



State Comptroller of Israel | Annual Report 71C | 2021

Ministry of Culture and Sport

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# **Prevention of Violence in Sports – Expanded Follow-up Audit**





## Prevention of Violence in Sports – Expanded Follow-up Audit

### Background

Sporting events are meant to reflect inter alia “cooperation, teamwork and physical and mental development”<sup>1</sup>. However, sporting events worldwide are often accompanied by violence of many different types and intensities, including physical violence, verbal violence and manifestations of racism. As a result of the frequent incidents of violence at sports stadiums, and based on the recommendations of various committees regarding means for contending with this phenomenon, the Prevention of Violence in Sports Law was enacted in 2008, which prescribes the rules and responsibilities of the police and civil security agencies for managing sporting events. The Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports was formed in March 2009 pursuant to the law, but has been inactive since July 2017. In August 2017, the Israel Police established a unit for the prevention of violence in sports, which is funded by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Public Security and the Israel Police.

<sup>1</sup> Criminal Appeal 5972/12 **Pinto vs. the State of Israel** (published in a computerized database, 10.3.13).



## Key figures

**58%**

Of police officer positions in the unit for the prevention of violence in sports have been manned, as of December 2019.

**approximately  
3.5 years**

As of July 2017 the Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports has been inactive, after 8 years of activity since its establishment in March 2009.

**22% drop**

In the opening of incidents of violence investigations in sports during the 2018–19 game season compared to the 2017–2018 game season (199 investigations compared to 256).

**NIS 15  
million**

The annual budget allocated to the Unit for the Prevention of Violence in sports. Another NIS 20 million per annum are transferred to the Israel Police for “paid policing” during games.

**36%**

Of the spectators banned from games during the 2017–18 and 2018–19 seasons were also obligated to report to the police during games, compared to approximately 14% in previous audit,<sup>2</sup> which related to the years 2011–2014.

**2,623  
convictions**

By the disciplinary tribunal of the Israel Football Association for all types of violent crimes and hate crimes<sup>3</sup> during the 2018–19 game season, representing a 15% rise compared to the 2017–18 season (2,278 convictions) and a 39% rise compared to the 2013–14 season (1,886 convictions).

**12  
convictions**

By the disciplinary tribunal of the Israel Football Association for hate crimes in sports during the 2018–19 game season, compared to an average of 3 convictions in the 2014–15, 2016–17 and 2017–18 seasons.

**1  
investigation**


Of a crime opened by the Israel Police in the 2017–18 and 2018–19 game seasons, but no indictment was filed.

<sup>2</sup> State Comptroller, **Annual Report 66A** (2015).




<sup>3</sup> The figures also include offenses between game participants, including offenses by players against referees.



## Audit actions




 From February to September 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller performed an expanded follow-up audit of the prevention of violence in sports. The follow-up audit focused on the rectification of the deficiencies reported in the previous audit report published in October 2015, and an expanded audit was performed in the new police unit – the Unit for the Prevention of Violence in sports, established in August 2017. The audit was performed in the Ministry of Culture and Sport (“the Ministry”), in the national headquarters of the Israel Police – in the Policing, Security and Community Division and in the Investigations and Intelligence Division, in the Jerusalem district, in the Tel-Aviv district and in the Coastline division, in the Israel Football Association and in the Israel Basketball Association. Supplementary audits were performed in the Ministry of Public Security, in the Ministry of Education and in the Israel Sports Betting Board.

## Key findings




-  **Activity of the Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports** – At the time of the previous audit, the Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports (headed by a retired judge), established in 2009 pursuant to the law (“the Council”), was active. The follow-up audit found that the Council was active until 2017, until the appointment of the Council chairperson expired. The ministers of culture and sport have not appointed a new Council since then. The failure to appoint Council members and a chairperson since July 2017 is a violation of the provisions of the law that established the Council and prescribed the obligation to appoint members to the Council, and hinders the ability to prevent violence in sports.
-  **Formulation of an action plan for preventing violence in sports by the Council and the Ministry of Culture and Sport** – The previous audit found that the Council had not drafted an orderly “action plan for cracking down on violence in sports,” which is one of its mandated roles pursuant to the law. The follow-up audit found that the Council became inactive before a plan was formulated.
-  **Integration of the unit for the prevention of violence in sports by the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Council** – The previous audit found that the Ministry had failed to lead and coordinate the activities of the various bodies dealing in the prevention of violence in sports and had not made progress on issues relating to the building and operation of the unit tasked with cracking down on violence in sports. The Ministry also failed to promote collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Education, with the Israel Police and with the related sports associations for the purpose of designing enforcement, prevention and educational mechanisms. Consequently, the imperative to



crack down on violence in sports did not receive adequate attention, and the inherent potential of establishing and operating a single unit to lead educational antiviolence activities and enforcement actions was wasted. The follow-up audit found that the Ministry has still not formulated a comprehensive plan for implementing the Prevention of Violence in Sports Law, which defines targets, performance timetables and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The follow-up audit also found that the Ministry does not function as an authority that coordinates the activities to prevent violence in sports among the various authorities, that collaborates with sports organizations on the formulation of enforcement, prevention and educational measures and that investigates incidents of violence in sports.

