

*A Progressive Jewish Response to  
the Discriminatory Policies of KKL-JNF*



## **Contents**

Executive Summary	3
<i>Introduction: “A State Within a State”</i>	6
<i>Section 1: Palestinian Displacement and Entrenching the Occupation</i>	7
<i>Section 2: Unraveling the Mystery of How KKL-JNF Works</i>	11
<i>Section 3: Where We Go From Here</i>	25
<i>Appendix: List of KKL-JNF Board Members as of Spring 2021</i>	37

# ***A Progressive Jewish Response to the Discriminatory Policies of KKL-JNF***

## ***Executive Summary***

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This report is intended for the progressive Jewish left in Israel and abroad to foster strategic thinking about how to relate to the discriminatory work of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael - Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF). Following this Executive Summary and an introduction, the report's first section summarizes KKL-JNF's most problematic work; its second section provides a deep dive into the organization's structure; and its third section offers recommendations for how those who oppose the occupation can challenge the work of KKL-JNF.

### **What is KKL-JNF?**

KKL-JNF is a 120-year-old organization dedicated to "redeeming" land in Israel for Jewish settlement. Beyond the tree planting work for which the organization is most famous, KKL-JNF operates as an enormous and powerful real estate and fundraising body. The organization owns 13% of the land in Israel and has an expected gross revenue of over 1.2 billion NIS for 2021.

KKL-JNF holds an important place in Jewish communal consciousness and is identified with environmentalism and intercommunal grassroots support for Jewish communities in Israel. At the same time, since its inception, KKL-JNF has advanced Palestinian displacement, a practice which continues to this day on both sides of the Green Line.

KKL-JNF is fully under the control of the World Zionist Organization, and its board is determined by the results of the World Zionist Congress elections. Elections are determined through Zionist Federations in diaspora communities and through Knesset election results in Israel. KKL-JNF's massive budget is due to its significant landholdings, and only a minor portion of its budget comes from donations. Because of KKL-JNF's significant resources, it is in many ways the most powerful of Israel's "National Institutions" and plays a central role in determining Israeli land policy. KKL-JNF operates two subsidiary companies, both named Himanuta, one registered in Israel and one in the West Bank, which serve as the purchasing arms of KKL-JNF today.

## **What Should Be Done to Counter the Discriminatory Work of KKL-JNF?**

This report suggests a variety of recommendations, listed below and discussed in more detail in the third section of the report.

***Nationalization:*** In many ways, KKL-JNF land is treated as state land, and there is an inherent logic to the idea that such land should be run by the State. Just as other pre-State organizations were dissolved or incorporated into the State, a campaign could advocate that KKL-JNF's land should be nationalized, and its other activities transferred to the Ministry of the Environment.

***Pressuring Zionist Organizations on the KKL-JNF Board:*** A set list of eleven Zionist organizations, which operate around the world, each have a seat on the KKL-JNF Board. These organizations have the power to significantly shape the decisions made by the KKL-JNF Board and often vote to the right, despite being ostensibly apolitical. Because of this, these organizations are potentially susceptible to public pressure through campaigns in Israel and abroad. Votes on the KKL-JNF Board can be very close, and even a few of the Zionist Organizations, such as Naamat and Maccabi, changing their votes could significantly shift KKL-JNF policy.

***Playing in the Zionist Electoral Arena:*** The KKL-JNF Board is determined by the World Zionist Congress. Therefore, shifting the composition of the Congress will shift KKL-JNF's Board and thus its practices. This can be done in a variety of ways, including "get out the vote" campaigns in diaspora Jewish communities for progressive slates, thinking strategically about how to work within Zionist Federations in diaspora communities, working in the Israeli electoral sphere to push for more progressive Knesset results (which directly influences the composition of the World Zionist Congress), and working to encourage progressive diaspora Jews to take a more active leadership role in KKL-JNF.

***Campaign to Nullify the Treaty Between the State and KKL-JNF:*** The vast majority of KKL-JNF's budget comes from its real estate holdings, which are managed by the Israel Land Authority. This arrangement is in line with a 1961 treaty between the State and KKL-JNF, according to which the State manages KKL-JNF's significant landholdings and transfers KKL-JNF the revenue gained from this real estate. Although KKL-JNF operating without State involvement could have downsides, cutting off its support from the State could impact both its material resources and image.

***Making Himanuta into a Public Benefit Company:*** Even though KKL-JNF is a public benefit company, its subsidiary Himanuta (both the one registered in Israel and the one registered in the West Bank), which are KKL-JNF's purchasing arms, are registered as private companies. This means that they operate with less transparency than the organization itself, even while carrying out work that has a huge impact on land issues of national and international significance.

**Legal Options:** There is currently a debate within the KKL-JNF Board about whether the organization's Memorandum of Association permits purchasing land in occupied territory. The phrase in the Memorandum that is under debate could be brought to the courts, where a favorable ruling would be game-changing and even a loss could become a media win by bringing attention to the issue.

**International JNFs:** Although KKL-JNF receives relatively minimal funding from JNFs abroad, it could still be useful to target these institutions because of the public impact this would have within Jewish communities and on decision-makers in Israel. This could be done through challenging JNF charitable status abroad, pressuring international JNFs to separate fully from KKL-JNF, and encouraging the cessation of donations to JNFs abroad.

**Creating Alternative Institutions:** Because even some left-leaning youth movements and political parties receive significant funding from KKL-JNF, it is important, in thinking long-term, to develop alternative institutions and sources of funding to enable left-wing groups to take a stand against KKL-JNF without risking the collapse of their programming.

## Introduction

### *“A State Within a State”*

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KKL-JNF exists in Israel as a quasi “state within the State.” The organization was founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress, forty-seven years before Israel was established, in order to purchase land in Palestine and surrounding areas on behalf of the Jewish people. Today, KKL-JNF continues to bill itself as the “trustee for the lands of the Jewish People” and owns 13% of the land in Israel (which is home to 70% of the population), holding special status as one of four “national institutions” of the State. The organization is massive - an apparatus with dozens of committees, subcommittees, and subsidiaries, employing over 1,000 people and operating close to 50 fundraising offices around the world.

Following the most recent World Zionist Congress, which took place in October 2020, the composition of the Board of KKL-JNF moved significantly to the right due to the outcome of the elections of both the World Zionist Congress and the Knesset, continuing a trend from recent elections. Soon after the formation of the new KKL-JNF Board, its chair, Avraham Duvdevani, announced that the board would vote on a proposal to formally set the purchasing of land in the West Bank as a policy of KKL-JNF, instead of utilizing subsidiaries to purchase land in the West Bank. The proposal passed in an initial vote in February 2021; however, the final vote in late April 2021 was delayed as the result of pressure from various groups. While a rescheduled date for the vote is still pending, both the danger of such a decision and the intensity of the opposition warrant further investigation. Indeed, the Board recently approved a different proposal that is set to begin a process of land registration (especially for properties in the West Bank and East Jerusalem). This is a complicated legal undertaking that could lead to hundreds, if not thousands, of evictions of Palestinian families.

Although these votes mark decisive moments in the history of KKL-JNF and provide important context for the present moment, the aim of this paper is to offer a broader and more long-term perspective on the challenges that KKL-JNF poses to the movement to end the occupation and to equality, justice, and peace between the river and the sea. To that end, the first section of this paper will summarize some of the most problematic work in which KKL-JNF has been involved; the second section will provide an overview of the internal mechanisms and structures of KKL-JNF; and the third section will suggest how the Jewish left can take action together.

Section 1

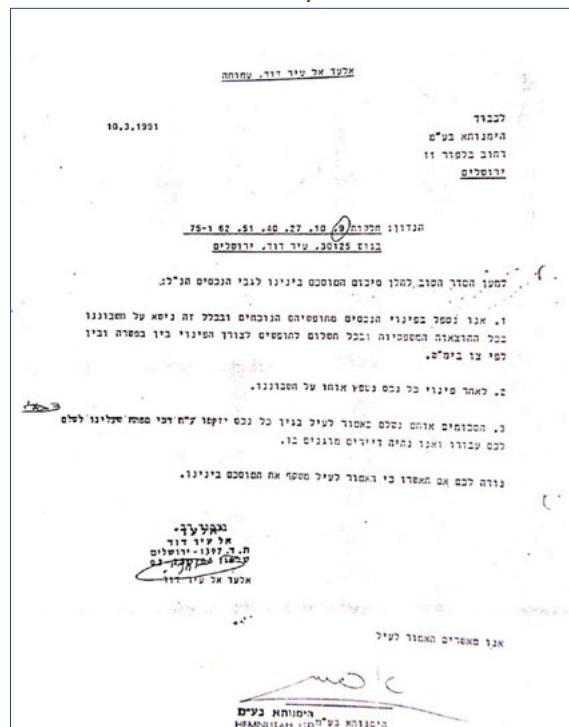
**Palestinian Displacement and Entrenching the Occupation**

***“It’s nonsense to say that KKL has not operated in Judea and Samaria before.”***

*Avraham Duvdevani, Chair of KKL--JNF, 2021*

Since its inception, KKL-JNF has aimed to support Jewish settlement in Israel and has done so through the dual tactics of purchasing land and environmental projects, especially planting trees, in strategic locations. Both of these undertakings have contributed to the intentional displacement and erasure of Palestinian communities, which continues to this day.

In the quote above, KKL-JNF Board Chair Avraham Duvdevani accurately describes KKL-JNF’s history. Purchasing land in the West Bank is by no means a new practice for the organization. Since the early days of the 1967 occupation, KKL-JNF has been involved in purchasing land in the occupied territories. In fact, as early as 1968, then-Prime Minister Levi Eshkol specifically requested that KKL-JNF purchase land in the West Bank. In the 1970s, KKL-JNF established a subsidiary company called “Himanuta West Bank” with the expressed purpose of purchasing land in the occupied territories. These practices were further intensified and entrenched in the mid-1980s as KKL-JNF began a serious partnership with the rightwing settler groups Elad and Ateret Cohanim, both of which work to displace Palestinians from their homes by settling Jews inside Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. More recently, in 2014, journalist Raviv Drucker uncovered an internal KKL-JNF document about the organization’s work in dozens of settlements, including in some of the most intense hotspots of occupation.<sup>1</sup>



1991 agreement between KKL-JNF and Elad

1. Among the settlements listed in the document are Adora, Itamar, Alon Moreh, Alfei Menashe, Ariel, Eshkolot, Beit El, Beit Aryeh, Givat Zeev, Gush Etzion, Har Adar, Talmon, Yakir, Kfar Etzion, Carmel, South Hebron Regional Council, Binyamin Regional Council, Mevo Dotan, Maon, Maale Amos, Metzadot Yehuda, Neve Daniel, Nahal Prat, Susya, Sansenah, Peduel, Kedumim, Kiryat Arba, Karnei Shomron, Rihan, Shvut Rachel, Shomron Regional Council, Telem, Tekoa, and Efrat. Note that this document only includes funding by KKL-JNF itself to settlements and does not address potential additional funding by its subsidiary Himanuta. While in some of these cases, KKL-JNF’s work involves building infrastructure (parks, bike paths, etc.) in already existing settlements, in other cases, such as in Itamar, Alfei Menashe, Kedumim, Otniel, and others, KKL-JNF purchased the land on which the settlements were built, thus even more directly contributing to settlement expansion and the creation of facts on the ground in the West Bank.

