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**UN Human Rights Council**  
**UPR Working Group 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 9 May 2023**

**Israel**

**Opening Statement**

Ambassador Meirav Eilon Shahar  
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva

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I am pleased to be here today for the 4<sup>th</sup> Universal Periodic Review of the State of Israel. With me is a distinguished delegation from various Ministries in Israel representing a wide range of topics we wish to bring to your attention during this review.

I am honored to present the members of our delegation:

Co-head of the delegation, **Dr. Gilad Noam**, Deputy Attorney General at the Ministry of Justice.

- **Adv. Mariam Kabaha**, National Commissioner at the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, at the Ministry of Economy and Industry;
- **Adv. Ayelet RAZIN BET-OR**, Director of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, at the Ministry for the advancement of the status of women;
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From the Ministry of Justice:

- **Adv. Dina Dominitz**, National Coordinator against human trafficking, prostitution and polygamy.
- **Mr. Dan RASHAL**, Commissioner for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- **Adv. Aweke Kobe ZENA**, National Anti- Racism Coordinator.
- **Adv. Hila TENE-GILAD**, Senior Director of Human Rights and Relations with International Organizations.

From the Ministry of Social Equality, **Dr. Ilham SHAHBARI**, Arab Affairs Advisor to the Director General

From the Israel Defense Forces, **Maj. Avishai KAPLAN**, International Law Department, Military Advocate General

From The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Adv. Rafael E. REUBEN**, UPR Focal Point, International Law Department, Legal Division

- Mr. Ilay LEVI, Human Rights and International Organizations Division

And the members of my own team from the Mission: Adi Farjon-Israel, Merav Marks, Brian Frenkel, Josh Pike, Nathan Chichepotiche and Haia Abbas.

We welcome the opportunity to engage in a fruitful, objective and professional dialogue with the Human Rights Council. Israel views the UPR process as an important tool in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are looking forward to the dialogue today.

In preparation for this review, Israel engaged in a broad collaborative effort with many Israeli Government Ministries and authorities, and in an open and professional dialogue with a wide range of representatives from civil society and academia.

This year we mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human rights as well as 75th anniversary of Israel's independence. Since its establishment, Israel has been dealing with many challenges. Nevertheless, it constantly strives to foster an open and democratic society where the rights of all its citizens are upheld, where coexistence comprised of a multitude of different cultural, religious, racial and ethnic groups is a corner stone of its society.

Just last month citizens in Israel celebrated Passover, Easter and Ramadan. This included facilitating the entrance of hundreds of thousands of Muslims worshipers each day to temple mount during the Ramadan, and tens of thousands of Christians to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during Easter. Israel remains committed to the enjoyment of the right of freedom of religion and access to holy sites to all.

Over the same time period, Israel faced numerous security threats including over 160 rockets fired at Israeli civilians both from Gaza and Lebanon and several terrorist attacks, which took the lives of innocent Israeli citizens with the aim of undermining the very coexistence we all thrive to achieve.

Israel does not shy away from criticism and actively engages with those who criticize it in a fair and balanced manner. This is why we are here today. However, we cannot ignore the one sided and ongoing discriminatory treatment to which Israel is subjected to by this Council, including the infamous stand-alone Item 7, an open mandated COI and an open-ended special rapporteur. This institutional bias does not prevent Israel's continued engagement with non-politicized human rights mechanisms and the UPR.

Accordingly, during the reporting period, Israel has engaged constructively in many forums and with multiple stakeholders. For example, last year at the Human Rights Council, Israel presented its first ever resolution, together with Germany, Greece and Argentina, on combatting cyberbullying. Israel also engages constantly with many special procedures mandate holders and participates actively in the Council's work. Furthermore, Israel is a member of seven core UN Human Rights Conventions, and of many other Human Rights instruments. This reflects Israel's strong commitment to the important protections established in those conventions, and to their additional monitoring mechanisms.

This engagement has also put Israel at the forefront of many issues relating to human rights in the multilateral level, including on the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, the rights and agency of children, the rights of older persons and the fight against ageism, the rights of women and girls, LGBTQI community, the promotion of gender equality, and more.

Before passing the floor to my distinguished colleague Dr. Gilad Noam, Deputy Attorney General at the Ministry of Justice, it is important for me that we all recall that in 2014, the Hamas terrorist organization killed and kidnapped two IDF soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin. Hamas is also holding Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, two young Israeli civilians who are both persons with psychosocial disabilities. Hamas has not allowed ICRC visits, and in all likelihood, Avera and Hisham have been deprived of the medical treatment they need. This situation must stop. The suffering of the kidnapped and their families must end.

With that, I will now pass the floor to Dr. Gilad Noam.