

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



המוקד לפליטים ולמהגרים
Hotline for Refugees and Migrants
الخط الساخن للاجئين و المهاجرين

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024 will be remembered as a difficult and bloody year. Like the rest of Israeli society, the non-citizen communities we serve at the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants were steeped in grief, confusion, and anger. Beyond its direct impacts, the war also brought to light the complex attitudes of Israeli society toward them. At a time when Israel's economy desperately needed foreign workers, immigration enforcement intensified against



migrant workers, including parents of children born in Israel. While refugee communities volunteered to support Israel during the war, touching the hearts of the Israeli public, the government renewed efforts to deport them and undermine their most basic rights.

This year, as always, we stood firm in asserting that refugees and migrants are not a burden—on the contrary, their contributions are essential to the resilience of Israeli society and its economy. Especially in these dark times, it is crucial that we continue to do everything in our power to protect their rights—not only out of commitment to the fundamental values that are the foundation of Israeli democracy but also out of gratitude for their presence and contributions.

This report details the significant work led by the Hotline over the past year while facing unprecedented challenges arising from the security, social, and political realities. Despite these difficulties, the resilience of the communities we serve and the unwavering support of our partners, donors, and volunteers give us hope that meaningful change is within reach. Thank you to everyone who has supported and taken part in our struggle for a more just and equal society.

May the coming year bring healing, hope, and peace.

ANAT HERRMANN - AHARONI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HOTLINE IN NUMBERS

PARALEGAL ASSISTANCE

1259

Inquiries from
Asylum seekers

116

Asylum applications

143

Inquiries from
migrants

824

WhatsApp inquiries

51

Newcomers

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP)

8

victims identified by HRM

Application pending
1

Victims recognized*
2



Victims applied for recognition
2

*1 of whom submitted their application in 2023.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO ASYLUM SEEKERS

88

Legal interventions:
20 strategic and 68
individual

1

Woman granted
refugee status

PUBLIC ADVOCACY

25

Lectures and tours
to 741 people

57

Media items

Note that our work in 2024 was significantly impacted by the war, including fewer new entries to Israel through the Jordan border, especially of TIP Victims and the media's inattention to non-war related topics.



TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

6

Capacity building workshops for civil servants and NGO staff on identifying and assisting human trafficking victims

3

Trainings for NGOs on refugee status determination procedures

2

Professional development sessions for lawyers on trafficking in persons

- **80** NGO staff and civil servants trained on TIP

- Post-workshop trainees identified **7** TIP victims and submitted applications on their behalf with minimal consultation from HRM staff

- Post-workshop trainees identified **3** Torture victims and referred them to HRM for further assistance

DETENTION MONITORING

2407

Protocols read and analyzed

15

Detention center visits

VISITS TO THE PERIPHERY



2 visits to Jerusalem.

3 Visits to the shelter for TIP victims.

1 visit to Eilat.

2 visits to Be'er Sheva.



OUR STRATEGY

HRM's multi-year strategy is built on four long-term goals:

- 1) Establishing Refugee Status for Asylum Seekers**
- 2) Protecting the Rights of Migrants and Asylum Seekers**
- 3) Protecting Victims of TIP and Reducing the Phenomenon**
- 4) Strengthening Organizational Infrastructure**

Under each of these areas, significant work has been accomplished, even as our issues were not at the center of Israeli public discourse this year. We made strategic shifts which align the organization more closely with our core mission and the needs of the populations we serve. This report is organized by these four goals and describes the main achievements, activities and challenges encountered over the year.



ESTABLISHING REFUGEE STATUS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

HRM has protected more than 8,000 Ethiopians from the threat of deportation.

Challenging removal of protected status for Ethiopians

In January of 2024, the Ministry of Interior announced a plan to remove the temporary protection from deportation that was extended to citizens of Ethiopia after the outbreak of war in the Tigray region in 2022. While the civil war has officially reached a ceasefire, violence in the region continues and famine is widespread. Removing group protection from Ethiopian nationals and returning the 8,000 non-Jewish Ethiopians in Israel to Ethiopia would present a significant risk to their safety. It is illegal under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Refugee, of which Israel is a signatory.

