the registration.
- Decreasing the cost of housing by including Arab localities in clusters 1-4 in the unique government assistance plan, to include lowering of the taxation on land and increasing the supply of land for housing, assistance with the cost of development and mortgages and encouragement of construction of public housing for the needy, especially in urban localities.
- Finding a complete and just solution to apartments built without permits and supply of an appropriate planning infrastructure and legal housing solutions, which would not exist if construction without permits had not developed in the current scope.
- Guaranteeing representation of the Arab local authorities in committees in district and national planning councils.

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- Giving fair representation to Arab professionals in key positions in the Ministry of Housing, in the Israel Land Authority and in the building and planning committees. Inclusion of representatives of the Arab public in outlining a comprehensive plan for a solution to the housing and land stress.
- Strengthening local Arab government by way of allocation of equitable resources and giving administrative tools to the heads of local authorities. The dissolution of authorities and replacing them with oversight committees should be avoided, with the objective of ensuring local democracy and participation of the residents in electing their representatives.
- Nullification of regional planning committees and granting rights to local planning committees in the Arab authorities.
- Upgrading Arab localities to the status of cities and ensuring urban and regional planning accordingly.
- Accessibility for Arab localities by connecting them to road systems and regular transportation between them and from them and to them.
- Elevating awareness of Arab citizens in initiating and development of business and economic investments and establishing special industrial zones next to centers of population in order to encourage the establishment of associations and factories that will increase the number of workplaces as well as the income level and the real estate taxes for Arab local councils.
- Encouragement of tourism to Arab localities.
- Recognition of unrecognized Arab localities and ensuring the supply of services to these places in an equitable and just manner, recognition and arrangement of unrecognized neighborhoods in mixed cities (such as Lod and Ramla), expansion of the area of jurisdiction of Arab localities and finding solutions for the housing stress, by cancellation of the laws of expropriation and the processes that discriminate against Arabs on issues of land and housing. Expropriated land that has not been used will be returned to its owners.
- Returning those uprooted from Iqrit and Baram to their villages.
- Transferring the Muslim waqf into the hands of Muslims.

2.3.2 The struggle against racism

In recent years we have witnessed a sharp increase in manifestations of racism, hatred of others and discrimination. We can no longer speak of bad weeds at the margins of society, this is expressions of ministers and Knesset members, calls for racist actions voiced by rabbis, which have brought about violence and lynchings. Meretz will continue to stand at the head of the struggle against racism in the Knesset, in courts and on the streets.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Nullification of the discriminatory laws that were passed in recent years, known as the Naqba Law, the Boycott Law and the Admissions Committees Law.
- Rejecting proposals for racist laws, placed on the Knesset agenda by the government and members of the Knesset from right-wing parties, for example the proposed law to give preference to those completing military service in employment, a proposed law to distinguish between Christian and Muslim Arabs and more, and Meretz will fight against new proposals, in similar spirit, if they are placed on the agenda of the Knesset.
- Operating the law on the matter of hate crimes towards any public or person for reasons of religion, race, origin, sex, sexual orientation and gender identification.
- Dismissing rabbis and holders of public positions who have racist speech and behavior in the framework of their positions.
- Expanding educational activity against racism at all levels of the public.
- As part of the fight against racism Meretz will act to advance a comprehensive plan in the entire education system to engage in education for shared life and civil equality, including recognition of the various national narratives, by emphasizing the principle of equitable citizenship and shared life. The plan should also include encounters between Jewish and Arab students on an ongoing basis.

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2.3.3 Handling of violence and crime in Arab society.

Violence and crime in Arab society are an acute social crisis that should concern every citizen of Israel. The factors for the spread of violence and crime in Arab society are many, and among them are lack of policing and enforcement, poverty and unemployment, defective and partial handling of disengaged youth and social alienation. According to a report of the State Comptroller, between the years 2014-2016, about 95% of the suspects in shooting offenses in residential areas were members of Arab society, a fact that reflects the high degree of availability of illegal weapons in Arab localities.

Meretz believes that the government of Israel must designate full attention to handle violence and crime in Arab society and the required resources in order to bring this severe crisis to a solution. Included in this, the police presence in Arab localities must be empowered, by making significant changes to the ethos of police enforcement towards Arab citizens.

Alongside this, allocation of resources must be increased for handling the community and for welfare services in Arab society.

2.3.4 The status of the Arabic language

The legislation of the Nation State Law reduced the Arabic language from an official language to a language with a special status in Israel. Alongside nullification of the Nation State Law and restoring the status of Arabic, the language of one fifth of the citizens of Israel, as an official language, Meretz will act to expand use of Arabic in the Israeli public sphere, including in signage in institutions and on the roads, and Meretz will expand Arabic language instruction in educational institutions where the language of instruction is Hebrew.

3. Security and peace

Security is a supreme interest and a condition for peace, and peace is a fundamental component in a complete perception of security. The end of the occupation and separation of the country into two states for two peoples living in it is essential both for peace and for security.

3.1 Security

The perception of the security of the State of Israel cannot only be based on building military force for deterrence and operating it in response to threats. National security must be based on an inclusive vision of interests and the political objectives. The primary political objective of the State of Israel is peaceful existence and in cooperation with all its neighbors and the end of rule over the Palestinians. The end of the occupation is a primary objective in and of itself and a condition for peace and integration in the region. Subject to these objectives, the security of Israel must be based on balancing interests with foes, to strengthen alliances with friendly entities and to rehabilitate the national status of Israel.

- Meretz will act for fundamental change in the attitudes about the national security of the country. Alongside building a deterrence force, regional and international alliances must be promoted, rather than leaning only on the military deterrence strength.
- Providing an impetus for a political process, responsiveness to Arab peace initiatives by presenting Israeli peace initiatives that match and complete these, entering significant negotiations about peace in the Middle East, all these will open new spaces of shared interests to Israel, both on the bilateral level and on the plane of international organizations. Israel will be able to express its unique ability in required areas such as agriculture, water, high-tech, medicine, education, online governance and more. The significance of its connection to the family of nations will then be diverted from engaging in the fact of its existence and will move to engagement in its contributions to humanity.
- Social and economic resilience is also an essential component in the perception of security.

3.2 Partition of the country: two nations for two peoples.

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The moral, social, political and economic price that the occupation collects from Israel is intolerable. The establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel is a primary national, security, and political interest for the State of Israel and a condition for arranging relations with its neighbors and its integration in the region.

The two-state solution is also the preferred solution for the majority of Israeli citizens, and it is the only solution that aligns with the geopolitical and demographic reality between the Jordan and the sea.

Meretz supports the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip on the basis of the Green Line with an agreed on exchange of territory in a ratio of 1:1, in partitioning sovereignty in Jerusalem so that its territory will be the capital of two states – Israel and Palestine, and in an agreed on solution to the refugee problem.

Meretz believes that Israel must adopt the initiative of the Arab League offering an overall reconciliation between the Arab world and Israel. Meretz objects to the position of the current Israeli government, according to which it is possible to manage the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for eternity, without advancing beyond a compromise based on the principle of partitioning of the country. The delusion of managing the conflict that the government is selling to the public costs victims and leads to frequent rounds of violence and it may explode.

Meretz believes that the existence of settlements is the primary obstacle to a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meretz will strive to evacuate isolated settlements with or without an agreement and will act to legislate a “Evacuation Compensation” Law that will allow Israeli citizens living beyond the Green Line to resettle inside of the borders of the State of Israel, even before the agreement.

In the framework of the arrangement most settlements will be evacuated, but most of the Israeli citizens living beyond the Green Line will be annexed into Israel in the framework of agreed on territorial exchange in outlines that have already been discussed between the parties (Annapolis, Geneva etc.).

3.2.1 The component of a political process

- Sovereignty: Israel will recognize the unification of the sovereignty of the future Palestinian state, in the area of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. The Palestinian state will recognize the sovereignty of Israel on the areas of the State of Israel within its legal borders.
- Borders: Israel will strive towards a peace agreement on the basis of 1967 borders, with territorial exchange by agreement in a ratio of 1:1.
- Security: In the framework of the United Nations, Israel will strive for an agreement guaranteeing its long-term security by way of integration of IDF deterrence components in the area for an agreed upon time, willing demilitarization of the Palestinian state, international guarantees and a long-term international military presence.
- Jerusalem: in the framework of a peace agreement there will be two capitals in Jerusalem. The Jewish neighborhoods to Israel, the Palestinian neighborhoods – to Palestine, and special arrangements in the Holy Basin. The meaning of the agreement is separation of the political sovereignty while preserving the municipal integrity of the city, for the benefit of all its residents and those visiting it. In the meantime the policy of expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem will be stopped, and provocations going on in the Palestinian neighborhoods will be prevented. The legal distinction of the absentee property law will be cancelled and the ownership of the residents of East Jerusalem of their homes will be recognized, where they lived during the years of Jordanian rule in East Jerusalem, and the possibility of nullifying the resident status of the residents of East Jerusalem will be cancelled and Israeli citizenship will be granted to the residents of East Jerusalem, who desire this.
- Settlements: with no connection to the pace of the progress of negotiations, Israel will halt all activity of construction and settlement in settlements. Alongside the prolonged wrong, the dispossession, the violence and the lordship involved with the settlements, the planting of citizens of Israel in areas of occupation is in contradiction with international law and the security and political interests of Israel.
- Voluntary evacuation: A dialogue must be opened with the public of settlers with the trend of allowing most of them to evacuate voluntarily in return for fair compensation, among other things by way of legislation that will allow for voluntary evacuation even before reaching a permanent arrangement.
- Palestinian refugees: The issue of Palestinian refugees will be resolved in a consensual manner.
- Meretz will act to cancel the Arrangement of Settlement in Judea and Samaria Law (“The Arrangement Law”) and will act to liquidate the illegal outposts.
- Meretz will object to any legislation that applies Israeli law to the occupied territories.

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- Meretz will act to protect the rights of minors in the military justice system by way of comparing it to Israeli legislation on matters of protection of minors
- Meretz will act to cancel the regulations the outgoing Knesset passed on the law prohibiting discrimination in products, in services and in entering public places of entertainment with the purpose of obligating service providers to take part in the settlement project
- Gaza: Meretz sees the rehabilitation of the Strip and its economy as an Israeli interest and supports removing the blockade of the Gaza Strip and in easing limitations of movement, marketing of merchandise from Gaza to the West Bank and to Israel, and the entry of construction material to the Strip – all this while safeguarding the security of residents of the south. Meretz sees the gradual rehabilitation of the Strip in the near future and a political arrangement later as the only way to stop the cycles of fighting and escalation in the south and returning quiet and hope both to the residents of the south and to the residents of Gaza
- Natural resources: The one-sided Israeli exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories should be halted, and instead alternative solutions should be promoted inside of Israel. In the framework of a peace agreement, the government of Israel will promise cooperation with the Palestinian government in development and preservation of water resources, the environment, nature and tourism that are shared, to the benefit of both sides
- Religion and heritage: Israel must guarantee mutual commitment in the framework of a peace agreement to recognize the right of members of all religions to free access to ritual sites in Jerusalem and around the country. In addition, there needs to be a guarantee that citizens of the two countries will enjoy free access to heritage and archeology sites with historical importance to both peoples
- Reconciliation and education for peace: In the framework of an agreement educational cooperation should be guaranteed of broad scope and long-term, the purpose of which is education for peace and reconciliation between the two peoples. The ignorance prevalent in Israeli society towards Palestinian society and the Palestinian narrative, and the ignorance prevalent in Palestinian society towards Israeli society and the Israeli Zionist narrative, are results of long years of exclusion, neglect and even intentional efforts to recruit the public to support a national and confrontational world outlook. The demonization serves extremism on both sides. Meretz will enlist to change this with governmental and civilian tools

3.3 The Arab Peace Initiative

Meretz supports the principles of “The Arab Peace Initiative” and believes that the Israeli government should express readiness to begin negotiations about its full implementation on the regional level, simultaneously with making progress in negotiations for a permanent agreement in the Israeli/Palestinian arena.

3.4 International Policy

The international status of Israel is shaken. The basis of the legitimacy of Israel has been deteriorating for many years, and in the period of the terms of the current Prime Minister has reached an unprecedented low point, because of its policy on the topic of the occupation, and its denial of international determination about the status of the territories that were occupied during the Six Day War. Israel is perceived in world opinion as refusing peace and as a serial violator of international agreements and of human rights. In order to improve the international image of Israel – the occupation must be ended, as it is the source of the “public relations” problem.

Instead of giving an appropriate response to the decline in the status of Israel in the world and in Arab nations in particular, the government of Israel led by Benjamin Netanyahu has nurtured relations with authoritarian regimes and anti-democratic and even anti-Semitic leaders. The connection with such regimes, more than being inappropriate, will not help Israel in the long term and cannot replace alliances with advanced nations, those that are democratic and seeking peace. Meretz will act to strengthen diplomatic ties with democratic governments and leaders.

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In the United States as well, the status of Israel and the political and security connection with it, there have been disputable changes under the rule of Benjamin Netanyahu. The alliance of interests between Netanyahu and Trump damages the strategic alliance with the United States and especially relations with American Jews, the vast majority of whom do not share Trump's world outlook and the policy of occupation and settlements of the Netanyahu government. Israel must strengthen ties with friendly nations and make connections of partnership and friendship with additional democracies.

In addition, Meretz will act to cancel or closely supervise export of weapons to countries and regimes violating human rights and carrying out crimes against humanity.

3.5 Regional Policy

Syria: Meretz identifies with the suffering of the Syrian people and with its desire for a democratic government and for freedom. Meretz condemns the targeted violence of the Assad regime towards its citizens. If and when an elected and representative government is formed in Damascus, recognized by the international community, there needs to be action to renew negotiations with Syria on the basis of the Arab peace initiative.

Lebanon: The ongoing threat security stability stemming from the aspirations and actions of the Hezbollah organization, and the threat to the security and peace of Israeli citizens along the northern border – these obligate cautious policy combining deterrence and moderation. This, until there is significant regime change in Lebanon, which will make peaceful relations possible.

Gaza: Meretz sees the area of Gaza as part of the area of a Palestinian state and does not see a government split between the West Bank and Gaza as an Israeli interest. As long as Gaza behaves as an entity that is independent and separate from the central government in Ramallah, relations of practical and purposeful cooperation need to be maintained, this in order to allow the development of the Gaza Strip for the wellbeing of its residents, without connection to the entity ruling it. Meretz will act to remove the blockade over Gaza. Meretz believes that a change in Israeli policy with Gaza will also improve the security and welfare of the residents of the Gaza envelope, who today live under incessant security risks.

Iran: The warmongering declarations of Iran and its aspirations to acquire nuclear weapons are a threat to the entire world. Israel must focus on the diplomatic track, in return for the nuclear agreement signed under the leadership of President Obama and the support of the international community. The agreement contributes to security in that it removes the nuclearization of Iran and makes an unintentional war more unlikely.

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4. Government

4.1 Strengthening Parliamentary Government

Parliamentary government is one of the fundamental pillars in Israeli democracy. Meretz will act to cancel the Governance Law harming representation and the ability of the Knesset so supervise the government.

4.1 Constitution

One of the important components of parliamentary democracy is the existence of a binding constitution, guaranteeing protection of human and civil rights and determining a system of norms and principles according upon which the legal system is based. Existing basic laws fill the role of a constitution in Israel. Basic Law: Respecting People and Their Freedom and Basic Law: Freedom of Employment, which were enacted under Meretz initiative, guarantee some of the fundamental rights of people in Israel, with the right to life, liberty and respect at the top of these. Completing the process of writing a constitution must include full protection over all human and civil rights including enactment of a basic law of social rights. Meretz objects to any compromise on legal topics that would mean weakening of the fundamental values standing at the basis of any democratic government and society.

4.2 The Government and the Knesset

4.3.1 The work of the government

- Meretz will act to cancel the monopoly of the budget branch over the budget process and making government ministries into ones that are responsible for principle determinations in their fields, and those that are fully responsible for the management of budgets in their ministries, in the framework of the overall budget. Work plans of government ministries will be the basis for budgeting and not the other way around. The budget book will be clear and transparent
- The independence of those serving as legal counsels in government offices will be preserved. The role of the legal counsels is to verify that the rule of law is preserved, and they do not fall in the realm of promoting political positions of ministers.
- Meretz will object to the politicization of the professional ranks in government ministries

4.3.1 The work of the Knesset

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Nullifying the Arrangements Law
- Limiting recesses in the Knesset to that the Knesset operates for at least one more month each year
- The obligation to respond to inquiries at the time determined in the Knesset by-laws, the obligation to give information at the request of the research and information center of the Knesset
- A change in the structure of committees so that they work in accordance with government ministries
- Expanding supervision of committees over government entities and primarily over the budget branch in the Ministry of Finance
- Limiting the number of committee members and prohibition of membership of Knesset members in more than two committees, in order to allow for presence at meetings and continuity of work of the committees
- Obligation of participation for government employees in meetings of Knesset committees
- Determining in law that untruthful statements before a Knesset committee will be considered as a criminal offense

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4.3.3 Transparency and public review

- Knesset members, government ministers and senior government clerks will be obligated to keep planners that are transparent to the public, other than when this is personal meetings, and they will publish summaries of their meetings
- Knesset members, government ministers and senior government clerks will be obligated to report in detail about any meeting that included lobbyists, or during which they were asked to promote processes that are a kind of promoting of the economic interests of private bodies
- Examining the adoption of the procedure of public hearings for government appointments

4.3.4 Reforms in the Public Authority

The Public Authority is the execution arm of the government, is supposed to protect the public from abuse of power. The central missions of the Public Authority are assistance to those determining policy in professional work and headquarters work and providing good and appropriate service to the public. There are many defects in the Public Authority in Israel in quality of service and there is confusion between the roles of the political ranks and the roles of the administrative ranks. In addition, there is no planning ability for the long range and the lack of efficiency is great. Comprehensive reform is needed in the Public Authority, which will place a desired model for the authority, form which the operative plans will be taken, while preserving normal work relationships and honoring collective agreements of employees of the Public Authority.

