

Hotline for Migrant Workers

“Cancer in Our Body”

**On Racial Incitement, Discrimination and Hate
Crimes against African Asylum Seekers in Israel**

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Executive Summary

This report covers six months of ceaseless incitement against African asylum seekers, which has been promulgated by Knesset members, various government officials and even the Prime Minister. The incendiary rhetoric has brought on a major wave of hate crimes against asylum seekers, which were previously a rare phenomenon in Israel.

The report cites dozens of statements of incitement made by decision makers against African migrants. The five major claims made by opinion leaders against asylum seekers in Israel are:

1. Asylum seekers are illegal migrant workers, infiltrators and invaders.
2. Asylum seekers are criminals.
3. Asylum seekers spread disease.
4. Asylum seekers pose a demographic threat to Israel.
5. Asylum seekers pose a security threat to Israel.

The report lists two racist and discriminatory laws that were passed over the past six months: the Anti-Infiltration Law and a legislation that bars asylum seekers from working in the recycling industry. This document also describes other attempts to pass racist bills, as well as bigoted decrees made by rabbis and discrimination within the court system.

Furthermore, the report details the hate crimes that have been covered by the media, as well incidents that were reported to the Hotline for Migrant Workers by asylum seekers. We consider these violent incidents a direct outcome of the campaign of incitement that is addressed in this document.

The Hotline for Migrant Workers would like to call the attention of decision makers to the rampant incitement and its devastating consequences, and urges them to take action against this reprehensible trend before it leads to the loss of life.

Incitement against Asylum Seekers in Israel

The discourse of Israeli policy makers about asylum seekers dehumanizes and characterizes them as a security threat. People who fled genocide in Darfur, or indefinite forced military service in Eritrea, are presented as “invaders,” “enemies,” “infiltrators,” “cancer,” “national calamity,” “ticking bomb,” “transmitters of disease” and “existential threat.” The anti asylum seekers incitement rests on five common arguments: that no asylum seeker in Israel is a refugee is the fundamental of all, with the rest invoking the racial stereotypes of asylum seekers as criminals, security threat, disease transmitters and demographic danger.

Asylum Seekers are “Infiltrators,” “Invaders,” and “Illegal Aliens”

Incitement against asylum seekers in Israel is premised on the claim that those who cross the Egyptian border onto Israel are not refugees but infiltrators (*mistanenim*), migrant workers or “labor infiltrators.” This argument has been adopted as Israel’s official stance as reflected in government policy and repeated statements by decision makers.¹ In fact, Israel prevents access to its Refugee Status Determination scheme (RSD) for the vast majority of asylum seekers. All national of Sudan and Eritrea, who comprise over 80% of the asylum seekers population in Israel,² are unauthorized to file for an individual asylum claim.³

By designating asylum seekers as “infiltrators,” a term out of use in Israeli discourse since the 1950s, when it described Egyptian, Palestinian and Jordanian intruders who entered Israel to carry out terror attacks and sabotage, asylum seekers are portrayed as posing a security threat. Another term frequently used by the media and decision makers is “illegal alien” (*shabachim*),

1 The plan to concentrate refugees in one central internment camp stems from the assumption that refugees arrive in Israel due to economic motives, and thus prolonged detention would discourage them from coming, as they will be unable to earn money. This assumption also stood at the heart of the refugees’ employment restriction policy. See: Yanga, Yanir: “Yishai: A country that doesn’t want illegal migrants doesn’t allow them to work,” *Haaretz*, May 22, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1713736> [accessed at: June 16, 2012].

Medzini, Ronen “PM: Refugees threatening Israelis’ jobs,” *Ynet*, November 28, 2010. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3990776,00.html> [accessed at: July 1, 2012].

2 26% of asylum seekers in Israel are Sudanese and 57% are Eritrean.

See: Population and Immigration Authority, Ministry of Interior Affairs, “Foreigners in Israel Data- April 2012,” April 14, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/%D7%90%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9C%202012.pdf> [accessed at: June 25, 2012].

3 Admin. Petition (Center) 48374-05-10 Ministry of Interior v Popana Backari and others.

which, likewise, connotes to unlawful entry of Palestinians to Israel. However, asylum seekers are granted stay permits in Israel, mostly the 2(A)(5) visa, which is arbitrarily renewed every one to four months. This permit bestows the status of “conditional release from detention,” which is valid until the removal of the asylum seeker from Israel is doable. This status does not grant fundamental rights such as the right to work,⁴ welfare or health services.

Thus, albeit refusing to assess the vast majority of asylum claims, Israel's official spokesmen label all asylum seekers as “infiltrators” whose sole aims are to secure a job and upgrade their living conditions. These arguments enjoy the endorsement of the Israeli media, which have mostly adopted the government's terminology in referring to



Aftermath of the Attack on a Kindergarten of Africans at Shapira Neighborhood, Tel Aviv, April 27, 2012

asylum seekers as “infiltrators,” “migrant workers” or “illegal aliens.” During the studied time frame (January - June 2012), countless printed and Internet op-eds established the argument that asylum seekers are falsely presented as refugees.⁵

⁴ Currently, following a state's statement to the High Court that was given the status of a verdict, employment of asylum seekers is prohibited; however, employees are not being fined. See: HCJ 6312/10, January 16, 2011. <http://elyon2.court.gov.il/files/10/120/063/B06/10063120.B06.htm> [accessed at: June 19, 2012].

⁵ Channel 2's prime commentator, Amnon Abramovitch, also stressed that: “The overwhelming majority among them are labor infiltrators. Refugees are 1,500 altogether, out of 61,000 and beyond... all the rests are labor infiltrators beyond any doubt,” Ulpan Shishi, *Channel 2 News*, May 18, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.mako.co.il/news-channel2/Friday-Newscast/Article-7080e0cc2016731018.htm> [accessed at: June 16, 2012].

More examples of op eds published during 2012 making the case that refugees are falsely presented as refugees: Yamini, Ben Dror, “From Freedom to Slavery,” *NRG*, April 6, 2012 (Hebrew). http://www.nrg.co.il/app/index.php?do=blog&encr_id=f2b4c1b55be76d1e6d7b777256ea0370&id=3555 [Accessed at: June 15, 2012].

Alperovitz, Lior “Foreign Workers-the Poor of Your City Come First,” *Israel Hayom*, May 17, 2012 (Hebrew). http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=8676&hp=1&newsletter=17.05.2012 [Accessed at: June 15, 2012].

Daum, Hanoch, “The truth about 'refugees,’” *Ynet*, May 18, 2012.

Israel's Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu (Likud), announced early in 2012 that “the vast majority [of asylum seekers] are not refugees, but labor infiltrators. In my view, the infiltrators are an existential concern.”⁶ The Speaker of the Knesset, MK Reuven (Rubi) Rivlin, proclaimed in March 2012 :”If these were indeed refugees fleeing for their lives, we would have the moral obligation to leave our border ajar and provide for their basic needs. However, those infiltrators who reach Eilat [a southern Israeli city, home to thousands of asylum seekers] are not refugees in the simple sense of the word. Many of them are not fleeing for their lives, but rather, looking to improve their financial situation.”⁷ The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Avigdor Lieberman (Israel Beytenu) argued that: “it much be emphasized that we are dealing with job seekers looking for a better life.”⁸ MK Miri Regev (Likud), one of the leading figures in the anti refugee incitement campaign, took the argument further, in June 2012, by stressing that: “those are not refugees but migrant workers. The state of Israel has been occupied by infiltrators walking freely into our land without a single bullet being shot. Whoever trespasses our borders unlawfully must be sentenced, and we should not be apologizing for that.”⁹

MK Danny Danon (Likud), chairman of both the ‘Knesset Lobby for solving the infiltrators’ problem’ and the ‘Deportation Now’ movement, joined his peers in announcing that “the

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4230916,00.html> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

Shoushan, Avi, “15 Minutes of Terror,” *Ynet*, May 18, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4230869,00.html> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

Segev, Yehuda, “Economic Solution Could Solve the Foreigners Problem,” *Maariv*, May 22, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/16/ART2/370/320.html?hp=16&cat=3872875> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

Morali, Ariel, “No Limit? Put a limit!,” *Walla!*, May 28, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2952/2536910> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

Margalit, Dan, “A Solution for the Refugees Problem,” *Israel Hayom*, May 31, 2012 (Hebrew). http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=8784 [Accessed at: June 16, 2012].

Maroz, Guy, “They Have Reached Us Too,” *Maariv*, June 6, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/375/162.html?hp=1&cat=479&loc=27> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012].

Shoval, Zalman, “Migrants: Not Political Refugees,” *Israel Hayom*, June 10, 2012 (Hebrew).

http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=8859&hp=1&newsletter=10.06.2012 [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

6 Liss, Jonathan, “The infiltrators are an existential concern,” *Haaretz*, January 16, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1618483> [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

7 Piotrkowski, Shlomo, “The infiltrator who reach Eilat are not refugees,” *Arutz 7*, March 4, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/234546> [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

8 Arbeli, Ezra, “Lieberman: Cut kids' stipends instead of tax increase,” *Ynet*, June 4, 2012 (Hebrew)

<http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4238063,00.html> [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

9 Bender, Arik, “MK Regev: 5 years in prison for renting out flat for infiltrators,” *Maariv*, June 12, 2012 (Hebrew)

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/376/657.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=80> [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

infiltrators do not seek asylum; they seek employment.”¹⁰ A press statement by Danon's office following a tour he conducted in South Tel Aviv, backed his statements with supposed findings from the field: “Illegal infiltrators whom we have met in our tour came up to us to say - like Muhammed, a Sudanese infiltrator: ‘\$2,000 to \$3,000 and a month of road travel and we got to Israel. We wanted to come here; life is far better. We save money and get our family over. Everyone is already here, including grandmother and grandfather. It's all about the money.’”¹¹ The Knesset published minutes of the tour showed that these statements were never made during the tour by any of the asylum seekers the Knesset committee members met.¹²

MK Ofir Akunis (Likud), provided “statistics” to the debate in claiming that “at least 99% of them... are work infiltrators or illegal aliens...it's an official state estimate... that there are only several hundreds if not tens, of actual refugees.”¹³ MK Yoel Hasson of Kadima went on Facebook to say: “Those tens of thousands of illegal migrants do not get here for a fear of their life but in order to upgrade their standard of living.”¹⁴ MK Michael Ben Ari (National Union) declared: “Those people invaded a country that does not belong to them. They are not refugees under any criterion.”¹⁵

Such arguments are also being raised by officials within the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for Israel's immigration policy. Professor Arnon Sofer, who had been appointed by the Interior Minister for a ‘special task force’ – charged with finding methods to execute the removal of all asylum seekers from Israel within a time frame of three years¹⁶ - said during an interview: “this claim that they are refugees has been put forth by a group of about ten Israeli

10 Goren, Yuval, “Danon: Infiltrators are a substantial threat to national security,” *Maariv*, March 29, 2012 (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/351/671.html> [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

11 The press statement was published in its original form at the terror supporting website ‘*Hakol Hayehudi*’ (The Jewish Voice), February 3, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il/?p=24454> [accessed at: June 16, 2012]

12 See: Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs, Minutes, 30 April 2012 (Hebrew). www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-04-30.rtf [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

13 Interview with Razi Barkaai, “Ma Boer,” *Army Radio*, June 11, 2012.

14 Yoel Hasson's official Facebook page, 7 June 2012 (Hebrew). https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=443870082299265&id=175929825759960 [accessed at: June 17, 2012]

15 Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, 30 April 2012 (Hebrew). www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-04-30.rtf [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

16 Ministry of Interior Press Statement, published in almost identical forms in *Ynet* and *Nana10*. June 5, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4238536.00.html> <http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=901695> [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

lawyers who make a lot of money from these unfortunate people.” Sofer went on to say that all asylum seekers, excluding those originating from the Darfur region in Sudan, are “people who came over to work, just like others like them went to Europe. And what will they say to you, that they came here to work? No, they’ll say they fled their country.”¹⁷ In another Interview, Sofer added that “people arrive here as migrant workers...hence I’m here to say and shout - stop talking about ‘refugees,’ they are migrant workers.”¹⁸ The Minister of Internal Affairs, Eli Yishai (Shas), went as far as arguing that asylum seekers are lured to come to Israel by human right organizations promising them to provide them with employment.¹⁹

Another method of denying the claims made by asylum seekers is by alleging that the situation in their countries of origins is tolerable, and that no persecution occurs there. Thus, MK Ofir Akunis (Likud) recounted how the ambassador representing the Eritrean dictatorship in Israel assured him that if asylum seekers “decide to return to Eritrea, no harm will befall them.”²⁰ Since the age of forced conscription in the Eritrean army ranges from 18 to 45, the majority of Eritrean asylum seekers around the world (and in Israel) are military defectors. According to various international publications, including the annual US State Department Human Rights Report, defectors caught by authorities get incarcerated under inhumane conditions and tortured, sometimes to death.²¹

MK Ben Ari claimed: “a large group of people teach us how in Eritrea, a war erupts every few years. I beg your pardon, But Israel is far more dangerous a place. It has so many missiles directed at it, and there is a round of bloodletting every three months.”²² MK Israel Hasson (Israel Beytenu) stressed that “the Ministry of Foreign Affairs failed colossally in its attempts to

17 Hartman, Ben, “Most African 'infiltrators' are economic migrants,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 10, 2012. <http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=273345> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

18 Interview with Razi Barkaai, “Ma Boer,” *Army Radio*, 10 June 2012.

19 According to Yishai, Human rights groups “act with hypocrisy and strive to put an end to the State of Israel's being the Jewish state. I gathered from the Eritrean ambassador that they promise these people employment and so they come. What will happen is that in a few years they will ask to have equal rights [to citizens],” *Ynet*, 10 June 2012. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-4240666.00.html> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

20 Interview with Razi Barkaai, “Ma Boer,” *Army Radio*, 11 June 2012.

21 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Eritrea, State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic_load_id=186194#wrapper [Accessed at: June 19, 2012]

22 Wolf, Pinhas, “Ben Ari: It took efforts in Egypt to define the infiltrators as refugees,” *Walla!*, 3 June 2012 (Hebrew). <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/2538534> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

have the Eritrean refugees deported, as it was unsuccessful in persuading the international community. There's an Israeli embassy in Eritrea, it is not a dangerous country; we just keep on failing in getting our message across.”²³ The Minister of Internal Affairs, Eli Yishai, declared: “I do not accept all that is being said about Eritrea. Let the UN inquire about the situation over there, so human rights organization won't be able to make things up. I can certainly say that in the current situation of Eritrea, it is far safer there than in Sderot [a town in southern Israel often targeted by rockets from Gaza].”²⁴

In fact, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees declared that most Eritreans fleeing their country should be considered as refugees. The UNHCR guidelines preclude forced deportation to Eritrea or to countries Eritrean asylum seekers may have transited on their way to the final asylum destination.²⁵ In light of the above, the rate of recognition of Eritrean asylum seekers as refugees worldwide is 84.5 percent.²⁶

Another frequent argument raised by Israeli officials stresses that asylum seekers who have transited through Egypt on their way to Israel, or other countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia or Libya, lose the right to claim asylum once they leave the first country in which they found refuge. As a matter of fact, the International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees makes no reference on the issue of the first country of asylum, and the suggestion that a person is a refugee only in the first country of asylum sharply contradicts UNHCR guidelines.²⁷ The UNHCR's position on the matter is that a person might persist in search of a haven until he or she feels assured of their safety at the final country of asylum.²⁸ The transit countries en route to

23 Steiff, Hadas, “African Refugees might team up with terrorists,” *Army Radio*, May 2, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://glz.co.il/newsArticle.aspx?newsid=104669> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

24 Shalev Tal, “Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vs. Yishai: ‘Has no clue regarding the situation in Eritrea’,” *Walla!*, June 11, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/2540562> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

25 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, “UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Eritrea,” April 2009, p. 10. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49de06122.html> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

26 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *2011 Statistical Yearbook*, “Table 10. Asylum applications and refugee status determination by country/territory of asylum and level in the procedure, 2011,” Available for download: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends/2011-GlobalTrends-annex-tables.zip>

27 UNHCR guidelines highlight that designating a certain country as a “safe country of origins” does not, “by that fact alone, serve as a declaration of cessation of refugee status in regard to refugees from that country,” Hence “no refugee claim, whether for granting of refugee status or for its continuation, should be rejected without an individual assessment on its merits,” Note on the Cessation Clauses, UN Doc. EC/47/SC/CRP.30 (1997), para. 7.

