

From Gatekeepers to Guardians of Authoritarian Regime and Corruption

The regime in the State of Israel has been growing increasingly authoritarian for at least a decade, and this process has accelerated since the establishment of the 37th government, as shown in the report *The Regime in Israel: From Quasi-Authoritarian State to Dictatorship*.¹ This document and a series of opinion papers published by Zulat review the steps that have today brought Israel to the brink of a full authoritarian regime, ever since the government declared its plan to advance a legislative program aimed at subordinating the Israeli justice system to the executive branch.²

On 8 September 1993, the Supreme Court ruled that the decision not to fire Interior Minister Aryeh Deri and Deputy Religion Minister Rafael Pinhasi, both indicted on charges of serious corruption, was extremely unreasonable.³ Thirty years later, on 23 July 2023, the Knesset approved Amendment No. 4 to Basic Law: The Judiciary, divesting the court of the authority to discuss the reasonableness of any decisions by the government, the prime minister, or other ministers.⁴ Thus, Netanyahu's sixth government succeeded in depriving the Supreme Court of a central tool to critique decisions on appointments and dismissals, and in effect to cancel the Deri-Pinhasi ruling.

Time will tell if the Supreme Court's judicial review of appointments will continue based on other reasons or if the government will rule those out as well. Be that as it may, this document depicts appointments as a key preoccupation of a government intent on finalizing a revolution of the regime. Simultaneously with the advancement in the Knesset of bills to abolish the independence of the judiciary, the government has been turning other gatekeepers into the guardians of a reinforced authoritarian regime and attendant corruption.

The process begun during his previous tenures intensified after the establishment of Netanyahu's sixth government on 29 December 2022, which has taken steps to weaken or replace the gatekeepers in government ministries and public authorities who are supposed to ensure the legality and proper management of the day-to-day work, hiring and firing of

¹ [The Regime in Israel: From Quasi-Authoritarian State To Dictatorship](#), Zulat, 28 May 2023 (Hebrew).

² Nimrod Gorenstein, [Abolishment of Reasonableness Standard: Radical Violation of the Rule of Law](#), Zulat, 29 June 2023; [Talks at Presidential Residence: No to Cronyism in Appointment of Judges](#), Zulat, 16 June 2023.

³ [Supreme Court Ruling 3094/93 Movement for Quality Government in Israel v. Israeli Government](#), Nevo, 8 September 1993 (Hebrew).

⁴ [Bill on Amendment of Basic Law: The Judiciary \(Amendment No. 4\)](#) (Hebrew).

staff, projects, affiliates, subordinate companies, commitments, contracts, and budgeting of external bodies, as well as of any legal proceedings.

Like Brazil under President Jair Bolsonaro, Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Poland under the Law and Justice Party, and the USA under President Donald Trump, the modus operandi of Netanyahu's governments has been to run generic campaigns that blend in conspiracy theories, alongside campaigns targeting specific gatekeepers. These are seen as highly important even if they fail to bring about the resignation or firing of a specific gatekeeper, since they succeed to convey the message to candidates that in order to be appointed to a job, they must a priori be loyal to the ruling party and acquiesce to its members' political and personal interests. The message to incumbent gatekeepers is that they must "toe the line" if they want to avoid becoming the target of a bullying campaign (say, on social media) that will make their lives miserable, professionally and personally.

The Netanyahu government's aggressive moves against the gatekeepers strengthen the authoritarian regime and expand corruption, which are two intertwined phenomena. As seen by the OECD,⁵ the United Nations,⁶ the United States,⁷ the European Union,⁸ and leading studies about the dangers posed by it, corruption leads to the waste of public resources and their unequal and proper distribution, erodes the government institutions that are supposed to protect human rights, and harms the economy. Moreover, authoritarian and would-be authoritarian countries use corruption to perpetuate their rule and to undermine democracy around the world.

Below are several examples of the campaigns and efforts of previous and current Netanyahu-led governments to rein in the gatekeepers and turn them into guardians of the authoritarian regime and corruption. The wide variety of entities and protagonists contained in these examples prove that at stake is not an isolated professional or matter-of-fact dispute between the government/a minister and a specific gatekeeper, but rather an all-out campaign against all gatekeepers.

⁵ [Connecting the Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Agendas: Guide for Business and Employers' Organizations](#), *Business at OECD*, September 2020.

