General

Israel Prison Service, the National Detention Organization of the State of Israel, has 32 prison facilities holding 17,500 criminal and security prisoners and detainees, from all walks of society, as well as women and minors – who have been removed from society in accordance with the law, and are serving sentences for a variety of crimes, carrying sentences that range from short periods to life imprisonment. Israel Prison Service is also responsible for about two thousand prisoners who are carrying out community service work, about one thousand detainees under electronic surveillance and about one thousand sex offenders living in the community. 8,500 members of staff are in command of maintaining these prisoners under legal custody: wardens, officers, and soldiers on regular military duty who serve in a range of functions: security, intelligence, care, rehabilitation, education and headquarters.

The Vision - one of the world's leading prison organizations

During the first decade of the new millennium, a national strategic decision was taken in accordance with which the IPS shall serve as the exclusive civilian detention organization in the State of Israel. In order to implement the decision, responsibility for all the police prisons and military detention facilities holding security prisoners was transferred to the Israel Prison Service (IPS). This move doubled the number of prisoners they were responsible for, and the number of IPS staff has been increased accordingly. After realizing this objective, the Prison Service continued looking towards the future, setting a new vision for itself - to be the leading Prison Organization in the world. A new multi-year program has been developed to help achieve this goal.

The main areas with which the prison service is involved:

› Safe custody – maximal, effective supervision of inmates inside and outside the prisons, to prevent escape and to secure the perimeters and prevent the facilities from attack.

› Proper custody and internment resources - improvement in the living conditions with the goal of reaching international standards, through optimal utilization of resources and development of alternatives to imprisonment.

› Correction - Maximum utilization of the period of imprisonment to efficiently treat the population of offenders so that they may reintegrate into society productively in the future.

› Crime prevention - minimizing the level of crime within, from and into the prison, as part of the ongoing fight against crime in Israel.

› The human resource - developing the human resource in accordance with the requirements of the job, and its needs in a changing and challenging environment, in the knowledge that the staff is the key to the organization’s success.

› Technology - utilizing technology as a support for goal achievement, to improve and optimize the IPS work environment.
The treatment of criminal prisoners

When a person enters prison to serve a sentence, his way of life changes drastically. The separation from his natural environment, his loss of freedom, the harsh living conditions, and an unfamiliar society and environment all make the term of incarceration problematic. The treatment framework provided inside the prisons aims to assist the prisoner during this period, and to motivate him to amend his criminal background, while guiding him towards other means by which to cope and live his life.

Correction is conducted through a variety of activities undertaken by the Prison Service during the period of incarceration, such as: education, employment, therapy, religion and rehabilitation, with the challenge being to prevent recidivism.

Security Prisoners

There are some 4,500 security prisoners and detainees incarcerated in the Israel Prison Service, about 50% of whom for crimes “with blood on their hands”. These prisoners include men, women and minors. Among the security prisoners one finds senior members of Palestinian terrorist organizations, terrorists who were on their way to a suicide mission and were apprehended by the defense forces; dispatchers; attack planners; those responsible for preparing the explosives, etc. As the primary law enforcement agency, the IPS is responsible for the incarceration of these prisoners while addressing and accommodating the prisoners’ basic needs in accordance with the law.

The prison services trains its guards to handle the job in the best and most professional manner, both during routine times and emergencies; working with a populace of dangerous prisoners; protecting the prison staff while preventing any activity or preparation of terrorist activity from within the prison walls.
Special Units

The IPS, both routinely and during emergency situations, must deal with a variety of threats such as: prisoners escaping from the prison facilities or while they are being escorted outside the prison; physical attacks on the members of staff; taking guards hostage; riots; smuggling of forbidden items, drugs, alcohol, etc. In order to deal with such scenarios, the organization must be committed to the highest possible level of professionalism, constantly learning and mastering enhanced task performance. In addition to routine training of all the organization’s guards, three special operational units have been established.

The Nahshon Unit – This unit transfers prisoners and detainees between prison facilities and the Courts; they also serve as an intervention force and serve as security during riots inside the facilities.

The Massada Unit - this is the operational control unit of the IPS that operates during complex occurrences that may take place within the detention facilities; they are also involved in locating and apprehending prisoners on the run.

The Dror Unit – a counter-intelligence drug unit that works to expose caches of drugs, and the smuggling of drugs and other dangerous items into the prison.