



**T'ruah**

the rabbinic call for human rights

# Impact Report

**FISCAL YEAR 2023**

*October 1, 2022–September 30, 2023*

[truah.org](http://truah.org)

# Our Mission

**T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights** brings the Torah's ideals of human dignity, equality, and justice to life by **empowering rabbis and cantors to be moral voices** and to lead Jewish communities in advancing democracy and human rights for all people in the United States, Canada, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territories.





# Our Theory of Change

Rabbis and cantors reach millions of people through their public moral voices and through their leadership of Jewish communities, including synagogues, schools, camps, JCCs, and other institutions. We train and mobilize clergy in order to create a Jewish community committed to human rights and rooted in Torah and tradition. With our rabbis at the helm, Jewish communities are equipped to take collective action to make change and to build strong relationships across lines of difference.

**By investing in rabbinic leadership, we invest in transforming our communities and our world.**

Since 2002, T’ruah has organized and trained more than 2,300 rabbis and cantors in the United States and Canada to be moral leaders, guiding Jewish communities in protecting and advancing human rights both here and in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

**This impact report explores our year from October 2022 to September 2023.** This was a year of profound human rights challenges. We saw an unprecedented democratic crisis in Israel, the continued failure of an inhumane immigration system; an assault on bodily autonomy; attacks on free speech; ongoing threats to American democracy; multiple climate disasters, and more.

Unfortunately, we had no idea what kind of unspeakable catastrophes would befall Israelis and Palestinians in the final months of 2023 and beyond. We could not have predicted the enormity of pain, grief, and fear that would strike our communities, but we’re so grateful that T’ruah’s rabbis and cantors were able to hold us, ground us in our values, and enable us to rise to the difficulties of the moment to protect and advance human rights for all people.

# Why Rabbis?

T'ruah serves more than 2,300 rabbis and cantors, but our financial supporters are mostly laypeople. Why is that?

*Because they can feel the tremendous power of the pulpit.*



“Faith leaders of all backgrounds have always engaged in American public life, but T'ruah rabbis do it extremely well and with tremendous integrity, wisdom, and effectiveness.

In the aftermath of October 7 and in so many important social justice and democracy protection battles over the years, **T'ruah rabbis have played a critical role and been a clarion voice in shaping policy-makers' views on issues of concern not only to the Jewish community, but to the country as a whole.”**

**-Amy Rutkin**

Former Chief of Staff to Congressman Jerry Nadler and House Judiciary Committee Staff Director

# T'ruah by the Numbers

October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023

Rabbis and cantors from  
**47 U.S. STATES**  
and  
**6 CANADIAN PROVINCES**  
led the charge for human rights.



**55**  
**RABBIS AND CANTORS**  
from around North America joined our communities of practice – cohorts organized around shared needs and interests, including working in a red state and (re)Thinking Zionism(s).



**WE PUBLISHED**  
**52**  
inspiring editions of (M)oral Torah, a human rights d'var Torah series written by top rabbis and cantors from around the country, and read weekly by **5,231 subscribers**.



**800**  
**JEWS AND ALLIES**  
leveled up their bystander intervention skills to stop antisemitism with Right To Be, using a training created by T'ruah.



**5**  
**SUMMER FELLOWS**  
from  
**5**  
**RABBINICAL SCHOOLS**  
leveled up their organizing skills and honed their moral voices.

T'ruah supporters purchased  
**700**  
**TREES**  
for a threatened Palestinian village in the West Bank and a rooftop garden in West Jerusalem.





**13**

**RABBIS AND CANTORS**

from around the country joined T'ruah and HIAS at the southern border to bear witness to the humanitarian crisis and take action back home.

**1,000**

**JUSTICE-SEEKERS**

from the T'ruah community attended our online human rights programs and trainings.

**2,808**

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

took concrete actions to fight antisemitism and to protect Israeli democracy.

**27**

**RABBINICAL STUDENTS**

joined our Israel program to learn more about human rights in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.



We led

**6 RALLIES**

in NYC and Washington DC, bringing together thousands of American Jews and Israelis to stand up for Israeli democracy.



Emor distributed

**1,200+**  
**COPIES OF "FREEDOM"**

our first issue of the "Fragments" journal.



**MEMBERS OF CONGRESS GOT**

**3,469**  
**MESSAGES**

from members of our community encouraging them to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.



**...and so much more!**



## WE'RE BUILDING LOCAL POWER All Over the Map

T'ruah rabbis and cantors in Massachusetts, New York City, and the Bay Area had our most ambitious year of local organizing yet.

