



**HOTLINE** for **REFUGEES** and **MIGRANTS**

*"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" Exodus 22:20*

*\*Formerly Hotline for Migrant Workers*

## **Hotline for Refugees and Migrants: 2015 Annual Report**

## **Overview**

2015 was a year of both incredible progress and immense challenge for the rights of refugees and migrants in Israel. We achieved another hugely significant decision from the High Court on the Anti-Infiltration Law, significantly improving the situation of refugees in Israel. However we also witnessed an expansion of the government policy of third country deportations which put the lives of refugees at great risk.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Interior (MOI), by the end of December 2015 there were 43,186 African asylum seekers in Israel, among them 31,414 Eritreans and 8,353 Sudanese.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of 2015 until the end of September 2015, 2,028 asylum seekers left Israel under the government's "voluntary return" program. This was a very significant reduction from the 9,026 asylum seekers who left the country during the previous two years and represents the eased conditions in Holot and reduced detention periods achieved through our petition against the Anti-Infiltration Laws.

Asylum-seekers and migrants face grave violations of their rights both in actual legislation and by the individuals tasked with carrying out procedures relating to asylum-seekers. At the same time they often have limited awareness of their rights and limited means to afford private lawyers. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants works to safeguard the rights of refugees in Israel in regard to legal status, detention and deportation and to improve Israel's migration policy and practices.

The organization has a huge impact on the lives of refugees and migrants; we create this through three streams of work:

1. **Strategic Litigation:** HRM conducts strategic litigation on behalf of individuals, families or groups with the aim of setting precedents and establishing a body of case law that protects the rights of refugees and migrants within the framework of government passed laws.
2. **Para-Legal Assistance:** Our Crisis Intervention Center (CIC) in Tel Aviv provides para-legal aid to those dealing with issues connecting to their visa status, detention or deportation. In addition our case-workers regularly (2-3 times per week) visit detention centers to provide these services to those in detention. We also identify and aid victims of torture and trafficking. Special focus is placed on vulnerable groups, including children, torture survivors, and those with medical conditions.
3. **Public Policy and Advocacy:** Our public policy activities include campaigns and reports that inform the public and the government of violations of the rights of asylum-seekers and migrants. We monitor detention conditions, the various tribunals, the application of the High Court rulings against the Anti-Infiltration Law, as well as the functioning of the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process. As well as monitoring these bodies, we also have written in-depth reports which inform the public of these issues, as well as campaigns that impact public discourse and policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Population and Border Control Authority Data, Foreigners in Israel Quarter 3 2015, October 2015  
<http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/oct2015.pdf>

## **Crisis Intervention Centre (Para-legal Assistance)**

At our office in Tel Aviv, as well as in detention-centers around the country, the Hotline's core work is that of our Crisis Intervention Center (CIC). Staffed by our caseworkers, our CIC provides para-legal aid regarding legal status, detention and deportation, as well as identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and torture.

In 2015, the CIC provided advice and assistance to a total of 3,500 refugees and migrants. This took place during reception hours (18 hours per week), over the phone, and at 138 prison visits to the three main immigration detention centers over the year.

We succeeded in releasing 41 people from immigration detention (including Holot) throughout the year, 32 of them refugees and 9 of them migrants. Three of them were recognized as victims of human trafficking and subsequently released. The others were released for a variety of reasons including for humanitarian reasons, health reasons and being falsely arrested. (35 were released via the work of our Crisis Intervention Centre and 6 were released by our legal team via the courts.)

We also succeeded in having 36 refugees' summonses to Holot cancelled, thus preventing either 20 months or 12 months of detention (according to whether they entered Holot before or after the Anti-Infiltration Law judgment). The prevention of detention in Holot became just as significant as - if not more significant than - the work of getting people released. There is no detention review tribunal in Holot because it is not formally considered a prison, so it is extremely hard to release people once they are already there.