28 See Sharon Harel's (UNHCR) statement given before a Knesset committee: “Claiming asylum at the first country of refuge, considering that claims are being assessed and protection is being given, is the legitimate and

Israel are hardly safe for refugees - in recent years, Egypt and Sudan have incarcerated, tortured and deported refugees back to their homelands, where many of them vanished in torture chambers.²⁹

The director of the Interior Ministry's Population Administration's Foreign Workers' Enforcement, Yossi Edelstein, proclaimed in a Knesset hearing that: "Whoever understands the Refugee Convention and the rules, knows we are not the initial country of protection", hence all those arriving in Israel are labor infiltrators³⁰. Earlier this year, Edelstein expounded on the matter: "97% of the infiltrators originate from South Sudan and Eritrea,³¹ while 3% originate from Chad, Somalia, Ghana and other African countries. In my view, the infiltrators make all the way to Israel just to send money home. They are not fleeing for a fear of their lives or a dangerous situation. On their way to Israel, they pass through Egypt and other countries. Upon leaving their countries, their lives are no longer threatened, and therefore they are not refugees in need of asylum. We have got to understand this is a serious problem we are facing, one that only deteriorates as more infiltrators arrive. The majority of citizens fail to comprehend the severity of

even the desired scenario. However, Once the protection mechanism of the first country of refuge is flawed, by means of persecution or forced deportation- refugees migrate, in what is called a secondary migration, from sorts of reasons, and they hold the right to reclaim asylum at the second...or the third country, for that matter," Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

29 "Eritrea: Sent Home to Detention and Torture", Amnesty International, May 2009.

<http://api.ning.com/files/PswCn84NetJNEVC73PY7uPeC2oBjqNJWF8r2FJHfsxy93pjaRTu5GSvP9DNKZDQvNrzdBTpz2w2BhfGEeHmkFgJ0QmPUnQIe/EritreaDevolucinDetencinyTortura.pdf> [Accessed at: July 12, 2012];

"Sudan: End Mass Summary Deportations of Eritreans," Human Rights Watch, October 25, 2011.

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/25/sudan-end-mass-summary-deportations-eritreans> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012];

"NGO Statement on International Protection," Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program, 62nd Meeting, October 3-7, 2011.

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NGO%20Statement%20on%20Protection.pdf> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012];

"Egypt Detention Profile," Global Detention Project, April 2011.

<http://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/africa/egypt/introduction.html> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012]

30 Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

31 As of January 2012, when the interview was held, out of the entire asylum seekers population in Israel, about 1,000 originated from South Sudan, and about 30,000 originated from Eritrea. Together, they comprised about 57% of the Israeli asylum seekers population, 30% less than what Edelstein proclaimed. See: Immigration and Population Authority, Ministry of Interior Affairs, "Foreigners in Israel Data, Annual Report 2011," January 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%9D%20%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%99%202011.pdf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

this problem. It is going to get horrible. Some citizens have already been facing infiltrators who have reached their neighborhoods, and they realize the scale of this problem.”³² In another interview, Edelstein denied the existence of refugees in Israel: “We have got to realize, without equivocation, that every person who gets here is driven solely by economic motives. Nobody fled any danger; they all cross several countries en route to Israel. They get here purely for economic motives.”³³ MK Akunis joined in claiming that:” According to the Refugee Convention... once one crosses onto the first country, I mean, Egypt is on the way, right? Then one is no longer a refugee in Israel. In Israel, he is an infiltrator... this lie that these people are refugees must come to an end... they come for one simple reason, Israel is a strong economy, and they come here to work... they are labor infiltrators.”³⁴

Asylum Seekers Are Criminals

Although police data persistently shows a much lower crime rate among asylum seekers compared to the general population in Israel,³⁵ officials and media outlets in Israel presented the

32 Solomon, Doron, “City's Refugee Crisis deteriorates,” *Yedioth Haifa*, January 13, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.yedhaiifa.co.il/?211-18-4154> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

33 Ben Ami, Oded, “Deportation Unit Chief: No such thing as refugees in Israel- It's all about the money,” *Channel 2 News*, 12 June 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/local/Article-c732f937521e731018.htm> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

34 Interview with Razi Barkaai, “Ma Boer,” *Army Radio*, 11 June 2012.

35 For a comparison of refugee and general population crime rate see:

Gilad, Nathan, “Data on crime committed by infiltrators and asylum seekers and crime against infiltrators and asylum seekers,” Knesset Research and Information Unit, October 11, 2010 (Hebrew).

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02625.pdf> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

Gilad, Nathan, “Data on crime committed by infiltrators and asylum seekers and crime against infiltrators and asylum seekers,” Knesset Research and Information Unit, May 23, 2011 (Hebrew).

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m02844.pdf> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

1,233 criminal cases launched against non-Jewish Africans, including tourists and migrant workers who overstayed their visas. The total number of asylum seekers at the end of 2011 was 54,497. Even if asylum seekers were responsible for all offences made by Africans, then their crime rate would have stood at 22.4 criminal cases for 1,000 people in 2011. The crime rate among the general population in Israel stood at 49.9 cases for 1,000 people in 2010 (the last year for which data was published). For the African foreigners case figures see: Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, March 19, 2012 (Hebrew)

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-03-19.rtf>

For the 2011 asylum seekers population figures see: Immigration and Population Authority, Ministry of Internal Affairs, “Foreigners in Israel Data, Annual Report 2011,” January 2012 (Hebrew)

<http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%9D%20%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%99%202011.pdf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

For the 2010 general population crime rate in Israel see: Ministry of Internal Security Annual Report,” P. 39, 14 September 2011 (Hebrew).

<http://mops.gov.il/Documents/Publications/HofeshHamaida/SummeryReport2010.pdf> [Accessed at: June 15,

asylum seekers as inclined to criminal behavior and a threat to public's well-being. This claim, which has also been raised in previous years, has gained popularity following the arrests of several asylum seekers on suspicion of rape and assaults in April and May of 2012. When reporting about crimes allegedly committed by asylum seekers, the media emphasized the suspects' origins (unlike reports on cases where crimes were committed by Israelis of different descents or Arab citizens of Israel), in violation of Article 14 of the Israel Press Council's ethical code.³⁶ In doing so, the media fueled the stigmatization of an entire community as involved in crime, while contributing to the growing sense of insecurity of the public.

The Minister of Interior, Eli Yishai, asserted that: “Because they have not done enough and did not heed my calls, and my proposals were not put into action, I saw the tension among residents intensify. I saw people being raped and assaulted. It is clear that crime is increasing and that crime rate among infiltrators is high.”³⁷

In another interview, Yishai alleged that most refugees are criminals, in saying: “I would do one simple thing, hard, but simple, put everyone, without exception, into jail or a detention facility, or divide it – to a detention facility all those who are not involved in criminality,



2012]

For the 2012 data, see: Yahav, Telem, “Knesset data: Foreigners are less involved in crime than Israelis,” *Yedioth Aharonot*, 30 May 2012.

36 Article 14: “A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish any matter which contains incitement or encouragement of racism or unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, origin, skin colour, ethnic affiliation, nationality, religion, gender, occupation, sexual orientation, illness or physical or mental impairment, political belief or views, and social or economic standing. A newspaper and journalist shall not indicate these characteristics unless they are relevant to the subject of the report,” Israel Press Council, Rules of Professional Ethics of Journalism <http://www.moaza.co.il/BRPortal/br/P102.jsp?arc=27521> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

37 “Yishai: Can't judge South Tel Aviv residents for their attitude towards foreigners,” *Walla!*, May 24, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/90/2535799> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

even though that's most of them, and also on that I'm being attacked. And the ones who do have even the slightest offence in the world, to jail, and from there, a departure grant or a deportation grant, call it any way you want and return them to their country.”³⁸

MK Danny Danon (Likud), who garnered a great deal of media attention for his incitement against asylum seekers, stated in March 2012: “This is a substantial danger to the State of Israel, the phenomena of crime and the damage to the economy are just the beginning. [These phenomena are] on the way to neighborhoods and the cities of work infiltrators throughout the country.”³⁹ In a Knesset hearing in May 2012, Danon proclaimed: “We see the crime, the rape, the violence in the streets, and we see that an enemy state has been established in the State of Israel.”⁴⁰ He later claimed: “The infiltrators are a national plague. They should be arrested, jailed and deported from Israel before it's too late. That way the increasing infiltrator violence will cease. The State of Israel is at an extreme point that threatens Israeli society.”⁴¹ In an opinion piece published in the daily *Israel Hayom*, Danon claimed: “Their [asylum seekers'] crime rate is dozens of percentage points higher than that of the general population.”⁴²

MK Carmel Shama HaCohen (Likud) wrote on his Facebook page: “A state that presumes to deal with underground reactors, entrenched under layers of dozens of meters of cement, 2,000 kilometers from here shouldn't muck up the expulsion from the face of the earth of tens of thousands of invaders who are walking and committing crimes freely in the heart of the country.”⁴³ MK Yoel Hasson (Kadima) published on his Facebook page: “A short time ago I appealed to the Knesset Speaker MK Reuven Rivlin, requesting an urgent hearing of the Knesset Interior Committee on the proliferation of robberies, rapes and violence committed by the illegal

38 Yanga, Yanir, “Yishai: A country that doesn't want illegal migrants doesn't allow them to work,” *Haaretz*, May 22, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1713736> [accessed at: June 16, 2012].

39 Goren, Yuval, “Danon: The Infiltrators are a Fundamental Threat to the State,” *Maariv*, March 29, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/351/671.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

40 Contrary to Danon's remarks, most of the refugees in Israel are from Eritrea and the majority is Christians. Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew). http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21_rtf [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

41 Ephraim, Omri, “The Foreigner Problem: No Country is Willing to Take the Infiltrators,” *Ynet*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4236418,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

42 Danon, Danny, “The Necessary Struggle to Solve the Migrant Problem,” *Israel Hayom*, May 28, 2012. (Hebrew) http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=8760&hp=1&newsletter=28.05.2012 [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

43 MK Carmel Shama HaCohen's official Facebook page, May 19, 2012. (Hebrew) <https://www.facebook.com/cshama/posts/3121226233153> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

African migrants. In this hearing, the Interior Minister and Public Security Minister will be asked to participate and present to Knesset members the government's immediate solutions to immediately expel those tens of thousands of migrants flooding the streets of south Tel Aviv. I have no doubt that record violence by the illegal migrants is ahead of us, and that if the government does not take immediate action to deal with this severe problem, Tel Aviv will go from a city that never sleeps to a city without deterrence.”⁴⁴ MK Michael Ben Ari claimed that asylum seekers “are not just hungry from bread...they are hungry for women.”⁴⁵

Shlomo Maslawi, a Likud party representative on the Tel Aviv City Council, and a leader in the campaign against asylum seekers in south Tel Aviv, sent a letter to the prime minister: “Following the events in recent days, the increased waves of violence, the lax policy practiced by the government and authorities, and in light of the explicit statement by the Israeli police, which is ill-prepared and unable to handle the situation, neighborhood residents are vulnerable to acts of violence. Because we have witnessed residents of neighborhoods in other cities being abandoned, we call on you to declare a national state of emergency... Incidents of rape, robbery, violence and harassment have become a daily routine, with no response from the authorities.”⁴⁶ In an interview with *Israel Hayom*, Maslawi tried to explain the lower crime rates among asylum seekers: “Police data is not surprising and even misleads the public. The number of infiltrators is going up, crime is rising, and there are many complaints that don't reach the police.” He added, “Unfortunately, Sudanese and Eritreans have joined Arab and Bedouin crime rings, mainly selling drugs for them, and they charge protection. Generations will weep and no one understands this. There are enclaves of crime and drugs.”⁴⁷

The Israeli media, through reports and opinion pieces, added to the sense that asylum seekers increase the crime rate. For example, an article by Guy Fishkin in *Zman Maariv* claims that,

44 It appears that this post was written purely for publicity purposes, as in the eight weeks since, the Knesset has not held the hearing requested by MK Hasson. Post on MK Yoel Hasson's official Facebook page, May 16, 2012.

(Hebrew) https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=429529970399943&id=175929825759960 [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

45 Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

46 Nachmani, Nativ and Goren, Yuval, “Huldai to Netanyahu: Take Responsibility for the Foreigner Problem,” *Maariv*, May 7, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/365/250.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

47 Cohen, Avi, “They Came to Work and Shifted to Crime,” *Israel Hayom*, March 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2680/2521249> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

“Thefts, break-ins, and increased crime are some of the phenomena that the infiltrators have brought.” He continues: “The despair, the poverty and the encounter with the local population has led to no shortage of violent confrontations, rapes and even murders. Even Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cannot remain indifferent... To his credit, Netanyahu's government began constructing the massive fence along Israel's border with Egypt, to prevent more infiltrators from entering the country. But for tens of thousands of illegal infiltrators, this is like closing the barn door after the horses have escaped. The place identified most with African infiltrators (only a minority, by the way, are considered refugees by the UN) is around the central bus station in Tel Aviv, but the city market in Netanya also resembles a Sudanese city.”⁴⁸

An article by Avi Cohen in the free daily *Israel Hayom* included the claims that, “The foreigners' crime keeps growing to frightening dimensions. Despite Border Police units and many police officers, the crimes around the central bus station and south Tel Aviv in general are increasing daily, and the Tel Aviv police is trying with all of its might to deal with the stream of refugees who are flooding the area and becoming the undisputed rulers of the streets. The refugees rented most of the stores and some have begun to lead a life of crime. They've become the Tel Aviv extension of the Arab and Bedouin criminal organizations, especially when it comes to selling drugs. They even collect protection money from store owners. Those working in prostitution pay NIS 200 per day, so that they can get clients.”⁴⁹ In another example of media bias, a writer for the local news site *Ashkelonet* did not attempt to hide his disappointment about no one bothering to attend a planned demonstration against asylum seekers in Ashkelon: “Apparently city residents don't care about the infiltrator phenomenon, which harms the socio-economic fabric in Ashkelon, with more than 1,500 infiltrators, and the numbers are increasing daily. Ashkelon residents are probably expressing their protest mainly through the virtual world and are less willing to take part in actual demonstrations.”⁵⁰

48 Fishkin, Guy, “Sudan is Here: In Netanya They've Declared a War on the Infiltrators,” *Zman Netanya*, May 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/372/744.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

49 Cohen, Avi, “They Came to Work and Shifted to Crime,” *Israel Hayom*, March 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2680/2521249> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

50 Haziza, Gal, “Protest Against Infiltrators: Zero Participants,” *Ashkelonet*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://ashqelon.net/?p=19805> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

The impartial reporter Haziza established a Facebook group “Ashkelon Residents Say No to Infiltrators,” See Ashkelon Residents Say No to Infiltrators,” *Ashkelonet*, May 8, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://ashqelon.net/?p=19925> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

A Channel 10 television report on the presence of asylum seekers in Eilat described them as “A phenomenon that threatens to destroy their [the Israeli residents’] city.” The broadcast positively described the extreme right-wing activist Moshe Ben Zikry, who was removed from Jerusalem by the Shin Bet’s Jewish Unit after forming a youth militia that attacked Palestinians in the city,⁵¹ an activity that he repeated in Eilat (directed towards asylum seekers this time).⁵² Ben Zikry’s militia, ‘Neighborhood Guard,’ is described in the Channel 10 report as “An organization established to try to bring back the residents’ sense of security” and his arrival in Eilat is described as such: “Ben Zikry was exiled from Jerusalem by the Shin Bet’s Jewish Unit and relocated to Eilat to bring order in regards to the foreign residents of the city.”⁵³ It should be noted that the Shin Bet ordered Ben Zikry to cease his activities against asylum seekers in Eilat.⁵⁴

Alongside descriptions like these, Israeli journalists reported false data regarding crimes committed by asylum seekers or explained why the police’s official crime data is inaccurate and the figures are significantly higher.⁵⁵ Israel Radio reporter Adi Meiri declared that “the police lost control” in dealing with asylum seekers’ crime. She claimed that asylum seekers do not pay municipal taxes, that their number in Israel is unknown and that they cannot be identified because they use fake documents (all the claims are untrue).⁵⁶ Army Radio reporter Hadas Shteif

51 Ateli, Amichai, “The Call from the Shin Bet Led the Right Wing Activist to Flee,” *Maariv*, August 29, 2010. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/150/509.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

52 Lis, Tony, “Sudanese Refugee: I Will Never Forget the Racist Treatment. *MYnet*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233022,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

53 Schwartz, Paz, “City of Refuge: Eilat Residents against the Infiltrators and Taking the Law Into Their Own Hands,” *Channel 10*, May 18, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=897896> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

54 Shilo, Ayala, “The Shin Bet to Ben-Zikry: Stop Your Activities in Eilat,” *Arutz 7*, October 27, 2010. (Hebrew) <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/227764> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

55 One accepted claim is that refugees’ crimes are under-reported. Under-reporting exists in other populations in Israel, and many victims do not report certain crimes, particularly those associated with a stigma. The crime rate in Israel is generally higher than what is reported to the police. For example, according to The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, less than ten percent of women who are harassed complain to the police. According to an Israel Police poll, less than 25% of women who were sexually attacked (including rape) reported the incident to the police.