⁶ [Corruption and Human Rights](#), *United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights*.

⁷ Anthony J. Blinken, [Press Statement: Combating Global Corruption and Human Rights Abuses](#), *U.S. Department of State*, 9 December 2022.

⁸ Ionel Zamfir, [Briefing: Towards An EU Global Sanctions Regime for Corruption](#), *European Parliament*, February 2023.

- ☒ **'Reign of Clerks' Campaign:** This campaign, which intensified in earnest in 2015 in the wake of the criminal cases against Netanyahu and the Likud's struggle to establish itself as a single ruling party, accused legal counsels and other gatekeepers in government offices of being subversive elements trying to run the country in an anti-democratic way and to carry out a "regime coup." This was no matter-of-fact debate about proper administration, but a campaign of delegitimization of the professional echelons whose slogans brought to mind the conspiratorial messages of US President Donald Trump and his supporters about a so-called "Deep State." This campaign, which targeted the professional echelon in public bodies and government ministries in general, and specific "clerks" who were involved in Netanyahu's investigations and criminal prosecution in particular, was designed to demote the gatekeepers by appointing advocates of minimalist judicial review of the executive branch who agreed to become guardians of the authoritarian regime and corruption. For example, on 3 April 2020, the journalist Gidi Weitz revealed that Netanyahu had told interlocutors at his official residence that although he had been elected time and time again, the country was in practice controlled by a hidden force he described as a "Deep State": "There is no democracy here, but a government of bureaucrats and jurists," he asserted.⁹
- ☒ **'Regime Coup' Campaign:** Following the criminal investigations and indictments, Netanyahu, his associates, and right-wing organizations launched yet another campaign accusing the judiciary and law enforcement agencies of fabricating charges and politically persecuting the Right in general and Netanyahu personally in a bid to overthrow the right-wing government.¹⁰ The campaign targeted such figures as former Israel Police Commissioner Roni Alsheikh,¹¹ former State Attorney Shai Nitzan,¹² former

⁹ Gidi Weitz, [Netanyahu: 'Deep State' Controls Israel, There's No Democracy Here](#), *Haaretz*, 5 April 2020.

¹⁰ Zeev Kam, [Netanyahu Declares: This Is What a Regime Coup Looks Like](#), *Kan-Israel Public Broadcasting Corporation*, 6 April 2021 (Hebrew).

¹¹ Moshe Cohen, [Netanyahu Lashes Out at Alsheikh: 'Next Commissioner Will Have To Work Hard To Rehabilitate Israel Police](#), *Maariv*, 2 December 2018 (Hebrew).

¹² Staff report, [Shai Nitzan in Response to Netanyahu's Remarks: 'There's a Limit to How Many Lies I Can Take'](#), *Haaretz*, 10 September 2020 (Hebrew).

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, Attorney Liat Ben-Ari, the prosecutor in the criminal cases against Netanyahu,¹³ and the panel of judges hearing the cases.¹⁴

☒ **Wexner Foundation Campaign:** A derivative of the 'Reign of Clerks' and 'Regime Coup' campaigns, this was a conspiracy theory circulated by right-wing activists/organizations and by Netanyahu loyalists (including his son Yair) to the effect that the Wexner Foundation, which awarded scholarships to hundreds of Israeli public sector workers to study for a master's degree in public administration at Harvard University, had provided the training on the progressive positions of the Israeli version of "Deep State." Disseminating the conspiracy theory, Yair Netanyahu's posts on Twitter depicted graduates of the training program as a cult. "Meet the secret cult that rules our lives. Many thanks to Civil Service Commissioner Daniel Hershkovitz who categorically refuses to save us from this crazy cult," read one tweet, while another called program graduates a "cult of pedophiles." After 75 graduates sued him for libel, Netanyahu Jr. acceded to an out-of-court settlement whereby he deleted his tweets and issued a sweeping apology.¹⁵ On 2 June 2021, the Supreme Court rejected a petition filed by the right-wing NGO Im Tirtzu demanding to stop the participation of Israeli public servants in the Wexner Foundation's program. The court ruling read: "It's quite inconceivable that the participation of public sector workers in the foundation's program should harm the integrity of the Civil Service.... The plaintiff's claim that participation in the foundation's programs impacts on the promotion of civil servants is frivolous and totally unfounded." Nevertheless, the campaign continued unabated.¹⁶

☒ **Campaign Against State Comptroller:** Probably due to the fact that some of State Comptroller Yosef Shapira's annual reports were highly censorious, particularly the one for 2015 about the expenses incurred by the prime minister's official residence¹⁷ that went on to trigger a criminal investigation and an indictment, Netanyahu decided to

¹³ Staff report, [After Day in Court, Netanyahu Rails at Prosecutors, Alleging 'Coup Attempt'](#), *The Times of Israel*, 5 April 2021.