In **Massachusetts**, our clergy followed the lead of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women organizing the **#NoNewWomensPrison campaign**, which aims to stop the construction of a new \$50 million women's prison and to instead invest in communities. Representatives from Families for Justice as Healing and the National Council of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls spoke at synagogues around the Boston area, and our rabbis **offered testimony at legislative sessions, wrote op-eds, and rallied at the State House.**



We also kickstarted our work in the **Bay Area**, our newest cluster, by hiring a dedicated Bay Area Organizer, who met one on one with local clergy to hear more about their concerns and how they want to take action with T'ruah. **We can't wait to see the impact T'ruah will make in the Bay!**



## T'ruah launched a bold new project with Jews for Racial and Economic Justice Community (JFREJ) in New York City.

**Tirdof: New York Jewish Clergy for Justice** is a place for rabbis, cantors, and student clergy to leverage a powerful moral voice in pivotal local campaigns. Our inaugural **Bayit Campaign** focused on the need for safe and dignified shelter for all New Yorkers, including new migrants. We reached the community and elected officials through public Jewish ritual, including **a Seder in the Streets and a Pesach Sheni Tisch for Housing Justice**. We came together over food and with song to celebrate the Jewish values that ground us in the fight for housing justice for all New Yorkers.



# WE BROUGHT MORAL CLARITY TO The Fight Against Antisemitism

This year, American Jews faced new levels of open bigotry. T'ruah's rabbis and cantors led their communities through the frightening experiences of synagogue bomb threats, antisemitic flyering, hateful graffiti, and more.

T'ruah supported our chaverim as they confronted these unique challenges, creating formal and informal spaces to share their experiences, learn, and support each other. **Chaverim turned to us when they had questions about the line between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel, and we gave them the tools to navigate this complex issue.**

**T'ruah also brought expertise and moral clarity to the national conversation around antisemitism, offering guidance to elected officials and consulting with the White House as they created the first ever National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.** We continued to educate both Jews and non-Jews through our public resources, trainings for national and local human rights and social justice groups, and through the Bystander Intervention Training to Stop Antisemitic Harassment, created in partnership with Right To Be.



## SPOTLIGHT!

In New York City, we supported a group of construction workers in their battle for better wages and working conditions. The workers came to T'ruah to ask for help avoiding inadvertent antisemitism in their public campaign against their Haredi Jewish bosses. We were able to provide them with a tailored antisemitism training in Spanish, so they could fight for justice without spreading antisemitic tropes.

WE TRAINED

# The Next Generation of Jewish Leaders



*“This is me. This is my home.”*

A young Palestinian woman met with me and my rabbinical school classmates to describe the state of siege in her neighborhood in East Jerusalem. In the shadow of settler violence and a barrage of home demolitions, her basic needs — taking a shower, walking to a friend’s house, parking her car — are denied and neglected by a city and national government for which she has no right to vote. She says,

*“What you can do is to tell the world our story.”*

Though I’ve organized around social justice for several years as a rabbinical student, Palestinian suffering under the occupation always felt like an abstract and distant, though terrible wrong for me — **until my year with T’ruah**. As a T’ruah Israel Fellow, I spoke with Palestinians in East Jerusalem, learned from Israeli human rights lawyers, and connected with American rabbis visiting on fact-finding tours.

**Thanks to T’ruah, opposing the occupation is no longer a question for me of principle, but of concrete and specific relationships.**

**Equally invaluable was my cohort of T’ruah fellows, who make me hopeful about the American Jewish future.**

Together, we’ve thought ahead to our future roles in Jewish institutions, exploring some of the fraught challenges of talking about Israel and Palestine with our home communities.

**T’ruah’s sense of moral urgency, its powerful experiential learning approach, and its committed staff make me grateful to call it a home. Publicly speaking out as rabbis for the Palestinian people’s dignity, equity, and human rights is not for the faint of heart. But with T’ruah at my back, it’s a little easier.**

— Allen Lipson  
2022-2023 Israel Fellow  
Hebrew College, Class of 2024



During my final week as a T’ruah Summer Fellow, I attended a gathering at the home of a member of the LA Tenants Union, my internship placement. In a neighborhood vulnerable to real estate developers eager to demolish affordable, rent-stabilized housing to build a restaurant or luxury apartments, **we were there to support her as she communicated to potential buyers that she was not planning to leave.**

I began my internship uncertain about how I could best contribute to the union, but by the time I arrived at that gathering, it was clear what I had accomplished. Over a summer of accompanying tenants to eviction court, delivering supplies to meetings, following busy Whatsapp chats, and knocking on doors to organize an apartment building, I had done something far more important than any of these individual tasks.

