



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government
Audit Report | July 2025

Conduct During Emergencies and the
Swords of Iron War

Taking Care of Special Populations by (Non- Evacuated) Local Authorities During Emergencies



Taking Care of Special Populations by (Non-Evacuated) Local Authorities During Emergencies

Background

The Swords of Iron War has had a profound impact on all the citizens of the state, and particularly on special populations, including persons with disabilities and senior citizens, who encounter multifaceted challenges even in routine times and rely on external support from both central and local governmental entities. The challenge faced by various governmental bodies tasked with providing care for these special populations and assisting them during emergencies has arisen, among other factors, from the intricacies involved and the difficulties in identifying all populations requiring aid, as opposed to merely those recognized by the local authorities' social services in routine times. In an emergency scenario, the immediate assessment of the needs of these populations is challenging and necessitates the accessibility of extensive information and tailored services, following disruption to the routine care administered to them in normal times and the diverse emergency needs arising.

Local authorities assume a pivotal role in all aspects concerning the care of residents during emergencies, being the governmental entities that maintain direct engagement with the population within their jurisdictions. These local authorities, which cater to the needs of residents during periods of stability, are expected to sustain their provision of support during emergencies while also undertaking additional responsibilities necessitated by the situation. This encompasses, among other tasks, ensuring the delivery of essential services, attending to the needs of vulnerable populations, disseminating information to the public, awareness-raising and media relations, and preparing for the evacuation of residents to designated displacement centers.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2022 approximately 1.1 million persons with various disabilities resided in Israel, constituting nearly 11.5% of the nation's total population, alongside approximately 1.2 million senior citizens (aged 65 and above), who constitute approximately 12.5% of the overall population in Israel.



Key Figures

**1.1
million**

Number of persons with various disabilities living in Israel in 2022 (approximately 11.5% of the total population)

**1.2
million**

Number of senior citizens, aged 65 and over, living in Israel in 2022 (approximately 12.5% of the total population)

14,724

Total population of persons with disabilities and senior citizens who may need assistance in an emergency in the local authorities examined (1,003 – in **Hatsor HaGlilit**; 1,004 – in **Nahariya**; 3,454 – in **Bat Yam**; 3,838 – in **Rishon LeTsiyon**; 5,425 – in **Be'er Sheva**)

665

Total number of vibrating bracelets that the local authorities examined have distributed to hearing-impaired people, at a total cost of NIS 144,100

70%

of the respondents in the public participation survey that took place across 111 local authorities nationwide stated that the local authorities did not address their needs during the war

69%


of the respondents in the public participation survey that took place across 111 local authorities nationwide stated that they did not know where they would have to go in the event of a decision to evacuate to protected areas within the locality

52%

of the respondents in the public participation survey that took place across 111 local authorities nationwide, did not view the local authority as a recourse for receiving assistance on matters related to the war



Audit Actions

 From January to September 2024, the Office of the State Comptroller conducted an examination of the treatment of special populations by local authorities during the state of emergency arising from the Swords of Iron War. The audit encompassed five local authorities that had not been evacuated as a result of the war: the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, and Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council. Other reports by the Office of the State Comptroller have addressed in depth local authorities that were evacuated; hence, this report specifically targets authorities that were not evacuated. The audit involved an assessment of the actions undertaken by the five local authorities at three distinct points in time: on the eve of the war, during the initial weeks of the war, and throughout the war. The audit focused on the identification and mapping of special populations, the preparation of an updated database of these populations, the identification of needs and provision of aid, awareness-raising activities and the dissemination of supporting information and emergency guidelines, and the arrangements made for the evacuation of areas within the jurisdictions of the local authorities and the preparation of power generation centers within them. Supplementary examinations were conducted at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health.

Public Participation Survey – In October and November 2024, the Office of the State Comptroller conducted via an external organization a public participation process among special populations, utilizing a non-representative national sample of 111 local authorities. This process did not specifically address the local authorities examined, but focused on the treatment received by the participants during the war. The public participation survey was conducted through the distribution of an online questionnaire targeting persons with disabilities aged 18 and older, as well as senior citizens. The survey was distributed by means of text messages, group and individual WhatsApp messages, and advertisements on social media platforms. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions relating to the actions taken by the local authority during the war to identify and address the needs of the respondents, to raise public awareness and disseminate pertinent information relating to the emergency situation and to prepare for the evacuation of areas within the jurisdiction of the authority. An analysis of the open-ended responses was conducted with the aid of artificial intelligence (AI).



Key Findings

Significant Deficiencies in Addressing the Needs of Special Populations –

Public Participation Survey – The public participation survey conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller across 111 local authorities, revealed that the needs of the majority of respondents (70%) had not been addressed by the local authority during the war. The majority of respondents (52%) – including individuals receiving services from the Department of Social Services (DSS) (46%) – did not even perceive the local authority as a viable source of assistance regarding war-related issues; 36% of respondents and 46% of DSS service recipients expressed complete dissatisfaction with the support provided by their local authority in relation to wartime matters. Additional grievances were reported regarding the local authorities' inadequate responses to gaps in protection measures, the availability of accessible protected spaces, and the necessity for emotional support services that include activities aimed at stress relief, alleviation of loneliness, and referrals to professionals.