¹⁴ Arik Bender, [Nixes Ben-Gvir as Minister, Mocks Lapid, Sends Message to Judges: Netanyahu Fires in All Directions](#), *Maariv*, 15 February 2021 (Hebrew); Avraham Bloch, [Netanyahu Lashes Out at Ilana Dayan: 'Vile and Transparent Political Sting Operation'](#), *Srugim*, 25 December 2020 (Hebrew).

¹⁵ Tal Schneider, [Yair Netanyahu Apologizes to Wexner Fellowship Alumni for 'Pedophile Cult' Claim](#), *The Times of Israel*, 20 July 2021.

¹⁶ [Supreme Court Ruling 4928/20 Im Tirtzu v. Justice Minister](#), *Neva*, 2 June 2021 (Hebrew).

¹⁷ Tal Schneider, [State Comptroller: Mandelblit's Decision on Netanyahu's Criminal Cases Must Be Published Regardless of Elections](#), *Globes*, 4 February 2019 (Hebrew).

promote the candidacy of Matanyahu Engelman. A certified accountant by training and the first in 30 years not to be a retired judge, Engelman was elected on the basis of his conservative and reductive views of the State Comptroller's role and his belief in "constructive criticism."¹⁸ In an unprecedented move, Engelman thanked Prime Minister Netanyahu and the MKs who supported his candidacy in his acceptance speech.¹⁹ Recently it was reported that Engelman had granted only three protection orders to whistleblowers.²⁰

☒ **Campaign Against Attorney General:** Almost every day since the formation of the sixth Netanyahu government, ministers have called for Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara's dismissal or have publicly pressured her to resign "willingly." For example, claiming she has been "serving as the de facto opposition leader," National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir urged her ouster after her response to the Supreme Court to the effect that he should refrain from issuing operative instructions to the Israel Police, especially with regard to enforcement at the demonstrations against the regime change²¹ (Justice Yitzhak Amit's ruling accepted her position).²² Throughout a cabinet meeting on 9 July 2023 held in her presence, Ministers David Amsalem, Miri Regev, and Galit Distel-Atbaryan called for her to be fired or to resign.²³ Criticizing her very participation in the meeting, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich later tweeted: "My time is too precious to be wasted on futile discussions. The Attorney General is in total conflict of interest. The demonstrators are protesting for her benefit and for the preservation of the corrupting power she and her friends in the justice system have accumulated over the years."²⁴

☒ **Campaign Against Bank of Israel Governor:** The functions of the governor of the central bank include managing monetary policy, supporting the stability of the

¹⁸ [Incoming State Comptroller Engelman Sworn In at Knesset Plenum](#), *State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel*, 1 July 2019 (Hebrew).

¹⁹ Shahar Hay, [Matanyahu Engelman: 'State Comptroller – Cornerstone Institution of State of Israel'](#), *Ynet*, 3 June 2019 (Hebrew).

²⁰ Shahar Ilan, [Decade's Nadir: Only Three Protection Orders Granted to Whistleblowers in 2021](#), *Calcalist*, 21 June 2022 (Hebrew).

²¹ Staff report, [Ben-Gvir Says Attorney General Must Be Fired, Acting as De Facto Opposition Chief](#), *The Times of Israel*, 17 March 2023.

²² Tova Zimuky, [Attorney General Says Ben-Gvir May Have Exceeded Authority on Police Policy](#), *Ynetnews*, 16 March 2023.

²³ Jonathan Lis, [Netanyahu Government Ramps Up Attacks on AG, Accusing Her of Leniency With Protest Movement](#), *Haaretz*, 9 July 2023.