Ben Ami, Lili, “Thus Will Be Done to a Woman Who,” *Ynet*, May 21, 2011. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4043513,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Another example is the worldwide phenomenon of significant under-reporting of rape when the victims are male. See: Tors, Einat, “In the Closet: Why Are Sexual Attacks in the Gay Community Still Silenced?” *Zman Tel Aviv*, June 6, 2011. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/247/038.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

56 Interview on “Agenda,” Karen Neubach’s program on Israel Radio (Reshet Bet). May 20, 2012.

reported a claim, supposedly made by a senior police official, that refugees commit 40 percent of the crime in Tel Aviv.⁵⁷ In fact, foreigners (the majority of whom are not asylum seekers), who comprise 28.5% of Tel Aviv's population, committed 13.5% of the crimes in the city, which is lower than the crime rate of the Israeli population in the city.⁵⁸ The false data that Shteif reported, which later appeared in other media outlets, was also disseminated by Israeli officials.⁵⁹ In an article published in *Maariv*, which called for re-colonizing Africa to “force progress” on the natives, columnist Er’el Segal quoted Shteif’s false figures.⁶⁰ It was only three weeks and several reports later that the police spokesperson corrected Shteif’s mistake and clarified that: “Israeli police never relayed data stating that 40 percent of crimes in the Tel Aviv District are committed by foreigners.”⁶¹

Asylum Seekers Spread Diseases

Another racist claim raised against asylum seekers is that they spread diseases and thus pose a threat to the Israeli public. Interior Minister Eli Yishai (Shas) declared to a reporter: “You know that many women in Tel Aviv were raped and are afraid to complain, so that they won't be stigmatized as having AIDS?”⁶² In this interview, Yishai expresses support for Professor Rafi Carasso, who claimed that 50-60% of diagnosed AIDS patients in Israel are refugees and, “50-60% or 80%” of diagnosed tuberculosis carriers are asylum seekers. Carasso labeled asylum seekers as a “reservoir of diseases” and warned Israelis not to eat at restaurants that employ asylum seekers, as they could infect the public through washing dishes or touching the faucets.⁶³

57 Steiff, Hadas, “Asylum Seekers Involved in 40% of Crime,” *Army Radio*, May 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.glz.co.il/newsArticle.aspx?newsid=104642> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

58 Telem, Yahav, “Knesset Data: Foreigners Less Involved in Crime Than Israelis,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, May 30, 2012.

59 For example, a request made by Danny Danon to hold a Knesset Interior Committee hearing. May 29, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.knesset.gov.il/committees/heb/Fmaterial/data/pnim2012-05-29-01.doc> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

60 Segal, Er’el, “Tel Aviv's Last Days,” *Maariv*, May 4, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/364/296.html?hp=1&cat=479&loc=28> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

61 Farsiko, Oren. “From the Horse's Mouth: The Factual Basis,” *The 7th Eye*, May 22, 2012. (Hebrew) http://www.the7eye.org.il/interviews/Pages/210512_Factual_basis.aspx [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

62 The response by journalist Shalom Yerushalmi was embarrassing: “You have warned of foreigners' diseases back in October 2009; so it sounded terrible,” See: Yerushalmi, Shalom, “Eli Yishai in a Special Interview: ‘It's Us or Them,’” *Maariv*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/373/346.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=2> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

63 “Morning Show With Orli and Guy,” *Channel 10*. May 23, 2012.

MK Ben Ari referenced Carasso when he stated: “People cry that there are no hospital beds and they fill the country with disease carriers, as noted by Professor Carasso.”⁶⁴ In practice, the majority of the migrants are young and relatively healthy. 13% of tuberculosis patients in Israel are migrants (this group includes migrant workers with visas, illegal migrant workers and asylum seekers) and 17% of people who have been diagnosed with AIDS in Israel are migrants, and the chance that Israelis will contract the virus from migrants is extremely low.⁶⁵

Knesset members also spread this claim. MK Aryeh Bibi (Kadima) declared during a Knesset hearing: “Most of the infiltrators have contagious diseases, from tuberculosis downwards.” In the same hearing, MK Miri Regev claimed that because of asylum seekers' diseases, after some were brought to Gordon Pool in northern Tel Aviv in a publicity stunt by MK Michael Ben Ari, “Gordon Pool was cleaned for two days” after the asylum seekers were in it.⁶⁶ MK Ben Ari declared that, “There's a powder keg here. A girl in fourth grade can't go to dance class unaccompanied, or she's in a class at school with children of infiltrators, and you don't know what diseases they have. These are terrible viral diseases.”⁶⁷

Articles and opinion pieces were published on the topic incited against asylum seekers. In an article published on the popular *Ynet* portal, which called for the deportation of asylum seekers back to their home countries, the writer stated: “Most of the infiltrators that force themselves on Israel (I wanted to use the word 'rape,' but decided against it) come from the sickest populations on earth, with infectious diseases, genetic and hereditary diseases, and other diseases. Some come from different regions in Africa where 25-30% of the population has AIDS. In Israel 17% of AIDS patients and 13% of tuberculosis patients are infiltrators from the developing world, and the health system invests major efforts to treat these patients and prevent the spread of their diseases.”⁶⁸ Journalists reporting on the issue quoted objective estimates by specialized

64 Mosasko, Avi. “People Cry That There Are No Hospital Beds and They Fill the Country With Disease Carriers,” *Tel Aviv Now!*, June 6, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://bit.ly/LeNLIh> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

65 Mor, Zohar, Groto, Itamar, Valevantel, Alex, “Tuberculosis and AIDS Among Migrant Workers – As the Shouts?” *The Medicine*, Volume 151, Issue 3, March 2012.

66 Knesset Interior Committee, Minutes, May 29, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/pnim/2012-05-29-02.rtf> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

67 Lis, Jonathan and Kobovich, Yaniv. “Ben Ari: Disturbed by the Violence, but They Carry Dangerous Diseases and Viruses,” *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politi/1.1715623> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

68 Farhadein, Maharan. “Dismantling the Foreigner Bomb,” *Ynet*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4236931.00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

physicians, then added their own commentary, according to which the “infiltrators” pose a threat to public health.⁶⁹

Asylum Seekers Are an Existential Demographic Threat to the State of Israel

The most widespread claim by state representatives against asylum seekers is that they pose a threat to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, even though they make up less than one percent of the population.⁷⁰ In addition, the current status of asylum seekers in Israel (group protection that prevents deportation), and even refugee status, are temporary and do not allow for naturalization in Israel (contrary to other countries that absorb refugees). The claim that asylum seekers are a demographic threat is central theme in the public statements made by Prime Minister Netanyahu on the matter. In May 2012 Netanyahu declared: “This phenomenon is very serious and threatens the



⁶⁹ See, for example, this typical paragraph: “According to a physician who works in one of the hospital departments, many of the migrants have fatal infectious diseases that have disappeared from the map of existing diseases in the West, including Israel. In fact, the infiltrators pose a threat to hospital patients, and threaten the Israel public with the spread of diseases. 'We get many patients with all sorts of diseases for which we have to refer to medical books,' says the doctor. “Sometimes women giving birth have these diseases, so we must be very careful.” The commentary that “infiltrators” endanger public health was not stated by the doctor, but was added by the journalist. From: Avni, Lior. “Barzilay Delivery Room is Filling with Infiltrators From Africa Giving Birth,” *Zman Hadarom*, February 18, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/338/092.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Another example is the following article and the questions raised by the writer and the outbreak of diseases among refugees and the threat they pose to the public. Shlomo-Melamed, Merav, “The Foreign Workers Have More Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” *Mynet*, May 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4223951,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

⁷⁰ There are currently about 60,000 asylum seekers in Israel. The population of Israel stands at 7,864,400 million, which means asylum seekers make up 0.76% of the population. For the data on the general population in Israel see: Central Statics Bureau, Population of Israel, June 2012. (Hebrew) http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/b1_h.htm [Accessed at: July 1, 2012]

national security and our national identity. The country is flooded and our identity as a Jewish and democratic state is being eliminated... 60,000 infiltrators could become 600,000, and could bring about the elimination of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”⁷¹

While Netanyahu rarely refers to the issue of asylum seekers in public, the Interior Minister does so often. Eli Yishai declared to the Knesset plenum: “The Jewish state is at risk because of the infiltrators, I say this explicitly. The values, the Jewish majority, Jewish identity, and the Zionist enterprise are all being threatened.”⁷² He also called for deporting asylum seekers because of the importance of “maintaining the Jewish identity if we don't want War of Independence II, and I'm not exaggerating.”⁷³ He later claimed that: “If they [asylum seekers] stay here, the Declaration of Independence should be shelved. Democracy is not a recipe for suicide.”⁷⁴ Asylum seekers, the majority of whom are single men with very few women, are also considered by Yishai to be a threat due to their reproductive potential: “Natality among the infiltrators is hundreds of thousands, and the Zionist dream is shelved.”⁷⁵ Following a pogrom against asylum seekers in the Hatikva neighborhood in south Tel Aviv, Yishai declared: “We have no hatred, but we want to protect the Zionist enterprise, the Jewish majority, the Jewish identity. If we feel sorry for them, eventually we'll be cruel to them, as happened today in south Tel Aviv.”⁷⁶ In another interview he claimed: “The infiltrators, along with the Palestinians, will quickly bring us to the end of the Zionist dream. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, we haven't faced such an imminent threat. We established a state, and now we're losing it daily.”⁷⁷

Justice Minister Yaakov Ne'eman declared: “To say that the situation is catastrophic is an

71 Yanaga, Yanir. “Yishai: A Country That Doesn't Want Infiltrators Won't Allow Them to Work,” *Haaretz*. May 22, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1713736> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

72 Plenum of the Knesset, Minutes, May 2, 2012. (Hebrew) www.knesset.gov.il/plenum/data/02072712.doc [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

73 Wolf, Pinhas, “Yishai on the Infiltrators: They'll Bring War of Independence 2,” *Walla!*, May 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/9/2535655> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

74 Yalon, Yaron, Schlesinger, Yehuda and Zilbershtein, Ronit, “Yishai: It's Us vs. Them,” *Israel Hayom*, June 11, 2012. (Hebrew) http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_article.php?id=18050&hp=1&newsletter=11.06.2012 [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

75 “Employment Will Root the Infiltrators Here,” *Army Radio*. May 20, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://glz.co.il/newsArticle.aspx?newsid=105766> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

76 “Yishai: I Can't Judge South Tel Aviv Residents for Their Treatment of Foreigners,” *Walla!*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/90/2535799> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

77 Yerushalmi, Shalom, “Eli Yishai in a Special Interview: It's Us or Them,” *Maariv*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/373/346.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=2> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

understatement. This is an existential threat to the State of Israel. We have the right to protect our country as a Jewish and democratic country. Refugees who pay thousands of dollars to cross the border, to get work and to deny Israelis' jobs – is that human rights? People come here illegally, through criminal organizations and take jobs from Israelis. Israel, like any country, must prevent illegal entry.”⁷⁸ MK Danon declared that asylum seekers are a “social strategic threat to the country” and added: “Children and women are afraid to walk the streets, crime is rising, unemployment is high and the Jewish character in the neighborhoods is disappearing. The infiltrators are the most tangible threat to the State of Israel, with the potential for hundreds of thousands waiting to arrive.”⁷⁹ MK Otniel Shneller (Kadima) claimed in an interview that the entry of asylum seekers to Israel is: “A ticking time bomb, and the politicians' equivocations on the matter is no less dangerous than the infiltrators themselves.”⁸⁰ MK Zvulon Orlev (Habait Hayehudi) declared: “The lack of immigration policy, which has resulted in more than 600,000 people residing in Israel illegally, is complete lawlessness and a severe government blunder that constitutes a strategic attack that threatens the Jewish identity of the State of Israel.”⁸¹ MK Nissim Zeev (Shas) claimed: “I never dreamed that the right of return would be for infiltrators from Africa. We are under a serious demographic threat.”⁸² MK Miri Regev claimed in a Knesset hearing that, “60,000 migrant workers want to stay here and disrupt the demographic, national, Jewish identity of the State of Israel.”⁸³ MK Uri Ariel (National Union) claimed in an interview:

78 Levin, Itamar, “Neeman: Illegal Migration – Existential Threat,” *News1*, February 17, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.news1.co.il/Archive/001-D-290053-00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

79 A press release from Danon's office, published on the pro-terrorist ‘*Hakol Hayehudi*’ website on February 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il/?p=24454> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Hebrew: Danon repeated these remarks two months later at a conference. See: Kelner, Gil, “In 2011 More Infiltrators Have Arrived in Israel than New Jewish Immigrants,” *Srugim*, April 15, 2011. (Hebrew) <http://bit.ly/It052J> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

80 “Shneller: Infiltrators from Africa = Time Bomb,” *Kol Chai Radio*, May 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://bit.ly/Kqd6l> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

81 Karob, Yishai, “Immigration Policy – Strategic Attack against Israel,” *Arutz 7*, April 15, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/236549> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Asylum seekers reside in Israel legally. According to the Immigration Authority, there are 105,000 illegal migrants in Israel, 95,000 of whom entered on a tourist visa. See: Population and Immigration Authority, Ministry of Interior Affairs, “Foreigners in Israel Data- April 2012,” April 14, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/%D7%90%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9C%202012.pdf> [accessed at: June 25, 2012].

82 Adato, Edna and Watzasna, Shlomo. “Green Light for Deportation,” *Israel Hayom*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_article.php?id=17449&hp=1&newsletter=24.05.2012 [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

83 Knesset Interior Committee, Minutes, May 29, 2012. (Hebrew)

“There are forces in Israel trying, through this phenomenon of infiltrators, to make Israel a nation devoid of its Jewish character.”⁸⁴

Declarations that asylum seekers pose a demographic threat are sometimes backed by the false claim that the number of asylum seekers in Israel is higher than reported. According to the Population Authority, almost 60,000 asylum seekers have entered Israel by April 2012.⁸⁵ Despite countless testimonies by IDF soldiers regarding asylum seekers waiting on the side of the road to be taken to prison and processed, Israeli politicians and analysts claim that the number of known “infiltrators” is 60,000, but their number in practice is much higher.⁸⁶ Another false claim made by MK Danon and a spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office, Mark Regev, is that more asylum seekers arrived in Israel in 2011 than Jewish immigrants.⁸⁷

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/pnim/2012-05-29-02.rtf> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

84 “Uri Arieli: Infiltrators – Weapons for a State of All Its Citizens,” *Ynet*, June 18, 2012. (Hebrew)

http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0_7340_L-4243876_00.html [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

85 This is the only official number currently provided by the state. This figure ignores the number of asylum seekers who left willingly or were deported after being declared ineligible for group protection or refugee status.

86 See, for example, the figures presented by MK Yaakov Katz (National Union) and the array of contradictions in them: “The number [of asylum seekers in Tel Aviv] is closer to 60,000 than 45,000, and according to Huldai, when he talks about the actual numbers, about the people who didn't enter through the State of Israel or through the IDF, or weren't picked up by the army, there are 80,000-100,000. We know cities in which residents who entered from the Egyptian border make up 15-20% of the population. In Eilat – 15%, in Tel Aviv, listen to these numbers, there are 400,000 Jews, and nearly 60,000-70,000 infiltrators, and another 110,000 foreign workers. Jews in Tel Aviv, in the city of Tel Aviv, are in the minority,”

In fact, the Tel Aviv Municipality estimates that there are 25,000 refugees in the city. See: Nathan, Gilad.

