

JANUARY 2024

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

HOTLINE FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

<i>From the Desk of the Executive Director</i>	1
<i>Challenges</i>	2
<i>Achievements</i>	3
<i>HRM in Numbers</i>	4

MIGRANTS

<i>The October 7th Attack</i>	8
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ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

<i>Improving Israel's Asylum System</i>	11
<i>New Arrivals of Asylum Seekers</i>	12

DETENTION

<i>Releasing Detained Sudanese Newcomers</i>	15
<i>Dictatorship Without Borders</i>	16
<i>2022 Annual Report on Detention of Migrants and Asylum Seekers</i>	19

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

<i>Women Escape War in Ethiopia, Human Trafficking and Slavery in Jordan</i>	20
<i>Joining to the Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking</i>	21

PROTECTION OF WOMEN

<i>Reaching Out: Assisting Asylum Seeker Women in the Periphery and Tel Aviv</i>	22
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PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Fighting the Arrest and Detention of Migrant Children and Their Families **23**

GIVING VOICE

Empowering Asylum-Seeking Adolescents to Speak Out in a Digital Media Workshop **24**

“I’ll Be Your Mirror”: Art Workshop and Exhibition for Refugee Artists **25**

World Refugee Day: Meeting Through Culture **26**

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES **27**

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANAT HERRMANN - AHARONI

At this point in time, it almost feels too early to reflect on 2023. The year still lingers with us, overshadowed by sadness, grief, and a profound sense of injustice. The Israeli-Hamas war continues to have tragic consequences for Israeli society, including dozens of migrants and asylum seekers who have been kidnapped, wounded or killed. **Hamas did not distinguish between citizens and migrants during its brutal attack on October 7, 2023 - it is now more evident than ever that these migrants constitute an integral part of Israeli society.** This realization highlights the crucial work of Hotline to ensure that the Israeli public accepts and supports the full human rights of migrants and refugees as inherent to Israeli society and democracy.

2023 was a year filled with both real threats to the rights of migrants and profound achievements made by the Hotline in the face of these challenges. The year began with the formation of the most extreme right-wing government in Israel's history, which proclaimed an anti-migrant and anti-democratic agenda. Thanks to a stalwart protest movement and the legal acumen of Israel's Supreme Court, the threat of the judicial overhaul has lessened. However, we continue to witness a notable decline in the state's commitment, capacity, and will to protect the human rights of refugees, migrants, and survivors of human trafficking.

Our strong ties to the communities of asylum seekers and labor migrants, our access to detention centers, and the dedication and expertise of our staff have enabled us to advance the rights of refugees and migrants despite these threats. This year, we identified 52 women as survivors of human trafficking, responded to the cruel practice of pushback of asylum seekers along the Jordanian border, and obtained the release of those who were arbitrarily detained. The Hotline played a crucial role in shaping public discourse in the aftermath of the September 2nd violent clashes between opponents and supporters of the Eritrean dictatorship and the widespread use of administrative arrests that ensued. And since October 7th, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that the migrants harmed by Hamas receive the same rights and benefits as Israeli citizens.

Looking forward to 2024, I want to express our deepest gratitude to our community of supporters. Your generosity generates access to basic rights for thousands of refugees, migrants, and survivors of human trafficking.

May 2024 bring peace to us all,

Anat

CHALLENGES

MAY

The detention of Sudanese newcomers who entered Israel through the Jordanian border.

AUGUST

“Pushbacks” of asylum seekers who entered Israel through the Jordanian border.

OCTOBER

The Iron Swords War erupted following the Hamas attack on the Gaza Envelope, resulting in the injury, kidnapping, and murder of numerous non-Jewish migrants and asylum seekers.

JANUARY

The Judicial Reform threatened democratic principles, attempted to make it nearly impossible to ensure the rights of refugees through the courts.

MAY

From May 15 until the end of the year, **the Interior Ministry’s office in Bnei Brak was closed to refugees and asylum seekers** leaving them without recourse for visa renewals, or asylum interviews.

SEPTEMBER

Riots involving both opponents and supporters of the Eritrean regime at a fundraising event, organized by the Eritrean Embassy, resulted in the mass arrests of protesters with insufficient evidence and indiscriminate use of administrative detention.




ACHIEVEMENTS



We uncovered a new trend in human trafficking: Ethiopian women who fled the civil war in the Tigray region and arrived in Jordan to work in domestic labor. After being forced to work in slavery-like conditions and being trafficked from one family to another, they managed to escape to Israel and sought assistance at our office.

We obtained **official recognition for 29 survivors of Trafficking in Persons (TIP)** whom we identified, providing them with access to shelter and rehabilitation. Out of the 29, we referred **14 TIP survivors** to a rehabilitation center.




We served as representatives of civil society organizations in the newly founded **Ministry of Justice's Advisory Committee to the Anti-Trafficking Combat Unit** during its pilot year.

We obtained **the release of 17 clients** from immigration detention.




As the sole organization monitoring the protocols of immigration detention facilities and that is authorized to visit these facilities, **we identified and secured the release of 10 Sudanese asylum seekers who were detained upon their entry into Israel**, including **four men, a vulnerable woman and a couple with three young children** who were held in a detention facility.

We represented and secured **the release of six Eritrean asylum seekers** who were arrested and placed in administrative detention following the September 2nd riots.



We concluded a **six-month workshop** aimed at enhancing the capacity of ten adolescent girls from Eritrea, who are seeking asylum, **to advocate for their community via social media.**

We moderated **a six-month art workshop for asylum-seeking painters**, culminating in a six-week-long exhibition at the French Institute's gallery in Tel Aviv.



We celebrated **World Refugee Day** with a family-friendly event at the Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv. In collaboration with Elifelet, ARDC, and UNHCR, we produced an art exhibition, showcasing three asylum-seeking painters.

HRM IN NUMBERS

IN ONLY A YEAR WE...

Handled **3,063**
inquiries

1,792 inquiries
face-to-face

1,271 inquiries
via WhatsApp

CLIENTS' ASYLUM REQUESTS

Assisted **933** clients
with asylum requests

Assisted **172** clients
in filling asylum
requests

Prepared **36** clients
for asylum
interviews

Escorted **8**
vulnerable clients to
asylum interviews

Sent **717** letters on
behalf of clients to
Israeli Authorities

100% of the asylum requests we submitted during 2023 **are still pending.**
0% have been rejected or approved.

