

An Accountability Deficit in the System for Dealing with Complaints against the Police in Israel

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Israel has a two-tier system for dealing with complaints against the police. The Department of Internal Police Investigations at the Ministry of Justice (“Machash”) handles the more serious complaints, while less serious complaints are handled by the Police internally. This system suffers from an “accountability deficit”. First, it does not accord with international principles of the investigation of complaints against police: independence, adequacy, promptness, transparency, and involvement of victims. Second, complaints data is ignored for the purposes of advancing the organizational interests of the Police. Though it is a single two-tiered system, the two tiers do not have enough contact between them. There is no authority in charge of assessing complaints data, and most complaints to Machash are closed without any consideration of organizational reforms, beyond individual criminal or disciplinary sanctions. It is thus an ineffective system for the investigation of complaints, which fails to advance the accountability of the Police.