“Geographical Dispersion of Infiltrators and Asylum Seekers in Israel,” Knesset Research Center. April 16, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m03052.pdf> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

In the same May 2012 hearing held by the Knesset Committee on Foreign Workers, the first meeting attended by Danon in 2012, he declared: “In Israel there are currently 200,000 people who entered illegally. 100,000 entered through Ben Gurion Airport and forgot to leave, from all over the world, and another 100,000 who came via Egypt. And these 200,000 have babies here and raise them and there is poverty and violence.” Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

87 As Head of the Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Committee in the Knesset, Danon should have known that the number of new immigrants to Israel in 2011 stood at 19,020, while the number of asylum seekers who entered the country was 16,851. For data on immigration (Hebrew), see:

<http://www.moia.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/C90F3B29-8776-462D-9FF2-DFC9B3973EF8/0/OLIM1.HTM>

For data on the entry of refugees to Israel (Hebrew), see: Immigration and Population Authority, Ministry of Interior Affairs, “Foreigners in Israel Data, Annual Report 2011,” January 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.piba.gov.il/PublicationAndTender/ForeignWorkersStat/Documents/%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%9D%20%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%99%202011.pdf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

For Danon's comments see: Kelner, Gil, “In 2011 More Infiltrators Have Arrived in Israel than New Jewish Immigrants,” *Srugim*, April 15, 2011. (Hebrew) <http://bit.ly/It052J> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Mark Regev claimed that the number of legal migrants (Jewish immigrants and migrants workers with visas) is lower than the number of asylum seekers who entered in 2011. For Mark Regev's comments, see:

Greenwood, Phoebe, “Huge detention centre to be Israel's latest weapon in migration battle,” *Guardian*, April 17,

Elected Israeli officials describe asylum seekers as a dangerous group that invaded the State of Israel and threatens to destroy the Zionist enterprise. When addressing leftist (opposition) parliamentarians, MK Danon claimed at a Knesset hearing: “An enemy state has been established here under our noses, because of you [the left].”⁸⁸ His conclusion was: “It's time to declare war on these infiltrators.”⁸⁹ His colleague, Ofir Akunis (Likud), declared: “I defined the infiltrator phenomenon as a social time bomb... The infiltrator problem is a strategic threat to the existence of the State of Israel and I can read you a list of occupied areas and neighborhoods: Neve Sha'anani in Tel Aviv is occupied; the Shapira neighborhood in Tel Aviv... is occupied; Hatikva Quarter is occupied; Arad is occupied; Eilat is occupied; Pardes Katz is occupied.”⁹⁰ MK Ben Ari stated: “Let's stop talking about refugees. There's migration. We have our war for the only Jewish state that we have. They want to destroy it as a Jewish state.”⁹¹

Five MK participated in the protest that preceded the pogrom in Hatikva neighborhood in south Tel Aviv: Danny Danon (Likud), Miri Regev (Likud), Yariv Levin (Likud), Ronit Tirosh (Kadima) and Michael Ben Ari (National Union). At the protest, Ben Ari yelled from the podium: “For three years women have not been able to go to the market without having their purses stolen. Girls can't play. Young men can't find jobs.” Afterward he led the crowd in chanting



2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/17/detention-centre-israel-migration>

88 Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew).

http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rf/zarim/2012-05-21_rtf [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

89 Fishkin, Guy, “Sudan is Here: In Netanyahu They've Declared a War on the Infiltrators,” *Zman Netanyahu*, May 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/372/744.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

90 Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew).

http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rf/zarim/2012-05-21_rtf [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

91 Wolf, Pinhas, “Ben Ari: In Egypt They Struggled to Define Infiltrators as Refugees,” *Walla!*, June 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/2538534> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

“Sudanese to Sudan.”⁹² At the protest, Miri Regev referred to the asylum seekers as “a cancer in our bodies,” and added: “We’ll do everything to return them to their countries. We won’t allow people to come look for jobs in Israel... All of the leftists who appealed to the Supreme Court, they should be ashamed. We won’t let the leftists do this. We, the right, will deal with the infiltrator issue, we will protect our children, our women, our jobs, and will continue to demonstrate every day, until the last Sudanese is returned to Sudan.”⁹³ Danny Danon spoke at the protest and said: “The most important thing is to deport the infiltrators from Israel and protect Israel as a Jewish state.”⁹⁴

Another false claim that stokes the public's fears regarding asylum seekers is that most are Muslim.⁹⁵ This claim was made by Israeli decision makers and in the Israeli media. Interior Minister Eli Yishai declared in an interview: “Most of the people who come here are Muslim who think that this country doesn't belong to us, the white man.”⁹⁶ MK Danny Danon claimed at a parliamentary hearing: “We see that an enemy state is being established in Israel. The state of infiltrators, who come here from Muslim countries.”⁹⁷ MK Miri Regev declared: “People don't understand the significance of 60,000 Muslims who marry here and have children. You can't be bleeding hearts.”⁹⁸ In an opinion piece authored by Regev that was published in the daily *Globes*, she proclaimed: “We must all unite in our opposition to Israel becoming a state of all its infiltrators, as per the vision of the far-leftist organizations, who seek to make the only Jewish

92 Video from the demonstration that took place on May 23, 2012. (Hebrew)

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10150927766637417> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

93 Brenner, Neri and Boaz Feiler. “Riot and Arrests in South Tel Aviv Protest: Foreigners Attacked,” *Ynet*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233445,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

A video from the event (Hebrew) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poKugY46_CQ [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

94 A video from the May 23, 2012 demonstration (Hebrew)

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10150927766637417> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

95 The heads of the Sudanese community believe that 80% are Muslim, and the heads of the Eritrean community in Israel estimate that 5-10% of Eritreans in Israel are Muslim. Even if half of asylum seekers from other African countries are Muslim, 35% of the African asylum seekers in Israel are Muslim.

The data is based on estimates provided by leaders in the different communities to the Hotline for Migrant Workers.

96 Yerushalmi, Shalom, “Eli Yishai in a Special Interview: It's Us or Them,” *Maariv*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/373/346.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=2> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

97 Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew).

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

98 Weiler-Polak, Dana and Kobovitch, Yaniv, “The Violent Protest Against Foreigners / 11 Protesters Under House Arrest,” *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715500> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

country in the world into another Muslim country, and add it to the list of 55 Muslim countries.”⁹⁹

Ayelet Shaked, the head of ‘My Israel’, an advocacy arm of the Yesha Council (the umbrella organization of the West Bank settlements), claimed in an interview that: “This is a social and political threat. If the southern border remains unprotected, 50,000 people will continue to enter each year, within ten years we’ll be living with half a million infiltrators. What kind of country wants that? All of Eritrea wants to come here... People don’t understand that these infiltrators are Muslim. They go live in places like Kafr Qassem and join the Muslim and Arab population here in Israel.”¹⁰⁰

Israeli journalists repeated the claim that asylum seekers are Muslim, and thus, in their opinion, pose a threat.¹⁰¹ Commentator Guy Bechor wrote in *Globes*: “A number of associations, charity organizations and others, encourage this African migration to Israel. They direct it from the home countries, protect it, so that there won’t be difficulties in Sinai, and provide a warm home for it in Israel. They spread and continue to spread the rumor in Africa that Israel is paradise, and that it can be reached by foot. These aren’t migrant workers or refugees, these are African Muslims, for the most part, who come here to settle, and never leave.”¹⁰² Radio broadcaster Avri Gilad claimed on his show: “Lest we forget that those knocking on our doors belong to Islam, and Islam is the worst disease raging in the world today. It poisons its believers, and poisons every place it reaches. The people who reach us, particularly the South Sudanese, are very moderate, the nice faces of Islam. The problem is when you carry the virus, you do not know when it will erupt... Every Muslim who comes here can carry the banner of global Islam... Therefore we must

99 Regev, Miri, “MK Regev: Disperse the Infiltrators in the Extreme Left Strongholds: Kfar Shmarhayu, Ramat Aviv, Caesarea and the Kibbutzim,” *Globes*, June 18, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000757744> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

100 Schneider, Tal, “In Ten Years We’ll Live Here With Half a Million Infiltrators From Africa,” *Lady Globes*, May 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000744969> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

101 Articles on refugees as a demographic threat were also published without they claim that they are Muslim.

See: Margalit, Dan, “Compassionate, But Why Is All of the Burden on Us?” *Israel Hayom*, May 17, 2012.

(Hebrew) http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=8681&hp=1&newsletter=17.05.2012 [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Segal, Er’el. “60,000 Infiltrators Are an Internal Existential Threat,” *Maariv*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/373/364.html?hp=1&cat=479&loc=28> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

102 Bechor, Guy, “South Tel Aviv Has Become Little Sudan, Eilat and Weaker Neighborhoods in Rishon Letzion, Petah Tikva, Pardes Katz, Sderot and the Galilee Have Been Occupied,” *Globes*, May 30, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000752851> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

be careful.”¹⁰³

The role of the Israeli media in the incitement against asylum mainly amounts to quoting incitement by decision makers, or in using labels that depict the asylum seeking community as criminals, spreading diseases or threatening the state's security or demographics. An exception is *Maariv* columnist Ben Dror Yamini, who backs his numerous articles on asylum seekers with data that seems believable or substantiated, but presents it in a way that deceives his readers. In an article published on the front page of *Maariv*, Yemini claimed that, “In three months there will be 67,000 refugees here, and many more will arrive before the completion of the construction of the fence, and Israel will be the country with the highest number of infiltrators - who in the meantime are considered refugees - in the West.”¹⁰⁴ Yemini based his claim such: “Assuming there wasn't a significant relative change in the leading countries, and the most significant change was in Israel,”¹⁰⁵ but across the Western world, the number of asylum seekers has increased. In fact, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Israel is not even among the top ten Western countries in terms of asylum seeker/citizen ratio.¹⁰⁶

In another article, Yemini tries to compare the expulsion of Africans from Israel to a similar situation in Norway: “The state could not receive everyone who claimed to be prosecuted or deprived by the harsh living conditions in his homeland. A public uproar broke out, but the government made it clear that the decision was professional and pragmatic: The Africans are to be deported, even though some of them belong to the opposition and are afraid for their lives. This didn't happen in Israel. It happened in Europe. In Norway – one of the wealthiest nations in the world. The deportees were Ethiopian. Human rights groups intervened on their behalf.

103 Shelah, Ofer, “Gilad Farm,” *Maariv*, June 13, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/376/969.html?hp=1&cat=479&loc=4> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Avri Gilad would probably find it difficult to explain the reason for the civil war between north and south Sudan, which claimed the lives of two million people, if both are Muslim. South Sudan, of course, is African Christian, and was suppressed by the Arab Muslim north.

104 It is interesting how in presenting the claim that the refugees are a demographic threat, Yemini is willing to recognize the refugee status of asylum seekers in Israel, after claiming for years that they are “work infiltrators,” See for example (Hebrew): Yemini, Ben Dror, “Refugee Phenomenon: Has the Penny Dropped?” *Maariv*, December 5, 2011. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/313/058.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

105 Yemini, Ben Dror, “National and Historical Blunder,” *Maariv*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew)

http://www.nrg.co.il/app/index.php?do=blog&encr_id=f2b4c1b55be76d1e6d7b777256ea0370&id=3721 [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

106 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrial Countries,” March 27, 2012. <http://www.unhcr.org/4e9beaa19.html>

Famous authors joined the protest, just like they did here. It didn't help. The government insisted. And Norway wasn't the only country - Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom also decided to forcefully send back thousands of Iraqi and other African nationals, whose asylum requests were denied.”¹⁰⁷

The final part of the quote appears insignificant, and Yemini fails to emphasize that these words make all the difference between Israel and the European nations he mentioned. The latter states seek to deport (not always successfully) Africans whose asylum requests have been denied following a fair and transparent process. Some countries even provide the asylum seekers with state-sponsored legal aid. Israel, on the other hand, seeks to deport Africans without reviewing their asylum applications at all. The requests filed by the “infiltrators” that Yemini says should be expelled were not and are not being reviewed. In all likelihood, a state with a fair asylum system¹⁰⁸ would accept most of these requests.

In some cases, religious figures are the ones that propagate the claims that asylum seekers pose a demographic threat to Israel and that they are criminals. Ahiad Ettinger, a rabbi at a synagogue in southern Tel Aviv, expressed concern that no Jews will remain in the city's southern neighborhoods. “This is an emergency, like an earthquake,” he added. “Army, police and security forces must be deployed. The illegals must be sent back home. They hurt women, steal and eliminate the Jewish majority here. A demographic revolution is taking place here, and they will reach other areas. So far, the prime minister and the defense minister have failed.”¹⁰⁹

In an essay, renowned Rabbi Israel Rosen examined ways to bypass the biblical commandment that calls for humane treatment of foreigners and escaped slaves, asserting eventually that “they are gentiles who drastically disrupt Israel's fragile demographic. They are idle, and idleness is the mother of all sin: drinking, theft, rape and violence. They sow fear in their surroundings.” He

¹⁰⁷ Yemini, Ben Dror, “Journalists, Leftists, Hypocrisy and Racism,” *Maariv*, June 15, 2012.
http://www.nrg.co.il/app/index.php?do=blog&encr_id=f2b4c1b55be76d1e6d7b777256ea0370&id=3773
[Accessed at: June 19, 2012]

¹⁰⁸ Read more about Israel's unfair RSD scheme in our previous report: Hotline for Migrant Workers, “Until Our Hearts Are Completely Hardened,” March 2012.
http://hotline.org.il/english/pdf/asylum_procedures_2012_eng.pdf

¹⁰⁹ Toker, Benny, “Tel Aviv is Burning: Tumultuous Protests Against Infiltrators,” *Arutz 7*, May 9, 2012. (Hebrew)
<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/237698> [Accessed June 16, 2012]

concluded that the asylum seekers who arrive at Israel's gates should be met with gunfire, and those who have already entered should be expelled.¹¹⁰

Rabbi Amnon Yitzhak, a popular preacher, warned an audience in Eilat about the dangers of intermarriage: "The Arabs who go for the Jewish girls, do they really mean to give? They spend 10,000 a month on a young woman, and she says, 'this is the life. I'm happy. The Israelis don't look my way; they don't spend a dime on me, so I'll date a Sudanese man.' And then what happens? You'll go to Africa. Climb trees. Eat bananas." He further claimed that the Sudanese are the decedents of Cham, the biblical figure who "had intercourse aboard Noah's arch even though it was forbidden. His skin turned black as punishment."¹¹¹

In an essay published on Shas' official website, Rabbi Moshe Shafir branded the asylum seekers as a "social bomb" who bring about "theft, destruction, violence and various acts of sodomy, including interfaith relationships that destroy the institutes of marriage and family." Such a group, he added, "should be placed in isolation, far away, the sooner the better." Addressing the asylum seekers, he said: "If you manage to crush our foundation and national identity...it would be unfortunate not only for us but for you as well, because it would create the same chaos that exists in the place where you come from."¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Rosen, Israel, "Africa is Here," *News1*, June 13, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.news1.co.il/Archive/003-D-72965-00.html> [Accessed June 16, 2012]

¹¹¹ Carmon, Omer, "Rabbi Amnon Yitzhak in Eilat: The Sudanese Look Like Warlocks," *Erev Erev*, February 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.everev.co.il/article.asp?id=13276> [Accessed June 16, 2012]

¹¹² Shafir, Moshe, "To the Dear Sudanese, With Love," Shas website, June 10, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://shas.org.il/Web/He/News/Ideas/1645.aspx> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

Asylum Seekers Are a Security Threat

Another claim that has been raised by Israeli decision makers and in the media, without any proof to substantiate the claim, is that asylum seekers pose a security threat because they could potentially ally with terrorists. The Interior Minister has warned, citing “unambiguous police



data,” that the crime rates and incidence of “terrorist activity” by asylum seekers will increase.¹¹³ Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch (Israel Beytenu) dubbed the asylum seekers as “a ticking time bomb, not only due to the violence in which the infiltrators have been involved, but also due to fears that they might join terror organizations.”¹¹⁴ Minister Uzi Landau, a fellow member of the Israel Beytenu party, further declared: “This is not a socioeconomic problem, but a strategic security problem. The Mossad and Shin Bet must address this issue. They have the means to stop this surge [of asylum seekers] beyond Israel’s borders and to deal with the crime rings and the smugglers.”¹¹⁵ Knesset Member Israel Hasson, also of Israel Beytenu, said: “Many refugees settle in Arab towns since it is cheaper to live there, and some sleep in the fields. These miserable individuals’ ability to make a living is very limited, so they turn to crime. Anyone who takes part in criminal activity and grows close to hostile sectors could be persuaded to take up

¹¹³ Knesset Plenum, Minutes, May 2, 2012. (Hebrew) www.knesset.gov.il/plenum/data/02072712.doc [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹¹⁴ “Jobs Will Allow Infiltrators to Settle Here,” *Army Radio*, June 20, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://glz.co.il/newsArticle.aspx?newsid=105766> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

¹¹⁵ Ephraim, Omri, “Yishai to Police Commissioner: Giving Migrants Jobs is a Big Mistake,” *Ynet*, May 20, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4231396.00.html> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

terrorist activity. This is not far-fetched.”¹¹⁶ Ephraim Sneh, the former deputy foreign minister, cautioned that terror groups like al-Qaeda could instruct the asylum seekers to carry out terror attacks upon entering the country.¹¹⁷ Rabbi Dov Lior, Kiryat Arba’s chief rabbi, added: “The arrival of African migrants is a plot to implant terrorists in Israel under the guise of family reunification and other terms of this sort. This could compromise Israel’s security.”¹¹⁸

Several reports postulating that asylum seekers pose a security risk have been published by major Israeli media outlets. In a piece that was published in *Maariv* in March, columnist Er’el Segal wrote: “Anti-Zionist groups and intellectuals couldn’t care less about reality. For them, the demographic risk makes for a winning card that trumps Israel’s majority, which identifies itself as Jewish. As far as they’re concerned, the more the African migrant population grows, the further the Jewish character of Israeli society erodes... Just wait until the infiltrator intifada breaks out – and it will break out. The media will go off on a tangent of self-flagellation.”¹¹⁹ In another article, Ofer Lefler, one of the founders of the Israeli immigration police, claimed: “In the south of the first Hebrew city, Tel Aviv, a radical Islamic terror cell is being born out of adversity. This is not an imaginary scenario, but a scenario that has emerged due to the lack of employment and the desperation that is brewing within the fringes of the illegal migrants’ community... There is an urgent need to implement all the decisions made by the committees that have examined the terrible phenomenon of migrant workers. We should not blame the helplessness of Israeli governments throughout history; instead, we should look closely in the mirror and realize that anyone who employs an illegal migrant is responsible for creating the human bomb who will carry out the next terror attack.”¹²⁰ Writer Haim Shine said in article

¹¹⁶ Steiff, Hadas, “The African Migrants Could Join Terror Groups,” *Army Radio*, May 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://glz.co.il/newsArticle.aspx?newsid=104669> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹¹⁷ Baruch, Uzi, “Terror Groups will Exploit African Migrants,” *Arutz 7*, May 29, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/238665> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹¹⁸ Karov, Yishai, “No Place in This Country for Anyone Disrupting Jewish Rule,” *Arutz 7*, April 14, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/236544> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

¹¹⁹ Segal, Er’el, “The Next Intifada,” *Maariv*, March 22, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/349/112.html?hp=1&cat=479&loc=26> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹²⁰ Lefler, Ofer, “The Concern: The Next Toulouse Incident is Already Here,” *Mako*, March 25, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news-columns/Article-3a3d320a7ca4631018.htm> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]. Two days after the article was released, Lefler reiterated his stance on a morning show on Channel 2, which operates *Mako*. See: “The Sudanese Refugees – Are They a Terror Threat?” *New Day*, March 27, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/tv-new-day/video&subChannelId=466de31eed175310VgnVCM2000002a0c10acRCRD&vcmid=bb8f152c15e46310Vg>

published in *Israel Hayom*: “While I do not have sources in the intelligence community, it is obvious that hundreds of thousands of Sudanese and Eritreans are currently gathering and walking across Sinai. It is possible that soon they will be joined by unemployed Egyptians, Greeks and Spaniards, all of whom will head toward Israel. Even though the Egyptians occasionally shoot at these infiltrators, there is no doubt that flooding Israel with hundreds of thousands of infiltrators is a strategic weapon against Israel.”¹²¹

Over the past three years, aid groups have reported about the expanding torture camps that operate in Sinai. In these camps, asylum seekers who have agreed to pay Bedouin smugglers \$3,000 to sneak them across the border into Israel are jailed and tortured until they pay a high ransom for their freedom.¹²² Even though Immigration Authority officials interrogate each asylum seeker who enters Israel and interview him or her every one to three months upon renewal of their visa, as far as we know these investigations have yet to yield any indictments against Israelis who collaborate with human traffickers in Sinai. These collaborators, some of whom are asylum seekers while others are Arab citizens of Israel, transfer funds from the families of the torture victims to the smugglers. The Hotline for Migrant Workers has so far seen to it that three indictments were filed against Israeli collaborators by mediating between the Israeli police and asylum seekers whose relatives were held hostage by the traffickers.