HRM is leading a litigation against the ministry's plan, along with partners at HIAS Israel and ASSAF. There is currently an injunction against the policy, which will be in force until the case is heard by the High Court of Justice in March 2025.



PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Impact litigation: arrests at Border Control Registration and Refugee Status Determination Proceedings

In 2024 there were several cases of illegal arrests made when asylum seekers arrived at Border Control for their registration appointment. These arrests are a violation of the UN convention on the rights of the refugee and pose a serious concern for the clients we represent and the broader asylum-seeking communities. In late 2024, HRM's legal team represented T. who fled war in Tigray and was arrested at her registration appointment and subsequently imprisoned. We secured her release and simultaneously requested a principled decision from the appeals court, ruling the arrest improper. However, that appeal was denied on the grounds that her release made it theoretical. We continue to monitor the situation and will return to court to stop this illegal and unjust practice.

Illegal Work Restrictions on Visas for Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers in Israel who apply for a visa for the first time, register with border control and then receive an 2A5 Visa that includes a 90-day work restriction. After this period, while they do not technically have a work visa (B1), there is no enforcement upon any employer, making it possible for them to gain employment and support themselves and their families while in Israel. The 90-day restriction is typical of asylum policies in comparable countries. However, in 2023 and 2024, there were often long wait times for a Border Control Registration appointment, exceeding 90 or even 180 days.

Despite this wait, asylum seekers were still issued with 90-day work restrictions. HRM's legal team took on an individual case with broad impact. As a result, PIBA invited all the other asylum seekers who had been waiting to receive a visa without work restrictions.

A., an Ethiopian woman fleeing violence entered Israel at the end of 2022 without going through a regulated border crossing. She submitted an asylum application. For 18 months she waited without a visa, for her first appointment with the Interior Ministry. Despite her long wait, she was granted a six-month visa with a work restriction. Together with HRM, A. brought her case to court. As a result, the Ministry summoned A. and 17 others like her to its office to exchange her visa for one that allows employment.

PIBA Facilities improvements for Asylum Seekers

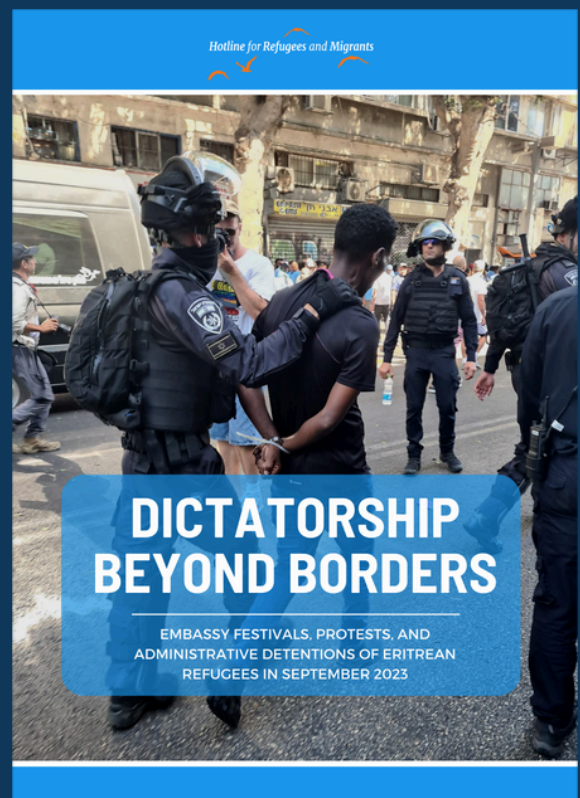
After years of closures, appointment system failures and long waiting times in harsh weather, HRM's persistence and advocacy made gains at the Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA) facility in B'nei B'rak. Asylum seekers are required to renew their permits periodically and must travel to B'nei B'rak to do so. After HRM sent a pre-litigation letter in April, PIBA installed a roof over the queuing area, queue wait time has been reduced and the appointment system has been streamlined. These changes alleviate bottlenecks and ensure that vulnerable asylum seekers can continue to work, access their bank accounts and health services. In addition, PIBA has installed automatic visa renewal machines, which means that most visa renewal visits are now free of the arbitrary and often racist treatment at the hands of the PIBA clerks.