The data presented here demonstrate how HRM can be successful at fulfilling clients requests only to be stymied by a lack of response from the government. Read more about how we are addressing the systemic refusal to review and decide on asylum applications [here](#).



WOMEN CLIENTS

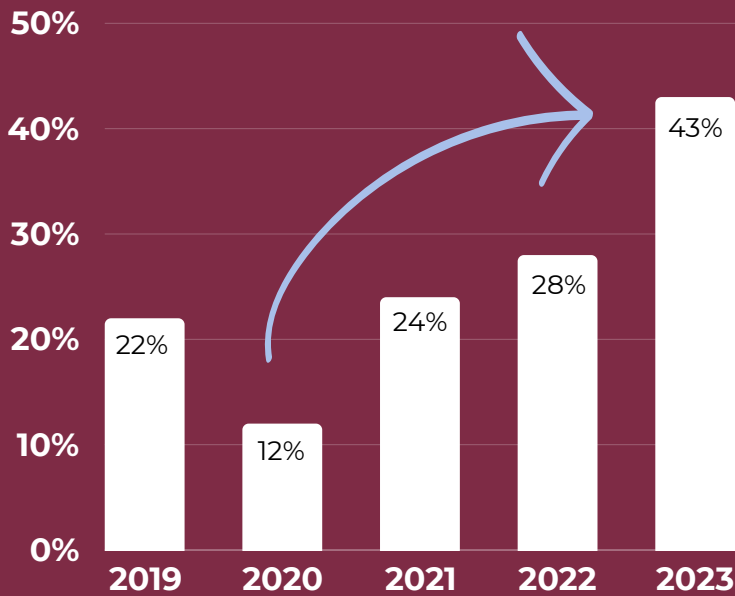
HRM has been dedicated to assisting migrant women and safeguarding their rights for over 20 years. Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of women, we have set a goal to reach as many women as possible. Since 2022, we have been conducting designated reception hours exclusively for women, both at our office in Tel Aviv and in peripheral cities.

We are proud to report a successful outcome, with a 20% increase in women clients over the past two years!

In 2023, **43%** of our clients were women. *

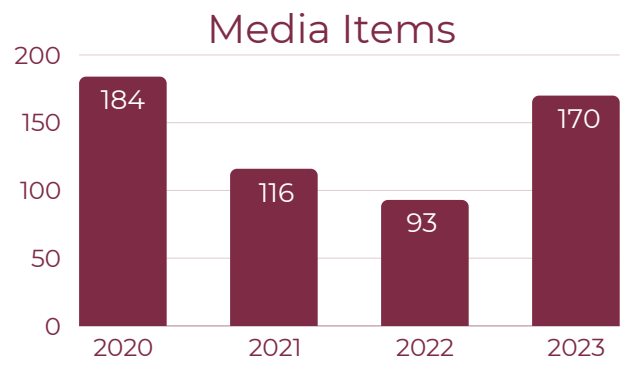
* Out of the **1,792** face-to-face inquiries, **774** were from women.

An increase in percentage of women we assisted since 2019



In 2023, we conducted **4** designated reception days for women in the Periphery





Initiated **106** legal interventions

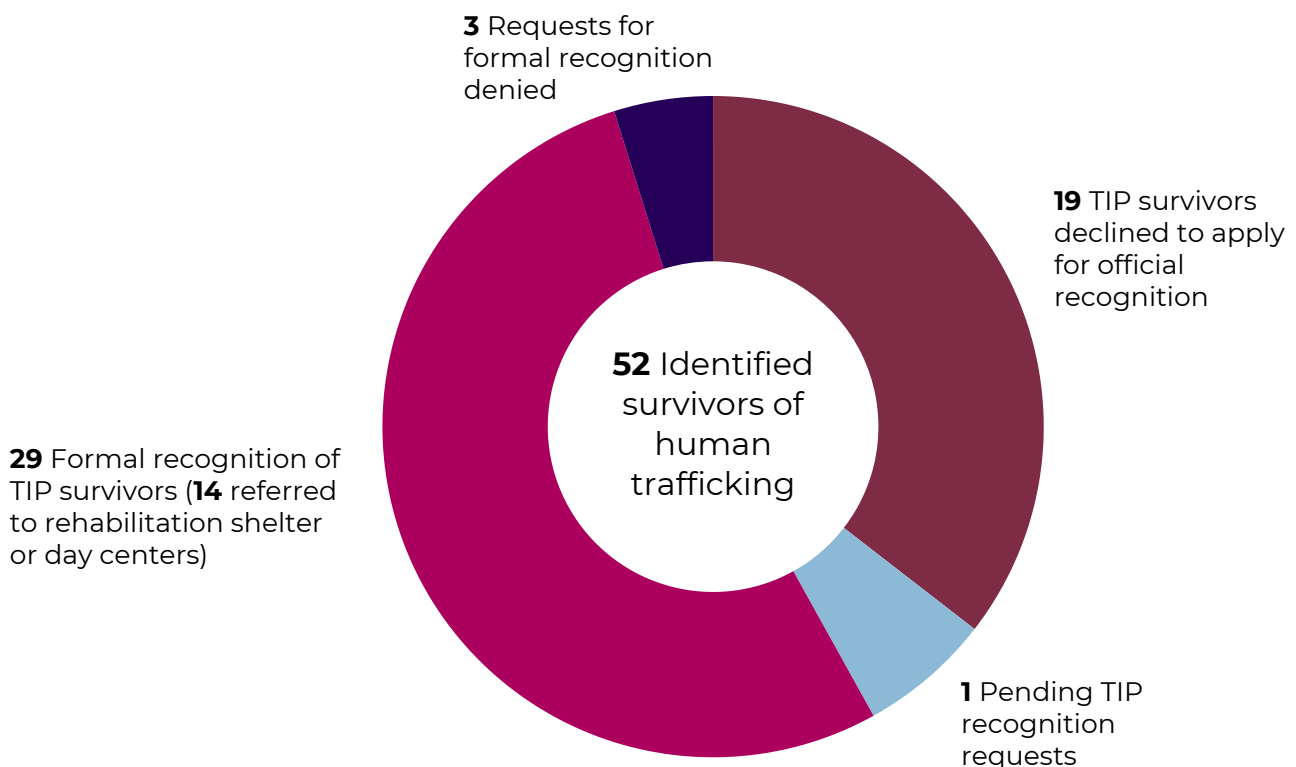
64 interventions in individual cases
42 interventions of impact litigation

Raised awareness and conducted trainings

We contributed to **170** media items;
 We conducted **5** trainings for NGOs, lawyers and governments officials;
 We gave **20** lectures and tours to **945** people about refugees' rights in Israel.