In the second week of June 2012, Israeli media outlets reported that an Eritrean refugee was arrested for collecting money from his “friends” to fund a terror group.¹²³ The web portal *Walla!* reported that the three suspects – the Eritrean man and two Israelis who were arrested alongside him – “utilized an existing fund transfer infrastructure normally used by African nationals who are residing in Israel and wish to provide for their families. The three suspects allegedly used the

[nVCM2000002a0c10acRCRD](#) [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹²¹ Shine, Haim, “Migrant Workers Must be Contained,” *Israel Today*, May 21, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2680/2534780> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹²² For more information on the torture camps, read a report jointly penned by the Hotline for Migrant Workers and several other human rights groups. See: “Hundreds of Refugees Held Hostage in Sinai Torture Camps Need Rescuing,” November 30, 2012. http://hotline.org.il/hebrew/pdf/Hundreds_of_Refugees_Held_Hostage_in_Sinai_November_2011_Heb.pdf

¹²³ Senyor, Eli. “Exclusive: Eritrean Migrant Arrested for Suspected Terror Activity,” *Ynet*, June 13, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4242019,00.html> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]
Baruch, Eli, “Eritrean Infiltrator Arrested for Suspected Involvement in Terrorism,” *Artuz 7*, June 13, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/239506> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

network to send money to anti-Israeli terror groups.”¹²⁴ Activists with the Hotline for Migrant Workers mediated between the police and asylum seekers who were willing to send thousands of dollars to free their loved ones from the torture camps. While the funds were being transferred, an Eritrean asylum seeker, Kabari Gabriosus, was arrested for trying to collect the ransom. It was not at all clear whether he collaborated with the smugglers; it is possible that he was ordered to raise or collect funds from others to buy a relative’s freedom even after he had already raised the sum that was originally demanded – a tactic commonly employed by the smugglers. In any case, it wasn’t clear whether the Eritrean was aware that the money he was about to send would fund a terror group. The media reports never mentioned that the funds were raised to free survivors from the torture camps, creating the impression that the detainee sought to sponsor a terror group.

Solutions Proposed by Israeli Officials to the “Problem” of the Asylum Seekers

Israeli elected officials employ yet another method of incitement against asylum seekers, whereby they offer solutions to the “problem” that is the presence of asylum seekers in Israel.

Most if not all of these solutions are contrary to Israeli law and international treaties signed by Israel, or are simply inapplicable. These proposed solutions arise logically from branding the asylum seekers as “work infiltrators” and “illegal aliens”, whereas, if indeed they were such, Israel would have imprisoned and deported them. The statements made by decision-makers give the public an



Tel Aviv Protest against Asylum Seekers Led by MK Michael Ben Ari. Sign Reads: “Sudanese to Sudan”, December 2011

¹²⁴ Shimony, Mor, “Migrants allegedly exploited to fund terror groups,” *Walla!*, June 14, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2541435> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

impression that they are working on solving the problem, although most of the decision-makers are aware that Israel is committed to act in light of conventions it had signed.

The first solution proposed, lately with ever more vehemence, is the deportation of the asylum seekers. This solution is contrary to the principle of non-refoulement, the very core of the Refugee Convention, also made statutory within Israeli law, which prohibits the deportation of asylum seekers to a place where their lives may be in danger.¹²⁵ The state has already declared itself in a great number of legal proceedings as committed to act in light of the principle of non-refoulement and the Refugee Convention.¹²⁶ These facts did not prevent Israeli elected officials from propagating statements that present the deportation of the asylum seekers as an applicable and desirable solution. Thus, the prime minister asserted: “There's an overflow of infiltrators, they should be removed physically.”¹²⁷ The Minister of Interior presented his plan: “I would do one simple thing, hard, but simple, put everyone, without exception, into jail or a detention facility, or divide it – to a detention facility all those who are not involved in criminality, even though that's most of them, and also on that I'm being attacked. And the ones who do have even the slightest offence in the world, to jail, and from there, a departure grant or a deportation grant, call it any way you want and return them to their country.”¹²⁸ Later Yishai suggested “We must also send them to a detention facility and operate direct flights to Eritrea and this way there will not remain one infiltrator. I hope that they will let me finish and not obstruct my work, all the bleeding hearts – and this way, not one infiltrator will remain here.”¹²⁹

The Minister without portfolio Dan Meridor (Likud) declared, in regards to this issue: “The majority are not refugees. Efforts must be made so as to reach agreements with their countries, and return them.”¹³⁰ The most vociferous supporter of deportation of the asylum seekers is MK

¹²⁵ High Court of Justice Ruling, 4704/94, Minister of Interior vs. Tai, 1995.

¹²⁶ See for instance the state's response to a request for granting an interim order; application for cancellation of the temporary injunction and application for holding an urgent hearing, Administrative Appeal 53765-03-12, May 30, 2012.

¹²⁷ Shalev, Tal, “Netanyahu: ‘There's an overflow of infiltrators, they should be removed physically’,” *Walla!*, May 20, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/9/2534490> [Accessed at: May 16, 2012].

¹²⁸ Interview on Golan Yokhpaz's program, “Good Morning Israel,” *Army Radio*, May 16, 2012.

¹²⁹ Zarkhia, Zvi, Koren, Ora, “Yishai: ‘If 50% of the infiltrators will move to Ramat Aviv the criticism against me will change’,” *TheMarker*, May 22, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.themarker.com/tv/1.1713830> [Accessed at: 16, June 2012].

¹³⁰ Somfalvi, Attila, “Meridor: The violence wave – not because of the foreigners,” *Ynet*, May 18, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4230948.00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Danny Danon, who has even set up a movement under the name 'Deportation Now' in order to promote this move.¹³¹ Danon announced the presentation of a bill that will impose on Israel to deport all the asylum seekers from its territory within three years. Danon has called to deport Sudanese citizens to their country and to bribe countries in Eastern Europe and Africa to receive the rest of the deported asylum seekers.¹³² Other coalition members expressed support of the deportation of the asylum seekers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Avigdor Lieberman (Israel Beytenu),¹³³ Minister of Science Daniel Hershkowitz (Habait Hayehudi),¹³⁴ Minister of Environmental Protection Gilad Erdan (Likud),¹³⁵ Knesset Members Miri Regev (Likud),¹³⁶ Israel Hasson (Israel Beytenu),¹³⁷ Michael Ben Ari (National Union),¹³⁸ Marina Solodkin (Kadima),¹³⁹ Aryeh Bibi (Kadima),¹⁴⁰ Ronit Tirosh (Kadima),¹⁴¹ and Shlomo Mola (Kadima).¹⁴² The commentator Yair Lapid, who heads the party “Yesh Atid” and intends to participate in the

¹³¹ Brut, Zvika, Zimuki, Tova, Veyahav, Telem, “Chairman of the Absorption Committee presents: the “Deportation Now” movement”, *Yediot Ahronoth*, May 22nd 2012.

¹³² Wolf, Pinhas, “KM Danon: Pay countries in Europe for receiving infiltrators,” *Walla!*, May 13, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/2532674> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]. In the two months that have passed since Danny Danon's statement such a proposal was not yet presented to examination before the Ministerial Committee for Legislation (the first step of passing law in Israel).

¹³³ Arbeli, Ezra, “Lieberman: Cut down allowances instead of raising taxes,” *Ynet*, June 4, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4238063.00.html> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

¹³⁴ Pyoterkovsky, Shlomo, “Hershkowitz: Infiltrators from outside - Haredim from within,” *Arutz 7*, June 12, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/239426> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012].

¹³⁵ Somfalvi, Attila, “Meridor: The violence wave – not because of the foreigners” *Ynet*, May 18, 2012. <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4230948.00.html> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012].

¹³⁶ Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, May 21, 2012 (Hebrew). <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012] <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/zarim/2012-05-21.rtf> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012].

¹³⁷ Steiff, Hadas, “The refugees from Africa may join Terrorism,” *Army Radio*, May 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://glz.co.il/newsArticle.aspx?newsid=104669> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

¹³⁸ Nahmani, Nativ, “Demonstration against the infiltrators in Tel Aviv: “Deport at once”,” *Maariv*, May 22, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/370/623.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=10> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012]

¹³⁹ Knesset Interior Committee, Minutes, June 11, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/pnim/2012-06-11.rtf> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012].

¹⁴⁰ Knesset Interior Committee, Minutes, May 29, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/pnim/2012-05-29-02.rtf> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012]

¹⁴¹ Adetto, Edna, Tzezana, Shlomo, “Green light for deportation,” *Israel Hayom*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_article.php?id=17449&hp=1&newsletter=24.05.2012 [Accessed at: June 16, 2012].

¹⁴² Knesset Plenum, Minutes, May 30, 2012. <http://www.knesset.gov.il/plenum/data/02617812.doc> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

coming elections as a centrist candidate, has also expressed his support of detention and deportation of the asylum seekers.¹⁴³

Support for the deportation of asylum seekers has also come from the direction of the mayors of Tel Aviv (Ron Huldai), Petah Tikva (Yitzhak Ohayon), Bnei Brak (Yaakov Asher), Ashdod (Yehiel Lasri), Ashkelon (Benni Vaknin) and Eilat (Meir Yitzhak Halevi). Their campaign, financed by the municipality of Tel Aviv, calls to imprison and deport the asylum seekers. The Mayor of Eilat, who had in the past financed, with municipal funds, an incitement campaign against the asylum seekers,¹⁴⁴ explained his support for the campaign: “I am glad that Ron Huldai has decided at last to come out with the campaign and of course I have joined it. We are talking about a population of illegal infiltrators, and every effort must be made to return them to their countries and homelands. I don't call it deportation, I call it return. I am talking about work migrants, it is not my job to examine who is an infiltrator and who belongs to another category.”¹⁴⁵

In light of the realization that deportation of the asylum seekers is impossible, another suggestion made by the decision makers is detention without trial of all asylum seekers, under the Prevention of Infiltration Law. The Minister of Interior has declared: “At this moment, there are more than 50 thousand people [asylum seekers] whom I cannot deport. The security of the citizens of Israel is gravely undermined as result of the infiltrators and their behaviour here, therefore I suggested vacating prison facilities. It will be right to set prisoners free within the framework of a committee that shall be formed together with the Ministry of Justice. Just as there's parole, [so] that it will be possible to release [prisoners] before they have served two thirds of the sentence. Of course not sex offenders or murderers, but offences that it's possible under recommendation from the Ministry of Justice to release so as to make room in [criminal]

¹⁴³ Lapid stated: “It is not possible to return the infiltrators to Eritrea because Eritrea is an enemy state,” and therefore proposed to bribe African states so that they'll absorb the deported refugees. In fact, Israel has friendly diplomatic relations with the Eritrean dictatorship. See: Somfalvi, Attila, “Lapid: I support the deportation of infiltrators. Incitement is wrong,” *Ynet*, May 24, 2012. <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233923,00.html> (Hebrew) [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

Yair Lapid's recording exposed: “Return the infiltrators to Africa,” *The Pulse*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.thepulse.co.il/index.php/2012052411192/q-q.html> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

¹⁴⁴ Arbeli, Ezra, “How to fight infiltration? Putting up red flags,” *Mynet*, May 13, 2011, <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4013075,00.html> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

¹⁴⁵ Hovel, Revital, “Huldai leads a campaign against infiltrators,” *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715256> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

prisons.”¹⁴⁶ Knesset Member Miri Regev suggested a way to save costs on airlifting the deported asylum seekers back to their countries: “The only solution is to bring to South Tel Aviv loads of buses, to get all the infiltrators on board and to drive them to a tent town that will be set up near the fence [the border with Egypt]. They should be allowed to decide if they want to return on foot to the place they had come from, or wait until we locate a third country that will receive them.”¹⁴⁷

Another option which is being raised by Israeli elected officials is to prevent the entrance of asylum seekers along the border, so long as the building of the fence has not been completed. Various solutions were proposed by Israeli officials: Minister Gilad Erdan (Likud) proposed a return to the procedure of 'hot return'¹⁴⁸ – a procedure that the State had undertaken to stop implementing before the High Court of Justice, since asylum seekers that had been deported by Israel to Egypt were incarcerated there in harsh conditions and tortured.¹⁴⁹ The Minister of Interior Security Yitzhak Aharonowitch (Israel Beytenu), proposed to shoot rubber-coated bullets at the refugees on the border.¹⁵⁰ The Ministry of Internal Security also publicized its intention to use water-hoses and 'Skunk' (vehicle that sprays a foul-smelling liquid) to prevent the entrance of the refugees.¹⁵¹ Lastly, Knesset Member Aryeh Eldad (National Union) called to shoot the asylum seekers with live ammunition at the border.¹⁵²

In light of the conviction of Israeli leaders that the asylum seekers are illegal migrant workers, another suggestion raised by Israeli legislators was to fine employers of asylum seekers, in view

¹⁴⁶ Wolf, Pinkhas, “Eli Yishai: “If only I get tools, not one infiltrator will remain here”,” *Walla!*, May 18, 2012. <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=%2F9%2F2534186> [Accessed at: June 16, 2012].

¹⁴⁷ Weiler-Pollack, Dana, Kubovich, Yuval, “The violent demonstration against the foreigners/ 11 rioters were put under house arrest,” *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715500> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

¹⁴⁸ Somfalvi, Attila, “Meridor: The violence wave – not because of the foreigners,” *Ynet*, May 18, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4230948,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁴⁹ Appeal to the High Court of Justice by “Hotline for Migrant Workers” together with four more human rights organizations: Appeal to grant a decree nisi and to grant an interim order, HCJ 7302/07, August 28th 2007. <http://www.acri.org.il/he/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/hit7302.pdf> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012].

¹⁵⁰ Nousbaum, Moshe, “The Minister of Internal Security: Allow shooting rubber bullets at infiltrators,” *Channel 2 News*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://reshet.tv/%D7%97%D7%93%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%AA/News/Domestic/internal/Article.98074.aspx> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012].

