**USSD 2015 TIP Report about Israel**

[**https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2015/243460.htm**](https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2015/243460.htm)

ISRAEL: TIER 1

Israel is a destination country for men and women subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking and, to a much lesser extent, a source country for women subjected to sex trafficking. Low-skilled workers primarily from Asia, Eastern Europe, and West Africa migrate to Israel for temporary contract labor in the construction, agriculture, caregiving, and fishing industries; some of these workers are subjected to forced labor. The average recruitment fee paid by migrants to labor recruiters is $8,400. An international organization reported in 2014 abuses endured by Thai men and women in Israel’s agricultural sector, some of which constitutes forced labor. In 2013, men from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and India worked under harsh conditions on fishing boats, some of which constitutes human trafficking distinguished by isolation, long working hours, and withheld salaries. Caregivers are highly vulnerable to forced labor due to their isolation inside private residences, high recruitment fees, and their lack of protection under labor law. Women from Eastern Europe, Uzbekistan, China, Ghana, and to a lesser extent South America, as well as Eritrean men and women, are subjected to sex trafficking in Israel; some women arrive on tourist visas to work in prostitution but are subjected to sex trafficking. Some Israeli women and girls may be victims of sex trafficking in Israel. Since 2007, thousands of African migrants have entered Israel irregularly from Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. Many of these migrants were kidnapped along the Eritrea-Sudan border or within Sudan and subjected to severe abuses, including forced labor and sex trafficking, at the hands of criminal groups in the Sinai before reaching Israel. Due to the construction of a fence along the Israel-Egypt border and an aggressive Egyptian military campaign, the flow of these migrants arriving in Israel has nearly ceased—dropping from 10,000 in 2012 to 21 in 2014. The remaining 43,000 Eritrean and Sudanese migrants and asylum seekers, most of who arrived in Israel from the Sinai, are highly vulnerable to trafficking. In 2014, three Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA) officials were allegedly implicated in visa and passport fraud and suspected labor trafficking involving foreign workers.

The Government of Israel fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government sustained law enforcement actions against sex and labor trafficking, although courts continued to give convicted offenders prison terms not commensurate with the severity of the crime. The government continued to implement strong anti-trafficking prevention measures. It continued to proactively identify and refer victims to protection services and cooperated with NGOs to identify potential victims. The government continued to operate long-term shelters—and opened an additional transitional shelter in 2014 —as well as a day center to continue providing protection services to an increased number of identified victims. Though the government continued to identify and release from detention trafficking victims among the detained irregular African migrant population, unidentified victims continued to be susceptible to long-term detention for committing immigration violations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISRAEL:

Impose stricter sentences on convicted trafficking offenders, consistent with the gravity of the crime; ensure trafficking victims are not penalized, including by detention, for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking, such as immigration violations; continue to strengthen victim identification and referral measures among African migrants in detention facilities, especially those who endured severe abuses in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula; continue to provide protection to all trafficking victims, including shelter and medical and psycho-social treatment; continue to increase and train the number of labor inspectors, social workers, and interpreters in the agricultural, construction, and caregiving sectors; continue to increase training for law enforcement, including police and prison officials, in victim identification, victim sensitivity, and enforcement of labor and sex trafficking laws; increase enforcement of foreign worker labor rights; and increase investigations of sex trafficking of Israeli nationals, including children, and foreign migrants working in the fishing and agricultural sectors.

PROSECUTION

The government sustained strong anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, but sentences given to some convicted offenders remained inadequate. The government prohibits all forms of human trafficking through its 2006 anti-trafficking law, which prescribes penalties of up to 16 years’ imprisonment for the trafficking of an adult, up to 20 years’ imprisonment for the 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, such as rape. Under 376A of the Penal Law 5737-1977, holding a person’s passport against their will carries a penalty of three to five years’ imprisonment. In 2014, the police initiated over 250 sex trafficking investigations and arrested 73 individuals in these cases; it also opened 119 suspected forced labor investigations, 15 of which included the withholding of passports. This demonstrated an increase from 2013 when the government conducted 32 sex trafficking investigations and 88 forced labor investigations. In 2014, the government prosecuted 14 sex trafficking offenders, but it did not initiate any new forced labor prosecutions, compared with one forced labor and eight sex trafficking prosecutions in 2013. A 2012 case involving three forced labor offenders and four others charged in connection with forced labor crimes remained ongoing. In 2014, the government convicted 18 sex traffickers and one forced labor offender, compared with 22 sex traffickers and three forced labor offenders convicted in 2013. Courts continued to issue sentences to some trafficking offenders that were not sufficiently serious to deter the crime: the majority of traffickers were given sentences ranging from community service to 40 months’ suspended imprisonment with financial penalties; only two of 19 offenders convicted in 2014 served prison time as a part of their sentences. Since May 2013, the government continued to cooperate with the Government of Georgia in a case involving an Israeli man who sexually exploited a 10-year-old Georgian girl*via*the internet; the offender was convicted of sex trafficking in January 2015. In February 2015, he was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment and fined $25,000. The government reported challenges to prosecuting sex trafficking cases, as many victims preferred to be repatriated and were unwilling to remain in Israel to serve as witnesses in the criminal case against their traffickers. In 2014, the government investigated and suspended three PIBA employees for allegations of visa and passport fraud related to foreign workers; one of the cases led to the investigation of seven non-governmental individuals for suspected labor trafficking. The government continued to provide extensive anti-trafficking trainings, workshops, and seminars to officials in various ministries. The government also hosted an anti-trafficking conference, in collaboration with international organizations, for judges from 14 countries in October 2014.