The reforms will include:

- A new structure for government service, according to which each ministry will be divided into a professional headquarters dealing with regulations, audit and monitoring, and operational units for efficient service to the public
- Designating authorities of all the coordinating bodies in government service to ministries and to support units
- Introducing modern management methods and professional senior staff
- An operative plan to improve services to the citizen, which will include placing the required employees to provide the service, introduction of quality methods and assimilating them into the work of the units and publication of a "service convention"
- Introducing a fair, clear and transparent salary system
- Promoting women, Arabs and people with limitations in government service
- Professionalism and public integrity will be ensured by way of training and education for government workers, including on topics of public integrity and functioning government, and through strict screening

4.3.5 Reforms in local government

About 95% of the residents of Israel live in urban areas, and from here an emphasis needs to be placed on taking care of the condition of the municipal authorities along with taking care of small localities, sometimes suffering from severe distress.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Re-partitioning of the geographic borders, in a manner that will give an equitable response primarily to development towns and to Arab localities through control of industrial zones and commerce and between the center and the periphery
- Enacting a new Municipalities Law in place of the mandatory Municipality Ordinance, which will obligate cooperation and involvement of residents, will strengthen the power of the local authorities and will elevate the level of supervision over their activity

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- Providing enhanced autonomy for local government under external review and with limits on the involvement of the Ministry of the Interior in management of local authorities in the periphery
- Increasing the significance of the part of the government in the budget of social services in local authorities
- Continuing payment of balance grant payments. The distress of many local authorities does not actually stem from failed management or from corruption, but rather from objective conditions and the socio-economic condition of the residents. The country must take into consideration that there are authorities that will be regularly dependent on the balance grants
- Financial encouragement to authorities who want to voluntarily consolidate
- Giving executional authority to deputy mayors. Fair compensation for members of councils elected around the country, so that they can fulfill their positions, even those without the means to do so
- Increasing the autonomy of local councils and municipal councils in determining auxiliary laws and norms in their area through limiting the ability of the Ministry of the Interior and the Minister of the Interior to intervene

4.3.6 The struggle against corruption in local governance

The public criticism about local governing structures is weaker and incidents of corruption are pushed to the margins of public discourse. Even though the Minister of the Interior has the tools to handle the topic (the ability to dismiss mayors, establishment of an ad hoc committee, operationalizing a procedure of personal responsibility), there are still more than a few phenomena of corruption in local governance, sometimes harming the status of entire localities. A series of individual steps must be taken to eradicate corruption at the local level.

Meretz will act to advance the following:

- Broad operationalizing of sanctions available to the Minister of the Interior towards mayors and local councils, and especially a procedure of personal responsibility in cases of offenses
- Obligating mayors and councils to publish all their meetings with candidates to receive bids in general and in the field of planning and construction specifically
- Obligating the existence of mandatory committees in local councils (on topics such as: environment, education, welfare and more) that will prepare an action plan for the council and will supervise its execution
- Establishing a school for local government intended for mayors, councils and interested members of councils. The school will operate and will train a future core of leaders in the municipal field and will initiate courses for authority employees in the fields of improving service and management

4.3 Good Governance

The dangerous proximity between the wealthy and those who hold government positions, which has become a prominent phenomenon in Israel, is a severe threat to Israeli democracy. The main struggle in this field is the narrowing of concentrations in the economy, ceasing the influence of the large bodies on decision making and taking concrete steps in relation to financing elections and the relation to lobbyists. The limitations existing today about fundraising and the low ceiling of expenses creates an incentive for those running for office and for parties to break the law, in various ways.

In order that candidates and parties behave legally the following rules must be set:

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- Parties will be required to publish their annual financial balance on the Internet, and the details of the donations and the donors (other than individual donations at a sum of less than 1,000 NIS). The maximum rate of a donation to a party or to a candidate from a single donor will stand at a cumulative amount of 5,000 NIS for an election campaign
- A matching arrangement will be determined, according to which for each individual donation that does not exceed 500 NIS, the party will receive an equal sum of money from the government
- Meretz will act to increase transparency in the work of lobbyists in the Knesset, and for publication to the public of the information they are conveying to the Knesset members
- A body should be established to supervise the execution of the ethical code of lobbyists. Lobbyists will be forbidden from participating in meetings of Knesset committees

4.4.2 The fight against corruption

In recent years we have discovered that the top level of government in Israel has been involved in acts of corruption. A Prime Minister who is facing indictments should have resigned, but instead of this the Prime Minister is trying to defend himself by attacking the legitimacy of the entire system of government and law.

Meretz is obligated to fight to limit corruption without unnecessarily harming the ability of those elected by the public to govern, without deterring appointed public employees from using appropriate discretion to make essential decisions, without creating a paralyzing and corrupting bureaucracy and without weakening the status of Israeli politics in the public's view.

Meretz will object to any effort to legislate laws that weaken the rule of law and especially laws with the objective of protecting elected officials who are corrupt.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Absolute objection to the legislation of a "French Bill" or similar laws granting immunity to elected officials from standing criminal trial, including the Prime Minister
- Amending the Basic Government Law, so that there will be certainty: A Prime Minister against whom an indictment has been presented, must immediately resign
- The Attorney General must report to the public once every half year about the status of examinations of public officials, both senior and appointed, who are suspected of government corruption. Included in this he must update on the matter of complaints reaching the government on the matter of corruption, decisions about opening investigations against public officials, closing cases and their reasons, coming to trial, and verdicts
- All holders of senior positions in local authorities, as well as all members of local committees for planning and construction, will be obligated to submit a declaration of wealth immediately with their appointment and every year for the two year after leaving the position, to the State Comptroller or to a different institution determined by law. These declarations will be legally examined by the State Comptroller or a different institution that will be determined for this in an organized fashion
- Establishing a public committee that will formulate rules for use by external consultants in political proceedings and in public committees, including the assistance of private attorneys and consultants, paid or as volunteers, in the processes of forming a coalition. In addition clearer procedures must be determined for the employment of accountants and attorneys in public committees making macro-economic decisions on the overall population

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4.4.3 Cooling off

- Increasing enforcement and even making cooling off limitations more extreme for senior public employees who are actively involved in a central way in formulating arrangements between large holders of capital and the government. Among other things it is appropriate to determine that public employees will be prohibited from making employment agreements with corporations for at least five years from the date they stop working in public service, in a corporation with which they undertook negotiations in the name of the country
- Establishing a committee to determine what financial compensation should be granted to these workers, because of the said limitation
- Determining administrative sanctions (a monetary fine) alongside criminal sanctions on workers who violate the cooling off instructions that will be determined as said above
- All governmental authorities will publish a list of public employees who have left and who are in the cooling off period and they will clarify the limitations on forming a relationship with these bodies to their employees

4.4.4 Appointments in the government system

Meretz will act to advance the obligation of publicity at the time of appointing center members and their relatives (also in positions of temporary employees). Publishing the names is intended to deter politicians from dividing positions.

4.4.5 Transparency in work of the authorities

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Upholding the obligation of recording minutes of discussions on regulation proceedings and publishing them on the Internet, both for government authorities (such as the Israel Lands Authority) as well as in planning and construction committees in local authorities
- Obligating government authorities with the publication of accounting reports, detailing government benefits that were granted to various sectors, including tax discounts
- Obligating the heads of authorities with the publication of their considerations with regards to giving exemptions connected to building permits
- Upholding the obligation to publish inquiries submitted to public employees for government benefits or assistance of public employees. Public authorities will be obligated to supply citizens, at their initiative, full information about their rights based on the Freedom of Information Act, legislated at the initiative of Meretz
- Protecting personal privacy from the transfer of information on people's interests without their knowledge and consent will be guaranteed

4.4.6 Deterrence

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Establishing a disciplinary track for offenses of corruption (in addition to the criminal track that mandates proof of intent and proof of details of the entire accusation without any reasonable doubt) in which it will be possible to condemn elected position holders and senior public officials
- Publishing administration of investigations against public employees and senior public officials, if the publication does not harm the investigation itself
- Obligating the authorities to prepare a report about lessons learned in cases of corruption, including recommendations for preventing similar cases in the future
- Establishing a "hot line" to expose corruption in public service where workers can report about corruption

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- Enhancing the possibilities available to the State Comptroller to provide protection for whistleblowers
- Increasing the resources for enforcement, investigation and penalty entities
- Publishing names in reports of the State Comptroller
- Operating a procedure of personal responsibility, similar to the procedure in local governance, for government ministers and CEO's, in cases of offenses of violating trust in appointments and in monetary expenditures
- Making the personal recommendations in reports of government investigative committees into mandated recommendations

4.4 Privacy

4.5.1 Legalization, the fight against addiction and prevention of smoking

Israel needs to become an advanced country on the topic of drug use and the battle against addiction and the damages of smoking. Legalization of cannabis and its products should be promoted alongside a fight against hard drug dealers, education for prevention and treatment of addicts.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Promoting the legalization of cannabis and its products in the model of full and supervised regularization, including arrangement of growing for personal use, taxation, purchase and sales
- Erasing criminal records for past convictions of the offense of personal use
- Legal recognition of cannabis as a substance with medical effectiveness and the removal of cannabis products that do not have consciousness altering matter from the drug ordinances
- Full recognition of medical treatment with cannabis including its transfer to first line treatment based on medical recommendations, entering the medical treatment to the medications basket, advancing medical research in the field, distribution of prescriptions by physicians and reform in the medical cannabis unit in the Ministry of Health so that it is not responsible for issuing the prescriptions
- Authorizing growing cannabis under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture for medical needs
- Re-examining the medical cannabis reform so that it will be operated for the benefit of patients
- Advancing the agricultural-industrial branch of medical cannabis including export and promoting research in the field
- Fighting against distribution and sales of “designer drugs” by promoting a policy of prohibiting entry of any new material without it undergoing a process of organized licensing in the Ministry of Health
- Fighting against “rape drugs” by promoting solutions to identifying the drugs and increasing awareness of the existence of the risks at entertainment venues
- Adopting a policy of treating the severely drug-addicted that sees addiction as a medical psychiatric problem and puts the emphasis on weaning and limiting damages and not on criminalization and punishment
- Fighting against drug producers and dealers, especially those who sell cigarettes, alcohol and drugs to minors
- Enhancing legislation and enforcement of laws punishing those whose actions under the influence of alcohol or drugs endangers the safety and health of others
- Transferring the authorities over the authority for war on violence, drugs and alcohol to the Ministries of Health, Welfare, and Education

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- Establishing a committee of experts in the Ministry of Health to monitor legal and illegal drugs distributed in Israel, ranking them according to the level of health risk and publishing the findings in newspapers, on the Internet, in schools and in places of entertainment
- Training professionals in the framework of medical, nursing, social work, psychology and criminology studies in the field of addictions and encouraging physicians for specializations in psychiatry with an emphasis on addiction
- Promoting separate specialization in addiction medicine as customary in the United States, Canada, Australia and European countries
- Establishing clinics and targeted departments for treatment of co-morbidities, relaxing the conditions for admission to substance abuse treatment frameworks that are not hospitals, for those suffering from co-morbidities and establishment of therapeutic frameworks including temporary housing without pre-requisites
- Establishing a rehabilitation basket for victims of addiction
- Establishing support groups for those clean of addiction in various languages
- Government funding of studies in the field of addiction
- Establishing trauma oriented services for battered women, establishment of services oriented to mothers and their children and updates of knowledge among treatment people about best treatment for battered women

Cigarette smoking is a broad-scope social problem, causing severe health problems of smokers and their surroundings, and a budgetary burden on the health systems. Immoderate use of alcohol also brings about the creation of health problems and the State of Israel does not treat all of these appropriately.

- A national plan for smoking cessation: launch of a national program for support and assistance for those addicted to smoking and nicotine products in stopping by means that have been declared as effective by the World Health Organization
- Public funding for withdrawal means by health funds and publicizing them as part of the sale of the smoking products themselves
- A relatively uniform tax for all smoking products that will embody in it smoking damages and will increase accordingly each year. According to the World Health Organization, this step is one of the most effective for encouraging those addicted to smoking to turn for withdrawal help
- Excluding the advertising budget of companies manufacturing / selling / marketing smoking products from tax deductions
- As with any other product, companies for smoking and vaping products must reveal the full list of components in their products, including quantities, and must make studies available to the Ministry of Health that are available to them about their influences (if they exist. If they do not exist, the company must inform the Ministry of Health about this.)
- Fair budgeting for educational activities against use of drugs, alcohol and smoking, also in the Arab public

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- Fully implementing the United Nations Convention on the War Against Smoking, including the prohibition against advertising cigarette and tobacco products
- The Ministry of Education will promote a program to limit smoking among pupils, including enforcement, and educational content based on educational models found to be effective by the World Health Organization
- Companies for the manufacture / marketing of smoking products are in a unique position in which their business interest, by its nature, is in contradiction with the public good. This needs to be reflected in the decision making process.
- All laws and regulations about smoking products must also apply to vaping products

4.5.2 The biometric database

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Nullification of the biometric database
- Freedom of choice in workplaces and in public places for giving fingerprints and other biometric information

4.5.3 Internet privacy

We are at the peak of a social revolution that is motivated by technological innovation. This innovation on its own is not good or bad. It allows people to do good or bad on an unprecedented scale. In recent years we have been exposed to the weakness of governments around the world to frequent damage of the giants of technology both to freedom of expression and to the privacy of people surfing the Internet. At the same time the government of Israel frequently removes content from the web without transparency and with discrimination. The role of the government is to create an environment allowing technological innovation to bring maximum benefit to people, to society, to the environment and to the economy, and at the same time to limit the possibilities of abusing it.

In order to achieve this objective, Meretz will act:

- To recognize access to the Internet as a fundamental right, similar to the right to electricity, to food, to water and to shelter. This is from the recognition that it is a condition for personal development and social mobility
- To determine the principle of “net neutrality” through legislation. Internet providers will be prohibited from distinguishing between information passing through them in order to protect the democratic principles of openness of thought, freedom of expression and equality
- To advance a comprehensive reform in a privacy protection law, in the spirit of new European data protection regulations (the GDPR). The new legislation will realize the fundamental right to privacy recognized in Israel but suffering from anachronistic legislation, which does not protect of people to their personal data with giant companies collecting information about them and selling it
- To nullify the biometric database. We will ensure the needs of the police to the unique identification of people without allowing exploitation of claims of security protection for collecting massive and unneeded data, which harms privacy and may be used to harm additional rights

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- To thwart the Internet Censorship Law that passed on its first reading in the twentieth Knesset. Meretz supports the handling of the foundations of the problem of children's and young people's access to inappropriate content, however the said legislation does not advance this objective and harms freedom of expression and protection in a manner that is reminiscent of totalitarian regimes
- To limit the possibility of companies to deal in information about Israeli citizens. Such information, if obtained with the consent of the carrier of the information (without which it should not be allowed to be preserved at all), is a valuable resource.
- To advance legislation that will obligate technology companies with further transparency with everything connected to removal of content, blocking surfers and damage to the freedom of expression of surfers

Despite the dramatic changes in the Internet web and the central place it occupies in our lives, legislation to protect privacy on the Internet has not been update for more than 20 years.

Meretz will promote legislation that will protect Internet privacy, especially the privacy of minors.

Meretz will advance legislation that will obligate providers of services and content on the Internet to protect freedom of expression and to protect the privacy of users.

4.6 Police Violence

Lately, the serious phenomenon of illegal use of force on the part of the police towards citizens has swelled to worrying dimensions. The phenomenon is especially severe in relation to distinct publics: Arabs, people of Ethiopian origin and asylum seekers. Police violence is especially enraging, when it is turned towards demonstrators and those seeking to express their points of view – the heart of the democratic method.

- Meretz will act to regularize the handling of investigations of violent incidents by the department of police investigation
- Meretz demands setting clear procedures for behavior during demonstrations, without difference of religion, nationality, and origin, and the obligation of comprehensive training of the various security bodies, engaged in civilian enforcement, in order to prevent harm to the demonstrators.
- Meretz will act to halt the norm of using profiles in the police by trainings for the police on the topics of profiling, using dashboard cameras during operational actions and implementation of a procedure of caution of police
- Meretz calls for the various security bodies engaged in civilian enforcement to enforce programs to prevent discrimination and to fight against racism, that will obligate those serving in them
- Meretz will act to adopt an outline for the Ministry of Justice that was outlined following the protests of people from the Ethiopian ethnic group

4.7 Freedom of Expression

Nullification of the clause of slander against a public employee without proving damages – this clause is used to dampen free discourse in Israel, and disproportionately harms weakened group sin society by way of false arrest and strategic lawsuits against public participation

5. The Economy and Social Justice

5.1 Society and Economy

Meretz believes that it is the obligation of the state to act for the benefit of all its residents on the basis of meaningful equality. Recent Israeli governments acted knowingly and intentionally in a manner that strengthened owners of wealth, expanded poverty and crushed the middle class and weakened layers of society. Israel has become a country where the gap between the rich and poor is among the largest in the western world. The government has set a distorted order of priorities, it has swollen the security budget instead of thinking out it is possible to cut it, and it has granted benefits and special budgeting to settlers. Most Israeli young people are lacking economy security and the middle class is getting weaker. The primary people harmed by the rampant

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social-economic policy of the Israeli government are the weaker populations, Palestinian citizens of Israel, the ultra-Orthodox, those of Mizrahi background, people from Ethiopia, people from the former Soviet Union, senior citizens and residents of the periphery. This policy especially harms women, whose portion of the poor public is larger, their rate among those employed through service contractors is greater, and they need more social services.

The socio-economic condition is measured not only in dry data, but also in the feelings of the citizens. Meretz offers a fair and just economic policy that believes in a welfare state and in a strong public sector, narrowing inequality, in raising taxes on wealth and those with high incomes, narrowing peripheral taxes and regulations and supervision to prevent exploitation of workers and of public funds.

Meretz believes that it is not possible to disconnect economics from politics and civics. Therefore, it holds that a long range political arrangement is essential for the genuine welfare of the citizens of Israel, for sustainable growth and for realizing the full economic potential of Israel. Decreasing the security budget and halting investments in the settlements are an integral part of the socio-economic policy required for Israel.

The Israeli economy needs a complete restructuring of systems:

- Establishing a broad and up to date welfare state, offering social services in all fields of education, health, housing, social and employment services, by returning the responsibility to the government over services given to residents. A change in the taxation policy, in a manner that will decrease the inequality in the economy
- A revolution in the employment market with the objective of guaranteeing a fair salary, employment security, assistance and professional training for the unemployed
- A change in priorities – ceasing disproportional investment in settlements and in the defense budget, and making all budgets for ultra-orthodox education contingent on learning of core subjects
- Deepening the war against the black market and illegal gambling.