²⁴ Bezalel Smotrich, [@bezalelsm 11:03](#), *Twitter*, 9 July 2023 (Hebrew).

financial markets, supervising and regulating the banking system, collating and disseminating statistics on Israel's economy, and more.²⁵ Through the appropriation of the governor's role the government could manipulate and temporarily conceal the serious consequences of the regime revolution on Israel's economy, but such a move would in effect inflict enormous and irreparable damage on the economy for years to come. After Governor Amir Yaron warned of the negative impact of the "judicial overhaul" on the economy and Israel's credit rating, Netanyahu reportedly decided not to extend his tenure for another five years as is the tradition.²⁶ Minister of Heritage Amichai Eliyahu said about Yaron: "The Bank of Israel's governor is badmouthing the State of Israel, harming its credit rating, and hurting its economy. He should be kicked down the stairs. He is a savage.... Governance and the economy hinge on the judicial reform. A country where bureaucrats do whatever they please cannot function."²⁷ The danger is clear: In Turkey, President Erdogan brought about the collapse of the economy and the Turkish lira (its value dropped 90%)²⁸ after he appointed his son-in-law as finance minister,²⁹ canceled the independence of financial and banking institutions, and fired the Turkish Central Bank governor three times.³⁰ The importance of an independent and professional central bank governor was evident recently when, with a blunt letter to the government that was published in the media, Yaron succeeded to postpone the advancement of a law that would let the Finance Ministry to intervene in setting interest rates paid to consumer checking accounts: "I wish to express my resolute opposition to the proposal.... Setting a uniform price harms the activity of the market mechanism, causes all the players to gather around the set price and in every way suppresses competition and efficiency; gives rise to significant application difficulties with regard to the method of calculating the price; and is seen internationally as a negative move that does not suit advanced economies in developed countries." Yaron warned that such blatant interference in the independence of the banking system could affect not only international financial entities that are

²⁵ [Functions of the Bank](#), *Bank of Israel*.

²⁶ Roi Weinberger and Oren Dori, [Market Fears BOI Governor Won't Seek Second Term](#), *Globes*, 6 June 2023.

²⁷ Avi Bar-Eli, [Minister Amichai Eliyahu: 'Bank of Israel Governor - Savage Who Should Be Kicked Down the Stairs](#), *TheMarker*, 18 June 2023 (Hebrew).

²⁸ Meirav Arlosoroff, [Non-Extension of Bank of Israel Governor's Tenure: Mega-Terror Attack on Israel's Economy](#), *TheMarker*, 7 June 2023 (Hebrew).

²⁹ Onur Ant, Selcan Hacaoglu, and Firat Kozok, [Erdogan Names Son-in-Law as Treasury and Finance Minister](#), *Bloomberg*, 9 July 2018.

³⁰ News agencies, [Turkey's Erdogan Sacks Central Bank Governor After Rate Hike](#), *Al Jazeera*, 20 March 2021.

considering operating in Israel but also those already doing business here; in other words, it might drive away international investors.³¹

☒ **Campaign Against Independence of Israel Police, Commissioner, Tel Aviv District Commander:** The efforts of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to curtail the independence of the Israel Police's top brass found expression in recurrent attempts to depose Superintendent Ami Eshed, commander of the Tel Aviv District (where the huge demonstrations against the regime coup and the government are taking place),³² as well as in the participation of his chief-of-staff, Chanamel Dorfman [a former far-right settler activist whose past activities were monitored by the Israel Police and the Shin Bet], in the interviews of senior police officers seeking promotion.³³ Eshed's ouster was blocked by the Attorney General in March 2023, but upon announcing his retirement in early July 2023 he disclosed the illegal demands to violently suppress the anti-coup protests that Ben-Gvir had posed to him: "I sinned by not being able to meet the expectations of the ministerial level, which included violating the rules, protocols, organizational structure and culture in decision-making and in operational judgment.... We could have cleared Tel Aviv's Ayalon Highway in minutes at the cost of breaking heads and crushing bones.... We could have filled the emergency room in Ichilov Hospital at the end of every demonstration."³⁴ Superintendent Yoram Sofer, commander of the Coastal District and Ben-Gvir's candidate for commander of the Tel Aviv District and successor of the current Israel Police Commissioner, has voiced views that dovetail with Ben-Gvir's positions. For example, contrary to the Attorney General's stance and Supreme Court rulings, he totally forbids the display of Palestinian flags in his district, which comprises the city of Haifa.³⁵ He said in an interview that harsh measures should be taken against protesters who block roads, and claimed that the Israel Police Commissioner "should understand more or less what the minister's direction is, and not say 'no.'"³⁶ At stake is not just a desire to suppress the

³¹ Roi Weinberger, [BOI Governor: Bill Threatens Central Bank's Independence](#), *Globes*, 27 June 2023.