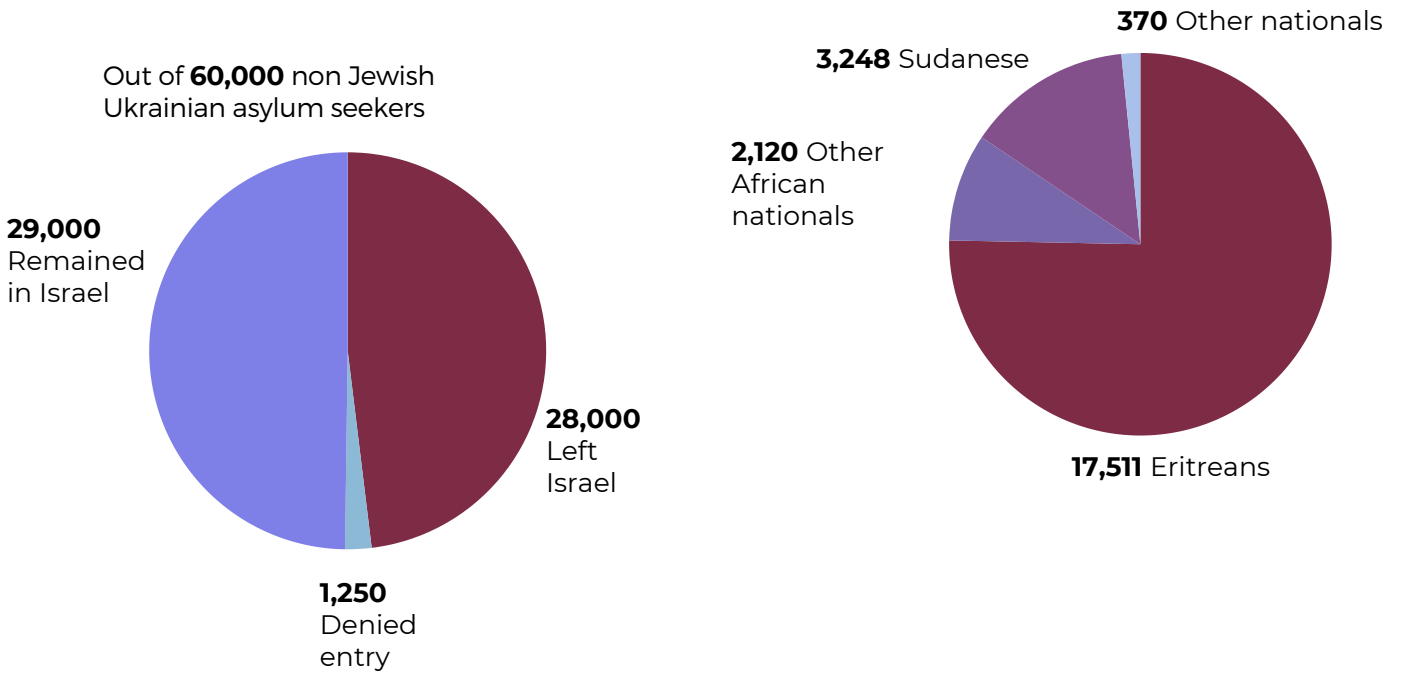


SURVIVORS OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP)



Asylum seekers in Israel: statistics

According to the Immigration Authority's report (October 2023) in Israel there are currently **23,249** asylum seekers (not including Sudanese asylum seekers who received a temporary residence visa (A5), nor Ukrainians refugees who fled the war). According to estimations, there are an additional **10,000** Israeli-born children of asylum seekers.



MIGRANTS

THE OCTOBER 7TH ATTACK

THE EFFECT OF THE ATTACK ON MIGRANTS



On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists carried out a brutal attack on residents of the Gaza Envelope, harming children, women, the elderly, and men. **The terrorists committed atrocities, including kidnap, murder, rape, and grenade attacks, without distinguishing between Israelis and non-Jewish migrants.** This rural area was home to many work migrants employed in its fields, along with foreign students and caregivers. The Nova Festival, where young people were targeted, also saw no differentiation based on citizenship. **Since the onset of the Israel-Hamas war, HRM has been actively engaged with migrant communities, gathering information on victims, liaising with Israeli authorities, and accompanying the victims to exercise their rights.**

According to our information, corroborated with official sources and migrant communities, by the end of 2023 there were:

9 migrants held hostage

At least **9 missing persons and hostages** from Thailand and Nepal, presumed alive, **are in the hands of Hamas in Gaza.**

24 released hostages

24 hostages from Thailand and the Philippines **were released** from Hamas.

Dozens of injured

Dozens of migrants with foreign citizenship only **who were injured** by Hamas.

61 killed

61 migrants with foreign citizenship only (including two asylum seekers) **were killed.**

5,000 survivors and evacuees

Approximately 5,000 survivors (with no physical injury) and evacuees from the Gaza Envelope and southern cities with foreign citizenship only.

All of these figures refer to migrants with foreign citizenship only (i.e., with no Israeli citizenship). Among them are legally working migrants and students, undocumented work migrants, children of work migrants born and raised in Israel without legal status, and asylum seekers. Each of these victims and their families are at risk of falling through the cracks of Israeli bureaucracy and society.

We have seen significant shortcomings in the State's attempts to collect information about non-Israeli citizen victims, accompany their families and provide crucial information about the state of their beloved ones, and make Israeli bureaucratic processes accessible to non-Hebrew speaking migrants. While a group of devoted volunteers was formed to assist the largest group of foreign victims - the Thai workers - in the other cases where the State fell short, HRM stepped in **to secure the rights of other groups of migrants who were the invisible victims of the October 7th attack.**



Tanzanian relatives of Joshua Mollel - who was murdered and whose body is kept hostage by the Hamas - advocating for his release.