<b>2015 Achievements by the Numbers</b>	
Number of Refugees and Migrants Released from Detention	41 (32 refugees and 9 migrants) (In addition to the 1,217 refugees released from Holot after the Anti-Infiltration law decision)
Number of Holot summons cancelled	36
Number of clients served	3,500 (3,032 refugees, 468 migrants)
Number of detention visits	138
Number of newspaper articles facilitated	572
Number of publications	5
Number of trafficking victims identified, referred and successfully recognized by the Israeli authorities	20 (19 Sinai torture camp survivors, 1 other migrant worker)
Number of cases litigated	79

### **Summons to Holot**

At the beginning of 2015 only Sudanese men who entered Israel before May 31, 2011, and Eritrean men who entered before May 31, 2009, and who do not have dependents ie. a wife and/or children, could be called to Holot. Additionally, recognized trafficking victims and those who arrived as unaccompanied minors and completed school in the Israeli school system were exempt. However, three times throughout 2015 the

Ministry of Interior expanded their criteria that had limited eligibility for Holot based on date of entry into Israel. The final expansion of the criteria, which took place just days after the August 2015 High Court judgment, was to remove it all together. This meant that all men except those who have families or partners, those who are over 60 or those who have been recognized as trafficking victims were living in constant fear that at any moment they will be issued with a summons to Holot and have to leave their jobs, their homes and take all their possessions to go and live in a desert prison for 12 months. This fear was highly justified. After the Anti-Infiltration law judgment, which validated the existence of Holot, and the release of 1,217 detainees, which meant that the centre was almost empty, the Mol began aggressively summoning people to Holot at an unprecedented rate.

By the end of December the centre was full for the first time since it opened in December 2013. 3,360 asylum seekers now live in Holot. Accordingly, the number of clients that turned to the Hotline for assistance between September and December was abnormally high. On some days we did not have enough seats for everyone to sit as they waited to see a HRM representative at reception. Other days we had to ask people to leave their names and come back the next day as we would not succeed to see all the clients by the end of the day or even late into the night. Some people we were able to assist by providing letters or helping them collect other formal documentations to prove their situation. The Mol even began to call people that they were not meant to, such as recognized trafficking victims and boys who arrived as unaccompanied minors and finished school in Israel. These two groups were previously not meant to be called, and we dealt with them on a case by case basis. The sharp rise in demand meant we had to carefully prioritize cases. In some cases we submitted legal appeals to at least get temporary injunctions until the case will be heard, this was generally reserved for Sinai torture victims in severe states. However often we were simply not able to help as detention in Holot is the law in Israel.

The prevention of detention in Holot has in many ways become just as significant if not more significant than the work of getting people released. This is because the absence of a detention review tribunal in Holot, (because Holot is not formally considered a prison) makes it extremely hard to release people once they are already there. We therefore focused our efforts on cases in 'closed' detention ie. Saharonim as well as on preventing detention in Holot. This was especially true after the criteria was expanded for the second time during the year and the new criteria meant that many survivors of the Sinai torture camps who arrived in Israel during later dates and therefore had not previously been summoned to Holot started to be summoned.

אנת  
 קובץ כל אלו שזכו לביטוח  
 קצתם מקנה להם את המסמכים  
 אין זה אומר אומר כי הם  
 אולי הם רשמיים וזכו  
 אנתוקרוא

**Letter to Anat, Director of the CIC, from a client:**

To Anat,

First of all, I truly want to thank you from all my heart for your help. I don't have words to describe how much I appreciate you. Thank you so, so much. With love.

