

Honorary Award Heart at East

May 2013



הקואליציה להקצאה שוויונית של משאבי התרבות בישראל
الإئتلاف لتوزيع الموارد الثقافية المتساوي في إسرائيل
The Coalition for Equal Distribution of Cultural Funds in Israel

Professor Smadar Lavie, PhD.

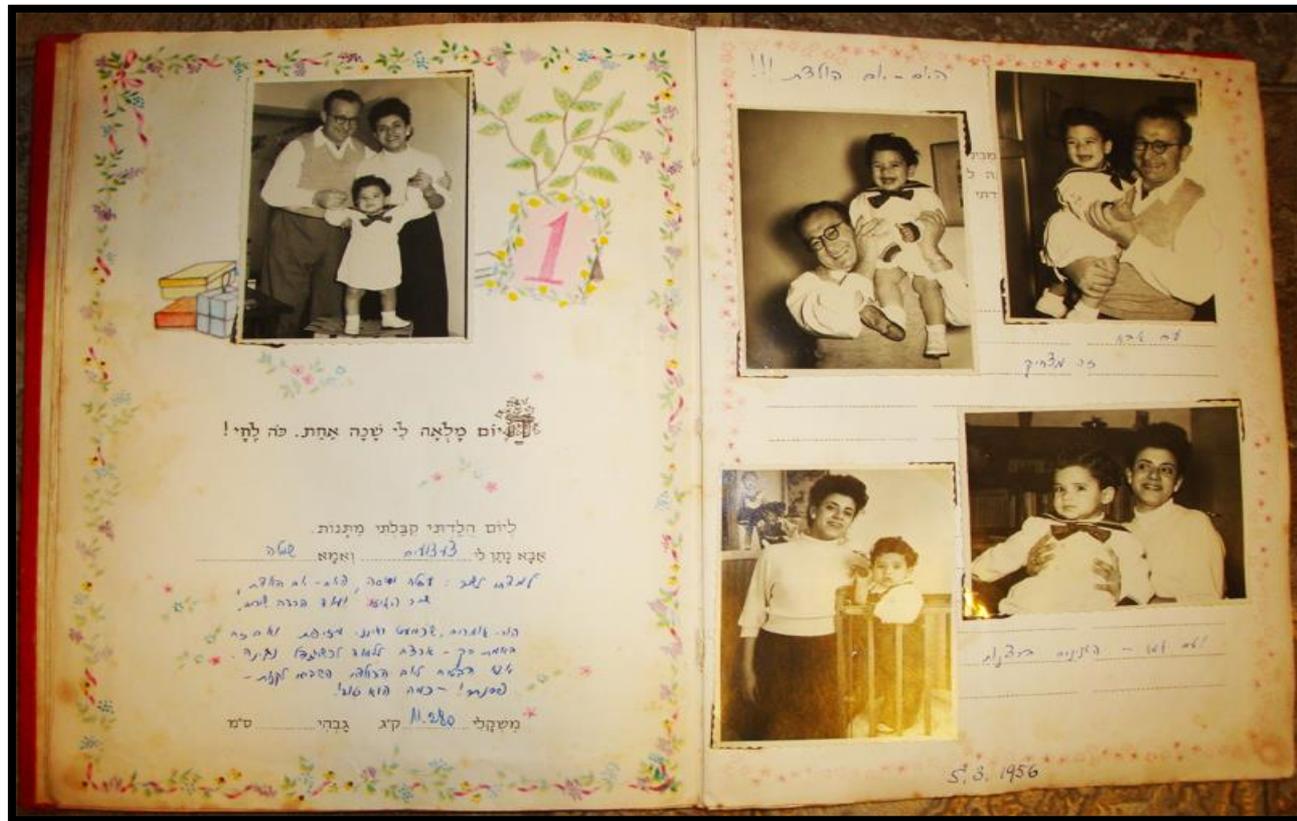
- Anthropologist
- Mizrahi Feminist
- Freedom Fighter
- Worker for Justice



The Heart at East Honorary Award is given to Professor Smadar Lavie, PhD, for her life work, dedicated to Mizrahi communities in Israel; for her illumination of the twisted intersection where racism, gender, class and religion meet in the lives of women of color; and for her fight against the disenfranchisement of the Mizrahi communities in Israel from their cultural rights. This award is given to Prof. Lavie for both her activism and leadership of Mizrahi Feminism in Israel, and for her groundbreaking academic research.



