**-Press Release-**

**Transparency International–Israel releases the first ever report on the National Integrity System: How immune from corruption are Israel’s governmental and civic institutions?**

* The first ever “**National Integrity System Report on Israel”** was prepared and released by **Transparency International-Israel**. The report ranks ten major civic and governmental domains according to their level of immunity from corruption.
* The report ranks the Civil Service Commission in last place, with 52 out of 100 possible points. Also ranked at the bottom of the list are the government, i.e. the executive branch, (58/100), and the political parties (60/100).
* The report found that the Israeli institution most immune from corruption is the Central Elections Committee (91/100). The Office of the State Comptroller and Ombudsman (83/100) and the judicial branch (81/100) scored high in the rankings as well.
* **The report points to an oppositional institutional structure, in which the government and its public and political arms (the Civil Service Commission and the parties) are eroding national integrity. At the same time, the Central Elections Committee, the judicial branch and the State Comptroller function as safeguard and protection mechanisms against this erosion.**

**Tel Aviv - November 11, 2014**

**“The National Integrity System Report on Israel”**, released today by **Transparency International-Israel**, examines for the first time the immunity from corruption of the main civic and governmental institutions (the country’s pillars) in Israel. The premise of the evaluation is that a high level of national integrity enables the rule of law and democracy, and a high quality of life. The results constitute a benchmark for future evaluations of the improvement or erosion of the national integrity. The immunity of each of the ten institutions in the report is based on an examination of its functional ability (resources and its level of independence from outside interference); its quality of governance in terms of its integrity, accountability and transparency; and the role of the institution/pillar in the fight against corruption.

The report concludes that the Civil Service Commission is the Israeli institution least immune from corruption. The Commission ranks last in the report, scoring 52 out of 100 possible points. The highest ranking body was the Central Elections Committee, which scored 91 out of 100 points.

Coming in second in **the National Integrity System** rankings, is the Office of the State Comptroller and Ombudsman (83 out of 100); third is the judicial branch (81 out of 100); in fourth place are the law enforcement agencies, including the police and the State Attorney (75 out of 100); fifth is media (71 out of 100); followed by civil society (69 out of 100); the legislative branch (68 out of 100); the political parties (60 out of 100); the executive branch (58 out of 100); and the aforementioned Civil Service Commission which ranks last (52 out of 100).

**The National Integrity System** study, conducted for the first time in Israel by **Transparency International-Israel**, was carried out simultaneously in dozens of European countries, although its purpose is not the creation of an index for comparison between countries. **The report examines the Israeli system’s level of immunity from corruption and governance failures. The report evaluates the ten main governmental and civic institutions in Israel, which constitute the pillars on which the national integrity system rests.**

The institutions were evaluated according to three parameters essential to the advancement of integrity and governance, and to the prevention of corruption: first, the functional ability of each institution, to what extent it possesses sufficient resources enabling it to function independently, without interference from outside sources (political or economic interests); second, each institution’s level of good governance, to what extent it adheres to standards of integrity, transparency and accountability to the public; and third, each body’s contribution to supporting the national integrity system.

The report is based on the examination and analysis of existing laws enabling each institution to adhere to these parameters (in theory) as well as on dozens of extensive interviews with people in the field, researchers, and experts in the various sectors examined in the report (the situation in practice). The findings were externally audited and evaluated using a “round table” process including stakeholders and experts in each field. The end product is a score between 1 and 100, assigned to each institution according to set indicators. The report data are correct as of 31/12/2012.

**In general, the report points to an oppositional institutional structure, in which the government and its public and political arms (the Civil Service Commission and the parties) are eroding national integrity. On the other hand are the Central Elections Committee, the judicial branch and the State Comptroller, which function as safeguard and protection mechanisms against this erosion.**

Among the main conclusions of the report is that the government (executive), the Knesset, and the Civil Service Commission make a small active contribution to the fight against corruption, in comparison with the justice system and law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the report concludes that the modus operandi of the government is non-transparency.

With regard to civil society (non-profit and public benefit organizations), the report found that it is limited in its ability to function due to bureaucratic obstructions and overzealous enforcement. The media in Israel was found to be very limited in independence and transparency, despite its central role as a watchdog over national integrity and exposer of corruption.

One of report’s main recommendations was that the government should adopt and promote an agenda that bolsters integrity and fights corruption at the national level. Resources should be allocated towards education for promoting these values and increasing transparency in the various fields of public life. It is further recommended that a meticulous code of ethics be implemented for the government and ministers, and that the Knesset code of ethics currently underway, be completed. In order to prevent the “revolving door” phenomenon, it is recommended that the civil service institute a paid cooling-off period for senior government employees. With respect to the enforcement agencies, the report proposes budget reform as a way of increasing efficient use of resources. It is also recommended that these bodies increase their level of transparency of their activities.

**According to Professor Ran Lachman, who headed the “National Integrity Evaluation” project,** “the study’s conclusions raise concerns over an erosion trend in the ability of the mechanisms safeguarding the national integrity. The ability of these three bodies, the Central Elections Committee, the State Comptroller, and the judiciary, to withstand the pressure and influence exerted by the executive branch, the parties, and the Civil Service Commission, is limited. Doubtless this concern has come to the fore in recent years as evidenced in attacks led by Knesset factions on the judicial branch, via “court override” legislation, and in the attempts to weaken the institution of the State Comptroller and to exert control over the media and restrain its important oversight role. It is fitting that the conclusions of this report serve as a resource for Israeli decision-makers as they set policy”.

**According to Judge (ret.) Micha Lindenstrauss, Chairman of Transparency International-Israel,** “upon reading and analyzing the interesting and useful reports on national integrity released by TI-Israel, headed by Professor Ran Lachman, reports which rank the ten main civic and political spheres in Israel according to their immunity from corruption, we can conclude that everything possible must be done in order to strengthen good governance by shoring up the three known pillars of: **1.** Transparency – the basic premise of which is that any action taken in the public sphere by public administration must be known and open to the public. **2.** Integrity –which is based on the premise that holders of public office must refrain from any conflicts of interest and act according to the highest ethical standards, personally and professionally. **3.** Accountability – which is based on the premise that a public servant, whether elected or appointed, senior or junior, is a trustee of the public’s assets, and owes a duty of faithfulness to his or her agency, to its declared purpose, and to the public, and is responsible for the results of his or her actions as such a trustee. This clear and precise position was detailed at length and proficiently in the June 2012 report on crony capitalism, initiated by and contributed to by the Office of the State Comptroller, and should serve as our guiding light here as well.

“We would be hard-pressed to overstate the importance and centrality of proper and ethical public administration to the well-being of the country. This is also apparent from the practical conclusions of the “crony capitalism” report, according to which the war on public corruption has a ways to go in overcoming public sentiment that the struggle is futile, which it is not. If all of us, all the volunteer organizations who fight against public corruption, work together according to the three goals I outlined above, we can make considerable and significant achievements in this struggle for ethical conduct and a law-abiding society that zealously guards that rule of law.

“Most importantly, we must not tire in this struggle against public corruption, the tough parts are still ahead, but our hope is one – that together we can contribute to an ethical State of Israel, as we know it was envisioned to be at its founding.

**According to Adv. Galia Sagi, CEO of Transparency International-Israel,** “the findings of the report oblige the government and Israeli policymakers to set the war against corruption as one of its strategic goals for the next several years. The quickest and most effective approach is for the government to first increase its own transparency, as well as that of the civil service and the political parties, and increase the protections for whistleblowers.

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**For additional information please contact:**

Irit Nachmani +972-54-668-7006

Udi Avni +972-54-472-4256

Transparency International-Israel spokespersons