5.2 Macro-economic Policy

Creating a more just and equal society necessitates an economic and social policy that is fundamentally different from the current policy.

- A macro-economic policy that will adopt, in addition to targets for growth and inflation, will set up quantitative targets for narrowing gaps and eradicating poverty (annual decrease in the Gini index, annual decrease in the poverty rate and narrowing the depth of poverty) through significant expansion of direct investment in education, health, welfare and housing and affirmative action towards the weakened sectors – Arabs, Mizrahim, people from Ethiopia and those from the former Soviet Union – and residents of the periphery
- Overall nullification of spending and rate-fixing
- Gradual increase of civilian spending in percentages of the GDP from 30.7% to the OECD average – 42.1%

5.3 Reform in the Tax System

The tax policy of the government of Israel in recent decades does not provide a response to the primary role of tax policy – it does not narrow gaps sufficiently and does not correct distortions. In Israel the indirect tax rate (Value Added Tax) is high and applies to all types of products, despite this being a regressive tax, which primarily harms the weakened layers and the middle class, the direct taxes impose a too heavy burden on the middle class and too little a burden on those with the highest income in the economy. There is an unreasonable gap between taxation of income from work and taxation of income from capital – which receives a low tax rate, and companies tax allows large companies significantly lower tax than appropriate

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Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Setting an additional tax level, at a rate of 55% of those earning above 60 thousand NIS per month (720,000 NIS per year) and an upper tax level of 70% on each shekel above 100 times of the average income in the economy
- Creating progression in the tax rate on capital, so that the capital income of a worker who has accumulated rights in a provident fund will be taxed at a low rate, while capital income on someone whose business is in creating capital profits, will be taxed at a high rate, equal to the tax rates on work
- An exemption from Value Added Tax for basic food products, medications and medical services and setting a lower tax rate on books, newspapers, culture and sports events
- Setting a progressive inheritance tax, at rates of between 10% to 30% on inheritances at a level of more than 5 million NIS per year and a decrease to 20% in cases where the income is lower than 1.2 million
- Promoting a comprehensive reform in the Law of Encouraging Capital Investments, with the objective of encouraging investment in the periphery. The law in its current format primarily benefits the wealthiest companies in the economy
- Collecting full tax on “detained profits”
- A change in definition of the payments, so that a person entitled to an allowance in accordance with his condition and his functioning, will not require an income test, but will pay tax in accordance with his overall income, including the allowances, which are currently exempt from payment. The prohibition against multiple allowances will be cancelled

5.4 Environmental Incentives and Green Taxation

Israel committed to enhance the use of renewable energy, but the rate of progress is very slow. Clear economic incentives must be created for efficient environmental behavior:

- Creating a taxation system and mechanisms that will economically incentivize companies and factories to limit their carbon emissions and use renewable energy, similar to the plan that was authorized in Australia
- Limiting easements for leasing – it will not be possible to recognize fuel that was paid for an employee as a corporate expense without limit on the amount of kilometers the employee traveled
- Amending the Condominium Law, so that the erection of solar panels on the roofs of condominium buildings will be possible, without the need for consent from all the tenants
- Setting a government guarantee for loans through not-for-profit bodies, to establish systems for renewable energy

5.5 The Fight Against Privatization and Returning Responsibility to the Government

The rampant processes of privatization that the Israeli economy has undergone in recent decades did not bring about improved competition or economic efficiency, but rather caused concentration of wealth in a few hands, to a system of wealth-government ties threatening Israeli democracy, to damage to the quality and quantity of social services, and to damage to workers' rights. The processes of privatization are also mostly carried out with presentation of a clear rationale for the process of privatization and an absence of meaningful public discussion on these matters. We should act to halt the process of privatization and to change the existing trend.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

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- An absolute halt of privatization with an emphasis on national assets and natural resources and starting a gradual outline to return public programs and services to the ownership and control of the public
- Halting the privatization of services supervising privatized services: The Supervision Services, which has also undergone privatization, will return fully, within one year, to the responsibility of the government and its employees
- Nullification and a halt to privatization of natural resources in Israel and a halt to the privatization of natural monopolies, including a re-examination of the privatization of the Dead Sea Works and gas reserves
- Nullification of the privatization of public services, such as nursing services in schools, hostels for children at risk etc.
- Nullification of the privatization of public services in the fields of education and health

5.6 Fight Against Conglomeration in the Economy

The Israeli economy is characterized by a high degree of concentration, expressed in control of a limited number of business groups in a huge part of the economic activity. The concentrated structure allows the few to accumulate wealth and power at the expense of the many and deepens the economic gaps. In addition, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a limited number of control holders brings with it exaggerated price increases to increase the burden on the weakened layers and on the middle class. Concentration of the control has been acute in recent years because of the expansion of privatization and limited government involvement in the capital and pension market. The lack of regulation on the capital market and the dominance of tycoons on investment houses and pension funds endanger long-term savings of the public in Israel, harms yields and stability, and in the end also harms growth. Meretz supports the strengthening of regulation mechanisms and a change in the ownership structure of pension funds and provident funds in Israel with the objective of them being under the ownership of the members.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Dismantling of control pyramids by limiting the perpendicular pyramid structure to a height of only two “floors,” and a sweeping prohibition against cross-holding of financial and real assets
- Operating regulatory limitations on holdings in a number of branches, including the field of communications, and dismantling multi-branch groups out of considerations for competition
- Court supervision over debt arrangements, based on the outlines of the “Haircut” Act, which was enacted at the initiative of Meretz
- A fight against the phenomenon of aggressive tax planning, allowing large companies to avoid payment of taxes
- Obligating private monopolies and concentrated groups to publish financial reports, similarly to the obligation currently applicable to public corporations
- Enhancing transparency and responsibility in the behavior of institutional bodies managing the pension savings of the public
- Developing a model of cooperative ownership of pension funds and long-term savings mechanisms
- Encouraging the establishment of savings and credit associations, which will be able to place alternative banks under the ownership of customers

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5.7 Work, Fair Employment and the Fight Against Unemployment

5.7.1

As of today, the employment market in Israel manufactures poor employees and it expands gaps. The rate of employment of contract workers is the highest in the western world and various harmful employment methods are invented by controllers by the Ministry of Finance and the private market.

The hired employees were replaced by employees of human resource companies, who were replaced by employees of service contractors and freelancers – independent against their will. Workers from all fields of life with lack of employment security, not knowing what their salary will be, or if additional work would be found for them at the end of the month or the semester. Women are especially harmed from the expansion of harmful employment, because they are the majority among those employed by exploitive methods.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Halting contractor employment in public service: No agreements of employment relations with contractors will be renewed and no new bids will be issued, so that within 3 years there will be no further people employed on the basis of contractor bids in public service
- A renewed examination of all the arrangements of the government to form a relationship on a temporary (freelance) basis that continue more than 6 months. Any relationship that is required by nature for a time period of 6 months or more, in the employment scope of 20 hours a week or more, can be converted to direct employment, in accordance with decision of the service provider
- Enacting a law setting enlarged social rights for those who are employed hourly – so that the limiting of this harmful employment method will be limited for who is indeed hired for employment on an occasional basis only
- In bids to provide services of any authority or government company, preference of 15% will be given to engaging corporations owned by their employees. Preference will also be given to engaging with small and middle size companies and with companies with their core business in the periphery
- Guaranteeing the possibility for workers to acquire education during all years of their work
- A salary that is 15 times higher than higher than the lowest salary in society will not be recognized as an expense for tax purposes
- Expanding the areas of responsibility of the supervisory wing in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Employment and making it an effective branch, with significant budgets and sufficient human resources, which can guarantee that all workers in Israel are receiving what is due them for their work
- Effective enforcement of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law in workplaces and expansion of the authorities of the Commissioner of Preventing Sexual Harassment in workplaces
- Recognition of sexual harassment in workplaces as a work accident
- Raising the salary in service professionals, women for the most part: nurses, teaching assistants, day care providers, teachers, nursing assistants and social workers
- Making the work week flexible as to allow the entry of those with family responsibilities to significant positions
- Recognition of stress damages in work as a work illness
- Operation of a national plan to make a balance between home and employment, which will encourage private business to prevent enhanced erosion

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5.7.2 Workers associations

Meretz is obligated to full solidarity with the struggles of workers, recruitment and activism of the party – from the level of the Knesset and up to the level of local government through activities in the field – to the benefit of the rights of millions of workers in the economy.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Significant strengthening of workers' organizations: guaranteeing right to organize and imposing severe sanctions on employers who harm the right of workers to organize
- Guaranteeing the rights of workers to direct representation and to democracy in the decision making mechanisms. Workers who are involved, are workers who better stand up for their rights
- Guaranteeing continuity of rights, group agreements and organized work frameworks in the transition between the bid period to the subsequent bid period
- Easing initial worker organizing
- Definition and prevention of replacing striking workers with other workers
- Mandatory representation for employee representatives in the board of directors of corporations in a size and in fields that will be defined
- Encouragement of establishment of cooperatives – economic organizing of workers

5.7.3 Fighting unemployment

Work is an essential component in the lives of people, offering an occupation, livelihood and means of self-realization and honorable existence. The unemployed in Israel have been perceived for many years, by the establishment, as those who not want to work, and unemployment compensation is presented as a burden they are placing on the country. Unemployment compensation is a right, as a response for those dismissed from earning a salary for years, and it is also an economic interest of the entire economy, which has the purpose of giving the worker the possibility to find work appropriate for his personal ability and education, exhausting his salary ability and enlarging productivity and growth. Therefore, limiting unemployment compensation and obligating the unemployed to accept any job with prolonged damage in the employment service and in service in the professions they are supposed to supply, harms workers and the Israeli economy.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Creating workplaces by public investment in building infrastructures, and especially in the periphery
- Establishing employment and adjusting the Law of Investment Encouragement in order to create full employment in the periphery, which is a kind of introduction and a condition for improving working conditions (organizing and any other thing)
- Simplification of the bureaucracy for small and medium sized business employers in general, and especially in the periphery. Tax benefits for local businesses
- Perpetual lessening of the numbers of non-employed with an aspiration for full employment
- Improvement of the public placement system and the public array for hiring and professional refreshment
- Returning the obligation to find work for the unemployed that is appropriate for their talents
- Returning the eligibility for full unemployment compensation during the period of professional training
- Abbreviating the training period entitling unemployment compensation for 10 months, or 24 months during the previous three years
- Nullification of the limitation on eligibility for unemployment compensation by four hears, and Nullification of the decrease in numbers of days of eligibility and the level of unemployment compensation

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- Setting eligibility for unemployment compensation for unemployed independent workers
- Development of talents for the unemployed, and providing professional training and training for employment searches and integration in work
- Establishment of day care centers that will allow parents of small children to work
- Creating transportation solutions for getting to work and training
- Granting incentives for those integrating into work and nullifying punishment for those who are not successful in integrating
- Matching unique solutions to each person, by taking into account the cultural background the person comes from and the family situation
- Nullifying operation of placement programs by for-profit companies
- Re-building of the branch for professional training in combination with the academy in order to create training adjusted for the employment market that is not dependent on the employment compensation system
- Disconnecting the connection between employment and livelihood for weakened employment sectors by increasing income guarantees and making them accessible in various languages and abbreviating the procedures
- Encouragement of employment of women and providing professional training with an emphasis on various ages, including middle-aged women, from all population groups

5.7.4

Work accidents, especially in the construction field, have in recent years become frequent and not taken care of, because of the fact that most of those injured belong to groups that are marginal in society – Palestinians, Israeli Palestinians, and foreign workers. The conditions of construction workers has gotten worse because of the policy of cutting back on procedures initiated by the Minister of Finance, with the objective of allowing for rapid construction, waiving all appropriate planning processes and ignoring safety defects. Even after the recent agreements on the topic, the response and handling are very partial and some even have increased and have transferred the burden from employers to the workers – in a manner that deserves notoriety. Meretz will act to advance the following corrections:

- Setting principles with regards to the number of required safety inspectors in accordance with the number of active construction sites and increasing the number of inspectors from the safety authority accordingly. Addition of supervisors with expertise in working with cranes
- Expanding the authority of supervisors from the safety authority, so that it can declare about the closing of a site where a serious safety offense is committed for a period of up to 30 days
- Nullification of contractor licenses for companies who commit serious repeat safety offense
- Obligation of the immediate arrival of a safety inspector in cases of accidents that do not end in death or serious injury and involvement of the Israel police, in accordance with the severity of the safety offense and not only the severity of injury.
- Testing of all cranes operating in Israel and an immediate halt of their work with cranes that do not meet the standards

5.8 Welfare Policy

The government is responsible for the welfare of its residents and for their honorable existence. Elimination of poverty is an ethical obligation of the country towards its residents. Meretz will promote enactment of a basic law of social rights that will include the right to health, to education, to housing, to employment, to an honorable existence, to organize and to strike. The welfare services have suffered from very serious privatization, and the vast majority have moved to private ownership and management.

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Privatization is also taking up a respectable place in the education system: education services are given by way of associations and business entities; teachers are employed as contract workers and the economic burden placed on the shoulders of parents is increasing. Privatization has limited the expertise of the government in the area of welfare an education, as well as its ability to effectively supervise the services given. Meretz will act to advance an accumulation plan, that will return the responsibility for social services to the government. The accumulation plan will include, among other things:

- Direct employment by the Ministry of Welfare: The Ministry of Welfare will return to be an employer, and within five years most welfare services will return to government ownership and to direct employment by the ministry. Not all services need to be provided only by the government, however indirect employment of workers and management in entire fields by private bodies will be completely cancelled
- Direct employment in the Ministry of Education: No teachers will be employed through indirect employment. The bids for indirect employment of teachers in after-school programs will be cancelled and teachers will be absorbed as employees of the Ministry of Education. GED teachers, who teach according to the curriculum of the Ministry of Education through indirect employment, will also be absorbed as employees of the Ministry of Education
- Direct employment in the Ministry of Health: School nurses will return to being employees of the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Health will operate rehabilitation institutions for senior citizens and nursing care institutions

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Guaranteeing pension savings money by the government, which has the responsibility for this imposed on it, in a manner that will guarantee to anyone who has saved throughout his or her life that they will receive a fair pension
- Comparison of the universal disability and old age allowances to the minimum salary and linking them to the average salary in the economy – in the first budget year
- Returning allowances for single parent families and encouragement of seeking employment by way of incentives and increasing the amount of income that is not deducted from the amount of the allowance
- Raising child allowances
- Guaranteeing an income guarantee allowance that makes it possible to exist honorably
- Until the amendment of the old age allowances – supplementing the income of senior citizens without income other than the old age allowance, up to the level of the minimum salary
- Fair budgeting to programs dealing with family violence and violence towards women, to the emotionally harmed and to neighborhoods in distress
- Development of a broad range of community services, including preventive services, leisure, assistance and support for children and youth in general and children and youth at risk in particular, by placing special emphasis on a response to the needs of cultural minority groups and immigrant children and youth
- Guaranteeing cultural appropriateness of all welfare services for the various needs of the diverse groups of population
- Development and implementation of a national plan for debtor rehabilitation
- Providing a fair response to the issue of the homeless with appropriate budgets and systemic institutional frameworks by measurable means

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The Government Health Insurance Law enacted in January 1995 guaranteed a health basket for all of Israel's citizens, however there are still large gaps in Israel in the health field stemming from ethnic and class affiliation and from the gap between the periphery and the center.

Data from the Central Bureau for Statistics of the Bank of Israel show that the investment in health in Israel is much lower than that of developed nations, and public funding is among the lowest among OECD countries. The rate of national expenditure on health in Israel as of 2017 stood at 3.7% of Local Gross Manufacturing, with the average of OECD countries standing at that same time at a rate of about 9.8%. Moreover, between the years 2000 – 2017, the percentage of ongoing national expenditures of Local Gross Manufacturing in Israel remained almost unchanged (an increase of only 4.0%), compared with the average in OECD countries that increased by 7.1%. The said space was taken up by private medicine with a leap in private expenditures on health with the public streaming to complementary insurance and to private insurance.

The rate of hospital beds, the basis of the hospitalization system in Israel, stands at 3 beds per 1,000 people. This is a lot lower than the average of the remaining OECD countries, standing at 7.5 beds. The occupancy rate of the existing beds in Israel stands at 8.93%, among the highest in the OECD. In more than a few periods in the year of a high degree of illness, the occupancy rate in the various departments and emergency rooms can even reach 150% and more. Patients are hospitalized in locations that were not at all intended for treatment, such as department hallways and dining rooms, where they are denied any privacy and their respect is harmed.

