



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

The Office of the Deputy Attorney General (International Law)

Date: May 28 2024

Re: Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: gender stereotypes and negative social norms

(A/RES/75/161 and A/RES/77/193)

1. The Government of Israel (GOI) implements a top-down approach to combatting violence against women by training the decision-making echelons to recognize, combat and eliminate gender-stereotyping or violence against women. Similarly, the GOI complements executive changes by supporting early stage, bottom-up interventions, by empowering future generations to reject gender-stereotypes or violence and providing comprehensive responses to victims and perpetrators of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Legislation and legal Amendments (as of August 1, 2022, to date):

2. In October 2022, comprehensive new regulations entered into force pursuant to Section 4(9) to the *Communications Law* concerning the filtering of offensive content.
3. In March 2023, the Minister of Communication established an Inter-Ministerial Team on Protection of Children on the Internet, towards finding innovative solutions for filtering harmful content on mobile devices. The team's goal is to fight bullying online and offensive publications to which children and youth are exposed.
4. Amendment No. 18 of 2022 (Temporary Provision) to *Prevention of Domestic Violence Law*, stipulates that if a Court granted a protection order, it may also instruct the person obligated by that order, to provide an obligation to receive treatment by an authority determined by the Court. The Court will not order the provision of an obligation to receive treatment unless being served with professional assessment report by a social worker, regarding the suitability the abovementioned person to such treatment and that he/she understands the conditions and essence of the treatment. The Court will also be presented with a report concerning the treatment's progress. The amendment is temporarily in place for 5 years until 2027.
5. Amendment No. 19 of 2023 (Temporary Provision) to the *Prevention of Domestic Violence Law*, defines conditions to be considered by the courts prior to the issuance of

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a restraining order enforced through technological supervision and determines the exceptions to these conditions, including where such supervision could lead to a threat to the victim's life. Also, the amendment establishes the creation of a technological supervision unit within the IPS. The amendment is temporary provision for 3 years and it will enter into force in 2024 until 2027.

Legal training

6. The Institute of Legal Training for Attorneys and Legal Advisers in the Ministry of Justice (the "Institute") conducts multiple seminars, courses, and vocational trainings for hundreds of practitioners, to raise the awareness of attorneys and legal advisors regarding the human rights issues affecting, *inter alia*, women and girls. Recent trainings have focused on "eliminating Domestic violence (December 2023)" and "Online sexual offences (June (2023))".
7. The Institute of Advanced Judicial Studies for Judges provides trainings and advanced education courses for judges and registrars and holds lectures, seminars and courses on various human rights issues, including women's rights, for judges of all instances. Hereinafter are several notable examples: in November 2022, the institute held a three-day seminar entitled "Gender is for everyone – questions relating to gender in life and in judicial proceedings", and in December 2022, additional two advanced one-day seminars were also held on victims of sexual offences. In February 2023, a three-day seminar was conducted on victims of sexual offences, and additional four advanced one-day seminars were held on this topic (March, May, July and November of 2023), one seminar was held on domestic violence (September 2023), and in addition, a one-day seminar was held on of trafficking in persons and modern slavery (October 2023).

The Civil Service (CS)

8. The Gender Equality Division under the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has prioritized gender-mainstreaming and the prevention of sexual harassment to ensure a safe organizational climate and protect all CS employees. As such, gender equality supervisors are charged with preventing sexual harassment in the various Government Ministries, local authorities and units, collecting initial complaints, accompanying and assisting the complainants throughout the procedure and serving as the conduit between the complainants and the management. The Department held quarterly refresher training sessions for gender equality supervisors regarding sexual harassment prevention regulations, under the guidance of the disciplinary department at the CSC.

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The Department, in cooperation with the Senior Learning and Organizational Welfare Division, also implemented a mandatory digital training course for all Civil Service employees on the prevention of sexual harassment in general and specifically in the corporate digital system. As a result, 2023 saw a decrease in the number of applications regarding sexual harassment at the Civil Service Commission (CSC). In 2023, the disciplinary department received 377 inquiries on issues of sexual harassment and sexual offenses (compared to 391 inquiries in 2022).

Combatting GBV at Early-Stages

9. The Unit for Gender Equality, under the Ministry of Education (MoE), is responsible for identifying gaps in gender equality and gender-mainstreaming in the education system and guiding various other units under the Ministry in assimilating a gender-based perspective. The Unit leads training courses and seminars, which over 87,000 teachers have attended, encouraging teachers to examine their own views, conceptions and feelings on gender issues. In recent years, the Unit has lead programs for pupils to break gender-stereotypes, including programs encouraging girl's leadership ("Shelach") and programs encouraging women's participation in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) - thereby transforming social norms and ensuring women's economic and decision-making empowerment.
10. The MoE has also prioritized preventing violence in schools, including sexual violence. The updated Director General Guideline No. 394 titled "Creating an optimal educational climate and coping with high-risk incidents at educational institutions" (28.5.23) includes guidelines to address violent events, and grants additional powers to educational staff to combat bullying at regular educational institutions, special educational institutions, and online, focusing on early-stage intervention, including in kindergartens. It also explicitly deals with sexual harassment, including verbal and digital violence of a sexual nature.

