



To the Honourable:

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett

Re: **Severe Warning – A Lockdown During The Upcoming Holidays Will be Catastrophic**
Urgent Request for a Meeting with the Prime Minister

To the Honourable Prime Minister,

Firstly, we wish to congratulate you on the formation of the new government.

The complexity of the task you have taken on is unparalleled, certainly in these challenging times, and we wish you heartfelt success.

We are hearing warnings of an impending lockdown during the upcoming holiday period, and we would like to state clearly and strongly - another lockdown will be nothing short of a catastrophe.

The Public Emergency Council is a spontaneous initiative of doctors and researchers who felt that it was no longer possible to remain silent in the face of the outgoing government's steps to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you can see below, among the members of the Council are individuals who constituted and still constitute the backbone of the medical establishment in this country, individuals who are at the heart of the medical consensus: four Israel Prize laureates, a Nobel laureate, experts who have managed four hospitals, a former Director General of the Ministry of Health, a HMO Director General, an IDF Deputy Chief Medical Officer, a founding member of Israel's epidemic treatment team and an expert in disaster situations, university department heads, deans and deputy deans of medical faculties, all of whom have joined together in an extraordinary step, without any political, commercial or personal interest, in order to contribute the vast knowledge and experience which they have acquired to the relevant decision makers.

The council is dedicated to providing a science-based professional opinion, focusing on the widest and most comprehensive view, including physical, mental and social aspects, in order to provide a guiding voice true to the basic principles of medicine and free choice – a balance between courage and conservatism, between the costs of the problem and the cost of possible solutions.

Unfortunately, many decisions made during the crisis' management were political. The policy was dictated in secret by the National Security Council instead of by scientists and physicians. Protocols painstakingly developed with years of effort and experience were "thrown out the window". Instead of enabling free professional exchanges of views, the decision-makers repeatedly engaged in censorship and defamation of anyone who offered a different opinion, in accordance with the message transmitted from the top of the decision-making pyramid.

A propaganda campaign, run to benefit the political echelon, presented what happened in Israel as a success story, when this was far from the truth. Israel enjoyed one of the best starting points in the world at the beginning of the crisis: one of the best health systems in the world, despite having been underfunded for years; the youngest population in the western world; a single point of entry; and a fully developed, organized, pandemic plan, in place since 2007, as a result of our perpetual state of readiness for war. Despite this, we received a comparatively "mediocre grade" in global terms for mortality per capita, with comparatively long and harsh lockdowns, together with the use of controversial surveillance tools not employed in any other western country.



We "won" first place in the world for the severe damage incurred to the education system, harm to citizens' health, and other parameters. When the government did get around to engaging the cooperation of the HMOs in implementing an important vaccination campaign that garnered worldwide admiration, it chose to sabotage the positive reputation gained by virtue of this significant achievement by using indirect coercive measures and turning a blind eye to severe violations of basic individual rights. These actions increased mistrust, polarization, and hostility in Israeli society.

The government chose to present this severe damage and reckless conduct as an extraordinary success and Israel as "the first country to exit the crisis" – a declaration that in fact, lacked any foundation in reality.

Moreover, funds were heavily invested in short-term products of low benefit, instead of acting calmly to strengthen the medical system and staff. The steep price of reckless, political, publicity seeking decisions that yielded ineffective results will be paid for years to come.

We have invested our entire lives in caring for and promoting the health care system in Israel - in treatment, management, education, and research. We could have chosen to remain in our personal and professional comfort zones and continued to observe with discomfort the failures of the government. However, we would have been unable to sleep peacefully had we not chosen to set out and act for the good of the State of Israel and its citizens. We never expected that we would be confronted with a smear campaign by people who have been at the heart of the establishment for decades, launched merely because we chose to employ professional, strategic and wide-ranging considerations.

