



June 15, 2020

To:

Member of Knesset Amir Ohana
Minister of Public Security

Major General Moti Cohen
Acting Police Commissioner

Dear all,

Re: **Over-policing certain populations**

We, the undersigned organizations, are acting to promote the rights of people belonging to various minority populations that have recently been harmed by the Israel Police.

Our appeal follows the incident in which Iyad al-Hallaq, an Arab teenager with disabilities, was killed while on his way to the day center that he attended on a daily basis. This tragic event joins a long list of incidents that have taken place over the past two years, including police killing Yehuda Biadega, Solomon Teka, and Shirel Habura, and injuring Yanki Rosenberg, the 10-year-old Zissy Margaliot, Jafar Farah, and many more. Despite the differences in the various circumstances of each case, they are all typified by the exertion of excessive or unnecessary violence toward minority populations: Arabs; Ethiopian immigrants; people of Mizrahi origin; the ultra-Orthodox; refugees and migrant workers; and people with disabilities. Some of them belong to more than one of the groups listed, which places them in even greater danger.

The incidents noted above are merely the tip of the iceberg, and reflect but a few events that were documented and made headlines. Over the years, we have repeatedly appealed to generations of security ministers and police commissioners, yet to our dismay, not enough has been done to prevent further incidents. The Israel Police investigate each difficult case as an isolated incident, without addressing the overarching problem: certain populations in Israel are exposed to over-policing and selective enforcement as a result of biases toward them and/or a lack of professional knowledge on suitable conduct.

As a result, police do not operate systematically or methodically to contend with the phenomenon of police violence. Even in situations wherein the Israeli Police are working to change the current situation, they do so on an unsystematic case-by-case basis. For example, during trainings for police conduct toward people with disabilities, which are both short and superficial, only about 60 researchers partake annually. The State Comptroller's Report on the

topic also noted grave failures in the field (in protecting the rights of disabled people during legal proceedings, Annual Report 69B, 2019).

Biases and stereotypes toward different populations constitute human tendencies that do not exclude police officers. Scientific research indicates that people judge others on the characteristics of the group to which they belong, and are influenced by prejudice and psychological and social preferences toward certain groups. Social experiments conducted in Israel and around the world demonstrate how the same exact action may be perceived in a completely different sense among bystanders and police officers, when carried out by individuals belonging to majority groups as opposed to minorities. Attributing criminality to a person due to their affiliation with a certain population (profiling) is not a phenomenon unique to Israel, but rather challenges enforcement entities internationally. The Israel Police must learn from the experience acquired amid efforts to counter this phenomenon. The vast power granted to police requires that they use it professionally, proportionately, and uninfluenced by bias and prejudice.

The current circumstances may not remain in place, and require the Israel Police to act immediately to profoundly and significantly change the situation, so as to exercise their power in an equitable and unbiased manner, without depriving human life. The following are a number of suggestions to further the topic:

1. **Recognition:** First, it is necessary to recognize that the series of incidents are an indication of a systemic problem that requires comprehensive care. We may no longer make do with periodic investigations of isolated cases, and personal conclusions drawn about the officers who acted during certain incidents. These incidents must be addressed systemically, and the reasons that give way to such disastrous outcomes must be uprooted.
2. **National plan of action to bring an end to over-policing toward certain populations:** Make the issue a top priority in the coming years, and allocate designated budgets. The Israel Police must appoint a professional team to address the matter and build a detailed plan of action, including a timetable for its implementation and ongoing monitoring following its execution. The plan of action must include practical steps to promote the matter, such as:
 - Establish indicators to assess the scope of the phenomenon including zone/station/officers, and set measurable goals to reduce the phenomenon;
 - Systematic data collection according to indicators and segmentation into zone/station/population, and more;
 - Training program for all police officers who come in contact with citizens: from raising the general professional level (through training on proper use of alternative means to weapons, for example) and meeting with people from certain populations. Establish a target date to train all officers in Israel, with a set schedule for periodic supplemental training on the topic following the conclusion of the course;

- Immediate transfer of officers suspected of violence or conduct manifesting in abusive behavior toward any minority group whatsoever to a role that does not include public contact, until an inquiry into the complaint is conducted;
 - Establish a database to include systematic data collection on police violence and segmentation of data on exercising authority per origin/nationality/race, etc.;
 - Full transparency and swift unequivocal addressal of police officers who behave unprofessionally: the immediate transfer of suspected officers to roles that do not entail public contact until an inquiry into the complaint is conducted, along with monitoring steps taken against those found guilty;
 - Appeal to professional entities if and when an individual with disabilities is found to be involved in an incident.
- 3. Cooperation with the relevant population:** An understanding must be established regarding the need for broad cooperation, arrangements, development, and implementation of plans to resolve the problem, including organizations that represent the various groups, community leaders, and public representatives. The undersigned organizations have extensive experience and wide-ranging knowledge on the affected populations, materials that may be put toward immediate use, as well as strong, deep connections with these populations. We would be glad to offer assistance as needed.

