



State Comptroller of Israel | Annual Report 71C | 2021

Ministry of Public Security |  
Israel Prison Service

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# **Prisoners Rehabilitation in Israel**





## Prisoners Rehabilitation in Israel

### Background

Amendment 42 of 2012<sup>1</sup> to the Prison Ordinance 1971, states that prisoner rehabilitation is a core mission of the Israel Prison Service ("IPS") and authorizes the IPS Commissioner to analyze the rehabilitation possibilities for prisoners who are citizens or residents of Israel, and to take measures to ensure prisoners' maximum integration in rehabilitation activities during their incarceration. The IPS's Rehabilitation Division ("Rehabilitation Division") is tasked with rehabilitating incarcerated prisoners, while the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority ("the PRA") is tasked with the rehabilitation efforts once prisoners have been released. Upon completing their prison terms, newly released prisoners face numerous challenges when attempting to reintegrate into society and into the community.

<sup>1</sup> Prison Ordinance Amendment Law (No. 42), 2012, Codex 2355, 14.5.2012, p. 377.



## Key figures

**NIS 46.7  
million**

The Israel Prison Service Rehabilitation Division's budget for 2019.

**32,621**

Israeli-resident criminal prisoners were released by the IPS between 2016 and 2020; approximately 77% were released without parole restrictions or rehabilitative treatment.

**NIS 86  
million**

Sum received by the IPS from 2016 to 2018 to implement Amendment 42.

**39.3%**

Recidivism rate after five years among all prisoners released in 2013.

**NIS 2.2**

Average hourly wage for a prisoner employed by the IPS for work inside the prison<sup>2</sup> (the hourly rate ranges between NIS 0.8 and NIS 4<sup>3</sup>).

**20,802**

Israeli-resident prisoners who were granted administrative release between 2016 and 2020 (approximately 64% on average of all prisoners released during those years).

**22%**

Of Israeli-resident prisoners who were released between 2016 and 2020 are might be obliged to go through rehabilitation under the PRA's supervision.


**NIS 22  
million**

The triennial addition to the PRA's budget since August 2019<sup>4</sup>.




- 2 Service, maintenance and kitchen jobs and various non-vocational jobs inside the prison (as tutors, support staff). The wage is the same for prisoners participating in vocational training programs.
- 3 It should be noted that the head of the Prisoner Department decided recently that the hourly wage to prisoners for employment in a vocational rehabilitation center will be calculated as of December 2020 at 65% of the hourly minimum wage in effect in the economy (NIS 14.7 per hour at the time of the audit).
- 4 It should be noted that, considering that there is no approved State budget for 2020, NIS 10 million out of the said budget addition were transferred to the PRA in October 2019 from the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services.



## Audit actions

 From March to July 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller alternately audited the subject of prisoner rehabilitation. The audit was performed in the IPS and in the PRA, and supplementary audits were alternately, performed in the Ministry of Public Security and in the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services. The audit examined the following issues: the rehabilitation programs in the IPS, the PRA's prisoner rehabilitation efforts and the continuity of rehabilitation throughout the period of incarceration and subsequently. It should be noted that this report does not deal with the issue of prisoner's education in the IPS. A previous audit report on this topic was published in 2014<sup>5</sup>.

## Key findings

-  **The rehabilitation provided to prisoners** – Between 2017 and 2019, an average of approximately 57% of the rehabilitative treatments defined for incarcerated prisoners during those years were not provided, and the prisoners designated to receive these treatments were not integrated into groups or dedicated departments according to the rehabilitative treatment defined for them, mainly relating to addictions and fraud. Furthermore, apart from the departments treating sex offenders, none of the other treatment departments make full use of their allocated incarceration quota and the ratio of vacancies in these departments ranges between 19% and 34%.
-  **Rehabilitation of prisoners sentenced for domestic violence offenses** – In mid-2020, approximately 37% of all prisoners incarcerated for domestic violence offenses received no rehabilitative treatments in any of the IPS's relevant rehabilitation programs. The recidivism rate among prisoners who received treatment in an IPS rehabilitation program was 30.2%, compared to 39.9% among prisoners who did not participate in programs. This high recidivism rate among released prisoners who had been incarcerated for domestic violence offenses and did not participate in rehabilitation programs may expose their families to risks.
-  **Rehabilitation of prisoners sentenced to short prison terms** – A negligible ratio of prisoners sentenced to short prison terms participated in pre-release activity to prepare them for re-entering society – 1.3% in 2018 and 1.8% in 2019. This fact reflects a substantive disparity between the IPS's perception – which advocates preparing prisoners sentenced to short prison terms for their re-entry into society – and its actual activity in this regard.

<sup>5</sup> The State Comptroller, **Annual Report 64C** (2014), "Aspects of Prisoners Rehabilitation," on page 475.



