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Ministry of Public Security – the Israel Police

**The Israel Police's
Struggle against Illegal
Weapons Possession
and Shootings in Arab
Communities and in
Integrated Communities
– Follow-up Audit**



The Israel Police's Struggle against Illegal Weapons Possession and Shootings in Arab Communities and in Integrated Communities – Follow-up Audit

Background

In August 2018, the State Comptroller published a report entitled "The Israel Police's Fight against Illegal Weapons Possession and Shootings in Arab Communities and in Integrated Communities." The report addressed several issues, including the sources of the weapons, the handling of weapons offenses by police stations, the administration of the Arab society, the "City without Violence" program and more. This is a follow-up report on that report presenting the results of audits of some of the issues discussed in the previous report, as well as additional issues.



Key figures

95

Number of murder victims in the Arab society in 2019 (highest number in the last 7 years), compared to 50 victims in the rest of the population.

70%

Percentage of murders by firearms out of all murders in the Arab society (compared to 22% in the rest of the population).

15,097

Number of victims of crimes against life and limb in the Arab society in 2019 (highest number in the last 6 years).

9,216

Number of shooting incidents in the entire population in 2019. 94% of the suspected shooters are members of the Arab society.

5%

Ratio of indictments filed during cases investigating shootings in 2019 (compared to indictments in 15% of all cases under investigation).

67

Number of Arab local authorities in which security cameras were installed during the "City without Violence" project (out of the 85 Arab local authorities).

47%

Utilization ratio of the program budget for strengthening governance and the rule of law in the Arab society (NIS 597 million were utilized out of the planned utilization of NIS 1,275 million).

562

Number of Muslim police officers recruited within the framework of the Five-Year Program 2016–2020.







Audit actions



From May to October 2020, the State Comptroller performed a follow-up audit in the Ministry of Public Security and in the Israel Police in the following departments and districts: in the Investigations and Intelligence Department, in the Security and Community Policing Department, in the Planning Department and in the northern and central districts. Supplementary examinations were performed in the Training Department and in the Arab Society Administration in the Israel Police, in the Ministry for Community Empowerment and Advancement and in the IDF.








Key findings

-  **The crime rate in the Arab society** – The previous audit found a rise in various criminal offenses in the Arab society, including in the number of shooting incidents. The follow-up audit found that this trend is steadily rising – a 19% rise in 2018 and an 8% rise in 2019 up to a record number of approximately 9,200 shooting incidents in that year. An uptrend of more than 10% also occurred in the number of victims of crimes against life and limb between 2017 and 2019 up to a record number of approximately 15,100 victims. The number of murder victims also reached a record number of 95 in 2019 – despite the efforts by the Ministry of Public Security and the Israel Police to cast a spotlight on this deteriorating situation and combat serious crimes in the Arab society.
-  **Ratio of indictments** – The previous audit found that the ratio of indictments filed for shooting offenses out of all cases under investigation is negligible. The follow-up audit found that this situation is persisting. Between 2017 and 2019, indictments were filed for 3% to 5% of the cases, while the ratio of indictments filed for all cases under police investigation was approximately 15% in 2019.
-  **The impact of weapons collections and seizures on crime** – The actions taken by the police to seize illegal weapons did not stop the uptrend in armed criminal actions in the Arab society, or even slow down this trend. During the national weapons collection campaigns launched by the police in 2017 and in 2019, 15 and 19 weapons, respectively, were collected from Arab communities.
-  **Handling of weapons smuggling across the Jordanian border** – Some of the illegal weapons are being smuggled across the Jordanian border. The Israel Police failed to form a tactical unit to struggle against weapons smuggling across the Jordanian border, even though it raised the argument in its response to the findings of the previous audit that it was having difficulties dealing with weapons smuggling because it lacks such a unit.
-  **The Program for Strengthening Governance and the Rule of Law in the Arab Society (“the Five-Year Program”)** – approximately NIS 597 million were utilized out of the budget for this Five-Year Program. This represents approximately 47% of the budget of approximately NIS 1,275 million that the government resolution stated should be allocated to the program, and thereby impairing the government’s ability to achieve the program’s goals.
-  **Construction of new police stations** – Four out of the eight new police stations constructed by the Israel Police in Arab communities failed to result in any significant increase in the police force, because officers were transferred from existing police



stations operating in the same community prior to the new stations being built. In essence, this only resulted in a reorganization of the police forces operating in these communities.







-  **Weapons smuggling through the crossing points between Judea and Samaria and Israel** – The previous audit found that the security checks at crossing points to detect weapons smuggling were being performed randomly, without any intelligence tips. As a result, there are very few instances of weapons being detected at the crossing points. The follow-up audit found that this situation has not changed, and the crossing points are still an easy channel for smuggling weapons by various means.
-  **No controls over the trading of tools usable as improvised weapons** – The previous audit found that Israel has no controls over the trading of tools usable as improvised weapons. The follow-up audit found that regulation of this matter is still pending.
-  **Delays in resolving the issue of witness protection** – The previous audit found that, since 2016, the Ministry of Public Security and the Witness Protection Authority had not reached any agreement about transferring the responsibility for protecting threatened trial witnesses to the Witness Protection Authority. The follow-up audit found that the situation unchanged and, as a result, many police officers are still being diverted from their primary and regular policing missions – to security details.
-  **No customized policing model or training for interactions with the Arab society** – The Israel Police has not adopted a comprehensive doctrine or model for policing in the Arab society or for the training that is needed relating to police interactions with this society.
-  **Negligible increase in the ratio of Muslim police officers serving in the Israel Police** – Notwithstanding the numerous recruitment campaigns launched in recent years, the ratio of Muslim police officers serving in the Israel Police rose from a mere 2.6% to just 3.4%.