It is essential to understand the impact of KKL-JNF in entrenching the occupation in order to understand why, as progressives, we must face this issue head on. An enormous amount of research has gone into learning about the impact KKL-JNF has had on Palestinian homes and communities in the West Bank and throughout Israel. What follows are just some of the examples of KKL-JNF's destructive impact on Palestinian communities through forced displacement and settlement expansion.

In Silwan, a neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem, KKL-JNF has been involved in a decades-long suit to evict Palestinian families. The organization acquired some of these properties through the unjust use of the Absentee Property Law, in which homes were turned over to KKL-JNF ownership despite the fact that Palestinian families had been living in them for generations. KKL-JNF, in partnership with the settler organization Elad (which runs the City of David settlement site in Silwan), has settled Israelis in at least ten Palestinian properties in Silwan and has chosen to pursue eviction proceedings against several families, including the well-known Sumarin family. KKL-JNF and Elad have been working together in various capacities in East Jerusalem since the mid-1980s.<sup>2</sup> Elad is clear about its intentions to displace Palestinians in order to “Judaize East Jerusalem,” an aim supported by KKL-JNF: as the Head of the Land Division for KKL-JNF Abraham Halleli testified after the organization acquired the home of the Sumarin family and other “absentee” property: “We have an interest for those properties to be under Jewish ownership.”

Similarly, in Makhrou, south of Jerusalem and near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, KKL-JNF, through its subsidiary Himanuta, petitioned for the eviction and demolition of the home and restaurant of the Cassia family. KKL-JNF was represented by Attorney Avi Segal, who also works as a lawyer for the far-right settler groups Regavim, Elad, Amana, Ateret Cohanim, and others. Following the demolition in Makhrou, settlers established an outpost on the land. A similar tactic was used in 2017 in a case regarding the Palestinian village of a-Ramadin, in which KKL-JNF joined Regavim in a court case which sought the demolition of the entire village.

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2. In a 1986 letter, for example, Eitan Geva, a lawyer representing Elad, wrote to KKL-JNF: “On October 30, 1985, you agreed that the organization [KKL-JNF] would volunteer to help locate and preserve your rights in the area of the City of David.” After describing a property which had been purchased by the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association and later transferred to KKL-JNF, the letter states, “Since then, residential homes have been built on this land. My client recommends beginning legal proceedings in order to nullify the double registration and return the ownership to you.” Later, a 1987 contract between KKL-JNF and Elad details a \$50,000 loan from KKL-JNF to Elad for the “eviction of buildings inhabited by Arab residents in Silwan and the surrounding areas that are registered in KKL-JNF’s name and ownership... After the eviction from the building, it will be rented to one or more members of the organization [Elad], as protected tenants, in exchange for the amount paid by KKL-JNF to carry out the eviction.” (See also this similar contract from 1991.) In 1994, following a case brought by the Ruweidi family in East Jerusalem in defense of the family’s home, Elad offered to cover KKL-JNF’s legal costs in the case. As Haim Cohen, Deputy Chair of KKL-JNF and Chair of Himanuta, explained in a meeting at the time, “The Elad organization preserves property in the City of David for Himanuta. In exchange for this, they are interested in assisting in the legal matter.”



In addition, KKL-JNF was involved in the [purchase of Beit Bakri](#), a Palestinian home in the heart of Hebron. Settler presence in Hebron has rendered the once bustling city center - one of the largest Palestinian cities in the West Bank - into a ghost town where deep segregation and settler violence persist. Settler purchases in Hebron have a devastating impact on the city, and, further, there is reason to believe that the [paperwork for Beit Bakri is questionable](#). Himanuta's alleged purchase of Beit Bakri enabled the settlers living there to avoid eviction, even after the Palestinian owners managed to win a case against them. The case is still ongoing but, in the meantime, settlers continue to live in the home.

The Palestinian [village of Susya](#) in the South Hebron Hills is yet another example of KKL-JNF's involvement in the displacement of Palestinians from their homes and communities. An Israeli settlement with the same name was established near the Palestinian village in 1983 on private Palestinian land that had been declared "state land" by Israel. Three years later, the Israeli Civil Administration declared that the Palestinian village's land was on an archeological site and expelled the Palestinian residents. Many of the residents moved to the remainder of their land, between the archeological site and the settlement, and since then, they have faced constant demolitions and continue to be threatened with expulsion. Despite this, as can be seen in the inlaid image taken from a [KKL-JNF call for donations](#), the organization takes pride in its role in this saga of displacement, referring to the settlement of Susya - once home to an entire Palestinian community - as "evolving into an attractive heritage site for visits, education and as a place for private and public events."

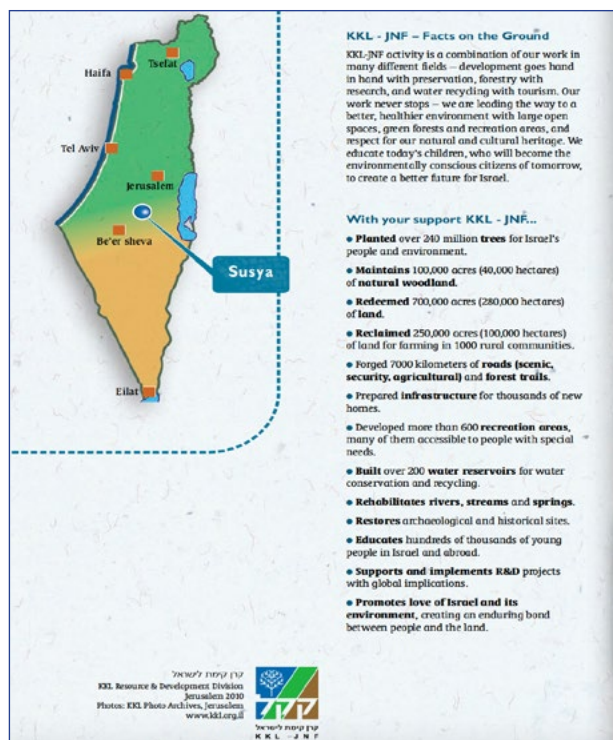


Image from KKL-JNF fundraising materials about their work in the settlement of Susya

In addition, [KKL-JNF-owned land was allocated](#) to the Efrat Regional Council for the construction of 800 settlement housing units in the highly problematic [E2 \(a-Nahla\) area](#), where the Givat Eitam unrecognized outpost now stands. E2 is a particularly strategic area because settlement construction there threatens Bethlehem's growth to the south and could cut the southern West Bank in two, which would deal yet another serious blow to the possibility of a two-state solution. The [settlement housing units are built on land owned by KKL-JNF](#), which essentially enables one of the most controversial and damaging settlement projects in the West Bank.

KKL-JNF uses these practices on the other side of the Green Line as well. In the Negev desert, in southern Israel, KKL-JNF planned to [plant a forest on top of the Bedouin village](#) of Al-Araqib. Residents have refused to leave the village, which has led to the Israeli army demolishing the village [close to 200 times](#). Not far from there, KKL-JNF is [complicit in the demolition of the Palestinian village of Umm Al-Hiran](#) and is [involved in the construction](#) of an exclusively Jewish village called Hiran, which is being built on the ruins of Umm Al-Hiran. In the Galilee, in northern Israel, KKL-JNF has worked to strategically purchase land ([often from the State](#)) that will [inhibit the growth](#) and development of Palestinian towns. As Board Chair Avraham Duvdevani has [explained](#), KKL-JNF intentionally outbids Arabs trying to purchase land in the Galilee in order to ensure that land in the area remains under Jewish ownership.

The problem of funding Palestinian displacement is not limited to KKL-JNF, the Israel-based organization, but is prevalent in JNF organizations around the world as well. While different JNFs have different levels of affiliation with KKL-JNF, these organizations continue to fund projects that entrench the occupation. JNF Canada, for example, [contributed directly to the construction](#) of the hilltop settler outpost of Givat Oz VeGaon in Gush Etzion, while JNF USA has [donated to the David Horowitz Freedman Center](#), a group that is a [recognized hate group](#); as well as to the settler site [City of David in Silwan](#); [American Friends of Likud](#); [American Friends of Shavei Hebron](#); and to the [Gush Etzion Foundation](#).

In Israel, mainstream criticism of KKL-JNF is most often focused on the issue of [corruption](#) and [mismanagement](#) in the organization, which is so pervasive that a 2018 investigative report on KKL-JNF by the Israeli Justice ministry [recommended considering dissolving the organization](#). It is important to note the ways in which organizational corruption and funding in the West Bank overlap and reinforce one another. For example, the organization was accused of [discriminatory firing of Palestinian workers in multiple cases](#). More so, [mismanagement and secrecy](#) led to a high profile case in which [100 million NIS](#) was spent on purchases in the West Bank behind the backs of the majority of the Board and in contradiction of KKL-JNF's own governance structure.

## Section 2

### ***Unraveling the Mystery of How KKL-JNF Works*** ---

***“KKL-JNF must change its organizational culture and instill among its management the fact that the money that it manages does not belong to them. Therefore, KKL-JNF must utilize its rights and responsibilities involved in managing the money it possesses with the utmost responsibility and transparency, while strengthening adherence to proper management norms.”***

2017 [Report by the Israeli State Comptroller](#) on KKL-JNF’s Activities

Just months after the publication of the report quoted above, the exact situation that the State Comptroller had warned against transpired: KKL-JNF Board members secretly used the organization’s funds for projects that they had a personal desire to advance – in this case, the purchase of land in the West Bank. This was done behind the backs of the vast majority of the organization’s Board and staff and in contradiction of KKL-JNF’s own decision-making policies.<sup>3</sup> Although this section does not focus specifically on the case of Nachi Eyal and Arnan Felman, the two Board members who carried out this fraudulent activity, their story is instructive because it is a case in which the opaque and confusing nature of KKL-JNF’s internal mechanisms were exploited for nefarious political goals.<sup>4</sup> Doing so was possible precisely because the organization’s hazy and complex structure makes it easy for even millions of shekels to elude oversight.

In light of the political implications of how KKL-JNF functions, this section will attempt to detail the organization’s structure, decision-making processes, division of power, and budget. Given the massive size of KKL-JNF, this report will not be fully comprehensive. Such a feat may be impossible in this case. In fact, not one person we interviewed for this project, including KKL-JNF Board members and others who are deeply involved in the organization, claimed to fully understand the unwieldy mess that is KKL-JNF. That being said, this section will attempt to give as full a picture as is possible regarding how KKL-JNF functions, with a particular eye to those aspects of its work that are most important to understand for those committed to ending the occupation.

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3. The [Lemberger Report](#), an external review of the Nachi Eyal and Arnan Felman affair that was commissioned by the KKL-JNF Board and written by retired Judge Yehoshua Lemberger, concludes that Eyal and Felman acted against organizational policy by making purchases without Board approval, not because the purchases took place in the occupied territories. Debates within the Board regarding the legitimacy of KKL-JNF purchasing land in the West Bank are discussed below. Notably, Felman remains on the Board and Executive Committee of KKL-JNF to this day.

4. As Yehoshua Lemberger [writes](#), “A decision to renew purchasing land in an area of territory where purchasing is deeply disputed and has been frozen for many years would need to be an explicit decision and rely on clear and precise policy which reflects the explicit position of the Board, according to which the operative bodies are meant to act. The desire to set aside controversy or conceal the content of the decision from donors or other bodies does not justify a vague decision, whose content cannot be interpreted from the language of the decision itself.”