The health basket budget does not provide a sufficient response, and funding the services is more and more imposed on the insured, in contrast with the principles of law, severely harming equality. In addition, the lack of investment in physical infrastructures and in human resources constitutes a real threat over the public health system.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Adopting a national plan to narrow gaps in health
 - Nullifying complementary insurances and having all required treatment entered into the government basket
 - Increasing the number of hospital beds (and especially nursing hospitalization) to two times the number of annual beds designated by the Ministry of Health – 600 instead of 300.
 - Creating absolute separation between public health and private health
 - Adding medical personnel:
 - The shortage among physicians may become worse with the upcoming exit of physicians from the former Soviet Union. In light of this the number of those studying medical profession needs to significantly be increased. In addition preference needs to be given with a notable shortage both in hospitals as well as in consulting medicine
 - There is a severe shortage of nurses in Israel. The number of nurses stands at 5 per 1,000 people in contrast with an average of 3.9 in the OECD. Because future nursing personnel is also low in comparison with the OECD (21 per 1,000 people as compared with an average of 8.48), this shortage is expected to continue and even worsen because of the aging of the population. The number of nurse standards in hospitals needs to be increased so that they will respond to current and future needs
 - In addition, an emergency team needs to be established in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the Council for Higher Education, and the Nursing Association, to set incentives for nursing staff – improvement in salary conditions and upgrade of the professional status – in order to encourage registration for nursing schools
 - Establishment of an additional hospital in the Negev, in accordance with the government decision from September 2015, which has been delayed
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- Reactivating the emergency room in Kiryat Shmona

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- Expansion of operating hours of surgery rooms: In order to decrease the wait times for surgeries and the dependence created in complementary insurance for the purpose of making lines shorter, the number of surgery room in public medicine needs to be increased as an initial investment, and also to lengthen the duration of work hours of existing surgery rooms and budgeting the personnel needed for this
- Limiting work hours of people on medical teams
- Handling violence and harassment aimed at people on medical teams
- Targeted for the aging population: One of each three people hospitalized is over the age of 65. The number of senior citizens will increase in coming years, but the health system is not prepared for the required care in this population even today and there are no appropriate plans for the future. The lack of sufficient accessibility to professional medicine for senior citizens in the entire country and primarily in the periphery brings about serious and sometimes irreversible damage in their health and ability to function. A national plan to match the health system to the aging population should be promoted and budgeted, including a change in the capitation budget, encouragement of medical specialization in geriatric professions and additional relevant specializations, guaranteeing services at an adequate scope for the periphery and significant improvement of health services in the community and at home
- Updating the health basket by two percentages per year so that it will include all the significant services and medications, in accordance with the law initiated by Meretz
- Correct the formula for distribution of resources between health funds so that it gives expression to social variables and compensation for residents of the periphery
- Amending legislation that has the purpose of compensation for the erosion in funding of the Government Health Insurance Law
- Creating separation, by way of legislation and standardization, between the public health system and the private health system
- A commitment to expand the basket of government health services at the expense of complementary and private insurance
- A multi-year plan to develop medical infrastructure, both in the hospitalization system as well as in the community
- Strengthening community medicine and building a plan for hospitalization in the community by providing economic encouragement to community physicians in an equal manner in all funds'
- A multi-year plan to deal with the needs of professional human resources. Physicians should be encouraged to specialize in fields where there is a shortage of physicians and primarily in fields where there are no physicians to engage in private complementary practice
- Commitment to budget for full-time physicians who are not privately employed, as an alternative to private health services
- Changing the standards for hospitals in order to improve the quality of the encounter between patients and providing optimal treatment
- Nullifying deductible payments when receiving preventive medicine services, physicians' visits, and purchasing medications found in the health basket, by supplementing the budget for health funds
- Including nursing insurance in the health basket: Nursing hospitalization and nursing treatment in the community with guaranteeing at least 40 hours of treatment in the community, development of day care centers in a broad scope and Nullification of family participation in funding
- Full funding of rehabilitation treatment for the elderly and ensuring rehabilitation places in accordance with demand
- Guaranteeing the entrance of victims of sexual attack to the reform in mental health

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- Establishment of a hospitalization department targeted for victims of sexual attack and establishment of a support system in the community for post-hospitalization rehabilitation and the process of returning to a life path
- Re-examination of the reform in treatment of the mentally ill in the community
- Continuing the process of bringing dental care into the health basket
- Allocating significant resources to advancing preventive medicine
- Formulating an overall policy for treatment of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases: investing resources in prevention and public relations that will include raising awareness to the importance of protected sex on the one hand, and social acceptance of carrier patients on the other hand
- Nullifying the privatization of health services for pupils
- Nullifying abortion committees and raising the age of funding for abortions above the age of 19 with guarantees of the right of women to complete control over their bodies
- Committing to pay attention to gender in research and publications of the Ministry of Health
- Operating a national program to protect the safety of children and to prevent their injury in accidents
- Including medications and immunizations for women's diseases in the health basket, including and with an emphasis on birth control and immunization to prevent cervical cancer
- Establishing medical centers for life-saving first treatment in cities where there are no hospitals
- Removing medical tourism from public hospitals
- Adding an update mechanism for personnel standards of Mother and Child stations in order to make it possible for nurses to give new parents information and to answer their questions on health topics. Neglecting the service causes real and direct damage to infants, children, and the entire Israeli society
- Immunizations: Immunizations are one of the foundation stones of preventive medicine and can be counted among the most important medical inventions. The State of Israel should adopt a comprehensive immunization policy including four aspects: Equitable access for the entire population, transparency, public relations, and enforcement
- Meretz will act to encourage organ donation and fetal blood donations to the public data base. Meretz will act to amend the law, so that the default at the time of brain death will be organ donation and only people whose family objects to this, or who gave explicit instructions not to donate their organs – their organs will not be donated

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6. Religion and State

Meretz supports freedom of religion and freedom from religion and will continue with its efforts to enact a basic law: Freedom of religion, which guarantee the right of all citizens of the country and its residents, Jews and non-Jews, secular and religious, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox – to live their lives according to their customs, outlooks and beliefs, in private and in public, on holidays and non-holidays, in the family structure and in the education of their children, in culture and in entertainment, without religious coercion by one side towards another, and only if realization of these rights to not harm human dignity.

Meretz sees Jewish heritage as a source of inspiration for creation and part of our lives, but not a source of authority or an obligatory norm in a democratic country and in the developed world for advancement, creation, and research. The State of Israel is a nation of law and not a nation of religious law. The freedom of religion and conscience and equality of rights for all citizens of Israel without difference of religion, race, and sex, as promised in the Declaration of Independence, align with the enlightened approach of Jewish heritage based on equality in the value of all people, freedom of choice and freedom of thought.

The principle of freedom of religion, including the freedom from religion, mandates a separation of religion from politics and a separation of religion from the government. Meretz will act to cancel the religious-Orthodox monopoly discriminating against women, secular Jews and Jews with pluralistic approaches, and will guarantee the equal status of all religious streams in all fields of life. Meretz will act to cancel the monopoly of Sharia courts on Muslims and Muslim citizens of Israel, in all fields of the family and the status of wives and will determine that the default option in any legal procedure in these fields will be the family courts and the religious courts will serve as mediators, only with the consent of all parties.

Meretz will act with determination against phenomena of exclusion of women from the public sphere, to enforce the prohibition against gender separation in buses and to impose sanctions on those who exclude women. Meretz will ensure that women will be able to pray at holy sites, including at the Western Wall, on an equal basis.

6.1 Marriage and Divorce

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Correcting the structural inequality in family laws in Israel, by establishing civil marriage and divorce in the State of Israel, including for same-sex spouses. The government registrar of marriages will be responsible for recording personal status, and one law will be imposed for men and women in all jurisdictions and for each and every matter: Equality in the act of marriage, in the period of the marriage and in its dissolution
- The start of civil marriages will not harm the status of common-law marriages
- Granting a fundamental right to anyone in Israel to marry based on their choice in a civil wedding or a religious wedding (in each one of the various religious streams) and to establish a home and a family
- Granting the authority in entire realm of the status of wives to the family court. The Rabbinical courts and the Sharia courts will discuss the status of wives only with the consent of both parties

6.2 Civil Burial

In a democratic society, and even more so in the state of the Jewish people, there is no place for discrimination between various streams of Judaism.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Guaranteeing the realization of Right to Alternative Civil Burial Law, of 5756-1996, determining that every person is entitled to be buried according to their world outlook. Establishment of cemeteries for civil burial around the country and allocating plots for civil burials in the existing cemeteries
- Guaranteeing the possibility for civil burial for residents by each local authority

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- Preventing dominance of the Burial Societies over civil burials – civil burials will be managed by public authorities, or associations whose members are significant stakeholders in advancing civil burials, rather than by Orthodox bodies who wish to preserve the economic monopoly on burial services

6.3 Conversion and Citizenship

The Orthodox monopoly on conversion is more problematic given the connection between religious affiliation and becoming a citizen in Israel.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Giving freedom of choice to those wishing to undergo religious conversion between Orthodox, Reform, Conservative or other conversions
- Jewish conversion and affiliation with the Jewish people, will be determined for anyone who declares in good faith that he or she is Jewish and has tied his or her fate to the fate of the Jewish people
- Freezing the religious monopoly on the entrance to Israel and the possibility of becoming a citizen in it and implementing the Law of Return based on civil criteria

6.4 Fighting against the Exclusion of Women

Meretz will act to halt the exclusion of women:

- Criminal sanctions will be imposed on those inciting for the exclusion of women, or those engaged in exclusion
- A severe punishment will be determined for those carrying out actions of destruction of property because of display of women
- A law will be enacted that will allow lawsuits, without proof of damages, because of exclusion of women in the public sphere including in public transportation, in public events, in government institutions, in providing social and religious services, in radio broadcasts etc. It will be possible to sue authorities, corporations and position holders personally
- Targeted government and municipal mechanisms will be established that will engage in preventing exclusion, in enforcing and supervision
- In order to avoid the phenomenon of exclusion of women from advertising and from billboards, a mechanism for government compensation will be determined for private entities harmed by the destruction of their property because of the display of women
- There will be signs displayed in every cemetery, announcing the prohibition against separation between men and women and administrative and criminal sanctions will be imposed on cemetery administrators who do not fulfill these instructions

6.5 Shabbat and Jewish Holidays

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Preserving Saturday as the general day of rest in Israel
- Operating public transportation on Shabbat, taking into consideration the nature of the population in locations and their needs, including inter-city transportation of trains and buses
- Guaranteeing the rights of a worker seeking not to work on Shabbat, whether because of religious faith or for other reasons
- Ensuring the existence of cultural, vacation, and leisure activity on Shabbat, including houses of entertainment, leisure sites, and vacation and sports facilities, taking into account the wishes of local residents
- Nullifying the “Hametz Law” preventing the display of hametz in the public sphere during the interim days of Passover

6.6 Religious Services

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

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- Guaranteeing the provision of religious services by the government in an equitable way for all religions and for all streams of Judaism, based on percentages in the population and in accordance with the “basket of religious services” that will be anchored in law and will be based on the recommendation of a special public council
- Nullification of the religious councils
- The Chief Rabbinate will cease to exist as a governmental institution with state funding
- Operating of the rabbinical courts of the various streams and the remaining religious courts in an autonomous manner in the framework of the Ministry of Justice, similarly to the civil courts. Their authority will be as arbitrators only and they will be requested only with the consent of all bodies connected to the matter

6.7 Pluralism in Education and the Fight Against Religionization

In recent years we have witnessed a growing process of redesigning the shared public space in Israel in the spirit, values, and world outlook of religious Zionism and orthodox Judaism. Despite the fact that most citizens of Israel identify themselves as secular or as belonging to other streams, the public space has been occupied by content, symbols, and customs that are orthodoxly religious. The phenomenon, which has been called “religionization” is prominent in the Israel Defense Forces, in schools, in hospitals, and in additional areas that have become an arena for religious coercion and ideological indoctrination.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Slowing down the processes of religionization in Israeli society, and especially in the education system and in the Israel Defense Forces, in order that all Israelis – religious and secular, Jews and Arabs – may feel at home in the public sphere
- Instilling humanistic values of Jewish heritage and of general human culture in the public education system by presenting the spiritual richness of Jewish heritage from a pluralistic approach and avoiding any religious preaching or coercion in ritual expression
- Absolute cessation of privatization of values education in the government system, including in removing young women doing national services and all the associations offering educational value-oriented and ideological services and returning control over values education to educators who were trained for this and to the community sending its young people to public schools
- Strengthening and elevating support in organizations and batei midrash engaging with Jewish renewal and in study of Jewish and Israeli sources obligated to a humanistic, pluralistic and democratic world outlook. Nurturing feelings of respect for people of other religions and for their holy places and encouragement of dialogue and inter-religious understanding among members of all religions in Israel
- Determined activity against racist and nationalist incitement of educators and rabbis and increasing enforcement against “Tag Mechir” offenders damaging churches and mosques

6.8 Nullifying the Limitations to Freedom of Research in Archeological and Anthropological Fields based for Religious Reasons

6.9 Israel and Jews of the Diaspora

There is an historic and national connection between Jews in the State of Israel and Jews in the Diaspora. From this fact and in accordance with the right to self-definition, as was written in the Declaration of Independence, “The State of Israel will be open to Jewish immigration and to the ingathering of exiles,” and it openly welcomes Jews who are interested in settling here.

Jewish culture and tradition developed in very different ways in Israel and in the Diaspora. Meretz believes that Judaism in Israel can be greatly contributed to through exposure to Reform, Conservative and other expressions of Judaism common in the Diaspora. The state must nurture and strengthen the connection with Jews around the world out of fellowship, solidary and mutual learning. Jewish communities in the Diaspora, with all their different streams, are a significant pillar in the Jewish people and they strengthen the State of Israel. The government must protect individual rights of Jews who come to Israel for the purpose of a visit or to immigrate. There is great importance for the Jewish community in Ethiopia at the peak of a unique and challenging immigration. Meretz

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sees this community as an integral part of the Jewish people and supports bringing the Jews remaining in Gondar and in Addis Ababa to Israel as soon as possible and in accordance with the government decision on the subject.

7. Israeli Society

7.1 Education

The education system is the most important resource for the establishment of a democratic, equal, and successful society. The education system is the way to empower the ability of citizens to be active partners in shaping the society and their ability to critique what exists and to contribute to amending its path and its flourishing. The education system has the power to grant its students the talents and skills required for appropriate functioning in an advance society that is a groundbreaker, to strengthen democratic trends and to lead with values of solidarity.

Instead of doing this, the system engages in criteria and measurements, barely succeeded at these also, and in tours at "heritage sites" in the occupied territories. Reforms declared in elementary and secondary schools do not optimally benefit teachers. Their salary remains low still, they work without reasonable conditions in schools, classrooms are bursting with students, and matriculation examinations are the façade of everything.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Enactment of a free education law from the age of three months. Every child in Israel will be entitled to free education from the age of three months and up to the end of secondary school. This is subject to the accommodation of buildings, increasing staff and lowering the norm at ages 3-4 to 25 children for 3 staff people
- Decreasing the number of students in a class
- Nullification of the phenomenon of parent payments in the public education system
- Stopping all processes of privatization, external sources and bringing in commercial entities to the heart of the activity of the education system
- A transition to a policy of zero private money in the education system
- Returning all core positions to the direct management of the Ministry of Education and not in the hands of associations or commercial companies
- Differential funding from the standard of local authorities in the field of education for the purpose of creating an equal national bar per student
- Encouragement of values education, for democracy and for peace
- Cultivation of humanistic education
- Meretz aspires an educational system with content that represents the rich cultural and historic range of all parts of Israeli society. We should act to correct the lacking and biased representation of the history and culture of Mizrahim, those from the former Soviet Union, those from Ethiopia, and Palestinians citizens of Israel in curricula in literature, in history, in civics and in additional subjects
- Meretz aspires to bring secondary schools in Israel to a level of instruction and education granting each and every student a genuine opportunity to exhaust the potential embedded within them, and to prepare them for higher education and for additional studies in any path they choose.
- Quality preparation for professional tracks is important to move the Israeli economy and industry forward, however the place for this is not in post-secondary education. We should act to cancel practices of tracking for professional/technological education, severely damaging earnings and social mobility, especially those of students who live in the periphery, Mizrahim, Arabs, those from Ethiopia and from the former Soviet Union
- Establishment of a long school day during which all students in Israel will enjoy a hot lunch that is high quality and nutritious, and instilling rules of correct and health nutrition

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- Advancing alternative assessment in schools (portfolios, final projects, art projects, research projects and more)
- Encouraging educational innovation with principles of use of technology tools to improve instructional practice and learning in schools
- Establishing libraries to loan school books in all schools in Israel
- Making general education accessible to children with special needs in a manner that will allow their full inclusion in it with respect and with the possibility of fully realizing their abilities, in accordance with the wishes of the child and the wishes of the parents and with budgetary assistance of a personal assistance basket that is appropriate and follows the child (and not the framework) and is set in a differential way in accordance with the needs of the student
- Providing assistance to students with learning disabilities that will give them tools to overcome them
- Introducing values of gender equality in the curriculum beginning with early childhood and up to the older ages
- Budgeting, incentives, and encouragement of curricula for sex education and prevention of sexual violence
- Encouraging young women to choose science and technology professions
- Schools will operate as education houses and will encourage students as consumers of culture and arts as part of developing their aesthetic tastes and encouraging them to be global thinkers and having universal views and emotions
- An emphasis on education to environmental outlooks and sustainable life will be emphasized
- Bringing in education for broad general training, for involvement in society and democracy, education for volunteerism in the community and for taking responsibility on global topics
- Setting the school as a place where preventive medicine activity takes place for all students in Israel
- Integration of bi-lingual classrooms and bi-lingual schools in the public education system
- The Ministry of Education will re-define fields of core studies and will supervise their instruction in all schools

7.1.1 Budgeting for the education system

The rate of private expenditures for education in Israel is among the highest among OECD countries. Because education is one of the variables with the most influence on the ability to earn a living and on the economic welfare of the individual, there is a need to work towards creating equality of educational opportunity by nullifying the advantages that the privileged have or for preferred sectors. In light of data revealing the huge gaps between well-to-do layers and weakened layers of the population with everything touching on educational opportunity (inequality in conditions and in resources) and in educational accomplishments (academic results) and in light of the unacceptable gaps between the rate of funding Jewish and Arab schools, primarily to the benefit of the public religious education, there is a need to create a transparent resource allocation formula that will guarantee that all children will benefit from equal educational opportunity, and that as long as there are still gaps, a policy of affirmative action towards the weakened and downtrodden populations will be enacted.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Comprehensive planning to establish reform in education. On the side of additional monetary expenditures, there is a need to carry out an examination of where it is possible to optimize the work of the Ministry of Education and the services provided by it. The Ministry of Education will be the only entity responsible for all components of education, with sharing decision making of all groups comprising the multi-cultural Israeli society, including the construction and maintenance of buildings. There is a need to improve the physical condition of schools and to allow for an appropriate learning environment for students to remain during a long school day
- Referring appropriate budgets for the improvement of the physical condition of educational institutions in localities in the periphery, in Arab localities and in the Bedouin localities in the Negev. Budgeting for educational institutions in a differential way with a reverse coefficient to the socio-economic level of each locality

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- Sponsoring legislation that has the objective of incentivizing the Arab education system by providing special resources to build an education system from the age of 3 up to secondary school. This system will encourage families to send their children to educational institutions, will encourage women to enter the labor market, and will strengthen the education services currently given in the Arab sector that is discriminated against in relation to the Jewish sector

