



Foreword

This report was presented to the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the State Audit Affairs Committee on August 15, 2023, and was scheduled for publication following the 2023 Tishrei (New Year) holidays.

On Saturday morning, 'Shemini Atzeret' (the Eighth day of Assembly holiday), October 7, 2023, the Hamas terrorist organization launched a murderous surprise attack on the Communities near the Gaza Strip and the surrounding area, along with heavy firing of thousands of missiles and rockets at the south of the country and its center. The Israeli government declared the "Swords of Iron" War, and the IDF and Israel security forces entered combat in the southern arena in Gaza, as well as in the northern arena. Since then, IDF soldiers and security forces have been fighting day and night to protect the residents of Israel.

In coordination with the Speaker of the Knesset and the Chairman of the State Audit Affairs Committee, the date for placing these reports before the Knesset has been postponed, as well as the date for their publication.

Since the outbreak of the war, I have conducted field tours, especially in the communities along the conflict lines in the south of the country and in the north. The tours took place in local authorities, hospitals, hotels where evacuees have been staying and in the Shura Camp for the identification of fatalities; All, to better understand disparities in the government bodies' handling of the civilian home front and in the response to the needs of Israel's residents during the current emergency. The Office of the State Comptroller brought some of the disparities to the attention of the relevant bodies so that they address them without delay.

As part of my tours in the south, I visited Sderot, Kibbutz Beeri, Ashkelon, Netivot, Ofakim, as well as the Eshkol, Hof Ashkelon and Merhavim regional councils and the party area in Re'im; In the north, I visited Kiryat Shmona, Ma'alot-Tarshiha, Tiberias, as well as the Mateh Asher, Ma'ale Yosef, the Upper Galilee, Mevo'ot HaHermon and Emek HaYarden regional councils; I also visited the Soroka and Barzilai hospitals and hotels in Eilat, Tiberias, the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, Shefayim and Ma'ale HaHamisha, that took in evacuees from Beeri, Nir Oz, Kfar Gaza, Kerem Shalom, Nir Yitzhak, Magen, Ein HaShlosha, Netiv HaAsara, Nirim, Re'im, Sderot, Tkuma, Kiryat Shmona, Shlomi, Shomera, Dafna, Malkia and Iron.

About one month following the beginning of the war, I referred to the Prime Minister's and for his further addressing the main failures and disparities concerning the handling of the civilian home front as they emerged from the many tours conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller and from a detailed inquiry into the public's complaints received by the Ombudsman in my office.

In my letter, I stated that "The government's emergency preparedness was supposed to be comprehensive, detailed, practiced and ready for operation. This is the expected standard,



against which the disparities and failures in the functioning of the civil systems in the first month of the war should be examined. This is also the standard expected of a country whose emergency preparedness is a necessary and fundamental element in its confrontation with its complex security challenges. The first month of the emergency period should not be characterized by a gradual and slow process of government organization, but rather by the rapid activation of prepared plans and formations. The government ministers are required to continue working, each in their own field, to improve the handling of the civilian home front at this time; The wonderful spirit of volunteerism found among us is of crucial importance and contributes to national cohesion, but at the same time it highlights the need for an effective and quick response from the governmental system".

These days, our office is completing the formulation of a comprehensive audit plan on the "Swords of Iron" War, in which all of our office's audit divisions will take part. The regular audit of the handling of the home front will begin in the coming days, however the audit of the defense establishment will begin according to the war's development. This is given that these days the war is still ongoing, and for over 90 days the IDF officers and soldiers have been fighting night and day in a bloody war inside the Gaza Strip and in the north of the country, and all of Israel must stand by their side. The audit will examine the activities of all ranks – the political, the military and the civilian rank – during the period preceding the outbreak of the abominable attack, during the days of the attack and thereafter. However, I made it clear that at this time it is our duty to support the IDF and the security forces so that they can contend with one thing – and that alone – victory over our enemy, since this is a war for our existence in our country. The Office of the State Comptroller will leave no stone unturned to get to the truth and point to the responsibility of the parties at all levels. The state audit's comprehensive activity will begin at a time to be determined by me.

Along with the beginning of the audit on the issues of the war, I decided to publish the report on the topic of the cost of living, the preparation of which was completed, as mentioned, prior to October 7, 2023, and whose publication was planned following the Tishrei holidays. The cost of living in Israel skyrocketed even before the "Swords of Iron" War, and with the beginning of 2024, costs continued to rise.

The damage caused by the war to the various sectors, combined with a high interest rate environment, impose a heavy burden on households in Israel, including households of reservists who are risking their lives for the State of Israel, and of many evacuees from the south and the north.

Along with the "Swords of Iron" War, the issue of the cost of living must be at the forefront of the Prime Minister's and the government ministers' agenda. As for the formulation of the 2024 budget – the government must also consider the effect of the war on the issue of the cost of living in Israel and rectify the report's deficiencies.



We will all continue to pray and wish for the victory of the IDF and the defense system in this difficult war, that was forced upon us by our most bitter enemies, who seek to destroy us as a people and as a country.

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State Comptroller and
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Jerusalem, January 2024



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Aspects of Contending with the Cost of Living



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