## **Brief Historical Overview of KKL-JNF's Land Acquisition Practices and Legal Status**

KKL-JNF was founded in 1901 as a subsidiary of the World Zionist Organization. It was based in England from its founding until 1953, when the organization was moved to Israel as part of legal changes taking place to bring pre-State organizations into compliance with the new State of Israel. As part of this process, KKL-JNF obtained approximately 1.5 million dunam of land from the State that had largely been taken as “absentee property” from Palestinian refugees and displaced people (who were not compensated for the land).<sup>5</sup> This land remains, to this day, a significant portion of KKL-JNF's total current holdings (approximately 2.5 million dunam of land).

Since its registration in 1953 in Israel, KKL-JNF has essentially existed as a quasi-governmental organization, which is clear from its financial dealings with the State and representation on governmental bodies. While this essential relationship has not changed, in 2014, then-Justice Minister Tzipi Livni initiated a process that forced KKL-JNF to become what is known as a “public benefit company” in 2016. This forced the organization to limit the number of paid positions and set a higher standard for reporting and oversight (though there is still debate within the KKL-JNF leadership about the extent of oversight to which they are subject). In addition, KKL-JNF owns, in part or in full, over a dozen subsidiaries. This includes companies that work in education, energy, and real estate, including in the occupied territories.

## **The World Zionist Organization**

KKL-JNF, along with the World Zionist Organization (WZO), the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), and Keren HaYesod, is one of Israel's four “National Institutions.” Officially, the WZO is the parent organization, under which the other three organizations are situated. In reality, KKL-JNF is, in many ways, the most powerful of these institutions. Because of its enormous real estate holdings, the budget of KKL-JNF dwarfs that of the other institutions, which operate as fundraising, educational, and advocacy organizations. Thus, while KKL-JNF is fully under the WZO, it is also the most significant contributor to the WZO's budget. KKL-JNF's support for the WZO increased significantly as part of the coalition agreement signed at the 2015 World Zionist Congress. KKL-JNF agreed to increased support for the WZO because it was known that KKL-JNF had billions of

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5. Note, however, that this process was not inevitable. Other pre-State organizations were instead disbanded, such as the pre-state military organization Etzel and the Rothschild family's Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA), which, like KKL-JNF, worked to buy and “redeem” land in Palestine before the foundation of the State. In fact, David Ben-Gurion originally thought to disband KKL-JNF with the foundation of the State. However, the organization's political potential, discussed in more detail below, led early State leaders to leave KKL-JNF intact. As Amiad Niv, who served as the Head of KKL-JNF's research institute, wrote in a KKL-JNF publication, “During the early years of the State's existence, the government, headed by David Ben-Gurion, decided to ‘redeem’ additional areas of land and to transfer them to KKL-JNF's guardianship, with the goal of preventing the return of those who had held the land before the foundation of the State.” That is, following UN Resolution 194, which rules that refugees have the right to return to their homes, Ben-Gurion decided to sell refugee land to KKL-JNF, intentionally transferring this land in order to circumvent the potential future application of international law which would require the State, but not a private company, to return refugee land. Further, forestation provided an additional tactic for the young State of Israel to contend with the issue of refugees: by planting forests over depopulated villages, the new state turned the destruction of these villages into an irreversible reality and ensured that there would be nothing to which refugees could return.

shekels in the bank that the State would come after were it not spent.<sup>6</sup> In the most recent World Zionist Congress coalition agreement, KKL-JNF nearly doubled its contribution to the WZO budget, increasing its support from \$22 million to more than \$40 million annually, while concurrently expanding the number of WZO departments to fourteen. These departments each cost up to 2.5 million NIS annually, leading the Israeli business newspaper *Calcalist* to term the WZO “a job factory for politicians.” According to a past delegate to the World Zionist Congress, every time the World Zionist Congress meets, more departments are added. This is a necessary part of the process for the coalition agreement, which every party signs at the end of the Congress, to be agreed upon. In order to create enough jobs for everyone and political consensus among the delegates, more departments are needed, which means that more funding is needed from KKL-JNF - leading to an unending cycle of KKL-JNF funding and WZO growth.



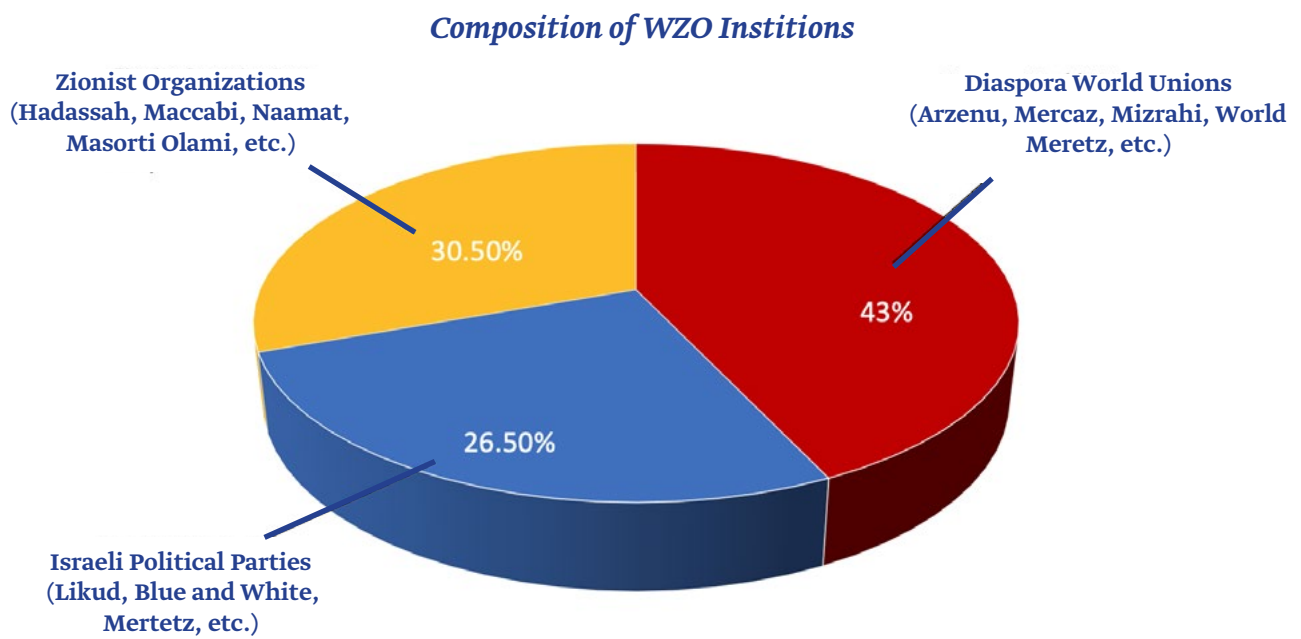
Importantly, the composition of the leadership of the National Institutions is a direct result of the decisions of the WZO. For this reason, to understand how KKL-JNF works, it is crucial to dissect the way that the National Institutions, and in particular the WZO, work.

The WZO was established in 1897 at the first World Zionist Congress as the democratic, decision-making body for the emergent political Zionist movement in Europe. This Congress is still active and is the central body that determines the workings of the National Institutions. The Congress meets every five years (most recently in October 2020) to determine organizational priorities, the allocation of a budget totaling \$5 billion,<sup>7</sup> and leadership positions within the National Institutions and their subsidiaries.

6. The motivation behind KKL-JNF’s decision to increase funding to the WZO was related to us by a former Board Member of Himanuta. This Board Member explained that funding the WZO was a way for KKL-JNF to avoid state taxation and oversight while increasing its power in the arena of the Zionist Institutions.

7. This is the total budget for the five years between World Zionist Congresses.

The Congress is made up delegates sent from three types of bodies: World Unions, Israeli political parties, and the Zionist Organizations. “World Unions” refer to political slates that are set up in the diaspora.<sup>8</sup> These slates are usually affiliated either with an Israeli political party or a Jewish religious denomination. Depending on the country, there are either elections or negotiations to determine representatives of the World Unions to the World Zionist Congress.<sup>9</sup> In Israel, delegates proportionally represent the results of the most recent Knesset elections.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the delegates that represent the Jewish diaspora and Israel, there are also delegates sent by a set list of eleven Zionist Organizations.<sup>11</sup>



There were a total of 755 delegates to the last Congress (not including alternates). 525 of these delegates come from World Unions and Israeli political parties, and 230 delegates were sent from the eleven Zionist Organizations. Israel had 200 delegates (38%), the United States had 152 delegates (29%), and the other countries of the diaspora had 173 delegates (33%).

8. Each country with a registered Zionist Federation (31 countries in total) gets a set number of delegates, proportional to the Jewish population of that country.

9. In the United States, there are elections that determine the makeup of the US’s 29% of delegates. Other countries may have elections as well, but most tend to opt for pre-set arrangements in which the local governing body of the Jewish community decides via precedent and negotiations how to divide their delegates.

10. Israeli political parties in the Knesset that do not claim to be Zionist, including both Haredi and Arab parties, are not represented in the World Zionist Organization. (The only Haredi party in Israel to participate in the WZO is Shas.)

11. Note that groups like Arzenu and Mercaz (affiliated with the Reform and Conservative movements, respectively) are Zionist Organizations and have also set up “World Unions,” such that it is possible to vote for Arzenu and Mercaz in World Zionist Congress elections. Similarly, a group like Meretz is both an Israeli political party and has a World Union.

Because the majority of delegates outside of Israel come from the United States, where there are active elections that can be contentious, election trends in the US are of particular note. In particular, new slates which are formed can tip the scale to the left or the right in meaningful ways. For example, in the last election, the leftwing [Hatikvah](#) slate brought together a number of progressive Israel organizations to back a left-leaning slate, while [Eretz HaKodesh](#), a rightwing Haredi slate, decided to enter the arena of Zionist politics, despite traditional Haredi opposition to working in or with Zionist institutions.<sup>12</sup> Although Hatikvah represented an interesting turn towards more cooperation among the left in the realm of Zionist politics, the slate failed to garner significant electoral outcomes. The significant gains the slate achieved were dwarfed by the success of Eretz HaKodesh, which gained [two and a half times](#) the number of seats as Hatikvah and obtained more than 16% of the total votes.

The increasingly rightwing composition of the World Zionist Congress should not be too surprising to those paying attention to the direction of mainstream Zionist politics abroad or the rightward shift of the Israeli electorate, which are the two factors that determine the composition of the Congress.<sup>13</sup> While Israeli Jewish voters have elected more and more extreme right-wing parties into the Knesset,<sup>14</sup> Jewish communities abroad are more polarized with regard to Israel-Palestine: those on the left are, by and large, less and less interested in Zionist politics (and thus less likely to vote in World Zionist Congress elections), while those on the right [have largely become increasingly vocal](#) on the issue of Israel. These trends in Israel and the diaspora together help explain why the Zionist Institutions have also [moved to the right in recent years](#).