¹⁵¹ Askenzai, Avi, “The new means to stop infiltrators: water hoses,” *Maariv*, May 25, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/371/595.html> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

¹⁵² Wolf, Pinkhas, Shalev, Annat, “Shoot every infiltrator who tries to cross the fence in the south,” *Walla!*, June 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/2538456> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

that due to this measure, Israel's appeal for "work infiltrators" will diminish. The state undertook before the High Court of Justice, and this undertaking was made statutory by a ruling of the Court, to not fine employers of asylum seekers, at least not until it has set up the big detention camp where their needs will be provided for.¹⁵³ Despite this undertaking, decision makers reiterated their declarations that Israel should fine and incarcerate employers of asylum seekers. Knesset member Akunis (Likud), who previously served as the spokesperson of Prime Minister Netanyahu, presented a bill according to which employers of asylum seekers will be sentenced to five years in prison or pay a fine of half a million NIS.¹⁵⁴ This proposal won the support of the Prime Minister¹⁵⁵ and the Minister of Interior,¹⁵⁶ and passed the preliminary approval of the Ministerial Committee on Legislation.¹⁵⁷ On the same day that the bill was withdrawn from the plenum's agenda, even before it had passed preliminary reading, the Prime Minister rushed to announce: "This week, we have passed in the Knesset the law for stricter punishments on employers who bring in illegal infiltrators."¹⁵⁸

Contrary to the state's undertaking before the High Court of Justice, on May 24, 2012, the Minister of Interior declared that he will prohibit municipalities from employing asylum seekers (many of them are employed through contracting companies as street-sweepers), and if within 30 days they do not fire the asylum seekers, they will be fined.¹⁵⁹ Knesset Member Regev proposed that, in parallel to the incarceration without trial of asylum seekers in tent camps, "We must go to every business in Tel Aviv, one by one, and sentence to three years imprisonment by law

¹⁵³ See High Court of Justice Ruling, 6312/10, January 16, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://elyon2.court.gov.il/files/10/120/063/B06/10063120.B06.htm> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

¹⁵⁴ "5 years in prison or half a million shekel fine for an infiltrators' employer," *Channel 2 News*, June 10, 2012, (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news-law/crime/Article-3805d17ee46d731018.htm&sCh=31750a2610f26110&pId=2082585621> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹⁵⁵ "Netanyahu: Dealing with infiltrators done with several tools" *Reshet Bet*, June 7, 2012. <http://www.iba.org.il/bet/?type=1&entity=848129> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹⁵⁶ "5 years in prison or half a million shekel fine for an infiltrators' employer," *Channel 2 News*, June 10, 2012, (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news-law/crime/Article-3805d17ee46d731018.htm&sCh=31750a2610f26110&pId=2082585621> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹⁵⁷ Megenzi, Aviel, "Despite the Councillor's position: penalty on infiltrators' employers will be made stricter" *Ynet*, June 10, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4240554,00.html> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹⁵⁸ Shalev, Tal, "Netanyahu: We will stop the flood of infiltrators, the arrangements are in full progress," *Walla!* June 13, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/90/2541364> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

¹⁵⁹ Bar-Zohar, Ofir, Lys, Yehonatan, Hovel, Revital, "Minister of Interior Yishai: We will fine mayors who'll employ African immigrants," *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1716161> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012].

whoever employed Sudanese.”¹⁶⁰ She also announced a new bill under which landlords who rent apartments to refugees will be imprisoned for five years and fined the sum of half a million NIS.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Weiler-Pollack, Dana, Kubovich, Yuval, “The violent demonstration against the foreigners/ 11 rioters were put under house arrest,” *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715500> [Accessed at: June 15, 2012]

¹⁶¹ Bender, Arik, “MK Regev: 5 years imprisonment for renting an apartment to an infiltrator,” *Maariv*, June 12, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/376/657.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=80> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012].

Racism against Asylum Seekers in Israel

Racist Legislation

On January 10, 2012, the Israeli Knesset passed the Amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law. The law entitles the state to incarcerate without trial asylum seekers who arrive from the Egyptian border for the period of three years, while asylum seekers from enemy states (such as Sudan) will be imprisoned indefinitely. Therefore, the law discriminates between asylum seekers on the basis of their nationality and country of origin – citizens of certain countries will be imprisoned for three years, whereas citizens of other states, who committed the same “crime”, will be imprisoned without time limitation. The Prevention of Infiltration Law creates two parallel and discriminating legal systems – while citizens of African states may be imprisoned for years and even indefinitely (if, for instance, they are refugees who fled the Darfur genocide) without trial, Israeli citizens continue to enjoy the right to due process.¹⁶²

In the course of the Knesset's Economics Committee's debates regarding the governmental bill for recycling electronic waste, Knesset Members Karmel Shama Hacoheh (Likud), Julia Shmalov-Berkovich (Kadima) and Michael Ben Ari (National Union), added an amendment to the law so as to prohibit employment of asylum seekers in this field. The amendment directs to revoke the licences of companies that will employ asylum seekers. During the committee's debates, Knesset Member Shama Hacoheh declared: “The problem of infiltrators has become a national plague. The state stands helpless in the face of the incessant stream of migrant workers from Africa. When the state goes into a systemic bankruptcy in the face of this worrying phenomenon, the need arises for action in more limited fields as well.” MK Ben Ari asserted on the same occasion: “Our country is destroyed because of the infiltrators – this is an invasion and it must be stopped.”¹⁶³

¹⁶² The Prevention of Infiltration Law (Offences and Jurisdiction) (Amendment No. 3 and Temporary order), 2012 http://www.knesset.gov.il/privatelaw/data/18/3/577_3_2.rtf [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹⁶³ The report alludes to foreign workers, but they can only be employed legally in the fields of construction, agriculture, nursing and ethnic catering, so that the law will apply in fact only for refugees. Ezra, Hizki, “The recycling industry – without foreign workers,” *Arutz 7*, May 13, 2012. <http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/237892> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

Racial Discrimination within the Judicial System

On May 2012, the District Court in Tel Aviv sentenced to 4.5 years imprisonment an Eritrean who had committed unarmed robbery. Explaining the severe sentence, Judge Zvi Gurfinkel wrote in the judgment that the harsh punishment stems from a need to deter the community of asylum seekers: “The cities’ streets have become unsafe, peaceful citizens fear to come out of their homes for fear of violence, and there is need to get an unequivocal message across, that the court will not give its support to a situation in which people are afraid to go out of their home and walk the in streets of the city... In light of the multiplying cases, and the need to deter the public of foreign citizens who are sojourning in Israel, it seems that the range of punishment [for unarmed robbery] should be raised, to between three to six years of imprisonment... These people must understand that while they are given the right to enter Israel and stay here, they must respect the law and not be engaged in violent acts.”¹⁶⁴

In June 2012, Judge Gurfinkel sentenced a Sudanese asylum seeker to four years in prison for robbing a cell phone. He argued that crime among asylum seekers had become a widespread phenomenon, and without establishing his argument, he stated in the judgment: “When the court deals with a phenomenon that had become a country-wide problem, specific for a certain group, it is the duty of the court to defend the public.” Furthermore, the judge declared in the verdict that the convict is not a refugee, since “one must keep in mind that they [asylum seekers] were not forced to come here. They did not arrive directly to Israel, but first arrived to Egypt, and when they found the quality of life there insufficient for them, they decided to come to Israel.”¹⁶⁵ Both of Gurfinkel's rulings do not deal with the convict alone, but with the community of the convict and the opinion of the judge regarding this community.

In May 2012, a Custody’s Court judge ordered to transfer a detained asylum seeker, who is a 16-year-old minor, to a closed boarding school instead of releasing him to the guardianship of his uncle, who had proved he can support him. The Judge stated in the ruling that “it was reported

¹⁶⁴ District Court ruling 379-01-12 , Jaffa, May 30, 2012:
<http://elyon1.court.gov.il/heb/dover/4982983.pdf> [Accessed at: June 17, 2012]

¹⁶⁵ Guetta, Yasmin “Tried to steal an iPhone and sent to 4 years in prison because he is a Sudanese refugee,”
TheMarker, June 19, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.themarker.com/law/1.1735354> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

only recently that three Eritrean citizens were arrested for a cruel rape of an Israeli woman. Possibly, these minors turned to crime as a result of being here without their parents.”¹⁶⁶

Racial Discrimination by Local Authorities

Since 2010, the municipality of Eilat adopted a policy of racial discrimination in schools. The children of asylum seekers cannot attend the city’s schools. Instead, they are sent to a facility outside the municipal boundaries of the city of Eilat in kibbutz Eilot. The facility is neglected, lessons are not held consistently and the Ministry of Education did not authorize it. The children are divided into four groups, although the pupil's ages range from six to 17. Repeated attempts of parents to register their children to schools under the jurisdiction of the Eilat municipality were rejected.¹⁶⁷ At the end of the 2011-2012 school year, the facility is to be demolished, and replaced by a hotel. To this moment, it is unclear where the children of asylum seekers will be enrolled in the next school year.¹⁶⁸

In January 2012, the Tel Aviv municipality sent letters to its subcontractors, ordering them to stop employing asylum seekers.¹⁶⁹ In February 2012, workers of Ashkelon municipality and the Immigration Authority, wearing gloves, performed a “mapping operation” aimed at ascertaining where asylum seekers reside in the city. The municipality also attempted to isolate the asylum seekers from Israeli residents of the city. The mayor, Benny Vaknin, explained the rationale of the operation: “they can’t be spread all over the city...they are a nuisance, especially around schools and public spaces. We designated a special place where they can stay, and we will enhance patrols to protect public safety.” As part of the operation, asylum seekers were offered \$1,000 and a flight ticket back to their country. However, the initiative failed.¹⁷⁰ At the end of

¹⁶⁶ Weiler-Polack, Dana “A judge sent an Eritrean youngster to a closed boarding school ‘they rape, the fear is that they turn to crime’,” *Haaretz*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715314> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁶⁷ A petition (29883) to the Administrative Court in Be’er Sheva, filed by Hotline for Migrant Workers and ASSAF (Hebrew acronym for “Organization for Aiding Refugees”) against the municipality of Eilat and the Ministry of Education.

¹⁶⁸ Swartz, Paz “A refuge city: the residents of Eilat take the law into their own hands,” *Channel 10 News*, May 18, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=897896> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁶⁹ Lior, Ilan, “The Municipality of Tel Aviv Orders not to Employ Asylum Seekers in its Bounds,” *Haaretz*, January 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1623656> [Accessed: July 12, 2012]

¹⁷⁰ Hadad, Shmulik “Asylum seekers refused a 1000 euros and a flight ticket,” *Ynet*, February 27, 2012 (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4195132.00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

May, the mayor of Nes Tziona, who recently spoke out against asylum seekers,¹⁷¹ sent letters to businesses asking them to fire their “infiltrator” workers, or their business license will be pulled. As a result of the letter several employers did fire their workers.¹⁷² A week later, Haifa municipality sent out similar letters to employers.¹⁷³

Rabbinical Rulings against Asylum Seekers

Throughout and prior to 2012, rabbis published public calls and religious rulings against asylum seekers. After calling in 2010 not to rent apartments to foreigners,¹⁷⁴ rabbis in Bnei Brak went further in 2012 and declared their intention to establish a special court that will order to boycott Israelis who do so.¹⁷⁵ The decision was the result of a meeting held by rabbis of the neighborhoods of Kiryat Hertzog and Pardes Katz in May 2012. Several days after the meeting, a letter signed by several rabbis was published in synagogues in Bnei Brak, which called the residents of the neighborhoods to join volunteer patrols to prevent criminal activities by foreigners. The letter also mentioned that renting apartments to foreigners is prohibited. One of the rabbis who signed the letters said that “people who rent apartments to foreigners are worse than foreigners themselves. They should be treated as *rodfim*¹⁷⁶ [killed] because they are aware of the damage and suffering they cause other residents, and are willing to do anything for money.”¹⁷⁷

Throughout May 2012, a notice signed by a number of rabbis was spread around the city of Bnei Brak, called on women to refrain from arriving to the central Tel Aviv bus station at night. The

¹⁷¹ Spielmann, Roi “The mayor of Nes Ziona: I’ll send refugees to the Prime Minister’s home,” *Rehovot Time*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/373/209.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁷² Complaints to Hotline for Migrant Workers, May 26, 2012.

¹⁷³ Raved, Achia “Haifa municipality: employing asylum seekers? Your business will be shut down,” *Ynet*, June 4, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4238317,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁷⁴ Adamker, Yaki “The rabbis of Bnei Brak against refugees and foreign workers” *Bhadrey Haredim (in Hebrew)*, November 7, 2010. (Hebrew) <http://www.bhol.co.il/Article.aspx?id=21252> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁷⁵ Nachshoni, Kobi “Rabbis in Bnei Brak against infiltrators: boycott against flats’ owners,” *Ynet*, May 21, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4232214,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁷⁶ A term in Jewish religious law for a person who pursues another to murder him and must be killed by bystanders if the person refuses to stop his pursuit. Declaring a person to be a “*rodef*” means he is an imminent threat and must be killed to ensure the safety of others.

¹⁷⁷ Brilant, Israel “Rabbis against infiltrators: whoever lets apartments to infiltrators should be persecuted” *Bhadrey Haredim*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.bhol.co.il/Article.aspx?id=41375&cat=1> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

pamphlet said: “there is a reasonable risk in letting women stay in the area after dark. Therefore, we ask women not to do so and take alternate routes, in addition to the permanent order to be modest and refrain from being out of the house if it is unnecessary.”¹⁷⁸ The rabbi of Mishkan Paz community in Ashkelon, Yaakov Abarjil, published a Halachic ruling declaring that foreigners who are Muslim or Christian are practically “pagans” and therefore their stay on the Land of Israel is forbidden. He said that the mosque that asylum seekers had established in the city (which is, in fact, a church) will be “the beginning of centers in the city that are far from the spirit of Judaism. It will cause an increase in gentiles among us and will severely threaten every woman in the city of Ashkelon.”¹⁷⁹

Hostility of the Israeli Public toward Asylum Seekers

Public surveys show that many Israelis hold racist opinions and support cruel solutions to “the problem of infiltrators.” 52% of Jewish respondents agreed with the statement made by Knesset Member Miri Regev that “unauthorized Africans living in Israel” are a “cancer in the body of Israel.” 83% of Jewish respondents supported demonstrations against asylum seekers, and 33.5% said that they can identify with people who take violent measures against them. 80% of Jewish respondents object the receiving refugees who were persecuted in their homeland, while 73% are troubled by the presence of asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea.¹⁸⁰ Another survey showed that 40% of Israelis support the deportation of migrants who cross the border with Egypt, regardless of whether they are migrant workers or refugees.¹⁸¹ A third survey showed that 63% of the residents of Tel Aviv support the deportation of “migrants from Africa.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Cohen-Gonen, Shiri “Rabbis of Bnei Brak: women, beware of foreign workers,” *Mynet*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4236238,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁷⁹ “Rabbi Ya’akov Abarjil is against letting apartments to foreign workers,” *Ashkelonet*, May 20, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://ashqelon.net/?p=19664> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸⁰ The Peace Index: May 2012 <http://www.peaceindex.org/indexMonthEng.aspx?num=242> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

¹⁸¹ “40% of the public: to deport all infiltrators,” *Chanel 2 News*, June 6, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news- israel/local/Article-d3ffc1ecae0c731018.htm&sCh=31750a2610f26110&pId=786102762> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸² Malka Yoav, “A special survey: 63% support the deportation of refugees,” *Mynet*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4236323,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Objections of Israelis to the Presence of Asylum Seekers

It is important to stress that the hardships of the Israeli population in neighborhoods where the majority of asylum seekers reside is real and is the result of a deliberate neglect and marginalization by the authorities. The arrival of asylum seekers, without doubt, had worsened the distress of the inhabitants of



The Pogrom at Hatikva Neighborhood, Tel Aviv, May 23, 2012

the poor neighborhoods. They now need to deal with the doubling of the number of people living in their area, while their new neighbors have a different cultural and religious background, suffer from an extremely low socioeconomic status and lack work permits. However, the arrival of asylum seekers to marginalized neighborhoods and their neglect is the result of government policy. Since the state does not provide asylum seekers with any support or guidance, while is actively limits their ability to find work, they are compelled to find low-paying jobs and live in the poorest neighborhoods. The concluding chapter of the report will recommend the solutions and measures that will ensure a dignified living for asylum seekers as well as reduce the distress of Israeli residents in the lower-class neighborhoods. Although their distress is clear and understandable, racist attitudes against asylum seekers, who are also the victims of the government's policy, must be condemned. Throughout 2012, asylum seekers suffered from hostility stemming from the objection of Israelis to the presence of asylum seekers in their vicinity, be it living closely to them, working with them, or educating their children in the same schools with children of asylum seekers. Israelis have also objected to the presence of houses of prayer of asylum seekers in their neighborhoods.

A member of Tel Aviv city council, Binyamin Babayof (Shas), addressed a letter to the prime minister and the minister of transportation, asking them to provide asylum seekers with a

separate transportation mean: “In the mornings illegal foreigners fill up buses and as a result the buses cannot not pick up passengers in bus stations. Local residents do not have free seats on the bus, and since the workers sleep in public gardens and do not shower, they smell bad, and can, God forbid, bring all sorts of diseases...The national train services designated special transportation to the most valued group - our dear soldiers, and the same can be done for illegal residents. Separate buses need to be provided to them, or their use of public transport needs to be limited in peak hours.¹⁸³ In recent months asylum seekers contacted the Hotline for Migrant Workers with complaints about being subjected to verbal and physical abuse from Israeli passengers on public transport. Most of the incidents took place in peak hours, when asylum seekers had to crowd with Israelis.