Mother, Father and Smadar at her 1st birthday, 1956



Smadar was born in 1955 to Shoshana Gamlielit-Levinson and Salman Levinson. The midwives recommended that the parents Hebraize their last name to prevent future identity problems from the child. "She doesn't look like a Levinson," they said. She had a happy childhood in Labor A neighborhood in Holon. She was pretty sure that the name she was called, "Shaynele Schwartzele" (Yiddish: "a beautiful little black girl") was a cute nickname.

Smadar grew up as a musical prodigy. At age 5 she started her studies at the Conservatory of the Tel Aviv Rubin Academy of Music, and by third grade she has already composed chamber music.

She wanted to conduct symphony orchestras when she becomes a grownup, but was told that it was no career choice for girls.



Shoshana's municipal kindergarten, Holon, 1960, playing a Mozart sonata for her 5th birthday

The Annual Family Day Concert, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 1995



In 2000-01 Prof. Lavie and Dr. Hagar Kadima reorganized the Israeli Women Composers Forum as a feminist organization that takes to heart affirmative action for Mizrahi classical composers.

HaAretz Shelanu, April 23, 1969, "From Weaving Threads to Phone Cords, " about the then-Minister of Postal Services, the late Yisrael Yesha'ayahu



Between 1963 -1973 Smadar wrote for the children's magazines, HaAretz Shelanu, Davar LeYeladim and for the teen magazine Ma'ariv LaNo'ar. Ma'ariv LaNo'ar's editor wrote to her: "Only on very rare occasions we trusted young reporters to write lengthy and important articles. Your articles proved we were right."

**“Panthers in the Spotlights,” Ma`ariv LaNo`ar, October 25, 1971,
about Yitzhak Halutzi and Vicky Shiran’s theater troupe**



In 1971, when she interviewed Yitzhak Halutzi and members of his impoverished youth theater troupe, she met the late Vicky Shiran, who taught her to say "Mizrahim" (a Hebrew coalitional term used politically by Jews from the Arab and Muslim World to refer to themselves; the term started being popularized by Mizrahi organic intellectuals in the 1980s This is in contrast to `Edot HaMizrah ("bands of the orient", Hebrew) or Sephardim –the official terms for Jews originating from non-Yiddish speaking countries .

In 1973, right before she was drafted into the IDF for compulsory military service, Smadar and two Ashkenazi girls from the affluent Northern Tel Aviv were interviewed together by the IDF radio station commander. Smadar arrived with a hefty binder of her own publications and with letters of reference.

The Ashkenazi girls did not have any experience in journalism, but they did have famous parents. After the interview the commander invited Smadar to his office, complimented her dark skin and proposed that she have sex with him. Smadar escaped the office as fast as she could. The Ashkenazi girls were accepted in the station. Starting that day, Smadar knew she was a Mizrahi woman.



Ma'ariv LaNoar. August 16, 1971, "Sulha in Kfar Qassem," about an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue group to discuss the Kfar Qassem massacre

From 1975 on, Prof. Lavie has been studying the Bedouin of South Sinai, Egypt. She has been adopted by Hajj Abdallah and Hajja Jebayliyya, their extended family, and the Mzeina tribe.