³² Chen Maanit and Josh Breiner, [Israel's AG Urges Ben-Gvir, Top Cop To Reconsider Dismissal of Tel Aviv Police Chief](#), *Haaretz*, 17 April 2023.

³³ Josh Breiner, [Ben-Gvir's Ex-Hilltop Youth Chief-of-Staff Interviews for Top Police Positions](#), *Haaretz*, 19 May 2023.

³⁴ Joshua Breiner, [Tel Aviv Police Chief Quits: I Paid a Price for Choosing To Prevent a Civil War](#), *Haaretz*, 5 July 2023.

³⁵ Joshua Breiner, [Israel's National Security Minister and Police Commissioner Brawl Over Next Tel Aviv Police Chief](#), *Haaretz*, 29 May 2023.

³⁶ Staff report, [Leading Candidate for Israel's Police Chief Says Top Cop 'Shouldn't Say No' to Ben-Gvir](#), *Haaretz*, 18 June 2023.

demonstrations against the regime coup, as a senior investigator at the National Fraud Investigation Unit (NFIU) stated in an interview with Ilana Dayan: "The entire police, and the NFIU in particular, are terrified. Somebody somewhere has sucked the air out of the entire force. How many corruption investigations have been launched since the indictments against Netanyahu? There have been no public corruption investigations since approximately 2018."³⁷

☒ **Campaign Against Finance Ministry's Legal Counsel:** Already under Finance Minister Yisrael Katz's tenure (May 2020 to June 2021), there were relentless attacks against the ministry's legal counsel, Asi Messing, which intensified after he wrote an opinion nixing Katz's choice of director general on the grounds that he did not meet the minimum requirements for the job.³⁸ In response, Katz refrained from consulting Messing on relevant issues and refused to let him attend work meetings. On 12 November 2020, Katz posted on his Facebook page: "Civil servants who seek to sabotage the policy I am leading in the Finance Ministry, in accordance with the mandate we received from the electorate, the door is open for them to leave."³⁹ Not long ago, on 23 May 2023, David Amsalem, the minister in charge of government-Knesset liaison, also attacked Messing and called him a "professional saboteur."⁴⁰ On 18 June 2023, it was announced that the current finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, decided that Messing would not serve on the Committee for Privatization of State Assets.⁴¹

☒ **Campaign Against Finance Ministry's Budget Director:** The Budget Division is a professional unit with a central role in the Finance Ministry. Its duties include drafting the state budget and the government's macroeconomic policy and presenting it for its approval.⁴² On 20 August 2020, Budget Division Director Shaul Meridor tendered his resignation to then-Finance Minister Katz following the media campaign run against him by Netanyahu and Likud officials. Meridor wrote in his letter: "The ability to perform

³⁷ Ilana Dayan, [Hardly Any Corruption Investigations Since Indictments Against Netanyahu, Entire Police Terrified](#), *N12*, 29 December 2022 (Hebrew).

³⁸ Nati Tucker, [Blow to Yisrael Katz: Finance Ministry's Legal Counsel Nixes His Choice of Director General](#), *TheMarker*, 21 January 2021 (Hebrew).

³⁹ Yisrael Katz, [Facebook post](#), 12 November 2020 (Hebrew).

⁴⁰ Sivan Hilai, [Amsalem Calls Finance Ministry's Legal Counsel 'Professional Saboteur', Smotrich Comes to Messing's Defense](#), *Ynet*, 23 May 2023 (Hebrew).

⁴¹ Nati Tucker, [Smotrich Also Objects to Assi Messing: Keeps Him Out of Privatization Committee](#), *TheMarker*, 18 June 2023 (Hebrew).