## Sinai Torture Victims

In 2015 271 survivors of the Sinai torture camps turned to the Hotline for assistance, mostly after they received summonses to Holot. We conducted a total of 135 interviews, collecting information and data that was submitted to various human rights bodies such as the US State Department and UNHCR and providing protection on a case-by-case basis. We recommend 28 Sinai torture survivors to the Israeli Police for recognition as victims of human trafficking. Recognition means that they receive a one year rehabilitation visa, state-sponsored legal aid and a place in a shelter for victims of human trafficking which includes social and medical services. 19 of the 28 were recognized by the police and received the associated rights. Five requests were outright rejected, three of which we have returned their cases to appeal the decision. Four others are waiting for decisions from the police. The 19 included 13 men and six women, 19 of them Eritrean and one Sudanese. **Two of those recognized were men in Saharonim prison who had been there in detention each for over four years.** Their recognition as trafficking victims meant that they were released from prison and transferred to the men's shelter for victims of trafficking. An additional torture victim who was in prison for over 4 years was also released, although was not officially recognized as a trafficking victim. Where we had previously tried to resolve the first two due to the reason that they were in prison – issues of contested nationalities - we were now able to release them by gaining their recognition as trafficking victims because they had built trust with the case worker and translator and opened up to speak about the torture in Sinai. After many months of working on these cases their releases were very emotional for all involved.

To place this achievement in context, in 2015 Israel recognized a total of 35 individuals as victims of trafficking and awarded them the associated rights. Therefore more than half of the country's trafficking victims from 2015 are asylum seekers who were identified, interviewed and referred to the state by the Hotline. This shows the remarkable contribution that the Hotline is making to combating human trafficking in Israel, despite the fact that it should be the work of the government. The length of time some individuals spent in detention demonstrates the incompetence of the authorities whom these individuals are in the care of and who are responsible for identifying victims of human trafficking. Unfortunately, during 2015 HRM identified another 28 torture survivors in Saharonim prison whose cases we are working on. HRM previously had unrestricted access to the prison but we are now only able to visit people who contact us and request we visit them. It is obvious that this has affected our ability to reach vulnerable people in detention. During 2015 HRM also succeeded to cancel the Holot summons of 36 asylum seekers without court proceedings, 8 of whom were Sinai torture survivors. Court proceedings were filed to stop the detainment of an additional 5 Sinai survivors in Holot. 3 whose summonses were then cancelled and another 2 who received temporary injunctions.

Aside from the results achieved on behalf of individuals other achievements were made through advocacy work. For the first time it is specifically stated in the Anti-Infiltration Law that recognized trafficking victims should not be sent to Holot. Whilst it was previously a matter of policy this is now a matter of law.

## Strategic Litigation

### Anti-Infiltration Law Judgment

On August 11, with 24 hours advanced notice, the High Court delivered their judgment on our case against the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Anti-Infiltration Law. The judges criticized parts of the law but fell short of annulling it as it did in the previous two judgments' on the earlier amendments of the Anti-Infiltration Law. The court said that 20 months in Holot was 'disproportional' and ordered the release within 15 days of anyone who had been held in Holot for longer than 12 months. The Knesset was given 6 months to re-legislate the law in line with the High Court judgment. High Court Chief Justice Miriam Naor said in her judgment that "as a citizen, I'd be happy to see my country have more compassion." She noted that in her rulings overturning the previous version of the law, she had urged the government to find "humane solutions that accord not only with international law, but also with the Jewish worldview," and even with the changes incorporated to the current law, Holot "is not what I had in mind when I wrote that."<sup>2</sup> In early 2016 the Knesset amended the Anti-Infiltration law to include the ruling of the Supreme Court. While this means that Holot is now here to stay for the foreseeable future, through the work of the Hotline detention time has for now been limited.

### Release from Holot

1700 men were in Holot at the time of the judgment, of which 1,217 had been there for longer than 12 months and were therefore released by order of the court. It was the biggest number of people we have ever succeeded to release from one court decision. However, they were given the same 'conditional release' visa that they had before entering Holot with the extra condition that they may not live or stay in either Tel Aviv or Eilat. The rationale for the new restrictions were that the majority of the community is populated in these cities; however it also meant that those released were not able to stay with their friends, come back to their workplace or get assistance from the human rights organizations. After 12-20 months in Holot people were suddenly released with nowhere to go and no money. This made the first few days extremely difficult for most. Despite this, most of the people released expressed extreme relief and gratitude at being out of Holot, despite the new visa conditions regarding Tel Aviv and Eilat. Although there is no formal data, reports from the community are that those released from Holot found work quite easily in different locations around the country. At least one Hotel chain sent mini-buses to Holot on one of the release days, demonstrating both their dire need for workers and the contribution asylum seekers are making to the Israeli economy – when they are not locked up.