7.1.2 The Educators

The quality of the education system is dependent on the quality of its teachers. In the end, it is set in the classroom and to a great extent is influenced by the personality and knowledge of the educator. The quiet process of privatization in the education system in Israel brought about a situation where in 60% of schools there are teachers employed by associations or as contractor employees, with no body examining the level of their training and the terms of their employment. The status of the teacher in Israel must be noticeably improved, and we must carry out all changes in the education system in cooperation with and in consultation with the teachers.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Raising teacher salaries significantly, including the salary for instructional hour
- Making teaching and education into preferred professions, in order to encourage the entrance of talented people with good abilities into the system
- Subsidizing half of the tuition for students to instruction
- Accepting candidates with high abilities and appropriate talents into teacher education, and personality and professional development of the students both in fields of culture and knowledge as well as on the pedagogical plane
- Raising the education level of teachers and encouraging teachers to obtain a master's degree
- Stopping the activity in schools of women in national service in the framework of ideological associations
- Stopping the activity of associations, business bodies and outsourcing organizations, which employ teachers under shameful conditions, without appropriate training and without rights similar to their peers in the teachers room
- Guaranteeing the presence of a school director with an educational character and autonomy to be responsible for the pedagogical field only
- Raising the salary of school directors and educational institutions by 50% in order to encourage teachers to advance to key administrative positions

7.1.3 Early Childhood

An investment in early childhood education is an essential and important investment for the future of Israeli society, with a yield that is worthwhile also for future economic development, for narrowing gaps and also for savings future state expenditures on health, welfare, and education. Moreover, this is our obligation towards toddlers and children, and this is their right according to the International Convention for the Benefit of Children. Therefore, we need to act to improve the existing conditions in early childhood centers and to act for a government arrangement for after-school care in Israel.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Establishing a framework for children from the age of 3 months with public funding
- Making day care centers in Israel a uniform educational framework of high quality for early childhood, providing emotional, physiological, educational, developmental and social responses
- Advancing legislation for the reduction in the number of children in day care centers and adjusting the ratio between children and staff members and the maximum number in centers, in accordance with the international professional standards. It will be emphasized that Meretz will act to add additional staff to day care centers, out of the understanding that adding a staff person is intended as an urgent and initial response only for the problem of crowding in day care centers. The appropriate and ongoing solution is decreasing the number of children in each center, in accordance with professional standards

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- Enactment of threshold standards for working in day care centers including, among other things, relevant professional training, professional accompaniment for the staff and professional in-service trainings
- Direct employment of all staff in day care centers under the Ministry of Education under fair employment conditions
- Nullification of the model of operation of family day care centers, managed by private entities benefitting from Ministry of Finance bids. We need to guarantee fair wages and full social benefits for those taking care of children in family day care centers
- Matching physical structures to the physical and educational needs of the children, including a designated area for afternoon rest
- Advancing a policy according to which the framework of after school frameworks will operate under government supervision and with appropriate standards in relation to the content of studies, the training of the staff and their employment and high quality nutrition for the children

7.1.4 After school programs

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Legislation that will set standards for the management of after school programs, including: the number of staff people and threshold employment terms, content, structure of the daily schedule, health and correct nutrition, costs and more
- Amendment of legislation that will mandate supervision of the Ministry of Education over the operation of after school programs, the training of staff people, the content conveyed in them, about nutrition for the children and about payment
- Threshold regulations for staff people working in afterschool programs, receiving relevant training and professional accompaniment, as well as fair and equitable employment conditions, not in the framework of contractor work
- Supervision and enforcement of criteria of nutrition in after school programs as well as a plan that will teach children as early as this young age about a healthy lifestyle and correct nutrition

7.1.5 Informal education

Informal education complements the formal education system and grants young people essential social and value-oriented talents. Youth movements are the cutting edge of informal education, and in addition they grant life skills, they play an important role in educating young people to public activism and active value-oriented involvement

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Guaranteeing the activities of youth movements by increasing their budgets
- Presenting and budgeting of an emergency plan to locate and work with young people who have left the education system, in an effort to develop an alternative framework that will make it possible to provide training and life skills to dropout youth
- Equitable budgeting for youth movements

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7.1.6 Higher education

The history of higher education in Israel is full of impressive accomplishments placing Israel in a high place in comparison to science and information centers around the world. The erosion of budgeting in institutions of higher education raises a real fear for the severe deterioration of the system. Even today the sings of the financial shortfalls are prominent in libraries that are not updated, old laboratories and primarily in a marked limitation of senior teaching faculty. Strengthening higher education as a future investment of the State of Israel mandates significant increase in its budgets. Firstly, all the budgets cut in the last decade must be returned to the higher education system. In addition, a regular updating mechanism needs to be determined for increasing the budget of higher education and guaranteeing the return of standards cut from the faculty in all institutions of higher education. Planning the system of higher education needs to be done at the national level, by increasing the number of public colleges and strengthening them, strengthening universities and making conditions tougher for establishing private institutions of higher education.

7.1.6.1 Accessibility to higher education

Expanding the academic circle is both a social-national need and a personal need.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Decreasing tuition to the point where it is symbolic, of serious intention fees only. There will be no differential tuition between different departments
- Operating plans and allocation of resources that are fair to educational institutions in periphery areas and among weakened populations – Arabs, Mizrahim, those from Ethiopia, and those from the former Soviet Union – in order to make access possible and to encourage equality in higher education
- Nullifying tuition in pre-academic preparation programs
- Increasing the representation of women, Arabs, Mizrahim, those from Ethiopia, and those from the former Soviet Union in the academic faculty
- Providing the possibility of academic studies in all fields beginning with age 18
- Opening courses in Arabic in the framework of the universities and colleges and providing the possibility to submit work in Arabic, in coordination with the lecturer. In the first stage such a step will also mandate subsidies for Arab research students in order that they be able to be integrated into the framework of teaching assistants
- Guaranteeing sufficient supply of housing in dormitories at a low rent
- Opening the campuses to the broad public, so that they can audit courses and use the academic libraries without payment or for a symbolic payment only
- Establishing an external body in the academic institutions that will investigate complaints of sexual harassment in the institutions
- Advancing women in the academy

7.1.6.2 The Faculty

The teaching faculty is the basis for success of institutions of higher education

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Halting the harmful employment of “adjunct instructors,” moving them to a permanent teaching track and absorbing them in the framework of the senior faculty, in accordance with an agreement signed with junior faculty organizations and imposing the terms of this agreement on lecturers in public colleges also
- Employment of junior faculty only in accordance with the terms of collective agreements
- Increasing scholarships to students for advanced degrees, especially in the humanities and social sciences for the purpose of encouraging them to stay in Israel

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7.1.6.3 Academic freedom

In recent years departments and divisions in universities have been attacked for political reasons and with no connection to their academic behavior. In order to ensure the continued advancement and excellence of the higher education system in Israel, we need to defend academic freedom. For the management of the universities, appointment of the heads of the academic and research system, laying out a policy of academic development and distributing budgets, we need to be diligent that they remain in the hands of scientists and researchers only.

We must guarantee academic freedom on two planes:

1. Personal academic freedom – making possible for each member of the academic faculty to determine his or her research direction and contents of instruction without external involvement and without fear about his or her status
2. Institutional academic freedom – granting each academic institution the full right to determine its academic agenda and the manner of managing it, and protecting it from external government or other involvement

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Ensuring the independent status of the Council of Higher Education and the basis of its status, the independence and authorities of the Committee for Planning and Budgeting
- Returning administration of the universities to the hands of the academic community and basing academic management on open and broad discourse to the extent possible of all members of the community – lecturers, students and administrative faculty

7.1.6.4 Freedom of expression

The universities are the basis for innovation, for independent and pluralistic thinking. They must allow the free exchange of ideas, organizing on the basis of various topics and freedom of expression for students and for faculty. In recent years academic institutions have allowed themselves to severely harm the freedom of expression of students and of lecturers and even brought about the detention of students who wanted to express their protests.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Freedom of expression and freedom of political organizing in all campuses authorized by the Council of Higher Education
- Freedom of political actions in a routine manner and in central locations on campuses

7.2 Rights and Equality

Meretz is committed to fight to achieve full equality between women and men. In all central problems on the national agenda we need to pay attention to the gender aspect. Meretz is committed to an uncompromising fight against sexual violence and in particular violence directed at women, in all its forms. Meretz will place the strengthening of gender equality as a top priority, out of the view of social justice and the importance of the representation of a range of groups in society and the belief that the full participation of women in all field and in every realm, public or private, is essential for the existence of a democratic country that is correct and free.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

1. Guarantee of representation
 - Ensuring the representation of women from all parts of the society in Israel and from a range of populations in public bodies and in centers of decision making, including in political negotiations teams
 - Advancing a law that obligates the representation of women in lists of the candidates for Knesset in all parties
 - Elimination of any form of exclusion or discrimination against women wherever it is
 - Advancing Arab women from a range of populations in all areas: in education, in the workplace, in participation in public and political activity

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- Publishing and full implementation of the Segev Report on “the appropriate integration” of women in the Israel Defense Forces and preventing the exclusion of women in the army
 - Development and adoption of a broad scope plan to include women in topics connected to peace and security, in accordance with resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council
2. Employment and the Economy
- Raising the salary for “women’s professions” – service professions: nurses, teaching assistants, day care providers, teachers and social workers. Stopping the privatization of these professions and returning their operation to a public framework, as a government responsibility
 - Encouraging the employment of women and providing professional training with a multi-age emphasis, including for middle age women, from all groups of the population
 - Changing the rate that is deducted from pensions for income and work, change of the contents of “what is income” in National Insurance
 - Limiting the degree of harm to women who receive pension for alimony because of income from work. Widening the system of day care for early childhood, including in work places, and implementation of the Long School Day Law in order to allow for both spouses to go out to work full time
 - Funding of expenses to care for children up to the age of 8 for working families
 - Advancing paternity leave, in parallel to maternity leave and not instead of it
 - Setting a flexible retirement age in and objections to the coercion of raising the retirement age for women. We need to allow women and men to retire in accordance with their needs and type of their work, and to allow for receiving allowances and pensions accordingly
 - Meretz objects to the Nullification of early childhood custody that will in practice cause harm to children and women. From lessons learned from other countries it arises that even after changes in the determining rules on the question of custody the main care remains in the hands of mothers who become poorer and weaker as a result of the change. Nullification of early childhood custody will cause the development of a new arena of legal struggles between parents over the custody of their children, to severe damage to the economic wellbeing of children in families with divorces, damage to the sensitive wellbeing of children, to elevating the extortion of women in divorce proceedings by way of a fight in custody struggles. Our position is that when inequality is corrected, among other things in legislation that anchors marriage and divorce law in Israel in religious law, we need to examine the replacement of early childhood custody with alternating legal custody – custody that determines that there will be a division of time between the parents before separation for the period after the separation realizing the benefit of the child
3. The struggle against violence against women
- A continuation of the fight against violence towards women in varied ways including education, adult education and preventive means
 - As of today there is an emergency unit for handling sexual violence in only five hospitals in the country (out of 21). Meretz will act to establish about another 17 units during the coming years in order to offer an appropriate national distribution
 - Arranging a new procedure to handle sexual violence in the health system. The existing procedure was formulated more than 15 years ago, and it is antiquated and not updated
 - Central assistance budgeting, shelters for battered women and treatment for violent men
 - Public housing for women leaving shelters for battered women
 - A fight against the phenomenon of prostitution, human trafficking of women, and sexual exploitation of women, and significant budgeting to prevent patronizing prostitutes among men. Continued advancement of legislation to criminalize prostitution clients
 - Nullification of the expiration of sex offense in the family
 - Passing a law of compensation and rehabilitation for victims of sexual attacks
 - Establishing a department for sexual offenses in the courts

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- Safe use in the public sphere and making the public sphere accessible to women, for example: placing lighting during all hours of the day, guarding of underground parking lots and more
- Enforcement of regulations prohibiting bringing weapons home for security workers and those in defense service
- Training education staff, medical staff, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists to locate, identify, treat, and rehabilitate victims of violence
- Special training for teams in the law enforcement system – policy, prosecutors, and judges – to handle instances where women are the victims of violence
- Advancing a training program for teaching staff and mandatory workshops matched to all ages on the topic of gender equality, health sexuality and preventing sexual violence
- Advancing legislation that will guarantee the wellbeing of women during demonstrations and protections from sexual violence from police entities

4. Miscellaneous

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Making public transportation accessible for women in general and for Arab women in particular
- Making language in official forms, in signage and in notices places in public places accessible so that they are appropriate for all genders
- Advancing women in sports and fair budgeting for women's sports
- Establishing an external body in academic institutions to study complaints about sexual harassment in institutions

7.2.2 Rights of the gay community

The commitment of Meretz to the gay community is strong, consistent and has existed for many years. Meretz fights for the recognition of homosexuals, lesbians, bisexual people, transgender people and queer people as individuals, as family cells and as communities, in being citizens with equal rights and status. Meretz recognizes that sexual orientation and sexual identity, with the range of forms and expressions, are an inseparable part of each and every man and woman. Discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender difference or their expression, is a fundamental injury to the right of people to privacy and to personal freedom. Meretz recognizes the right of each and every person to determine for themselves their gender identity and the manner in which they express their identity without connection to their biological sex. Meretz is committed to parenting and families of same sex couples and has promoted the rights of gay families for many years.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

This section of the platform is an expansion and details of the document of demands of the gay community in Israel, which 14 associations in the community have already signed, as it was submitted to the government of Israel during the LGBTQ demonstration for full rights in the summer of 2018.

7.2.2.1 Preventing crime, violence and discrimination towards the gay community:

- A. Making more severe handling and punishment of those carrying out incitement and hate crimes on the background of homophobia and transphobia. Advancing legislation that will include sexual orientation and gender identity among the grounds allowing indictments for incitement to racism and comparison of the status of victims of hate crimes to the status of terror victims from the perspective of compensation and payments
- B. Completion of the amendment to the Interpretation Law – adding a definition of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression to any law dealing with discrimination
- C. Legislation prohibiting gender conversion therapy for minors and prohibition against publicizing conversion therapy
- D. A fight against any attempt of a government and/or local authority to negatively discriminate, practically and budgetarily, against the LGBTQ community or to constrict their actions in advancing their culture and identity, including holding pride marches in the cities of Israel among them the capital city, Jerusalem

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7.2.2.2 Recognition of gender identity

- A. Amendment of the procedures of the Population Authority so that a change in the item of sex will be possible in the population registry on the basis of the declaration of the person requesting only, as well as changing the birth certificate in a manner that reflects the gender identity
- B. Government recognition of the right of a person to self-definition as belonging to a third gender that is neither male or female, man or woman, or as lacking a gender
- C. A law will be enacted obligating the government to change the registration method and official forms in all government offices and in public institutions so that possibilities of registration of additional gender identity and relationships beyond those existing today will be allowed. The government will allocate resources for this objective and will establish a body responsible for its execution

7.2.2.3 Recognition of gay families

- A. Equality and recognition of relations between same-sex spouses, as well as couples where one of the spouses is transgender. Meretz will act to establish civil marriages in Israel including marriages of same-sex couples and of couples where one of the spouses is transgender
- B. Registration of LGBTQ couples as parents in a manner identical to the registration of heterosexual parents – recognition of non-biological parents as parents with no need for a legal proceeding and adoption
- C. Offering the possibility of adoption in Israel and overseas – legislation that will allow adopting children in Israel and from overseas, both by same-sex spouses and by individuals
- D. We will act to amend the Surrogacy Law, so that it will apply in equal fashion to gay couples, heterosexual couples and individuals. All this while being diligent about the rights of women over their bodies and preserving their rights of surrogacy. In addition the government will financially support surrogacy and adoption arrangements, so that the right to parenthood will not be open only to the wealthy
- E. Regularizing a designated path in health funds and in the public health system for lesbians who wish to become pregnant
- F. Inclusion of same-sex couples and transgender parents in the authority of family courts, including the possibility of dissolving a marriage
- G. Meretz will object to any proposed law in which there is damage to the status of same-sex couples and transgender parents, and will act to counteract discrimination in all the existing laws
- H. Recognition of family cells in which there are more than two parents

7.2.2.4 Matching services to the LGBTQ population:

- A. Development of a sequence of adjusted designated responses, a combination of services existing for the transgender community, LGBTQ people in the Arab sector, the religious and ultra-orthodox, and LGBTQ people in the cycle of prostitution
- B. Adjusting plans for integration into the employment market for the transgender community
- C. Allocation of resources to expand support and assistance to transgender people in dealing with the process of gender transition, including therapeutic treatments that are not in the surgical framework for gender affirmation
- D. Allocation of resources for emotional and social support frameworks for transgender people, training professionals in all areas of gender issues and identity by way of legislation and in the framework of government policy
- E. Passing a law of LGBTQ training for medical, welfare, and educational teams
- F. Advancement of a government plan to accommodate bathrooms for all genders

7.2.2.5 Equality in health

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- A. Significantly increase the budgets for gender confirmation for the purpose of expansion of medical teams, allocation of operating room hours, and training appropriate medical institutions in addition to those existing
- B. Inclusion of all gender confirmation surgeries not carried out on genitalia in the health basket
- C. Advancing the writing or procedures for treating transgender and bisexual people in the mental health system
- D. Inclusion of PREP and life-improving medications for HIV carriers in the basket of basic medications
- E. Nullification of the discrimination against transgender people in funding fertility treatment and freezing sperm and eggs, making them equivalent to the conditions existing for patients who are not transgender
- F. Allocation of resources to treat the suicide in the transgender community

7.2.2.6 Education for tolerance, respecting the other, and acceptance of the gay community

- A. Writing and assimilation of a CEO pamphlet defining treatment of the LGBTQ community in general and transgender people in particular, in all streams of the education system
- B. Bringing in LGBTQ educational content to relevant academic institutions and updating the educational content so that it will contain examples of new family units and varied gender identity
- C. Holding mandatory training on LGBTQ topics for educators, lecturers in academic institutions, caregivers and providers of public services
- D. Bringing in content with history of the LGBTQ struggle in Israel in the framework of civics and history studies

7.2.2.7 Resource allocation

- A. Opening a designated budgetary regulation for budgeting activity of the gay community
- B. Budgeting for institutions and bodies carrying out housing solutions for young people thrown out of their homes as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression or for anyone who is suffering from housing discrimination on the background of being LGBTQ, and especially for transgender youth and adults, who cannot receive a response in the existing framework. Included in this is an allocation of apartments in public housing for the transgender community or inclusion of gender differences in the criteria granting rights to public housing
- C. Increasing the budgets designated for the gay community to at least 50 million NIS in the base budget with an emphasis on senior citizens, the periphery and weakened populations
- D. Increasing the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Israel Gay Youth organization and for various groups of LGBTQ youth in Israel, in order to move existing safe spaces to the Israeli education system
- E. Allocating resources for scholarships for higher education, completion of education and professional training for transgender people (and gay people).

