

STATE COMPTROLLER

Special Interim Report

Safety of Conscripts (Female and
Male Soldiers) at the Ministry of
National Security Units



State of Israel

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Safety of Conscripts (Female and Male Soldiers) at the Ministry of National Security Units – Special Interim Report

Background

About 5,500 female and male soldiers serve yearly in the Ministry of National Security units, including the Israel Police, the Israel Border Police, and the Prison Service. Recently this unique service arrangement has been on the public agenda, mainly following the disclosure of the events that became known to the public as the "Pimping of female prison guards at Gilboa Prison." As part of this audit, various aspects of the mandatory service in the Ministry of National Security units are examined, including the tasks assigned to conscripts, the medical care provided to them, the training for the duties, the welfare conditions to which they are entitled, their safety and the degree of usefulness of their service. Given the severity of the findings and since they were raised when the mandatory service of soldiers outside the IDF, especially in the Prison Service, is on the public agenda, the State Comptroller decided to prepare an interim report and publish it. The interim report presents severe findings regarding the safety of the soldiers who serve in the Israel Police, the Israel Border Police, and the Prison Service.



Key Figures

1,045

conscripts serve in the Police, most of them in patrol positions, call center operators, and administrative positions; 74% of them (774) are females

about 570

conscripts serve in the Prison Service, most of them serve as guards in the security wings of prison facilities throughout the country; about 35% of them (196) are females

1,907

conscripts and discharged soldiers answered the questionnaires distributed by the State Comptroller's Office (14.4% of all recipients)

about 150

conscripts with whom the audit team spoke during visits to security prison facilities (over 25% of all conscripts serve in the Prison Service)

25%

female conscripts rate serving in the Police, the Israel Border Police, and the Prison Service who stated in the questionnaires that they had experienced one or more sexual harassment incidents during their service

38%

female conscripts rate serving in the Prison Service who stated in the questionnaires that they had experienced one or more sexual harassment incidents

about 70%

of the assaults against conscripts serving in the Police, the Israel Border Police, and the Prison Service were perpetrated by a standing serviceman or a direct or indirect commander (by the questionnaires)

70%

conscripts' rate who stated in the questionnaires that they filed a complaint regarding sexual harassment, but the complaint was not handled at all or was handled unsatisfactory

Audit Actions







From February to September 2022, the State Comptroller's Office audited the mandatory service in the Ministry of National Security units. The audit was conducted at the Ministry of National Security, the Police, and the Prison Service. Completion examinations were conducted at the Ministry of National Security and the IDF. The audit team visited seven Prison Service security prison facilities and spoke with about 150 conscripts. Furthermore, in August 2022, the State Comptroller's Office conducted an online survey on the subject through questionnaires distributed among about 13,000 conscripts and discharged soldiers who served in the Police (including the Border Police) and the Prison Service. Moreover, employees of the State Comptroller's Office and the Ombudsman contacted via phone about 70 respondents, conscripts, or discharged









soldiers who had served in the Police, the Border Police, or the Prison Service in the last three years.

Key Findings

-  **Trends Raised in the Meetings and Conversations Held with the Conscripts** – three trends were raised in the meetings and conversations held with about 220 conscripts (female and male): Abusive behavior of a sexual nature by security prisoners; The lack of backing from the commanding echelon to the conscript soldiers serving as guards when working with security prisoners; Inappropriate statements of a sexual nature by standing serviceman towards the female conscripts.
-  **The Rate of Sexual Harassment in the Police, the Border Police, and the Prison Service** – one out of four female conscripts who responded to the State Comptroller's questionnaire (161 out of 644 respondents) stated that during her service – 24 months – she had experienced one or more incidents of sexual harassment. It was found that the rate of female conscripts in the Prison Service who had experienced sexual Harassment was the most significant – 38%; about four out of ten female conscripts who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they had experienced one or more incidents of sexual harassment. It was also found that about 70% of the incidents of assault against conscripts were committed by a standing serviceman or commander: 52% of those serving (144) who answered that they had experienced sexual harassment stated that the perpetrator was a standing serviceman (who was not a commander), and 19% of those serving (52) stated that the perpetrator was their direct or indirect superior.
-  **The Reporting Rate of Sexual Harassment and Satisfaction Level with its Handling** – less than half of the conscripts in the Police, the Prison Service, and the Border Police (96 out of 209, which is about 46%) who indicated in the questionnaires that they had experienced sexual harassment during their service – reported the harassment to some entity in the organization they served in, or outside of it – a Gender Affairs Advisor (Yohalam), a commander, the Coping and Support Center (Mahut) and the like. 70% of the conscripts who reported the sexual harassment stated that the complaint was not handled at all (26%) or handled inadequately (44%).
-  **IDF Research** – according to an IDF study in 2022, 33% of female conscripts stated that since their enlistment, they had been sexually harassed once or more. Only 32% reported it to a relevant entity handling the matter. 49% of the female conscripts serving in the IDF who reported the harassment were satisfied with the complaint handling, compared to 39% among the female conscripts in the Prison Service and 27% among



the female conscripts serving in the Police, according to the questionnaires. The audit raised that the IDF does not publicize its surveys and does not present their findings to the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women and Gender Equality.