**I had built relationships — the building blocks of transformation. As I near the end of my rabbinic training, I know that these relationships, and the skills I have developed during my summer with T’ruah will continue to grow, strengthen, and deepen as they become an integral part of my rabbinic practice.**

**This is what it means to be a rabbi-in training nowadays, thanks to T’ruah.**



— **Claire Bergen**  
2023 Summer Fellow  
International Institute for Secular  
Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ), Class of 2025

WE EMPOWERED

# Rabbis to Fight the Occupation

For over 20 years, T'ruah has brought Jewish clergy and students to meet with Palestinian and Israeli human rights leaders and to confront the harsh realities of the occupation.



*I traveled with T'ruah to the South Hebron Hills to hear real stories of real human beings in the occupied territories. I wanted to take a good, hard look at the seeds of childhood narratives I felt deep inside of me. **I knew T'ruah was the right group for this experience, to hear stories and witness humanity. Our experience together opened my heart and soul.***

*I was particularly interested in understanding the relationship between occupation and climate change. Learning about the disparity of water access between Palestinians and Jewish settlers, and the cruelty embedded in that disparity, highlighted the crisis of oppression and the inhumanity of climate injustice. **How can anyone denied proper access to water live physically or spiritually? How can one live most fully when subject to the refusal of the most basic rights?***

*Throughout the trip, T'ruah's commitment to the study of Jewish text alongside experiential learning was a powerful tool to highlight the threads and messages of compassion and justice embedded in our tradition. Holding both types of learning together as a cohort of spiritual and moral leaders **was almost like standing at Sinai.** We each had our own experience, made even more powerful by witnessing, challenging interpretations, and learning together. **As transmitters of tradition, it was now on us to tell the story and take action.***

**-Rabbi Lisa Gelber**, Congregation Habonim, New York City

# A YEAR OF FIGHTING For Israeli Democracy



As Israel faced an unprecedented democratic crisis – with the most extremist government in its history attempting to destroy the power of the judiciary and infringe on the rights of marginalized groups – T’ruah met the moment in the U.S.

**With more than 20 years of experience working to protect the human rights of both Israelis and Palestinians, we were ready to mobilize American rabbis and cantors to protect democracy.** As Israeli protesters gathered weekly in Tel Aviv to protest Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government, we poured onto the streets of New York City and Washington DC to stand up for Israeli democracy and to insist that there is **no democracy with occupation**. We offered training and resources for our clergy members, so they could bring their communities along with them. **With T’ruah’s support, many of our members publicly protested the Israeli government for the very first time.**

We had no idea what kind of tragedy and suffering would await us in the final months of 2023 and beyond, but T’ruah’s expertise, partnerships, and strong moral voice laid the groundwork for a powerful response.

WE SHOWED UP FOR

# Immigrants and Workers

**This year, T’ruah organized human rights delegations of rabbis and cantors to bear witness to abuses at the southern border and to learn about farmworker protections in the tomato fields of Immokalee, Florida.**

*“On one of the days of our trip, we visited both the Otero Detention Center and Annunciation House, a shelter staffed by volunteers. Both facilities are full of asylum-seekers. Yet the contrasts couldn’t be more stark. At the detention center, everyone is a ‘detainee,’ held behind locked doors and barbed wire, clothed in uniforms, with every aspect of their lives controlled and observed. At Annunciation House, the paradigm is humanity, compassion, and care. New arrivals are ‘guests,’ coming through an open front door, greeted warmly, and brought downstairs to choose from donated items. Migrants are treated like what they are: people.*”

*“As a country, we have forgotten the humanity of refugees and asylum seekers. **T’ruah is helping to change that** by taking rabbis and cantors to the border and bringing the reality of their experience to the center of our moral conscience and prophetic teachings. **Bearing witness, learning together, and committing to specific actions helps us mobilize our communities around this sacred work and live the highest Jewish values of humanity, compassion, and justice.**”*

*–Rabbi Susan Goldberg, Nefesh, Los Angeles, CA, on visiting the U.S.-Mexico border*



A delegation of rabbis from T’ruah and HIAS walk towards the Rio Grande while visiting the U.S.-Mexico border.

# A LOOK AT OUR FIRST YEAR OF **Bold Jewish Thought**

With the launch of Emor, The Institute for Bold Jewish Thought, T’ruah provides a progressive, scholarly Jewish framework for the critical issues of the day.

Our Threefold Cord Project explored how democracy, human rights, and nationalism can coexist in the Jewish state. Powerful thinkers wrote and spoke on topics from the influence of the white Christian right to the untapped power of the religious Israeli left.

We also published our first issue of “Fragments,” reclaiming the concept of freedom by asking: Freedom for whom, and to do what?