In 2012, a number of cases of Israelis objecting to the presence of asylum seekers in their area of residence were documented. The residents’ board of Kiryat Shalom neighborhood in south Tel Aviv made it clear to apartment owners and real estate agents that they must not rent apartments to asylum seekers. If anyone decided to act differently, they are immediately reported to the board, which deals with them.¹⁸⁴ Residents of the southern town of Mitzpe Ramon initiated a campaign against asylum seekers who work in a hotel in town.¹⁸⁵ In the city of Nahariya, Israelis objected the presence of Nigerian citizens, who arrived to Israel legally as part of an occupational course and stayed at a hotel in town.¹⁸⁶ Several demonstrations against asylum seekers held by locals and extreme right-wing activists took place throughout Israel, including in Ashdod,¹⁸⁷ Tel Aviv,¹⁸⁸ Eilat¹⁸⁹ and Sderot.¹⁹⁰ Since many Israelis do not want to

¹⁸³ Malka, Yoav, “A proposal: separate buses to Sudanese refugees,” *Mynet*, February 16, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4190334,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸⁴ Goren, Yuval, “The neighborhood ‘bully’: letting apartments to foreigners is banned,” *Maariv*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/373/144.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸⁵ Ifargan, Shimon, “The Protests against the Infiltrators Have Reached Mitzpe Ramon,” *Mako*, May 30, 2012. <http://www.mako.co.il/special-mako-news/Article-5025cc44bed9731006.htm&sCh=3d385dd2dd5d4110&pId=565984153> [Accessed: June 17, 2012]

¹⁸⁶ Gal, Udi, “Residents against Nigerians who arrived to Israel as part of their occupational training,” *Mynet*, June 10, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4239578,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸⁷ Gelberd, Zvi, “The demonstration in Ashdod: deport infiltrators,” *Ashdodnet*, May 28, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.ashdodnet.com/article/43347> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸⁸ In southern Tel Aviv several demonstrations took place throughout 2012, some of the dates are: May 8, 22, 23 (the night of riot against foreigners, otherwise called here “pogroms”) and 30, see also: “last night demonstrators called to expel infiltrators,” *Israeli Patriot*, May 9, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.kr8.co.il/BRPortal/br/P102.jsp?arc=332093> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]; Nativ, Nachmani “A demonstration against infiltrators in Tel Aviv: deport immediately,” *Maariv*, May 22, 2012. (Hebrew)

reside next to asylum seekers, house owners mention in ads when a building is free of asylum seekers. For example, an advertisement of an apartment for rent in Bnei Brak, stated that it is in “a building without Sudanese people.” In an interview, the owner said that he phrased the ad this way because “every person who calls, asks whether there are Sudanese people in the building.”¹⁹¹ A similar ad was published for an apartment in Kiryat Shalom, southern Tel Aviv.¹⁹²

In the market of Sderot, merchants signed a petition against the employment of asylum seekers - as a way to ensure they will eventually leave the town.¹⁹³ In the city of Netanya, hundreds of Yeshiva students signed a petition against the employment of African migrants, after the Yeshiva’s services company hired four workers to do maintenance jobs.¹⁹⁴ In Tel Aviv, donors of a local soup kitchen threatened to stop transferring money to the place if it continues providing meals to asylum seekers and migrants.¹⁹⁵

Israeli parents in Eilat support their municipality’s violation of the Israeli law of compulsory and free education for all. The central forum of parents in the city announced: “We will shut down all the schools in the city, without exception. We will not let the city's education system be disrupted and we will object any decision to do so. The day the court decides to integrate the

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/370/623.html?hp=1&cat=404&loc=10> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]; Levinon Haim, Lior, Ilan, Zarchin, Tomer and Neshet, Talila, “Demonstrators attacked foreigners in South Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715061> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]; Zilbermann, Dana “Demonstrations against foreigners in Tel Aviv in three places,” *Tzeva Adom News*, May 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mivzaklive.co.il/archives/26245#.T94yNIJv43c>. [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁸⁹ Throughout 2012, several demonstrations against foreigners took place in Eilat, including in the following dates: January 1, 5 and May 23. See also: Karmon, Omer, “Parliament member Ben-Ari against Eilat’s police force,” *Erev Erev*, January 12, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.ereverev.co.il/article.asp?id=12948> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹⁰ Levy, Nitzan, “Protesters in Sderot: ‘We Send our Support for the Residents of southern Tel Aviv, the Infiltrators are a Real Threat,’” *Spirala Online*, May 28, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.spirala.org.il/2012/05/19359/> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹¹ Abramovich, Aviv, “A building without Sudanese people in Pardes Katz: they are not welcome here,” *Walla!*, May 11, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2532101> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹² An ad published on June 2012 in “Yad 2” website, see: <http://yfrog.com/nxfo2daj> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹³ Avni, Lior “Merchants in Sderot commit not to employ Sudanese,” *Maariv*, June 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/373/846.html?hp=54&cat=873&loc=59> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

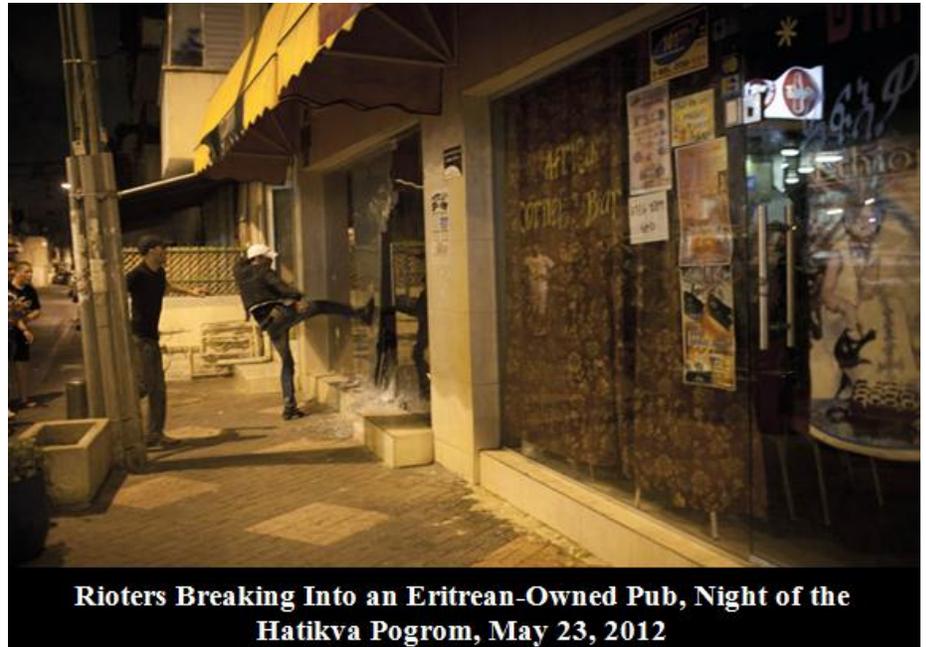
¹⁹⁴ Musasco, Avi “We don’t want foreign workers in our Yeshiva” *Netanya, Now!*, May 17, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://bit.ly/Kq8HPN> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹⁵ Toors, Einat “Donors: we will not donate to the soup kitchen if it continues to feed refugees,” *Zman Tel Aviv*, January 8, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/323/805.html?hp=54&cat=870&loc=10> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

children of infiltrators into our schools, we will stand at the gates and not let anyone in. If we have to, we will handcuff ourselves to the school's gates. This is not merely a threat.”¹⁹⁶ Parents in southern Tel Aviv have begun forging their addresses so that their children will not be sent to the same schools with children of migrants.¹⁹⁷

Objections to Places of Worship of Asylum Seekers

Another manifestation of popular racism toward asylum seekers in Israel is the objection to the establishment of houses of worship by asylum seekers. On January 1, 2012 residents in Eilat and yeshiva students demonstrated against a church that was established by asylum seekers on the ground floor of a building called “Migdalei Eilat.”¹⁹⁸ In March 2012, the building was sprayed



with graffiti saying: “Churches in Sudan, not here!”, and “Sudanese to Sudan.”¹⁹⁹ In the city of Ashkelon, a group of Eritrean asylum seekers rented a warehouse to serve as a church for them.²⁰⁰ In response, locals put up signs that warn neighbors and call “to protect the women of

¹⁹⁶ Arbeli, Ezra “Children of asylum seekers to be integrated in our schools? We will strike,” *Mynet*, January 26, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4181059,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹⁷ Groner, Elchanan “Parents are forging their address so that their children won’t go to the same schools as asylum seekers,” *Hakol Hayehudi*, May 6, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il/?p=31143> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹⁸ Pearl, Yehuda “Today there will be a demonstration against in Eilat against infiltrators,” *Hakol Hayehudi*, January 5, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il/?p=22395> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

¹⁹⁹ Karmon, Omer “Graffiti with hate content against asylum seekers,” *Erev Erev*, March 15, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.ereverev.co.il/article.asp?id=13496> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰⁰ Despite what media reports argued, since the migrants are from Eritrea, the place serves as a church and not as a mosque. Only one media outlet bothered reporting from the scene and confirmed it was a church with Christian sacraments. See: Sabag, Asulin, Sivan “The local inhabitants are furious: the warehouse turned into a church,”

the city” from the asylum seekers.²⁰¹ In addition, local residents turned to the city council and the police and threatened to prevent religious services there by force; some confronted asylum seekers and shouted at them: “we will burn this place, you will not stay here.”²⁰² Several members of the city council, including ultra-orthodox members of the coalition, raised the issue in the council’s meeting. One of the members, Oren Shani (opposition member) declared: “this is an extremely dangerous phenomenon and it threatens our national security and national identity.”²⁰³ Following the pressure of residents, the owner of the warehouse shut the place down.²⁰⁴ Similarly, following objections of local residents, a church of asylum seekers was closed in the town of Sderot.²⁰⁵

Ashkelonim, May 20, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.ashkelonim.co.il/index.php?s=7b732fce0de134c508e0b232422d0d3b&act=articles&id=7409>

[Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰¹ “New in Ashkelon: a mosque for Eritreans and Sudanese. *Ashkelonet*, May 19, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://ashqelon.net/?p=19647> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰² Sabag-Asulin, Sivan “Locals are furious: the warehouse turned into a church,” *Ashkelonim*, May 20, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.ashkelonim.co.il/index.php?s=7b732fce0de134c508e0b232422d0d3b&act=articles&id=7409>

[Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰³ Hadad, Shmulik “The residents of Ashkelon declared war on migrants’ mosques” *Mynet*, May 24, 2012.

(Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233675,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰⁴ Mor, Chen “They also have a brothel: a tour in African refugees’ strongholds in the city of Ashkelon,” *Zman Ha’darom*, May 29, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/372/360.html?hp=54&cat=873&loc=342> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰⁵ Cohen, Shimon “The city of Sderot is concurred by Sudanese,” *Arutz 7*, January 29, 2012. (Hebrew)

<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/232615> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

Hate Crimes against Asylum Seekers

Amine, an asylum seeker from Eritrea who has lived in Israel for five years and opened a pub in the past year:

Help me get out of here. I have to get out of this country. I can't work. I can't sleep at night. I'm always waiting and scared that they'll hurt me like they always say they will. I fled Eritrea after they killed my father and brother. I've been in Israel for five years, but it has gotten harder and harder in the past few months. Four month ago a friend and I were asleep in our ground floor apartment, at Levinsky 125. The window was open for fresh air. People threw lit matches into the apartment. It didn't make a big fire and we put it out pretty quickly. But we were very scared, because we knew that people did it on purpose and we didn't know who those people were.

I opened my pub, on Etzel 52, with the help of many friends. It cost us NIS 200,000 to renovate the place and buy furniture. My rent is NIS 5,000 a month. With bills, I pay NIS 8,000 a month. For the place to be profitable and for me to repay my friends, I work very hard, many hours every day.

A month after they threw matches into the room, on March 15, 2012, some twenty people, among them five or six kids, maybe 16-year-olds, came into our pub. They ordered beer. I know that alcohol cannot be sold to minors, and politely asked to see their ID cards. The kids got mad that I wanted to see their ID, pushed me on the floor and beat me so hard that I had to go to the hospital. I also went to the police. Even though I know some Hebrew, the police said I had to come with someone who speaks Hebrew and translate for me. I went again and was able to file a complaint and received confirmation that the complaint was filed. To date I don't know what happened with those kids, whether they were caught.

A week before the big demonstration, around the middle of May, three Israelis whom I don't know came and demanded my landlord's number. I was afraid and didn't know what they wanted to tell him, so I said I didn't have it. They said that if I don't give them the number I'd see what they'd do to me and my pub.

Because of all of this, when I heard about the protest on May 24, 2012 I closed my pub way before it was scheduled to start, and left because I was scared. In the evening, friends who were near my pub called me and said that people had broken into it, that the window and door were broken and that everything was being taken. As soon as I was notified about the break-in, I called the police. They said they were coming, but no one showed up. I ran to the street to look for the police. I saw many police cars and police officers at the beginning of Hahagannah Street. I asked for help. I said that my store had been broken into. They said they couldn't leave the area and told me to go to the Levinsky station. I went to Levinsky. At Levinsky they told me to go to the Salame police station. I ran to Salame. I waited a really long time. They told me to wait outside. I waited outside an hour and a half and tried to go in and explain that in the meantime all of my goods were being stolen. At 1:30 A.M. I realized that the police wouldn't help me and I left. After all of the police stations, I went back to my store and saw that all of my bottles, amounting to NIS 80,000, and towards which all of my friends had contributed, had been taken. The renovation that we had done was also ruined. A large refrigerator that cost NIS 16,000 was broken, as was a little refrigerator that we had. Israeli volunteers sat with me to watch the store, because everything was broken and we couldn't close it or lock it. In the morning, Mesi Fishaye, from Hotline for Migrant Workers, who speaks Tigrinya, helped me file a police complaint. They wrote that I filed a complaint for theft and trespassing.

The next day Israeli friends helped me fix the glass window at the pub. Israelis whom I don't know came, not the ones who had threatened me earlier, said it was a waste to fix things, as they would be broken again. Good Israelis gave me money to fix my pub. On Friday I was with Tal, a friend who helps me, and his friend. Two more Israelis whom I don't know came up and said to me: "You cleaned your place up again. If you open it we'll break your place and you as well." They also said to me, "Sudanese, we'll screw you all." They started to hit me next to Tal and his friend.

On May 28, 2012 I got a call from the police station on Salame. They said: "We found some of your bottles, and you can come get them." If they found my bottles, then they know who took them, right? I want whoever took them to pay for what they did to me. In recent weeks I try to open the business occasionally, because I continue to pay the fixed expenses and my debts are growing. Different Israelis come by every time and chase off the people who come to sit at my pub. They say bad words to me and sometimes break things and scratch the windows.

I want to get out of here as fast as possible because every time they damage the business, I'm scared that the next time it won't just be the business that they hurt. I can't sleep at night and it's really hard for me. Even though I don't have money, I don't dare go out to the street. When I do open the business, I check in the evening that there's no one outside and then I call and get a cab home, even though it's very close. I'm afraid they'll do something bad to me if I walk home.

Although hate crimes against asylum seekers in Israel were carried out prior to 2012, they occurred in a sporadic and unorganized manner. The year 2012 marks a turning point in the scope and nature of these hate crimes. Extreme incitement against asylum seekers led by public figures, as well as a sense of insecurity among Israeli public fed by media coverage, have resulted in hate crimes occurring on a daily basis. Most hate crimes go unreported because asylum seekers fear that the police will not help them, are afraid of contacting authorities or do not know where to turn for help. In recent months, numerous asylum seekers reported to the Hotline for Migrant Workers that Israelis cursed, spat at and physically assaulted them, and that they have witnessed graffiti with racist anti-refugee messages in their neighborhoods.

Eilat

A 'Neighborhood Guard' organized by the right-wing extremist Moshe Ben Zikry began operating in the city of Eilat. The guard's members patrol the neighborhoods in the city with sticks and stones and attack asylum seekers.²⁰⁶ Asylum seekers living in Eilat have reported that local residents attack them verbally and physically.²⁰⁷ Lukka Vito Dimo, an asylum seeker from South Sudan who resided in Eilat described that he was attacked by locals several times because of his skin color, and added: "my friends were also attacked, my 11-year-old son was beaten numerous times only because he is black. I do not allow him to leave the house after 5 PM anymore, and I am very worried when he is out. We do not file a complaint with the police because we do not have a visa,²⁰⁸ so why will they protect us?"²⁰⁹ In late January of 2012, a refugee from Congo was stoned by youngsters in Eilat, who yelled at him: "Sudanese go home." Several months before that, another resident of the southern city set his dog at him and yelled at

²⁰⁶ Liss, Tony "I will never forget the racist attitude," *Mynet*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4233022.00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰⁷ Swartz, Paz "A city of refuge: the residents of Eilat take law into their own hands and attack asylum seekers," *Chanel 10 News*, May 18, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=897896> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²⁰⁸ The Ministry of Interior had stopped renewing the permits of asylum seekers from South Sudan, as part of its effort to pressure the asylum seekers to "leave willingly" after announcing in March 2012 that they will be deported. See: Knesset Migrant Workers Committee, Minutes, 30 April 2012 (Hebrew). www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rf/zarim/2012-04-30.rtf [accessed at: June 15, 2012]

²⁰⁹ Liss, Tony "I will never forget the racist attitude," *Mynet*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4233022.00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

him: “go away you smelly nigger, you trash.”²¹⁰ On May 27, an asylum seeker from Darfur was attacked by seven Israeli youngsters who stayed at a hotel where he worked. He was beaten up for over ten minutes, while the attackers shouted racist slurs and tried to throw him out the window from the fifth floor. As a result of the severe attack, the man was hospitalized.²¹¹ On June 7, youngsters from Eilat chanted “death to Sudanese” and “Sudanese to Sudan” in front of a building populated by asylum seekers.²¹² Earlier this year, a demonstration was held in front of this building, which is known by the locals as “Sing Sing.”²¹³ On June 14, a Sudanese asylum seeker, Musa, was attacked in the building. He described his ordeal “people here always call me ‘stinky Sudanese’, they tell me ‘nigger, go home’, and shout curses at me. I am used to it, but I still get offended. This time they cursed me really bad. I asked the women why she talks to me like this when I did nothing to wrong her. She responded: ‘you are black, how dare you even speak to me?’ and she threw water at me from a bottle she was holding.” Following this, Musa described: “A man, who stood next to us, threw a stone at me and then came back from his apartment holding a knife. He stabbed me in my shoulder and my hand. Never mind cursing, but stabbing?”²¹⁴

