**USSD 2010 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142760.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142760.htm)

**ISRAEL (Tier 2)**

Israel is a destination country for men and women subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced labor and forced prostitution. Low-skilled workers from Thailand, China, Nepal, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, and, to a lesser extent, Romania and Turkey, migrate voluntarily and legally to Israel for contract labor in construction, agriculture, and home health care provision. Some, however, subsequently face conditions of forced labor, including through such practices as the unlawful withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, inability to change or otherwise choose one’s employer, non-payment of wages, threats, and physical intimidation. Many labor recruitment agencies in source countries and in Israel require workers to pay recruitment fees typically ranging from $1,000 to $10,000, although Chinese workers often paid more than $20,000 – a practice making workers highly vulnerable to trafficking or debt bondage once in Israel. Traffickers are usually the migrant workers’ legal employers and the recruitment agents in both Israel and in the migrants’ home countries. Women from the former Soviet Union and China are subjected to forced prostitution in Israel, although the number of women affected has declined since the passage and implementation of Israel’s 2006 anti-trafficking bill. A small number of Israeli women are trafficked within the country for 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. Israel continued law enforcement actions against human trafficking and established a shelter for labor trafficking victims during the reporting period. However, the government did not identify labor trafficking victims during the year, and some law enforcement and protection efforts diminished since the transfer of anti-trafficking duties from the Immigration Police to the Ministry of Interior. 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 punishment of forced labor offenses, including the unlawful practice of withholding passports as a means to keep a person in compelled labor or service; ensure identified trafficking victims are not penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, such as immigration violations; and fully investigate the incidence of Israel nationals trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation.

**Prosecution**
The Government of Israel made some progress in its law enforcement efforts against human trafficking. 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 serious crimes. In the reporting period, the government of Israel prosecuted the case of eight traffickers who ran an international sex trafficking ring. This case involved coordination and cooperation with law enforcement and other government officials in several countries. In 2009, fourteen people were convicted of trafficking for the purposes of prostitution and/or related offenses. Since July 2009, the police opened 61 investigations of cases involving forced labor and 28 investigations of cases involving the withholding of passports. In 2009, the government initiated the prosecution of 32 suspected offenders on charges of forced labor, exploitation of vulnerable populations, and withholding a passport. Police arrested an individual reported to have coerced more than 30 women into prostitution, and who lived off of their income. He was suspected of enslavement, an offense under the anti-trafficking law, and a number of sexual offenses, including rape. NGOs indicated the government focused on prosecutions of related offenses — which allow for civil penalties as opposed to criminal convictions — rather than the prosecutions of trafficking crimes. Police did not initiate any investigations into the trafficking of Israeli citizens within the country and generally did not recognize that Israeli women were trafficked.

According to NGOs, there was a diminishment of anti-trafficking efforts in the reporting period since the newly-created immigration and border control authority (commonly referred to as the “Oz” unit) within the Ministry of Interior (MOI) replaced the Immigration Police. The Oz unit was accused of lacking awareness of trafficking and the will to combat it. While Oz inspectors were meant to convey information to the police if they encountered suspected crimes against migrant workers, NGOs asserted this did not happen, and a report by the Knesset’s Research and Information Center confirmed shortcomings in the operations of Oz inspectors. Furthermore, NGOs reported almost all labor trafficking prosecutions since initiation of the Oz unit were due to efforts by NGOs as opposed to investigation by the government.

The government provided numerous classes, workshops, and seminars to train law enforcement officers and judicial officials on trafficking. For instance, the Investigations and Intelligence Training School integrated trafficking issues in its curriculum, including lectures given by NGOs.

**Protection**
The Government of Israel continued to improve its protection of trafficking victims over the reporting period, although it lacked effective procedures to identify victims of labor trafficking and domestic sex trafficking. While the government has a formal system of proactively identifying victims of trafficking among high-risks persons with whom they come in contact, this procedure was largely limited in practice to identifying foreign sex trafficking victims, whom the government refers to shelters. The government gave a grant of $15,000 to a labor trafficking NGO for the purposes of identifying and assisting trafficking victims. In 2009, the government opened a new shelter for foreign male victims of labor trafficking, which assisted 50 victims in the reporting period. The government continued to support its existing shelter, and expanded its mandate to assist foreign female victims of both sex and labor trafficking, assisting 41 women during 2009. The government funded and supervised the shelters and its legal, medical, and psychiatric services, allocating $1.3 million in 2009, while an NGO operated the facility. The government encourages victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking.

Israel detained and deported labor trafficking victims if they were undocumented and not identified as victims. There were some unconfirmed reports that a small number of sex trafficking victims were detained, incarcerated, or deported. An NGO indicated officers prevented it from entering prisons to identify potential sex trafficking victims. Reports indicate the MOI transferred migrants to new employers who were affiliated with the same recruitment agency as the previous employers. This created an abusive situation since the new employer had incentive from the recruitment agency to coerce the migrant into revoking or amending the migrant’s labor complaint. At times, this employment transfer occurred without the migrants’ consent. Since 2009, the government of Israel issued temporary B1 visas – unrestricted work visas – to trafficking victims, not contingent on their cooperation with law enforcement officials. However, at an inter-ministerial meeting in January 2010, the MOI declared its intention to cancel this procedure.

The government provided numerous workshops and other training to state social workers and other government officials on victim identification, cultural sensitivity, and other issues. The Foreign Ministry’s International Agency for Development Cooperation conducted a one-week training course for senior representatives of NGOs and governments in source countries in May 2009. The workshop included components on trafficking prevention and victim rehabilitation.

**Prevention**
The Israeli government made sustained progress in preventing trafficking in persons over the reporting period. During the reporting period, the government held its first and second annual ceremony to present awards to individuals or organizations that made a significant contribution against human trafficking.

The country’s national coordinator for human trafficking posted an annual summary of the Israeli government’s anti-trafficking efforts on the Web, and disseminated information on trafficking on the Internet and via a weekly digest sent to governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders. The Knesset held a meeting to discuss the U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report for Israel. In December 2009, the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women broadcast on Israeli television several reports on the issue of sex trafficking. The government distributed trafficking prevention brochures in local languages for use by the Israeli consuls abroad in countries of origin; however, it is uncertain if laborers in their home countries received these brochures. The government continued to distribute a labor rights brochure to foreign workers arriving at the Ben Gurion Airport and a second brochure to foreign construction workers. During the year, authorities revoked the recruitment licenses and special permits to recruit foreign workers of 18 recruitment agencies. Prime Minister Netanyahu in January 2010 announced a Cabinet-approved plan to increase penalties on employment agencies that charge exorbitant recruitment fees and force agencies to secure a full year’s employment for workers in the caretaker sector. However, the plan also binds foreign workers to sectors and geographic regions, and migrants who are found violating this for more than 90 days will be deported. The government used education campaigns to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.