HRM and Kav La'Oved's teams and volunteers filling out National Insurance forms with the Tanzanian students who were evacuated from the Gaza Envelope to Afula (23-12-23)

How did HRM respond to this situation?

Following the initial attacks, HRM's related work has been comprised of three strategies:

- 1) Coordination between the families of missing and kidnapped migrants and the civilian organizations mobilizing on behalf of Israeli missing and kidnapped persons.
- 2) Paralegal and legal advocacy to ensure that all the victims, regardless of nationality or legal status have access to the full range of rights and benefits available to them.
- 3) Ensuring that the stories of murdered, kidnapped and surviving migrants reach the Israeli and International media, demonstrating how migrants are part of the very fabric of Israeli society.

SUJITH WAS IN ZIKIM WHEN THE MASSACRE BEGAN

Sujith, a Sri Lankan immigrant, worked at the Zikim beach and was there on the morning of the atrocious massacre on October 7th. Sujith was the first to reach the shelter after seeing the Hamas boats approaching. He was soon joined by more Israelis looking for shelter from the brutal attack. **Sujith had worked for many years in the police in Sri Lanka, and when Hamas terrorists threw a hand grenade into the shelter he could tell that the safety catch wasn't completely removed. With great bravery, he threw the grenade back.** Then, one of the terrorists entered the shelter and began to shoot. Sujith was wounded but still conscious, he tried to help another wounded person and then passed out.

When he finally awoke, Sujith managed to crawl to his residence, from where he was taken to the Barzilai hospital. He was admitted for several days and then sent home. He told us that when he returned to continue treatment he was refused since he doesn't have medical insurance. Hamas considered Sujith an Israeli for all intents and purposes, but in Israel, he is considered "undocumented".



We submitted a claim on Sujith's behalf to the National Insurance Institute of Israel, for recognition as a victim of hostile action. Several weeks passed – while Sujith had to finance the medical follow-up treatment – until we received an answer, rejecting the claim outright. Sujith entered Israel illegally and therefore can't be recognized as a victim of hostile actions. The terrorists on the Zikim beach did not make any distinction, but the National Insurance Institution is still working according to an outdated script. Immediately upon receiving the rejection letter, we turned to the Exceptions Committee at the Ministry of Defense, asking he receives the compensations he is entitled to.

Sujith was attacked and wounded as an Israeli. He was hurt while trying to protect those taking shelter with him. Every day that he does not receive the compensations he deserves, prevents him from receiving the mental care he needs, delays his rehabilitation and makes it difficult for him to heal his wounds and move on. A technical clause can't prevent him from receiving the rights entitled to all those hurt in the brutal terror attack. We are committed to work tirelessly for him to be compensated.

ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

IMPROVING ISRAEL'S ASYLUM SYSTEM

PETITION TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS AT THE POPULATION AND IMMIGRATION AUTHORITY (PIBA)'S OFFICE IN BNEI BRAK

In 2022, PIBA decided to cease the automatic and computerized renewal of permits for asylum seekers. As a result, thousands of asylum seekers found themselves without a valid residence permit and without an appointment for its renewal. They faced the risk of losing access to basic social services that require a valid residence permit, including banking and healthcare services, and of losing their employment. In December 2022 we filed [a petition](#) to the District Court, together with HIAS and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), requesting remedies including the establishment of a computerized appointment scheduling system and the opening of all PIBA offices for visa renewals for asylum seekers (read about our petition here: [English](#), [Hebrew](#)).

PIBA responded that it had no plans to implement an appointment scheduling system and, as of May 15, the Bnei Brak facility would only cater to Israeli citizens seeking passport renewals, with asylum seekers' documents renewed automatically online.

The court criticized the state's response, deeming it unsatisfactory and lacking a clear justification for not implementing a computerized appointment scheduling system for asylum seekers. With the closure of the facility to asylum seekers and the return to the format of online extension, the court issued a ruling dismissing our appeal as redundant.

In October, following the onset of the Iron Swords war, the Bnei Brak office was closed temporarily and is expected to reopen (for asylum seekers too) in January. Until then, visas that expired after January 1, 2023, are automatically renewed, while those that expired earlier could not be renewed.

Once it reopens, automatic renewals will cease again, and visa renewals will require invitations from PIBA to their Bnei Brak office. If needed in 2024, we will initiate a new legal proceeding.

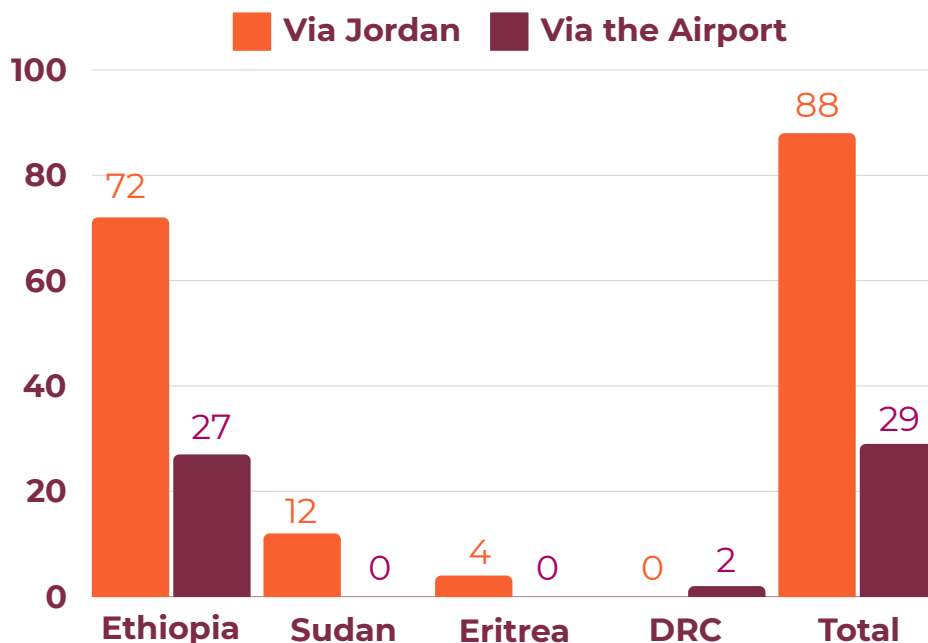
NEW ARRIVALS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

