

June 19, 2025

## **Operation Rising Lion: A Special Home Front Situation | Explainer**

What are the implications of declaring a “special home front situation”, and what powers does such a declaration confer to Israeli authorities? Are the restrictions that the government has imposed on citizens leaving Israel legal? What rights do citizens have in areas regarding which such a declaration has been made? What’s the difference between a “special home front situation” and the ongoing “emergency situation” that has long been in force in Israel? This article explains these issues, and more.

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On June 13, 2025, with the launch of Operation Rising Lion against Iran, the Israeli minister of defense declared a “special home front situation” applicable to the entire territory of the State of Israel. Two days later, the government passed a decision to extend this declaration through to June 30, 2025, subject to the approval of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, which is due to convene soon for this purpose, as per reports in the media.

This article provides a short explanation about the declaration of a special home front situation, its implications for Israel’s citizens, and the differences between this declaration and other declarations related to emergency situations and war.

### **What is a declaration of “special home front situation”?**

The Civil Defense Law (1951) cites two situations involving armed conflict in which IDF forces are granted special powers on the home front:

1. An “attack situation”—a period during which an attack on Israel takes place in a specific area, lasting up to 24 hours from the beginning of the attack (or less, if an all-clear is given).
2. A “special home front situation”, which is declared when there is a high likelihood of an attack on the civilian population in all or part of the State of Israel.



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Particularly relevant to the current circumstances is the special home front situation. The law grants the authority to declare such a situation to the government (or to the minister of defense, if the government has not used these powers).<sup>1</sup> A government declaration of a special home front situation must be ratified by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee within five days. A declaration made by the defense minister expires within 48 hours unless it is extended to five days by the government, in which case it will need to be further extended by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

In fact, a special home front situation was already in place in Israel before the launch of Operation Rising Lion, following the October 7 attack (see [here](#)). At 8 a.m. on that terrible day, the defense minister declared a special home front situation in the Gaza border region. Later that day, the defense minister declared an expansion of the special home front situation to apply to the entire country. On October 8, the government passed Resolution 941, extending the defense minister's declaration of a special home front situation. This government decision was submitted for ratification by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on October 9, and the Committee duly ratified it on October 12, limiting the declaration for a period of seven days. Since then, throughout the Iron Swords war, the government has decided to extend the defense minister's declaration with respect to all or part of the territory of the State of Israel, and these decisions have been approved by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, the government extended the declaration of a special home front situation through July 10, 2025, in a reduced format applicable only to areas close to the Gaza border region. The Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee has approved this extension until June 26, 2025.<sup>3</sup>

As noted, with the launch of Operation Rising Lion, the defense minister declared a special home front situation throughout the

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<sup>1</sup> Section 9(c) of the Civil Defense Law (1951), henceforth referred to as the Civil Defense Law.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, government resolution number 2654 from January 5, 2025, under the heading "Extension of the declaration of a special home front situation".

<sup>3</sup> See government resolution number 3123 from June 8, 2025, under the heading "Extension of the declaration of a special home front situation".

country and subsequently asked the government to extend this declaration until June 30. As explained, any such extension requires the approval of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

### **What are the implications of declaring a “special home front situation”?**

Declaring a special home front situation allows the IDF to wield various powers in the area stated in the declaration. Examples include:

- Certain senior IDF officers are empowered to issue, as needed, any instruction to any individual, or to part or all of the Israeli public, necessary to safeguard or save human life or property. Among other powers, they can require that civilians remain in shelters, ban or restrict studies in educational institutions, and issue instructions about personal equipment and supplies for civil defense purposes.<sup>4</sup>
- Senior IDF officers are also empowered to order the evacuation of any equipment or property being held in public shelters. In this context, the law requires residents to remove their belongings from the shared building shelter, and to maintain the shelter in such a way that will facilitate its use at any given time to shelter from attacks. Similarly, during an attack, anyone who has a shelter is obliged to allow any person nearby to enter the shelter and to remain there throughout the attack.<sup>5</sup>
- IDF Home Front officers are empowered to issue any reasonable instruction to any person, and to prevent entry into or exit from a certain area in order to safeguard lives or property.<sup>6</sup>
- IDF Home Front soldiers are allowed to enter any location in order to perform their duties.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Section 9(d) of the Civil Defense Law grants these powers to the following officers: The IDF chief of general staff; his deputy; the head of the IDF General Staff Division; the head of the IDF Civilian Defense Corps; and any IDF officer with the rank of major general serving as the head of one of the IDF regional commands, regarding the region under their command.

<sup>5</sup> Sections 9(d), 14(a)(1), and 15(f) of the Civil Defense Law

<sup>6</sup> Section 9(e) of the Civil Defense Law.