A government of "change" cannot be just a title - change must be demonstrated, change must be examined through actions. Therefore, during this sensitive and fateful period, we ask you for an urgent meeting with our representatives in order to present our positions regarding actions and steps to be advanced (and the data supporting them), and to ensure that we do not find ourselves once again in a situation where the system operates inefficiently, whereby we all pay an immeasurable price for policy that outweighs any benefits.

We urge you not to continue with the previous government's policies which prevented open discussion and exchange of views. These policies led to three devastating lockdowns, and now appear to be leading to a fourth lockdown, which will be even more devastating. As a leader, it is essential that you hear differing opinions in order to evaluate new and better alternatives.

Thank you in advance and with our blessings of hope and success,

Members of the Public Emergency Council for the Covid19 Crisis



The Members of the Council* (in alphabetical order)



Dr. Ifat Abadi-Korek

An expert in epidemiology and molecular biology, served as a consultant to the national health basket public committee and Head of Pharmacoeconomics Department, Israeli Center for Technology Assessment in Health Care at the Gertner Institute.



Prof. Zvika Granot

Professor of Immunology in the Faculty of Medicine at the Hebrew University. An international expert in the field of neutrophil research, is developing new approaches to immunotherapy.



Dr. Bruria Adini

PhD in health systems management, serves as head of the Department of Emergency and Disaster Management at Tel Aviv University. Former Head of the IDF Emergency Preparedness Division (Lt. Col.) and Senior Consultant to the Ministry of Health's Emergency Division.



Dr. Michal Hemo Lotem

Pediatrician, Entrepreneur and author on leadership at medical futurism. Served as Vice President of Innovation at the Sheba Medical Center, and as a member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Council. Founded Beterem - Safe Kids Israel and OSHEYA - Women Lead Wellness. Received the Prime Minister's special Award for contribution to children.



Prof. Amos Adler

Professor of Medicine in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Specialist in Pediatrics and Clinical Microbiology. Director of the Microbiological Laboratory at Sourasky Medical Center Tel Aviv, Treasurer of the Israeli Association for Infectious Diseases.



Prof. Asa Kasher

Professor Emeritus of Professional Ethics and Philosophy at Tel Aviv University. Laureate of the Israel Prize for Philosophy. Member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. Wrote dozens of state and public codes of ethics, including the military code of ethics, as well as serving as a member of several national public committees.



Prof. Elian Alkrinawi

Professor of Social Work, served as president of the Achva College, head of the Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University and as dean of the School of Social Work at Memorial University in Canada. Killam Award winner and beacon lighter at the 2013 Independence Day ceremony.



Prof. Amnon Lahad

Specialist in Family Medicine (ISR) and Public health (US). Head departments of Family Medicine Hebrew University & Clalit Health Services, Jerusalem, Israel. Vice Dean Academia – Family medicine, Hebrew University. Chairman of the National Council for the Health of the Community. Active family physician in Jerusalem.



Prof. Mira Barak

Professor of Medical Sciences, head of Medical Laboratory Sciences at Zefat Academic College. Managed the R&D division in Carmel Hospital, Director of Haifa and Western Galilee Central Laboratories in Clalit Health Services, founded and managed numerous clinical laboratories, including the central lab of Clalit, the Corona lab in the Northern region, and the designated corona lab at Ben Gurion airport.



Prof. Retsef Levi

Professor of Operations Management at MIT School of Management. An international expert in safety, risk management, design and optimization of health systems and drugs manufacturing systems. He is leading several large-scale research collaborations across the world with leading industry enterprises and government organizations. He has consulted multiple state governments during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Prof. Zvi Bentwich

Professor of Medicine, specialist in Clinical Immunology and Infectious Diseases. Served as Chief of Department of Medicine, and pioneered AIDS medicine in Israel. Currently Head of Center for Tropical Diseases and AIDS at Ben-Gurion University. President of NALA Foundation for the Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Developing Countries and Board Member of Physicians for Human Rights in Israel.



