



To:

**His Excellency, Hon Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel**

Cc: Israeli Public Health Physicians Association/ Israeli Public Health Association

Geneva, 09/03/2023

Dear President Isaac Herzog,

I am writing on behalf of the World Federation of Public Health Association, international health organization, to warn that the legal changes being proposed in Israel endanger public health and to express solidarity with health professionals in Israel whose professional autonomy and independence are under threat.

Israel's governance and health system have set an example for the world. They are committed to providing all citizens with the highest health standards and principles of equity and ethical, medical, and scientific excellence, as enshrined in the constitution of the World Health Organization<sup>1</sup> and ratified by the State of Israel.

These principles recognize that:

- *The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.*
- *Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures.*
- *The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.*

Israel has expressed its unwavering foundational commitment to the community of nations in its declaration of independence; through membership, participation and leadership in international agencies, including the World Health Organization and the World Federation of Public Health Associations, and by extending medical and humanitarian assistance to individuals and states, in the region and beyond, notwithstanding internal societal and economic challenges and an external existential conflict.

As president of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, I am alarmed by the drive of Israel's present ruling coalition to weaken the independence of the judiciary to eliminate essential

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<https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution#:~:text=The%20Constitution%20was%20adopted%20by,are%20incorporated%20into%20this%20text.>



checks and balances on the executive branch's power. The proposed changes, if enacted, will alter Israel's regime by eliminating basic protections for human rights.

They threaten to undermine the measures designed to ensure that the government fulfils its legal responsibility to protect and promote the health of all people and to provide adequate health and social measures, which are an inalienable and fundamental right that cannot and must not be abrogated by legislation, executive order, or by a subjugated Supreme Court<sup>2</sup>.

Passing the proposed reforms would imperil Israel's international standing and the fundamental right of every person in Israel to enjoy the protection and promotion of the highest standard of health without distinction of race, religion, political belief, and economic and social condition.

I support your efforts to reach a compromise and avert a constitutional crisis and a dangerous rift in Israeli society. However, the legal system's authority to ensure the Government upholds the fundamental principle and inalienable human right to health must not be compromised.

Domestic and international actions are essential to ensure good governance to protect health; prevent disease and disability; address the social, environmental and economic determinants of disease and reduce inequities in order to promote health and social resilience. These goals cannot be safeguarded if the ruling coalition is allowed to grant itself unfettered power.

President Herzog, you are the head of State and ratifying signatory to all laws passed by the Knesset. I urge you to exert your full moral leadership and constitutional authority to guarantee and safeguard the State of Israel's unconditional commitment to providing the fundamental human right to health for all its people.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Luis Eugenio de Souza  
WFPHA President

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://en.zulata.org.il/consequences-of-regime-change-on-public-health/>