INCREASE IN NEW ARRIVALS VIA THE JORDANIAN BORDER

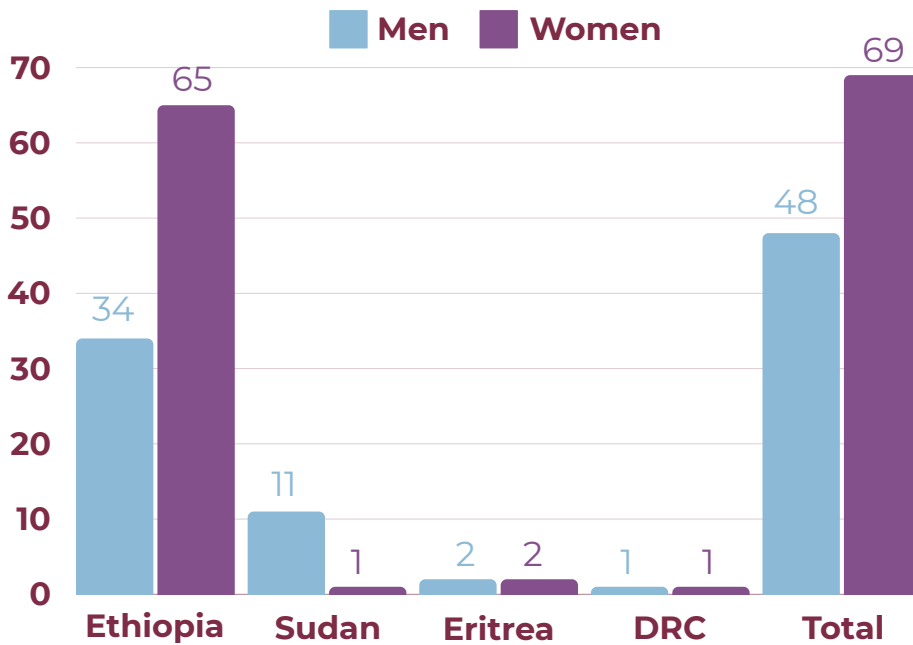
Throughout 2023, our Crisis Intervention Center (CIC) has provided paralegal assistance to **117 newcomers**. Among them are Sudanese asylum seekers and survivors of human trafficking from the Tigray Region in Ethiopia (see the "Trafficking in Persons" section below for more details).

Sudanese asylum seekers possess valid reasons for departing from Jordan, a nation that has not ratified the Refugee Convention. Amid Jordan's declining economic circumstances, refugees are prohibited from engaging in work to sustain themselves while residing within its borders. Jordan detains and deports any Sudanese refugees who are apprehended three times for working illegally. This is especially egregious because of the escalation of the armed conflict in Sudan in recent years (read about the detention of Sudanese newcomer in the "Detention" section below).

Asylum-Seeking Newcomers Throughout 2023: Point of Entrance



Asylum-Seeking Newcomers Throughout 2023: Gender



From the data, it appears that the entries of Ethiopian citizens are mostly through Jordan, with a significant number of women, most of whom are survivors of trafficking. This situation arises from the ongoing conflict in Tigray, despite the declared ceasefire.

The CIC team conducted intake interviews for the newcomers, helped them complete asylum requests, identified individuals as survivors of human trafficking, and submitted their requests to be formally recognized as such by the state. Due to the long queues at Border Control Registration, our team also assessed the newcomers' needs and referred them to organizations that offer medical, social, and humanitarian support. For those deemed at risk or lacking secure housing, we advocated for expedited appointments at Border Control Registration through the Ministry of Interior. Our requests have been met with positive responses from the authorities, who have invited at-risk individuals to the relevant PIBA offices.

(Read more here: [AP story](#), [Haaretz.com](#), [The Times of Israel](#), [AP YouTube](#)).

PUSHBACKS OF NEWCOMERS BACK TO JORDAN

In August, the Israeli media reported that a group of 5 Eritrean citizens was discovered while crossing the border to Israel and was returned to Jordan (Read here: [English](#), [Hebrew](#)).

In a follow-up investigative article, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that there was an unpublished procedure regulating coordinated returns between Israel and Jordan.

At the same time, **HRM received information from several sources suggesting that people who cross the border are not being questioned in a language they understand, are not told about their right to file for asylum request and there is no mechanism ensuring that they will not be deported to their country of origin, even if they are from countries known for their producing refugees.**

This is particularly concerning in light of the fact that 54% of the newcomers are survivors of Trafficking in Persons (TIP): 54 women out of 100 newcomers whom we assisted during 2023. Although the IDF claimed to have coordinated the pushbacks with PIBA to check who is an asylum seeker or TIP survivor, PIBA stated that they did not receive any inquiry from the IDF. **It raises the concern that the IDF is deporting vulnerable asylum seekers and TIP survivors to Jordan, where they are detained and sent back to their home countries.**

Along with our partners at HIAS Israel and ACRI, on August 21st, HRM's legal team issued a letter to the Legal Advisor to The Government and the Chief Military Prosecutor.

In [the letter](#), we requested more information regarding the confidential proceeding and demanded that the IDF not conduct "pushbacks" unless they meet the legal standard to which the state committed in the Israeli Supreme Court.

We also detailed the problems that asylum seekers face in Jordan, since it is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention. For Example, in December 2015, Jordan deported hundreds of Sudanese refugees to Sudan. One hundred of them were arrested and tortured in their homeland. As of the time of this writing, no reply has been received.

DETENTION

RELEASING DETAINED SUDANESE NEWCOMERS

ASSISTING SUDANESE ASYLUM SEEKERS DETAINED AFTER CROSSING THE JORDANIAN BORDER INTO ISRAEL

As the only organization with access to immigration detention centers, our CIC team closely monitors the protocols in immigration prisons to identify any instances of misconduct and arrange our assistance for those in need.

During 2023, we visited the prison on several occasions to offer support to Sudanese asylum seekers who were apprehended after irregularly entering Israel from Jordan, through the border between Israel and the West Bank. The group included a family of five (two parents and three young children), in addition to four other men and a vulnerable woman.

Through intake interviews, we gathered their stories about the circumstances that compelled them to flee from Jordan to seek asylum in Israel.

We discovered that three of them received refugee status in Jordan, while the other three did not due to the Jordanian authorities' refusal to allow UNHCR to grant such status.

