**USSD 2007 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82806.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/82806.htm)

**ISRAEL (Tier 2)**

Israel is a destination country for low-skilled workers from People's Republic of China (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, such as withholding of passports and other restrictions on movement, threats, and physical intimidation. According to the Government of Israel, women working in the health care field are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for involuntary servitude. Many labor recruitment agencies in source countries and in Israel require workers to pay up-front fees ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 - a practice that may contribute to debt bondage and makes these workers highly vulnerable to forced labor once in Israel. Israel is also a destination country for women trafficked from Eastern Europe - primarily Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Belarus and Russia - for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.

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. This year, the government passed crucial amendments to its anti-trafficking law that comprehensively prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, including involuntary servitude and slavery. In addition, the government extended legal assistance to victims of trafficking for involuntary servitude, and passed a national action plan to combat trafficking for forced labor. Nevertheless, the government still does not provide forced labor victims with adequate protection services, such as shelter, medical, and psychological aid. Israel has not yet reported any criminal prosecutions under its new law for labor trafficking crimes. The government continued, however, to address the issue of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation by investigating and prosecuting traffickers, and providing victims with shelter and protective services.

**Prosecution**  
The Government of Israel moderately improved its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts over the reporting period. Israel prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons through its Anti-Trafficking Law that came into force on October 29, 2006. Prescribed penalties under this law range from 16 to 20 years' imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent to deter and commensurate with those for other grave crimes. During the reporting period, the government conducted 352 criminal investigations of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, filed 34 cases in court, and convicted 13 individuals; an additional 43 sex trafficking prosecutions are currently pending. Penalties imposed, some of which resulted from negotiated plea arrangements, ranged from 6 months' to 13 years' imprisonment. In March 2007, the government filed charges against a police officer suspected of complicity in trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, Israel cooperated with Ukrainian, Belarusian, Moldovan, and Czech law enforcement authorities to extradite traffickers and break up organized sex trafficking rings.

Prior to passing the new anti-trafficking law criminalizing labor forms of trafficking, the Government of Israel continued to use existing statutes to combat trafficking for involuntary servitude. During the reporting period, the Crime Unit of the Immigration Administration opened 708 criminal cases for fraud and deceit of foreign workers, 77 cases of withholding the passports of foreign workers, and five cases of labor exploitation. Of these, the government filed charges in 10 cases for withholding passports and 43 cases involving fraud by manpower agencies and private recruiters against foreign workers. It is unclear, however, how many of these cases specifically involved trafficking in persons for the purpose of involuntary servitude. The government reported no convictions for involuntary servitude this year, nor did it provide evidence of conducting criminal investigations of manpower agencies for illegally charging recruitment fees, a factor that may contribute to a situation of debt bondage for many foreign workers.

In cooperation with local NGOs, Israel provided anti-trafficking training to judges; government employees who potentially encounter trafficking victims, such as passport control officers and employees in the visa department; and government officials in relevant ministries. The government also specifically trained legal aid officers and other government officials on provisions in the new anti-trafficking law pertaining to trafficking for involuntary servitude.

**Protection**  
Although the Government of Israel made some improvements in its protection of sex trafficking victims over the reporting period, protection of victims of involuntary servitude remained relatively weak. Victims of commercial sexual exploitation are not punished for unlawful acts committed as a result of being trafficked. The Ministry of Social Affairs and local NGOs jointly operate a shelter for victims of sex trafficking. During the reporting period, police, immigration authorities, and NGOs referred 46 victims to the shelter. Victims in this shelter receive medical treatment, psychiatric and social services, stipends, and temporary residency and work permits. Although the government encourages victims of sex trafficking to assist in investigations and prosecutions of traffickers, it now also allows victims to remain in the shelter even if they are not willing or able to testify. Victims are permitted to apply for a one-year extension to their temporary residency permits on humanitarian grounds.

Victims of trafficking for involuntary servitude, however, remain largely unprotected. The government does not offer shelter, medical, or psychological services to these victims, but does assist them in obtaining new employment. Migrant workers who file criminal complaints are not arrested, but they are also not encouraged to assist in investigations against their traffickers. This year, the government's anti-trafficking national coordinator prepared a tool kit for law enforcement authorities to assist them in identifying victims of involuntary servitude. Israel's new anti-trafficking law mandates legal aid for all victims of trafficking to file civil suits against their traffickers; for victims of involuntary servitude, a pilot project will be in place until September 2008. The law also includes broad forfeiture provisions that permit the government to seize traffickers' assets for use in rehabilitation of victims and compensation.

**Prevention**  
The Israeli government sustained its modest efforts to prevent trafficking in persons over the reporting period. The government published brochures informing incoming foreign workers of their rights. These brochures were printed in the workers' native language and outlined their rights and resources for assistance. Israel also continued to monitor its southern border with Egypt for signs of trafficking; reporting period, the Ramon Border Unit prevented the trafficking of 15 women for commercial sexual exploitation through proactive screening of incoming illegal migrants. Israel has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.