7.2.3 Children's rights

The rights of children require special attention. In accordance with the international convention on children's rights, Meretz will act to advance the rights of minors in Israel, both in new legislation and in continuing to advance legislation on the matter of children's rights. The starting point of the convention sees children as autonomous creations carrying rights and obligations. The rights are given to all children as human beings and they are not granted to children contingent on them being citizens, residents or holders of any other status. In this sense all the rights given to children in the convention are human rights. At the same time, some of the rights are unique for children, among them the right to connection with the parents, the right to development and the right to education.

Meretz will act to advance legislation of the four central principles of the convention: the principle of equality, the principle of the welfare of children, the principle of life, survival and development, the development of children's participation in decisions that impact their lives.

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7.2.4 Rights of refugees, asylum seekers and economic immigrants

Israel was established as a nation of refugees. It seems that most Knesset members have forgotten this fact. Laws have been passed in the Knesset that harm the rights of refugees, permitting them to be detained in camps and even allowing the detention of children. In addition, the public discourse on the topic of refugees has become coarse, violent and dangerous. The policy of persecution that the government has chosen, which prevents work permits and basic rights, has brought about a situation where in actuality the southern neighborhoods in Tel Aviv are the primary ones paying the price. The country must have a policy that is grounded in the national memory of the refugee experience, a policy that will undertake the required effort to provide a humane response to the distress of asylum seekers at all layers of society. The country is struggling against economic immigrants but in parallel continues to recruit additional workers from around the world who many times are themselves exploited, both by the human resources companies who brought them to Israel as well as by employers.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Refugees and asylum seekers:
 - Nullification of the policy of expulsion and imprisonment of asylum seekers and prevention of the return or renewed opening of a prison facility, such as the Holot facility. Establishment of a fair and functioning system of examining asylum requests and granting the status of refugee to asylum seekers who will be recognized as refugees
 - Providing work permits to asylum seekers until clarification of their status
 - Establishment of social residence (accessibility to welfare and health services) to asylum seekers and guaranteeing accessibility to health and welfare services until receiving the status of refugee
 - Advancing the United Nations outline that was achieved in consent with countries around the world, to remove half of the asylum seekers currently living in Israel from Israel for resettlement in western countries, and to provide humanitarian status to the remaining half, spreading them around the country in a manner that will lower the burden on the neighborhoods in south Tel Aviv
 - Advancing an implementable and budgeted plan to spread out the asylum seekers around the country along with their integration and training, for example the plan for leaders of the economy, signed by more than 60 senior people in the Israeli economy. The plan includes: Rehabilitation of south Tel Aviv through investment in a physical infrastructure, comprehensive social rehabilitation and establishment of a public authority that will act in cooperation with the area's residents; controlled spreading out of the refugee population in the entire country in accordance with demand for workers in each area, being diligent that the number of refugees will not exceed one percent of the population of the locality where they will reside; work permits and appropriate professional training for the asylum seekers
- Immigrants:
 - Providing work permits in Israel for the economic immigrants on a personal basis of the worker subject to a bilateral agreement between governments, and not through human resource companies
 - Nullifying the immigration police, and significantly expanding the unit for enforcement of employment laws. This unit will engage in, among other things, ensuring equal working conditions for economic immigrants
 - Establishing a moratorium on all economic immigrants living in Israel for a period of one year, during which the workers can arrange their status. Economic immigrants will be able to receive permits to stay, until receiving permanent status and citizenship
 - Giving permanent status to children of foreign workers who were born in Israel or have lived in the country for five years and more, so they will later be able to request and to receive Israeli citizenship
 - Guaranteeing the right to health in the framework of the Government Health Insurance Law, as well as education, coverage for work accidents, disability and childbirth for every foreign worker employed in Israel

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- Advancing reform in employment conditions of foreign workers in nursing – nullifying the obligation to sleep in the home of the patient, nullifying the employee-employer relationship between the caregiver and the nursing patient, clearly defining the employer, who will be responsible for all rights of the workers, regularizing terms of employment, and payment for overtime
- Implementation of a law about work hours and rest for all economic immigrants employed in Israel
- Adopting the national program to fight against human trafficking 2019-2024
- Nullifying the agreements with the Turkish and Chinese execution companies preventing mobility between employers

7.2.5 Rights for people with limitations

We are all people with limitations, or we have in our families people with limitations. It is possible that they fell ill or were injured and became temporarily limited, or they have experienced limitations when aging. In being part of society, the right of people with limitations is to be fully integrated in social life, and we cannot make do with steps that have the objective of making things better for them or to relieve them in their isolation. We must make society accessible so that each and every person reaches what they desire in an honorable and independent way and will be able to realize their aspirations freely. The implementation of the Law of Equality of Rights for People with Limitations, which was enacted in the 19th and 20th Knesset on the subject of realizing the right to accessibility, improved the condition of people with limitations, however the road to creating equality and complete rights is still long. Meretz is obligated to the continuation of the struggle, and to allocating all the resources required for full implementation of the law.

- Meretz will act to advance the rights of children and people with limitations and their families, in a manner that will match the international convention on the rights of people with limitations
- Among other things, Meretz will act to prevent sectoral and discriminatory legislation; to legislate the remaining parts in the rights of people with limitations law; to amend the antiquated laws that do not match the international convention and with the law of equality of rights
- Meretz will act to establish a law of equality of rights for people with limitations for all government ministries and government authorities, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defense
- Meretz will act to legislate a family rights law of people with special needs as quickly as possible
- Meretz will act to make the education system accessible to all children and will promote legislation of rights for children with special needs in education in a manner that will advance their inclusion respectfully in the community of children in Israel
- Enactment of a rehabilitation law for people with limitations and establishment of a national rehabilitation authority
- Ensuring effective enforcement of laws so that any discrimination in employment will be prevented and accessibility in public places and in public will be ensured for people with limitations
- Raising the disability allowance to the level of minimum wages
- Raising special services allowances to a level that will allow for the fair employment of a nursing worker
- Enactment of a part on the topic of housing in the community, personal assistance and education, in the law of rights for people with limitations
- Meretz will act to limit to a minimum hostels with many residents and will support the transition to supportive housing in the community, with a range of different possibilities, in accordance with the needs of the person entitled to nursing and support
- Meretz will act to establish a supervision and handling mechanism for inquiries and the rights of people living in institutions
- The integration of children with limitations in regular education, in accordance with the wishes of the parents, and budgeting of an integration basket belonging to the child (and not to the framework the child belongs to) in a differential manner based on the functional level

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- Allocation of comparable resources for the level of services for people with limitations in Arab society
- Implementation of the reform in mental health so that multi-level treatment that is available and fair within the community will be comparable
- Removal of the medical committees from the hands of National Insurance in accordance with the recommendations of the Goldberg Committee and establishing a reform in the structure of the committees so that the right of the disabled person to appropriate treatment and to representation on his behalf in the committee will be guaranteed
- Making rights in the field of health comparable between the IDF disabled, those disabled by work accidents and the disabled in general
- Promoting the accessibility of higher education to people with limitations by way of government investment in physical and sensory accommodations of all academic institutions, advancing programs to encourage academic studies of people with limitations and increasing the compensation given to employers of workers with limitations
- Enacting a law encouraging investment of capital for factories where more than half of their employees are people with limitations, and determining taxation benefits for employers employing more than 10% of people with limitations
- Significantly limiting employment of workers by way of “protected factories” and integration of as many people as possible in supported employment in the free market

7.2.6 Equality for neglected and weakened groups

During the history of the country certain social groups – Mizrahim from Arab and Muslim nations, those from Ethiopia and those from the former Soviet Union – have suffered from various forms of exclusion and neglect, both on the side of the government and also on the side of various layers of Israeli society. Geographic differentiation, inequality in access to resources, discrimination in allocation of resources, coerced settlement in the periphery, referral to differentiated education and careers, cultural suppression and hidden and overt expressions of racism. A worthy society cannot accept the continuation of this situation, and the government must act to repair the wrongdoings of the past and the present. For this purpose a radical change of policy is mandatory in all areas:

- Just distribution of resources, including state land by way of leases for the purpose of housing
- Differential investment in the primary and secondary school system with the purpose of ending parallel tracking, one designated for students going into academics, and the other for low-skilled occupations
- Accessibility to higher education at all levels so that the benches of academe will reflect the socio-economic, ethnic and cultural mosaic of Israeli society
- Legislative steps that will guarantee equal representation for all cultures and for all parts of Israeli society in the public sphere, especially in the media
- Promoting equal investment and fair distribution of budgets of public cultural and arts institutions in Israel, so that they give expression to the range and languages of the various communities and groups in Israel
- Promoting steps of affirmative action with the purpose of equal staffing of government positions at all levels
- Change in curricula so that they will equally represent the history and culture of all groups in Israel
- Establishing local heritage and ethnic centers that will make possible the preservation and transfer of various heritages within Judaism, and documentation of the collective experience in the processes of absorption and immigration
- Enhancing awareness of rights among immigrations, and especially their rights as workers
- Establishing a committee that will examine a re-distribution of land in Israel for groups sent to the periphery during their absorption (especially if this was done through coercion)
- A battle against racism towards these groups and especially what is founded in the education system and additional ways

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7.2.7 The status of senior citizens

The status of senior citizens has been eroded in recent years in a worrisome manner. Senior citizens have rights and they have the ability to make a significant contribution to society. Meretz sees unique importance to guaranteeing the right of senior citizens to live with dignity and the guarantee of their status and economic resilience, in order that they be able to function optimally in the community where they live and to fully express their retirement years.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Raising old age and universal pensions and linking them to the minimum salary, by bringing them into the overall income for tax purposes
- In the absence of a reform in the taxation system – a guarantee that supplement to the income of the old person, without any other income, will bring income at the level of the minimum wages for an individual
- Guaranteeing a pension for each and every worker
- Expanding the relevant salary components for the purpose of calculating the pension, in order to prevent a drastic decrease in the lifestyle with retirement
- Enactment of a government pension
- Linking pension retirement to the average salary in the economy to prevent its long-term erosion
- Nullifying administrative fees in senior pension funds, an additional tax not justified for retirees
- Re-examining an array of incentives and benefits to ease the poverty in old age
- Nullifying the discrimination in receiving health services for age reasons
- Offering the possibility to take a “reverse mortgage” with government guarantee, which will allow senior citizens to continue to live in their homes and to receive a regular monthly sum that will help in daily life
- Enacting a law for supervising assisted living transactions, to prevent exploitation of senior citizens
- Encouraging the establishment of assisted living facilities that are not for-profit, by way of allocating designated land, preferring relationships with self-organizing under the ownership of senior citizens to build assisted living and mandatory imposition on contractors to allocate 25% of the apartments in assisted living facilities at a fair price in criteria of attainable housing
- Increasing the hours of nursing care due to a person in his home and expanding the eligibility for such care, so that those with limitations can also continue to live in the community
- Creating a comprehensive reform in the field of nursing care, nullifying the definition of the nursing patient as an employer and creating community-based alternatives both for hospitalization as well as for treatment at home
- Defining nursing care as a profession mandating training and licensing
- Integrating and accommodating in the system of services for the population of the elderly, both at the policy level and the level of supply of service in the community, which will allow matching the service to the individual and a convenient transition between services
- Guaranteeing a uniform level of services in the entire country, being diligent about equality in accessibility and in the quality of services, with an emphasis on the geographic periphery and on oppressed and weakened populations: Arabs, Mizrahim, those from Ethiopia and those from the former Soviet Union
- Developing programs in all areas of the country for healthy cities that are friendly to the elderly. Making public spaces in the municipal sphere accessible so that everyone will feel safe in them
- Developing ways to offer elderly people active involvement in shaping their lives
- Deepening way to locate, uncover and treat those suffering from maltreatment and neglect
- Implementing the national plan to deal with Alzheimer’s disease

7.2.8 Holocaust survivors

Many Holocaust survivors in Israel without recognition and without benefitting from appropriate living conditions. We need to stop the discrimination against Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Israel after the year 1953. These people, who survived purgatory, are dealing with their old age in poverty. This is an embarrassment that more than anything indicates our condition as a society. Meretz will act to enact a law for the rights of Holocaust survivors, which will guarantee equal rights for each survivor, who lived in Germany or one of its partners, or in the area of the Soviet Union and North Africa occupied by the Nazis, in the period of the Second World War.

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7.3 Working settlements and agriculture

7.3.1 Settlements and kibbutzim

Kibbutz settlements and the kibbutz movement represent a model of integration between individual freedoms and community solidarity

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Guaranteeing the equality of rights of kibbutz members to receive welfare services
- Guaranteeing the legal conditions that will allow each kibbutz to exist in the manner it selects for itself and at the level of cooperation and equality it defines for its members
- Guaranteeing the right of all kibbutz member reaching old age to receive a fair pension, in accordance with their needs and in accordance with the rights they have accumulated in their kibbutz. The government will guarantee a fair pension to kibbutz members, who have been left without pension savings in their old age
- Guaranteeing the property rights of kibbutzim and their members in their residential plots

7.3.2 Education for a shared life

The structural separation in the area of education causes a situation where in the formative years of life children and young people do not meet children who are different from them religiously, ethnically, or socio-economically. They learn about the other in the media primarily during times of crisis. So “others” are depicted as a threat and not as potential partners. In order to move from the stage of crisis to the stage of partnership, the entire education system, from kindergarten age and up to post-secondary education, must allow continuous encounters, persistent dialogue, and cultivation of a multi-cultural outlook with a foundation of tolerance and inclusion among all the different citizens of Israel. Personal familiarity is the key to creating personal and humane dialogue between members of the different groups, and this is on the basis of two principles: the first principle – enhancing trust, on the basis of the agreement of the respect towards people being a supreme value and no one can object to the right of “the other” to live honorably. The second principle – the principle of equality. In order to enhance trust we must create an equal social system in the country, and primarily to guarantee a fair distribution of resources among all students in Israel expressing the needs of each child.

Meretz will act to guarantee education for a shared life in Israel by way of:

- Teacher training: A system of teacher training in the country must train teachers who believe in a shared life and with leadership and change ability in the education system. Training for a shared life will be a prerequisite for receiving a teaching certificate. A teacher will not receive a teaching certificate without passing a training course on the topic of a shared life
- A multi-year and multi-age curriculum on the topic of a shared life: Meretz will act to establish a government committee with the purpose of formulating the contents of the curriculum on the topic of a shared life
- Encounters between Jews and Arabs in the education system: Today most schools in Israel are not partners in programs of encounters between Jews and Arabs. Meretz will act to significantly expand the scope of the meetings in the education system by way of doubling the budget designated for these encounters in the Ministry of Education
- The headquarters for shared life in the Ministry of Education: Meretz will act to significantly increase the budget of the headquarters for a shared life in the Ministry of Education, the existing headquarters of a shared life will be strengthened, and it will accompany and instill the process of inserting programs of shared life into the system
- Integration of Arab teachers in Jewish schools and Jewish teachers in Arab schools: This integration can be a practical model of shared life and therefore Meretz will act to double the number of teachers who teach in schools of the other society
- Expansion of bi-lingual education in Israel: Meretz will act in order to strengthen and expand schools and kindergartens in bi-lingual education and to integrate them in the government education system

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7.3.3 Agriculture

Meretz places much importance on the existence of agriculture, which is a primary component in nutritional resilience and the strength of the country and its ability to take care of its citizens. Agriculture is also an important component of preserving open areas, acting as green lungs and offering a response to the problem of desertification in the south of the country. Farmers have the right to earn a living from their land and to preserve them as agricultural land, to the benefit of the entire country:

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Re-examination of the system of support for agriculture, with an emphasis on environmental quality, agriculture in an era of extreme climate change, technologies that save water and personnel, as well as support in farmer cooperatives that work together with funding, packing and marketing of their products, while guaranteeing that the support of Israeli agriculture will not be lower than the average in OECD nations
- Deep recognition of agriculture as a public product and preserving planning in agriculture from a commitment to steady supply of healthy and inexpensive food to the consumer. Recognition of cooperative mechanisms as essential to meeting this objective
- Meretz will act to implement a law of standards in agriculture, and to label the country of origin of all agricultural products as customary in formats in countries around the world
- Operationalizing a policy that will guarantee profitability of agriculture and prevention of the dependence on external entities, by determining the appropriate conditions for manufacture and trade, while preserving the rights of the workers employed in this field
- Increasing investments in agriculture and especially investments required for reasons of environmental quality and limiting the use of fresh water. Transferring Israeli agriculture to crops using small amounts of water and less impacted by drought conditions
- Founding most growth on recycled water
- Making sure there is insurance in the case of agricultural crime
- Decreasing the brokering gaps between fresh agriculture products, among other things by establishing a national wholesale market
- Investment in purification facilities that will make maximum use of recycled water possible and maximal savings of fresh water

8. Sustainability – Housing, Transportation, Planning and the Environment

8.1 Housing and Planning

Meretz believes that all residents have the basic right to housing, and therefore the country has the obligation to guarantee appropriate shelter. The government's policy in recent years promoted short-term solutions and was primarily based on the free market. The state of Israel has not developed the correct policy in the fields of regional and urban planning. These failures have brought about an increase in the prices of housing and to a broad scope crisis we currently find ourselves in and to damage to the quality of life and the welfare of the residents of Israel.

