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### Israeli authorities escalate pressure on Eritreans and Sudanese to leave the country with no clear safeguards or protections

- Detained Eritreans and Sudanese in Holot are now at risk of indefinite imprisonment if they refuse to leave Israel to a third country – allegedly Rwanda or Uganda.
- Immigration Authority allegedly began approaching detainees who do not have pending asylum applications, including those who have been refused asylum, telling them to leave or go to Saharonim prison.
- Current transfer arrangements have remained secret and offer no clear safeguards against human rights violations in receiving countries.
- Recent report reveals how asylum-seekers who were coerced to leave Israel were left without documents upon arrival and faced arbitrary arrest, demands for a bribe and problems accessing the asylum procedure.
- The move, announced by the Ministry of Interior yesterday, constitutes de facto unlawful deportations.

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The Israeli Ministry of Interior (MOI) announced yesterday that some Eritrean and Sudanese nationals who do not agree to leave "voluntarily" to a third country will face indefinite imprisonment. Such policy constitutes de facto deportations.

According to MOI's plan, Eritreans and Sudanese who are detained in Holot centre and do not have an asylum application pending could be imprisoned indefinitely. This includes those who have been refused asylum in Israel. **Refugee recognition rate in Israel stands at 0.36% for the last six years. Only four Eritrean nationals and no Sudanese nationals have been recognized so far. Such figures cast serious doubts over the fairness of Israel's asylum system.**

According to testimonies, the Immigration Authority today approached several detainees in Holot centre and asked them to sign to leave the country or go to Saharonim Prison within 30 days.

Minister of Interior Gilad Erdan said yesterday: "the plan will encourage 'infiltrators' to leave Israel in a safe and dignified manner". The move has allegedly been approved by Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein.

However, such de facto deportations will take place under Israel's alleged secret transfer arrangements with Uganda and Rwanda. People transferred under such arrangements receive no guarantees of protection against *refoulement*, no guarantees of admittance to the receiving states, and no access to fair and efficient asylum proceedings.

Asylum-seekers who leave Israel and reach Uganda or Rwanda face arbitrary arrest, demands for a bribe by the receiving immigration authorities, and problems accessing the asylum process due to a lack of documentation. Israel has systematically failed to monitor or review the situation of those who have been coerced to leave.

Many of those who leave continue their journey towards Europe and face human rights abuses along the way.



One Eritrean who left for Rwanda via Israel's "voluntary" returns procedure told Amnesty International only three days ago: **"I have suffered by my decision to leave to Rwanda. When you [sic] reach Rwanda they take our [travel] documents. Without documents you are nothing....anyone can ask you for a bribe. People arrive and they are arrested in Uganda or Rwanda and in South Sudan. I am not safe."**

The current plan constitutes a serious escalation in Israel's systematic coercion of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers to leave Israel. The methods of pressures to leave have so far included imprisonment in Saharonim prison, detention in the Holot centre, withholding of status, withholding of work permits, requirement to frequently renew the "Conditional Release" permits, as well as degrading and humiliating treatment by the authorities.