



March 29, 2020

To:

Commissioner Asher Vaknin
Acting Chief of Prison Service
Israel Prison Service
lavineo@moc.gov.il

Mr. Oren Lavine
Director of Postal Administration
Ministry of Communications
ips@mail.gov.il

Dear all,

URGENT

Regarding: **Deposits to Inmates' Israel Post Postal Bank Accounts**

1. We are hereby contacting you to demand that you urgently update procedures regarding deposits made by family members to the accounts of incarcerated people, which are managed by the Israel Post Postal Bank, to reflect the restrictions on movement imposed upon the entire population due to the coronavirus crisis.
2. Many incarcerated people and their family members have appealed to us in recent days expressing great distress over the harm caused to prisoners due to the inability to continue depositing money into their Postal Bank bank accounts, as a result of restrictions on movement and fear of contagion upon any public outing.
3. At this time, any family member or individual attempting to deposit money into a prisoner's Postal Bank account must **do so physically** at either the Post Office branch or during a visit at the detention facility, in order to complete the deposit. Additionally, following the imposition of a monthly cap per prisoner, families are compelled to deposit a sum of money **each month** so as to not exceed the limit established in the regulation "Deposits Made by Family or Others to a Prisoner's Account" (no. 01-1008).
4. Recently, the capacity to deposit money into an inmate's canteen account has become nearly impossible: in accordance with the Emergency Regulations (the Novel Coronavirus - Restrictions on Activities) 2020-5780, as of March 25, 2020, all people are forbidden from public outings (Article 2(a)) aside from exceptional cases; family visits have been entirely banned by the Emergency Regulations as of March 15, 2020, and in accordance with the Minister of Public Security's



- declaration on March 17, 2020, public transportation has been drastically reduced over the past few days.
5. Incarcerated individuals require the deposited funds during regular times, and far more so during this crisis. These funds may go toward obtaining basic goods such as toilet paper and soap, and for supplemental food like cans of tuna, vegetables, and tahini, as well as purchasing cigarettes. Additionally, since money may not be deposited, a prisoner cannot purchase calling cards and their ability to speak with family is thus restricted – such communication is essential amid these challenging days of uncertainty.
 6. Indeed, recognizing that inmates' capacity to purchase canteen products must be made as easily accessible as possible during this period, the Israel Prison Service (IPS) approved the decision to "increase the monthly quota on criminal prisoners' canteen purchases by 200 NIS" (as declared by the IPS spokesperson on March 15, 2020).
 7. The above makes clear that **the current situation compels prisoners' family members to endanger their health** in order to make deposits into Postal Bank accounts, thus deeming this option completely inaccessible for many.
 8. The following actions must thus be urgently taken:
 - a. **Enable online deposits** to a prisoner's Israel Post bank account. In our current technological age, the option for online deposits is a basic demand that must be met regardless of states of emergency. Until this change may be technically implemented, an alternative solution must be found that will allow for at-home fiscal transfers.
 - b. **Increase the monthly cap on deposits** to minimize one's necessity to leave the home to make deposits. Needless to note, this change does not require an adjustment of the monthly amount that inmates are permitted to use.
 9. We appreciate your urgent reply.

Respectfully,

Attorney Anne Suciu

CC:

Legal Advisor Yochi Gensin, State Attorney, Israel Prison Service