### **The Role of the WZO in Determining KKL-JNF's Governance**

A variety of decisions are made by World Zionist Congress delegates when they meet every five years. This includes, most notably for our purposes, decisions regarding the division of leadership positions and budgets for the various National Institutions. Because KKL-JNF is 100% under the WZO, the composition of its Board is proportional to the results of the World Zionist Congress elections. That is, 25 seats on the KKL-JNF board proportionally represent the composition of the World Zionist Congress (meaning that they proportionally represent the results of the World Zionist Congress elections abroad and the Knesset results in Israel). In addition, there are eleven seats on

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12. While Haredi parties in both Israel and the diaspora have traditionally eschewed Zionist politics, the community's [increasing acceptance of Zionism](#) (or at least tacit agreement to cooperate with Zionist institutions in many cases) warrants consideration of whether other Haredi parties, either in Israel or abroad, will enter the WZO in the coming years. There is a particular incentive for these communities to do so, given the significant access to funds that comes with such a decision, and it is worth considering how such a move would shift the map of Zionist electoral politics.

13. Although there is indeed a rightward shift in the National Institutions, it is important to note these shifts are taking place within institutions that were already carrying out [exclusionary policies in Israel](#). It is noteworthy, for example, that the World Zionist Organization has [financed illegal outposts for years](#).

14. The left's losses in the Knesset are particularly notable. The Labour Party, for example, as part of the Zionist Union coalition with Hatnua, won 24 seats in the 2015 Knesset elections. In 2021, Labour won just 7 seats of the 120 total seats in the legislature.

the KKL-JNF board which belong to a set and unchanging list of eleven Zionist Organizations<sup>15</sup> (discussed in greater detail below) and one additional seat which is allotted to a department of the World Zionist Organization, called the Zionist Council. Importantly, negotiations matter in allotting Board positions. The number of seats a given group receives can be rounded up or down if their percentage of board seats is not a whole number. Like-minded groups can band together to push for 5.2%, for example, to turn into 6% instead of 5%. Other decisions, such as who will serve as the Chair of KKL-JNF and other leadership positions, are decided via negotiations during the World Zionist Congress. By the end of the Congress, a coalition agreement is signed, which details decisions about leadership positions and more.

In addition, at the conclusion of the World Zionist Congress, the organization chooses a General Council. The General Council is composed of 25% of the delegates to the World Zionist Congress (186 individuals) and meets annually (or more often if needed, unlike the World Zionist Congress, which only meets every five years) in order to advance the more ongoing operations of the National Institutions. The General Council of the WZO also acts as the General Assembly of KKL-JNF, which votes on bigger picture questions (e.g., new bylaws for KKL-JNF). This body also confirms the composition of the KKL-JNF Board of Directors.

### **The KKL-JNF Board**

The 37-person KKL-JNF Board is made up of the same three groups that are represented in the World Zionist Congress: World Unions, Israeli political parties, and the Zionist Organizations. 25 KKL-JNF Board members represent World Unions and Israeli political parties, while 11 Board members represent the Zionist Organizations (one Board member per Organization) and one seat is allocated to a representative of the Zionist Council, a department of the World Zionist Organization.

There are a variety of committees within the KKL-JNF Board, including the Executive Committee, which is composed of the Chair (which is a paid position) and Deputy Chairs (which were paid positions until KKL-JNF was forced to become a public benefit company in 2016).<sup>16</sup> The fact that the chair is paid and the deputies are not means that the chair generally has more time to work on KKL-JNF business than the deputies and, therefore, a greater ability to influence policy and direction. Following the 2015 World Zionist Congress, the Executive Committee was expanded from five members to twelve members in order to distribute more positions. Although Deputy Chair positions are unpaid,<sup>17</sup> the increasing politicization of KKL-JNF makes them an important

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15. One of these eleven seats is allocated to a representative of a student organization, but that representative can come from different student organizations.

16. The Executive Committee is comprised only of delegates who were elected and thus does not include representatives from the Zionist Organizations.

17. Deputies, however, do have access to aides and offices.



bargaining chip in negotiations. The growth of the Executive Committee has meant that the Executive Committee, which was intended to oversee project implementation, now largely directs policy as well, which is part of a trend towards the Executive Committee seeking increased power on the KKL-JNF Board (though, of course, increasing the number of deputy chairs simultaneously decreases the power of each deputy chair).

The most central political question that KKL-JNF currently faces is regarding the acceptability of the organization buying land directly in the occupied territories. Although KKL-JNF has been operating in the occupied territories for decades through subsidiary companies, the recent attempt to have the organization buy directly in the West Bank (beyond East Jerusalem) has led to an internal legal debate within the Board about the meaning of section 3a of KKL-JNF's Memorandum of Association, which states that the organization operates in "the State of Israel in any area subject to the jurisdiction of the Government of Israel." The debate focuses on whether Area C of the West Bank is under "the jurisdiction of the Government of Israel" or not. Board members representing organizations in the more progressive camp, including from the Reform Movement and Meretz, have argued that Area C is not under Israeli jurisdiction, while those on the right say that it is. Both sides have obtained legal opinions that support their stances.

## **Budget**

The vast majority of KKL-JNF's income comes from its extensive real estate holdings, which total around 2.5 million dunam. In 2019, for example, KKL-JNF's total revenue was 2 billion NIS. Of this revenue, 84% came from land holdings. All of KKL-JNF's land is managed by the Israel Land Authority (ILA).<sup>18</sup> The ILA's management of KKL-JNF's land dates back to a treaty signed in 1961 between the State and KKL-JNF, which sets out that the ILA will manage KKL-JNF land, a service for which KKL-JNF pays and in return receives the extensive profit from that land from the ILA. In 2019, for example, the ILA transferred 1.69 billion NIS to KKL-JNF as the result of this treaty.

The rest of KKL-JNF's budget comes from a variety of sources, including donations and partnerships with the government and other institutions. It is important to note that donations make up a relatively small portion of the KKL-JNF budget. In 2019, for example, donations totaled 91.7 million NIS, accounting for only 4.5% of that year's budget.<sup>19</sup>

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18. This excludes land owned by Himanuta, a subsidiary of KKL-JNF, which is managed privately, rather than by the Israel Land Authority. However, Himanuta's land accounts for only 1.7% of the total land owned by KKL-JNF.

19. Averaging the numbers from 2017-2019 yields similar proportions: during this three-year period, the total amount that KKL-JNF received from the ILA averaged 86.9% of its budget per year, while the total amount that it received in donations averaged 3.9% of its budget per year.

Further, it is also important to note that KKL-JNF's assets are significantly more valuable than the organization reports. Some of KKL-JNF's land is owned directly by the organization, and some of its land is owned by subsidiaries, including, most prominently, Himanuta (discussed in greater detail below). In 2018, KKL-JNF claimed that its land holdings (excluding the land of Himanuta) were worth 3.7 billion NIS.<sup>20</sup> However, this number is based upon the land's historical value (that is, the purchase cost from many decades ago), and the value of the land has not been appraised since. The significance of this omission is made even stronger when one compares the stated value of Himanuta's land with the stated value of KKL-JNF's land: Himanuta owns about 45,000 dunam of land, which it claims is worth 4.7 billion NIS, while KKL-JNF owns 2,500,000 dunam of land (55 times as much land as Himanuta) which, as stated above, it claims is worth only 3.7 billion NIS!<sup>21</sup> This discrepancy is explained by the fact that Himanuta appraises its land every five years and so its stated value is relatively accurate, while KKL-JNF has never re-appraised its land. Assuming that the per dunam cost of land owned by Himanuta and KKL-JNF is roughly equivalent (there is no reason to think otherwise), we can conclude, based on Himanuta's land value, that each dunam of land is actually worth approximately 100,000 NIS, meaning that the approximate actual value of KKL-JNF's holdings in fact totals something more like 250 billion NIS (67 times the total value that they report). According to a former board member of Himanuta, KKL-JNF has refrained from updating their land's value because doing so would make their land more susceptible to the government's interest and control.

### **KKL-JNF, The State, and the ILA**

In a November 2018 legal opinion for Himanuta CEO Alex Hefetz, Attorney Vladi Borodovsky wrote that because the State aimed to “minimize the exposure (and the political and international sensitivity entailed therein) of direct engagement by State of Israel institutions in purchasing land in the area [of the West Bank], the State of Israel's institutions chose to use Himanuta as a tool to implement their land purchases in the area.” That is, despite various disputes, KKL-JNF and the State of Israel are deeply intertwined and mutually benefit one another in particular ways, including regarding decisions about land in the West Bank. The State is able to carry out its wishes under the guise of the actions of a private company.<sup>22</sup> Because KKL-JNF is tasked only with acting on behalf of the Jewish people, rather than on behalf of the good of all Israeli citizens, KKL-JNF can carry out work that the State would have trouble justifying. At the same time, KKL-JNF also benefits in this relationship in terms of the access to power and resources it receives from the State.

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20. This number is based on KKL-JNF's 2018 claim that its total land holdings are worth 8.43 billion NIS and that Himanuta's land is worth 4.7 billion NIS of that.

21. The following year, KKL-JNF slightly adjusted the estimation of the value of its property.

22. Indeed, when former Board Chair Danny Atar finally agreed to increased government oversight, Likud Members of Knesset stepped in to thwart that process, presumably because they realized that lack of oversight of KKL-JNF serves the rightwing goals of increased land takeover in the West Bank.

KKL-JNF claims to work only in geographic areas that accord with Israeli government policy; however, it is important to note that KKL-JNF plays a significant role in choosing and crafting these policies. KKL-JNF holds 6 of the 14 seats (43%) on the Council of the Israel Land Authority (ILA), which is Israel's national authority in determining land policy. The ILA decides on the distribution of land, planning priorities, and development policies - processes that while technical, are hugely important and impactful. In 1968, a committee termed "the Committee of Two" was established, which functioned until 2000 and was composed of the head of KKL-JNF and a representative of the ILA, who together determined land purchasing decisions, particularly in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

One problem that has emerged in the relationship between KKL-JNF and the ILA is that KKL-JNF, according to its charter, exists to act on behalf of the Jewish people and only leases land to Jews (thus necessarily discriminating against non-Jews), while the State and State bodies are prohibited from advancing discriminatory practices.<sup>23</sup> Two legal cases emerged from this tension. In 2004, the NGO Adalah submitted a petition arguing against the legality of certain ILA tenders, which, because they were for KKL-JNF land, were only open to Jews. In response to the case, KKL-JNF wrote:

***"The [KKL-]JNF, in relation to being an owner of land, is not a public body that works for the benefit of all citizens of the state. The loyalty of the [KKL-]JNF is given to the Jewish people and only to them is the [KKL-]JNF obligated. The [KKL-]JNF, as the owner of the [KKL-]JNF land, does not have a duty to practice equality towards all citizens of the state."***

The case lasted several years, after which the judge ruled that the ILA should operate according to the principal of equality, including on KKL-JNF's land, but also ruled that if a non-Jewish citizen wins a bid on KKL-JNF land, KKL-JNF may transfer that land to the State and receive other land in exchange so that KKL-JNF does not need to be the body selling land to non-Jews, essentially allowing KKL-JNF to continue its discriminatory policies.<sup>24</sup> (In 2015, an agreement was signed between KKL-JNF and the ILA which, among other matters, formalized the process of swapping land when a tender was won by a non-Jew, rather than dealing with those instances on a case by case basis, as had been done from the ruling in 2009 until the agreement in 2015.)

Later, in 2016, Adalah, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, and the Arab local councils submitted a legal petition arguing that KKL-JNF should not be represented on the ILA because their policy of not leasing land to non-Jews is necessarily discriminatory, and they should not

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23. It is of course important to note that despite the State's claims to the contrary, Israel does in fact discriminate against non-Jewish citizens in a variety of ways. See, for example, Adalah's database of discriminatory laws.

