**USSD 2004 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33195.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33195.htm)

**ISRAEL (TIER 2)**

Israel is a destination country for women trafficked for prostitution and men and women trafficked for labor exploitation. Women from European and former Soviet Union (FSU) countries are brought into Israel, including through Egypt, by traffickers and sold to brothel operators, after which some are forced to work off their debt through involuntary sexual servitude. Most trafficking victims for sexual exploitation originate from Moldova, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine—with the latter three increasingly replacing Moldova as principal source countries. Most foreign laborers in Israel come from Turkey and other countries in South East Asia, East Asia, Africa, South and Central America, the FSU, and Eastern Europe. Some foreign laborers enter into Israel for labor under conditions that constitute trafficking. Some laborers are subjected to debt bondage and restrictions on their movements, including employer confiscation of their passports. Following the adoption of stricter immigration control measures at Ben Gurion Airport, traffickers have begun using Egypt as a transit route, relying on Bedouin smugglers to transport victims across the border between Egypt and Israel.

The Government of Israel does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. It should continue strengthening its efforts to prosecute and convict traffickers, and to sentence them to prison terms commensurate with the seriousness of trafficking crimes. Similarly, Israel needs to strengthen its protection measures, such as by providing more temporary residency permits, increasing available shelter capacity, and establishing a transparent procedure for the voluntary repatriation of victims. In an effort to fight an apparent rise in labor trafficking, a parliamentary committee has proposed draft legislation, which, if approved and effectively enforced, would replicate Israel's efforts to date to fight trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

***Prosecution***Over the reporting period, Israel has made marked improvement in strengthening its laws for fighting traffickers. In 2003, the government established the Border Police Rimon Unit, in part to limit trafficking across Israel's southern border with Egypt. It has also prosecuted and convicted several traffickers for sexual exploitation, though some cases were disposed of through plea bargains and resulted in lighter sanctions.

Section 203(a) of the penal law of Israel prohibits trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Foreign Workers Law of 1991, as amended, guarantees migrant workers the right to decent working conditions, health insurance, and a written employment contract. In August 2003, the Knesset passed a new law with a minimum sentencing requirement for convicted sex traffickers. This law, in addition to providing enhanced protection, will provide victims with access to public defenders. In 2003, the government arrested 92 suspected traffickers and another 93 individuals for related offenses. Preliminary data indicates that 13 traffickers for the purposes of sexual exploitation were convicted and received sentences ranging from 16 months to 15 years, that 114 victims served as prosecution witnesses, and that a total of 537 victims were deported in 2003. Also, the government filed 753 criminal indictments for violations of labor laws, some of which are believed to be related to labor trafficking, and obtained 42 judgments with monetary fines. The government investigates allegations that individual policemen engage in misconduct and illegal behavior, including taking bribes or tipping off brothels of raids, but these instances of corruption are not widespread.

***Protection***Government efforts to care for victims of trafficking remain inadequate, though they improved slightly during the last 12 months. In early 2004, Israel opened part of a new shelter and admitted 17 victims; gave temporary visas to seven victims; and allowed 2,336 foreign laborers to change employers. The government continued to provide some victims with lodging in police-funded hostels, as well as pocket money and access to medical care. Given the large number of trafficking victims, the government needs to greatly expand the capacity of shelters. Trafficking victims who are willing to assist law enforcement in prosecuting traffickers are not prosecuted or fined for illegal entry or the possession of forged identifications or travel documents.

***Prevention***The Israeli Government has made minimal efforts in the area of prevention. A joint government and NGO-sponsored anti-trafficking public awareness campaign, expected to have taken place during the preceding reporting period, failed to materialize. The government needs to develop and ensure the effective implementation of anti-trafficking measures such as information campaigns that involve its embassies and consulates in source countries.