To ensure their protection, we submitted asylum requests on their behalf, and accompanied them to their asylum interviews. We managed to secure the release of all of them from prison.



DICTATORSHIP WITHOUT BORDERS

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRESTS OF ERITREAN PROTESTERS IN THE ERITREAN EMBASSY'S FUNDRAISING EVENT

On September 2, 2023, the Eritrean Embassy in Israel planned a festive event to raise funds for the dictatorship regime. Similar events conducted in other countries have been provoking the anger of refugees who escaped the dictatorship and opposed continued funding through extortion and threats in their hosting country.

Before the event, Eritrean community leaders in Israel alerted the police to potential violence and requested event cancellation due to clashes between regime supporters and opponents.

“We, as a community organization, would like to express our concern for people’s lives and implore the Israeli Police to act to stop the violence that will put people’s lives at risk.”



Eritrean New Hope Organization

לכבוד,
משטרת ישראל תל אביב יפו

הנדון: התראה על אירוע המונים שמלווה באיומים אלימים ברשתות החברתיות

26/08/2023
שלום רב,

ביום שבת 02/09/2023 שגרירות אריתריאה בישראל מתכננת אירוע פוליטי, האירוע המתוכנן המלווה באיומים של תומכיו, באותו מידה מתוכננת הפגנת התנגדות מצד המתנגדים לדיקטטורה, אירועים כאלה התרחשו במהלך חודש יולי אוגוסט ברחבי העולם, כגון, גרמניה, שוודיה, בריטניה, קנדה וארצות הברית, האירועים שצוינו הופסקו עקב אלימות קשות שסיכנו חיים הן של תומכים ומתנגדים הן אזרחים מיקומים. בישראל היו בעבר אירועים מדמים כאלה שיצאו משליטה גבו מחיר כבד מאמשים ולקח לנו הרבה זמן ארגוני הקהילה להרגיע אותם, עכשיו בעקבות האירועים ברחבי העולם והתגריות של שגריר אריתריאה ותומכיו האיומים להסלמה שוב פעם חזרו זה עלול להגיע לשפיכת דמים מיותרים.

הינה עדות איום בפייסבוק **התארגנות של גברים** של חוליה מאורגנת שיש בה רק גברים היום שבת 26/08/2023 שנועדה להפחיד ולאיים באופן מפורש לקראת האירוע לשבוע הבא. לאור האמור אנחנו בתור ארגון קהילתי שפועל לטובת חיים שקטים של הקהילה בתחומים שונים מביעים את דאגתנו נחשש ממשי לחיי אדם ומבקשים ממשטרת ישראל שתפעל למניעת אלימות שתסכן חיי אדם.

צוות אגון- Eritrean New Hope Organization
י"ר ברהנה נגאסי

The letter from the leaders of the "Eritrean New Hope Organization" (sent a week before the protest). (August 26, 2023)



Eritrean New Hope Organization

The police approved a protest of 4,000 people but refused to cancel the event. Indeed, approximately 4,000 opponents gathered in South Tel Aviv to protest the event, where violence broke out between event attendees and protesters. Police responded with live fire, rubber bullets, stun grenades, tear gas, and water cannons to disperse the crowd.

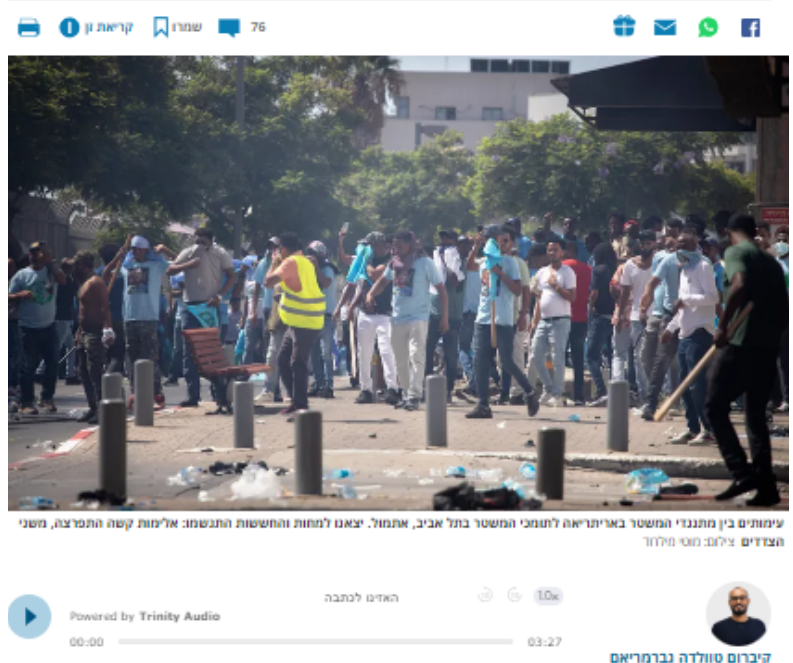
After several hours, the police gained control, but there were 157 reported injuries, including 49 police officers. By day's end, 67 of the injured remained hospitalized, with 19 in serious condition. Additionally, police detained dozens of Eritreans, often without evidence of violent behavior, solely for their participation in the protest.

HRM represented 6 Eritrean asylum seekers who were detained in administrative detention on the grounds that they were involved in the riots in Tel Aviv surrounding the event at the Eritrean embassy.

At the hearing, we argued that **there was no evidence against our clients and that administrative detention as a substitute for a fair criminal procedure is illegal in principle. We managed to secure the release of all our clients.**

We also issued a letter to the Government Legal Advisor expressing our objection to the use of administrative arrests as a response to the violent events. In this letter, we emphasized that **using administrative arrest as an alternative to criminal proceedings is illegal based on previous Supreme Court rulings** and demanded that all those arrested in relation to the riots be released from administrative arrest and subjected to criminal proceedings if there is sufficient evidence to their involvement in violating the law.

הזהרנו מהאירוע של השגרירות. התעלמתם, והחברים שלי נורו



עמותים בין מתנגדי המשטר באריתריאה לתומכי המשטר בתל אביב, אתמול. יצאנו למחות והחששות התבססו: ארצות קשה התמריצו, חשני הצודים יצאנו חטי מילוד

Powered by Trinity Audio האזינו לכתבה

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קיברום טוולדה נברמריאם

An [op-ed](#) by Kibrom Twelde, the head of the CIC team, published in Haaretz (Hebrew).