-  **Police Surveys** – Police surveys in 2016, 2018, and 2021 regarding sexual harassment of conscripts serving in the Police experienced during those years raised that there has been a significant increase in reports of sexual harassment by conscripts, especially among women: 6.44% of female conscripts reported that they had been harassed by a police official in 2021. These findings are not in line with the findings of the questionnaires, according to which 27% of the female conscripts serving in the Border Police and 22% of the female conscripts in the Police stated that they had experienced one or more sexual harassments. The audit further raised that the Police do not publicize its surveys nor present their findings to the Knesset Committee for advancing the Status of Women and Gender Equality.
-  **The Complaints Rate and Disciplinary Indictments Compared to the Conscripts Rate Serving in the Police** – in 34% of the complaints received by the Police Gender Affairs Advisor (Yohalam), (149 out of 442) and in 39% of the indictments against police officers (standing servicemen) for offenses of sexual harassment or behavior unbecoming of a police officer that was submitted to the Police Disciplinary Court (17 out of 44) in 2019–2021, the victims were conscripts, even though they are only about 7% of the overall police personnel (including volunteers and Border Police).
-  **The Complaints Rate and Disciplinary Indictments Compared to the Conscripts Rate Serving in the Prison Service** – in 37% of the complaints received by the Prison Service Gender Affairs Advisor (Yohalam) (68 out of 185) and in 42% of the indictments submitted to the Prison Service Disciplinary Court (5 out of 12) in 2019–2021, the victims were conscripts, even though there are only 6% from the overall Prison Service personnel.
-  **The Sexual Harassment Incidents Rate in the Prison Service and the Police Compared to Their Rate According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BSS) Personal Safety Survey** – the female conscripts rate serving in the Prison Service and the Police who indicated in the questionnaires that they had been sexually harassment (about 25%) is about 300% greater than the rate of victims aged 20 up to 34 according to the Central Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey for 2021 (9.2%).
-  **The Report of the Public Committee Investigating the Conditions of the Security Prisoners Held in the Prison Service** – by the audit, the report recommendations regarding the risk involved in performing the role of a security guard were not discussed in the State Security Cabinet, and therefore no decisions were made.
-  **Security Prisoners Posts on Social Media** – about 15% of the prison guards' conscripts indicated in the questionnaires that they received posts from security prisoners or their spouses through social media. However, none of the reports received



by the Prison Service about such cases in 2019–2022 were handled, and this, among other things, was because "the prisoner was released." Upon completion of mandatory service, the Prison Service procedures no longer apply to the conscripts who served as prison guards, as does the responsibility of the Security Department over them. After their service, they have no protection against the dangers associated with this type of post, from security prisoners, which evoke a feeling of insecurity.



Performing Duties Without Training – according to the questionnaires, in the Prison Service, the Police, and the Border Police, the conscript's rate which began their service and waited for over three months for the training required to fulfill their duty was 18%, 36%, and 47% respectively. Contrary to procedures, a significant part (43%) of the serving in the Police and the Border Police begin to perform their duties without having undergone appropriate training, compared to 17% of those serving in the Prison Service. For example, a conscript serving as a prison guard told the audit team that even though he served in the headquarters, he was required to reinforce security wings and stand as an armed guard in the guard tower without training for this duty.








Measures for Increasing Awareness and Handling of Sexual Harassment Incidents – the State Comptroller commends the actions carried out by the Police, the Prison Service, and the Ministry of National Security to increase awareness of the issue, to address incidents of sexual harassment, and to minimize their number. For example, the Gender Affairs Advisors (Yohalam) at the Prison Service and the Police coordinate an informational and treatment system regarding complaints of a sexual nature, and in all units, there are officers in charge of the prevention of sexual harassment, making available to the victims a system of support and accompaniment by professionals; Conducting gender-adapted training and workshops on the topic of a safe work environment and prevention of sexual harassment and conducting follow-up with enforcement agencies and providing emotional and organizational support; The Minister of National Security appointed a special advisor for women's and gender affairs and established the "Muganot" ('Protected') Forum – a joint forum for the national security bodies that meet regularly, discusses practices and measures for dealing with the phenomenon of sexual harassment, maps challenges, and trends, and formulates proposals and recommendations to eradicate the phenomenon. Despite the positive actions carried out in the Ministry of National Security, the Police, and the Prison Service, given the findings noted in this report, it is recommended that all parties continue to increase awareness of the issue.





