



----- FOR RELEASE -----

Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) Strongly Condemns Coalition's Attempts to Shut Down the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation

Emergency discussion to be held Oct. 30 with media leaders, Knesset members and other top decision makers; the goal: analyze gravity of current situation, come up with recommendations to prevent callous and candid attempts by politicians to take over Israel's public media

FOR QUOTE:

IDI President Yohanan Plesner on the intention to destroy independent public broadcasting:

"The government's inability to relinquish its political control of public broadcasting is causing grave harm to the foundations of our democracy. MK David Bitan's latest bill will essentially maintain the status quo, whereby public broadcasting is tainted by political corruptions, wastes public funds and operates in a poisonous and pressurized work culture. His proposal is unjustified and does nothing to change the important conclusion that the current Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) cannot be revived into an independent, unprejudiced authority."

Dr. Tehilla Shwartz Altshuler, Director of the Center for Democratic Values and Institutions on Bitan's economic calculations: "Bitan's mathematical acrobatic maneuver of moving money from one hand to the other, laden with multiple internal contradictions, is intended to trick the public. There is no new business model in Bitan's calculations or his bill, there is likewise no vision or nearly any practical ability to look beyond 2018 and plan what public broadcasting in Israel will look like then."

Oct. 28, 2016 ----- The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) strongly condemns MK David Bitan and the Coalition's efforts to shut down the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation (IPBC). In a policy statement sent to Knesset members and the head of the Coalition on Tuesday, Oct. 25, IDI scholars explain that Bitan's proposed bill is scandalous in many ways. First, it lacks vision and professionalism. Second, it is dishonest and harms public interest. Finally, it causes grave harm to freedom of the press in Israel.

According to IDI scholars, public broadcasting – and especially news broadcasting – is a delicate subject and source for the public that requires as much protection as possible. This is because it

must provide oversight of the government while being funded by the government. Separation between the political level (funder) and the body in charge of producing public broadcasting is so important. Past experience, even in Israel, including countless academic reports, have taught us that political pressures are what led to the IBA's challenges and ultimately required the structural change expressed in the 2015 Israeli Public Broadcasting law, which mandated the closure and replacing of the old IBA. The current **bill, presented by Bitan**, not only does not deal with this much-needed structural change, but likewise **would serve to increase politicization of the IPBC, which is already too politicized.**

This blatant attempt to shut down the new IPBC will transform our democracy's watchdogs into watch-puppies, with a goal of weakening and politicizing the IPBC, rendering it unable to do its job. Instead of fighting to improve the efficiency of such an important public body by harnessing its variety of human resources, maintaining its independence and ensuring freedom of expression for the benefit of taxpayers, Bitan's bill will increase politicization and **create government control over a body that in its very DNA is supposed to be independent.**

Dr. Altshuler likewise asserts that the drafters of the new bill ignore the realities of 2016 and do not understand the role of public content in a digital world. She said, "Whoever erects a media body in 2017 that centers on the radio and TV, rather than the Internet, reflects a lack of understanding of our current world and professionalism."

IDI scholars conclude that the previous process of closing down the IBA and opening the IPBC in its stead was one of the most important reforms put forth by the State of Israel. This was a reform that was needed for 25 years and one that is rooted in the recommendations of experts and a law that was drafted with tremendous thought, achieved through understandings reached by the workers' union, IBA, and the Communications and Finance Ministries. The process of establishing the IPBC was nothing short of historical. To halt and destroy this process now will serve as an indication to the Israeli public that we cannot fix what is broken in this country. Is this the less we want to teach our children?

For more information or interviews, please contact Maayan Hoffman, Director of International Communications, jaffemaayan@idi.org.il or 050-718-9742.

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Israel Democracy Emergency Discussion:

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS MEDIA THAT IS TOO FREE!

October 30, 2016 | 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. | Israel Democracy Institute, 4 Pinsker St., Jerusalem

This event will be held in Hebrew and live streamed on the IDI website.