Kibrom Twelde, in an interview with AP, outside of HRM's offices.

We organized meetings with representatives of the Eritrean community to discuss the implications of the violence within the community and the response of the police.

We participated in over 30 media articles about the event (see: [AP](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [Voice of America](#)).

HRM will soon publish a thorough report, **“Dictatorship without Borders,”** exposing both the control the Eritrean regime has over its citizens in the diaspora and the detrimental response of the Israeli government to the riots.



2022 ANNUAL REPORT ON DETENTION OF MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

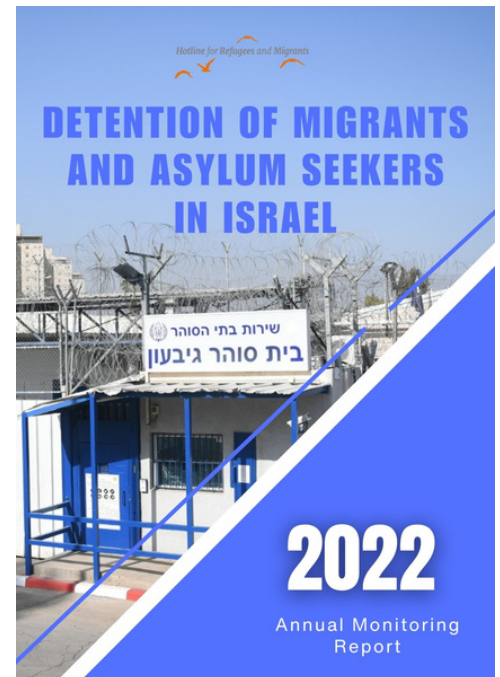
In 2023, we published our [annual monitoring report](#) covering detention in 2022. This report continues our commitment to illuminate the dark corners where the rights of statusless migrants are easily trampled - jails and prisons - for individuals refused entry into Israel. These spaces, often ignored by the public, house marginalized populations whose grievances remain largely unseen.

The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war led to an influx of refugees unseen in recent decades. It began with the detention and deportation of Ukrainian migrants during the days before the Russian invasion of their country, was followed

by HRM's demand for group protection of Ukrainian refugees when the fighting started and reviewing the implementation of this protection, and continued up until the entry refusal of war escapees as they entered Ben Gurion Airport.

Our continuous monitoring of the Detention Review Tribunal, revealed an improvement in the awareness of the tribunal adjudicators to cases of human trafficking and modern slavery. However, despite our efforts in recent years to raise the awareness of the tribunal adjudicators to the challenges facing mentally ill detainees, the tribunal adjudicators rarely answered our petitions for Legal Aid Office representation. This occurred even in cases involving unidentifiable migrants detained for extended periods, contrary to the state's commitment to provide representation for detainees who aren't able to self-represent due to mental illness.

The practice of detaining asylum seekers while their asylum application are processed by the Immigration Authority severely undermines the accessibility of asylum procedures in Israel and exposes asylum seekers to arrest, detention, and deportation. The liberties of migrants and asylum seekers were easily taken, despite the media attention given to refugees issues due to Ukrainian refugees.



TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

WOMEN ESCAPE WAR IN ETHIOPIA AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY IN JORDAN

Over the course of 2023, 52 women, most of whom fled the war in the Tigray region in Ethiopia, were trafficked and enslaved in Jordan. In an attempt to flee from their homeland and find a safe-haven, they arrived in Jordan through manpower companies to work in - what they thought were - legal domestic household jobs. They soon found out that the work was abusive and in slavery-like conditions.

First, upon arriving in Jordan, their passports were confiscated - in some cases by the agency and in others by the family for whom they were to work. Furthermore, they were forced to work extremely long hours without proper conditions or payment. Some of them reported sexual harassment and repeated rape incidents by the head of the household, their sons, or the chauffeur. One of the women testified that her employer told her that she had bought her from the agency and therefore did not need to pay her a salary. Some of the trafficked women were physically abused and humiliated by the women in the household.

Some of the women were forcibly relocated to the West Bank against their will, and from there, they managed to escape to Israel, either by being trafficked or by paying smugglers for their entry.

Some of the women arrived at our office in a distressed mental state, with serious injuries, or both. Not all the women wanted to be recognized as Trafficking in Persons (TIP) survivors. However, **29** of those who asked our assistance to receive the rights of TIP survivors were recognized as such and were accepted to a rehabilitation shelter for TIP survivors, where they receive social, medical, and psychological care, and are still in the process of receiving official recognition.

(Read Sigal Rozen's [position paper](#) about the slavery victims from the Tigray region who arrived via Jordan. Read the news article - in which HRM was interviewed - published about this case (March 4th): "Ethiopian women fleeing war fall prey to human trafficking in Jordan, end up in Israel", [Yediot Aharonot](#), - Hebrew, [YnetNews.com](#) - English).



From left to right: Natsnet Tsegay, Maysoon Kheir, and Huda Kundos, case workers at the CIC team, providing paralegal assistance to women on a designated reception day in Eilat.

PARTICIPATING IN THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

During 2023, we were designated as the representatives of human rights organizations on the Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Justice for the acknowledgment of human trafficking victims. This committee comprises representatives from the Ministry of Interior, Welfare, Police, various other organizations, and survivors of trafficking. The committee meets monthly to assess requests for official recognition as trafficking survivors and subsequently offers recommendations. Throughout 2023, **we engaged in 9 committee meetings**. Serving on the committee allows us to actively advocate for survivors of human trafficking creating impact that goes beyond the clients we represent.

PROTECTION OF WOMEN

REACHING OUT: ASSISTING ASYLUM SEEKER WOMEN IN THE PERIPHERY AND TEL AVIV

Since February 2022, our CIC team has been visiting peripheral cities to provide paralegal support to vulnerable women within the asylum-seeking community.

The assistance includes educating these women about their rights, assisting with asylum applications (RSD) and visa renewals, and identifying potential survivors of human trafficking, subsequently assisting them in seeking formal recognition from the state. During 2023, our CIC team undertook **four visits** – two visits to Be'er Sheva, an extended visit in Eilat, and a visit to Jerusalem, assisting **57** individuals. Additionally, our team conducts a monthly reception day for women at our Tel Aviv office.