**Prisoner rehabilitation regulations** – Notwithstanding the obligation legislated in 2012, as of July 2020, regulations have still not been enacted to regulate prisoners rehabilitation. The failure to enact regulations over the course of the years constrains the IPS's ability to implement the policy set by the legislature in a regulated and orderly manner.



**Data-based management** – The IPS's computerized data systems lack relevant information about prisoners' corrections needs or about the extent that they are being integrated in the various corrections programs. Computerized information in the rehabilitation system would enable the IPS to constantly monitor the number of prisoners who are not receiving any rehabilitative treatment and would also enable the IPS headquarters to reach managerial and strategic decisions based on the data in its computerized systems.



**The PRA's annual work plan** – Key components of the PRA's annual work plan for 2017–2018 were not implemented, including supervision of newly released prisoners who are being rehabilitated at religious institutions and promotion of the employment of former prisoners by the economic company of the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel. As a result, the PRA failed to achieve some of the objectives defined in the said program. The findings reflect a problem in the PRA functioning, which derives mainly from a shortage of resources in recent years.



**Prisoners being released who are not obliged to undergo rehabilitation** – The Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority Law delegates to the PRA the authority to rehabilitate all Israeli-resident prisoners who are being released. Out of all Israeli-resident criminal prisoners who were released from 2016 to 2020, the ratio of prisoners who may be obligated with accompaniment, monitoring, supervision and rehabilitation by the PRA subsequent to their release is on average approximately 22%. The PRA is not handling approximately 70% of prisoners being released who are not being released on licence or who are not interested in being released under the PRA's supervision, apart from those prisoners who voluntarily participate in the PRA's rehabilitation programs. This ratio attests to the fact that the PRA is not realizing its full potential for rehabilitating prisoners and for lowering the recidivism rate. Between 2016 and 2020, 20,802 prisoners were released under administrative release (constituting approximately 64% on average of all Israeli-resident prisoners who were released during those years). These prisoners are not obliged to undergo rehabilitative treatment programs subsequent to their release, even though they are liable to pose a danger to the public.



**Work interfaces between the IPS and the PRA** – Less than half of the prisoners who were released by the IPS's Early Parole Board were referred for rehabilitation at the PRA or voluntarily sought rehabilitation.



**Prisoners being released who have unique rehabilitation needs** – The recidivism rate among prisoners with mental disorders is 70%, and they account for approximately 10% on average of the prisoners being released each year. The PRA's rehabilitation frameworks do not provide any treatment program for this population.



**Increase in corrections activities** – The Office of the State Comptroller commends the corrections Division's efforts to increase the number of dedicated departments and the number of prisoners participating in rehabilitation frameworks.

**Joint evaluation project** – The Office of the State Comptroller commends the joint evaluation project being carried out by the PRA, the Israel Police and the IPS and recommends that the PRA use the results to improve the rehabilitation programs that it operates, to discontinue ineffective programs and to design new programs that are measurable and may be evaluated.

## Key recommendations



It is recommended that the IPS analyze the reasons why prisoners have not been integrated into the rehabilitative treatments defined for them and take action to eliminate obstacles; it should also increase the number of prisoners who receive a comprehensive corrections treatment response, particularly in relation to prisoners in protective or segregated ward. It is further recommended that the IPS analyze additional actions to maximize the number of prisoners being integrated in the dedicated departments, mainly in the rehabilitation departments.



The corrections Division should ensure that all information needed about prisoners is regularly and accurately entered into the IPS's computerized system so that decision-making will be based on up-to-date and reliable information.



During the discussions being held in the relevant government forums, the correction bodies and the Ministry of Justice should also discuss the recidivism rate among prisoners who completed full sentences for offenses other than sex offenses. Discussion of the high recidivism rate is required due to the fact that this category of former prisoners – mainly violent offenders who pose considerable risk to their victims or to the public – is not obliged to participate in post-release rehabilitative treatment programs.



It is appropriate that the PRA maximize the number of prisoners being interviewed in all prisons and evaluate their suitability for rehabilitation. Thus to grant such prisoners early release under the PRA's supervision as soon as the law allows and to achieve the public interest goal of minimizing the chances that prisoners will resume their criminal behavior upon release.



It is recommended that the IPS and the PRA consider granting effective incentives for prisoners incarcerated for domestic violence offenses, as well as using additional measures in order to increase their participation in rehabilitation programs while incarcerated and when in the community after their release. In any event, the IPS and the PRA should take action to avoid the situation whereby prisoners who did not participate in rehabilitation programs while incarcerated are rejected from post-release rehabilitation programs.



It is recommended that the PRA design rehabilitation programs for prisoners that apply the restorative justice approach, and operate them with voluntary victim's participants. Thus increasing the effectiveness of the rehabilitation processes and reducing the recidivism rate. It is recommended that the treatment methodology applied in these programs be defined in internal procedures.