24. In this case, the Attorney General ruled that the Israel Land Authority is not permitted to discriminate against non-Jews, without explicitly addressing the question of whether KKL-JNF is allowed to discriminate. Were a case to arise in which land was owned and managed by KKL-JNF and the organization forbade non-Jews from living on that land, it is not clear what the Attorney General would rule. It is possible that a ruling would forbid discrimination because KKL-JNF is quasi-governmental, or it is possible that it would permit it because it is not fully a government body.

have representation on a state body. Adalah and the other petitioners lost this case, and KKL-JNF continues to hold close to half of the representation on the ILA.

In addition to the land that KKL-JNF owns which is managed by the ILA, the ILA contracts land to KKL-JNF for it to administer. In addition, according to the ILA's national master plan for forestation, KKL-JNF is responsible for all of Israel's forests, regardless of whether they are owned by KKL-JNF.

In 2009, then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu advanced policies that allowed for sweeping privatization of land in Israel. KKL-JNF opposed such a move because privatization might have led to KKL-JNF losing some amount of land. Due to this concern, a deal was signed between the State and KKL-JNF, in which KKL-JNF transferred land that was set to be privatized to the State and received in return land in the Negev and Galilee. That is, KKL-JNF received a very favorable deal in which it was able to get rid of land that would be privatized and instead received land that it could keep.

The joint work of KKL-JNF and the State in the Negev is particularly instructive. In the Negev, the ILA has used KKL-JNF to plant forests in order to limit where Bedouin communities can live and evict them from their homes, often into urban areas where poverty rates are high and lack of services is a significant problem. In 2017, a [five-year development plan](#), which advanced [discriminatory policies](#) against the Bedouin community, was implemented for the Negev that explicitly laid out the partnership between the ILA and KKL-JNF in that region. In section 13 of the plan, it calls for "implementing planting activities on state lands that were evacuated or are being evacuated for an annual sum that will not be less, when possible, than 30 million NIS. This should be done in coordination with and through KKL-JNF and subject to the regulations of the Israel Lands Authority."

There is no indication that there are plans to end these practices: in Avraham Duvdevani's first meeting as Board Chair, [he stated](#) that forestation is "tremendously important because of its role in seizing land and preventing intruders.<sup>25</sup> The Negev must be saved by means of forestation."

## **KKL and Himanuta**

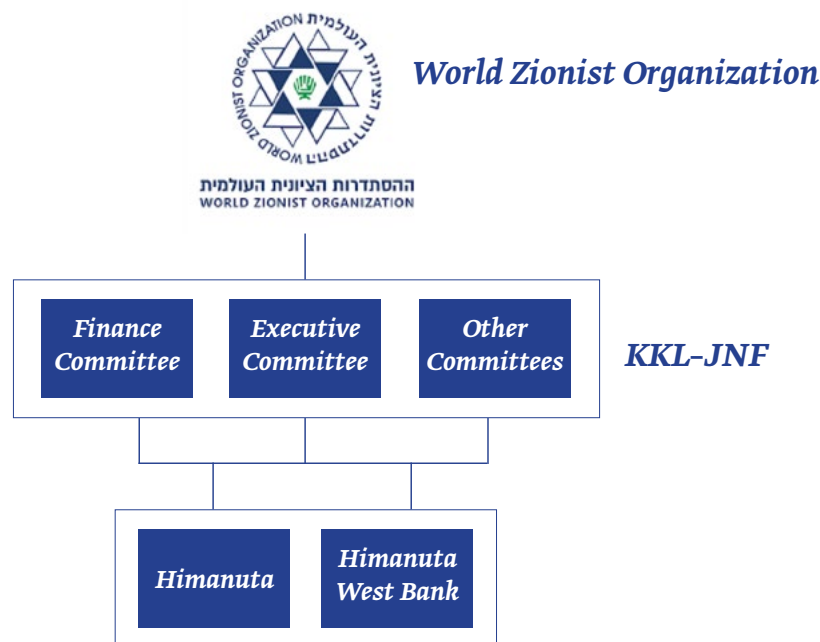
Among KKL-JNF's subsidiaries are two different subsidiaries named "Himanuta" -- one an Israeli company, first registered in 1938 (ten years before the establishment of the State of Israel), and one registered in 1971 in the West Bank via the Israeli army's Civil Administration.<sup>26</sup>

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25. The word "intruders" here presumably refers to Palestinian Bedouin communities in the Negev, who have been living in the area for generations.

26. "Himanuta" will henceforth refer to the Himanuta company registered in Israel, while "Himanuta West Bank" will refer to the company registered in the occupied territories.

Although KKL-JNF is a public benefit company and thus has particular obligations in terms of transparency and public reporting, both Himanutas are private companies and therefore have significantly fewer public records.<sup>27</sup> Himanuta, which has been headed by Alex Hefetz since 2005, is the purchasing arm of KKL-JNF and is the body that actively acquires more land. As noted above, its holdings today total about 45,000 dunam of land, while according to a former Himanuta Board member, Himanuta West Bank currently owns 10,000-15,000 dunam of land.<sup>28</sup> Himanuta West Bank decreased its purchases beginning in the 1980s and was largely dormant between the early 2000s until 2017. Purchases wound down slowly, with the last West Bank purchase in this period taking place in 2008.



However, in 2017, KKL-JNF published a tender for a job as the “Judea and Samaria Transactions Coordinator.” The position includes “responsibility for examining land transactions of the Himanuta company in the area of Judea and Samaria,” “preserving the land rights of Himanuta in Judea and Samaria,” and “locating properties and reaching out to their owners.” This position was filled by Oved Arad, who had previously worked for the far-right group Regavim. Following this, between 2017 and 2020, KKL-JNF Board members Nachi Eyal and Arnan Felman began a

27. While there are few records for Himanuta, we were not able to obtain any records at all for Himanuta West Bank because of restrictions by the Civil Administration.

28. According to research by Peace Now, Himanuta West Bank has acquired a total of at least 65,000 dunam over its history. However, because many of these land purchases were never registered, these numbers are difficult to determine with full certainty.

secret West Bank land purchasing spree, and during these years, Himanuta West Bank spent 100 million NIS on purchases throughout the West Bank, including in Gush Etzion, the Jordan Valley, Hebron, and the areas of Samaria and Binyamin in the northern West Bank. The funding for all of these purchases came from a budget that KKL-JNF had allocated to Himanuta to spend in Israel's geographic periphery.<sup>29</sup> As Judge Lemberger explained:

***“Immediately following the decision [to allocate money to Himanuta for purchases in the Negev, Galilee, Jerusalem, and the periphery], very extensive activity began to be implemented for the preparation of land purchases in Judea and Samaria by means of the Himanuta West Bank / Jerusalem company. This activity was done completely secretly through the de facto exclusion of the relevant institutions, including the Board of KKL-JNF, the Executive Committee, and the Board of Himanuta... [These purchases were made through Himanuta West Bank] despite the fact that the purchasing budget had been allocated and was designated within the context of the decision for Himanuta [and not Himanuta West Bank, a separate company].”***

Although at times KKL-JNF has tried to distance the organization itself from these two subsidiaries, the three are all closely linked.<sup>30</sup> There is a significant amount of overlap between Himanuta and KKL-JNF board members, and, further, the Board members of KKL-JNF form the General Assembly of Himanuta.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Alex Hefetz, the head of Himanuta, also served simultaneously as the head of Himanuta West Bank. Further, Himanuta's budget comes in full from a yearly transfer from KKL-JNF and its financial accounting is fully integrated with KKL-JNF's.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, Himanuta and Himanuta West Bank are both subsidiaries of KKL-JNF and are deeply intertwined -- board members of Himanuta West Bank (who are also the official owners of the company) are in fact KKL-JNF professionals. In one case, an individual, Menachem Leibowitz, simultaneously sat on the Boards of both Himanutas and served as Deputy Chair on the Board of KKL-JNF. Beyond this, Himanuta West Bank did not receive a separate budget line from that of Himanuta until 2019.

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29. As Judge Yosef Alon, who had been appointed to investigate the matter, noted regarding Arnan Felman and Nachi Eyal's decision to spend money that was meant for Israel's periphery on purchases in the occupied West Bank: “The interpretation of the statement ‘Jerusalem and the periphery’ as ‘Jerusalem and the West Bank’ is, at a minimum, not the simple interpretation, to say nothing of a necessary interpretation.” Lemberger also notes that Felman had previously attempted to have the Board agree to a decision that the “periphery” includes “Judea and Samaria” but that his proposal had been rejected by the Board.

30. In fact, in a 2017 case, Himanuta appeared in court instead of Himanuta West Bank, which was the legal entity actually involved in the case. The court noted, “Further clarifications are required regarding Himanuta's status. We note that respondent 5 [Himanuta] is not the correct respondent to the proceeding, and, as stated, the Himanuta company operating in the area is a separate legal entity than that which operates in Israel.”

31. In addition, until KKL-JNF was forced to become a public benefit company, the same person chaired the Board of KKL-JNF and the Board of Himanuta. When KKL-JNF became a public benefit company, the number of paid positions was restricted and in order to maximize paid leadership positions, separate people began to serve as the Chair of KKL-JNF's Board and the Chair of Himanuta's Board.

32. The 2020 World Zionist Congress Coalition Agreement includes a stipulation that Himanuta's budget will be published as a separate document from KKL-JNF's budget book going forward.

Following a 2020 dispute between the Boards of KKL-JNF and Himanuta regarding a particular project, KKL-JNF's legal advisor, retired Judge Yosef Alon, [explained the relationship](#) between KKL-JNF and Himanuta: "Himanuta is controlled 100% by KKL-JNF, in terms of its shareholders, and Himanuta is funded 100% by KKL-JNF, and its employees are 100% employees of KKL-JNF. In addition to all of this, according to Himanuta's history, a foundational agreement was signed in 1938... which is still fully relevant today... [The agreement states:] 'Himanuta agrees and is obligated to do with the property everything as is requested by KKL-JNF, as if KKL-JNF were the property owners and Himanuta were its agent and acting on behalf of KKL-JNF.'" Alon further added, "In the case of KKL-JNF, the reasons [for creating a subsidiary] stemmed from the restrictions that applied to KKL-JNF regarding issues related to transferring land."

In its 2019 budget, [KKL-JNF wrote](#), "in 2018, the decision was made to open a new division - Himanuta Jerusalem." However, Himanuta Jerusalem is in fact simply a new "nickname" for Himanuta West Bank and is not the entity's legal name.<sup>33</sup> The name "Himanuta Jerusalem" was chosen presumably to obscure the fact that the company works exclusively in the occupied territories. In general, because they are private companies rather than a public benefit company like KKL-JNF, both Himanuta and Himanuta West Bank are subject to far less oversight than KKL-JNF, allowing them greater freedom to act as they wish with less public scrutiny.

## **Jewish National Funds Abroad**

KKL-JNF relies very little on donations from abroad. Nevertheless, KKL-JNF operates [48 offices around the world](#). The affiliations between these foreign offices and KKL-JNF itself ranges from JNF offices in Europe, Latin America, and South Africa, which function primarily as fundraising arms of KKL-JNF abroad and which largely use the same logo and branding as KKL-JNF, to JNFs in the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, which claim to have no formal ties to KKL-JNF (even though the US, UK, and Australia offices are listed on the website of KKL-JNF offices abroad).