PROTECTION

The government continued to improve efforts to identify and protect trafficking victims, yet unidentified victims among the African migrant population remained vulnerable to the government’s policy of detaining migrants. The government continued to widely circulate victim identification guidelines to government ministries, which regularly referred potential victims to the police to open an investigation and ensure the provision of protective services. Authorities also continued to cooperate with NGOs on victim identification and referral. The police continued a program with an NGO to help identify and refer to protection sex trafficking victims picked up during police raids of brothels; police identified 28 victims during brothels raids in 2014. The government continued to fund the 35-bed Maagan shelter for female trafficking victims, a 35-bed Atlas shelter for male trafficking victims, and an 18-bed Tesfa shelter specifically catered to the cultural and social needs of female victims from Eritrea and Ethiopia; all shelter residents were provided work permits and allowed to leave freely. These shelters offered one year of rehabilitation services, including job training, psycho-social support, medical treatment, language training, and legal assistance. The government also funded transitional apartments with 18 beds for trafficking victims, and, in December 2014 it opened a six-bed transitional apartment for male trafficking victims. In 2014, the Maagan shelter assisted 58 victims, including 27 who were newly referred to the shelter. Authorities referred 17 women to the Tesfa shelter. Transitional apartments housed 38 women, and the Atlas shelter assisted 79 men. The Ministry of Social Affairs continued to operate a day center in Tel Aviv for male and female African trafficking victims, some of whom were awaiting space at the shelters. The center provided psycho-social services and food aid and identified individuals at risk of trafficking and referred them to shelter services. In 2014, the center provided services to over 100 African men and women, primarily from Eritrea, who police identified as trafficking victims abused in the Sinai. Additionally, the government continued to provide trafficking victims who opted not to live in shelters an official letter that protected them from potential arrest and emergency contact numbers of the shelters and relevant ministries.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) legal aid branch continued to provide free legal aid to trafficking victims. In 2014, the branch received 88 legal aid requests from victims, including 47 African men and women who were trafficking victims in the Sinai. In 2014, the government issued 111 B1 visas—unrestricted work visas—and one-year rehabilitation visas to trafficking victims. The government encouraged victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers, but did not require their participation as a condition for receiving visas and protective assistance; victims could also opt to leave the country pending trial proceedings. The government allowed trafficking victims to work during the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers.

Though most trafficking victims were not punished for acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking, unidentified trafficking victims among the irregular African migrant population were regularly detained for immigration violations under the Law of Infiltration. In December 2014, the government amended the law, which determined irregular African migrants remain in prison for three months, followed by 20 months in the Holot holding facility. Though the government characterized Holot as an open facility, an international organization and Holot residents claimed it was a *de facto* detention center due to its remote location in the desert, poor access to healthcare, and restrictive requirements on movement. Though the government identified and released from detention four trafficking victims in 2014, an NGO identified and referred 29 trafficking victims among those in detention facilities to the MOJ legal aid branch; at the end of the reporting period, the government granted only eight of these referrals trafficking victim status.

PREVENTION

The government continued its efforts to prevent and raise awareness of human trafficking. The anti-trafficking unit met on a regular basis with government ministries, NGOs, and the Knesset (parliament); conducted trainings for officials; advised officials on labor practices in the agricultural sector and fishing industry; and maintained a website on human trafficking. The anti-trafficking unit also continued to chair an inter-ministerial committee appointed to study women and children in prostitution in Israel and, in 2014, it formed a working group with various ministries and an NGO to address child prostitution. The Knesset Subcommittee on Trafficking in Women and Prostitution and the Knesset Committee on Foreign Workers met several times during the reporting period. In December 2014, the government presented its seventh annual awards to individuals or organizations making a significant contribution to combat human trafficking.

PIBA continued to monitor recruitment agencies and manpower companies for labor law violations, and the government produced and distributed a victim identification pamphlet to manpower agencies. In accordance with PIBA procedures for recruitment agencies in the caregiving sector, it required every agency to hire a licensed social worker responsible for supervising the conditions of foreign caregivers, including home visits, and for informing relevant authorities about labor violations. In 2014, the Ministry of Interior reported an increased focus on training social workers to identify potential cases of human trafficking among caregivers. In 2014, the police charged 26 individuals for alleged crimes against foreign workers, such as inflated brokerage fees and fraud. The Ministry of Economy, which employed 274 labor inspectors and contracted translators during routine inspections, initiated 796 investigations and issued 982 administrative warnings against 413 employers for labor violations in 2014. The government continued to operate a 24-hour hotline for foreign workers to lodge complaints. The government reported efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts and forced labor. In 2014, the government prosecuted nine defendants and convicted two individuals for purchasing commercial sex with children, while it also initiated the prosecution of a potential forced labor case that included elements of exploitation. The government also made efforts to prevent potential trafficking of African migrants who had been abused—or affiliated to persons abused—in the Sinai; it prosecuted four and convicted two offenders for crimes committed in the Sinai, some of which may have included trafficking. The government made significant efforts to address sex tourism. The Ministry of Tourism adopted the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism in January 2014, and throughout 2014 it implemented awareness raising of trafficking in the tourism sector and anti-trafficking training on this issue for government officials, tourism industry representatives, and NGOs. Israeli law prohibits Israeli nationals from engaging in child sex tourism abroad. The government provided anti-trafficking training or guidance for its diplomatic personnel.