Regulation of Assistance in Emergencies for Special Populations by the

Central Government – As of the audit end date, over six years had elapsed since the deadline established by the Equal Rights Law for the enactment of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Critical and Essential Needs in an Emergency) Regulations (the Essential Needs Regulations) (May 2018), yet the Ministry of Defense had not enacted these regulations. Furthermore, despite a year having passed since the onset of the Swords of Iron War, which underscored the critical necessity for emergency preparedness across the entire population and intensified the need for the promulgation of these regulations, the enactment process for the aforementioned regulations remained incomplete. In the absence of these regulations, no clear directives exist mandating local authorities to ensure the accessibility of a range of critical and essential services during emergencies.

Additionally, it was found that while the Department of Social Services was obligated to respond to all special populations within the local authority's jurisdiction during emergencies, supplementary guidelines regarding service provision for all special populations, including those not receiving services during routine times, were only published by the Ministry of Welfare at the onset of the war. It was further found that a draft procedure mandated by the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility of Population Evacuation and Intake Operations in an Emergency) Regulations, 2022 (the Population Evacuation Accessibility Regulations), was distributed by the Ministry of Health only in March 2025, addressing coordination with both the Federation of Local Authorities and the Israel Regional Government Center.



Identifying and Mapping Populations in Need of Assistance –Actions of the Federation of Local Authorities to Establish an Emergency Database – It was found that despite the stipulations prescribed in the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law, 1998, which mandated that the Minister of Defense enact the regulations for accessibility in emergencies by May 2018, only in August 2024 did the Minister of Defense approve the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Database for Assistance to Persons with Disabilities in an Emergency) Regulations (the Database Regulations), which entered into effect in December 2024. It is also pertinent to note that at the onset of the Swords of Iron War, the enactment of the Database Regulations had not yet been finalized.

It was also found that, as at the audit end date, the legal framework for establishing a database specific to senior citizens had not yet been developed, and the database itself had not been established. This was so despite prior recommendations from the State Comptroller and the response of the Ministry of Welfare made in January 2024 at the joint meeting of the State Audit Affairs Committee and the Special Committee on the Treatment of Holocaust Survivors.

Local Authorities' Utilization of Locked Vault Data Provided by the Ministry of Welfare – Despite the fact that the limitations of the Locked Vault¹ in identifying the entire population likely to require assistance during emergencies were known prior to the onset of the war, and notwithstanding that the Office of the State Comptroller had pointed out as early as 2021 the absence of a unified and updated database pertaining to persons with disabilities, on the eve of the war the Ministry of Welfare lacked a comprehensive and complete database of individuals likely to require assistance in emergencies.

Identifying and Mapping Populations in Need of Assistance – The audit found that on the eve of the war, none of the local authorities examined (the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, and Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) possessed a thorough and updated database concerning persons with disabilities and senior citizens who might need aid during emergencies. Notwithstanding, these local authorities did at that time maintain databases containing information on persons with disabilities and senior citizens receiving services from DSSs and they utilized some of the information sources at their disposal, including data from collection departments, calls made by residents to the local authority's hotline, and information from welfare frameworks and day care centers, to compile a comprehensive and updated

1 The Locked Vault is a database managed by the Ministry of Welfare whose purpose is to assist the DSSs in identifying the population within the jurisdiction of the local authority that needs special attention in times of emergency. In order to create the Locked Vault, the Ministry of Welfare receives monthly data from the National Insurance Institute on recipients of certain benefits, processes them by segmentation according to local authorities, and in times of emergency securely transmits to each DSS the list of residents of the local authority included in the database.



database, with no uniformity in information sources – each local authority employing a different database.

Identifying and Mapping Populations in Need of Assistance – Due to disparities between the databases of the Locked Vault and the recipients of services from the Department of Social Services at the onset and during the war, such as a nearly two-fold disparity at the onset and during the war in the **Be'er Sheva** Municipality, a nine-fold disparity during the war in the **Bat Yam** Municipality, a 3.5-fold disparity at the onset and 2-fold disparity during the war in the **Rishon LeTsiyon** Municipality, and an approximate three-fold disparity at both the onset and during the war in the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council, the DSSs within the local authorities examined (**Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) were compelled to invest valuable time in identifying vulnerable populations under wartime conditions, despite the limitation of resources within the local authorities at the time.