-  **Central database containing the volume of violent crimes and hate crimes in sports** – The previous audit found that the Council’s attempts since June 2014 to build a database based on data from entities that collect information about violent crimes, such as the Israel Police, the Israel Football Association and the Israel Basketball Association, have been unsuccessful. The follow-up audit found that neither the Council nor the Ministry has initiated any alternative action since then. The follow-up audit also found that data from the Israel Police indicate approximately 22% drop in the number of investigations opened during the 2018 – 19 game season compared to the 2017 – 18 season. While data from the disciplinary tribunals of the Israel Football Association and the Israel Basketball Association indicate the contrary – a rise in convictions by the disciplinary tribunals during that same period at a similar rate.
-  **The use of game tickets to identify spectators who were banned from sports stadiums** – The previous audit found that, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Tzur Committee, approved by the minister in 2015, no linkage has been created between game tickets and the Israel Police’s computerized system in order to identify spectators banned from stadiums. The follow-up audit found that no change has occurred.
-  **No reliable data about the number of banned spectators or about the effectiveness of the punishment** – The previous audit stated that the Investigations and Intelligence Division of the Israel Police should review how police investigators are implementing the Directive to obligate banned spectators to report to a police station during games and should update it or design an alternative as needed. The follow-up audit found that the national headquarters of the Israel Police has no data about compliance with the obligation imposed on banned spectators to report to a police station during games. Consequently, the national headquarters of the Israel Police can neither analyze the effectiveness of this type of punishment nor draw conclusions nor improve the use of this type of punishment. The follow-up audit found discrepancies of hundreds of percentage points between the data on the number of spectators banned from sports stadiums in reports by the national headquarters of the Israel Police and data obtained from the audited districts.



-  **The handling of hate crimes in sports** – In the previous audit, the State Comptroller stated: “the striking sparsity of investigations and indictments for racist outbursts during all game seasons reflects material weakness and inadequate action by law enforcement.” The follow-up audit found that, during the 2017–18 and 2018–19 game seasons, the Israel Police opened only one investigation pertaining to a hate crime in sports, and no indictment was filed. This constitutes a significant decline compared to previous game seasons. On the other hand, the disciplinary tribunal of the Israel Football Association handed down convictions for 56 hate crimes, while the disciplinary tribunal of the Israel Basketball Association handed down convictions for 15 hate crimes. This number of convictions reflects an increase in hundreds of percent compared to the years reviewed during the previous audit.
-  **Police officer positions funded by the Ministry of Culture and Sport** – The Ministry of Culture and Sport funded the establishment and operation of a special police unit to crack down on violence in sports, but the unit has not realized its full potential for carrying out agreed activities. For example: in 2019, due to the fact that the Ministry had transferred NIS 12 million per annum to the Israel Police as promised, which accounts for 80% of the unit’s annual operating budget, one would expect that the Israel Police would have at least manned a corresponding ratio of the unit’s positions – equivalent to 25.6 positions<sup>4</sup>. However, in 2019, the Israel Police filled only 18.7 vacancies. The result is that the Ministry of Culture and Sport in effect overfunded 6.3 positions, which the Israel Police used for missions other than the prevention of violence in sports.
-  **Continuing operation of this special police unit as of 2021** – When the expanded follow-up audit was completed in September 2020, the activation of stage 2 manning of the unit had not yet been examined and, as a result of disagreements between the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Public Security and the Israel Police about the continued funding of the unit’s operations as of 2021, the unit’s continuing operations have been cast in doubt.