### Mutasim Ali

In July 2015 we succeeded to release Mutasim Ali after 14 months of detention in Holot and 6 different

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<sup>2</sup> Ilan Lior, *Israel's High Court Rejects Part of Third Anti-Infiltration Law*, August 11, 2015  
<http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel/.premium-1.670645?date=1443467517078>



legal procedures that began in April 2014. After reaching the Supreme Court in February 2015 we had to return to the District Court as the ruling that we were appealing was given under the outdated 4th Amendment to the Anti-Infiltration Law. On March 16 the District Court said it was problematic how long it was taking to receive an answer to the asylum application and that the state must make every effort to issue a decision by the end of May. At the end of May the MoI admitted for the first time that they did not have a policy on asylum seekers from Darfur and they needed more time. The court also instructed the MoI to reconsider if there was any justification for detaining Mutasim for any longer than till the end of June and if they want to detain him past this date he must receive hearing. At the end of June Mutasim was not released and neither was a hearing held. We appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. On July 6th, one week before the hearing for the appeal in the Supreme Court, we received a letter from the MoI saying that Mutasim would be released by order of the Attorney General. This was a very unexpected move - that the Attorney General would step in and order his release from detention. However it was also extremely beneficial for the government because without going to court there could be no ruling that would set a precedent applicable to hundreds of others in the same circumstances. Mutasim was released the next day on the same conditional release visa he had before being sent to Holot. The issue at heart, recognizing Mutasim as a refugee, still remains. Furthermore, the situation in which not a single asylum seeker from Darfur has received a response to their asylum application, neither in the positive or the negative, has not changed. Since being released Mutasim has resumed his role as the Executive Director of the African Refugee Development Centre and is continuing to work to advance the refugee community.



*Mutasim Ali with Hotline attorney Asaf Weitzen*

### **Saharonim or Rwanda**

In March the MOI announced a policy change saying that they would be issuing asylum seekers already in Holot who have not submitted RSD applications, or whose applications have been rejected, with deportation orders to leave Israel to a third country within 30 days, and that if they refuse they will be jailed in Saharonim indefinitely. On April 30 2015 the Tel Aviv University Refugee Rights Law Clinic submitted a case to the Beer Sheva District court on behalf of HRM, fellow human rights organizations and two detained Eritrean asylum seekers who received the deportation order. The question the Court had to determine was: Can people who are entitled to protection from refoulement be detained, based on the claim that they "refuse to cooperate" with their removal to a country that is not their homeland; as part of a secret deal, the details of which have not publicized or made known to them, and when there's a well-founded fear that in reality, that country will not offer them protection? The evidence included testimonies and an affidavit demonstrating the great gap between the written promises of the Israeli government and the actual fate of those who believed the promises and left.<sup>3</sup>

When the case was heard the judge suggested that the evidence about what happened to those who

<sup>3</sup> For the affidavit's testimony see: HRM "I believed Israel that I will find shelter in Uganda", available at: <http://hotline.org.il/en/i-believed-israel-that-i-will-find-shelter-in-uganda/>

arrived in Rwanda and Uganda was anecdotal and unlikely to represent the experiences of the majority of those who had already taken the "voluntary leave" option. In order to collect more evidence for the court we sent two representatives on a fact finding mission to Uganda that was made possible by an emergency grant from the Moriah Fund. Anat Ben-Dor from the Tel Aviv University Refugee Rights Clinic and Adi Avraham-Meire who previously worked at Amnesty International traveled to Uganda. Their findings were consistent with the previous information we had gathered. Deportees from Israel found themselves with no status in Uganda and some of them were in prison. Some of them had originally been sent to Rwanda where they also had no status, and were told that their only option was to pay to be smuggled across to Uganda. Affidavits from people in Uganda were submitted to the court and were accepted as evidence. This was the best outcome we could have asked for from their Uganda mission.