⁴² [About Budget Division](#), *Finance Ministry* (Hebrew).

my duties has become impossible.... You do not allow me and many other public servants in the Finance Ministry's various departments and in other government ministries to do what we know how to do: to formulate, propose, analyze, and critique policy measures.... Policy these days is typically characterized by narrow, irrelevant, and short-term interests, muzzling of the professional echelon, blatant disdain toward qualified staff work, off-the-cuff decisions, and trampling of budgetary tools and norms. The message to the citizens, the business sector, and the world is one of broken principles, frameworks, and boundaries and of a public service whose values, rules, and norms are being trampled over."⁴³ A month earlier, Netanyahu shared on his Facebook page a message bearing Meridor's photo that had been posted by Likud MK Shlomo Karai: "We have grown used to the phenomenon of public servants vying with elected officials for governance of the country.... The role of public servants is to carry out government policy. Any attempt to enforce their own policy in contravention of government policy constitutes bureaucratic subversion." Upon sharing the post, Netanyahu added: "It is inconceivable that public servants should critique decisions made by the government and try to thwart them. We will not accept this!"⁴⁴ In a tweet in June 2023, in his current capacity as energy minister, Katz also attacked the current budget director, Yoav Gerdos: "I find the method used to communicate with me, through letters leaked to the media, puzzling.... The decisions on the gas economy take into account broad policy considerations, such as Israel's global status. I, the minister elected by the people, will be the one who will make the decisions and not the professional level."⁴⁵

- ☒ **Campaign Against Deputy Attorney General for Legislative Affairs:** Attorney Dina Zilber was for years one of the main targets of the "Reign of Clerks" campaign, and for good reason. As part of her role as Deputy Attorney General, she was at the forefront of the defense of the country's democratic values, and was repeatedly required to examine and block endless unlawful actions by public authorities, government ministries, and ministers. In a discussion held on 6 November 2018 in the Knesset's Education, Culture, and Sports Committee, ahead of a second and third reading vote on the Loyalty in Culture Law, Zilber warned against "contrarian discourse that injures

⁴³ Avi Waksman, [Budget Division Director Shaul Meridor Resigns](#), *TheMarker*, 30 August 2020 (Hebrew).

⁴⁴ [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), *Facebook*, 17 July 2020 (Hebrew).

⁴⁵ [@IsraelKatz](#), *Twitter*, 08:14, 27 June 2023 (Hebrew).

and scars the common social fabric, that labels friends and foes. If some are loyal, then are all others traitors? A fifth column?"⁴⁶ At the end of the meeting, then-Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked demanded from Attorney General Mandelblit that Zilber stop representing the Justice Ministry before the cabinet and the Knesset. Her replacement, Dr. Gil Limon, also became the target of a similar campaign, both because he was Mandelblit's assistant during his tenure as Government Secretary and Attorney General (the campaign accused him of "fabricating" the cases against Netanyahu and right-wing governments), and since January 2023, because he is the one who briefs cabinet and Knesset sessions about the current Attorney General's position regarding the regime change legislation.⁴⁷

- ☒ **Campaign Against Attorney Dana Neufeld:** She was specifically targeted on account of being the Communications Ministry's legal counsel at the time of the revelations about bribery, fraud, and breach of trust that turned into Cases 100 and 4000 against Netanyahu and subsequently confirmed the main facts in the indictments in her testimony to the police and the Jerusalem District Court. Netanyahu's supporters called for her dismissal from public service, and approval of her appointment as legal counsel of the Health Ministry was enigmatically held up until May 2023.⁴⁸

- ☒ **Campaign Against Government Companies Authority:** The GCA is a "treasure trove" as well as a huge source of power. It oversees 71 state-owned enterprises [SOE] with assets totaling over NIS 235 billion that employ some 57,000 workers and enter contracts with numerous suppliers, local authorities, and private firms. Some of these SOEs are giant corporations that provide important services to the public and play a significant role in the national economy and in the life of Israelis in such areas as energy, education, water, health, housing, seaports, transportation infrastructure, security, and culture. In July 2023, GCA director Adv. Michal Rosenbaum sent a letter to her boss, Minister David Amsalem: "Ever since your taking office, I have been subjected to reprehensible pressures and you have attributed to me criminal deeds, but the attempts to intimidate me will not succeed. I am not afraid to fight for the professional

⁴⁶ Revital Hovel and Jonathan Lis, [Shaked Versus Deputy Attorney General: Zilber Will No Longer Represent Justice Ministry Before Cabinet and Knesset](#), *TheMarker*, 6 November 2018 (Hebrew).