Tel Aviv

In recent months, asylum seekers living in Tel Aviv have reported experiencing a lack of personal sense of security, direct hostility toward them, harassment and attacks.²¹⁵ Couples of African men and Israeli women experience insults and attacks.²¹⁶ Children of asylum seekers are

²¹⁰ Karmon, Omer, “A resident of Eilat: I was stoned, ‘Sudanese go home’,” *Erev Erev*, February 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.erevev.co.il/article.asp?id=13114> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹¹ Zilberstein, Yehudit “A suspicion that youngsters attacked a Sudanese hotel worker in Eilat,” *Maariv*, May 29, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/372/513.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹² Karmon, Omer “Calls ‘death to Sudanese’ in front of the ‘sing sing’,” *Erev Erev*, June 7, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.erevev.co.il/article.asp?id=14321> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹³ Pearl, Yehuda “Today there will be a demonstration against asylum seekers,” *Hakol Hayehudi*, January 5, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.hakolhayehudi.co.il/?p=22395> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹⁴ Liss, Tony, “You Are Black, How Dare you Even Talk to Me?,” *Mynet*, June 21, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4244925,00.html> [Accessed: June 21, 2012]

²¹⁵ For example see: Shlezigner, Liat “They see Africans and think we are animals,” *Maariv*, June 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/372/829.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹⁶ Hemo, Ohad “When I am alone I am ‘beautiful’, when I am with him I am ‘disgrace’,” *Chanel 2 News*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/local/Article-5715140af34a731018.htm> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

also subjected to racist verbal attacks and violence.²¹⁷ Ashul Joon, a South Sudanese teen, describes her experience: “I am tired of hearing that we smell bad and other racist words when I walk in the street. I always hear them talking about Sudanese [in a derogatory manner]. Sometimes I consider answering, but I end up not doing it because I am too afraid. I say nothing, but inside I am angry of how they look at me and what they think of me.”²¹⁸ Aisha, an 11-year-old Eritrean girl said in May 2012: “In recent weeks Israelis want to chase us out of here. Just this week while I was walking with my friends an Israeli came and started cursing. It was scary.”²¹⁹

On April 27, five Molotov bottles were thrown at apartments of asylum seekers in Shapira neighborhood in south Tel Aviv. One of the Molotov bottles was thrown at a house that served as a kindergarten for children of migrants.²²⁰ On May 6, two Molotov bottles were thrown at apartments of asylum seekers on Hanoch Street at Hatikva neighborhood, also in southern Tel Aviv.²²¹ On May 22, Israeli fifth-graders at ‘Hayarden’ school in southern Tel Aviv used racist slurs against African girls, telling them: “you’re black, go back home”, and “we don’t want you here.” As a result a brawl ensued. Israeli parents, who were later interviewed, justified their children’s behavior.²²² During May of 2012, a gang of 11 residents of southern Tel Aviv was arrested, nine of whom are minors.²²³ According to the indictment filed against them, the suspects carried out four attacks on asylum seekers using metal bars, bats, rocks and metal chains.²²⁴ The gang also carried out two robberies of stores owned by asylum seekers. The gang

²¹⁷ For example, see: Idan, Alon “What is incitement? Jeffery’s story,” *Haaretz* June 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1719085> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹⁸ Rotem, Tamar “A lesson in incitement: children of African migrant live in fear,” *Haaretz*, June 3, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/kids/1.1721858> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²¹⁹ Ephraim, Omri, Filler, Boaz and Brener, Neri “They yelled go back to Sudan and beat me up, I thought they were going to kill me,” *Ynet*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233544,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²⁰ Matar, Hagai, “South Tel Aviv: Molotov bottles were thrown at flats of African refugees” *Zman Tel Aviv*, April 27, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART2/362/065.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²¹ Kobovitch, Yaniv, Weiler-Polack, Dana “Again, two Molotov bottles at residents of Africans in south Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, May 6, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/law/1.1701020> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²² Malka, Yoav “Black girls go home, we don’t want you here,” *Mynet*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mYnet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233503,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²³ Kobovitch, Yaniv “A suspicion: a gang of resident of south Tel Aviv was active against infiltrators,” *Haaretz*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/law/1.1715173> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²⁴ Cohen Friedman, Neama, “11 Teens Indicted: Assaulted Foreigners with Bats and Chains,” *Ynet*, May 31, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4236576,00.html> [Accessed: June 19, 2012]

members used to cruise southern Tel Aviv armed with bats and metal bars and attack Africans who would pass by.²²⁵

On May 23, an anti-refugee protest was held at Hatikva neighborhood in southern Tel Aviv. About a thousand people took part in the demonstration, among them local residents as well as right-wing activists. During the demonstration, representatives from the neighborhood and Knesset members gave anti-refugee



speeches that inflamed the audience. The Knesset members who took part in the demonstration were Miri Regev (Likud), Yariv Levin (Likud), Danny Danon (Likud), Ronit Tirosh (Kadima) and Michael Ben Ari (National Union). After the demonstration, some of the protesters went on a spree of attacking asylum seekers at the Hatikva neighborhood. Justino, a citizen of Ivory Coast, was attacked by the mob while driving his car. Dozens jumped on his car and broke the windshields. Justino sustained injuries after being assaulted with one of the megaphones used in the rally. The rioters shouted at him: “go back to Sudan!”²²⁶ The mob also stopped public transport taxis and checked whether there were Africans riding them. The rioters banged on the windows of the taxis and chanted: “the people demand deportation of the Sudanese” and other racist chants.²²⁷ Demonstrators identified an Eritrean asylum seeker standing in a kiosk and started moving toward him while blocking the entrance to the kiosk, but were stopped by the

²²⁵ Senior, Eli “Terrorized foreigners in Tel Aviv: asked for a cigarette and then attacked,” *Ynet*, May 25, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4234033,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²⁶ Ephraim, Omri, Filler, Boaz and Brenner, Neri “They yelled go back to Sudan and beat me up, I thought they were going to kill me,” *Ynet*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4233544,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²⁷ Levinon Haim, Lior, Ilan, Zarchin, Tomer and Neshet, Talila, “Demonstrators attacked foreigners in South Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715061> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

police before they managed to assault the man.²²⁸ During the pogrom, the police arrested several rioters while they were beating up Sudanese asylum seekers.²²⁹ Following this, in Hanoch Street at Hatikva neighborhood, rioters smashed a bottle on the head of an Eritrean asylum seeker who carried a baby in his arms. Another group of Israelis chased after a Sudanese asylum seeker and stoned him on Etzel Street in the neighborhood.²³⁰

The rioters also smashed storefronts of establishments owned by asylum seekers. The storefront of a barbershop was broken and its content was stolen.²³¹ Rioters smashed the storefront of a pub owned by an Eritrean asylum seeker on that same street and vandalized and robbed the establishment.²³² In Abbas Street in the neighborhood, rioters threw bricks at a shop of an Eritrean woman, invaded her store, and robbed NIS 9,000 in cash as well as various products. Rioters also tampered with the locks of an Internet café next to the Hatikva market that is owned by an Eritrean man. He changed the locks, but they were sabotaged again.²³³ Days after the pogrom, asylum seekers who own shops in the neighborhood were afraid to reopen them.²³⁴

On May 28, five Israeli youngsters, riding motorcycles, broke the door of the internet café owned by Ms. Yerusalem Maston on Hahagana Street. The group opened the metal blinds that Yerusalem tried to shut down, and threatened her with a knife.²³⁵ On May 30, during a demonstration of right-wing activists in southern Tel Aviv, an Israeli man of Ethiopian descent

²²⁸ Goren, Yuval and Nachmani, Nativ “Violence in a demonstration in south Tel Aviv: broken glasses and attacks on foreigners,” *Maariv*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/371/105.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²²⁹ Levinon Haim, Lior, Ilan, Zarchin, Tomer and Neshet, Talila, “Demonstrators attacked foreigners in South Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715061> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³⁰ Ilan, Rotem “A hopeless night,” *Saloon*, May 24, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://saloon.co.il/blog/%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%94-%D7%91%D7%9C%D7%99-D7%AA%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%95%D7%94%/> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³¹ Levinon Haim, Lior, Ilan, Zarchin, Tomer and Neshet, Talila, “Demonstrators attacked foreigners in South Tel Aviv,” *Haaretz*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1715061> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³² Goren, Yuval and Nachmani, Nativ “Violence in a demonstration in south Tel Aviv: broken glasses and attacks on foreigners,” *Maariv*, May 23, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/371/105.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³³ Levi, Gidon “Horror takes over migrant in Hatikva neighborhood,” *Haaretz*, June 1, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1720738> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³⁴ Goren, Yuval “After the violence,” *Maariv*, May 28, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/372/038.html?hp=1&cat=402&loc=2> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³⁵ Goren, Yuval “Despair on Hatikva neighborhood: everyone is afraid,” *Maariv*, May 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/372/733.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

was attacked because rioters mistook him for an asylum seeker.²³⁶ On June 2, a Sudanese asylum seeker was brutally attacked by a resident of southern Tel Aviv on Har Tzion Street and was taken to the hospital with severe injuries.²³⁷

On June 15, an Eritrean asylum seeker returned to the Landwer Café branch from which he was fired in order to claim his wages. He says that while there was never had any disagreement between him and his employer that money was owed to the worker, despite this, the latter repeatedly refused to pay up. On his final attempt to collect his paycheck, the asylum seeker was beaten by the employer and his brother.²³⁸ On June 16, a firecracker was hurled into an Eritrean bar in the Hatikva neighborhood – an establishment that has come under attack several times recently. A patron was injured in the incident, and damage was caused to the bar.²³⁹ On June 18, three teens stoned an Eritrean asylum seeker at a public park in southern Tel Aviv, attacked him with a blunt object and threatened him with a knife. The interrogation of the teens showed that they were driven by xenophobic motives.²⁴⁰ Throughout the second and third weeks of June 2012, a gang of eight teens carried out several attacks and attempted lynchings of Eritrean asylum seekers in the Shapira neighborhood in southern Tel Aviv. The attacks of the gang, in which the teens used metal bars, led to the hospitalization of several asylum seekers with severe injuries.²⁴¹

Other cities

On April 25, the eve of Independence Day, an Eritrean asylum seeker was attacked by two Israelis while sitting in coffee shop in Netanya. The assailants used a knife and a broken bottle to stab the man, who had to be hospitalized and lost his job as result.²⁴² On May 5, another Eritrean

²³⁶ Morage, Gilad and Willer, Boaz “Right wing demonstrators thought an Ethiopian was a Sudanese man and beat him,” *Ynet*, May 30, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4236268,00.html> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³⁷ Amram, Azri “A foreign citizen was Beaten up in Tel Aviv, he is severely injured,” *Mako*, June 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news-law/crime/Article-f423fd4bdf9a731018.htm> [Accessed at: June 20, 2012]

²³⁸ Testimony collected by the Hotline for Migrant Workers on June 17, 2012.

²³⁹ Goren, Yuval, “Firecracker hurled on Eritrean Pub,” *Maariv*, June 17, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/377/962.html> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012]

²⁴⁰ Sinior, Eli, “The Eritrean Identified the Teens Who Attacked Him Because of ‘Hate’,” *Ynet*, June 21, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4245463,00.html> [Accessed at: July 12, 2012]

²⁴¹ Arnon, Nir, “Another Case of Assaults on Refugees: 7 Teens Arrested,” *Maariv*, June 27, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/381/249.html?hp=1&cat=402&loc=50> [Accessed at: July 12, 2012]

²⁴² Schlesinger, Liat, “They See Africans and Think We’re Animals,” *Maariv*, June 2, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/372/829.html> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

asylum seeker who was working at Soho, a restaurant in Rishon Lezion, was attacked by one of the cooks also employed there. According to the asylum seeker, the cook taunted him before finally smashing a plate on his head. The police opened an investigation into the violent incident, but the victim was never given any details about the probe; he was only told that for a period of a month, he should steer clear of the cook, who continues to work at the restaurant.²⁴³ On May 28, a teen uploaded



a video on the web, showing his friend throwing an egg at an African man in Or Akiva.²⁴⁴

On the night of June 4, an apartment inhabited by asylum seekers on Jaffa Road in Jerusalem was torched. The words “Get out of the neighborhood” were spray-painted on a nearby wall. Four of the apartment’s residents were hurt in the blaze. A spokesperson for Jerusalem’s Fire Department, Assaf Abres, said that the incident could have been fatal; he said that the arsonists set fire to the door of the apartment, creating a “death trap.”²⁴⁵ Prior to the incident, the owner of the building was threatened by individuals who demanded him to evict the asylum seekers.²⁴⁶

On June 13, residents of the northern Israeli town of Kafr Manda assaulted Sudanese asylum seekers who were staying in the town. A mass brawl broke out in which 15 people were hurt. The asylum seekers agreed to leave town following the violence;²⁴⁷ some 100 asylum seekers were subsequently removed from the village by the police. Prior to the riot, they were harassed

²⁴³ The refugee’s testimony was collected by the Hotline for Migrant Workers on May 8, 2012.

²⁴⁴ Morag, Gilad, “Video: African Migrant Attacked with an Egg,” *Ynet*, May 28, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4234787,00.html> [Accessed at: June 19, 2012]

²⁴⁵ Elik, Maor, “Eritreans’ Apartment Torched in Jerusalem,” *Megafon*, June 4, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://megafon-news.co.il/asys/archives/53364> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

²⁴⁶ Efraim, Omri, “Owner threatened prior to Apartment Blaze,” *Ynet*, June 4, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4238002,00.html> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

²⁴⁷ Furat, Nassar and Steinman, Tamir, “Residents of Kafr Manda Expel Sudanese Nationals Using Violence,” *Mako*, June 14, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/local/Article-88ec763f4fbe731018.htm> Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

by residents²⁴⁸ who wished them gone.²⁴⁹ Eritrean asylum seekers were exposed to similar harassment in the Bedouin town of Rahat, while Sudanese migrants, who are Muslim, were treated well.²⁵⁰ On June 29, an Israeli hired four Eritreans to work at a construction site in the town of Rishon Letzion. The workers spent the entire day digging a deep pit, as ordered. When they got tired, the employer said that if they don't finish the job, they won't be compensated. After hours of digging, when they were done, the employer poured cement on the asylum seekers and fled the scene without paying them.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ "Kafr Manda Residents Clash with African Workers," *Nawras*, June 13, 2012. (Arabic) <http://bit.ly/LqNWhC> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

²⁴⁹ Khoury, Jackie, "Tumultuous Debate Over Infiltrators Reaches Galilee Mosques," *Haaretz*, May 21, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1712663> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

²⁵⁰ Curiel, Ilana, "Rahat Residents Find Common Language With Sudanese Migrants," *Ynet*, June 13, 2012. (Hebrew) <http://www.Ynet.co.il/articles/0.7340.L-4241648.00.html> [Accessed at: June 18, 2012]

²⁵¹ Testimony given to the Hotline for Migrant Workers, June 29, 2012.

Recommendations

Israel has every right to protect its borders, but it also bears an obligation to respect the Refugees Convention, to which it is a signatory, and to maintain policies that are in accordance with its obligations under this Convention.

The main recommendation stemming from this report is for decision makers and public figure to refrain from inciting against asylum seekers and spreading false information about them. The government should also immediately allocate resources for the benefit of residents of neighborhoods in which many asylum seekers live.

The incitement by decision makers has created an acute sense of insecurity among the Israeli public. This insecurity, along with the de-humanization of the asylum seekers, encourages Israelis to act violently against asylum seekers.

We also call on the Israeli media to stop the incitement against asylum seekers and to report about them in a responsible manner. Branding the entire community of asylum seekers as criminals inflames the fears of the Israeli public and encourages them “to take the law into their own hands.”

Further recommendations about the status of refugees, decreasing the crime rate among them and minimizing the friction between them and residents of Israel's lower class neighborhoods

- Israel should adopt domestic legislation and earmark sufficient resources to ensure that all asylum seekers who reach Israel have access to a fair procedure for examining their asylum requests, regardless of their country of origin.
- Israel should refrain from using retrogressive legislation in the form of the Anti-Infiltration Law and make sure the internationally-recognized rights of asylum seekers to a fair process will be safeguarded.
- Israel should not detain asylum seekers for a longer period than the one required to determine their identity and confirm that they do not pose a threat to society. Children and unaccompanied minors should not be detained at all and should be referred to the welfare system.
- All asylum seekers should receive work permits pending a decision regarding their status to ensure that they can support themselves in a dignified manner.

- Open temporary civilian transit centers should be established for asylum seekers who cannot yet support themselves in a dignified manner in accordance to International standards.
- Israel should strengthen its victim identification system and ensure rehabilitation services for victims of torture in accordance with the EU Guidelines on Torture, as well as providing access to basic services in detention and in the community.
- Israel should respect the freedom of movement of asylum seekers within the country.
- Israel should grant asylum seekers with “social residency” status that will enable immediate access to the health and welfare services.
- Asylum seekers who are determined to be eligible for refugee status must be granted this status in accordance with the UN Refugees Convention.