Despite the extra evidence on the 8th of November we received the judgment that the court had rejected our petition. The main argument by the court was that we did not provide credible enough information or show that our cases were not an exception, whilst on the other hand the state is committed to the safety of those it deports. The court suspended the implementation of the judgment for 21 days to allow us to appeal to the Supreme Court. We appealed immediately and are awaiting the Supreme Court hearing that has been set for March 11th.

### **Criteria for Holot**

After the criteria for Holot was expanded for the third time and we were receiving an overload of clients, including many particularly vulnerable individuals, we decided this needed to be dealt with on a principle level. In October we wrote a letter to the MOI calling for the establishment of criteria for summons to Holot. The letter that we sent argues that there needs to be criteria and that there should be exemptions for those who have a pending asylum application, those who have already spent long period in detention and victims of torture. It also argues that the amount of damage it will cause to one's life should be taken into account, for example if someone has a business, is studying, has a rental contract that is not complete, etc. The letter is the first step towards legal action, which will be taken in 2016.



*Example of Conditional Release Visa*

### **Preventing Detention**

In October, during the period in which the MOI was summoning an unprecedented number of people to Holot, we succeeded in preventing the re-detainment of 179 refugees whom we released last November. This is the group who were the very first people taken to Holot, from Saharonim, in December 2013. They had mostly arrived in 2012 during the period of the 3rd Amendment to the Anti-Infiltration Law, under which they could be held for up to 3 years in Saharonim. When the 3rd Amendment was annulled they thought they would be freed, but they were moved to Holot under the 4th Amendment. When the 4th Amendment was annulled, we succeeded in getting these 179 (138 followed by another 41) refugees release as by then most of them had been in detention (Holot and Saharonim) for more than two and a half years. However, because the most recent High Court ruling has now said that 12 months of detention in



Holot is acceptable, and they were in Holot for only 11 months, the MOI decided to call them back to Holot for one month. We wrote a letter to the State attorney arguing that this group should not be taken to Holot and that they had already spent extremely long period in detention. The letter also threatened to take the issue to the Supreme Court. The state resigned the issue and renewed their visas.

### **Infant trafficking victim**

Early in the year we received a case of a 5 year old Eritrean boy who arrived in Israel at the age 2 in 2012. He had been in the Sinai torture camps where his mother was killed after being tortured in front of him. Upon arrival in Israel he was put in an institution. However he had an uncle already in Israel who had paid the ransom for his release from the torture camps. The uncle, who has a wife and two children, wants to adopt the boy. The uncle had already managed to take the boy from the institution into his care as a foster parent. However he needed extra support to look after him. In May we sent a letter to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Welfare requesting that they provide him with the services and resources required for his rehabilitation. In June we got a response that the state would pay for his health insurance. A few months later we also managed to get the family recognized as a foster family, meaning that they would receive a significant amount of monthly financial support like all Israeli foster families. This was a positive outcome for the family.

### **Protecting Migrant Partners of Israeli Citizens**

We have recently taken two legal cases of migrant women who are spouses of Israelis and are facing deportation. When a non-Israeli citizen marries or becomes a de-facto partner of an Israeli citizen the couple can apply for the foreign partner to go through a naturalization process. The couple must register that they are still together every 6 months to a year with the Ministry of Interior for somewhere between 4.5 to 7 years until the foreign partner may be granted citizenship. If the relationship or family unit breaks down in the middle of the process, the foreign partner is usually required to leave Israel. However there are certain circumstances when the application of this produce is very unjust. One such circumstance is in the case of women leaving abusive relationships.

We received two cases of women who are facing deportation because of leaving abusive relationships. We submitted a case to the local court on behalf of one of them and an appeal on behalf of the other. One of the clients was identified in detention just days before she was due to be deported. She was beaten and raped by her husband. She went to the police, but when the police turned to him he told them that they were no longer a couple and that they should arrest and deport her. Had we not intervened he would have succeeded to have her deported before she could press charges. The outcomes of both cases are pending.