⁴⁷ [Channel 14](#), *Facebook*, 17 January 2023 (Hebrew).

⁴⁸ Roni Linder and Nati Tucker, [Despite Obstruction Efforts: Dana Neufeld Appointed Health Ministry's Legal Counsel](#), *TheMarker*, 2 May 2023 (Hebrew).

truth and to protect the public interest. I will not accept slanders whose entire purpose is to create an artificial crisis of trust in order to justify getting me out of the way."⁴⁹ Amsalem wrote to her in response: "In light of your bad conduct, I ask you not to contact me anymore. I will not be a party to such a game."⁵⁰

☒ **Fight Over Appointment of Central Bureau of Statistics Director:** According to media reports, Netanyahu tried to appoint Yossi Shelley, a political confidante, current director general of the Prime Minister's Office, and former Likud campaign manager, as head of the CBS, even though he lacks the relevant experience and qualifications for the job.⁵¹ This would have allowed the government to manipulate the country's economic statistics (such as the consumer price index, inflation, unemployment, growth, and demographics), thereby leading to biased data and the loss of confidence in economic information on the part of the public, investors, and the international community. A similar effort by President Erdogan a year ago ended with the resignation of a senior Turkish Statistical Institute official after he was accused of presenting very high inflation data.⁵²

☒ **Fight Over Appointment of Israel Securities Authority Director:** ISA is the main gatekeeper overseeing public companies whose investments consists primarily of public funds (pensions and savings). For over three months ISA remained without a director after the previous one retired in April 2023 because Finance Minister Smotrich insisted on naming Attorney Seffy Zinger, despite the fact that legal counsel Asi Messing informed him that Zinger lacked the necessary qualifications for this important body. Although Zinger is considered an expert in some of ISA's domains, it was argued that he had no experience in the field of securities law.⁵³ ISA's functioning,

⁴⁹ Ayala Baron, Amalia Dowek, and Keren Marciano, [Showdown Between Amsalem and GCA Director: Attempts To Intimidate Me Will Not Succeed](#), *N12*, 2 July 2023 (Hebrew).

⁵⁰ Ayala Baron and Amalia Dowek, [Amsalem in Sharp Response to GCA Director: 'I Ask You Not To Contact Me Anymore'](#), *N12*, 6 July 2023.

⁵¹ Nati Tucker, [Netanyahu Tried To Appoint Political Confidante To Be Israel's Statistics Chief](#), *Haaretz*, 22 February 2023.

⁵² Beril Akman, [Senior Turkish Statistician Left Post Before May Inflation Print](#), *Bloomberg*, 3 June 2022.

⁵³ Nati Tucker, [Finance Ministry's Legal Counsel Objects to Seffy Zinger's Appointment as ISA Director: 'Lacks Relevant Qualifications'](#), *TheMarker*, 12 July 2023 (Hebrew).

including its investigative powers, were impaired during the time that the appointment remained unapproved.⁵⁴

☒ **Fight Over Appointment of Gatekeepers at National Roads Company:** The company responsible for a major part of transportation infrastructure projects in Israel is presently headed by Yigal Amedi, a Likud member close to Transportation Minister Miri Regev. In June 2023, the GCA nixed the appointment of Attorney Elad Bardugo (nephew of media personality Yaakov Bardugo, who is close to Prime Minister Netanyahu) as the company's legal counsel citing "serious flaws in the interpretation of the minimal qualifications and rigid criteria required for the job, which took place after all the submitted applications were seen, in a way that benefited the recommended candidate."⁵⁵ In addition to the unfilled position of legal counsel after the retirement of the previous one, other gatekeepers have left the company, including the deputy chief financial officer, the internal auditor, and the compliance officer.⁵⁶

Author and legal consultant: **Adv. Eitay Mack**

⁵⁴ Neta Sarusi, [Finance Minister's Nomination Gets Boggled Down, ISA Stuck Without Director](#), *Globes*, 24 July 2023 (Hebrew).

⁵⁵ Yifat Reuven, [GCA Nixes Elad Bardugo's Appointment as National Roads Company's Legal Counsel](#), *TheMarker*, 16 June 2023 (Hebrew).

⁵⁶ Daniel Shmil, [All Brakes Gone: Deputy CFO Also Leaves National Roads Company](#), *Haaretz*, 25 June 2023 (Hebrew).