<sup>7</sup> Section 9 of the Civil Defense Law.

Similarly, members of “auxiliary organizations” (including Magen David Adom and the Israel Fire and Rescue Authority), as well as volunteers in these organizations seeking to perform their duty, are required to assist military forces in civilian defense efforts.

In addition, declaring a special home front situation grants powers to government ministers, as laid down in various laws. For example:

- The minister of labor is entitled to issue orders ensuring that work is carried out in essential factories or factories for essential services.<sup>8</sup>
- The minister of labor is entitled to permit the employment of workers beyond regular working hours.<sup>9</sup>
- The minister of communications can order media and communications organizations to cease their activities, to carry out certain activities, or to place their systems at the service of the security forces.<sup>10</sup>
- The minister of transport can order changes in the benefits applicable to air passengers, among other reasons due to the reduced capability of airlines to plan flight schedules and to the limited supply of passenger flights to and from Israel.<sup>11</sup>
- The minister of the interior can allow local authorities to operate outside of their area of jurisdiction and assist other local authorities.<sup>12</sup>

### **Restrictions on leaving Israel**

During the first days of Operation Rising Lion, the media reported that the government had instructed Israeli airlines not to allow Israelis to leave Israel on special flights operated to rescue Israelis stranded

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<sup>8</sup> Emergency Employment Service Law (1967).

<sup>9</sup> Hours of Work and Rest Law (1951).

<sup>10</sup> Communications Law (Bezeq and Broadcasts) (1982).

<sup>11</sup> Section 9(a) of the Aviation Services Law (Compensation and Assistance for Flight Cancellation or Change of Conditions) (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Local Authority Ordinance (new version).

abroad.<sup>13</sup> It was reported that the reason for this was the request of defense authorities to prevent crowds being formed at Ben-Gurion Airport, and thus reduce the risks of a mass casualty event among passengers waiting to fly abroad. However, no legal basis was cited for this government's restriction of the right to leave Israel—a right that is enshrined in section 6(a) of the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. This is a central, fundamental right in every democracy, founded on the right to freedom of movement, which has been recognized by Israeli courts as a higher right, holding special status among basic individual rights. Withholding the right to leave Israel could also lead to harms to other basic rights, such as freedom of occupation.<sup>14</sup> Infringement of this right is only permissible via explicit powers granted by a law that is enacted for proper purpose and that does not overstep the bounds of proportionality.

It is doubtful whether the general authority awarded senior military officials to issue instructions to the civilian population, under section 9(d) of the Civil Defense Law, can be considered an explicit power to place restrictions on leaving Israel. According to the Airports Authority Law, the minister of transportation does indeed have the authority to halt airport operations under conditions and at times determined by the Israel Airports Authority,<sup>15</sup> but the current case involves preventing people from leaving Israel by plane, not suspending the operation of the airport as a whole. In addition, according to the Aviation Law (Security in Civil Aviation), the transport minister may instruct airlines to take specific measures for passenger safety, including measures relating to the presence of people in the vicinity of an aircraft, but even this does not constitute explicit authority to prevent people from leaving Israel by plane.

It is important to note that when the exit of citizens from Israel was restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic, this was based on explicit powers provided by the Special Powers for Dealing with the Novel Coronavirus Law (Temporary Order) (2020), and by virtue of regulations

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<sup>13</sup> Yoram Gavison and Hadar Kaneh, "Government orders airlines not to transport Israelis abroad even when rescue flights begin", *The Marker*, June 15, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> HCJ 1107/21, Oren Shemesh et al. v. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (March 17, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Section 6 of the Airports Authority Law (1977).

enacted in accordance with this law.<sup>16</sup> In our opinion, if the government wishes to restrict the exit of Israeli citizens from Israel, it must, at the very minimum, enact an appropriate emergency regulation, and should such a restriction apply over an extended period, then these powers must be enshrined in law, with a proper defined purpose, and must be proportional—that is, based on clear and proportionate criteria—rather than sweeping powers.<sup>17</sup>

### **What rights are granted to citizens by declaring a special home front situation?**

Declaring a special home front situation grants several rights to citizens in the area affected. For example, employers are not allowed to fire workers for being absent from work in a situation in which the IDF Home Front has forbidden citizens from going to work.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Supervisor of the Banks is entitled to rule that banks are not to place restrictions on bank accounts or account holders because of checks that are declined.<sup>19</sup> In addition, electricity providers are forbidden from disconnecting debtors from their electricity supply during a special home front situation.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding businesses that suffer losses or those whose property is damaged, declaring a special home front situation does not in itself give them the right to automatic compensation. These are separate arrangements, detailed in the Property Tax and Compensation Fund Law (1961), according to which compensation can be received for war

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the High Court of Justice ruled that the regulations containing the conditions for restricting exit from Israel during the pandemic, and which were introduced based on the Special Powers for Dealing with the Novel Coronavirus Law (Temporary Order) (2020), were unconstitutional, as they did not meet the proportionality test. See: HCJ 1107/21, Oren Shemesh et al. v. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (March 17, 2021).