Community Supporter – The role of the community supporter is to enhance and reinforce the professional staff in the Departments of Social Services during emergency situations, in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and senior citizens. The task of the community supporter is to identify senior citizens and persons with disabilities in the community, regardless of their prior association with the DSSs, assess their needs, and suggest appropriate solutions as required. Since the outbreak of the war, community supporters have been engaged temporarily, with funding from the Joint-Eshel organization, in collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare. At the onset of the war, the Ministry of Welfare designated 67 community supporter positions to the DSSs in 46 local authorities situated within 2 kilometers of the northern border or within 40 kilometers of the Gaza Strip border, along with 6 local authorities receiving evacuees. During the war, in April 2024, the operational framework for community supporters was expanded to include 72 local authorities within 40 kilometers of the northern border; community supporter positions were not in practice assigned but frozen agreements pertaining to them were reached between the local authorities and the Joint organization. For instance, an agreement was signed with the **Nahariya** Municipality in July 2024, but was put into effect only on September 24, 2024, well after the outbreak of the war. The deployment of community supporters in local authorities within 40 kilometers of the northern border only at the end of a year of conflict prevented them from accompanying the process of outreach and identification of special populations, and precluded the expansion of the scheme when these populations most required it.

It was further found that the Ministry of Welfare had not taken measures in routine times to train community supporters for emergency situations, despite the important role of identifying special populations unknown to social services who may require aid during emergencies. In addition, it was found that, notwithstanding the de facto state of war prevailing in Israel, particularly in the northern region, the Ministry of Welfare had not



taken measures to incorporate community supporters into the DSSs at the onset of the state of emergency.

📌 Presentation of Special Population Data Utilizing the Local Authority's Geographic Information System (GIS) – It was found that the **Rishon LeTsiyon** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council lacked a special population layer in the GIS, contrary to the provisions of Ministry of Welfare's operational doctrine for emergency and crisis situations. Conversely, the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva**, **Bat Yam**, and **Nahariya** successfully incorporated a special population layer within their GIS frameworks.

📌 Regulation of Emergency Assistance for Special Populations by Local Government – Although the emergency master plan mandated that a local authority formulate a procedure to regulate the provision of assistance for special populations during emergencies, thereby conserving crucial organizational time and enhancing care for these populations during emergency situations, the **Nahariya** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council did not have procedures regarding assistance for special populations during emergencies. However, both local authorities developed relevant procedures at the onset and during the war. On the eve of the war, the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva**, **Bat Yam**, and **Rishon LeTsiyon** had such procedures, but those in **Be'er Sheva** and **Bat Yam** referred only to recipients of services from the Department of Social Services and did not address the needs in emergencies of special populations not known to the DSS. Furthermore, while the emergency procedures of the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council were supposed to address all facets of the emergency situation, they dealt only with the aspect of evacuation of special populations. The municipal procedures of the **Nahariya** Municipality did not set guidelines for communicating with special populations during emergencies.

📌 Formulation of Situational Assessment of Needs and Responses – There is significant variability among the local authorities examined (the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva**, **Bat Yam**, **Nahariya**, **Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) regarding the approach taken to establish a situational assessment of the needs of special populations within their jurisdictions and the requisite responses, including the timing of situation assessments, their frequency and documentation. For instance, the **Be'er Sheva** Municipality's Department of Social Services compiled an initial list of residents' needs, identified in the course of its work during the first two days of the war, which included the targeted evacuation of senior citizens to retirement homes; the organization of respite care facilities for persons with disabilities residing in non-protected housing; the provision of respite for senior citizens and persons with disabilities; food assistance; and transportation for urgent necessities (health clinic and pharmacy visits). The **Bat Yam** Municipality's DSS made a daily situational assessment that included identifying the needs of residents, such as lack of occupation and routine activities for persons with disabilities lacking familial and social support; insufficient recreational frameworks for senior citizens; challenges for hearing-impaired individuals in hearing



sirens; difficulties faced by severely disabled individuals in reaching protected spaces; heightened anxiety levels; and an increase in requests for food assistance from senior citizens. At the onset of the war, the **Nahariya** Municipality made three daily situational assessments with its staff, focusing on special populations. The **Rishon LeTsiyon** Municipality made a situational assessment of needs based on calls from residents to the municipal hotline and outreach calls made on its behalf to residents. The **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council made daily situational assessments at the outbreak of the war, during which the activities of the DSS were examined. Following the general situation assessment, an additional evaluation was carried out at the DSS, which included an identification of the needs of special populations, particularly in terms of stress relief activities, as well as the identification of deficiencies in the responses provided. No documents were found at the **Nahariya** Municipality pertaining to situation assessments regarding the needs of special populations as a result of the war, despite the recommendations of the Office of the State Comptroller made in a 2021 report concerning "The Local Authorities' Conduct During the COVID-19 Pandemic".

Addressing the Needs of Special Populations – Gaps in Protection Measures –


The municipalities of **Be'er Sheva** and **Bat Yam** did not map the gaps in protection measures among the special populations within their jurisdiction following the outbreak of the war; the Nahariya Municipality undertook an examination of these gaps, but did not prepare accurate documentation of them.