Key Recommendations

The Minister of Defense, the Minister of National Security, the Police Commissioner, the Prison Service Commissioner, and the Chief of the General Staff, each in their responsibility, should rectify the deficiencies raised in this report regarding the protection and personal safety of male and female conscripts.

-  It is recommended that the findings in this report be considered by a team set up under the direction of the Minister of Defense to re-examine the placement of conscript soldiers in the Prison Service when formulating its recommendations, which it is required to submit, under the letter of appointment, by November 30, 2022.
-  It is appropriate that the measures taken by the Police and the Prison Service for the safety of the conscripts be based on a work plan including set goals to improve the situation according to several parameters: the rate of those serving in these bodies who indicate that they have experienced abuse of a sexual nature; The rate of those serving who report such incidents to an authorized entity in the organization; Increasing the conscripts' satisfaction level of the handling of their complaint and the response given and more.
-  It is recommended that the IDF, the Israel Police, and the Prison Service continue to conduct surveys on the safety of the conscripts in these bodies to learn about the level of safety of those serving and for creating database to formulate a work plan. It is also recommended that the full findings of these surveys be publicized and submitted to the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women and Gender Equality for discussion. It is further recommended that the Police examine the reasons for the gap between the findings from the surveys and the findings from the questionnaires. The State Comptroller's Office also recommends that the IDF, the Police, and the Prison Service increase their cooperation with other organizations and promote public participation, including round tables of conscripts and discharged soldiers – to deal with the phenomenon of sexual harassment in these bodies.
-  It is appropriate that the Police and the Prison Service work habitually and regularly to collect and analyze all the data on reports on safety and sexual harassment and their handling, segmented according to types of offenses and types of those serving (standing army or conscripts). Thus, a complete and accurate picture of the findings can be compiled on incidents involving conscripts and their handling, enabling to verify that the handling cycle was completed efficiently and quickly.
-  It is recommended that the recommendations in the report of the public committee investigating the conditions of the security prisoners held in the Prison Service be discussed for examination and resolution.