We will make note that we are aware that an inter-ministerial committee has recently been established to examine the issue of police violence in relation to people with disabilities. We welcome this, though wish to emphasize that this committee does not address any of the items detailed in this letter. The committee is designed to contend with a specific population through addressing the necessary professional requirements for police interaction. In this letter, we wish to shine a spotlight on a more widespread phenomenon that requires a different systemic response, as detailed herein.

We seek to conduct an urgent joint meeting to address the issue extensively and formulate immediate modes of action to prevent the next tragedy.

Contact: Naama Lerner, Director of Community Outreach Department, Bizchut

Respectfully,

ASSAF - Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel - Social Worker Tali Ehrenthal

Avnei Derech (Milestones for Life) - Inbal Vortman-Shoham

Association of Ethiopian Jews - Adv. Shlomit Bukaya

Ahava - Dr. Dafna Azarzar

Itach-Ma'aki - Women Lawyers for Social Justice - Adv. Neta Levy

Alut - Michael Zatz

Achlah - Quality of Life for People with Special Needs -

Israel Elwyn - Margalit Piller

AlManarah - Adv. Abbass Abbass

Organization of Families that Suffer From Dual Diagnosis - Mihal Waldiger
 Enosh - Dr. Hela Hadas
 ACI - The Autistic Community of Israel - Sola Shelly and Ronen Gil
 I'LAM - Arab Center for Media Freedom, Development and Research - Kholod Massalha
 Effie Asperger - Aryeh Sivan
 Bizchut - Naama Lerner and Dr. Idit Saragusti
 Beit Issie Shapiro - Yoav Kraiem
 The Association for Civil Rights in Israel - Adv. Anne Sucio and Attorney Debbie Gild-Hayo
 The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants - Dr. Ayelet Oz
 The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel - Adv. Noa Levy
 The Arab Center for Alternative Planning - Samer Sweid
 The Reform Movement's Racism Crisis Center - Attorney Uri Narov
 The Israel Center for the Blind - Nati Bialystock-Cohen
 The Disability Rights Clinic in Memory of Prof. Yaakov Neeman, Bar Ilan University - Dr. Maya Gefen, Atty., Adv. Roni Rothler
 The Rights of People with Disabilities Clinic, The Clinical Legal Education Center, Faculty of Law, Hebrew University of Jerusalem - Adv. Ron Derech
 Clinic for the Rights of the Palestinian-Arab Minority, Faculty of Law, University of Haifa - Dr. Ilan Saban
 The Clinic for the Study of Multiculturalism and Diversity - Adv. Nasser Odeh
 Yated - Ilil Leder
 Guidance and Assistance for Special Families - Nili Raymond
 Link 20
 Mahapach-Taghir - Fidaa Tabony Nara and Nurit Barak
 Ma'agalei Shema - Mili Wasserstrom
 The Mossawa Center - Advocacy Center for Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel - Suha Salman Mousa
 The Israeli Anti-discrimination Legal Center - Yifat Bitton
 Disabled, Not Half a Human Being - Alex Fridman
 Women Against Violence - Naila Awad
 Sikkuy - The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality - Amjad Shbita and Ofer Dagan
 Abraham Initiatives - Dr. Thabet Abu Rass and Amnon Be'eri Sulitzeanu
 The Association of Mental Health Families - Dr. Hagit Gur Ziv
 Health Forum - Leading Toward People with Disabilities' Health at Beit Issie Shapiro - Osnat Yehezkel-Lahat
 Sharon Special Needs Forum - Merle Barnett
 Tzahi - Merle Barnett
 Special Families Coalition - Atty. Revital Lan Cohen
 All Rights - Yulia Ben Moshe
 Ruderman Family Foundation - Shira Ruderman
 Keshet - The Home of Special Families - Hagit Gross
 Tismotek - Rivka Morowitz

Copied:

Mr. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State

Member of Knesset Avi Nissenkorn, Minister of Justice

Member of Knesset Itzik Shmuli, Minister of Labor and Social Welfare

Dr. Avihai Mandelblit, Attorney General

Mr. Matanyahu Englman, State Comptroller

Mr. Avremi Torem, Commissioner of Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities - Ministry of Justice

Adv. Aweka (Kobi) Zena, Coordinator of the National Anti-Racism Unit

Mrs. Merav Lisovsky, Anti-Racism Coordinator, Ministry of Public Security

Mrs. Yifat Shklar - Anti-Racism Coordinator, Israel Police