<sup>17</sup> See: Yuval Shany, Mordechai Kremnitzer, Amir Fuchs, Guy Lurie, and Nadiv Mordechai, “Proportionality of restrictions on the entry and exit of citizens to and from Israel”, *Israel Democracy Institute* website, February 23, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Emergency Protection of Workers Law (2006).

<sup>19</sup> Declined Checks Law (1981).

<sup>20</sup> Electricity Market Rules (standards for the level, type, and quality of service provided by external service providers) (2018).

damage—that is, physical damage caused by acts of war<sup>21</sup>—and for indirect damage (losses or loss of profits incurred as a result of war damage) in border locations, as declared by the minister of finance. However, some have argued that the list of declared border locations is out of date and unsuitable to current circumstances.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to this law, over the years temporary regulations have been issued by the finance minister to enable case-specific and time-limited compensation mechanisms for damage caused by wars and operations in recent years.<sup>23</sup>

### **What is the relation between the declaration of a special home front situation and the government's decision to launch Operation Rising Lion?**

According to section 40(a) of the Basic Law: The Government, the authority to decide whether to launch a war or to initiate "a significant military operation which is liable to lead, at a level of probability close to certainty, to war" lies with the government.<sup>24</sup> According to section 40(a1) of the Basic Law, the authority to decide whether to go to war can be delegated to the Ministerial Committee on National Security Affairs ("the political-security cabinet"), on a permanent basis or for a particular instance. In the past, the government has permanently empowered the cabinet to make decisions by virtue of section 40(a). The application of this power in each individual case is subject to the prime minister's determination that it is required for reasons of security, foreign relations, or secrecy. It should be emphasized that the decision to go to war does not, in itself, confer special powers on bodies such as the IDF Home Front Command or the police regarding civilian matters.

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<sup>21</sup> On October 8, 2023, the Israel Tax Authority opened an online [claims system to the public to apply for direct damage compensation](#), in the case of damage to property caused by Operation Swords of Iron.

<sup>22</sup> Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee legal team, *Legal review: Declaring a special home front situation*, May 12, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. See also: Israel Tax Authority website, "[Compensation arrangements for indirect damage \(financial damage\) caused by the Iron Swords war](#)".

<sup>24</sup> See: Eran Shamir-Borer, "Embarking on military operations in Gaza without cabinet authorization is playing with fire", *Israel Democracy Institute* website (19.5.2023).

The Basic Law: The Government does not define the term “war”, and there is no definition of war in any other Israeli law. In international law, “war” is defined as an armed conflict between two or more countries.<sup>25</sup> There is no doubt that Operation Rising Lion meets the definitions of war between two states according to international law, but in our opinion, the operation does not constitute “launching a war”, but is rather a new and more intensive stage of the ongoing armed conflict between Iran and Israel. Indeed, with the launch of the operation, senior Israeli officials referred to Iran’s direct attacks on Israel in 2024, and to the activities of its proxies, with an emphasis on Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, against Israel on October 7, 2023, and during the ensuing period. Iran continued to threaten the use of force against Israel during this period, throughout which Israel regularly made it clear that it was fighting on seven different fronts, including Iran. Therefore, the separation between the armed conflicts that have been taking place since October 2023 and the launch of Operation Rising Lion seems artificial, and it is reasonable to presume that this is not “launching a new war”.<sup>26</sup>

However, in our opinion, it is appropriate to interpret the existing legislation in such a way that escalation in the conflict, as was done at the beginning of Operation Rising Lion, requires discussion and a decision by the government (or at least by the cabinet), even if it is part of an existing war.

1. According to the Basic Law: The Military, the IDF is subject to the authority of the government. Cabinet decisions to launch operations on the scale of Operation Rising Lion are expressions of this authority, which has a dual purpose—to ensure that the military operates in accordance with government decisions, and to ensure that the military is not subject to the authority of only one element in the government.<sup>27</sup> If a cabinet decision is not required for such

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<sup>25</sup> HCJ 6204/06, Beilin v. Prime Minister of Israel, August 1, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Amichai Cohen and Yuval Shany, “A New War or a New Stage in an Ongoing War? Observations on the June 13 Israeli Attack against Iran”, *Just Security*, June 15, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> See: Eran Shamir-Borer and Mirit Lavi, “50 years after the Yom Kippur War, the time has come to take security out of the hands of the security cabinet”, *Israel Democracy Institute* website, September 24, 2023; Amichai Cohen and Mirit Lavi, “The decision about bringing the hostages home cannot remain in the hands of a single person”, *Israel Democracy Institute* website, August 28, 2024.



an important operation, whose consequences may be so far-reaching, then the “authority of the government” is essentially meaningless.