However, even in the case of the JNFs in those countries which in truth are separate entities from KKL-JNF and in some cases transfer [relatively minimal amounts](#) of money to KKL-JNF, there is still a reasonable argument to be made that they use and benefit from the KKL-JNF brand and history in a way that implicates them in KKL-JNF's work. Indeed, according to their 2019 Registered Charity Information Return for the Canada Revenue Agency, JNF Canada [reported](#) over 12 million CAD in revenue in 2019 and sent over 9 million CAD to KKL-JNF that year. In fact, in Canada, [a formal complaint](#) has been filed to Canadian tax authorities claiming that JNF Canada cannot honestly claim to be a separate entity and that their non-profit status should be revoked because the work of JNF Canada and KKL-JNF contravene Canadian tax law by operating in the occupied territories and supporting the development of Israeli army infrastructure.

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33. In fact, KKL-JNF's work in East Jerusalem is [not even done via "Himanuta Jerusalem"](#) (i.e. Himanuta West Bank) but rather via the Israel-based Himanuta.



Beyond Canada, in other countries that also claim to have no formal ties to KKL-JNF, JNF organizations send some funding to KKL-JNF or through KKL-JNF to particular projects in Israel. These bodies also send money to other organizations, in some cases over the Green Line. In these countries, JNF organizations have taken pains to establish their distance from KKL-JNF. JNF Australia refers to themselves as “separate and independent,” and JNF USA makes clear that their board is independent of KKL-JNF in Israel. JNF UK goes so far as to state on their FAQ page, “In March/April 2005, JNF UK stopped sending funds to KKL; it had lost confidence in KKL’s ability or willingness to apply JNF UK’s funds as directed by JNF UK.”

While different JNFs abroad relate to KKL-JNF in different ways, all JNF organizations share similar histories, commitments, and branding and, even in cases where JNF organizations attempt to distance themselves from KKL-JNF due to KKL-JNF’s problematic work and worsening image abroad, KKL-JNF and international JNFs still often work together on projects such as sending Israeli emissaries abroad or diaspora delegations to Israel. Thus, although the funding structures connecting JNFs abroad, while varied, are ultimately not of prime economic significance, the shared image linking these organizations is noteworthy.

## Conclusion

The organizational labyrinth described in this section is essential to understanding what can be done to stop KKL-JNF’s most problematic and discriminatory work. As described above, the general structure of these institutions is such that the World Zionist Organization is above KKL-JNF in the organizational hierarchy, while KKL-JNF sits atop Himanuta and Himanuta West Bank. Similarly, the General Council of the WZO forms the General Assembly of KKL-JNF, while the KKL-JNF Board forms the General Assembly of Himanuta. The budgets, governance, and operations of all of these bodies are interlinked at virtually every level. The interwoven nature of these organizations creates an opaque structure that is difficult to parse. As we have laid out in this section, this opacity is part of what allows for tremendous mismanagement and fraudulent activity, especially in the occupied territories, to take place. This is incredibly convenient for the right, which utilizes the organization as a convenient bank account for its own purposes. Concurrently, the complexity of this structure requires that those of us committed to advancing solutions to the deeply problematic work of KKL-JNF contend with all of these levels and bodies. The next section will lay out some of the possible paths forward.



### Section 3

## *Where We Go From Here*

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***“It is sad to see the unbearable ease with which people sling mud at an organization whose signature is all over the State and its history and which, for many people, constitutes a symbol of national unity.”***

KKL-JNF response to legal petitions submitted to the Israeli Supreme Court regarding the organization’s discrimination against non-Jews

The above quote comes from a document which, although it speaks of “national unity,” actually defends a deeply discriminatory vision for Israel, in which only Jews can reap the benefits of KKL-JNF’s work. As the organization writes in the same document, “KKL-JNF was [intended as] a trustee [to act] on behalf of the Jewish People only. It was created for their sake, and it acts in their interests... A state is obliged to abide by the principle of equality but a people does not give up its assets.” KKL-JNF is certainly correct in describing its primary historical goal as supporting Jewish settlement, and this core mission still underlies the organization’s work today.

KKL-JNF has endeavored to portray itself as something like a non-governmental organization, in order to make their discriminatory practices seem more defensible.<sup>34</sup> However, as Section 2 of this report demonstrates, KKL-JNF has immense influence and access in Israeli halls of power. The organization’s public position that their discrimination is within the bounds of a healthy democratic system is thus misleading and problematic.

Although the Board of KKL-JNF took a turn to the right in the most recent elections of the World Zionist Congress, the status quo prior to these elections was still discriminatory and unacceptable. Thus, while it is important that the progressive camp address the West Bank land purchasing vote if and when it resurfaces, it is also imperative that we think in a way that addresses the structural problems of KKL-JNF to affect more far-reaching change.

This section will lay out possible strategies and paths to build opposition to KKL-JNF’s discriminatory practices. Some of these suggestions will be more relevant for Israelis, while some will be more relevant for diaspora Jewish communities and activists; some of them will be a better fit for NGOs to push forward, while others will fall more into the wheelhouse of

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34. KKL-JNF likens itself to the Islamic waqf in an effort to defend the fact that it does not serve non-Jews. They write, “The Muslim waqf, for example, holds about 3% of Israel’s land, and this is available for use only by Muslims.” While it is true that both organizations existed before the State of Israel and serve particular populations, only one has State backing. As already discussed, KKL-JNF has gained land, in large part from the State of Israel, while the waqf has been dispossessed of large amounts of its land in the years since Israel’s founding.

grassroots activists. This section is not meant to lay out a detailed program forward but rather to provide initial starting points for possible action by all of these different actors. We hope that this document will serve as a basis for conversation and joint strategic planning for the progressive camp to counter the discriminatory practices of KKL-JNF.

## **Nationalization**

A KKL-JNF campaign in Israel could advocate for the nationalization of the organization. There is a very reasonable argument to be made in favor of this goal, given that, for example, government literature refers to KKL-JNF's land as "public domain," just like state land. Because KKL-JNF land functions in many ways like state land, it is reasonable to think that it should be formally nationalized, with KKL-JNF's other work being distributed to various governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of the Environment. According to this line of thinking, the establishment of the State of Israel should render pre-State organizations irrelevant, and the State itself should control its land and resources. Nationalizing KKL-JNF could mean that the organization ceases to exist, and its work becomes fully indistinguishable from that of the government's or, alternatively, KKL-JNF could be nationalized, and its programs moved under various government ministries while maintaining the image of KKL-JNF as an institution. (For example, there could be a KKL-JNF unit within the Ministry of the Environment, which would allow for both full government control over that work, while also catering towards those who oppose the dissolution of KKL-JNF for historical/emotional reasons.)

It would certainly be more democratic for land currently controlled by KKL-JNF to be under the control of an elected government rather than a company. A campaign aiming to nationalize KKL-JNF would require considerable financial and political resources. That being said, such a campaign could also potentially obtain widespread support from a multitude of political camps, ranging from those who want to end state-sponsored discrimination to those like centrist Yair Lapid, who pushed for nationalization of KKL-JNF in 2015 to weed out corruption.

Alternatively, a campaign could focus on the full dissolution of the organization not in the context of nationalization. However, according to KKL-JNF's Memorandum of Association, dissolution would automatically move all assets it holds to the State. A campaign for dissolution could also focus specifically on Himanuta West Bank, which exists solely to purchase land in occupied territory.

## **Pressuring Zionist Organizations on the KKL-JNF Board**

As explained in Section 2, there is a set list of eleven Zionist Organizations, which operate around the world and which are represented in the World Zionist Congress. On the KKL-JNF Board, these organizations each have one representative, who is chosen by the organization and is not elected. These organizations play a crucial role in determining the balance of power on the KKL-JNF

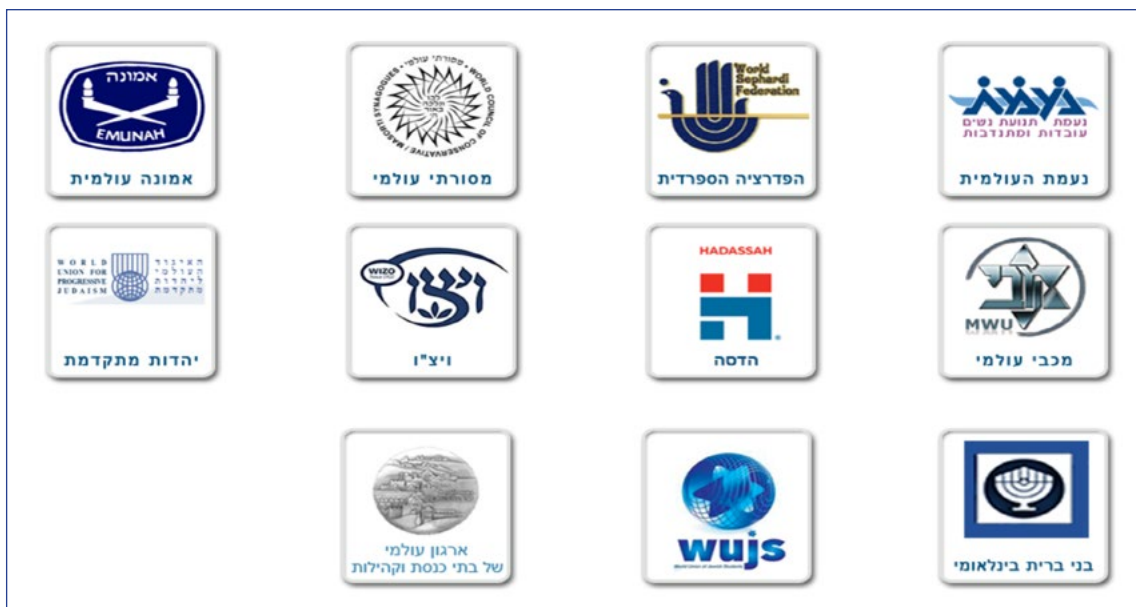
Board. The chart below gives a breakdown of the results of the vote regarding purchasing land in the West Bank, in order to illustrate the determinative power of the Zionist Organizations. As can be seen in the chart, Israeli political party representatives were evenly split on the vote, and there was one more vote against purchasing land in the West Bank than in favor of it among the World Unions. However, the Zionist Organizations voted six in favor of purchasing land in the West Bank and four against (with one abstention). Neither the right nor the left has a decisive majority on its own. In other words, had the Zionist Organizations voted differently, the vote would not have passed.

