**USSD 2006 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65989.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65989.htm)

**ISRAEL (TIER 2 WATCH LIST)**

Israel is a destination country for low-skilled workers from the P.R.C., Romania, Jordan, Turkey, Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India who migrate voluntarily for contract labor in the construction, agriculture and health care industries. Some are subsequently subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude. Many labor recruitment agencies in source countries and in Israel require workers to pay up-front fees ranging from $1,000-10,000 - a practice that often leads to debt bondage and makes these workers highly vulnerable to forced labor once in Israel. 144 Israel is also a destination country for women trafficked from Eastern Europe - primarily Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and Russia - for the purpose of sexual exploitation. NGOs estimate that in 2005 between 1,000-3,000 women were trafficked into Israel for sexual servitude and 16,000-20,000 foreign workers faced involuntary servitude, though NGOs do not provide evidence to support their claim.

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. Israel is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for its failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to address trafficking, namely the conditions of involuntary servitude allegedly facing thousands of foreign migrant workers. The government did not pass a much-needed law criminalizing all forms of trafficking, including labor trafficking, drafted in 2003, though it took more steps than in previous years to criminally investigate and prosecute employers allegedly keeping foreign workers in conditions of involuntary servitude. The estimated thousands of victims of forced labor were not provided with protection. The government continued to build upon progress made in previous years to combat trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, such as prosecuting traffickers and providing victims with shelter and protective services, including legal aid. Israel should extend the scope of its anti-trafficking law to criminalize labor trafficking and establish a shelter for such victims. Israel should immediately take steps to adequately punish, using its criminal justice system, the perpetrators of labor trafficking crimes occurring in Israel. The government should also more vigorously enforce existing bans against charging recruitment fees and withholding passports, factors that contribute to the trafficking of workers.

***Prosecution***
The Government of Israel's anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts were uneven and inadequate over the last year. While the government made noticeable improvement in its law enforcement efforts against traffickers for sexual exploitation, it did little to address the much larger problem of involuntary servitude among foreign migrant workers. The government convicted 31 sex traffickers with sentences ranging from eight to 18 years in prison. The police also investigated 327 cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation and arrested 78 suspected sex traffickers. In addition, Israel cooperated with Russian, American, Ukrainian, and Belarussian law enforcement authorities to extradite traffickers and break up organized sex trafficking rings. The government's efforts to investigate and prosecute labor trafficking cases, however, were inadequate in light of the scope of this problem. Israel's anti-trafficking law does not cover labor forms of trafficking, though other criminal statutes could be used to punish exploiters of foreign laborers. The government did not enact a long-awaited draft law that would specifically cover labor trafficking. Israel pursued administrative actions against employers for labor exploitation, including investigating 198 manpower agencies for suspected fraud against foreign workers, and revoking the hiring licenses of 227 Israeli employers and 12 manpower agencies. The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor filed 208 criminal indictments against employers for violations of the labor laws governing foreign workers, and the Immigration Authority registered 133 indictments against manpower companies for violations of the Israeli Penal Code. Few of these indicted employers or managers of manpower companies, however, faced jail time as a punishment; most were punished with fines. In one case, a judge sentenced four employees of a manpower agency to seven to 13 months' imprisonment for aggravated assault of foreign workers; such prison sentences, however, proved far too rare. The scope of labor trafficking in Israel merits a higher number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and manpower agency closures. Israel also failed to enforce bans on charging recruitment fees for employment and withholding workers' passports.

***Protection***
Although Israel made some improvements in its protection of sex trafficking victims, it did not demonstrate significant efforts to improve its protection of labor trafficking victims this year. The government solicited input from NGOs to design a questionnaire to screen detained illegal immigrants for evidence of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, but many victims are believed not to respond to either these questionnaires nor to Israeli police interviews for fear of retribution. As such, many victims are not adequately screened before being deported, despite other indications that they are trafficking victims. For identified victims of trafficking, the government provides shelter, medical, psychological, legal, and repatriation assistance. Women referred to the shelter are also granted temporary residency permits pending their testimony against traffickers, and a limited number of victims may receive one-year humanitarian visas allowing them to remain beyond the conclusion of their cases. Victims of labor trafficking, however, do not receive adequate protection services. The government does not operate a shelter for their rehabilitation, housing them in detention facilities instead. Such victims are also frequently arrested and deported for violation of immigration regulations before they have an opportunity to testify against their employers. The government does not provide state funded legal aid to foreign workers, and often fails to include interpreters in judicial and deportation hearings. Israel has been proactive, however, in revising the foreign employment system to allow changes of employers for workers in the construction industry, and in establishing an ombudswoman in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor with whom foreign workers can lodge complaints. The government also published brochures and signs at detention centers advising foreign workers of their rights and allows NGOs access to detained workers to provide legal aid and translation services during deportation hearings. Israel should improve protections available to victims of labor trafficking, including access to a shelter and legal aid, and should adequately support the ombudswoman with a sufficient budget and increased staff.

***Prevention***
This year, Israel improved its efforts to prevent trafficking in persons. The government ran several programs to address demand for prostitution and is working to incorporate an anti-trafficking in women message into the high school curriculum. Israel also published brochures in 14 languages outlining the rights of foreign workers to be distributed at airports, manpower agencies, and on construction sites. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs included information on trafficking in persons in training programs for Israeli diplomats, and the Ministry of Justice trained police officers, border patrols, interrogators, judges, and soldiers on identifying trafficking victims. Finally, the government provided additional resources to the border patrol policing the boundary between Israel and Egypt to prevent the smuggling and trafficking of people.