



THE OCTOBER 7TH TERROR ATTACK AND THE IRON SWORDS WAR

STATE COMPTROLLER REPORT

Government Management of the Civil Domain During the Swords of Iron War

September
2025

Special
Report

Foreword

The Swords of Iron War inflicted severe and unprecedented harm on the Israeli home front. Following the extensive missile and rocket attacks on Israeli territory from multiple combat fronts, hundreds of thousands of residents were compelled to evacuate their homes in dozens of communities across the northern and southern regions of the country. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of reserve soldiers were conscripted for prolonged reserve duty; business owners encountered difficulties; many residents suffered considerable physical and mental harm; it proved hard to operate fully and uninterruptedly the education system for the evacuated population, and so on.

The Swords of Iron War broke out approximately 17 years after the Second Lebanon War, which had, to that date, caused the most substantial harm to the Israeli home front. Regrettably, throughout the intervening years between these two conflicts, the Israeli government did not assimilate the lessons learned nor did it implement the recommendations necessary to establish a functional infrastructure adept at managing the Israeli home front in the event of a large-scale war event.

Among the report's numerous findings, it suffices to point out in these introductory remarks that over the course of 17 years, the government failed to complete the requisite actions for appointing an authoritative body endowed with overarching responsibility to manage and lead the home front during emergencies. An operational system aimed at supporting the provision of assistance in this area has also not been established as mandated.

Consequently, during the difficult and tumultuous days following the murderous terrorist attack of October 7,

amidst ongoing hostilities and when many residents of the country were in critical need of assistance from government agencies, the government was forced to attempt to deliver a comprehensive response in the civil domain, an endeavor in which it failed. The discussions and decisions made by the government during this period reveal, more than anything else, a significant failure to make adequate preparations in the many years preceding the conflict.

Ultimately, the decisions adopted by the government in the aftermath of the outbreak of war did not fulfill their intended purpose; indeed, their implementation dissipated due to the unsuccessful attempt to establish a functional structure without adequate prior preparation. In practice, an irregular structure was created that intermittently took on a coherent form. Moreover, the activity of the Socio-Economic Cabinet – the political forum tasked with leading the management of civil needs – was scant and limited.

The failure to establish an adequate state infrastructure has also resulted in deficiencies in the operation of other systems pertinent to emergency management. These deficiencies include the activities, in practice, of emergency bodies under the aegis of the Ministry of Defense, specifically the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) and the Home Front Command (HFC), and the non-implementation of the Minister of Defense's "supreme responsibility" regarding home front management, following the government's failure to complete the allocation of appropriate powers to a central and authoritative entity; discrepancies between the response efforts of NEMA and the HFC and the substantial needs of the populace; the ineffective

actions taken by the Directors General Forum, led by the Director General of the Prime Minister's Office. Moreover, the National Security Council (NSC) has not fulfilled its obligation to provide an integrative national situational overview through the Crisis Management Center since the outbreak of the war, particularly concerning civilian care.

The displaced citizen, the family residing away from its home, the business proprietor striving to sustain their livelihood, thousands of pupils experiencing disruptions in their education, and many others – these individuals justifiably anticipated more effective governmental preparedness and a more prompt and better response following the onset of the war.

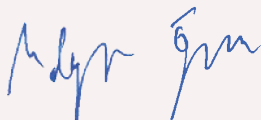
The characteristics of the overall management constituted an unstable foundation for the government's response to the public's needs during the conflict. This instability is attributable to the continuous failures of Israeli governments since the Second Lebanon War, including the current government, in completing the actions for regulating the overall authority and responsibility for managing civilian aspects of home front operations during wartime, and in organizing its activity. Accountability for the principal findings presented in this report rests with several key individuals: Prime Minister MK Benjamin Netanyahu, who throughout his cumulative years of service has not established the requisite functional infrastructure; the Minister of Defense during the audit period, Mr. Yoav Galant, along with his predecessors, who failed to regulate the status of the emergency agencies over the years; the Minister of Finance MK Bezalel Smotrich who has been heading the Socio-Economic Cabinet since the outbreak of the war.

The emergency agencies, NEMA and the HFC, have failed to adequately address various discrepancies since the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War. NEMA has not constituted a national emergency entity, managing the handling of the home front from the civil aspect. The HFC has not met the needs of the displaced persons, nor has the role of its representatives at the locations for displaced persons been clear; this is so, despite the fact that it has been vested with considerable resources and is responsible for civil defense and for providing support for civilians during emergencies, as well as being obligated by the government to allocate manpower for supporting the activity of NEMA in relation to the absorption of displaced persons in various facilities.

The report directly addresses the former Director General of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Yossi Sheli, regarding his operation of the Directors General Forum of government ministries. The deficiencies in operating the forum had repercussions that were detrimental to the government's overall functioning.

Alongside accountability for the main findings of the report and the State Comptroller's said observation regarding the Directors General Forum, in the final analysis the Ministry of Finance - its management and professional functionaries, including in the administrative and legal fields - the Commissioner of Wages and the Civil Service Commission, failed to effectuate implementation of the government's decision to establish a civilian control center and operate it during wartime. They also failed to address difficulties arising during the attempt to implement the policy of the Minister of Finance vis-à-vis the establishment of a civilian control center and its activity during wartime.

The State of Israel currently finds itself engaged in a widespread and ongoing conflict. Consequently, the political leadership – particularly the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Defense, as well as the Prime Minister's Office, the National Security Council and NEMA – must promptly implement all necessary measures to rectify the deficiencies detailed in this audit report. Swift and purposeful action to remedy these deficiencies is essential for establishing a comprehensive and effective government management system for the civil aspects of the war, thereby enabling the State of Israel to adequately address the civilian dimensions of the ongoing conflict and to prepare for future wartime events and other emergencies.



Matanyahu Englman

Jerusalem,
September 2025

**State Comptroller
and Ombudsman**