### **Vote On KKL-JNF Purchasing Land in the West Bank — February 2021**

**Israeli Political Parties** | **World Unions** | **Zionist Organizations** | **WZO Representative**

<b>Voted in favor</b>	<b>Voted against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Likud	Blue and White	Hadassah
Likud	Yesh Atid	
Likud	Yesh Atid	
Likud	Labour - Blue and White	
Likud	Labour - Blue and White	
Shas	Meretz	
Yisrael Beiteinu	National Unity - Tkuma	
Mizrahi	Mercuz Olami	
Mizrahi	Mercuz Olami	
Mizrahi	Arzenu	
Eretz HaKodesh	Arzenu	
World Confederation of United Zionists	Arzenu	
Student Delegation	HaNoar HaTzioni	
Bnei Brith	WIZO	
Maccabi	Masorti Olami	
Emunah	World Union of Progressive Judaism	
Union of Orthodox Synagogues	World Sephardi Federation	
Naamat		
Zionist Council		

After this initial vote in February, a final vote was planned for April 2021 but was postponed indefinitely the morning of the vote because it became clear that the decision might not pass. In other words, pressure campaigns, specifically targeting the Zionist Organizations, can work. The Zionist Organizations are thus a crucial pressure point in changing the policies of KKL-JNF, both in the context of pressuring them to select more progressive board representatives and for particular votes of consequence. While some of these organizations may be ideologically rightwing (e.g., Union of Orthodox Synagogues), most of them are ostensibly non-political (e.g., Maccabi, which runs sports tournaments, or Naamat, which is at least nominally affiliated with Labour but voted in favor of purchasing land in the West Bank). Organizations that want to maintain reputations as apolitical, or at least as not being far-right, may be willing to change how their representatives vote on KKL-JNF's most rightwing proposals. Most of these organizations certainly do not have mandates or official positions that favor settlement expansion. In fact, even high-level leadership in many of these organizations probably do not pay much attention to how their representatives vote on the KKL-JNF Board. Although these organizations are primarily diaspora-based, they tend to appoint an Israeli representative, who is often more rightwing than the organization itself and presumably often votes as he or she sees fit, rather than in line with organizational policy. In other words, there is currently no cost for organizations like Maccabi or Naamat to voting in favor of purchasing land in the West Bank. Sufficient international pressure from the Jewish diaspora on the institutions and programs run by these organizations could certainly change that calculus. It would take only two of the Organizations changing their votes for such a vote not to pass in the future, and there are at least four Organizations that could be susceptible to such pressure (Maccabi, Naamat, The Students, and Hadassah).<sup>35</sup>



35. Bnei Brith leans more ideologically right and could be a harder target but is not impossible. In addition, a campaign targeting the Zionist Council, a department of the WZO, could also be considered.

## **Playing in the Zionist Electoral Arena**

Given the structural problems of the National Institutions, playing the game of Zionist electoral politics will always involve some amount of compromising. The left is, in many ways, set up to fail in these arenas. That said, there is value in maintaining opposition, even on an uneven playing field. Given the amount of money and power that these institutions hold and control, it would be unwise to give up fully. In fact, were we to succeed in sufficiently shifting the makeup of the World Zionist Congress to the left, it would be possible to vote and change the bylaws of KKL-JNF to include equitable land distribution for all people living in Israel, rather than just for Jewish Israelis. While such a change might seem far off, it is helpful to think about Zionist electoral politics much like progressives might think about working with the Israeli Knesset or US Congress: these arenas are too powerful to fully give up on and some amount of work with these institutions is beneficial; however, we will not achieve the entirety of our progressive agenda through these legislative bodies and so we must simultaneously work on building civil society power and alternative institutions.

There are a few ways that elections for the World Zionist Congress could achieve more power for the progressive camp on the KKL-JNF Board (and in the rest of the National Institutions). In general, in order to contend seriously in the sphere of Zionist electoral politics, it will be necessary to commit real resources to this endeavor, including, for example, paid staff who work exclusively on this goal.

***Campaigning for more progressive votes:*** Although the Zionist left has worked together in the context of World Zionist Congress elections in the past, ahead of the 2020 elections, these efforts were seriously ramped up through the Hatikvah slate, which was backed by groups including J Street and the New Israel Fund. Although Hatikvah's results were somewhat underwhelming, campaigning for increased support for Hatikvah in the future could be advanced as a goal. Although there is reason to believe that Hatikvah's success may be necessarily limited given changes in the American Jewish community (that is, those on the left are decreasingly engaged in mainstream Israel politics and institutions, while those on the right are increasingly vocal in their support for Israel),<sup>36</sup> it is possible that increased resources towards Hatikvah's campaign and more years of cumulative name recognition could increase Hatikvah's success.

In this regard, it is also worth considering the growth potential of the Reform and Conservative movement slates, which are both often left of center. In particular, the Reform movement is the largest Jewish movement in North America and therefore has the potential to significantly increase its voter turnout and therefore affect the World Zionist Congress makeup. In addition, because Reform movement synagogues provide the institutional framework for communication and communal engagement, it should be easier for movement leadership to reach potential voters.

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36. This trend of decreasing support for center-left parties can be seen in the [World Zionist Congress election results](#) of the past years. For example, in 2010, Arzenu received 83 delegates; in 2015, it received 78 delegates; while in 2020, it received 63. Meretz, to take another example, received 33 delegates in 2010, 29 delegates in 2015, and 20 delegates in 2020.

The possibility that a slate like Hatikvah or the Reform and Conservative movement slates could garner more support in the future is strengthened by the fact that the Forward estimates that there was about 1% voter turnout in the American Jewish community for the 2015 World Zionist Congress elections. While over double the number of people voted in the 2020 elections compared to the 2015 elections (potentially signifying increasing politicization of, and thus investment in, the Zionist Institutions), the voter turnout for 2020 was still incredibly low, meaning that voter mobilization is certainly possible. Such a strategy could of course backfire if the right mobilizes in response to, and outpaces, the left.

To give some concrete numbers regarding Hatikvah and the Reform and Conservative movement's potential impacts: based on data from 2020, in the United States, one delegate to the World Zionist Congress required 813 votes, and each seat on the KKL-JNF Board required about 20 delegates to the World Zionist Congress. This means that if Hatikvah were to have received 16,260 votes in the past election, it would have on its own, added another progressive Board member to KKL-JNF. In 2020, Hatikvah received 7,936 votes. While upping this number to a sum that would achieve a full seat or two on the KKL-JNF Board would be a big push, these are not numbers that are totally inconceivable to achieve. It is important to note that higher voter turnout means that more votes are needed per seat; however, the general principle of increasing voter turnout for the left could still be successful.

Importantly, 48% of American adult Jews identify as either Reform or Conservative. This totals over 2.75 million individuals. In the most recent World Zionist Congress elections, the Reform movement received 31,483 votes, and the Conservative movement received 14,655 votes. While the Reform movement received more votes than any other slate in the US in 2020, its growth potential is still enormous. It is of course unrealistic to expect that anywhere near 2.75 million adults would start voting in World Zionist Congress elections, but even a fraction of this number could have a significant impact on the composition of the Congress. Focusing on attracting new voters to this cause, as opposed to swaying progressive voters who already vote for left-of-center slates, could be a powerful way to enact change.

While the above analysis has focused on the United States, it is important to note that a similar model of leftwing organizations banding together in World Zionist Congress elections, in the style of Hatikvah, could be tried in other countries as well.

***Pushing for elections:*** As discussed in Section 2, most countries of the diaspora, with the exception of the US, tend to hold negotiations or have set agreements within the Jewish community to determine the delegates that they send to the World Zionist Congress, rather than holding elections. While such an endeavor would require significant research, were there a country where the left could be relatively certain that elections would yield a more progressive slate than the agreed upon status quo, there could be various moves made to push for elections in those places. It is important to note, however, that actual elections could yield worse results than the

status quo for the left in many places, so this tactic would have to be considered cautiously before implementing (especially given that were we to be successful in particular countries, the right could use the same tactic in countries where it could have even more significant gains). Although many existing World Unions prefer not to go through the energy and expense of elections, if a slate is not satisfied with negotiations or a new slate wants a delegate, they can force elections. This means that a slate willing to go to elections can sometimes make gains in negotiations. In Canada in 2020, for example, the slates agreed to give the new far-right slate, Herut Canada, a delegate to the World Zionist Congress in order to avoid elections. A leftwing party could of course try the same tactic.

***Targeting particular Zionist Federations and creating new ones:*** Not every vote for the World Zionist Congress is equal. That is, one seat in the World Zionist Congress requires around 18,000 Israeli votes but only just over 800 American votes, or, to give another example, about 90 votes in Argentina. That is to say, votes from smaller Jewish communities are more valuable than votes from larger Jewish communities. Because of this, it could be worth targeting smaller Jewish communities that have the possibility of shifting left because the margin needed to shift the results in these communities is smaller. This could be particularly relevant in countries with strong leftwing youth movements (e.g., Hashomer Hatzair and Habonim Dror, where it would be easier to organize large numbers to vote). Further, only 100 Jews are needed to register a new Zionist Federation, which would automatically gain a seat in the World Zionist Congress. If there were a country that does not yet have a registered Zionist Federation and it was relatively likely to lean left, we could work to advocate for the creation of a new Zionist Federation in that place. Again, as in the point above, this tactic should only be adopted with caution, as the right could also begin founding new Zionist Federations in places which would be in their favor. More research would be needed to determine whether this could be a helpful strategy.

***Israeli electoral sphere:*** A sure way to increase leftwing representation in the Zionist Institutions is for Israeli Knesset results to shift to the left. While a strategy for shifting the Knesset is beyond the scope of this report, it is worth keeping in mind that work that builds the power of parties like Meretz and Labour will also yield beneficial results in the World Zionist Congress.

Further, it is worth noting that in the 2020 Israeli Knesset elections, which determined Israeli representation in the 2020 World Zionist Congress, the Joint List received 470,211 votes. Because the Joint List is not a Zionist party, none of these votes were counted towards the World Zionist Congress.

***Diaspora Jews taking a more active role:*** Although delegates to the World Zionist Congress come from around the world, actual leadership positions in the National Institutions are traditionally only given to Israelis. That is, even though 73.5% of delegates at the World Zionist Congress come from diaspora World Unions or Zionist Organizations (which are largely diaspora-based), all real power is ceded to Israelis. This is in part for logistical reasons -- the National Institutions are based

in Israel and so meetings happen according to Israel's clock and in Hebrew. However, diaspora Jews could insist on representing themselves, via Zoom and at mutually suitable hours, in the National Institutions. While of course not all diaspora Jews are more progressive than Israeli Jews, there is reason to think that greater diaspora representation in the National Institutions' leadership could help push matters in our favor. It is worth noting that the only body where diaspora Jews are in fact represented in significant numbers (about 60%) is the General Council of the World Zionist Organization (because it tends to meet less frequently). Importantly, the General Council of the WZO forms the General Assembly of KKL-JNF. While further investigation would be needed to confirm this, there is reason to think that because of this, the General Council of KKL-JNF may be slightly more left-leaning than the Board, and so forcing issues (such as purchasing land in the West Bank) to go to the General Assembly could also be a useful tactic.

### **Campaign to Nullify the Treaty Between the State and KKL-JNF**

As noted in Section 2, KKL-JNF receives an incredibly high percentage of its income from a 1961 treaty with the State,<sup>37</sup> which lays out the Israel Land Authority's management of KKL-JNF's land, a service for which KKL-JNF pays and the profit from which KKL-JNF then receives. One possible campaign in Israel could entail advocating that the State nullify its treaty with KKL-JNF. This has the potential to harm KKL-JNF's revenue from leasing land and would also send a strong statement that the State is unwilling to be complicit in the profiteering motives of a discriminatory and problematic organization like KKL-JNF. Crucially, nullifying the treaty would not automatically remove KKL-JNF representatives from the Council of the Israel Land Authority, a body which gives the organization tremendous power in determining land policy and planning in Israel. This means that any campaign focusing on changing KKL-JNF's relationship with the State would also need to explicitly call for its removal from the Council of the Israel Land Authority, which would require amendments to existing law.

However, such a tactic also requires significant consideration. It is not clear that KKL-JNF would fare worse financially were it to manage its own lands and lease them on its own rather than through the ILA. Further, because of the State's involvement in KKL-JNF, there are some measures that are in place that prohibit certain forms of discrimination against non-Jews. Were the State to no longer be involved, it is not clear whether Israeli courts would require KKL-JNF to maintain the same non-discrimination parameters or whether discrimination by KKL-JNF could become worse.<sup>38</sup>

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37. As noted in Section 2, 84% of KKL-JNF's revenue in 2019 came from the Israel Land Authority.

