

Bill to Shut Down Kan Corporation's News Broadcasts

Another Link in Government's Efforts to Harm Public Broadcasting and Free Media

This document addresses the Bill to Change Format of Public Broadcasting and Regulate National Radio Broadcasts (Legislative Amendments-2025), which was submitted by Likud MK Galit Distal Atbaryan.¹

The bill is another link in a long chain of legislative initiatives aimed at dismantling public broadcasting and harming the free media in Israel in the framework of the regime revolution. Among other things, it seeks to shut down the news broadcasts of the Israel Public Broadcasting Corporation (IPBC), significantly cut its budget, and subject it to political control.

This is a two-pronged move to terminate public broadcasting and seriously harm the independence of commercial news broadcasters, through private bills filed by MKs and advanced with the government's support **on the one hand** and a government bill recently submitted by the Minister of Communications **on the other**.

The goal of this move is to radically transform the Israeli media landscape en route to the obliteration of the free media in Israel and the subjugation of media entities to the political and economic influences of both tycoon owners and politicians striving to sway news broadcasts and interfere with their content.

The move contradicts the law and the fundamental principles of a democratic regime. According to Supreme Court rulings, public broadcasting free from political and economic influences is essential to ensuring a true climate of freedom of expression and may serve as a "watchdog" of democracy. This applies tenfold to public news broadcasts, which the bill seeks to terminate, thereby tangibly harming freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and a free media. The bill is an illegal measure that infringes upon the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, has an improper purpose, and

* All references are in Hebrew.

¹ [Bill To Change Format of Public Broadcasting and Regulate National Radio Broadcasts-2025 \(Legislative Amendments\)](#), Knesset National Legislation Repository, 3 March 2025.

is disproportionate, as will be elaborated below.

Main Steps for the Termination of Public Broadcasting Contained in the Bill

The bill includes a long list of clauses, all aimed at severely harming the IPBC's broadcasts and subjecting it to political control:

- **Terminate the IPBC's news broadcasts in Hebrew.** The IPBC would cease broadcasting news and current affairs programs in Hebrew, both on television and on radio. Hebrew news broadcasts on Channel 11 would end, and radio broadcasts on Reshet Bet would come to a complete halt. Should the move be implemented, there would no longer be public television news broadcasts in Israel and the main source of public radio news (along with IDF Radio, which is also being targeted) would cease to exist.
- **Turn the IPBC Council into a politically affiliated body.** The bill seeks to cancel the appointment process of the IPBC Council stipulated under the current law, which is designed to ensure its independence and insulation from political influence through the selection of council members by an independent search committee. Instead, the bill proposes a political process, similar to the one used in the Second Authority for Television and Radio (SATR), under which the government would directly appoint all council members based on the recommendation of the Minister of Communications.
- **Cut the IPBC's operations budget.** The bill proposes a major cut to the IPBC's annual budget, setting it at NIS500 million instead of the current NIS700 million. This would be compounded by the termination of other funding sources (commercials, sponsored ads, and payment for archival content), as detailed below. According to estimates, the proposed budget cut would exceed NIS300 million. Since the existing law allocates NIS160 million for the production of news broadcasts, it is clear that the aim of the amendment is not only to harm the IPBC's news programming but also its regular operations and its independence in particular.
- **Preclude airing of commercials and sponsored ads.** In addition to the budget cut, the bill proposes to ban the IPBC from airing commercials and sponsored ads, both on radio and television, thus denying it a source of funding currently totaling NIS100 million that is crucial for its existence and independence.