**OVER 1,200  
READERS!**



# FINANCIALS

**\$3,171,316**

TOTAL BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR

**\$1,650,166**

IN TOTAL INDIVIDUAL GIFTS.

WHICH WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY

**2,271 DONORS** WHO MADE

**4,548 DONATIONS.**

**120 PEOPLE**

BECAME MONTHLY DONORS.

**\$326,864**

WAS RAISED FROM OUR ANNUAL GALA.

**\$1,374,400**

CAME FROM INSTITUTIONAL DONORS.

AND

**\$70,448**

WAS EARNED INCOME.

**TOTAL NET ASSETS**

FY22 \$990,476

FY23 \$1,185,148

**TOTAL INCOME**

**\$3,365,988**

The institutional funding total may differ slightly from our independent audit due to how multi-year gifts are recognized under generally accepted accounting principles.



# EXPENSES

**\$3,171,316**

TOTAL EXPENSES

**\$1,650,166**

PROGRAM SERVICES

**\$234,214**

GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

**\$700,415**

FUNDRAISING



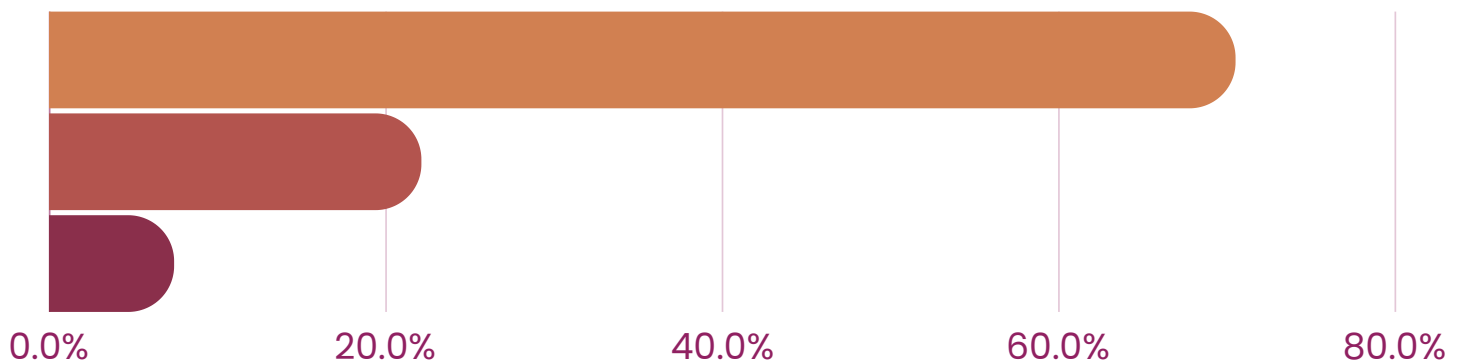
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**Truah’s work has, perhaps, never been more important than now.** At such a fraught and challenging moment in history, **T’ruah’s voice shines through with searing moral clarity**, amplifying the Jewish imperative to see the spark of the Divine in every human being. Operating at the level of values, rather than politics, T’ruah powerfully represents the most fundamental principles of Judaism and the Jewish community. We are proud to support their critically important work, now more than ever.

**STEVE JACOBSON,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DOROT FOUNDATION



## CONCLUSION

**This was a year of incredible power-building and momentum, amidst unprecedented human rights challenges at home and in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.**

As the world continued to turn its back on our most vulnerable neighbors and community members, we showed up in full force with courage, know-how, and rabbinic moral backbone. We trained and organized more than 2,300 rabbis and cantors to speak up for democracy, human rights, and human dignity. We called on the U.S. government to protect and expand the legal rights of immigrants. We raised the rabbinic moral voice in support of incarcerated individuals and alternatives to policing.

We sounded the alarm on far-right extremism and existential threats to democracy in Israel that paved the way for unthinkable catastrophes in October 2023 and beyond.

We prepared the next generation of Jewish moral leaders to lead their communities in working for human rights, here and across the globe — all in the midst of enormous upheaval in our public, personal, and spiritual lives.

***This year taught us once again that our safety, freedom, and well-being is deeply intertwined — and that together, we can build a world our ancestors never thought possible.***

שתיקה כהודאה  
"Silence is akin to  
complicity."

Talmud Yevamot 87b



**T'ruah**

the rabbinic call for human rights

[www.truah.org](http://www.truah.org)

**Thank you**  
for raising your moral voice.  
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Special thanks to **Gili Getz, Kevin Gay, Justin Hamel, Harold Levine, and Chuck Fishman** for the use of their photography in this report.