

## Challenging the State Firearm Reform

By: Rachel Beit Arie, Politically Correct (PeeSee)

This week, the “Gun Free Kitchen Tables Coalition” did not have its wish granted when the High Court of Justice refused to file an interlocutory injunction to stop the application of criteria promoted by outgoing Public Defense Minister Gilad Erdan, which significantly ease restrictions on carrying civilian firearms.

The High Court did, however, demand the state present State staff work performed on the subject within a few months.

Lawyer Anat Tahon-Ashkenazi, the CEO of Itach-Women Women Lawyers for Social Justice, said staff work on the subject was promised in the past. “We don’t want a year to pass and find ourselves in the same position we’re in today,” she said.

The petition dealt with two of Erdan’s decisions: Adding a criteria allowing anyone trained in the army as a level 7 Rifleman to bear arms without any additional instruction, and revoking the directive that forbids security guards from taking their service weapon home after their shift, instead of having the security company care for its storage.

The petition also sought to make sure these criteria be made to go through proper parliamentary-legislative channels, in transparent debate - and not as an exclusive ministerial decision.

“Both of these decisions created a situation in which thousands of people are walking around with guns, which we think endangers the public a lot more than it does it any good,” said Ann Suchio, a lawyer with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel who also represents the coalition.

Members of the Gun Free Kitchen Tables Coalition, working to minimize the proliferation of arms in the public sphere, say Erdan’s assessment that more firearms means more security, isn’t factually based or rooted in evidence, but relies on the minister’s hunch. “It presents a skewed perception of what security means,” Suchio said.

One of the project’s founders, Reli Mazali, believes the deliberations, despite not producing an injunction, are a small step forward. “The court focused its demand of the state to bring data and factual support for this policy, along with a regulated examination of the criteria. Our dictate from the project’s inception was to first have a database of crimes committed with firearms. The police doesn’t methodically collect and section this data, which is necessary in order to establish an informed policy.”

During the deliberations, Tahon-Ashkenazi said that since the change in regulations, there has been a three-fold spike in gun license requests. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Esther Hayut made light of this argument, saying that “We’ve seen there weren’t dozens or hundreds of thousands of requests, but only a few thousand.”

In response, Mazeli said the court is limited in its ability to view the severity of gun distribution because of a lack in data collection. The court also accepts the distinction between a licensed firearm and an illegal one, Mazeli said, but that in reality an unlicensed gun comes from legal sources, and that as the circulation of legal arms is increased, so will that of unlawful ones grow.