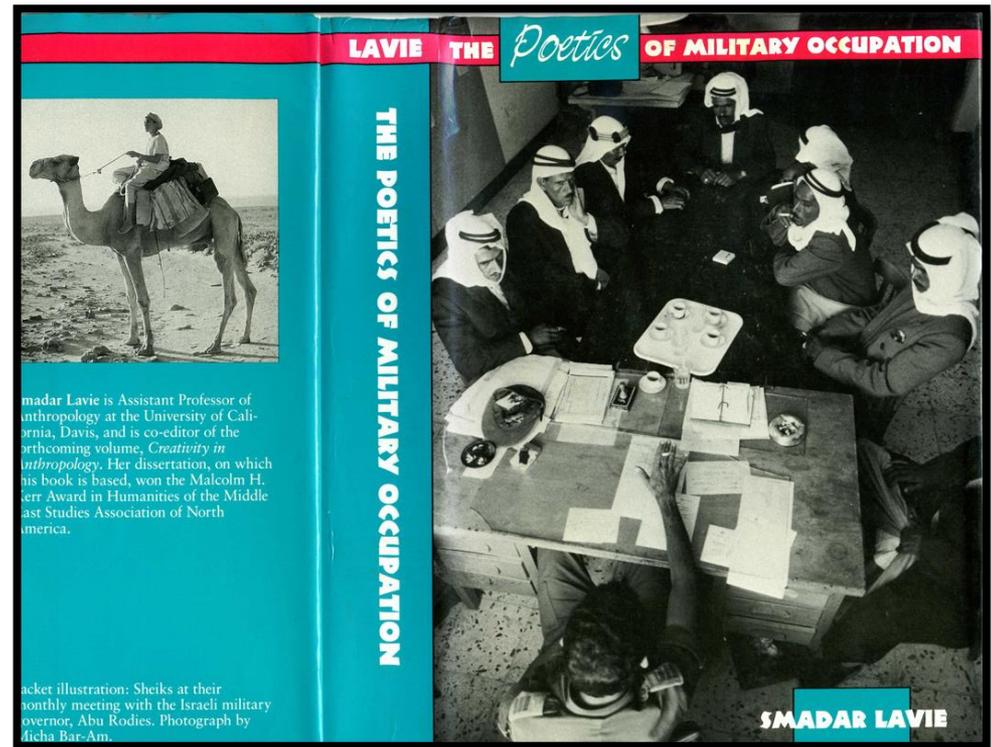


Prof. Lavie and her adoptive Bedouin father, Hajj Abdallah, when her book first came out in 1991. Dahab, Egypt

The Poetics of Military Occupation, University of California, 1990

Her first book, *The Poetics of Military Occupation* is about the Bedouin's theater protesting the Israeli and Egyptian occupations. It became a canonical work in Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies. Among other things, the book explores the intricate relationships of a young Mizrahi woman scholar -- carrying an Israeli passport -- among an Arab population under Israeli military occupation.

Despite its importance, no Israeli publisher has agreed to translate and publish the book.



Smadar and her adoptive sister, Mahamouda, 2006, Dahab, Egypt



Prof. Lavie passes all her books' royalties, however meager, onto the Mzeina tribe.

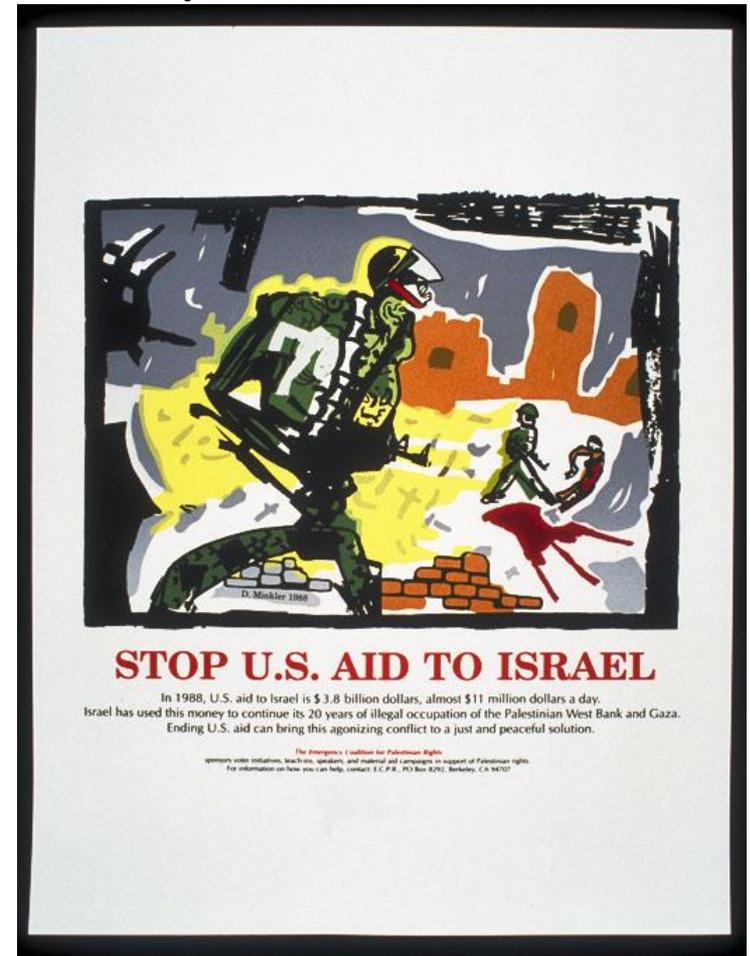
In 1979 Prof. Lavie won a tuition and living expense scholarship for her PhD. Studies in Anthropology at University of California, Berkeley. Almost all the Israeli students in Berkeley at that time were Ashkenazim whose education was paid by their parents.