The public participation survey conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller across 111 local authorities nationwide revealed complaints concerning inadequate responses by local authorities to gaps in protection measures, resulting in persons with disabilities and senior citizens being denied access to protected buildings during siren activations. Additionally, emphasis was placed on the unique need of special populations for accessible protected spaces, as well as on security measures.


Meeting the Needs of Special Populations – Emotional Support –


The municipalities of **Bat Yam** and **Nahariya**, along with the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council, failed to maintain accurate records and did not systematically document their activities related to emotional support for special populations in their jurisdiction. This lack of documentation extended to the number and identities of service recipients, inhibiting the capacity for regular monitoring of treatment processes and assistance provided. The public participation survey conducted across 111 local authorities nationwide revealed that emotional support was the most significant need among special populations following the war. This population wishes and expects local authorities to offer emotional support, including activities aimed at alleviating stress, reducing loneliness, and referring people to professionals.








 **Meeting the Needs of Special Populations – Occupational Frameworks for Persons with Disabilities and Day Centers for Senior Citizens** – It was found that the number of service recipients in day centers did not increase following the outbreak of the war, despite the needs of senior citizens disclosed by the public participation survey conducted across 111 local authorities nationwide and the outreach measures taken by the local authorities examined (the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council).

 **Meeting the Needs of Special Populations – Designated Emergency Kits** – It was found that as of the end of the audit, the Ministry of Defense had not yet enacted the Essential Needs Regulations, which were meant to regulate mechanisms for providing necessary services for persons with disabilities in emergencies, enabling local authorities to take relevant measures in advance. Therefore, neither prior to the outbreak of the war nor in the course of it, has the Ministry of Defense established by law a detailed definition of accessibility kits for persons with disabilities. As a result, in emergency situations local authorities are likely to lack the appropriate dedicated infrastructure to address the generic needs of special populations in a variety of areas highly likely to require their actions, such as specialized protection and evacuation measures; adaptations for stays outside the home; personal kits for vehicles and workplaces, and dedicated equipment for rescuers and rescued persons. Moreover, the local authorities examined (the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) do not possess dedicated emergency kits, providing assistance on an ad hoc basis during the war, according to specific needs identified by the local authorities among the special populations.

 **Meeting the needs of the Hearing-Impaired** – The municipalities of **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya**, and **Rishon LeTsiyon** initiated the distribution of 665 vibrating bracelets to hearing-impaired residents, to the sum of NIS 144,100, while addressing the whole of this population within their jurisdictions. The **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council did not distribute such bracelets at all, despite the inclusion of hearing-impaired individuals among its residents. Additionally, the **Be'er Sheva** Municipality did not verify the compatibility of the bracelets for use with the Home Front Command app prior to distribution. The public participation survey conducted within a non-representative national sample, which did not specifically focus on the local authorities examined, revealed that the overwhelming majority of respondents identifying as hearing-impaired (43 out of 44) reported not having received from the local authority a vibrating bracelet that indicates Home Front Command alerts.

 **Lessons Learned** – The municipalities of **Bat Yam** and **Nahariya**, along with the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council, did not implement a systematic and documented process for drawing lessons concerning the treatment of special populations during the war.



-  **Awareness-Raising and Dissemination of Information to Special Populations during Emergencies** – The **Bat Yam** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council failed to publish information and specific directives for special populations within their jurisdiction regarding states of emergency.
-  **Operating an Accessible Municipal Hotline in an Emergency** – From the onset of the war, it has not been possible to contact the municipal hotline via text message in the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva**, **Nahariya**, **Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council, despite it being one of the communication methods stipulated in the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Service Accessibility Adjustments) Regulations, 2013. However, these authorities allowed communication through other means, including email, WhatsApp, and online contact via their websites.
-  **Training Employees at the Municipal Hotline to Provide Accessible Service** – The **Nahariya** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council did not provide for hotline employees specialized training in the delivery of accessible public service to individuals with disabilities, as required.
-  **Preparations to Meet Needs within Facilities under the Local Authority's Jurisdiction – Ensuring the Accessibility of Local Intake Facilities** – Despite reports from the municipalities of **Bat Yam**, **Rishon LeTsiyon**, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council that the schools designated to function as intake facilities within their jurisdictions were accessible, no certification was found within them verifying that these schools had undergone an examination for compliance with the accessibility provisions pertinent to intake facilities. Furthermore, the accessibility certificates presented by the **Nahariya** Municipality assert that the building complies with the accessibility regulations governing educational institutions; however, the accessibility requirements delineated in the Population Evacuation Accessibility Regulations are different, and the municipality bears the responsibility to ensure that the buildings also adhere to the accessibility requirements prescribed by these regulations. Additionally, it was found that the intake facility classified as accessible within the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council is a private institution and is not under ownership of the Council.
-  **The Establishment of a Power Generation Center as Part of the Readiness for a 'Blackout' Scenario** – One anticipated emergency scenario necessitating state authorities' preparedness involves the potential for substantial damage to national energy facilities, leading to extended power outages across extensive regions of the country. This scenario became increasingly pertinent following the Swords of Iron War and the National Emergency Management Authority's extreme scenario (Blackout Scenario). It would have been prudent for the Ministry of Health's evacuation procedures for patients with special medical needs, in accordance with the Population Evacuation Accessibility Regulations, to address the implications of prolonged power outages as well. The examination found that in January 2024, shortly preceding the publication of the