#### **Establishment of a special police unit for the prevention of violence in sports**

– The previous audit noted that the Tzur Committee had recommended the establishment of a special unit in the Israel Police’s Intelligence Division dedicated to cracking down on violence in sports. As of the completion date of the previous audit, this police unit had not yet been established. The follow-up audit found that, pursuant to the agreement of June 2016 between the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Public Security, a special police unit for the prevention of violence in sports was established in August 2017. The agreement was in effect from 2016 to 2020 with a

<sup>4</sup> 80% of the 32 standardized positions.



budget of at least NIS 72 million, NIS 58 million of which were supposed to be transferred from the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

**Publishing and assimilation of a code of ethics and publication of regulations regarding sports fan accessories** – The previous audit found that the Ministry of Culture and Sport had published a “Code of Ethics for Sports in Israel – Fairness and Sportsmanlike Conduct” (“the Code of Ethics”) in 2011 and that no regulations regarding sports fan accessories had yet been published. The follow-up audit found that some of the sports associations have taken action to adapt and publish the Code of Ethics as required, and some of the sports associations did so during the follow-up audit. It was also found that the Israel Police had published regulations regarding sports fan accessories in January 2017.






**Supervision of spectators banned from sports stadiums and imposition of the obligation that banned spectators report to a police station during games** – The previous audit found that details of spectators banned from sports stadiums held by the Israel Police, details appearing in court orders and details of restraining orders were not available to the police forces out in the field, and that no new system had been developed to optimize the work. The follow-up audit found that the Israel Police completed building a technological system in the years 2018–19 to monitor whether banned spectators report to police stations. The development was achieved by building a system to record banned spectators reporting to police stations – “Siren Song” – and by creating an application that enables police officers assigned to a sporting event to receive a list and photos in real time of banned spectators who did not report to a police station as required.

**Cracking down on violent crime and hate crime in sports – the Israel Football Association** – The previous audit found that the Israel Football Association, as the oversight organization of the football sector, was not using all of the educational and preventive tools available to it, and had also not developed additional tools to contend with these phenomena during all football matches in the local arena. The follow-up audit found that the Association’s disciplinary tribunal applies more lenient disciplinary measures to teams that prove that they sued fans who committed violent crimes or hate crimes in sports stadiums – which incentivizes teams to take action to prevent violent and racist phenomena also by way of filing lawsuits against fans or by imposing sanctions on groups of fans. The management of the Israel Football Association approved a three-stage method for cracking down on racially-motivated outbursts as of the 2016–17 game season: (a) before a game starts, the announcer warns against any racially-motivated outbursts and informs the crowd that if any racist heckling occurs, the game will be interrupted for several minutes or even terminated; (b) if a racially-motivated outburst occurs, the referee can stop the game, initially for several minutes; (c) if racist heckling continues, the referee can decide to terminate the game.





## Key recommendations

-  As long as the Council has not been cancelled and a statutory obligation still exists to operate it, the Minister of Culture and Sport should duly appoint members to the Council. It is recommended that, upon its re-establishment, the Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports: formulate a comprehensive plan for cracking down on violence in sports; complete the building of a central database containing data on incidents of violence; and initiate studies or surveys to develop knowledge in its sphere of responsibility.
-  The Ministry of Culture and Sport should be the authority that coordinates all entities and actions pertaining to the prevention of violence in sports. It is recommended that it formulate a suitable comprehensive plan in this regard, including target reductions in incidents of violence, deadlines for achieving the targets and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Culture and Sport collaborate with the Israel Police to advance the production of game tickets in conjunction with subscriptions that will include technological means of fan identification that are linked to the police database on banned spectators. This identification will enable, on the one hand, safe and swift entry into stadiums and, on the other hand, prevent banned spectators from entering using game tickets. Also recommended is the development of an application compatible with smartphones.
-  It is recommended that the Attorney's Office collaborate with the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Israel Police and the Israel Football and Basketball Associations, to develop a strategy for cracking down on racist outbursts in sports, which was already agreed upon with the State Attorney-General back in 2013. It is recommended that the Israel Police increase enforcement relating to the prevention of racism in sports; set a target for the ratio of banned spectators who would be obligated to report to police stations during games; monitor compliance; and consider obligating every banned spectator to report to a police station, as the State Attorney recommended.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Culture and Sport collaborate with the Ministry of Education and the sports associations, to create cooperative efforts and formulate joint plans relating to the prevention of violence in sports among children and youth, and measure and evaluate the programs operated by the Ministry of Education, the sports associations and the teams. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Culture and Sport publish appeals to support fans organizations and civil society NPOs that will – with budgetary assistance – operate educational projects to prevent violence and racism in sports and impart values of sportsmanship.



The Israel Police should allocate the manpower, resources and means to the Unit for the Prevention of Violence in sports as prescribed in the agreement with the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and regulate the unit's professional and reporting hierarchy. It should also devise a way to synchronize and create uniformity between the data on violence in sports as agreed upon among the police districts and the data in the national headquarters and in the Unit for the Prevention of Violence in sports.



