



August 30, 2026

To:

The Honorable Justice Noam Sohlberg, Chairman of the Elections Committee
Deputy President of the Supreme Court

Chairman of the Central Elections Committee for the Knesset ("the Committee")

Via the Committee Secretariat

Re: Urgent Demand for a Prohibition and Sanctions Regarding the National Security Minister's Election-Campaign Visits to Prisons

1. General

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel ("PCATI") is a non-profit organization that has worked since 1990 to prevent torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners by Israel's law-enforcement and security authorities. PCATI is writing to Your Honor as a matter of urgency regarding the filmed visit conducted by the National Security Minister at Damon Prison, and in particular in the women's wing, where Palestinian women prisoners are held — a visit that received extensive media coverage, accompanied by camera crews and documentation published on social media. PCATI wishes to draw Your Honor's attention both to the legal aspects of the incident, including the prohibition on outrages upon personal dignity, and to the gravity of the human context of show visits to prisons holding detainees and prisoners classified as "security prisoners" under conditions of ill-treatment and torture.

2. The Filmed Visit at Damon

Today, August 30, 2026, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir published, on his own initiative and through media and social-media channels, filmed footage of a visit he recently conducted week to the "security" prisoners wing at Damon Prison. The footage shows the Minister entering cells and questioning the women prisoners held there, who complained to him about the harsh detention conditions imposed on them by the Israel Prison Service (IPS), including the absence of functioning showers and water in the cells, denial of medical treatment, frequent raids by guards, and unprovoked violence. The Minister responded dismissively, stating that the purpose of his visit was "to see up close the implementation of" his policy, and further stated that his goal was to bring detention conditions down to "the minimum of the minimum."

This visit continues a recurring, well-documented pattern of conduct, one for which the Central Elections Committee, under Your Honor's chairmanship, has already issued rulings.

3. The Recurring Pattern and Prior Rulings

This is a direct continuation of a series of incidents already addressed by the Committee:

- On March 18, 2026, the Central Elections Committee ordered the National Security Minister to remove from the Internet videos he had filmed, ruling that he had made improper use of the Israel Police and the Israel Prison Service for election-campaign purposes.

- Following a further visit captured in a self-promotional video filmed at the Prisoners of the Underground Museum, which was ruled unlawful campaign propaganda, the Minister and his party were fined roughly NIS 28,000.
- In July 2026, Your Honor ordered the Minister to explain why the provisions of Section 2A of the Elections Law (Campaign Methods), 5719-1959 — which prohibits the use of public resources for election-campaign purposes — were not being violated with respect to a planned press tour of Ofer Prison, a demand that led to the tour's cancellation.
- In a series of rulings over the years, including during the current election campaign, the Committee has repeatedly reaffirmed the prohibition on using state facilities and state employees for election-campaign purposes and has even ordered the removal of publications of this kind.

4. This Constitutes Unlawful Election Campaigning

Section 2A of the Elections Law (Campaign Methods), 5719-1959, prohibits the use of a public resource — including personnel, facilities, and official authority — for election-campaign purposes. A widely publicized visit by a senior minister, assisted by the IPS apparatus and film crews, producing promotional content for election day just weeks in advance, and published at the initiative of the Minister and his own party, fully meets the definitions Your Honor has already established in previous rulings, and requires no further interpretation. The gravity of the act is compounded by the fact that the backdrop for this campaigning is women held in state custody, with no ability to object to the situation or to the mockery of their complaints: this is a political exploitation of a defenseless population for personal electoral gain, turning documented suffering into marketing content.

Furthermore, given that family visits and MK visits are not, in practice, being permitted, and that photography inside the prison is prohibited, this amounts to an abuse of the Minister's authority over the IPS: the very act of entry and filming is a privilege granted by the Minister himself, for his own political purposes.

5. The Prohibition on Violating the Dignity of Detainees

Article 3, common to all four 1949 [Geneva Conventions](#), provides that anyone held in the custody of a party to a conflict or an occupying power must "in all circumstances be treated humanely." The prohibited acts set out in that article include "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment" — a protection that applies to detainees who are residents of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Violations of the Third Geneva Convention can be considered [war crimes](#). Blurring the faces of the prisoners reduced the severity of the humiliation, but the relatively small number of detainees held at Damon Prison does not allow adequate protection of their identities. Even if the women filmed were not identified by face, they were coerced into being subjected to humiliating questioning and contemptuous treatment, which violates their dignity and is also prohibited under the Convention Against Torture, which the State of Israel is bound to uphold.

6. Context: The Appalling Detention Conditions of Women Prisoners at Damon

This show visit does not occur in a vacuum. PCATI represents a number of women prisoners held in the security wing for women at Damon Prison in proceedings concerning their conditions of detention. The complaints voiced by the prisoners and documented today are consistent with claims PCATI has long

since raised in those proceedings, including prolonged isolation from the outside world — including of girls; severe deficiencies in nutrition; conditions amounting to torture, applied even to pregnant women; and more. This policy has been publicized both by the Minister himself and by PCATI and other human-rights organizations, and has drawn international attention. The Minister’s statement that detention conditions were deliberately lowered to “the minimum of the minimum” is, in effect, an admission of — and boast about — that very policy, made for campaign purposes.

Publishing footage taken from inside the cells of prisoners who are simultaneously represented in pending legal proceedings concerning the very conditions documented in that footage may also constitute an improper attempt to influence the legal proceedings concerning them, to violate their privacy and dignity, and to serve as a means of deterrence against them or their family members.

7. Remedies Sought

In light of the above, PCATI calls on Your Honor to exercise the full extent of the powers vested in you as Chairman of the Committee, including:

- Ordering the immediate removal, from all online platforms, of all footage published from the visit to Damon Prison.
- Imposing on those responsible for the described offenses the maximum financial sanction available under the circumstances, given that this is a repeated, recurring violation following prior fines and warnings.
- Instructing the National Security Minister, the IPS, and all candidates and officeholders granted special access to detainees and prisoners by virtue of their position, by official and explicit notice, that media-covered visits to prisons during an election campaign are prohibited under Section 2A of the Elections Law (Campaign Methods), and that any further visit of this kind before the end of the election campaign will be treated as a deliberate violation of the Committee’s directives.
- Considering, in light of the recurrence of these violations and the enforcement measures already taken, referring the matter for examination of criminal enforcement under the Elections Law, as well as examining the imposition of a preventive order barring further media-covered visits to prisons — particularly to security wings — until the end of the election campaign, except with the Committee’s prior approval and under supervised conditions.
- Instructing the above-mentioned parties to refrain from any further publication of footage taken from the cells of women prisoners who are parties to pending legal proceedings concerning their conditions of detention, including those represented by PCATI, given the risk of harm to their privacy, their dignity, and the proper conduct of those proceedings; and warning them of the sanctions they will face should they violate this instruction.
- Taking any further step within Your Honor’s authority as Chairman of the Committee that would help ensure that public resources and incarcerated populations are no longer used as a campaign tool by holders of public office.

8. Summary

PCATI regards the broadcast of the visit to Damon Prison as a repetition of shameful and unlawful conduct, and calls on Your Honor to act without delay. PCATI remains available to the Committee for any clarification or further information required, and requests Your Honor's decision at the earliest possible opportunity, given the urgency of the matter.

Respectfully,

Meirav Ben Ze'ev, Adv.
Director of the Legal Department
Public Committee Against Torture in Israel

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel is proud of the support and funding it receives from private individuals, foundations, governments, and professional bodies. Most of PCATI's funding comes from foreign state entities.