



State of Israel
State Comptroller and Ombudsman
Audit Reports on Municipalities 2020

Aspects of Conduct in the Local Authorities of Samaria

Abstract

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Background

The Samaria region (Shomron) is a mostly mountainous area in the center of Israel that covers 2,800 sq. km. Samaria has eight Jewish local authorities: the Ariel Municipality, the local councils of Oranit, Alfei Menashe, Elkana, Emanuel, Kdumim and Karnei Shomron, and the Samaria Regional Council. The unique legislation in Samaria is enacted by the commander of the IDF forces of Judea and Samaria (J&S). In some cases, the Ministry of Interior applies Director General circulars to the J&S region through the person in charge of the them.

Key figures

More than 100,000

The number of residents in Jewish settlements in Samaria at the end of 2019

NIS¹ 850 million

Total income of the eight local authorities in Samaria in 2018

NIS 37 million

Total deficit accumulated by the eight local authorities in 2018

NIS 6,000 to 70,000

Cost of transportation of a student per year in the academic years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018

NIS 9,000

Fee charged by the Kfar Saba Municipality from the authorities for Samaria students that studied in its institutions in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years

83%

Percentage of bylaws legislated in the eight local authorities in Samaria over 20 years ago, which must be updated or substituted (134 out of 162 bylaws)

¹ As of December 31, 2019, 1 US dollar = 3.45 NIS.

Audit actions

 In June–November 2019, the State Comptroller’s Office reviewed aspects relating to the conduct of the Jewish local authorities in Samaria: accidents on route 55, fees charged to out of district. students, bylaws, and internal audit. Additional examinations were conducted at J&S District of the the Israel Police and the Ministry of Interior.

Key findings



-  **Accidents on road 55:** Three Jewish local authorities and dozens of Palestinian towns with a total of 300,000 residents are situated near road 55. In 2015–2018, there were 380 accidents on that road. These do not include accidents involving only Palestinians, which are not recorded by the Central Bureau of Statistics, and are not included in the data published by the National Road Safety Authority. For this reason, the Ministry of Transport does not include them in calculating the transportation budget for Samaria.
-  **Out of district student fees:** The municipalities of Kfar Saba, Ra’anana and Hod Hasharon, and the local councils of Kochav Yair-Tsur Yigal, who host students of Samaria’s local authorities in their establishments charged annual fees in the amount of NIS 3,000 to NIS 9,000 per student. These amounts are higher than the tariffs stipulated by the Ministry of Education. The amounts were charged for additional services, without the Ministry of Education having determined the additional services that should be provided and the formula for calculating their cost.
-  **Updating the bylaws:** The eight local authorities have not updated their bylaws in many years, not even when it was required to adapt some of them to changes in the legislation.
-  **Website advertising:** Local authorities in Israel are obligated to post vast amounts of information about many topics on their websites. This obligation has not been applied to the local authorities of J&S.
-  **Internal audits:** The examination of six local authorities indicated that none of them prepared internal audit reports for one or more years over the period 2014–2018. Two of the local authorities prepared a single internal audit report for two years. Four local authorities did not prepare annual or multiyear internal audit plans. The audit committees of those authorities did not convene at all in some of the years or convened very few times.



Increased enforcement on roads: In 2016-2018, the J&S Traffic Department conducted enforcement activities and traffic operations. As a result, and based on the data at its disposal, the number of accidents on road 55 decreased from more than 100 in 2015-2017 to 73 in 2018.

Key recommendations

-  The Central Bureau of Statistics and the National Road Safety Authority must update their data to include data on accidents involving Palestinians for all roads of J&S, based on data from the police, the Israel Civil Administration, and other bodies. Accordingly, the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety must analyze the data to make decisions regarding upgrading the roads and establishing additional safety means, including traffic cameras, security railings and more in all J&S roads.
-  To resolve the issue of the fees paid for out of district students, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel, must formulate rules and guidelines. These guidelines should include specifications for additional services for which the receiving authority should collect money, their cost, and an evaluation of the maximum amounts that can be collected.
-  The local councils of Oranit, Alfei Menashe, Elkana and Kdumim must ensure they initiate bylaws updating, to adapt those to their changing needs, and must review their relevance from time to time. It is recommended that the Ministry of Interior evaluate the possibility of updating bylaws at the national level, so that changes and updates apply to all authorities.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Interior's Coordinator for Israeli Settlements in J&S consider to oblige asking the local authorities to post on their website the information that all local authorities in Israel are required to publish. This will increase the level of transparency of their decisions and ongoing activities, and will enable the residents to obtain access to all the information they should be receiving.
-  The Alfei Menashe local authority must appoint an auditor as stipulated in the regulations. The latter and other local authorities in Samaria must comply with the provisions of the law in terms of internal audits.

Summary

This report indicated deficiencies in the provision of municipal services to residents of Samaria, which must be resolved by both the central and the local governments. The findings show that governmental and municipal bodies must update their data about all road accidents in J&S, in particular along road 55, and include this information in their calculations to upgrade the roads and add safety means. The Ministry of Education must get guidelines for collecting fees from out of district students, and the local authorities are required to resolve issues related to bylaws and internal audits.

Fatal and severe accidents on road 55, 2018-2019



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, processed by the State Comptroller's Office