In 1982 she founded the Berkeley Committee for Academic Freedom in the Israeli Occupied Territories (CAFIOT), along with Israeli, Palestinian and Jewish students, as well as students from Arab countries. When the university allocated summer classes to student organizations, she taught a class about the history of modern Palestine with Raif Hijab from the Palestinian village of Artas. The class also discussed the intricate relationship of Mizrahim and the national Palestinian struggle. This was the first class of its kind at UC Berkeley.

In the 1980s she volunteered for the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, headed by Mubarak `Awad.

In the early 1990s Prof. Lavie volunteered with the Tel Aviv Women's for Political Prisoners NGO. She and Hava Keller translated texts back and forth between Hebrew and English, exposing sexual harassments, tortures that were mostly sexual in nature, and threats of sexual violence that Palestinian political prisoners experienced in Israeli prisons.

Berkeley, California, 1984



A lecture for the Adva Center and the Tel Aviv Cinematheque, "Women of Color Write Culture: Third World Feminism in Israel," Beit HaSofer, Tel Aviv, December 22, 1993

In 1990 Prof. Lavie shifted the main focus of her research from Egypt to Israel. She embarked on a study of hybrid, Ashkenazified Mizrahi and Palestinian-citizen-of-Israel poets and novelists whose mother tongue is Arabic but who write in Hebrew. She concentrated on the disjuncture of these poets from the communities they were supposed to represent. For the very first time, the works of Erez Biton, Siham Daoud, `Amira Hess Na'im `Araidi, as well the works of other Mizrahi and Palestinian-Israelis were discussed as one gamut representing an experience of displacement, racism, exile and sexism – despite these poets' and writers' desire to please the Ashkenazi literary critics.



In 1992, as she translated her English publications into Hebrew, Prof. Lavie coined the Hebrew terms for Racialization (*hagza 'a*) and for Feminism of Color (*feminism keheh*). She sent translations of her scholarly articles to the most progressive Israeli Cultural Studies periodical, *Teoria uVikoret*. One was “lost;” the other one was rejected for its “anti-Ashkenazi racism.”

In the early 1990s, visiting from California, she lectured in various Israeli universities' departmental seminars. Since then she has been boycotted by the Israeli academic establishment. Her Israeli colleagues claimed that concepts such as “racialization,” “racism,” “border crossing,” “silencing” and “hybridity” were not suitable for the study of Israeli society. The establishment also insisted that Feminism of Color had no scientific basis. When these concepts started permeating into the academic and public discourse in Israel, her ideas were appropriated without reference or quotation.

"Sell-Out Mizrahi and Highbrow Ashkenazi," Shishi Magazine, January 21, 1994

In 1993, Prof. Lavie participated in formulating the Bellagio Declaration, and was among its signatories. The declaration recommended a reform in the intellectual property Law, meant to protect folklore works and collective heritage, as well as community-shared biological and ecological knowledge of traditional societies.