- **Limit the fee charged for use of IPBC archive content.** The bill also proposes to restrict the IPBC's leeway to collect fair compensation from external entities for commercial use of its archival content, and stipulates that it may only charge fees reflecting the operational cost of such service. This clause is probably intended to benefit such broadcasters as Channel 14 and i24 News and enable them to receive content from the IPBC without paying the full market price.
- **Reduce the number of the IPBC's radio stations.** The IPBC would broadcast on no more than five frequencies, thereby reducing the number of national radio stations currently operated by it, in addition to the shutdown of Reshet Bet.
- **Publish a tender to operate Reshet Bet as a commercial network.** A tender would be issued to select a licensee to operate Reshet Bet as a nationwide commercial network. Should no operator be found, the IPBC would cease broadcasting the station within six months of the tender's publication.
- **Issue national radio licenses.** The SATR Council would be empowered to issue commercial licenses for nationwide radio broadcasts. Clearly, the frequencies allocated to this end would be those currently used by the IPBC, and apparently those used by IDF Radio as well.

In conclusion, should the bill be implemented, the IPBC would no longer broadcast news and current affairs programs in Hebrew. It would be subordinated to a council with a clear political affiliation and would lose a significant portion of its operating budget. This bill is unquestionably intended to dramatically harm public broadcasting in Israel and the independent status of the IPBC.

Yet Another Government-Backed Bill to Harm Free Media and Public Broadcasting

The bill in question is part of a long series of private and governmental legislative proposals aimed at harming the free media and public broadcasting in Israel. It is a coordinated two-pronged move to completely eliminate public broadcasting and to severely harm the independence of commercial news broadcasting, subject it to political and economic influences, and exempt it from basic ethical requirements, without which the reliability of facts and news reporting will no longer be guaranteed.

Elimination of Public Broadcasting: Numerous bills aimed at eliminating public broadcasting in Israel, or at least to significantly harm it, have been tabled in the Knesset. Here are some of them:

- **Bill on Privatization of Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation-2022²:** Intended to bring about the termination of public broadcasting in Israel. Submitted by Likud MK Tali Gottlieb.
- **Bill on IPBC Law-2024 (Amendment: IPBC Budget)³:** Seeks to make the IPBC's budget part of the state budget, thereby subjecting it to political control. Submitted by Likud MK Avichay Buaron.
- **Bill on Privatization of IDF Radio-2024⁴:** Seeks to shut down IDF Radio. Submitted by Likud MK Nissim Vaturi.
- **Bill on Public Broadcasting Law-2025 (Amendment: Appointment of IPBC Council)⁵:** Seeks to set up a political mechanism for appointing members of the IPBC Council, thereby subjecting the IPBC to political control. Submitted by Likud MK Osher Shekalim.

Harm to Independence of Commercial News Broadcasting: As part of the **Bill on Amendment of Communications Law-2025 (Broadcasts)** published recently, the government seeks to deal a dramatic blow to the independence of broadcast news providers and to enable politicians and tycoons to seize control of the public agenda and manipulate broadcast news at will. Among other things, the bill proposes to abolish the mechanisms safeguarding the independence of commercial news companies and to allow any would-be broadcaster to air news affected by the worldview of its owners with no obligation to abide by even the minimal ethical standards of news broadcasting.

This is an attempt to fundamentally alter the Israeli media landscape, which will lead to the elimination of the free media and the subjugation of media channels to political and economic influences, both by their tycoon owners and by politicians seeking to sway news

² [Bill on Privatization of Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation-2022](#), Knesset National Legislation Repository, 12 December 2022.

³ [Bill on Israel Public Broadcasting Corporation Law-2024 \(Amendment: IPBC Budget\)](#), Knesset National Legislation Repository, 15 July 2024.

⁴ [Bill on Privatization of IDF Radio-2024](#), Knesset National Legislation Repository, 15 July 2024.

⁵ See footnote #3.

broadcasts and interfere with their content. As will be elaborated below, this represents a severe violation of the foundational principles of democracy and of the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

Bill Seeks to Seriously Harm Public Broadcasting, Doesn't Meet Test of Law and Jurisprudence

The importance of public broadcasting and the purposes for which it was created, which are one of the foundations of a democratic society, cannot be overstated. The roles of the IPBC and public broadcasting are primarily set out in Article 7 of the Israeli Public Broadcasting Law-2014⁶:

"The content provided by the IPBC shall be independent, aimed at all citizens and residents of the State of Israel, reflect and document Israel's character as a Jewish and democratic state, its values, and heritage, and give fair, equal, and balanced expression to the range of views and opinions prevalent in the Israeli public" [Article 7(b)].