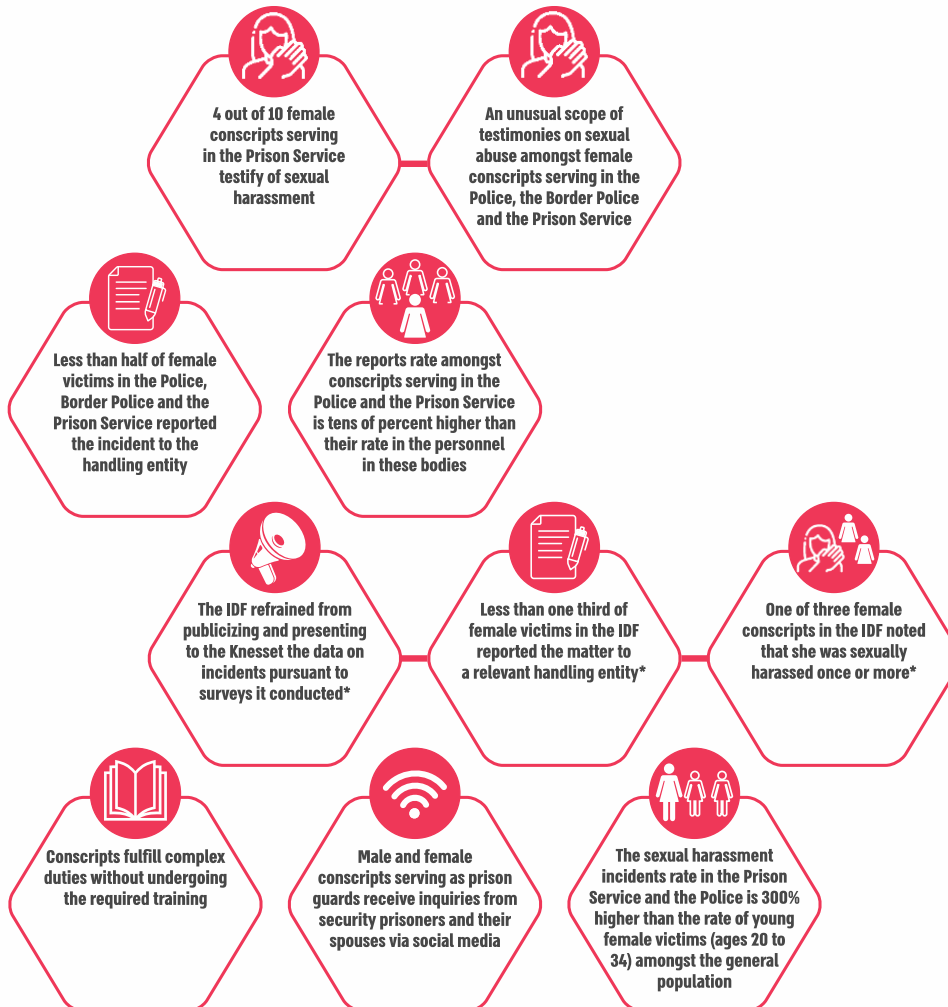


-  For the personal safety of prison guards, strict adherence is required to ensure that the conscripts who have not yet completed their professional training in total to fulfill their duties in the security prisoner wings are not involved in the performance of tasks they were not trained to perform.

-  It is recommended that the Israel Police and the Prison Service consider expanding the support for discharged soldiers, including those who reported the sexual harassment they experienced for the first time only after they were discharged from service. The support will include counseling and advocacy services and referrals to relevant treatment and enforcement agencies. It is appropriate that upon the conscript's service end, the Police and the Prison Service do not brake off relations with them regarding the sexual harassment and the harm to their safety and personal security they experienced during their service.



The Key Findings Raised from the State Comptroller Office's Questionnaires



* According to the findings of the IDF study from 2022.



Female and Male Conscripts Statements About Sexual Harassment by Security Prisoners

"A PRISONER DID **INDECENT ACTS** IN FRONT OF ME IN HIS CELL" ■ "A PRISONER SAID TO ME: **WOW, WHAT WOULD I DO TO YOU**" ■ "THEY LOOK AT ME LIKE A **WHEEL OF SHAWARMA**. IT IS NOT LEGITIMATE BUT THERE IS NOTHING TO BE DONE ABOUT IT" ■ "IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT WE ARE **THE BEAUTIFUL SCENERY OF THE PRISONERS**" ■ "I ENTER A SECURITY WING AND IT'S FULL OF PRISONERS LOOKING AT YOU AND EXAMINING YOU FROM HEAD TO TOE **AND THROWING STATEMENTS AT YOU**" ■ "A DETAINEE WHO WAS BROUGHT TO THE STATION TOOK OFF HIS UNDERWEAR AND TOLD ME... **[TO PERFORM A SEXUAL ACT ON HIM]**" ■ A PRISONER **EXPOSED HIS PENIS** IN FRONT OF THE FEMALE GUARD* ■ DURING AN INSPECTION IN THE WING TWO PRISONERS PERFORMED **A SEXUAL ACT** IN FRONT OF THE FEMALE WARDEN* ■ THE PRISONER TOLD THE HEAD OF THE WING: "I WILL ONLY ENTER THE CELL **IF THE FEMALE WARDEN ENTERS WITH ME**"* ■ DURING AN INSPECTION IN THE PRISONER'S CELL HE PERFORMED A SEXUAL ACT ON HIMSELF AND DID NOT STOP EVEN WHEN THE FEMALE WARDEN ARRIVED* ■ A PRISONER **RUBBED AGAINST THE FEMALE WARDEN'S LEG** AND TOLD HER "IF THERE WERE NO BARS, **I WOULD JUMP ON YOU**"*

* From complaints to the Prison Service Gender Affairs Advisor (Yohalam) in 2019-2021.



Female and Male Conscripts Statements About Sexual Harassment by Standing Service Personnel