In 1994 she was interviewed for Shishi Magazine about the erasure of Mizrahi culture by the ruling hegemony of the Ashkenazi minority. Prof. Lavie claimed that the handful of Mizrahi members of the Israeli academia were submissive to the Ashkenazi faculty. Yet, these very Mizrahi faculty members policed, banned and exiled the Mizrahi intellectuals who struggled for their own independent and original thought and actions. Popular Yemeni singer Margalit Zan'ani (Margol) was interviewed for the same article, saying: "Her [Prof. Lavie's] jabbering is overwhelming."



Ahoti-For Women in Israel Grievance against all Israeli Research Universities submitted to the Israeli State Comptroller Ombudsman, 1st page, 2004

In 2004 Prof. Lavie researched and initiated a grievance submitted by Ahoti - for Women in Israel to the Israeli State Comptroller Ombudsman against all Israeli research universities, due to the near complete lack of Mizrahi and Palestinians tenured faculty members, mainly women, from their anthropology departments. The grievance urged the Ombudsman to investigate – and undo – the intellectual community property violations performed by Israeli academic researchers who made profit from Mizrahi and Palestinian culture. It requested the State Comptroller to find out why Israeli anthropologists performed their studies of Mizrahim and Palestinians without adhering to a code of research ethics.



"On the Progress of Affirmative Action and the Cultural Rights of Marginalized Communities in Israel," Anthropology News, 2006

Following the grievance, Prof. Lavie and Dr. Rafi Shubeli founded the Mizrahi-Palestinian Coalition Against Apartheid in Israeli Anthropology (CAAIA). The coalition lead an international campaign against the denial of cultural rights for Mizrahim and Palestinian citizens of Israel, and joined forces with similar NGOs and scholar activists in Latin America, Australia, South Asia, and South Africa.

From 1980 to this day, Prof. Lavie has voluntarily assisted dozens of Mizrahi and Palestinian students in applying and receiving higher education scholarships in West Europe and North America, so that they would not have to silence themselves due to the academic situation in Israel.

DIALOGUE

On the Progress of Affirmative Action and Cultural Rights for Marginalized Communities in Israel

SAGGAR LAVIE
RAFI SHUBELI

On behalf of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow and Mossava-Advocacy Center for the Palestinian Citizens of Israel

In March 2004 the Mizrahi-Palestinian Coalition Against Apartheid in Israeli Anthropology (CAAIA) sent Israel's State Comptroller an official complaint, asking for clarification as to the almost total absence of Mizrahi and Palestinian anthropologists in FTE positions in Israeli universities, inquiring about the systematic violations of our communal intellectual and cultural rights, and calling attention to the absence of any effort to guide Israel's anthropological research and writing.

Follow-up on Affirmative Action
As job season began in fall 2005, the coalition checked the written press and electronic bulletin boards of the Israeli Anthropological Association, Israeli Sociological Association, AN and job section ads in the Friday newspapers to find six new university FTE anthropology openings. Since our fall 2005 survey, at least one more anthropology FTE has been advertised by the IAA.

The coalition sent letters to the IAA and Israel's State Comptroller inquiring whether affirmative action would be provided to Palestinian and Mizrahi candidates. We also requested information about affirmative action protocols that would guide search committees' deliberations, and schedules of the candidates' job talks so that members of the coalition could come listen to their lectures.

Only two search committee chairs answered these letters. The reply of Uriel Levitan, chairman of the anthropology-sociology department at Haifa University and chair of the Haifa anthropology search, conveys the spirit of the two: "I hereby notify you that we act according to the regulations and procedures of the Haifa University, where our department is located, and therefore I have forwarded a copy of your letter to the university's provost, who is the proper address to relate to the subject."

The coalition does not believe such bureaucratic responses address the issues raised by the coalition, and ignores that the fall 2005 job ads clearly stated that the search was conducted by the department itself, and the selection of the candidates was to be by that very department, and not the provost, who has yet to reply to our forwarded letter.

IAA Collaboration Needed
In a January 2005 AN article, "Israeli Anthropological Association Preparing to Call for Affirmative Action," André Lévy, chair of the IAA, replied: "[T]he complaint ... deals with a violation: Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian Arabs are underrepresented amongst faculty in Israeli universities. The Israeli Anthropological Association has long been preoccupied with under-representation of underprivileged segments amongst faculty, and as the first, and so far only, academic disciplinary association in Israel to officially address the matter."

