



— **State Comptroller of Israel** Special Report —

# **The National Response to Foreign Influence in the Digital Sphere**

**Abstract**



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# Foreword

Foreign influence comprises the full range of illegitimate actions carried out by a foreign actor with the aim of covertly harming a state, to the extent of fundamentally undermining its sovereignty. In recent years, the use of the digital sphere in general, and of social media in particular, for the purpose of exerting foreign influence over public opinion has increased. In Israel, a growing number of attempts by hostile actors, led primarily by Iran, have been identified in recent years. These efforts are intended to influence public opinion in Israel in order to create political instability, undermine social cohesion, deepen existing divisions within Israeli society, and even instill fear and panic among the public. These attempts have accompanied periods of war (such as the Swords of Iron War), social protests, and even elections to the Knesset.

This report, which addresses the response to the threat of foreign influence in the digital sphere, including during election periods, presents a troubling picture indicating a lack of alignment between the threat and its escalation on the one hand, and the governmental response on the other. It also identifies significant deficiencies that have remained unaddressed for years. As of March 2026, the State of Israel has no comprehensive national policy for addressing this threat, nor has any authority been designated to lead the interagency governmental effort in this field. The report also identifies challenges relating to monitoring that hinder effective action, as well as gaps in education and in raising public awareness of the threat. In addition,

the report finds that despite the growing risk and the heightened potential for harm during election periods, the bulk of the preparations for addressing this issue are undertaken only shortly before elections.

Although this report focuses on protecting the State's citizens from foreign influence efforts in the digital sphere, it is important to emphasize that these efforts are directed not only at Israelis but also at the international community. They have the potential to cause serious harm to Israel's standing, legitimacy and actions, and even to permeate future Israeli public discourse.

It should also be borne in mind that the threat posed by foreign influence in the digital sphere is only one of several arenas in which attempts at foreign influence are conducted. This underscores the need for a comprehensive examination of the issue of foreign influence in all its dimensions and for the establishment of a clear directive, while giving due consideration to the buildup of necessary force and resources. This should be done to ensure the resilience of the State of Israel against this far-reaching threat.

Technological developments, particularly the artificial intelligence tool, are intensifying the challenge of addressing foreign influence in the digital sphere and require an immediate response. Rectification of the deficiencies and implementation of the recommendations set out in this report are essential for preventing a situation in which the Israeli public remains vulnerable and exposed to foreign influence in

the digital sphere, especially during sensitive periods such as times of crisis and emergency, when the potential for harm escalates significantly. The need for this is further reinforced by the immediate challenge already on the horizon—the forthcoming election campaign.

In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of the Office of the State Comptroller, in the Division of Government Ministries and Institutions and the Staff Division, for their hard work in conducting dedicated, professional, and thorough review and audit processes and in publishing the report presented herein.

We will continue to pray and hope for the success of the Israel Defense Forces and the security establishment, for the recovery of the wounded, and for peaceful and tranquil days ahead.



**Matanyahu Englman**

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