Blackout Scenario, the Ministry of Health commenced engagement with local authorities concerning this issue. In February 2024, the Ministry disseminated a draft circular from the Director General regarding "Preparation of the health system to provide a response to patients who require electricity for life-sustaining medical equipment during extended power outages". This draft was circulated to hospitals and HMOs, instructing them to adhere to the draft guidelines should an incident as described in them occur prior to the circular's coming into force. It is noteworthy that in July 2024, the Ministry of Health published the procedure as Director General's Circular 4/2024, delineating the health system's readiness for the Blackout Scenario, including the evacuation of patients with specific medical requirements reliant on electricity for life-sustaining medical devices. The audit found that as of the audit end date, there were no power generation centers in the **Bat Yam** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council. Furthermore, the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva** and **Rishon LeTsiyon** had not yet practiced operating these centers.

The public participation survey conducted with a non-representative national sample of 111 local authorities, which did not specifically focus on the authorities examined, revealed that an overwhelming majority of patients with special medical needs (96% – 70 out of 73) utilizing electrical medical equipment, were unaware of the locations of power generation centers that could offer charging services during prolonged power outages. Additionally, participants were asked if they knew where they would have to go in the case of evacuation to protected areas within their locality, and the majority (69%–260 out of 375) responded that they did not know.







Identifying and Mapping Populations in Need of Assistance – During the preparation of their database, all the local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit local council**) took measures at the onset of the war to reach out and identify populations potentially requiring emergency assistance, initiating phone calls and various other measures.






Meeting the Needs of Special Populations – Providing Food and Medicine – At the commencement of the war, all the local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit local council**) assisted in the provision of food and medicine to special populations, wherever needed.









Key Recommendations

-  The Ministry of Defense should expeditiously finalize the enactment of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Critical and Essential Needs in an Emergency) Regulations.
-  The Ministry of Welfare should promptly initiate efforts to establish a database as required by the Database Regulations, in order to adhere to the timeline for transferring the database to local authorities by June 2026. This is necessary for communicating with persons with disabilities and providing necessary assistance during the Swords of Iron War and in any other emergency. Additionally, it is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare promote a legal framework for the creation of a database of senior citizens who may require assistance during emergencies. Following the establishment of the legal framework, it is recommended to regulate the formation of the database and to facilitate the adaptation of the provisions outlined in the Database Regulations to the senior citizen demographic as well. This approach will enable communication with senior citizens in need of assistance and the provision of aid during the war and in other emergency situations. It is further recommended that until it finalizes the establishment of the database pursuant to the Database Regulations, the Ministry of Welfare should update the Locked Vault database and ensure that it encompasses all relevant details of the population likely to require special attention and assistance in times of emergency.
-  The local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit Local Council**) should make sure to maintain at all times a comprehensive and current database of all persons with disabilities and senior citizens within their jurisdictions who may require assistance during emergencies, in accordance with the provisions of the emergency master plan.
-  It is advisable that the Ministry of Interior, as the regulator of local authorities, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare, which is responsible for the data of the Locked Vault, provide guidance to local authorities concerning the sources of information utilized for constructing and updating the databases of special populations within their jurisdictions during both routine and emergency situations, in a manner aimed at ensuring extraction of the most comprehensive and current information. Such measures are intended to establish consistency among local authorities regarding the methodologies employed in the construction, management, and updating of their databases. Furthermore, all the local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit Local Council**) should annually update the databases concerning special populations within their jurisdictions, leveraging various existing sources such as the collection department, the municipal hotline, welfare frameworks, and day centers, to enhance the completeness and accuracy of the database.