Prof. Lechaim Naggan

Professor of public health and epidemiology. Previously served as deputy chief medical officer in the IDF, the dean of the Department of Health Sciences at Ben Gurion University and, subsequently, as Vice President of the University and Dean of Research and Development. Prof. Naggan was awarded a Life Achievement award by the Union of Public Health Doctors



Dr. Orna Blondheim

Specialist in Pediatrics and Neonatology as well as Director of Health Systems. She served as the director of the Schneider Children's Hospital and served 16 years as CEO of Emek Medical Center.



Prof. Udi Qimron

Chair of the Department of Clinical Microbiology and Immunology at Tel Aviv University. Expert in T cells, mucosal vaccines, genetic engineering of bacterial viruses, and CRISPR. Published in Science, Nature and Cell and has won prestigious research grants including the ERC. Partner in the establishment of the SARS-CoV-2 testing laboratories.



Prof. Emerita Rivka Carmi

Professor of Medicine, Specialist in Pediatrics, Neonatology and Medical Genetics. Served as Director of the Genetic Institute at Soroka Hospital, Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Ben-Gurion University, Chairman of the Dean of Medical Schools Association, President of Ben-Gurion University and Chairman of the Board of Universities.



Dr. Amir Shachar

Specialist in internal medicine, cardiology, emergency medicine and health administration. Established and managed the Department of Emergency Medicine at Sheba Hospital, was deputy director of Meir Hospital and currently heading the ER at Laniado Hospital. Founded the Emergency Medicine department at Tel Aviv University.



Prof. Aaron Ciechanover

Serves as a Distinguished Professor in the Faculty of Medicine in the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. Awarded the chemistry Nobel Prize, as well as the Lasker Award, the Israel Prize, and the EMET Prize. Member of the US National Academies of Sciences (NAS) and Medicine (NAM), the Israeli National Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican.



Prof. Mordechai Shani

Professor of Medicine and Medical Management, Specialist in Internal Medicine. Winner of the Israel Prize. Served twice as Director General of the Ministry of Health and Director of Sheba Hospital, as well as Chairman of the Medicines Committee. Founded and managed the School of Public Health at Tel Aviv University, and also established and managed the National Institute for Health Policy Research.



Prof. Eran Dolev

Professor of Medicine, Military Medicine and Medical History, Specialist in Internal Medicine, Health administration and Ethics in Medicine. He served as Surgeon General of the IDF, Director of Internal Medicine Department, Chairman of the Medical Association's Ethics Bureau and Head of the International Review Board of Tel Aviv University.



Prof Emerita Zahava Solomon

Lt. Col (ret). Recipient of the Israel Prize, the Emet Prize and The Laufer Award. Her research in Social Work and Psychiatric Epidemiology focuses on man - made trauma. Served as head of research in mental health IDF. Head of the School of Social Work and director of the Trauma I-Core, TAU and DSM-4 (APA) committee.



Prof. Asher Elhayany

Professor of Medicine, Specialist in Family Medicine and Public Administration. He served as the CEO of Meir Hospital, the director of the Central District at Clalit HMO, and as the CEO of Meuhedet HMO. He served as chairman of the National Council for Health in the Community. Family doctor in the Negev.



Dr. Yoav Yehezkelli

Specialist in Internal Medicine and Medical Management. Lecturer in the Department of Emergency and Disaster Management at Tel Aviv University. Lt. Col. Res., One of the founders of the epidemic treatment team and evaluation programs for extreme biological incidents. Served as a hospital's deputy director, district physician, director of the primary care division in the HMOs. Medical consultant to KI research institute.



Prof. Eitan Friedman

Professor of Medicine, Specialist in Internal Medicine and Medical Genetics, PhD from Karolinska Institute in Sweden. Established the Ontogenetic Unit and Clinic for High-Risk Women at Sheba Hospital, Chair of the Ministry of Health's Supreme Helsinki Committee.

* The opinions expressed are the individual opinions of the members, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the institutions in which they are affiliated with.