Dictatorship Beyond Borders

In September 2023, tensions within the Eritrean Asylum-Seeking community came to a head, as supporters and opponents of the Eritrean dictatorship took to the streets and rioted. The riots were, in part, a result of the police refusing to listen to community leaders who had warned of violence. They were followed by a wave of troubling police conduct, including illegal arrests made without evidence. Judges in criminal court found no legal reason to hold those arrested. However, the police, under the direction of the Minister of Internal Security, Itamar Ben Gvir, transferred them to administrative immigration detention. In response, HRM represented illegally detained Eritreans, and gathered evidence detailing the reach of the Eritrean dictatorship and the illegal and unjust use of administrative detention as a response to intra-communal conflict. While the conflict in the Eritrean community quieted after the outbreak of the war, it re-emerged in the summer of 2024, and we published our investigative report, [Dictatorship Beyond Borders](#).

The report generated attention both from [local media](#) and [international advocates](#) for human rights in Eritrea. Since its publication it has been used as a basis for a wide range of advocacy activities with the police and knesset.

In addition, HRM Policy Coordinator, Sigal Rozen gave a special briefing on the report to the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea. Findings from HRM's report will be included in the special rapporteur's next report.



War Affected Migrants



“Neta from the Hotline said she would do everything she could to make sure I got what I deserved, and after months of fighting, we did it and managed to get what I was entitled to.”

-Shannon Akbulut, Nova Party Survivor

A major focus of HRM’s work throughout 2024 was advocacy for the migrants who are caught up in the war, both between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah. Since the outbreak of war HRM has worked to ensure that the Israeli and International public hear the stories and value the lives of this population, most of them labor migrants and their children.

HRM’s legal team represents 6 undocumented victims of the Hamas attacks on 10/7, achieving recognition for them as Victims of Hostile Actions and obtaining compensation, including access to medical and psychosocial care.

In addition, we obtained work visas for five of the six, on the basis of their status as Victims of Hostile Actions. We are still advocating for agriculture students from Tanzania who were working in the Gaza Envelope on October 7th to receive these benefits.

Throughout 2024, we helped keep the spotlight on the victims of the war that are too easily forgotten, speaking to the press about the risks taken by agricultural workers in active military zones. We did not cease to advocate for the migrant among those held hostage by Hamas: the Thai citizens Nattapong Pinta, Pongsak Tanna, Sathian Suwankam, Watchara Sriaoun, Surasak Lamnau and Bannawat Saethao, as well as the Nepalese citizen, Bipin Joshi. Hamas also holds the bodies of Thai citizens Sonthaya Akasri, Suthisak Rintalak, and Joshua Loitu Mollel, a Tanzanian citizen, who were murdered on October 7th. In August, at a weekly Yoga session held for Carmel Gat and all the hostages, Public Advocacy Director Shira Abbo shared the stories of Bipin and Joshua, ending with a clarion call: "The state of Israel invited them [captive migrants] here to work our fields and to ensure that food reaches our tables. We have a duty and responsibility to bring them home. Now."

*As of writing, five of the Thai hostages have been released, we remain steadfast in our commitment to bringing home Nattapong Pinta and Bipin Joshi, along with the bodies of Sonthaya Akasri, Suthisak Rintalak, and Joshua Loitu Mollel.

Illustration by Ilana Zeffren



In 2024, HRM renewed our commitment to the rights of undocumented families, who have few rights in Israel and who are extremely vulnerable to crises due to their lack of legal status. While our doors have always been open to migrant families, in the third quarter of this year, we began a targeted effort to outreach to them, providing an overview of their rights, especially regarding arrest, detention and deportation. Immigration enforcement activities against families are on the rise: In the first half of 2024, there were six instances of immigration officers stopping, arresting, or detaining parents of minors. The second half of the year saw 25 such arrests.

We have recruited a cabinet of prominent lawyers who will represent, pro-bono, families issued with deportation orders, to whom HRM can refer. Our expert legal team provides ongoing consultation to those lawyers whose area of expertise is not immigration law.

Campaign for the Status of Undocumented Children

For the first time in 20 years, youth graduating the Israeli high school system are eligible for deportation. More than a hundred children of labor migrants who were born and educated in Israel are at risk of being deported to a country they have never known. HRM together with United Children of Israel (UCI) – a grassroots migrant mothers' organization – launched a public campaign to pressure the government to issue a decision regularizing the children's legal status.