-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Welfare implement, even partially, the employment of community supporters in all local authorities, not only in times of emergency but during routine times as well. This approach should be adopted both for preparing the supporters for action during emergencies and in light of the importance of their role in identifying special populations that may not be known to the Departments of Social Services and may require assistance during emergencies. This necessity is underscored by the difficulties encountered in staffing and training personnel during the war due to the need to recruit staff in the course of the war and the candidates unwillingness to fill temporary positions for half a year, which demanded hard work, a lot of running around and dealing with the skepticism of the target population.
-  The **Rishon LeTsiyon** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council should establish a layer within the municipal GIS to identify special populations, simultaneously addressing issues of information confidentiality from both technological and legal perspectives. This should be executed in accordance with the operational principles doctrine established by the Ministry of Welfare for emergency and crisis situations and in order to take advantage of the system's merits for providing optimal assistance to special populations during emergencies.
-  Within the framework of the procedure for meeting the needs of special populations in times of emergency, the **Nahariya** Municipality should regulate the manner of contacting these populations. The **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council should formulate a procedure for regulating all aspects of assistance for special populations, not just evacuation measures. In addition, the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva** and **Bat Yam** should draw up procedures that regulate assistance during emergencies for all special populations, not just those known to the DSS, ensuring that their needs are met fully in times of emergency, in accordance with the Social Work Regulations.
-  It is advisable for the Ministry of Welfare to regulate the actions local authorities should undertake to formulate a situational assessment of the needs of special populations within their jurisdictions during emergencies, as well as how these authorities should effectively supervise and monitor the assistance they provide to these populations or that is provided through them.
-  As their duty requires, the municipalities of **Be'er Sheva** and **Bat Yam** should examine and map the existing gaps in protection measures among special populations within their jurisdiction, so as to meet their needs during emergencies. They should also guarantee that the needs of the entire population within their jurisdiction are met, as prescribed by the emergency master plan. The **Nahariya** Municipality should accurately document the gaps in protection measures affecting special populations so as to rectify these deficiencies. Furthermore, it is recommended that the local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva**, **Bat Yam**, **Nahariya**, **Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) consider the issue of protection for special populations, assessing both its existence and absence, prior to making a decision relating to it when considering advancing plans for urban renewal within their jurisdictions.



-  It is proposed that the local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) thoroughly investigate the operation of day centers for senior citizens during emergencies and derive insights regarding the continuity of their operations and the provision of other options where necessary.
-  It is recommended that the Ministry of Defense, together with the Ministry of Welfare and the Federation of Local Authorities, define in regulations or in any other manner the required emergency kits for treating special populations during emergencies, and to clarify the responsibilities for their establishment and maintenance. Additionally, the Federation of Local Authorities and the Center of Regional Councils should advance the standardization of these emergency kits and the equipping of local authorities with them, thereby enhancing preparedness for emergent responses to special populations within their jurisdictions. It is further advised that the Ministry of Defense, through the Home Front Command, disseminate guidelines and recommendations to local authorities regarding the type of vibrating bracelets that are compatible with its app and the manner in which they can be purchased. The relevant bodies should also consider the procurement and organized distribution of these bracelets.
-  It is recommended that the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council distribute vibrating bracelets to its hearing-impaired residents to enhance accessibility to alerts from the Home Front Command. The municipalities of **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, and Rishon LeTsiyon**, which have distributed such bracelets, should monitor their usage and provide assistance and guidance as necessary to support the hearing-impaired population during emergencies, thereby ensuring that expenditures are utilized effectively and do not result in waste.
-  It is advisable for the **Bat Yam** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council to publish comprehensive guidelines for special populations within their jurisdiction, akin to the guidelines issued by the other local authorities examined in the emergency information booklets.
-  The Office of the State Comptroller points out that advancements in technology are prompting alterations in the modes of communication between residents and local authorities. For instance, facsimile machines, once prevalent for document transmission, are now infrequently utilized; thus, the communication methods laid down in Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Service Accessibility Adjustments) Regulations, 2013, should be adapted to reflect these technological changes. It is recommended that the Ministry of Justice promote a draft aimed at updating the regulations for the Minister's endorsement and revise the list of measures required to ensure accessibility of telephone services at the emergency hotline.
-  The **Nahariya** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council should conduct specialized seminars for training the municipal hotline employees to deliver accessible



public services to persons with disabilities, as mandated by the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Service Accessibility Adjustments) Regulations, 2013. The municipalities of **Bat Yam**, **Nahariya**, and **Rishon LeTsiyon**, along with the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council, should guarantee that their designated accessible intake facilities conform to the stipulations of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility of Population Evacuation and Intake Operations in an Emergency) Regulations, 2022. Moreover, it is recommended that the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council identify an accessible local intake facility within a property under its jurisdiction; should no such facility be available, assistance should be sought from adjacent local authorities to identify a suitable building.



It is recommended that the Ministry of Health continue to engage with the local authorities in order to establish power generation centers within their jurisdictions or to coordinate with neighboring local authorities the operation of such centers for patients reliant on life-sustaining electricity during prolonged power outages.