## Public Policy

### Reports

In 2015 the Hotline published five significant reports. Throughout the year we also conducted in-depth research for our first comprehensive detention monitoring report covering all three detention facilities which will be published in February 2016.

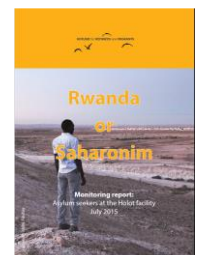
#### [Where There is No Free Will](#)

In February we published our long anticipated report on what happens to Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers who agree to leave Israel under the government's "voluntary return" program. Over the last two years the Israeli authorities have aggressively pursued Eritrean and Sudanese nationals to "voluntarily return" to their home country or to a third country. 9,026 asylum seekers "voluntarily" left in the last two years. Despite difficulties due to the sensitive nature of the information, we succeeded to interview 47 asylum seekers, of which 24 went to third countries and 23 returned to their home countries. The final report, published together with ASSAF was titled Where there is no free will. We could not have known when we started just how crucial the project would be. On March 31st the government announced a policy change under which they can issue deportation orders to third countries and indefinitely incarcerate those who refuse to go. Because of this report we had evidence about the danger and the conditions they will face in the third countries. This evidence has been crucial to our advocacy and legal work against the deportation policy.



#### [Saharonim or Rwanda](#)

In July we published our Holot detention monitoring report. As this was shortly after the announcement of the new Rwanda or Saharonim policy and was the major concern of detainees in Holot it became the focus of the report. The report looked at the rejected asylum applications of the individuals who received the deportation orders. It exposed the twisted logic behind the asylum rejections of Eritrean nationals as well as basics on detention conditions such as food, discipline and punishment and pocket money. This publication attracted 13 media articles; 9 Hebrew and 4 English.



#### [Who Inspects the Inspectors?](#)

In October we published a report on the use of violence by immigration authority officials against refugees and migrants in cooperation with ACRI (published only in Hebrew). The report details 16 cases of police violence at the hands of immigration authorities that have resulted in a total of 0 arrests. The report was published only in Hebrew and attracted 4 media articles (media coverage was limited due to the wave of terror attacks at the same time).



#### [Deported to the Unknown](#)

In December we published [Deported to the Unknown](#), the outcome of a fact finding mission we sent to Uganda to collect further evidence about Israel's deportations to third countries.

[The Labrynth](#)

In December, together with Physicians for Human Rights and ACRI we published a major report on the Ministry of Interior's treatment of issues of migration and legal status. This report gives an overview of a full range of complex issues of legal status in Israel.

**Media**

Through the work of our public policy department, HRM facilitated 572 media articles during the year, including items in newspapers, radio, and television. 344 of the articles were in Israeli media and the other 150 were in publications abroad. Articles ranged from coverage of the HRM's legal activities, in-depth pieces on the struggles of asylum-seekers and migrants, new policies of the government (such as Rwanda Saharonim), as well as pieces that highlight the strength and potential of the migrant and asylum-seeker communities in Israel. See the table below highlighting some of the major English language media that the Hotline facilitated this year:

Publication	Date	Link
Times of Israel	8/7/2015	<a href="http://www.timesofisrael.com/migrants-forced-to-choose-between-deportation-and-prison-ngo-report-says">http://www.timesofisrael.com/migrants-forced-to-choose-between-deportation-and-prison-ngo-report-says</a>
Jerusalem Post	08/07/2015	<a href="http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/NGO-Israel-forces-migrants-to-choose-between-leaving-for-Rwanda-or-indefinite-internment-408307">http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/NGO-Israel-forces-migrants-to-choose-between-leaving-for-Rwanda-or-indefinite-internment-408307</a>
Washington Post	15/05/2015	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/toughening-its-stance-toward-migrants-israel-pushes-africans-to-leave/2015/05/14/e1637bce-f350-11e4-bca5-21b51bbdf93e_story.html">http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/toughening-its-stance-toward-migrants-israel-pushes-africans-to-leave/2015/05/14/e1637bce-f350-11e4-bca5-21b51bbdf93e_story.html</a>
Wall St Journal	19/10/2015	<a href="http://www.wsj.com/articles/eritrean-dies-in-israel-bus-station-attack-1445238202">http://www.wsj.com/articles/eritrean-dies-in-israel-bus-station-attack-1445238202</a>
New York Times	25/8/2015	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/26/world/middleeast/israel-begins-releasing-african-migrants-from-detention-center.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/26/world/middleeast/israel-begins-releasing-african-migrants-from-detention-center.html</a>