Combatting Online Violence

11. The Ministry of National Security (MoNS) runs a Child Online Protection Bureau Hotline (Operated by Police Unit 105) for the prevention of violence and crime against children and youth online accessible through toll-free phone calls country-wide. The Hotline addresses all offensive and abusive behaviours against children, committed online, including sexual abuse and prostitution. The calls are answered by Police officers who received specific training, with the support of an inter-ministerial "Partnership Desk", which ensures victims (and offenders, as needed) are supported,

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accompanied and treated in an appropriate and comprehensive manner. The hotline responds to criminal incidents as well as to injuries and incidents that do not amount to criminal offenses, and which until the establishment of the Hotline were not given this type of response.

The following part of the reply to the report was sourced by the Israeli Mission to the UN in accordance with information sent in by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security (MoWaSS) and additional official resources.

The October 7 attacks

On October 7, thousands of Hamas terrorists invaded Israel by land, sea, and air, in an unprovoked planned attack. While indiscriminately firing thousands of rockets on Israeli cities, Hamas systematically massacred, mutilated, raped and abducted Israeli men and women, including girls, adolescent girls, and babies. Over 1200 persons were murdered on that day, more than 5,500 maimed, and over 240 hostages were abducted, including women and girls, adolescent girls, babies, persons with disabilities, and older persons. The crimes were targeting civilians, and had occurred in multiple civilian locations, including on the sites of festivals, such as the music festival “Nova”.

During the October 7 attacks people were shot, often at close range, burnt alive in their homes as they tried to hide in their safe rooms, gunned down or killed by grenades in bomb shelters where they sought refuge, and hunted down on the Nova music festival site as well as in the fields and roads adjacent to the festival ground. SRSV-SVC and her team found reasonable grounds to believe that CRSV occurred during the 7 October attacks, including rape and gang rape¹. Patterns of undressing and restraining victims were also identified, as the team found several fully naked or partially naked bodies from the waist down were recovered – mostly women – with hands tied and shot multiple times, often in the head.

From photos and videos published online by either the terrorists themselves or by bystanders, the October 7 violations also included the public display of captives, both dead and alive, of both women and men.

To this date (May 28 2024), 125 hostages are still being held by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza. Among those, 17 women and 2 babies. Israel has not yet received a confirmation that the humanitarian assistance which also included specific medications for

¹ SRSV-SVC report, dated 29 January 2024: <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf>

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specific hostages suffering from chronic diseases, had reached the hostages in need. According to the SRSV-SVC report, there is clear and convincing information that some hostages have been subjected to various forms of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and sexualized torture and sexualized cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and it also has reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing.

Survivors of the October 7 attacks, of which at least 3800 are young persons who survived the Nova massacre, are recovering from physical, sexual and mental trauma. The widespread and difficult consequences of the terror attack have required the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security (MoWaSS) to adapt its services and work to the new reality on the ground.

As of October 7, 2023, the following actions were taken by MoWaSS:

- Immediately after the outbreak of the war, a dedicated budget supplement was allocated for the treatment of victims of sexual violence, mainly women including young women, as a result of the war in the sum of four (4) Million NIS (1.1 Million USD), in order to add 32 therapists specializing in sexual trauma at the dedicated treatment centers throughout the country. In addition, in March 2024, the MoWaSS allocated an additional budget increase of 6 Million NIS (1.65 Million USD) intended for the expansion of the treatment provided for victims of sexual violence whose condition worsened as a result of the war. The MoWaSS provided therapists at the treatment centers with specialized training for treatment of sexual violence victims at times of war, in preparation for receiving patients who have undergone sexual violence in the war. A dedicated briefing was written for the treatment of the returning abductees who have undergone sexual violence, the briefing refers to the entire treatment both in the emotional, social and family aspects.
- The Gender Equality Division at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) - During the Iron Swords war, the Gender Equality Division worked in order to assist and accompany the Gender Equality Supervisors in fulfilling their role, along with providing tools, knowledge, best practices and practical replies on a wide variety of issues, including on matters of parental resilience, organizational resilience, and coping with trauma. Hereinafter are several tools implemented by the Division:
 - From the very first days of the hostilities, the Division's staff began holding a round of conversations with gender equality supervisors in ministries and hospitals in order to assess and provide initial assistance in dealing with significant challenges due to the security situation.

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- Following from lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Division carried out a needs identification and mapping process, in which a questionnaire was sent to the community of supervisors, with the aim of providing an optimal, accurate and adapted responses to the supervisors, government ministries and hospitals staffs.
- Webinar on identifying and dealing with trauma for all CS employees in cooperation with the Government Medical Centers Division of the Ministry of Health, was also conducted. This online meeting focused on mental first aid in an emergency with the aim of assisting CS employees to identify personal distress and help themselves, as well as how to recognize signs of distress among my children, Family members or colleagues.
- According to Government decision 1459 dated 26 February 2024, the MoWaSS led the establishment of a cross-sectorial and inter-Ministerial mechanism, dedicated to supporting young survivors of the festivals through recovery and rehabilitation processes, by focusing on, inter alia, psycho-social support and trauma, and re-integration in society and in the labor sector.
- Development of age- and gender-sensitive professional guidelines to the treatment of returned abductees from captivity.