

March 14, 2021

To:
Party leaders

Subject: Request of a Commitment to Promote the Protection of Human Rights by Israel's State Institutions in the 24th Knesset

Shalom to all,

I appeal to you to adopt three recommendations of **Zulat for Equality and Human Rights** on the protection of human rights by Israel's state institutions, and to commit to promote them in the 24th Knesset. Ahead of the current election campaign, and in light of a survey conducted by our institute in February 2021 whose findings revealed that *"in the opinion of the vast majority of respondents, the issue of human rights is not a priority for Knesset candidates,"* we compiled an operational policy paper whose main recommendations are:

- 1) Establishing a National Human Rights Commission in Israel.**
- 2) Establishing human rights commissions in local authorities.**
- 3) Anchoring in the Basic Law the role of the State Comptroller as the chief protector of human rights.**

Attached to this letter is the full policy paper, which thoroughly examines ways to strengthen the protection of human rights in Israel and to ensure the ability of state institutions to promote them. The document proposes operational measures focusing on institutional solutions, whose implementation and execution will ensure better and fuller protection of human rights, will significantly improve the way state authorities and institutions address human rights issues, and will consequently cement this protection by independent non-governmental entities.

The implementation of these recommendations, whose aim is to guarantee the protection of human rights regardless of subject matter, **will ensure the long-lasting protection and preservation of human rights, independently, and irrespective of the incumbents at any given time.**

In addition to the full paper attached herein, following is an elaboration on the chief recommendations:

1. Establishment of Human Rights Commissions

The commissions to be established, both at the national and municipal level, will be state bodies that will ensure the protection and preservation of human rights, as well as their active promotion. Among other things, these will be consolidated bodies that will integrate and protect human rights by state institutions in a comprehensive manner, and will recommend measures across the board irrespective of government ministry or subject matter. They will function as a liaison between human rights organizations in civil society on the one hand, and the government and the legislative branch on the other, and will be particularly effective and efficient in providing legal assistance and guidance to marginalized minority groups.

- Establishment of a National Human Rights Commission: We recommend anchoring in primary legislation the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission that will meet international standards, and that will best ensure the protection of human rights and their promotion by state institutions.
- Establishment of human rights commissions in local authorities: We propose a model under which local commissions will be established that will ensure the protection and promotion of human rights at the municipal level. The proposed model is modular to enable local authorities to adapt it to their size and the resources at their disposal.

2. State Comptroller: Chief Protector of Human Rights

Since the State Comptroller is best positioned to fulfill the role of protector of human rights, we seek to include this role within his duties in *Basic Law: The State Comptroller*. Therefore, we propose to add to Article 2 of *Basic Law: The State Comptroller* a subsection (c), stipulating that "the State Comptroller shall be in charge

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of examining the implementation of Israeli and international human rights law in all state authorities".

Amending the law will make it possible to anchor this duty in the Basic Law, so that it does not depend on the personal perspective of a given state comptroller. This is further necessitated in light of the State Comptroller's ability to audit not only government ministries but also local authorities, thereby ensuring the best handling and protection of human rights issues.

Distinguished MK, I appeal to you and your party to adopt these recommendations, and thus commit to work toward their formalization and advancement during the tenure of the 24th Knesset.

Best regards,

Einat Ovadia
Executive Director of Zulat for
Equality and Human Rights

