**USSD 2005 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46614.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46614.htm)

**ISRAEL (TIER 2)**

Israel is a destination country for women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and men and women trafficked for the purpose of labor exploitation. Women from European and former Soviet countries are trafficked to Israel, often through Egypt, and sold to brothel operators, after which they are forced to work off debts through involuntary sexual servitude. Most trafficking victims for sexual exploitation originate from Uzbekistan, Moldova, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine — with Uzbekistan increasingly becoming the principal source country. In a new trend, traffickers in Ukraine reportedly have begun exploiting an Israeli law that allows all Jews to immigrate to Israel by providing victims with false Jewish identity documents. Most victims of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation come from China. Foreign workers from Romania, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, Jordan, and former Soviet countries also come to Israel. No reliable evidence exists to indicate how many workers are trafficked. Some trafficked foreign workers suffer from non-payment of wages, threat, coercion, physical and sexual abuse, debt bondage, and restrictions on freedom of movement, including the withholding of their passports.

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. Trafficked workers are often categorized as illegal foreigners, unless — in rare cases — they seek legal action against their traffickers. Israel still lacks a national task force and an official coordinator for the government's anti-trafficking efforts, as the government failed to fund such a position. A de-facto coordinator has continued to work on trafficking in persons by coordinating information and anti-trafficking initiatives between various government agencies and NGOs. The government lacks a law against trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation, although such a law was drafted in 2003 and awaits approval. The government has not established either a procedure for the systematic identification and referral of trafficking victims to places where they can seek care, or a coordinated and transparent system for the humane repatriation of victims. In 2004, Israel changed the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on Trafficking in Persons into a Permanent Committee on Trafficking in Persons. This Committee drafted laws to enable closure of brothels, provide national health insurance to trafficking victims, grant witness protection for non-Israeli citizens and residents, and postpone the deportation of trafficking victims.

***Prosecution***

Israel showed improvement in its law enforcement response to trafficking during the reporting period. In 2004, the government investigated 602 cases relating to trafficking for sexual exploitation, an increase from the 460 investigations it conducted in 2003; arrested 103 suspects; and handed down 28 convictions, as compared to 13 convictions in 2003. In its response to labor trafficking, the government prosecuted at least two employers for offenses such as withholding of passports and forgery. Israel has no laws against labor trafficking, but can and does use other laws in its criminal code to prosecute labor traffickers for related offenses. The Knesset is considering an anti-labor trafficking law. In 2004, courts rendered on average stiffer penalties against traffickers, but the judicial process is overburdened with cases, and delays are common. Israel charged a former labor inspector with accepting a bribe, among other charges. The government also indicted a police officer who solicited sexual favors from a trafficking victim and threatened her with arrest and deportation. It also investigated another officer who allegedly extorted payment from a trafficking victim. Reports also indicate that two police officers were criminally charged following complaints against them by foreign workers. Israeli police expanded their anti-trafficking collaborative efforts with the Governments of Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Russia. In addition, the police conducted an unprecedented joint anti-trafficking operation with the Government of Belarus. These efforts resulted in the arrest and indictment in Russia of a trafficking ringleader and his collaborators. An Israeli request for extradition of those indicted is still pending in the Russian Supreme Court. The government should investigate allegations that some manpower agencies facilitate trafficking into Israel.

***Protection***

Israel's efforts to care for victims of trafficking remained inadequate during the last year, particularly concerning victims of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation. In 2004, Israel expanded the capacity of its only shelter to 50 beds; the shelter assisted 108 trafficking victims of sexual exploitation. With some exceptions, only trafficking victims for sexual exploitation who agree to testify against their traffickers are accorded protection in the shelter. Such victims are now granted visa extensions; work permits; and legal, medical, and psychological services during their stay in Israel. Most trafficking victims in prostitution who are arrested are subsequently deported, as the police do not use a systematic screening procedure to differentiate trafficking victims from violators of immigration laws. In 2004, Israel detained 904 foreign women on charges of engaging in prostitution and deported 796 of them. Those who are victims of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation do not receive the same level of protection as do victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Most labor trafficking victims who are detained are deported as illegal foreign workers.

The Ramon Unit of the Border Police in 2004 interdicted and rescued 43 women who were attempting to cross the border from Egypt, 36 of whom were being trafficked into Israel for sexual exploitation. Israel also waived court fees for civil suits filed by trafficking victims, published brochures on the rights of foreign workers in English and Hebrew, issued a revised version of a brochure on detainee's rights in 14 languages, conducted two trafficking-related workshops for inspectors, and negotiated with IOM to monitor the employment of foreign workers in Israel. Given the large number of trafficking victims for commercial sexual exploitation, Israel needs to greatly expand the capacity of its only shelter. It also needs to accord to labor trafficking victims protection services similar to those accorded to victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

***Prevention***

The Israeli Government undertook new steps in the area of prevention. The government provided three training sessions for a total of 90 police officers on how to recognize, investigate, and prepare trafficking cases for prosecution. It also conducted anti-trafficking information campaigns in source countries of victims trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation by distributing brochures in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Moldova. In a marked improvement of its efforts to deter and prevent trafficking for labor exploitation, the Israeli Government appointed an attorney to investigate labor law infractions, hired an ombudsman for foreign workers rights, and raised the fines for collecting illegal recruitment fees.

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