The guest of honor of the IAA May 2005 annual meeting was Harvard Professor Michael Herzfeld. Aside from delivering the IAA keynote address, according to IAA Historian Orit Alshayim in her 2004 dissertation "Anthropology and Anthropologists in Israel: Internal Perspectives on the Development of Israeli Anthropology," the annual guest of honor is expected by the IAA hosts to informally reciprocate the invitation by lending an elite collegial network to assist Israeli anthropologists in better accessing research funds, sabbatical host institutions, publications and conference invitations.

On May 26, 2005, Herzfeld met with the coalition and Lévy at Sapir College. Along with reiterating demands made in its complaint to Israel's State Comptroller, the coalition raised concerns about a lack of procedural transparency during Israeli FTE hiring processes and any public accessibility to official personnel manuals, if such even exist. The coalition justified the need for such transparency given that all Israeli universities are public and therefore funded by Mizrahi and Palestinian communities (Israel's majority citizenry) taxes.

COMMENTARY

Levy argued that the IAA has no influence on university appointments, although the coalition noted in response that almost all Israeli anthropology FTE holders are members of the IAA, and thus can play an important role both as academic faculty and collectively through a public IAA statement. Later in February 2006, Lévy also noted by telephone to Shubeli that IAA views the confidentiality of the job search process as beneficial.

From the experience gathered in the course of our campaign, it is clear to us that our success in the discussion and just implementation of cultural rights in Israel is dependent upon international support ...

since it prevents pressures that are not matter-of-fact.

Timetable for Joint Action Necessary
Herzfeld supported many of the coalition's concerns, but advised that the IAA and coalition collaborate in translating the humanistic principles of anthropology into joint bureaucratic action to remedy the situation. He, along with others, suggested that the coalition and IAA work together in design-

case, and in cross-cultural comparison to other contexts, how do you think issues of cultural rights

because, it is always about human relationships and all human

comparatively and with respect for the specificities of cultural context. ☐

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Smadar and Shaheen in Dahab, Egypt, soon after they have received their Israeli passports in November 2005. In the background, Naqb Shaheen, Shaheen Lavie-Rouse's namesake

In 1999, Prof. Lavie fled to Israel from the United States to save her son from her violent ex-husband. He pursued child abduction allegations, and during the subsequent litigation, the Israeli courts confiscated both of their Israeli and U.S. passports. In 2001, the Israeli Supreme Court (verdict 5253/00) cleared Prof. Lavie of any and all allegations brought by the United States, Israel, and The Hague. After the verdict, she and her son had their U.S. passports returned, but they did not get back their Israeli passports. Because they had to wait two years for the Supreme Court's verdict, and because Lavie's son was a minor, his official domicile changed to Israel. As Israeli citizens, they needed their Israeli passports to exit the country, and to do that, Smadar had to establish Israeli custody of Shaheen.



The court refused to grant custody, so they were stuck. Smadar, therefore, had to resign her tenured professorship at the University of California, Davis. With very few Israeli job prospects because of her color and politics, she became a single mother dependent on government welfare bureaucracy to survive. To stay sane, she followed the late Vicky Shiran's advice and joined the effort to build Ahoti. Smadar and Shaheen finally received their Israeli passports in late October 2005, and in 2007 returned to the U.S.