2. The spirit of the Basic Law: The Government suggests that this type of escalation requires a government decision. Thus, the explanatory notes to the amendment to section 40(a) in 2018, which stipulated the requirement for government approval also in relation to military operations that could lead to war, referred to “consequences such as significant harm to public security, including on the home front, extensive mobilization of reserves, damage to the state’s foreign relations, the state’s economy, or other aspects” as being characteristics of “war”. Thus, it would appear that a cabinet decision should also be made regarding very significant military operations, even if they take place within the context of an ongoing war.

Indeed, it was reported that the launch of Operation Rising Lion was approved by the ministers of the political-security cabinet.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that according to the interpretation that we have proposed of the Basic Law: The Government, according to section 40(c), there is an obligation to notify the entire government as soon as possible of the launch of an operation, as well as the subcommittee of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, and the Prime Minister must notify the Knesset as soon as possible.

### **What is the difference between a “special home front situation” and a “civil emergency event”?**

According to the Police Ordinance, a civil emergency event is an event that causes severe harm to public safety, life, or property affecting a large area or population, including natural disasters, environmental disasters, chemical or biological disasters, large-scale accidents, or hostile terrorist activity. A civil emergency event is usually declared by the minister of national security, with this declaration being valid for two days and the minister entitled to extend it to up to four days.

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<sup>28</sup> Itamar Eichner, “Ministers taken underground without their bodyguards and without phones: Behind the scenes of the cabinet”, *Ynet*, June 13, 2025.

Extending a civil emergency event to a period of a week requires a government resolution to be passed, and further extensions require another government resolution and ratification by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. In an area in which a special home front situation has been declared, it is the defense minister who has the sole power to declare a civil emergency event.

During a civilian emergency event, the Israel Police is responsible for command and control activities. Police powers in such an event can be divided into two main categories: First, the power to issue instructions to rescue organizations, including in regards to their activity and the operation of their equipment; and second, powers vis-à-vis the public which may infringe on certain human rights, such as freedom of movement and property rights, in order to save human life or safeguard human property. Thus for example, if an emergency event is declared, police officers may enter any domain if it is necessary for them to perform their duties, including with the use of reasonable force, as long as they identify themselves to the people there, announce the purpose for which their entry is necessary, and warn them that they are prepared to use force in order to enter.

On October 7, Israel's minister of national security declared a civil emergency event, applying to the entire country for a period of two days. The minister specified that this civil emergency event would not apply to areas within a radius of 80 kilometers from the Gaza Strip, with regard to which a special home front situation had already been declared. This is because the national security minister is not empowered to declare a civil emergency event in an area covered by a special home front situation; this can only be done by the minister of defense. However, several hours after the national security minister's announcement, the defense minister declared that the special home front situation would now apply to the entire country. Thus, it would appear that the national security minister's declaration of a civil emergency event was no longer effective from that point on. Regarding Operation Rising Lion, given the fact that a special home front situation was declared for the entire country, the power to declare a civil emergency event lies with the defense minister.



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## **What is the difference between a special home front situation and the constant emergency situation in Israel?**

A special home front situation applies when there is a “special” emergency situation in which the IDF requires powers it does not normally possess.

By contrast, ever since the establishment of the state, Israel has continually been in an “emergency situation”, on the basis of section 38(a) of the Basic Law: The Government, a situation that the Knesset has renewed annually. In this unceasing emergency situation, several laws and ordinances remain in place which are predicated on an emergency situation, and the government is also able to pass emergency regulations—essentially, legislation by the executive branch—in order to protect state security and public safety, and ensure the provision of essential supplies and services. Emergency regulations usually apply for a period of three months (with the option for them to be extended), and they allow the government to override Knesset legislation and to introduce or increase taxes.

Over the years, emergency regulations have been passed by the government in various cases, including to enable the implementation of economic policy—for example, to provide rapid housing solutions in response to the waves of immigration from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. According to a ruling by the Supreme Court, the government is not to use emergency regulations in cases in which the Knesset can exercise its authority and pass a law quickly and in an orderly fashion, and consequently there has been a decline in the use of such regulations. However, following the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, the government used this power on an almost daily basis, among other things in order to place restrictions on social gathering, to extend financial aid to citizens, and more.<sup>29</sup>



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<sup>29</sup> Guy Lurie, Amir Fuchs, and Daphne Benvenisty (2023), *Emergency regulations: A proposal for constitutional reform, Policy Proposal 53*, Israel Democracy Institute.