One of the cornerstones of public broadcasting is news programming. Regarding the role of the IPBC as a news broadcaster, the law further states:

"The IPBC shall provide news and current affairs content, including in Arabic and in regard to Israel's heritage, in a professional, fair, responsible, independent, critical, unbiased, and reliable manner, amid transparency, journalistic discretion, and faithfulness to the factual truth and the duty of reporting to the public" [Article 7(c)].

The termination of public news broadcasts and the subordination of the IPBC to political control is aimed at undermining the core purposes that public broadcasting is meant to serve and threatens to undo the principles established in the Public Broadcasting Law.

Here is what the Supreme Court had to say on the importance of a free and independent media in a democratic state as a necessary tool for safeguarding freedom of expression and freedom of the press in its ruling on **Case HCJ 2996/17 Union of Journalists in Israel-**

⁶ [Israel Public Broadcasting Law-2014](#), Nevo, last update 4 December 2017.

Histadrut Labor Federation v. The Prime Minister⁷:

"The media serves as a counterbalance to the power of government, and guarantees that the latter does not harm democratic principles. Besides the ability to monitor the government, the media ensures a free flow of information and regular expression of different and diverse opinions.... Finally, the media is a platform that plays a key role in safeguarding the public and political discourse. Even these days, when a significant portion of that discourse takes place on the Internet, the strength of 'traditional journalism', radio, and television, and their role as platforms for much of the public discourse, remains essential and must be respected. Therefore, a free media is the stage upon which the public discourse takes place, and as such, it is a factor that preserves, promotes, and enhances that discourse."

This applies tenfold to a public broadcasting service, which is primarily important for its ability to air news and current affairs programs. The Supreme Court ruling went on to say in this regard:

"Public broadcasting, including news and current affairs programs, must be independent and free from political interference and interests, which is a principle that also reflects the people's right.... A robust and independent public broadcasting service is an important tool for maintaining a diverse, vibrant, and critical media market that does not curry favor with the powers that be, wealth, or special interests. By being such, it upholds democracy and ensures the participation of the country's citizens in shaping its character.... It is easy to understand that even at an 'institutional' level, government intervention in the media aimed at 'adjusting' the media market to align with the interests of one side or another on the political spectrum, essentially constitutes an improper subordination of the media that is meant to be independent to the desires of the government. **Such conduct undermines freedom of the press in its broadest sense.**"

The ruling by the Supreme Court also emphasized the link between a free media and the

⁷ [Ruling on Supreme Court Case HCJ 2996/17 Union of Journalists in Israel-Histadrut Labor Federation v. The Prime Minister](#) ("Supreme Court's IPBC ruling"), *Supreme Decisions*, 23 January 2019.

preservation of the fundamental right to freedom of expression:

"Public broadcasting is essential for ensuring a true climate of freedom of expression. Many constitutions enshrine the people's right to receive information, and not just to share it, as part of the right to freedom of expression. An independent public broadcasting service in a democracy also serves as a 'watchdog' that exposes corruption in government, which is why its independence is vital. Ensuring the fulfillment of these responsibilities calls for independence from political and economic influences."

Therefore, it follows from the Supreme Court ruling that the independence of the IPBC is essential to safeguard freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the democratic character of the State of Israel.

As stated, the proposed legislation seeks to terminate public news broadcasting in Israel and to subject the IPBC to political control. Accordingly, it represents a dramatic violation of the constitutional fundamental rights of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and a significant blow to Israel's democratic fabric. These infringements are made for an improper purpose – control over the IPBC and interference with the content of its programs – and do not meet the test of proportionality established in case law.

In conclusion, Zulat firmly opposes the proposed legislation and warns against the termination of the IPBC's news programming and its subjection to political control. The IPBC is a central pillar in the preservation of a vibrant and active democracy, and maintaining its independence is a moral and social obligation. Zulat calls on the government and legislature to act toward protecting freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

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