Considering the need for the unit for the prevention of violence in sports and its focus on direct actions to crack down on violence in sports, and the need that such a unit be operated by the Israel Police, and considering the Tzur Committee's recommendations approved by the Minister of Culture and Sport. It is recommended that the Ministry of Public Security, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Israel Police, conduct a process of analyzing the unit's activities and its contribution to the eradication of violence during sporting events, drawing conclusions and reviewing the importance of its continued operation. As part of their analysis, they should take into account the fact that the unit was not operating at full capacity as prescribed in the agreement. With regard to the continue budgeting of the unit, disagreements about funding the unit should be submitted for an additional discussion by the director-general of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the director-general of the Ministry of Public Security and the Israel Police so that this unit may continue operating in a format to be decided upon, so that the unit can optimally fulfill its purpose.



## Prevention of violence in sports – key findings of the expanded follow-up audit

Audit section	Deficiency found in the previous audit	Extent that the deficiency has been rectified according to the follow-up audit			
		Not rectified	Slightly/ partially rectified	Largely rectified	Fully rectified
Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports and the Ministry of Culture and Sport	The Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Council did not integrate the subject of preventing violence in sports and, inter alia, the Ministry did not formulate a comprehensive plan for implementing the Prohibition of Violence in Sports Law, which prescribes targets, performance timetables and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.				
The Council's functioning over the years of its activity	Since the Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports was founded in 2009, it has not proposed any action plan for cracking down on violence in sports, has been unsuccessful in coordinating with relevant bodies in order to create a database of violent incidents in sports and has not presented any educational programs.				
Use of game tickets	No arrangements were made with the relevant bodies to produce game tickets with means of identification to improve tracking capabilities.				



Audit section	Deficiency found in the previous audit	Extent that the deficiency has been rectified according to the follow-up audit			
		Not rectified	Slightly/partially rectified	Largely rectified	Fully rectified
Program for preventing violence among children and youth – with the Ministry of Education and the sports organizations	No comprehensive anti-violence educational program was formulated for athletes in the children’s and youth leagues with the Ministry of Education and with sports organizations.				
Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Israel Police, sports associations	No actions were taken to publish and assimilate a Code of Ethics.				
	No regulations regarding fan accessories were published.				
Establishment of a police unit	A special police unit for the prevention of violence in sports was not yet established.				
Supervision of spectators banned from sports stadiums – ratio of banned spectators obligated to report to police stations	In 86% of the violent incidents resulting in spectators being banned from stadiums, police officers were not exercising their authority to also obligate banned spectators to report to police stations during games in the future.				
Banned spectators who did not report to police stations	The Israel Police was not analyzing the ratio of banned spectators who reported to police stations and, in any case, was not drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of this punishment or considering ways to improve its use.				



Audit section	Deficiency found in the previous audit	Extent that the deficiency has been rectified according to the follow-up audit			
		Not rectified	Slightly/partially rectified	Largely rectified	Fully rectified
Installation of facial recognition cameras at stadiums	Facial recognition cameras were not installed in stadiums to obtain evidence admissible in court in order to increase enforcement.				
Cracking down on violence in sports by the Ministry of Culture and Sport	The Ministry took no long-term actions to integrate, map and develop plans for cracking down on racism in sports, nor did it lead any strategy for cracking down on racist outbursts, as proposed by the State Attorney-General in February 2013.				
Cracking down on violence in sports by the Israel Police	Back in 2012, the Police Commissioner had instructed that priority must be given to cracking down on hate crimes, but the Israel Police did not formulate any action plan in this regard. The inadequate performance by the police is also reflected in the sparsity of investigations opened between 2011–2014.				
Israel Football Association	The Israel Football Association is not using all of the educational, preventive and enforcement tools available to it to crack down on racist outbursts in the football sector.				



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## Summary

The findings of the follow-up audit indicate that, although some deficiencies have been rectified since the previous audit, other reported deficiencies have still not been rectified. The Council for the Prevention of Violence in Sports stopped operating in 2017; the Ministry of Culture and Sport is not acting as an authority coordinating the matters under its responsibility with other agencies; and the Ministry of Public Security has still not arranged the continued operation of the police unit for the prevention of violence in sports, whose operation agreement expired in 2020.

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, some of the games during the 2019–20 season were held without spectators. It is recommended that all relevant organizations take advantage of this period to analyze the actions taken as well as those that need to be taken or completed in order to continue cracking down on violent and racist phenomena in sports.

The Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Public Security, the Israel Police, and the sports associations, clubs and teams should take action to rectify the deficiencies and consider the recommendations in this report – each within its sphere of responsibility.



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## Chapter 3

# State Institutions, Government Companies and Corporations