During our visits to these periphery cities, we also provide training sessions for fellow organizations, communities, and activists. We empower them to assist and advocate for the rights of women asylum seekers. The training covers how to identify potential survivors of human trafficking and how to navigate the formal recognition process with authorities. Through these efforts, our aim is to enhance local organizational capacity to aid this group of women, fostering long-term impact and sustainability that positively impacts their wellbeing.



PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

FIGHTING THE ARREST AND DETENTION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

At the beginning of 2023, the Immigration Authority resumed enforcement activities against migrant children and their families.

On February 20, together with HIAS and ACRI, we sent a request to the Interior Minister to order the Immigration Authority to immediately cease enforcement activities against minors. In addition, we demanded that the Authority's procedures be amended to be consistent with binding domestic and international law, in particular, to uphold the principle of the best interest of the child.

Following a question we raised through MK Debby Biton, the Acting Interior Minister Michael Malkiely said that arrests in educational institutions do not occur and that the Immigration Police do not enter educational institutions. This is significant because the current law does not explicitly prohibit the Immigration Police from entering these institutions.

On February 21st, our Public Advocacy Director, Shira Abbo, participated in a session of the Knesset's Special Committee on Foreign Workers. The head of the Immigration Authority's Enforcement Unit, Yossi Edelstein, repeated the Authority's commitment not to arrest the children inside schools or kindergartens. Shira responded that even in the context of arresting children outside of their schools, **prisons are not a place for children**. She cited the Authority's internal report, which states that the poor conditions at the Yahalom facility are not suitable for children.



From left to right: Shira Abbo (HRM), Dr. Shani Bar-Tuvia (Refugee Rights Forum), and Adv. Meytal Russo (Kav Laoved) at the Knesset Committee.

(Read more: [Haaretz Hebrew](#), [Haaretz English](#), [Kan 11 TV](#), [Ynet](#), [Timeout TLV](#)).

GIVING VOICE

DIGITAL MEDIA WORKSHOP: EMPOWERING ASYLUM-SEEKING ADOLESCENTS TO SPEAK OUT

In March, we concluded a six-month workshop aimed at enhancing the capacity of ten adolescent girls from Eritrea, who are seeking asylum, to advocate for their community via social media.

As a component of the workshop, the participants created a series of posts on our Facebook page sharing their experiences as children of asylum seekers in Israel. (See the posts here: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#)). The posts were a powerful testament to the experience of young asylum seekers in Israel.

They [Israelis] say, 'You're taking our jobs'—what jobs? Who's going to clean up after them? We were at a protest once, and there was a comedian who said, 'Enough of discrimination.' So, I said, 'Right on,' and then he continued, 'We should also let white people into the AM:PM!' And then I thought, would any white even want to work at AM:PM? It's mostly black people. We didn't come here to take something away from the Israelis. I wish I had grown up there in Eritrea, with the sheep and cows, instead of what I go through here — feeling like I'm beneath others. There's always that feeling of the gap between what Israelis can do and what I can't do because I have no rights. They talk about things, and I think, 'Oh, I can't do that.'

The workshop empowered the adolescents to advocate for their community through social media, raising awareness about their experiences, and fostering skills for effective communication and future advocacy. By sharing their stories, they will challenge stereotypes, and potentially influence positive policy change and public perceptions.



TikToker and educator Dani Buller (from "Ask Dani" with the participants of the workshop)

“I’LL BE YOUR MIRROR”: ART WORKSHOP AND EXHIBITION FOR REFUGEE ARTISTS

From February to June, HRM collaborated with the French Institute and the French Research Center in Jerusalem in conducting an art workshop for asylum-seeking painters. The goal was to give the artists - Selam Mamush, Naka Pitia, Tsegay Berhe, and Tesfalem Fissaha - tools to enhance their artistic skills and navigate the Israeli art world. The artists explored the idea of the "mirror" as a representation of the power of art to reflect the complex relationship of the artists have with themselves, their immediate environment, and the Israeli society. In addition to the collective work at the studio and the discussions, we also met with two important Israeli curators – Dorit Shafir and Svetlana Reingold – and with the Israeli-Ethiopian artist Nirit Takele. The exhibition, featuring the workshop's results, was held from July 12 until August 25 at the gallery of the French Institute. (Read an article in the Jerusalem Post about the exhibition [here](#)).



WORLD REFUGEE DAY: MEETING THROUGH CULTURE

In June, we celebrated the World Refugee Day with a family-friendly event at the Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv. In collaboration with Elifelet, ARDC, and UNHCR, we produced an art exhibition, showcasing three asylum-seeking painters (Naka Pitia, Selam Mamush, and Tsegay Berhe) and one photographer (Dawit Yrgaw). Together with a dozens of people from both the Israeli public and the asylum-seeking community, we celebrated the different cultures and arts of asylum seekers.



ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

At HRM, we take pride in a good working environment and the sense of mission exhibited by our organization's staff, leading to minimal turnover among team members. However, in 2023, the team experienced rejuvenation after years of dedicated service from seasoned staff members.

In February, we bid farewell to **Dr. Ayelet Oz**, our Executive Director, expressing our deep appreciation for her dedicated efforts and extending our best wishes for her future. In March, we extended our congratulations to **Anat Herrmann-Aharoni** for her new role as our Executive Director. Also in March, **Naomi Frid**, the Resource Development Director, concluded her tenure with HRM. In April, attorney **Adi Livneh** joined our legal department, and in May, attorney **Neta Mishly** assumed the role of attorney **Inbar Barel** as the Legal Department Director, who embarked on her maternity leave. In June, we also saw the departure of two valued team members from HRM. **Maysoon Kheir** is joining UNHCR, and attorney **Stav Paskay** will pursue a Master's degree at the esteemed Leiden University. In July, we bid farewell to **Alexandra Roth**, who served as the manager of the CIC department for almost 9 years, as she pursued a degree in social work. Simultaneously, we welcomed **Kibrom Twelde** to his new role as the manager of the department. In August our Resource Development team was joined by **Rabbi Eliana Sherangelo** as its new manager. In October, we welcomed **Elad Zamir** as a caseworker to the CIC team. In December, **Arsema Teame** joined our CIC team as a caseworker coordinator. She replaced **Natsnet Tsegay**.



