



State of Israel

State Comptroller of Israel

Special Report

The Construction and
Safeguarding of the Prime
Ministers' Residences and the
Prime Minister's Office



April 2024 | Jerusalem



Foreword

The State of Israel has been engaged for a decade in an attempt to carry out a project whose main purpose is the construction of new buildings for the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister's Residence, to provide the Prime Minister and the leadership hubs security and functional infrastructure that will ensure their survival and continuity of activities in routine and emergency. The project, in its initial form, failed, and a decision to initiate an alternative project has not yet been made.

Given this background, extensive and immediate construction and security measures were required at the Prime Minister's official residence on Balfour Street in Jerusalem, to ensure that the residence meets the security forces' security and safety requirements. Slow and faulty implementation of these construction and protection works, since 2018, has led to a challenging situation in three aspects: first, equipment purchased for the official residence, at millions of NIS, has been damaged as a result of delays in the implementation of the works, mainly up to the evacuation of the official residence in July 2021; This equipment is no longer usable. Second, due to the aforementioned delay, the Prime Ministers who served in the years 2021–2023 were unable to reside in the official residence, and thus the State incurred an expense of about NIS 56 million in adapting their private residences (in Caesarea, Ra'anana, Tel Aviv, and Azza Street in Jerusalem) to the security and safety requirements. And third, the outbreak of the war on October 7, 2023 raised the problem of the Prime Minister residing in his private residence in Jerusalem, as according to professional factors, this place of residence is not suitable as the Prime Minister's residence at this time.

The findings of this audit report reflect a persistent weakness in the Prime Minister's Office over the course of a decade in decision-making on the matter – a weakness that led to significant expenses on security and construction in private residences belonging to prime ministers, and resulted in inefficiency and a waste of public funds. Furthermore, the construction in private properties funded by the state treasury creates unwanted mixing between the public and private spheres.

To address the deficiencies outlined in the audit report, the Prime Minister's Office should approve a project to establish a building for the Prime Minister's Office and residence, thus providing the Prime Minister with a suitable residence, considering safety, security, and the safeguarding of public funds. In this context, the audit findings highlight the need to reconsider the suitability of the Prime Minister's private residence in Jerusalem as an alternative to the official residence, and instead consider acquiring or renting a building for this purpose.

And above all, looking to the future, the audited bodies, especially the incumbent Prime Minister and future prime ministers, have a duty to ensure that principles of efficiency and



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cost-saving will prevail at the core of the processes for addressing this matter and of decision-making in respect thereof. Action according to these principles is primarily obligated by virtue of ethical and public values.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Matanyahu Engelman".

Matanyahu Engelman

State Comptroller and
Ombudsman of Israel

Jerusalem, April 2024