38. Regarding these two concerns, it would presumably be possible for economic experts to predict, relatively accurately, whether KKL-JNF would suffer financially were its relationship with the ILA to be severed. If such a campaign were to be more seriously considered, expert advice on this question should be sought out. However, regarding the question of whether or not KKL-JNF would be subject to the same non-discrimination parameters if it no longer worked in the context of its treaty with the State, it is impossible to know how the courts would rule if presented with such a case, and an unfavorable ruling is a risk that would have to be seriously considered.



## **Making Himanuta into a Public Benefit Company**

Because KKL-JNF has been a public benefit company since 2016, various records are publicly available. However, KKL-JNF's subsidiary, Himanuta, is a for-profit company, which means that there is much less publicly available information on their work. As detailed in Section 2, Himanuta exists in large part to carry out activities that KKL-JNF cannot implement itself for various legal reasons and is thus a tool for KKL-JNF to circumvent regulations. A campaign could focus on demanding that Himanuta be made a public benefit company, just like its parent organization. This would limit its ability to operate without public scrutiny, thereby ensuring greater transparency in Himanuta's practices. Of course, transparency on its own is an insufficient end goal, and while information is important to have in building a campaign, it cannot be a substitute for action towards particular political goals.

## **The Legal Route**

As noted in Section 2, the current Board of KKL-JNF is divided regarding their interpretation of Section 3a of KKL-JNF's Memorandum of Association, which states that the organization operates in "the State of Israel in any area subject to the jurisdiction of the Government of Israel." The debate regarding whether Area C of the West Bank is "subject to the jurisdiction of the Government of Israel" could be challenged in Israeli courts.<sup>39</sup> More serious investigation is required regarding whether it is likely that the left would win in such a case and, if this is unclear, it should be considered whether there might be an advantage in maintaining the murky definition rather than having it be definitively decided against us. On the other hand, there is a chance that the courts would rule in our favor and even a loss in the courts could be a public relations win and provide an opportunity to bring attention and exposure to KKL-JNF's discriminatory work.

## **International JNFs**

The proposal that came to the KKL-JNF Board in February 2021 included a clause that foreign donations would only be used to buy land in the West Bank if doing so would not contravene the law in the donor's country. This clause was meant to allow KKL-JNF to have its cake and eat it too: to purchase land over the Green Line while avoiding repercussions in the international arena. This is an important example of KKL-JNF implicitly acknowledging the tenuous political ground on which it stands in the international sphere.

While it is clear that KKL-JNF pays some attention to its international image, greater pressure could be exerted on this front, particularly through international JNFs, which are complicit in KKL-JNF's work to different degrees (and often do work that is not connected to KKL-JNF yet

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39. Both sides of this debate have presented legal opinions in their favor, including one by Meretz and one by the Reform and Conservative movements opposing the interpretation of Area C as under Israel's jurisdiction.

is deeply problematic in its own right). However, because KKL-JNF has such vast and valuable real estate assets, JNFs abroad contribute relatively little to KKL-JNF's budget.<sup>40</sup> This means that harming the organization financially in any significant way is highly unlikely. Because of this, pressure against JNF and KKL-JNF should aim to challenge the organization's image and reputation as a friendly, apolitical NGO. Some ideas for work in this direction follow below.

***Challenging tax-exempt status abroad:*** A coordinated campaign could be conducted to challenge the tax-exempt status of JNFs abroad. This would follow a model that has been used in Canada and the United States. Such a campaign, in focusing on connections between JNFs abroad and KKL-JNF, could be helpful in highlighting the ways in which KKL-JNF's work in the West Bank violates international law. Even without a legal win, significant media attention could be garnered from these kinds of court cases. In addition to legal cases challenging charitable status, parliamentary questions, freedom of information requests, and similar tactics could be used to force particular governments to take a stand on questions around NGOs funding over the Green Line.

***Pressuring international JNFs to fully separate from KKL-JNF:*** As discussed in Section 2, different JNFs have different levels of affiliation with KKL-JNF. No matter where they are situated on the spectrum of affiliation, however, international JNFs could be pressured to more fully separate from KKL-JNF (by, for example, ceasing to transfer any amount of money to KKL-JNF, changing their logo to something wholly different from KKL-JNF's, changing their name away from "Jewish National Fund," etc.). Such steps would highlight how problematic KKL-JNF's work is - to such an extent that even their "partners" no longer want anything to do with them. Such a campaign could also be used to put pressure on a particular practice of KKL-JNF: for example, JNFs abroad could be pressured to announce that they will change their names away from "Jewish National Fund" if KKL-JNF continues to work with Elad or advances proceedings to evict the Sumarin family. It is important, however, that any campaign targeting international JNFs not focus solely on a particular project or budget line (such as transferring money to KKL-JNF) because doing so could imply that the rest of the organization's work is acceptable.

***Stopping donations to JNFs abroad:*** Even though a relatively small amount of KKL-JNF's budget comes from money raised by JNFs abroad, there would still be value in a campaign urging diaspora Jews to halt donations to international JNFs, especially given that most JNFs abroad transfer at least some amount of money to KKL-JNF. Such a campaign could highlight areas of note in a given country, such as the Coretta Scott King Forest, a forest in the Galilee funded by JNF USA, about which there could be a campaign highlighting the use of Coretta Scott King's name in conjunction with an organization that stands in opposition to basic values of equality and civil rights. Similarly, a campaign could focus on Canada Park, a park funded by JNF Canada and built upon depopulated Palestinian villages, or on Ambassador Forest, where trees were

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40. For example, JNF USA claims it will only send 1% of its total \$100 million raised this year to KKL-JNF.

planted in honor of a former South African Ambassador, who [rejected the gift](#), explaining, “I have supported the struggle against Apartheid South Africa and now I cannot be a proponent of what I have witnessed in Israel, and that is, a replication of Apartheid!”

## **Creating Alternative Institutions**

KKL-JNF’s mammoth budget funds several important organizations on the Zionist left, both directly and through its contributions to the budget of the World Zionist Organization (which distributes funds to various organizations, religious denominations, and youth movements). Organizations - even progressive ones - that receive direct or indirect funding from KKL-JNF may not be immediately willing or able to take on the risk of associating with [campaigns](#) against KKL-JNF for fear of losing vital resources.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, any successful campaign that calls upon progressive groups within the National Institutions (e.g. Meretz, Hashomer Hatzair, Arzenu) to take a stronger stand against KKL-JNF will need to consider building alternative institutions in order to try and mitigate the financial and social risks of taking a stand. A strong enough framework could even convince organizations like the [Arava Institute](#), which does important environmental research and education with the goal of advancing regional peace, to join a clear call for justice and even refuse the significant funding it currently receives from JNF USA.<sup>42</sup>

Creating alternative institutions could include, for example, establishing progressive Jewish foundations or other funding sources to replace the need for funding from the National Institutions. Although this may be a further-off goal and not immediately attainable, new alternative institutions could mitigate the risk that those on the inside face when they challenge the centralized power and funding of the organized Jewish community. Progressive organizations could contemplate leaving KKL-JNF together as a strategic exit from the framework of the National Institutions. Building alternative institutions would also create new opportunities for more joint work across organizations, allowing groups to be both less dependent on outside institutions and more interconnected internally.

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41. Beyond the already significant budget KKL-JNF provided to these groups, the 2020 World Zionist Congress coalition agreement stipulates that KKL-JNF’s funding for the various youth movements, religious denominations, and other groups will increase by 50% in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

42. The Arava Institute does little [in their own literature](#) to differentiate between JNF USA and KKL-JNF.

## **Conclusion**

Challenging KKL-JNF is no easy feat. The organization is enormous and incredibly well-funded. Further, because of the obscurity of much of their work, any campaign will face significant initial challenges in making the issues at hand visible and clearly relevant. That said, the work of KKL-JNF touches on a vast number of the relevant political issues in Israel-Palestine today, including occupation, settlements, Palestinian refugees, Bedouin communities in Israel, and the discriminatory legal frameworks that operate in Israel. This means that even though the challenges facing us in the work against KKL-JNF are significant, it is crucially important work that gets at the crux of politics and justice in this land. This is of course important work for Israelis to take part in, and it is also of critical importance to activists abroad who care about this place (especially because KKL-JNF's work is not contained to the area between the river and the sea).

The recent rightward shift in KKL-JNF's work means that its nefarious political goals and practices are more out in the open than ever before. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, it becomes harder to justify engaging with KKL-JNF or the National Institutions in any way given their problematic work, while on the other hand, the increasing willingness of rightwing KKL-JNF leadership to state explicitly their goals of Jewish expansion and Palestinian dispossession means that it is easier to make clear to a wider public why we must counter the work of KKL-JNF. It is of course difficult to know when change from within is possible and when the time has come to withdraw from a problematic institution. This document cannot provide a conclusive answer to that question but, if anything can be learned from the right's rise in power in the National Institutions, it is that we on the left must think strategically and must be in it for the long game. Whether this is done from within, from the outside, or some strategic combination of the two, countering the work of KKL-JNF is crucial to building a more just, peaceful, and democratic society for all people living in this land.

**Appendix: List of KKL–JNF Board Members as of Spring 2021**

(Members of the Executive Committee are in *italics*)

**Daniel Avidor** (Labour - Blue and White)  
**Elisheva Ansbacher** (Emunah)  
**Yaakov Bachar** (Labour - Blue and White)  
**Mauricio Belter** (Masorti Olami)  
**Davidi Ben Tzion** (Mizrahi)  
**Ronit Boytner** (World Union of Progressive Judaism)  
***Nisan Cialic*** (*HaNoar HaTzioni*)  
**Haim Cohen** (World Sephardi Federation)  
**Michal Sabel Darel** (Arzenu)  
***Shlomo Deri*** (*Shas*)  
***Avraham Duvdevani***, Chair (*Mizrahi*)  
***David Etzioni*** (*Likud*)  
***Arnán Felman*** (*Likud*)  
**Tal Gan-Zvi** (Mizrahi)  
**Barbara Goldstein** (Hadassah)  
**Yossi Katrives** (Maccabi)  
**Haim Katz** (Bnei Brith)  
**Ron Katz** (Yesh Atid)  
**Shira Lev-Ami** (Arzenu)  
***Emily Levy-Shochat*** (*Mercaz Olami*)  
***Shmuel Litov*** (*Eretz HaKodesh*)  
***Yair Lootsteen*** (*Arzenu*)  
**Yisrael Malachi** (National Unity - Tkuma)  
**Haim Menahem** (Likud)  
**Ehud Naor** (student seat)  
**Keren Ofek** (Naamat)  
**David Peretz** (Likud)  
**Gadi Perl** (Mercaz Olami)  
***Amir Schneider*** (*Yisrael Beiteinu*)  
***Naama Schultz*** (*Yesh Atid*)  
**Batsheva Schwartz** (WIZO)  
**Eliran Shmuel-Chai** (Likud)  
***Alon Tal*** (*Blue and White*)  
**Lior Taragan** (Zionist Council)  
***Rani Trainin*** (*Meretz*)  
**David Yaari** (World Confederation of United Zionists)  
**Mordechai Moti Yogev** (Union of Orthodox Synagogues)

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