**USSD 2009 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/123136.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/123136.htm)

**ISRAEL (Tier 2)**

Israel is a destination country for men and women trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Low-skilled workers from China, Romania, Turkey, Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India migrate voluntarily and legally to Israel for contract labor in the construction, agriculture, and health care industries. Some, however, subsequently face conditions of forced labor, including the unlawful withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, non-payment of wages, threats, and physical intimidation. Many labor recruitment agencies in source countries and in Israel require workers to pay recruitment fees ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 – a practice that makes workers highly vulnerable to trafficking or debt bondage once in Israel. Women from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and China are trafficked to Israel for forced prostitution, often by organized crime groups across the border with Egypt. Israeli women are trafficked within the country for commercial sexual exploitation, and small numbers are reportedly trafficked to Ireland and the United Kingdom.

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 continued law enforcement actions against sex trafficking and provided victims of sex trafficking with shelter and protection assistance. Although the government filed its first indictment for forced labor under its anti-trafficking law in 2008, it did not obtain the conviction of any employer or recruitment agent for labor trafficking offenses. In addition, the government did not provide the majority of forced labor victims with adequate protection services, such as appropriate shelter or medical and psychological services. Extending protection services to all victims of trafficking identified in Israel, and improving identification of victims of labor trafficking and internal trafficking would enhance Israel’s anti-trafficking response.

**Recommendations for Israel**: Significantly increase prosecutions, convictions, and sentences for forced labor offenses, including the unlawful practice of withholding passports as a means to keep a person in a form of labor or service; increase investigations, prosecutions, and punishments of internal trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation; and extend comprehensive protection services to victims of forced labor.

**Prosecution**  
The Government of Israel increased its efforts to investigate cases of forced labor during the reporting period, while its prosecution of sex trafficking offenses and conviction of sex trafficking offenders declined. Israel prohibits all forms of human trafficking through its Anti-Trafficking Law of 2006, which prescribes penalties of: up to 16 years’ imprisonment for sex trafficking of an adult; up to 20 years’ imprisonment for sex trafficking of a child; up to 16 years’ imprisonment for slavery; and up to seven years’ imprisonment for forced labor. These penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes. In 2008, the government investigated nine cases of alleged sex trafficking, filed six indictments, and obtained the convictions of six individuals – 32 fewer than last year – with sentences ranging from four months’ to seven years’ imprisonment and fines. In addition, 12 prosecutions for sex trafficking remained in process, and eight cases awaited appeals. In March 2009, the government indicted eight men on charges of trafficking Eastern European women to Israel over a six year period for the purpose of forced prostitution. During the year, the government opened 24 investigations into cases of forced labor and 48 into the unlawful withholding of migrant workers’ passports; it filed its first indictment for forced labor under the trafficking law in November 2008. Police, however, did not initiate any investigations into the trafficking of Israeli citizens within the country and generally did not recognize trafficked Israeli women as such. In 2008, the government requested the assistance of three foreign governments in conducting international trafficking investigations.

***Protection***  
The government continued to improve its protection of trafficking victims over the reporting period, though protective services available to victims of forced labor and internal trafficking remained limited. The government supervised and funded a local NGO’s operation of a shelter for foreign victims of sex trafficking, allocating $1.25 million for operations, security, and medical care in 2008. During the year, the shelter assisted 44 women, 12 of whom were referred by the police. Victims in this shelter received medical treatment, psychiatric and social services, stipends, temporary residency, and work permits. Local observers, however, continued to report the shelter’s reluctance to accept trafficked women with children, and that victims outside the shelter could not access medical or psychological care unless they first paid for insurance. The government employed formal procedures to identify victims of sex trafficking and refer them to the shelter or other NGO facilities; these victims were not punished for acts committed as a direct result of their being trafficked. The government made protective services available for the first time to Israeli victims of sex trafficking at the end of the reporting period. In December 2008, the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs launched a $2.5 million project to assist Israeli females engaged in prostitution, include trafficking victims, resulting in the opening of emergency apartments in Tel Aviv and Haifa, establishment of a hotline, and operation of a mobile clinic; while 70 women benefited from these services, none were identified as trafficking victims.

Israel lacked a specific shelter for victims of labor trafficking, but government authorities referred six female victims of forced labor to the aforementioned shelter during the reporting period. In 2008, the Ministry of Social Affairs solicited bids for the creation of three facilities for labor trafficking victims – a shelter for women, a shelter for men, and three short-term apartments – and selected an NGO to operate them. In May 2008, the Committee of Directors General approved and disseminated to relevant government entities and NGOs procedures to identify labor trafficking victims. NGOs reported, however, that the guidelines were not implemented and the Detention Tribunal that reviews immigration violation cases continued to misclassify labor trafficking cases on a regular basis, resulting in the detention and deportation of many victims. In July 2008, the Ministry of Interior published procedures for granting temporary visas to victims of slavery and forced labor; the government issued temporary visa extensions for 27 sex trafficking victims and 17 forced labor victims in 2008. In February 2008, an inter-ministerial committee launched a new system for licensing nursing recruitment agencies and employing foreign caregivers in Israel that allows workers who legally entered the country to obtain alternate employment if they lose or chose to leave their first job; no licenses of abusive employers have been revoked since the new system came into place, though there have been reports of abusive employers over the last year. In November 2008, the Knesset passed Legal Aid Law (Amendment 9) granting free legal aid to victims of trafficking and slavery. In February 2009, the Minister of Justice signed Penal Regulations 5769-2009, making it possible to distribute property and funds confiscated from trafficking offenders to victims, NGOs, and government agencies to assist victim rehabilitation programs.

**Prevention**  
The Israeli government made efforts to prevent trafficking in persons during the reporting period. The National Coordinator for Anti-Trafficking Efforts provided lectures on trafficking to army units, city and municipality workers, students, and social workers. In addition, the Authority for the Advancement of Women, the Ministry of Education, the State Attorney’s Office, and the Ministry of Justice’s Legal Aid Branch sponsored anti-trafficking seminars, conferences, and lectures throughout the country. The government distributed a labor rights brochure to foreign workers arriving at the Ben Gurion Airport and a second brochure to foreign construction workers throughout the year. To reduce the demand for commercial sex acts within Israel, the Knesset drafted, but has not yet passed, a private bill in 2008 – The Prohibition of the Use of Paid Sexual Services Law – calling for the criminalization of clients of the sex industry; the bill prescribes punishment of six months’ imprisonment or an education program for first-time offenders. The National Coordinator convened a series of meetings with NGOs, academics, and government officials to examine the bill; its passage has been delayed one year to allow for further study and intensive public education campaigns on the subject.