**Campaigns**

Campaign about Sinai torture survivors

In September we launched a campaign about the detainment of torture victims in Holot. The campaign coincided with the spike in number of refugees travelling to Europe and particularly with the short period of sympathy aroused by the media coverage of the 3-year-old Syrian boy, Aylan al-Kurdi, who washed ashore on the Turkish coast after his family tried to cross from Turkey to Europe. They drew on the general regional context and on the idea of atonement that is behind the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur.

Only Bilaterally

In December conducted a campaign together with ACRI, PHR and Kav LaOved regarding the government's new plan to bring 20,000 Chinese workers to work in Israel's building industry. Despite the fact that a previous government decision was made not to employ migrant workers in the building sector from countries where there is no bilateral agreement, this new plan has been pushed



through without such an agreement. The bilateral agreement cuts out the role of the recruitment agencies who often charge exorbitant fees for work visas and placements. When there is an agreement in place the recruitment becomes the responsibility of the two governments. Existing bilateral agreements have shown to protect worker's rights and prevent them from being bound to places of employment where they are caught in abusive and exploitative conditions. The campaign took place on social media and traditional media and included an animation film explaining how the current situation allows companies to profit from a lack of worker's rights. We also wrote a letter to the Ministry of Finance arguing why bringing migrant workers without a bilateral agreement is harmful, as a step towards legal proceedings. In January we received a letter from the Ministry of Justice saying that,

*In general, bilateral agreements concerning the recruitment of foreign workers into Israel include mechanisms that enable the protection of foreign workers' rights in Israel and oversight thereof. These bilateral agreements provide, inter alia, for taking steps to protect foreign workers from exploitation during the recruitment procedure. In principle, any arrangement to bring construction foreign workers to Israel will include the above mentioned protections.<sup>4</sup>*

There has been no further movement on the issue by the government, which we see as a positive, so we have not had to progress the issue to legal proceedings.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Justice, Legal Counseling and Legislation Department (International Law), Public letter, January 25, 2016



## HRM Staff 2015

### **Reut Michaeli – Executive Director**

Anda Barak – Financial Officer

Saroj Elam – Office Manager & Volunteer Coordinator

Tamara Newman – Resource Development Director

### **Anat Guthmann – Crisis Intervention Centre Director**

Alex Roth – Detention Case Worker

Gabriel Tekle – Tgrinya translator

Maya Mark – National Service Volunteer, Crisis Intervention Centre

Meseret Pashia – Tgrinya translator

Ofer Atar – National Service Volunteer, Crisis Intervention Centre

Omri Shlomov – National Service Volunteer, Crisis Intervention Centre

Towibah Mjdoob – Detention Case Worker

### **Asaf Weitzen – Legal Department Director**

Rachel Freidman – Attorney

### **Rona Perry – Public Policy Department Director**

Anat Ovadia – Spokesperson

Elizabeth Tsurkov – Removing Barriers Project Manager

Emi Saar – Director of Combatting Human Trafficking

Sigal Rozin – Public Policy Coordinator

Shaked Harari – National Service Volunteer, Public Policy Department

## HRM Board 2015

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Prof. Bella Kaufman

Prof. Gideon Kunda

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Dr. Nelly Kfir

Adv. Noa Diamond

Rotem Ilan