Meretz will act to carry out an emergency national program to settle the housing crisis, which will include:

- Budgetary construction of hundreds of thousands of housing units
- Placing clauses of attainable housing in every new plan
- Nullifying the waiting lists for public housing
- Developing models for long-term rentals and creation of long-term rent mechanisms and protecting apartment renovators and supervision over rent
- Marketing through leasing public lands in government bids, and halting maximum price bids, for the purpose of significantly reducing the price of housing
- Immediate arrangement of solutions for housing shortages

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- Massively expanding the pool of public housing on the bases of sales money of the apartments in public housing, in accordance with the principles of the Public Housing Law. About 15,000 apartments will be added to the pool of public housing within a decade.
- We need to act with all legal efforts to return apartments to the pool of public housing, for apartments sold in contradiction to the law to private bodies and associations, and to immediately put an end to the illegal sale of public apartments not to their tenants
- Determining transparent criteria for distribution of public housing to those eligible
- Establishment of public housing in the center of the country alongside gradually limiting the rate of public housing in the periphery and in distressed neighborhoods
- Increasing the amounts transferred to those eligible for assistance with rent, in accordance with the rental prices in the economy, and determining transparent criteria for giving eligibility and granting a government guarantee for renters
- Urban renewal of the centers of cities, optimizing public transportation, and development of planning in the approach of mixed use in urban areas
- Determining a definition in the Attainable housing Law and construction of attainable housing, so that this will be based on income, and will allow households with lower income to live in appropriate housing through ownership or through rental, without harming their other basic needs
- Implementing a comprehensive national program of urban renewal to establish 100 thousand housing units in the centers of cities, in the framework of which an urban renewal authority will be established to be responsible, among other things, for National Outline Plan 38, development of the centers of cities, making cities denser, and preserving open areas
- Incentivizing the return of empty apartments and land bought for construction to the market to increase the housing supply – with an emphasis on high-demand areas
- Encouraging construction for long-term rental with government funding. The government will be the one to take care of the construction, to rent and to maintain the properties
- Making new construction permits contingent on such that a certain percentage of the apartments will become public housing and attainable housing and with planning of public transportation
- Integration of instructions for building attainable housing for people with limitations in new construction
- Giving the possibility to tenants in public housing to purchase their apartments with significant discounts, in accordance with the Public Housing Law, enacted by Meretz
- Setting property tax of 30% of the value of the house on anyone holding more than one apartment, which will become valid within one year of its enactment. Apartment owners will be able to avoid paying the said tax, if they notify that they are subordinating the apartments in their ownership to fair rentals, which will determine the level of the rental fees and terms
- Special attention to the housing needs of the Arab population and removal of obstacles causing the deep inequality in allocating land resources between Jews and Arabs
- Giving benefits to establish cooperative housing, under the ownership of the tenants, which will operate through rental, not limited in time, and commitment sustainable payments without maximizing profits

8.2 Transportation

Israelis feel the worsening transportation crisis every day. The State of Israel suffers from a defective infrastructure, a severe shortage of efficient and rapid public transportation, a lack of appropriate and efficient transportation alternatives. This situation is the fruit of many years of neglect and lack of advanced planning, lack of inclusive and flexible regulations that can be changed, and not using advanced technology. As a result of all of these the congestion on the roads is getting stronger, while public transportation is incomplete and inefficient.

8.2.1 The congestion on the roads

The road system in Israel is among the most crowded in the world. Israelis spend a lot of time in traffic jams, time with a personal, social and economic cost that is skyrocketing. The density on the roads today, which is 5.3 times the average in OECD countries, is expected to become even worse in coming years. Without massive intervention, the length of congestion on the main roads and the cost to the economy are expected to double within two decades.

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It is currently estimated that daily entry into Tel Aviv during rush hour wastes between 200-250 hours per year on average, weighted to five weeks of work. If the growth in using private vehicles without broad investment in expanding the scope of public transportation and alternatives to using private vehicles, it is projected that in the year 2030 Israelis will sit on the roads 60 minutes more than today. The economic damage that is estimated for such a situation will stand at about 70 billion shekels per year and in 2040 will stand at about 100 billion shekels per year.

8.2.2 Public transportation

Varied and developed public transportation is a key component in an environmental outlook. It is an essential condition for the mobility of populations from the periphery to the center of cities, to reduce gaps, to limit pollution and for economical and wise use of land. The slaughter on the roads in Israel collects a high price that will decrease as an efficient and convenient public transportation system is developed.

Every person in Israel has the right to be mobile at any time. Preventing public transportation on Shabbat and holidays, prevents the possibility to rely on public transportation and therefore it has severe environmental and social implications and requires many to keep private vehicles.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- A government target for transferring travel from private transportation to public transportation
- Significant preference to public transportation and massive investment in the public transportation infrastructure. Installation of these infrastructure facilities will be done in a calculated way in order to save public funds, to increase the expected efficiency and to prevent damage to the rare values of nature (such as Nahal Yatleh)
- Encouragement of the use of public transportation, by allocating appropriate resources, increasing its frequency and availability, the information system and integrated targeting. The prices of public transportation will be subsidized at a rate of 80% for senior citizens, children, students and people with limitations
- Paving at least 50 kilometers of public transportation pathways per year with regular enforcement
- Operating public transportation seven days a week, 24 hours a day, including inter-city trains and buses, as the basis for improvement and advancement of the weakened population, to bring the periphery closer to the center and to limit the use of private vehicles with the negative implications for the environment
- Promoting the establishment of metropolitan authorities for transportation, that will see the overall transportation map in front of them, alongside the needs of the populations who are residents of the metropolis. The metropolitan authority for transportation will advance a transportation system in the metropolis, on the basis of shared planning for the metropolis, the Ministry of Transportation, and the local residents, and not based on the desires of the operator of the public transportation

8.2.3 Transportation alternatives

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Full implementation of a plan for rapid lines to industrial zones
- Mandating submitting a survey of the sustainable transportation with a new construction plan
- Increasing the number of drivers in bus transportation by improving work conditions and increasing the handling system in the Ministry of Transportation
- Encouraging non-motorized mobility, such as bicycles or walking, by creating safe lanes, expanding possibility to load bicycles in public transportation, fighting against the theft of bicycles, a system of bicycle rentals, showers in work places and more
- Limiting private trips by way of decreasing import of vehicles, taking old vehicles off the road, increasing fines, the surcharges, the levies, and the taxes involved with maintaining vehicles, an increased tax on a second vehicle per household, limiting investment in new roads and parking spots

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- Limiting the mitigations for leasing – it will not be possible to lease as a corporate expenditure, for gas that was paid for, if there is no limit to the total kilometers that the worker travels in corporate vehicles
- Public transportation lanes at the entrance to large cities and expanding congestion taxes. The model of the rapid lane to Tel Aviv, which includes an efficient and well-developed public transportation system needs to be copied to the eastern and northern entrances of Tel Aviv and similar models need to be operated at the entrances to Jerusalem and Haifa
- A vehicle that is not used for a regular day per week will grant an economic benefit to its owners. The benefits to work places that will encourage use of public transportation or by non-motorized means (bicycles etc.) as well as those that will encourage car-sharing
- A policy that does not encourage import of new vehicles and their purchase. In the case of purchasing a new vehicle, there will be a clear preference for vehicles that are not wasteful and that emit less pollution and greenhouse gases (for example “hybrid” vehicles)
- Acceleration of a process of building system lines for mass transport in the Gush Dan metropolis, in the areas of Haifa and Jerusalem, by limiting to an essential minimum of disruption for the residents of these places and the damages to business operating along the routes
- Meretz objects to establishing civilian airports in agricultural areas such as the Jezreel valley, Ramat Menashe or Megiddo because of the heavy damage to health and the environment and the severe damage to agriculture. There are a number of alternatives to establishment of an airport to complement Ben Gurion Airport, not in these areas. First and foremost – the original alternative at Nevatim in the Negev where all the local adjacent local authorities see as the basis for an economic, tourism and commercial anchor for the Negev

8.2.4 Road safety

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Implementation of the multi-year plan for the fight against traffic accidents (on the basis of the Scheinin report with the changes requested to prevent the growth in traffic volume), including investment of resources required to carry it out.
- Basing the Authority for Road Safety as an independent authority
- Increasing education and public relations for the culture of safety in all sectors in Israel

8.3 The Environment

8.3.1 Environmental justice

Environmental justice is the equal right to accessibility to clean air, to quality of life and to health. The connection between people and the place where they live, the vegetation and animals, is an integral part of our life. Defending environmental resources and the right to accessibility of the society to them, also in future generations, is a principle standing at the center of the environmental approach of Meretz.

The Israeli public is aware of and acts to promote environmental justice, however the current government and the person at its head have acted in contradiction to their commitment to the public in this context also. Under Prime Minister Netanyahu a decision was made to privatize state land – the decision known as “The Reform in Land Policy and Planning in Israel.” This is a policy that perpetuates the wrongdoings of the existing system, encourages waste of land that cries out and accelerates the economic-social weakening of the periphery. Israel must stop ignoring the environmental issues and act on a fair distribution of Israeli natural resources and the income from them.

Meretz led the battle to protect the environment in the Knesset, in the government and in the local councils, by way of important cooperation with environmental organizations and activists as well as with selected public from other parties. However it is not enough to recruit the political system to the environmental campaign. Meretz is acting and continues to act to expand the circles of those committed to environmental protection as well as the strengthening and backing up of the law and trial system, industry, agriculture, consumerism, the economy, security, planning, and education

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8.3.2 Open areas and planning policy

Open areas have much value from the ecological perspective. In crowded Israel their value increases, and the threats reflected to them are getting more powerful, and primarily stem from an attitude about land as a real estate resource and as a political tool. The reform in land management that causes their privatization makes this situation worse. Therefore there is a need to for a preventive struggle and repair of the distortion. State lands will remain under government ownership, and their sale will be prohibited.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Statutory promotion of a national plan for the open areas
- Strengthening the independence of the planning system by way of statutory processes for participation of the public, creating balances and brakes in the planning system and expanding representation in planning entities
- Nullifying the steps taken by the last government to limit independence of the planning system
- Determining criteria for leasing state land in the spirit of the value of equality and limiting the social gaps
- The Israel Lands Authority will be obligated to publish proposed decisions, their decisions as well as the minutes of discussions of the board of directors
- The priorities of the Land authority (the former Israel Lands Administration) so that emphasis will be placed on involving the public, about transparency and on the national interest and not on the privatization of state land
- The reform in planning will be canceled and an alternative reform will be promoted, one that is intelligent, transparent and inclusive
- Standing at the basis of the amended Law of Planning and Construction proposed by Meretz will stand the public interest and the integrity of the ecological systems. This reform will operate to strengthen regional planning committees, and to strengthen the civilian involvement in the planning processes including expansion of the right of opposition to civilian organizations and to the broad public, as well as enhancing transparency and public accessibility to information
- We need to make the process of licensing more efficient, among other things by way of allocating the required human resources to the existing planning committees, as well as to regional offices
- Institutions in the planning system will be cancelled, with their entire purpose is bypassing the customary processes and rejecting the public interest, such as the National Planning Board, the regional planning committees and the public housing committee, and the regional committees will be strengthened
- The defense system will be subject to all the conditions, the limitations and the principles of transparency applicable to any other body in the planning system
- The planning policy must be long-range, and must refer to land as a public resource, belonging in an equal manner to the overall public in Israel
- Urban renewal must be placed as a national objective, preserving the principals of National Outline Plan 35, to make urban centers denser, to encourage saturated construction, building vertically and green construction, and to act to limit ground level construction. Suburbanization is a significant problem that is expressed in waste of land resources, in growth in the dependence on transportation, in infrastructures and more
- Service and employment centers should be developed in each settlement block, in order to allow all citizens good accessibility to public, commercial, and community services, at a walking distance or brief travel distance from home
- The planning should take into account environmental, social, transportation and health aspects. Each plan must allow mobility through sustainable means – firstly walking, riding bicycles and public transportation that is efficient and useful. In each urban plan allocation should be taken into account of green areas in accordance with the law and the regulations

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- In accordance with past decisions of the Israeli government and of planning institutions, no new settlements will be established in Israel. This prohibition will be anchored in law. Underneath this, planning will focus on strengthening and condensing existing settlements, including the scattered Bedouin settlements in the Negev. Old plans (from 8 years or more ago) that have not yet begun to be carried out will be brought up for discussion again in the planning institutions, with attention to updated legislation and to the new National Outline Plans, especially in the field of construction along the shoreline. Planning will take into account integrative considerations of preserving the values of nature and landscape, the cultural and social heritage (such as agriculture, archeology, a range of forms of settlement, ethnic and national traditions) and social justice
- Mandating that new construction meet the new Israeli standard for green building. Government support and subsidies for environmental renovation of existing buildings with the retrofitting method (limiting the consumption of energy, water and raw materials)

8.3.3 Policy that is environmentally friendly – assimilating the existing attitudes into the processes of making decisions

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Guaranteeing public accessibility to environmental information, including updated information in real time about damage and environmental nuisances, and planning information (including auxiliary documents)
- Full implementation and enforcement of the Freedom of Information Law (environmental information). For the purpose of increasing transparency, legislation needs to be promoted obligating government, business, private, and public corporations as one to report to the public in an organized way about their transportation-environmental influences, in a wider range of fields than what is mandated by law today
- Implementation of the obligation of consultation in environmental organizations existing in law, enacted with the sponsorship of Meretz, and expansion of this obligation for additional processes, influencing the environment
- Involving the public in decision-making: adoption of advanced mechanisms of involving the public in making decisions, such as the civilian committee, including on the topic of infrastructures, planning, the environment, and public health. Environmental and social organizations will be an important pillar in the process of involving the public and making decisions
- Re-establishment of the Commission of Future Generations in the Knesset, which will continue to operate with assistance for legislation, research and shaping Israeli government policy
- Establishing regional frameworks for handling cross-border environmental issues, including cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, and Jordan. Ecological systems do not take into account political borders and in many fields a regional solution is required for shared problems. These bodies will formulate long-range solutions to cross-border problems such as pollution of streams, pollution of groundwater, unbridled construction, illegal dumps, illegal hunting and more. These frameworks will have authority anchored in law that will also be expressed in consultation to the defense system.
- Ratifying international conventions on environmental topics, preserving nature and public health, and legislation that will anchor the execution of these conventions
- Adopting advanced standards and laws from the entire world
- Education is a fundamental condition to protect the environment, and therefore environmental studies should be integrated in the formal and informal curriculum, not only as a part of natural sciences but rather as part of mandatory studies, which will expand the horizons of Israeli students beginning from their entry into the public education system at kindergarten age. Environmental studies will offer students the possibility to examine and to understand the implications of their actions and their decisions in the field of the environment – on themselves, on their neighbors and on their surroundings. In addition, we should advance and expand systems of education and public relations for the adult population in a range of fields

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- Renewing activity of the National Council on Environmental Quality, which stopped operating in 2003. This council will regularly include representatives of the public, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and the key bodies. The council will invite, as the case may be, representatives of groups frequently harmed by processes of development, industrialization, or environmental and planning neglect such as the Bedouins in the Negev
- Establishing a statutory ministerial committee for environmental protection (“Environmental Cabinet”). The ministerial committee will engage in matters of coordination between government ministries with all that is related to actions preserving the environment and removal of harmful nuisances as well as in future preparation to prevent environmental nuisances and to promote solutions to preserve the environment

8.3.4 Fair distribution of natural assets

Israeli governments in recent decades have led to wild privatization of public and natural assets. The question of the ownership over natural resources is meaningful and ethical as much as it is economic and it obligates an in-depth public discussion, with provision of full information devoid of special interests. The discussion in the Knesset on issues of distribution of gas profits shows us to what extent the political system acts in a superficial way that is corrupted by special interest bodies, in contradiction with the interests of the overall public.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Nullifying the gas outline
- Setting higher tax rates for companies engaged in exploitation of natural resources, legislation that will subordinate the economic considerations of exploiting natural resources to environmental considerations and limitations
- Supervising the prices of natural gas and limiting exports
- Ensuring the involvement of the government in making decisions in order to create a balance between the desire to create economic profits and the interests of preserving natural resources, commitment to the environment, health etc.
- Setting quotas and limitations to exploitation of natural resources, and effective enforcement mechanisms will be created
- Nullifying the extension of the wanton franchise for exploiting the resources of the Dead Sea for many additional decades. Nature preserves, national parks, heritage sites and memorial sites are property of the nation and belong to all its citizens, and therefore they must be managed by the government by way of the Nature and Parks Authority. The transfer of memorial sites and national parks to private entities and political associations must be halted entirely, returning the management of sites already privatized to the state
- Ensuring accessibility and free passage of the public in open spaces, nature preserves and beaches, and strengthening enforcement against private and business entities limiting access to them. Included in this are seashores, the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, the peak of the Hermon, and other public nature and leisure sites

8.3.5 Air, land and water pollution

Air pollution in Israel is severe and is a significant environmental and health nuisance. Prolonged exposure to air pollution causes irreversible damage to the health. The primary victims of this are very old people, those who suffer from respiratory illnesses, and those living near the sources of pollution (power stations, factories, main roads and focal points for burning trash). Land pollution stems from accumulation of toxic materials and various chemicals from industry, agriculture and runoff from roads. Water reserves on the coastal plain and in the interior plains are under perpetual threat from seepage of the toxic materials.

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Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Climate changes are one of the greatest dangers for humanity, and this is a danger that the vast portion of which is the acts of humans. Every nation in the world must take part in order to fight it. For this purpose, Meretz will act to meet the emissions targets Israel committed to in the framework of the Paris Accord
- Carrying out a policy of “the polluter pays:” Giving large fines and convincing punishments to those violating the permissible standards. Linking emission standards to vehicles, to facilities for the production of electricity and chemical factories in Israel to those in the European Union
- Increasing the budget for research and development on the topic of implementation of alternative sources of energy in Israel with an emphasis on solar and wind energy
- Enforcing the prohibition against throwing away all kind of trash in open areas and of burning trash, and advancing the establishment of legal and well organized sites, in accordance with the customary standards in the west, for burial, for recycling and for energy recovery
- Enacting a law to encourage industry that is environmentally friendly that will mandate government encouragement for environmentally friendly industry and will bring about a transition to clean industries in place of polluting industries
- Spreading out monitoring and follow up systems for air, ground, water, and radiation pollution, to receive data accessible to the broad public in real time
- Increasing follow-up, supervision, and auditing of streaming sewage and brine to streams and to the sea, by local authorities, industries, the electric company and the Israel Defense Forces
- Taking a hard approach in providing permits for this and punishing those deviating from the permits
- Supervising and enforcing laws and regulations with regards to pest control and fertilization. Chemicals used to improve agricultural products are rinsed by water, seep into the ground and are carried away by wind. Agricultural trash, and primarily from livestock, also carry pest control materials, antibiotics, hormones and other pollutants, and there is a critical need to treat them
- Expanding the possibilities for direct enforcement – allowing citizens to directly sue for compensation from polluting corporations, without needing to prove damages
- Budgeting a government plan to move the refineries in the Haifa Bay, and preparing for limiting the volume of petroleum refining in Israel
- Implementing the national preparedness plan for climate change, including making available the required budgets
- Establishing an independent national authority for measuring air quality. Its role will be to test the air quality in Israel, to present the data to the public, to warn about high levels of air pollution, to analyze trends of air quality throughout time and to supervise the Ministry for Environmental Protection meeting the targets for air quality that it set

8.3.6 Conscious consumerism

One of the heavy prices of the improvement in quality of life is the large quantities of trash. In Israel the production of trash per person is among the highest in the world. A notable rate of the trash does not find its way to organized burial sites, and sometimes is not collected at all. In Israel there is only one large site for toxic waste (Ramat Hovav), something that causes transportation of dangerous waste along long axes.