"DID YOU HAVE BREAST AUGMENTATION?" ■ "SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS VERY COMMON IN THE PRISON SERVICE. STANDING SERVICE GUARDS SEE FEMALE SOLDIERS AND TRY, **IT DOESN'T WORK FOR THEM AND THEY TRY AGAIN**. THERE ARE NO SHORTAGE OF CASES" ■ "FRIENDS TOLD ME: "HE IS A STANDING SERVICE EMPLOYEE, **IN THE END HE WILL SCREW YOU, YOU WILL END UP IN A BAD WAY**, IT IS A SHAME TO GO AGAINST HIM"; "THERE IS A HABIT AMONG STANDING SERVICE MEN TO **TALK IN A MORE SEXUAL AND MORE PROVOCATIVE WAY** WITH FEMALE CONSCRIPTS"; "I DON'T KNOW WHY BUT THEY FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THEM"; "IT'S SAD SAYING THIS BUT **AT FIRST IT'S HARD** BUT **SLOWLY YOU LEARN TO ACCEPT IT** AND SMOOTH IT OVER"; IT'S NOT SOMETHING I SAY – HOW COME I DID NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT IT? IN THE END **I SWALLOWED MY SALIVA** AND THAT'S WHAT IT IS" ■ "THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE OF A SEXUAL NATURE AND YES, THERE ARE ATTEMPTS TO COVER IT UP." ■ "**HE STARTED PUTTING HIS HANDS ON ME AND GETTING CLOSER**. I PUSHED HIS HANDS AWAY. THEN PHYSICALLY HE STOPPED, BUT IT CONTINUED WITH DISTURBING SAYINGS AND SOUNDS. **I FELT UNCOMFORTABLE**. I SAID TO HIM: YOU ARE MARRIED. HE REPLIED: NEVER MIND. I'M GETTING A DIVORCE ANYWAY" ■ "I WAS SEXUALLY HARASSED BY THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE SHIFT, BUT THEY DIDN'T PAY ATTENTION TO IT. **I REGRET THE MOMENT I ARRIVED HERE**" ■ "YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THINGS HERE THAT CHILDREN SHOULD NOT EXPERIENCE" ■ "WITH MY OWN EYES I SAW HOW **OFFICERS CONVINC** A FEMALE CONSCRIPT SERVING AS GUARD **TO REFRAIN FROM FILING A COMPLAINT** AGAINST A STANDING SERVICE GUARD WHO SEXUALLY ASSAULTED HER" ■ "MANY OF THOSE SERVING **ARE OLDER THAN THE YOUNG FEMALE SOLDIERS WHO ENLIST**, AND THEY ARE FROM ANOTHER GENERATION WHO PROBABLY THINKS IT'S LEGITIMATE TO SPEAK RUDELY" ■ "AN OFFICER ASKED WHY I'M WITH A BOYFRIEND **AND WHY I'M NOT WILLING TO TRY OTHER THINGS**; ANOTHER WROTE THAT HE'S ON HIS WAY HOME BUT **IF I'M NOT IN HIS BED THERE'S NO POINT IN GOING OUT**" ■ "**ARE YOU A VIRGIN?**"



Statements by Conscripts Serving as Guards on the Absence of Personal Security

"THERE IS ALWAYS **THE FEAR** THAT THEY WILL DO SOMETHING TO YOU" ■ "THE PRISONERS ARE UNPREDICTABLE. IN A SECOND THE PRISONERS CAN TURN ON YOU, **POUR HOT WATER ON YOU OR START A FIRE**" ■ "AT FIRST, I WAS VERY **SCARED**, BUT I JUST **GOT USED TO IT**" ■ "THE PRISONERS SHOUTED "YOU ARE DEAD OUTSIDE". **I WAS RATTLED**" ■ "THEY **KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT US**. I SAW A NOTEBOOK WITH RECORDS THEY KEEP ON US: **WHERE WE LIVE, FINANCIAL SITUATION, WRITE DOWN WHEN I ENTERED, HOW I DID A SCAN**" ■ "I'VE SEEN THINGS HERE DOZENS OF TIMES THAT **I DON'T WISH ANYONE TO SEE**" ■ "I'VE SEEN **HORRORS**. **A PRISONER CUT HIS VEINS BEFORE MY EYES**" ■ "PRISONERS ALMOST ATTACKED ME SEVERAL TIMES" ■ "I FOUND MYSELF **ALONE** BETWEEN TWO DOORS IN A SMALL AREA WITH **SEVEN HAMAS PRISONERS**"

From the descriptions of the conscripts serving as guards in the security prison facilities that were heard in the meetings and on the phone, conversations held with them by employees of the State Comptroller's Office and the Ombudsman.

Summary

Sexual Harassment can sometimes cause severe and long-term harm and significantly undermine a victim's sense of control over their life and body and their right to privacy and protected personal space. A significant part of the mental harm accompanying the victim involves denying personal security and the feeling that the autonomy over their body and actions has been taken away. To this end, the victims need a sense of security – physically and emotionally – including knowing that the community and the enforcement systems are working to the best of their ability to create a safe environment, prevent the recurrence of harm and bring the offender to justice. This applies especially to entities entrusted with law enforcement in the State of Israel and young male and female soldiers who perform their mandatory service in hierarchical organizations alongside older standing servicemen, and when the types of tasks assigned to them are mostly challenging and complex from a mental perspective.