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The Legitimacy of Using Excessive Force during Civil Policing among Israel' s Border Guard Police Officers

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine two main issues: What is the level of legitimacy attributed to the use of excessive force during civil policing among Border Guard Police officers, compared to ordinary police officers and civilians, and how legitimate is it to involve external supervisory bodies when there is a suspicion of unreasonable or unjustified use of force? Every democratic state faces the need to find a balance between two theoretical and normative models: on the one hand the " Due Process Model" which aims to protect the rights of suspected, accused or convicted individuals and, on the other, the " Crime Control Model" , mainly based on an efficient and economical judicial system, and the need to provide society with a sense of security on a daily basis. The research assumption is that police officers as a whole, and specifically members of the Border Police who handle disturbances of peace as well as legal violations, alongside the necessity to combat security threats, tend to hold closer to the " Crime Control Model" and less to the " Due Process Model" , which the police officers find hinders their ability to effectively manage crime. In order to examine this assumption, an attitude questionnaire was constructed, examining the degree of legitimacy for the use of excessive force on the one hand, and supervision of the use of excessive force in police work on the other. The questionnaire was distributed to 140 Border Guard officers and ordinary police officers serving in the Southern Command of the Israeli Police. In addition, 60 questionnaires were distributed to ordinary civilians. Our findings show a high level of support among police officers and civilians alike for the use of excessive force in civil policing operations. The highest level of legitimacy towards the use of excessive force was found, as expected, among the Border Guard officers. The research concludes that the attitudes of the police officers, especially those of the Border Guard who are fighting a constant battle against security threats alongside the war against crime, greatly restrict the power of external and internal supervision mechanisms to effectively supervise the use of unreasonable force during civilian policing.

KEYWORDS

Excessive Force; Police; Legitimization; Israel

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