The cycle ending in throwing away trash begins with consumption. Overconsumption is part of the neo-liberal world outlook, and it is in contradiction with the public interest. Positive and negative economic incentives need to be created in order to encourage less consumption and in a conscious way, by limiting the scope of packaging and strengthening recycling.

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Bottom up consumer regulation has much influence on manufacturers and suppliers, but it mandates a public of consumers who are aware, and informative tools available to them. Consumption must be grounded in free choice, conscious and aware, which will allow consumers to control the quantity and quality of the products and services they consume. The consumer must have available comprehensive knowledge about the circumstances of the manufacture of the product, about the social conditions of those laboring in the production and delivery chain, and about the environmental price that the product costs during its production and its disposal.

In order to prevent excess haulage we need to encourage consumption based on local manufacture, both on the national level as well as on the level of areas within the country.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Government authorities and companies will adopt a policy of savings in consumption, with the help of preferred use of email and virtual documents over printed alternatives, preferring building materials and office equipment that require fewer resources and produce less waste, prohibiting use of disposable implements and mechanisms to save energy
- A law will be passed about the obligation of collecting, recycling and use of building waste and recycle solid waste in public projects
- Encouraging recycling policy in the private sector and in industry
- Implementing a deposit law for drink containers for bottles with a volume of a liter and a half and more also
- Providing a response to electronic waste, which needs special handling
- Placing targets for recycling in all branches, to advance research on use of recycled waste, and targets for purchasing recycle materials as raw materials and as final products
- Imposing the responsibility for collection, sorting, and recycling on the local authorities in combination with the manufacturers and marketers, with the assistance of tools and government budgets
- Implementing advanced technology to handle dangerous waste (positioned solids)
- Limiting the scope of dangerous waste by way of designated technology and balanced use policies in toxic, chemical, and biological components
- Significant enforcement and punishment to anyone disposing of waste in illegal burial sites in the public domain or burning them
- Providing positive incentives to contractors removing household waste and building waste to take the waste to organized sites

8.3.7 Water

Water is the most basic commodity for people. Each person has the right to receive water in accordance with his or her needs. Privatization of water, in a manner that water corporations are managed as a closed economy, is in contradiction with the basic role of the country as a supplier of essential services. In Israel there is no systematic long term approach to treating water sources and for years there has been a policy that has led to pollution of water sources, waste, and to discrimination in allocation of water and its distribution between populations and sectors.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Nullifying the water corporations and return of water management to the government, as a basic part of its role. Water payments will be done without funding of separate systems, which are wasteful and discriminatory, with the payment for reasonable consumption, in accordance with the needs of people, being low and measured
- Determining a systematic perception of water resources that takes into account the overall uses of water, including guaranteeing the natural right to water
- Updating the blueprint for the water economy in accordance with forecasts of the hydrology service, about limited precipitation, so that in addition to the immediate increase requested in desalinization, the blueprint will relate to management of demand and saving water

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- Guaranteeing equality in distribution of accessibility to water in general, and for potable water specifically. Stopping discrimination against Arab localities, both recognized and unrecognized, in allocating water for agricultural purposes
- Prohibiting cutting off water and development of alternative sources of water, such as recycling waste water and desalinization
- Implementing the plan to establish international centers for development of water sources in Israel
- Legislation that will allow and will encourage the citizen to collect rainwater and to recycle gray water, a step that began with Meretz sponsorship and ran into government resistance
- Restraining the Israel Defense Forces and defense system with regards to wasting water
- Changing the water law and adjusting it so that it will lead to rehabilitation and sustainable management of natural water resources, rehabilitation of the water flow in streams, and elevating transparency and public involvement in decision making in the water economy

8.3.8 Energy

Israel has huge potential to produce energy from renewable sources. Use of these, and especially of solar energy, is an advantage from the environmental perspective and also from the economic, social and health perspective. Israel committed to boost use of renewable energy; however the pace of progress is very slow. Using this channel will limit the dependence of Israel on petroleum exporting countries and will bring about economic independence. We need to encourage production of electricity from renewable energy source and encourage development of a blue and white solar market that will also be used for export. Finding large reservoirs of natural gas opposite the shores of the Mediterranean Sea only lately brought with it excitement and displays of happiness, but we need to remember that natural gas is also a source of fossil energy, the production and use of which involve much pollution and storing it is a risk for residents living in proximity to these reservoirs.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Setting a target for the transition to energy from renewable sources with the addition of one percent per year, so that by 2020 10% of the energy resources in Israel will be produced by renewable energy and by 2030 30% will be produced by renewable energy. Funding the process will be carried out by raising taxes. Not meeting the annual target will be like not meeting the budget targets, and therefore will be grounds for dissolving the government
- Implementing a comprehensive policy of optimization and savings in national institutions, in the defense system, in the industrial sector, agriculture, business and private sectors
- Implementing the government decision to establish a solar power station in the Negev, taking into account that there are sensitive sites with desert ecology systems existing there
- Advancing a national plan for energy optimization for the purpose of assimilating these sources in the Israeli electricity economy
- Advancing production of energy from trash by way of legislation, resources, tools, and areas designated for this purpose
- Giving incentives and long-range commitments to the price of purchasing renewable energy, to create and use solar energy for domestic consumption, in factories and in public places, giving preference to public entities and to cooperatives
- Prohibiting establishment of new power stations based on fossil fuels such as petroleum, coal and natural gas and prohibiting expansion of the scope of activity for those that exist
- Nullifying the freeze of the national program to decrease emissions, and it will be expanded to additional field that have not yet received a response in it
- Giving incentives to replace, improve, and upgrade equipment and machines for energy savings
- Anchoring regulations in law to stop use of incandescent light bulbs and removing placing them outside the law within a defined time period, similarly to legislation in various countries in Europe

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- Following the last reports of the United Nations, from which it arises that the primary cause of greenhouse gases is industrial farming, we need to examine the agricultural policy in Israel, primarily for livestock, and to convert them in general to preserving the environment and limiting pollutants and greenhouse gases
- There needs to be transparency for ongoing transfer of information about the use of nuclear energy in Israel and the ways to bury nuclear waste. No nuclear energy should be developed without direct legislation on this matter, which also includes a system of supervision and control
- Updating the petroleum law, allowing sponsors to carry out search for and production of petroleum, so that environmental considerations, transparency, and public inclusion will be taken into account in giving permits to sponsors
- Establishing a government investigative committee on the petroleum tragedy in the Evrona preserve, the conclusions of which will be assimilated into legislation

8.3.9 Preserving nature

The State of Israel has been blessed with a varied and rich natural world, with almost nothing similar to it in the world in relation to the limited area of the country. The world of Mediterranean nature overlaps with the desert world and allows for a meeting place of vegetation and animals, biblical landscapes, phenomena unique in the entire world, bird migration paths and more. The State of Israel must above all preserve the rare treasures deposited in its portion of the globe.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Preserving open spaces by reconsideration, in-depth discussion and even nullification of plans already authorized for construction, roads, infrastructure facilities, agriculture and more
- A declaration of the Minister of the Interior about dozens of nature preserves and national parks, stuck in the bureaucratic system for dozens of years without response
- Protecting the unique ecological systems in Israel in accordance with the standards that are customary in the European Union and in the United States. Sensitive systems such as deserts, natural forests, woodlands, caves, streams, winter ponds, the shores of the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee will receive special emphasis
- Enacting designated legislation to protect the natural values unique to Israel, such as the Dead Sea and the area of craters in the Negev. Special importance will be devoted to the Dead Sea. The rehabilitation of the Dead Sea will be carried out by way of halting the exploitation of its resources, limiting the drawing out of water from its sources and operating an appropriate policy towards the tourism sites around the Dead Sea and primarily towards the industrial factories. These are responsible, together, for a considerable percentage of the annual pace of evaporation of the Dead Sea
- Stubbornly fight against the biological invasions into Israel, of animals and vegetation that are brought into Israel by humans and get settled in the ecological systems, while damaging the local flora and fauna. Such a battle will be done by a combined system of research, customs, supervision, enforcement, and public relations. Importers, zoos, illegal smugglers, and merchants of flora and fauna will be forced to take full responsibility in order to protect the diseased habitats, which are at risk
- Supervision of use of sand by building contractors and limiting them on this topic
- Authorization and budgeting of a national plan to rehabilitate Israeli streams
- Advancing a law about drainage and flood protection, by strengthening the environmental-ecological vision

8.3.10 Beaches and the sea

The sea and shorelines are important and rare public resources that require special attention. There are many threats to the sea and beaches from the direction of real estate, drilling, and commercialization, all of which are an environmental and health threat and more. Many countries in the world have advanced to integrative management of oceans and beaches with all considerations taken into account. In Israel also, legal and academic

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work has been done to examine the topic. The State of Israel needs to recognize the importance of preserving the sea and its resources for the future of Israel and in parallel must preserve the sea and shorelines as public, accessible resources.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Prohibiting collecting payments at the entrance to the shorelines of the State of Israel
- Establishing an authority for integrative management of the sea that will include all interested parties and will encompass all the various oceanic uses and will allow for transparency in using natural resources, public review and preserving natural values and the oceanic environment throughout the years
- Declaring at least 20% of the territorial sea areas as oceanic preserves and advancing oceanic research in the fields of economic water for the purpose of examining means to preserve the oceanic environment in this field
- Completing the reform in fishing, including removing all trawling ships from the sea and protection of species in danger of extinction, with concern for the range of fish, the maritime ecological systems and the livelihood of fishermen
- Advancing and budgeting an action plan and infrastructures for emergencies, which will be able to give an optimal and immediate response to breakdowns in drilling facilities and infrastructures at sea
- Re-examining the location of the “Leviathan” gas barge
- Executing regular and publicly transparent monitoring along southern shorelines for pollution from Gaza and limiting pollution from sewage coming from there

8.3.11 Preservation

Preservation of historic buildings and sites, as the constructed historic heritage, is an important spiritual, value-driven, and touristic asset for our generation and coming generations. Meretz sees the preservation of historic buildings and sites as an important tool in cultivating national identity and in formulating the heritage of settlement.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Preventing the destruction and neglect of sites with local and national historical significance. A special emphasis will be placed on halting the destruction of the historical sites in Jerusalem.
- For each proposal to change the designation or planning classification of a site including historic value it will be mandatory to hold a public hearing, which will include the council for the preservation of historic sites, the Antiquities Authority, the Ministries of Tourism, Education, and Environmental Protection, and the broad public.

8.3.12 Animal rights

As those who advocate for defending weak and voiceless groups in order to hear their suffering and distress, Meretz naturally sees the obligation to defend the wellbeing of animals. Meretz believes that alongside the differences between animals and human beings, the two groups share many behavioral, cognitive, and emotional characteristics. First and foremost both people and animals can feel pain and suffering. In the presence of this similarity Meretz believes that alongside sensitivity to the distress and suffering of human beings, a fair degree of consideration is required to the needs, distress, and suffering of animals. The distribution of authority between various government ministries in defending animals, is in contradiction to the interests of the animals and many times stems from considerations of special interests in preserving a harmful situation. Defending the welfare of animals and their unique interests must be executed in a number of aspects.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Concentrating all authorities for animal protection under the Ministry for Environmental Protection and cutting off any connection of special interests sitting in the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Education, with the topic of defending animals
- Allocating appropriate resources to enforce the Kindness to Animals Law

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- Prohibiting trade in furs
- Amending the Kindness to Animals Law – experiments on animals. Israel is the only country in the western world, which has not advanced alternatives to experiments on animals. The internal committees for authorization of trials should be nullified, adding representatives of animal protection organizations to the authorizing committees, and determining severe criteria for giving authorizations for trials on animals, only in a place where it has been proven that the research is for the purpose of saving lives and there is no appropriate alternative
- Hunting and fishing for sports or entertainment purposes are barbaric activities that need to be erased from the world. In order to defend wild animals hunting will be prohibited and a punishment of up to 6 years imprisonment will be determined for anyone convicted of a hunting offense
- Prohibiting trade in products where the manufacture process involves abuse that is prohibited in Israel such as selling pate foie gras of geese and ducks who have undergone forced mastication
- Prohibiting the import of goose liver
- Nullification of battery cages in the egg industry and transition to the European standard of coops without cages
- Enforcing the law prohibiting shackling of dogs 24 hours a day
- Arranging veterinary activity in local authorities in the law
- Carrying out controlled sterilization and castration, combined with immunizations, with government and local authority funding, to decrease the populations of nomadic cats and dogs
- Improving the conditions in municipal pounds and aspiring to transfer animals in pounds for adoption
- Prohibiting poisoning of animals in the case of euthanasia for the purpose of eliminating rabies and adopting an oral vaccination approach
- Expanding existing law, so that use of animals for commercial purposes, entertainment and sport (circuses, races) will be prohibited
- Protecting wild fowl from electrocution from high tension wires by way of shielding
- Protecting nomadic fowl from shooting of farmers in their migration paths with the assistance of a subsidy of feeding sites
- Protecting habitats of wild animals, with the understanding that this is the key to protecting them. Encouraging projects of returning to nature by way of research, education, and saturation nuclei
- Increasing government support of organizations working for animals and their welfare, service, and treatment, rescue and medical assistance for animals in distress at any time
- Encouraging vegetarian and vegan nutrition by way of education and subsidies
- Meretz believes that pets are an important part of the public space and that they make social, educational and cultural contributions to live in the city and in rural areas. In order to make things easier for the owners of pets and to improve the welfare of these animals, Meretz will act to establish and expand gardens, parks and green areas where free movement of animals and interactions among them and between them and people will be possible. In addition, breeding of cats and dogs will be prohibited
- Budgets will be defined for the activity of the organizations operating pounds for animals found wandering and no owners for them were found. Each local authority will operate a center to distribute food to street cats at cost
- Prohibiting live shipments of sheep and calves from Australia and Europe

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9. Culture and Sports

9.1 Culture and Art

Cultural activity in its various areas creates the optimal spiritual assets of Israeli society and is a central component of determining quality of life, shaping its image, identity and uniqueness. Cultural and artistic creations contribute to the formulation of social solidarity and is a source of spiritual enrichment. The nation has the responsibility to develop culture and to encourage original and free creation that is independent of the establishment, and it is an obligation to protect creators and artists who contribute to culture.

The outgoing Knesset authorized in a first reading the proposed "Loyalty in Culture" Law, granting the Minister of Culture authorities of illegitimate intervention in the content of artistic creations in Israel by way of ruling out funding of cultural institutions that do not meet a list of opaque criteria open for political interpretation. The law will severely damage freedom of expression and creation, and it has no place in the book of laws of a democratic nation. Meretz will object to the authorization of the law and will fight against it.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Preventing enactment of the "Loyalty in Culture" Law
- Significantly increasing the budget directed at the field of culture, with the objective of getting close to the standard that is customary in western countries (1% of the national budget in accordance with the UNESCO recommendation)
- Establishing a national authority for art and culture
- Protecting the rights of artists to freedom of expression and expressing opinions, without limitations of political or religious censorship
- Enacting a new law of creative rights that will grant creators protection of their intellectual property and receiving fair royalties. The law will nullify the possibility of expropriating the rights from the creators of a creation that was ordered
- Professional protection for artists and executors and ensuring that exploitation and extortion, unfair employment conditions, harm to their social rights, will be prevented
- Increasing public assistance to institutions and creators in the field of culture and art, including non-institutional groups, and preventing the damage in budgeting to the film industry in accordance with the film law
- Establishing a "National Art Basket" law for all pupils in Israel, and including education for arts consumption in the framework of core studies
- Arranging in law the top of placing art in the public sphere in Israel based on transparent criteria and with integration of professional artists
- Correcting the discrimination that exists in distributing budgets to culture and arts institutions, and increasing investment in cultural content of creators from all groups in Israel, including Mizrahim, those from the former Soviet Union and those from Ethiopia
- Providing full equality in allocations for Arab and Druze creative works and allocating an appropriate place for creative works in the Arabic language
- Establishing a commercial television channel in Arabic
- Enlarging support in public libraries, in continuation of the public libraries law that was enacted with the sponsorship of Meretz
- Establishing a publishing house intended to publish research about Israeli culture
- Enacting a law of the establishment of the national museum for culture and art in Israel
- Establishing a high public council to support artists and artistic activity in the entire country, which will give expression to the cultural heritage of the various ethnicities, and will encourage artistic creation

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- Expanding the activity to professionally and culturally absorb immigrant artists
- Deepening the cultural ties with countries around the world, with a special emphasis on Mediterranean countries
- Diversifying and making culture accessible with an emphasis on advancing creative work in the social and geographic periphery

9.2 Sports

Engaging in sports is an important component in guaranteeing quality of life and good health. Leisure activities have great influence on the nature of a society and on the quality of life in it. Participation in creative and active occupation of time, and especially engaging in diverse and balanced physical activity is especially important. Therefore, we need to guarantee encouragement of physical activity in all age groups in the population by way of public relations and education, development of programs for physical activity in community centers, expansion of establishment of centers for active leisure and accommodating them for people with limitations.

Meretz will act to advance the following topics:

- Directing resources for sports activity to the entire public, by setting targets for significantly increasing the percentages of the overall population who engage in physical activity
- Encouraging achievement sports and representative sports through investing national resources for cultivating sports activity and projects. We need to bring the understanding of the importance of sports as a way of life and life skills into the school curriculum, starting at an early age, and to include education for correct and healthy nutrition as a way of life
- Struggling against the phenomenon of violence and racism in sports in the spirit of a law enacted with the sponsorship of Meretz, and instilling the principles of fairness in sports and cultivating patience and tolerance by way of public relations and education
- Enacting equitable criteria for allocation of money from the Council for Arranging Sports Gambling, taking into account the number of people active in a branch, the geographic location and the ability to fundraise
- Advancing women in sports and fair budgeting of women's sports
- Supporting the rights of team fans to organize and manage a group under their ownership