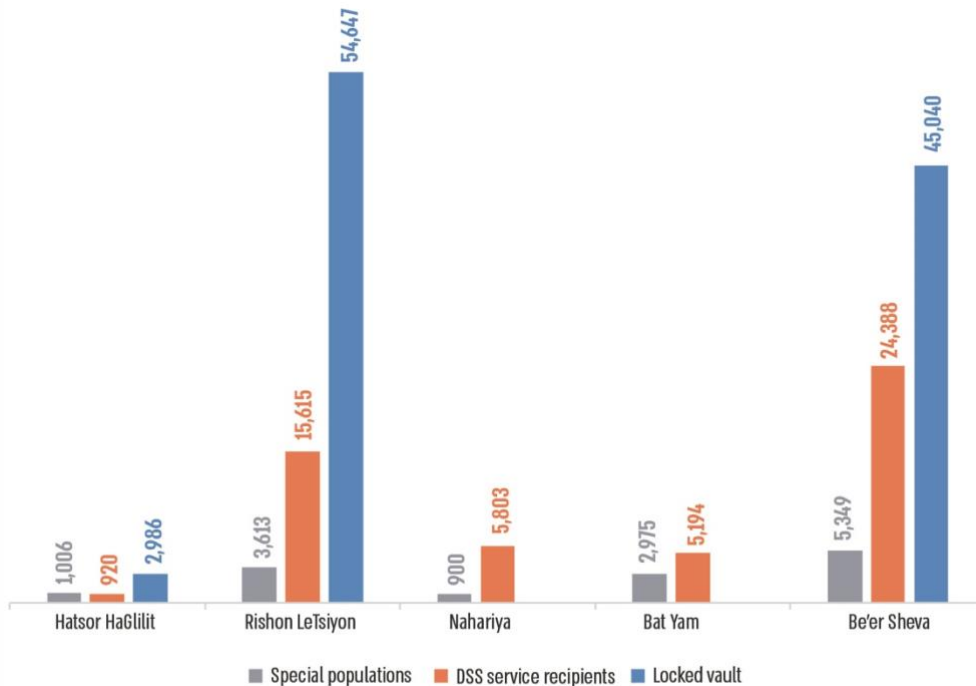
The **Bat Yam** Municipality should take measures to establish an available generation center within its territory or, at a minimum, collaborate with surrounding local authorities to provide emergency services to patients with special medical needs during extended power outages. The **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council should promptly finalize the preparation of the power generation center, in order to meet the needs of patients requiring life-sustaining electricity during protracted power outages.



The public participation survey conducted across 111 local authorities nationwide disclosed limited awareness of the availability within local authorities of power generation centers, whose function includes providing energy solutions for patients with special needs during prolonged power outages. It is therefore recommended that subsequent to the establishment of power generation centers within the jurisdictions of these authorities, the authorities publicize their locations and the services provided therein for their residents. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Federation of Local Authorities and the Israel Regional Government Center, endeavor to raise awareness on this matter and publicize the locations of the centers and the services they offer.



Numerical Data on the Special Populations in the Local Authorities Examined at the Beginning of the War*



According to the reports of the local authorities examined, processed by the Office of the State Comptroller.

- * The **Bat Yam** Municipality did not have Locked Vault data from the beginning of the war; the **Nahariya** Municipality did not use the Locked Vault data; special populations include persons with disabilities and senior citizens, both those receiving welfare and those who do not; it should be clarified that all welfare recipients include additional people who do not fall into the categories of persons with disabilities or senior citizens.



Examples from the Public Participation Survey Conducted Across 111 Local Authorities Nationwide on the Issue of the Lack of Response and Treatment During the War



I have no access, not during war and not when there isn't a war. There is no awareness of accessibility for the hearing-impaired, there is no understanding of the handicap.



Accessible 'miguniot' (concrete protective shelters) must be installed and the homes of senior citizens must be made safe.



Sleeping arrangements in public shelters must be arranged for senior citizens or persons with disabilities who do not have protection.



I expect the municipality to contact and check on us and see what we need, as well as send a social worker to see what's going on with us.



I expect to receive, at least, a phone call inquiring about our needs and how we are coping.



It wouldn't harm to check to see if we are alive.



Summary

In 2022, approximately 1.1 million persons with various disabilities resided in Israel, constituting roughly 11.5% of the total population, alongside 1.2 million senior citizens aged 65 and over, representing about 12.5% of the total population. The challenges encountered by these groups during regular times become more complex during emergencies. Additionally, specific populations, such as hearing-impaired individuals and senior citizens taking medication, may not require continuous assistance under normal conditions, yet require such support in times of crisis. Local authorities are pivotal in addressing the needs of these populations and ensuring their safety and continued functioning during wartime.

The audit revealed that prior to the onset of war, the Ministry of Defense had not finalized the enactment of the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (Database for Assistance to Persons with Disabilities in an Emergency) Regulations, 2024. Furthermore, as of the audit end date, the Ministry had yet to complete the enactment process for the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Critical and Essential Needs in an Emergency) Regulations, which were designed to establish protocols for delivering essential services to persons with disabilities in emergency situations and enable the local authorities to make relevant arrangements in advance. Deficiencies were identified concerning the establishment of a comprehensive and updated database by the Ministry of Welfare regarding the population that may require assistance during emergencies. This inadequacy persisted despite the fact that the limitations of the Locked Vault had already been known prior to the war, and as early as 2021 the State Comptroller had pointed out the absence of a unified and up-to-date database on persons with disabilities. Consequently, the development of such a database by local authorities at the war's outset required the various sources, and supplement missing information – a process requiring time and human resources, both of which are in any case limited in emergency situations.