Construction of police stations and recruitment of Muslim police officers – The Israel Police's Five-Year Program for Strengthening Governance and the Rule of Law in the Arab Society, which was formulated in conformity with a government resolution; resulted in the construction of eight police stations and five police substations in Arab communities. In some instances, the stations were constructed despite opposition to their construction. Additionally, there was an increase in the recruitment of Muslim police officers. These efforts may increase the Arab society's confidence in the police and result in improved service to residents.

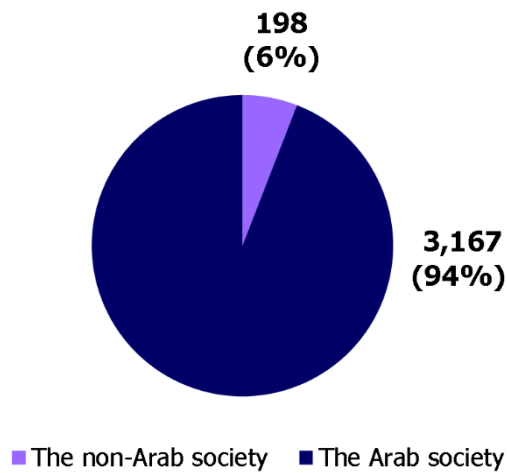


Key recommendations

-  It is recommended that the Israel Police perform a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes of the Five-Year Program that just ended, complete a process of learning lessons and drawing conclusions, and reach a decision about what the correct nature of this program should be before the Five-Year Program for 2020–2024 is approved. If a decision is reached to approve a new Five-Year Program, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Public Security and the Israel Police should jointly formulate the annual budgeting of the program and set clear objectives and indicators that will enable them to analyze the program's effectiveness and impact.
-  The Office of the Prime Minister should complete its dialogue with representatives of the Arab society and present the recommendations of the government ministries' team of directors-general tasked with addressing crime and violence in the Arab society to the government. The team will be appointed after the upcoming elections. These efforts should lead to the approval and implementation of a government plan for handling crime and violence in the Arab society.
-  The Israel Police should take action to increase its cooperation with the IDF and additional security forces in combatting weapons smuggling over the Jordanian border, all along the border and at the various crossing points. The Israel Police should also increase its initiatives for combatting weapons smuggling and should complete the technological developments for detecting weapons smuggling at the crossing points.
-  The Ministry of Economy and Industry and the Ministry of Public Security, in collaboration with the Israel Police, should take action as soon as possible to regulate and control imports of tools used as improvised weapons, in order to better combat the increased criminal use of such tools.
-  It is recommended that the Israel Police take action to define measurable goals for all police stations in Arab communities relating to reducing the number of shooting incidents and analyze the stations' preparedness in terms of staffing and technological needs.
-  The Israel Police and the Ministry of Public Security, in collaboration with the State Attorney's Office and the Witness Protection Authority, should complete their examination of the threatened trial witnesses' protection program and should reach the necessary decisions to enable the Israel Police and the Ministry of Public Security to properly prepare witness protection details.



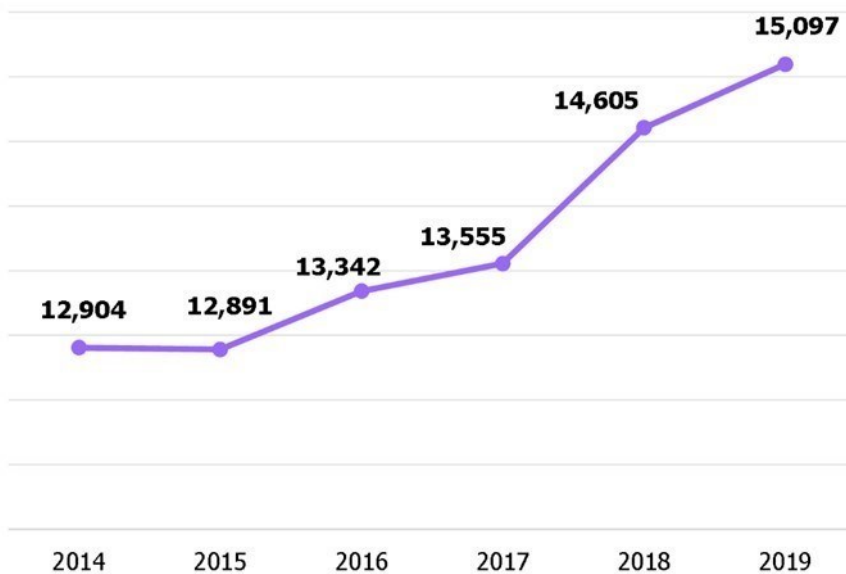
Shooting investigation cases: suspects from the Arab society compared to suspects from the non-Arab society, 2017–2019



Source: Israel Police data.



Victims of crimes against life and limb in the Arab society 2014–2019



Summary

Since the previous report was published in August 2018, crimes in the Arab society have steadily intensified in various parameters, including the number of shooting incidents, the number of victims of crimes against life and limb and of violence. The number of murder victims also rose and reached a record number of 95 in 2019 – despite the actions taken by the police in this regard. The follow-up audit found that additional activities by various government ministries are needed alongside the police activities, inter alia, relating to socio-economic, community and educational issues, as well as welfare activities, and that inter-ministerial collaborative efforts need to be intensified. Furthermore, it is essential to recruit influential leaders of the Arab society (heads of local authorities, clerics, etc.) to strengthen the cooperation between members and leaders of the Arab society and the police in order to make progress in the anti-crime efforts. Anti-crime efforts will not be effective without such cooperation.