One hundred 10-12th grade students signed a letter to the Minister of the Interior Moshe Arbel, asking him to grant them legal status. Residency will allow them to safely remain in the only country they know as home and provide them with access to a future where they can thrive and contribute, in any way they choose — national service, higher education, and professional licensure.

"למרות היחס והמבטים מהסביבה
בגלל המראה החיצוני השונה אולי כשיהיה לי
תעודת זהות יסתכלו עליי באופן יותר שווה."



18

ג'רוס אלם מיליאנר

"Despite the treatment and looks I get from others because of my different appearance, maybe when I have an ID card, they'll see me more equally."

-18 year old Jerus, from his testimony for the letter.

Already, immigration enforcement officers have arrested and released one of the students who signed the letter. Several parents of those who signed the letter have also been arrested, detained and even issued with deportation orders.

Preventing Illegal Questioning of Minors

In two cases, children of labor migrants were summoned to interviews at PIBA facilities, even though an Israeli court ruled that children must be questioned in a natural environment. HRM's legal team represented the minors and, in both cases, the illegal hearing has been indefinitely postponed.

PROTECTING VICTIMS OF TIP AND REDUCING THE PHENOMENON

Identifying and Assisting TIP Victims

HRM encountered significantly fewer TIP victims in late 2023 and throughout 2024, than the previous calendar year, likely due to heightened border security which is a result of the security situation. In 2024, HRM identified 8 victims of TIP, two of whom sought recognition. Thus, we suspect that the escape route of Ethiopian women TIP victims, through Jordan into Israel became much less viable.

SA is an Eritrean citizen who fled to Ethiopia and from there to Jordan. In Jordan, she was enslaved by the family for whom she worked. SA escaped to Israel and was recognized as a TIP survivor. However, a Ministry of Interior official then subjected her to a cruel and illegal hearing during which the official berated and threatened her, as well as conducted an illegal search of her phone. As a result of the information collected illegally, the TIP advisory committee decided to reopen SA's TIP request, jeopardizing her rehabilitation. We filed an objection based on the wrongful and offensive PIBA hearing, with a request that her recognition status remain as is. The case has not yet been decided.

Capacity Building for Civil Society

A key piece of HRM's long-term strategy for increasing the number of TIP Victims who are identified as such and receive official recognition and rehabilitation is training fellow NGO workers, community leaders, and civil servants to identify victims and assist them. In 2024, our staff overhauled our TIP training with the help of an expert trainer and launched a renewed training program. The program has trained 80 frontline workers, civil servants and community leaders. As a result, 7 trafficking victims and 3 torture victims have been identified and are in the process of receiving recognition



STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A fourth area of strategic activity for HRM this year was improving the organizations data and task management systems as well as increasing the frequency and quality of monitoring and evaluation and supporting staff wellbeing. To that end, the senior staff organized quarterly monitoring meetings for the full team, which ensured sustained progress on goals and helped us maintain flexibility in our workplan—adjusting to the shifting geopolitical environment and responding to the changing needs of the communities we serve.

WHAT'S NEXT: 2025 PLANS

Challenging removal of protected status for Ethiopians: We take our case to the High Court on March 24th.

Campaign for Children's Status: Together with UCI we will continue to pressure Interior Minister Moshe Arbel and tell our stories to the public.

Volunteers: Beginning in February 2025, we will once again offer a regular volunteer program for those who wish to assist refugees and migrants on an ongoing basis. [Let us know if you'd like to take part!](#)

Palestinians Seeking Asylum: This year we are extending our legal services to vulnerable women and LGBTQ+ Palestinians fleeing violence or persecution.

Supporting Tigrayan Women: In partnership with Mesila, a social services unit run by the Tel-Aviv-Yafo Municipality, we will provide a safe space for the women who arrived in Israel from Tigray between 2022 and 2024 to learn about their rights in Israel, what constitutes intimate partner violence, including financial abuse and create opportunities for individual women to consult with our staff about any related issues.

Streamlining our work: In 2025, the Legal Department and Crisis Intervention Center will become the CIC-Legal Department. The talented Kibrum Twelde Gebremariam will move into the public advocacy department as our manager of community relations.