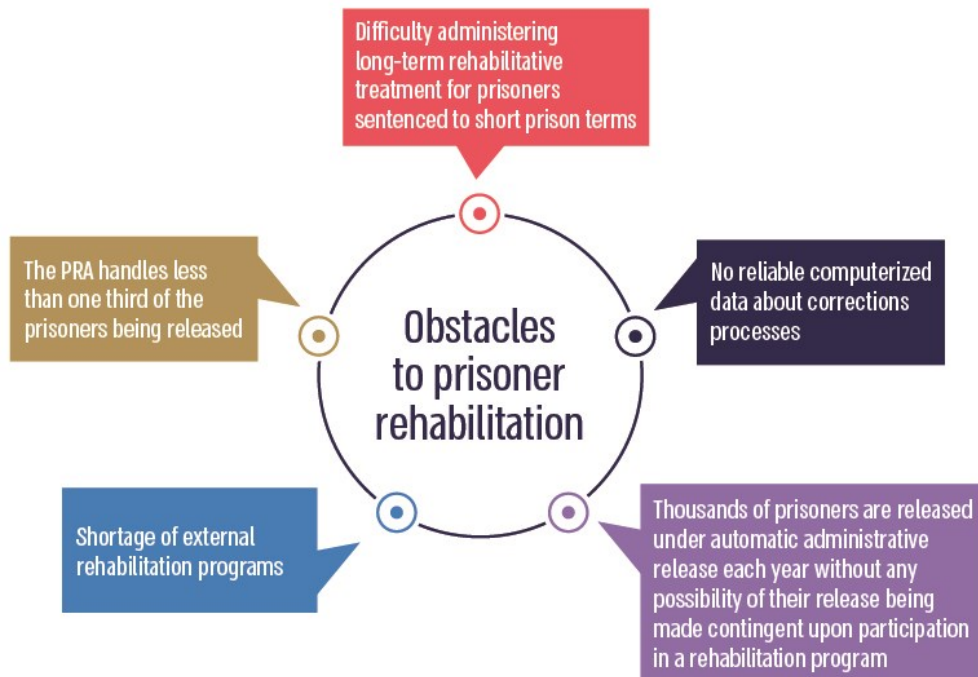


Considering the unique characteristics of the category of prisoners with disabilities who are being released, it is recommended that the PRA ascertain the adequacy of the current solutions offered in community programs and in the programs operated by the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services and whether they are contributing to lowering the high recidivism rate among this category of prisoners. If the PRA draws the conclusion that the said programs are not fit for their purpose, it is recommended that it consider designing unique rehabilitation programs for prisoners with disabilities, as well as alternative solutions using the existing programs.



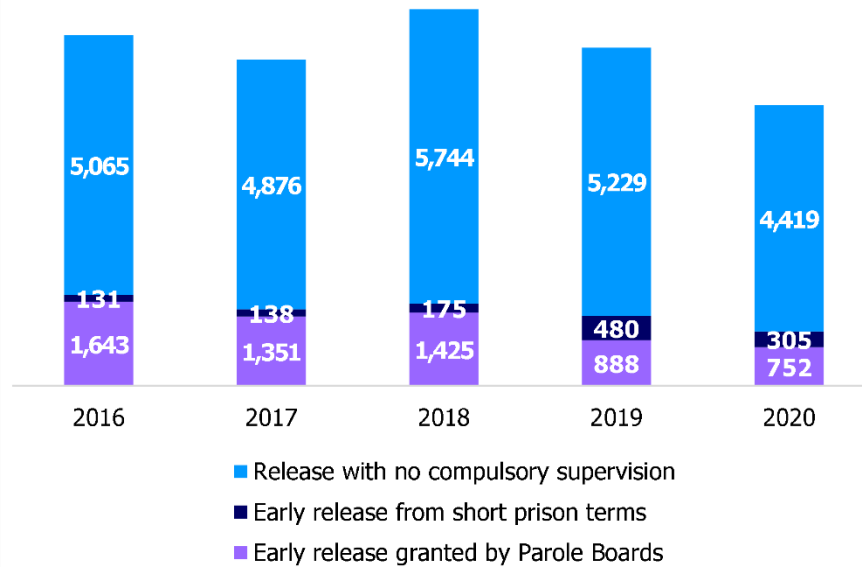


## Key obstacles to prisoners rehabilitation





### Israeli-resident prisoners releases 2016–2020



## Summary

The common perception over the last decade has been that prison sentences are not achieving their objective of reducing the recidivism rate, which underscores the need to augment the government's prisoner rehabilitation efforts. Considering the upward trend in the number of prisoners being released in recent years, the various rehabilitation authorities have a significant obligation to ensure that prisoners receive continuous rehabilitative treatment, from arrest through release, including their re-integration in the community and in the labor market. Thousands of criminal prisoners are being released each year without their release being made contingent upon participation in rehabilitation and treatment programs. The Israel Prison Service and the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, should consider designing a program that will encourage and incentivize most prisoners being released to participate in treatment, accompaniment, rehabilitation or supervision processes – particularly violent offenders who pose considerable risk to their victims or to the public.