Deficiencies were also identified pertaining to the regulation of emergency assistance for special populations prior to the war (the **Nahariya** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council); an absence of references in municipal procedures to special populations not known to the Departments of Social Services (the **Be'er Sheva** and **Bat Yam** municipalities) and the manner of contacting them (the **Nahariya** Municipality); the mapping of gaps in protection measures for special populations (the **Be'er Sheva** and **Bat Yam** municipalities); a lack of organized documentation pertaining to the emotional support provided by the authorities (the **Bat Yam** Municipality and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council); and an absence of records indicating the existence of a lessons-learned process (the **Bat Yam** and **Nahariya** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council).

Notably, all the local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva**, **Bat Yam**, **Nahariya**, **Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit Local Council**) undertook efforts at the onset of the war to complete the Locked Vault data and to develop an updated database



concerning special populations, as well as to identify populations in need of assistance and establish contact with them. Since the outbreak of the war, the local authorities have sought to assess the needs of special populations and to address them in areas such as protection, emotional support, occupational and leisure frameworks, food and medical aid, and the distribution of vibrating bracelets for individuals with hearing impairments. However, the solutions offered during the war by the local authorities have been on an ad hoc basis, addressing specific needs identified among the special populations.

According to the majority of respondents in the public participation survey undertaken by the Office of the State Comptroller amongst 380 persons with disabilities and senior citizens, who were not a representative sample, from 111 local authorities, the local authorities had failed to adequately address the needs of the special populations in their jurisdictions (70%) and had not made sufficient contact with them (78%). Additionally, it was demonstrated that the satisfaction level of the special populations regarding the assistance received from the authorities during the war was low. The data collected from this nationwide public participation survey underscores the significance of addressing the needs of special populations and the imperative for the relevant government ministries and local authorities to enhance their treatment, exposure, and accessibility of services to these populations during emergencies.

Given the vulnerability of special populations during wartime, it is highly important that government ministries and local authorities take measures in advance for identifying these populations, assessing their needs and preparing appropriate responses. Such measures are required to improve preparedness for emergencies and reduce response times in offering assistance. The Ministry of Welfare should initiate the establishment of a comprehensive database to comply with the timelines outlined in the Database Regulations, thus facilitating contact with persons with disabilities and assisting them during emergencies. Furthermore, it should expeditiously evaluate the existence of a legal framework necessary for the creation of a database of senior citizens who may require assistance in such situations. Additionally, the Ministry of Welfare should regulate how local authorities assess and address the needs of special populations in their jurisdictions during emergencies, as well as how they supervise and monitor the efficacy of the responses provided to these populations, either directly or through intermediaries. It is advisable for the Ministry of Welfare to centralize all pertinent and current information required by the Departments of Social Services for optimal operation during emergencies, including data on individuals with specific medical needs, and ensure its continuous availability. The Ministry of Defense should finalize the formulation of the Essential Needs Regulations intended to establish frameworks for delivering necessary services to persons with disabilities during emergencies. Moreover, it is recommended that the Ministry of Defense, in collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare and the Federation of Local Authorities, delineate the emergency kits requisite for addressing the needs of special populations during emergencies and define the responsibility for their creation and upkeep.

The Office of the State Comptroller advises that the Ministry of Interior, as the overseer of local authorities, in conjunction with the Ministry of Welfare, which is responsible for the Locked Vault data, provide guidance to local authorities on the sources of information that



will enable the establishment and updating of databases regarding special populations in their jurisdiction both during regular times and emergency situations, ensuring that comprehensive and updated information may be extracted. It should also instruct all local authorities to consider utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a tool for making decisions relating to the geographical distribution of measures at their disposal for assisting special populations during emergencies.

The local authorities examined (the **Be'er Sheva, Bat Yam, Nahariya, Rishon LeTsiyon** municipalities, and the **Hatsor HaGlilit** Local Council) should rectify all the deficiencies disclosed in this report, to enhance their preparedness for emergency situations and to reduce their response times in assisting special populations within their jurisdictions during emergencies. They must also implement systematic documentation of their actions, including the recording of the number of individuals receiving assistance and the scope and costs associated with the aid provided, thereby allowing for regular oversight of treatment and support processes.

In light of the findings generated from the nationwide public participation survey, some of which do not align with the findings of the audit of the local authorities examined, these authorities should intensify their efforts to proactively engage with special populations and address their needs during emergencies, thereby improving the quality of service rendered to these populations and fulfilling their obligations to them, particularly in wartime.