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Deputy A-G: Gov't ignoring IDF's manpower needs

• By SARAH BEN-NUN

The government is ignoring the needs of the army to fill its ranks in its failure to pass a comprehensive draft law, Deputy Attorney-General Gil Limon charged at the annual conference at Reichman University's Rubinstein Center for Constitutional Challenges on Thursday.

The High Court of Justice ruled in June that haredi (ultra-Orthodox) men can no longer be exempt from the draft. Attorney-General Gali Baharav-Miara then ordered an immediate conscription of draft-eligible men, as well as sanctions against those who dodge the draft.

Limon wrote in a letter to Defense Ministry legal adviser Hila Erlich-Amar last month that the sanctions must be enforced so that the IDF's manpower needs, dire since the war and requiring reservists to complete still-ongoing rounds of service, can be met.

"The IDF has told everyone – the Knesset, the legal advisory, Defense Minister Israel Katz, 'We need more soldiers,' 10,000 in fact... This is something that affects the market, the reservists, and the economy," said Limon on Thursday.

He added, "The first group of people that should have discussed this is the government – and there have not been any discussions; this has nothing to do with legal difficulties."

Limon further explained that the government's legal advisory teams ensure that Israel remains a law-abiding state.

"At the end of the day," he said, "the government has a massive amount of power – people don't understand how much. This power expresses itself in everything that happens: budget, education, securi-

ty, housing, and appointments. The government decides who the responsible person will be for paving roads and for building a school curriculum – this power is present in everything.

"To ensure that a state will follow democratic laws, it has to have an inner checks-and-balances system to make sure that its legislation is in line with the law. There are cases where the legal advisory teams say no to certain decisions – that is its job," he said.

The letter that Limon sent to Erlich-Amar was sent not due to any law – but rather because there is no law that exists, he said.

Limon's statements spoke to the core of a much more fundamental tension that touches every aspect of Israeli society, particularly the points of disagreement: Israel's dual nature as a Jewish and democratic state.

This was the subject of the Reichman conference and was touched upon by many figures who dealt with it in their respective careers.

Former Supreme Court president Aharon Barak said, "This state is not just Jewish, it is also democratic. This is the exact

point where the conflict begins, as does the need to resolve it. At the end of the day, you can't fully realize the vision of a Jewish state as though there are no democratic elements in it, nor the opposite – to realize the democratic vision without the Jewish elements. If you do, you'll end up where we are now – where we need to find proportional compromises, to search for solutions."

The policies Barak implemented during his tenure as president are the target of the aggressive judicial reform legislation that has been at the heart of this coalition, and which brought to the forefront a serious societal split in the period before the Israel-Hamas war.

"As a judge, a text is placed before me. This is a text that I didn't create, rather it was created by the constituent assembly, the body of people that established Israel's founding legal documents. This assembly produced a text that details Israel's core values as a Jewish and democratic state," he said.

"My belief – and my experience – is that this is possible," he said.

Eliav Breuer contributed to this report.



DEPUTY ATTORNEY-GENERAL Gil Limon attends a conference at Reichman University in Herzliya yesterday. (Tal Gal/Flash90)