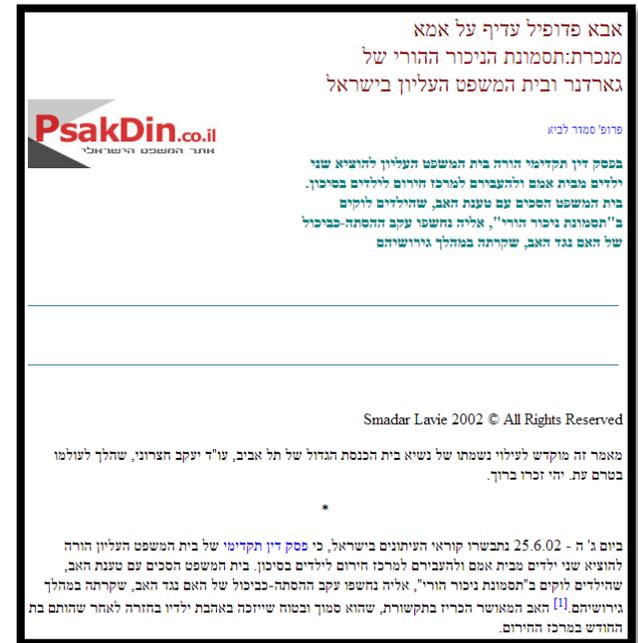
During her time in Israel, Prof. Lavie has put time and thought in an effort to stop the treatment of children as property. In cases of divorce, children are often shunted from one parent to another, or even worse—taken from their parents and homes and put into forced boarding. She raised the public awareness of the way in which the Israeli legal and welfare systems, as well as the psychological-psychiatric establishment, were constructed around womens' historical deprivation of economic equal opportunities due to the burden of motherhood.

During those years she voluntarily assisted dozens of mothers, mostly Mizrahi, to face these aggressive systems. In 2002 her essay "A Pedophile Father is Better than an Alienating Mother,"

was published in Psakdin.co.il, a very influential Israeli legal website. The paper was submitted to Israel's Supreme Court as an expert opinion in case 6041/02. Since then the powerful deadbeat dad lobby has denigrated her reputation online, threatened her by phone, and distributed confidential information from her son's family court case in public internet forums. The law enforcement authorities have not taken any steps against these offenses.

In 2003 she was the first to disclose and warn Israel's feminist NGOs about the deadbeat dad lobby's initiative to have the Tender Age Doctrine struck down and replaced with mandatory joint custody from age zero. The Tender Age Doctrine grants divorced mothers automatic major custody over children ages 0-6.

In 2004, she founded the Coalition of Women for Mothers and Children, with Prof. Esther Herzog and Hanna Beit Halachmi. It was the widest coalition in the history of Israeli Feminism, including Islamist Feminists on one side of the spectrum and orthodox Jewish settlers from the Occupied Territories on the other side, with all the diverse identities in between these two ends.



Kfar Shalem, July 7, 2007

In 2007 she participated in the struggle for saving Kfar Shalem. She internationalized the struggle by replacing the municipal term of Pinuy-Binuy (“evacuate and build,” Hebrew) meant for Mizrahi consumption with the term dispossession-destruction-exile that was the Palestinian reality. She worked with Prof. Jim Bowen, then chair of the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign and her student Ilise Cohen Ben-Shoushan. Together they mobilized the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions and other Ashkenazi and Euro-American NGOs demonstrating against the



Separation Wall. Thanks to Prof. Lavie and her colleagues, these NGOs used the same nonviolent direct action they use against demolitions of Palestinian houses, to assist the residents of Kfar Shalem. In July 2007 she started negotiating with the UN Internal Refugees Agency in the Middle East (UNHCR) concerning the ways they could assist Kfar Shalem residents with the same aid they provide to Palestinians whose houses are demolished by Israel. Kfar Shalem residents refused the UN's assistance. They were hoping that the Israeli courts and the Kfar Shalem Knesset Bill proposed by MAFDAL (the National Religious Party) would deliver them from their troubles.

In December 2007, their houses were demolished.

After the 2006 Lebanon War, Smadar met regularly with Reuven Abarjel to discuss the significance and possible impacts of a potential one-state solution, Israel-Palestine for the Mizrahi public in Israel. They published the first essay on the topic in 2007.

In 2008-2009 Prof. Lavie participated in a couple of international think tank conferences on this topic. She resigned, however, due to lack of discussions of the Mizrahi predicament in the One State, and over the anti-Mizrahi and anti-Jewish racism of many Israeli-Ashkenazi participants in these scholarly-activist events.



**One State Israel-Palestine Conference,
University of Massachusetts, Boston, March 2009**

Thanks

شكرا

תודה

Shaheen and Smadar, Rio San Juan, Dominican Republic, January 1, 2013

