



March 30, 2026

## Death Penalty for Terrorists Bill approved in final readings

In its sitting on Monday, the Knesset Plenum voted to approve in second and third readings the Death Penalty for Terrorists Bill, 2026, sponsored by MK Limor Sonn Har Melech (Otzma Yehudit), MK Nissim Vaturi (Likud), and a group of MKs. In the vote 62 MKs supported the proposal, 48 MKs voted against the bill, and one abstained. The opposition's reservations to the bill were all rejected.

It is proposed to stipulate that the Minister of Defense will instruct the commander of IDF forces in the region to amend the Order regarding Security Provisions that is applicable in the Judea and Samaria region, so that a resident of the area - excluding an Israeli citizen or a resident of Israel - who intentionally causes the death of a person in an act of terrorism shall be subject only to the death penalty, unless the military court finds that special circumstances justify imposing life imprisonment instead.

It is further proposed to determine that the authority of a military court to impose this sentence will not be conditional upon a request by the prosecution, a unanimous decision of the panel, or the judges holding a rank of at least lieutenant colonel. It is also proposed that the commander of IDF forces in the region will not be authorized to pardon, mitigate, or commute a death sentence imposed for this offense.

In addition, it is proposed to amend the Penal Law so that a person who causes the death of another with the intent of denying the existence of the State of Israel, under circumstances constituting an act of terrorism, shall be liable only to death or life imprisonment. It is likewise proposed that the court's authority to impose the death penalty under the Penal Law and under the Crime of Genocide (Prevention and Punishment) Law will not be conditional upon a request by the prosecution.

It is further proposed to establish that a death sentence under this law will be carried out by hanging within 90 days from the date it becomes final, and to authorize the Prime Minister to request that the court delay the execution for special reasons, for a cumulative period not exceeding 180 days.

It is also proposed to amend Basic Law: The Government so that the government will not be permitted to order the release from imprisonment of a person convicted, suspected, or accused of an offense punishable by death. Additionally, it is proposed to amend the Prisons Ordinance to

establish arrangements regarding the conditions of segregation for a person sentenced to death, restrictions on access to such a person, and the confidentiality of the execution of the sentence.

Finally, it is proposed to amend the Rights of Victims of Crime Law to enshrine the right of victims to receive updates from the Israel Prison Service regarding the date of execution of the sentence.

The explanatory notes to the bill state: "The Penal Law, 1977, prescribes a sentence of life imprisonment for the offense of murder. Experience shows that this penalty does not deter terrorists, since many of them presume that their imprisonment period will be shortened significantly in deals that include a prisoner release. Many terrorists have also returned to their former behavior and continued to engage in terrorist activity after their release. Since the prison sentence is not a sufficient deterrent, it is proposed to stipulate that the penalty for terrorists who have committed acts of murder will be death. This penalty will serve as a deterrent and will be able to prevent further acts of murder from being committed."

National Security Committee Chair MK Tzvika Foghel (Otzma Yehudit) presented the bill, saying, "The State of Israel is coping with a reality of evil and hatred that are unparalleled worldwide. Our enemies do not seek a border, a compromise or a shared future, but rather to destroy, to attack, to sow fear here and to challenge our very existence here. In the face of such a reality, our responsibility is clear—to protect the citizens of Israel. Not by words or hopes, but by actions. This bill is not a bill of revenge or rage, it is a bill of a state's responsibility towards its citizens, of a leadership towards human life. The reality has changed, and I am glad to say that the security doctrine of the senior officials of the defense establishment has also changed, particularly after we parted from those who were the defenders of the [previous] preconception and now everyone supports the need to advance the bill, even if they had remarks on its details. After dozens of debates, most of which were in-depth and serious, a reasonable bill was formulated here, which understands the complexity of the reality but also does not deny it.

"The existing option for a death penalty in Israeli law has not been implemented since the Eichmann trial. This bill adds a significant tier to the defensive wall that we are obligated to build, particularly since that 'Black Sabbath.' We are not bloodthirsty and do not seek to kill; we are a nation that sanctifies life, and for this reason we cannot afford to forsake lives. This bill is part of an array of changes and another tier in the path towards winning the War of Revival and the battle for our future and the future of our children.

"The bill will enable the death penalty to be imposed for an act of murder under terrorist circumstances in Israel's territory and also in Judea and Samaria. The deterrence will be increased towards future terrorists, because a terrorist will know that the outcome will not be a few years in prison, but rather to end his life. Another tool will be added to the war on terrorism, and the incentive will be reduced to commit terrorist attacks for the purpose of bargaining to release prisoners. The bill does not require a unanimous conviction, and it also stipulates that a prisoner sentenced to death will be held in a separate cell block, and the sentence will be carried out within 90 days and after an automatic appeal. The message is very clear—whoever chooses the path of terrorism and raises a hand against Israel's citizens with the aim of destroying, will know that this has an unequivocal and irreversible price. Some will say that this is immoral, and

I say, there is nothing more moral and ethical than to protect our citizens' lives," said MK Foghel.

MK Gilad Kariv (Labor) commented on the bill, saying, "This is an immoral, un-Jewish and undemocratic bill, which is also not effective from a security standpoint. In all the long months of the deliberations on this bill, not a single opinion was laid before the committee that justifies the basic assumptions upon which it is based. Each time we requested a professional opinion, [or] details on the extensive staff work that was ostensibly carried out—the professionals disappeared and we received nothing. No document that supports the basic assumption that instituting a death penalty increases deterrence. Who is to say that applying a death penalty will not actually increase motivation for revenge and high-profile terrorist attacks? Let the citizens of Israel know that the committee devoted more time to [Minister of National Security MK] Itamar Ben Gvir (Otzma Yehudit)'s TikTok videos than to opinions of officials from the National Security Council, the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) and the Mossad, which expressed opposition to the final wording of the bill. The bill explicitly contradicts the provisions of international law that Israel has undertaken [to observe]. You are forsaking the IDF officers and the IPS prison guards. Don't make them into war criminals against their will by primary legislation of the Knesset.

"This bill places Israel in the most extreme position in the democratic world with regard to the death penalty. Wherever it was necessary to choose, you always chose to turn to the extreme, to the abyss, to the fringe. A bill in which a person can be sentenced to death without a unanimous conviction. Do you consider that justice? Is that the sanctity of life that Jewish tradition has taught us? This bill also doesn't apply to the Nukhba terrorists. But [Minister MK] Ben Gvir and [MK] Foghel have no problem with coming here and, at the expense of the memory of those who were killed on Simchat Torah [October 7], lying to Israel's citizens as if the bill applies to them. You removed the section that applies to them from the bill.

"Above all, the citizens of Israel should know that in this vile bill, a section was included that ties the hands of Israel's government in conducting negotiations over the release of Israeli citizens who were kidnapped by vile terrorist organizations. [This is] the parliamentary group whose members voted time after time against deals for the return of hostages, even the first one, in which babies and children were returned. Even after hundreds of days in which our brothers and sisters were beaten, starved and raped in the Hamas tunnels, which were built with money that [Prime Minister MK Benjamin] Netanyahu (Likud) transferred to them. 'Would you murder and also take possession?'" said MK Kariv.

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