



Aid Organization for Refugees
and Asylum Seekers in Israel



Eritrean Women's Community Center

Israel

**Briefing to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
(CEDAW)**

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ASSAF - Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel

The Eritrean Women's Community Center

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Eritrean Women's Community Center

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REPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

ASSAF - Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel submits this report to the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women** (hereinafter: **CEDAW**) together with **The Eritrean Women's Community Center**.

ASSAF is an independent, non-profit, Israeli human rights organization that for the last ten years aims to promote the human rights of asylum seekers living in Israel and to change public discourse and official Israeli policy through public advocacy work. ASSAF also offers psycho-social support programs for the direct benefit of asylum seekers living in Israel without legal status and is the only non-governmental organization to offer group and individual support specifically tailored to the needs of African women asylum seekers. Around 500 women have received services at ASSAF in 2017 so far.

The Eritrean Women's Community Center in Tel Aviv is an initiative designed and run independently by a group of Eritrean refugee women. Established in November 2011, the center aims to provide Eritrean women with a safe space as well as access to important services. This center is the first and only one of its kind, utilizing a grassroots approach to support Eritrean women in a fundamental way by providing them with information, education and resources all in their native language.



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Eritrean Women's Community Center

"I am alone. I have no one to help me with my children. No family. I used to work 12 hours a day but now we move from place to place every few months, from Eilat to Ashdod to Tel Aviv. Every time someone gives us a place [to sleep] and I give them what they want [in return]. My head hurts all the time and I worry. I have pressure in my chest but I don't cry. I haven't cried since Sinai [the torture camps in Sinai]. Sometimes I just want to leave the children and go away. I have been in Israel for five years. There is hate everywhere."¹

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- 1. *The report examines the human rights situation of African women asylum seekers living in Israel in light of CEDAW's list of issues and questions to the State of Israel, paragraphs 10, 12, 13 and 23, and the State Party's response to those issues. The report focuses on Eritrean and Sudanese women who reside in Israel under a non-deportation policy.*** It examines the way in which current Israeli policies and legislation directly and indirectly push African women asylum seekers, at least a third of them survivors of torture in the Sinai Peninsula, into poverty, and significantly increases their vulnerability to gender-based violence, including family violence and abuse, and forces many of them into prostitution.
- 2.** As this report shows, the key factors that affect the living conditions of African women asylum seekers in Israel are the denial of stability and regular status, lack of adequate health and social services, lack of specialized rehabilitation to torture victims and ineffective protection from domestic violence. At the same time, Israel criminalizes African asylum seekers and penalizes them for residing in the country "illegally", most

¹ Taken from an interview with E, Eritrean woman asylum seeker living in Israel, single mother of two, Sep 2017.

recently by deducting 20% of their monthly salary towards a fund that will be accessible to them only when they leave the country, pushing women further into poverty.

3. These topics are all subject to Israel's obligations under the **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, specifically provisions set out in Articles 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 16** and other international treaties signed by Israel and in accordance with the Constitutive Law: Human Dignity and Liberty.
4. The content of this report is based on information collected by the professional staff at ASSAF, through our ongoing support programs for African women asylum seekers and monitoring work.

KEY POLICY AND LEGISLATION THAT AFFECT AFRICAN WOMEN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ISRAEL

5. According to the most recent figures by Israel's Ministry of Interior, approximately 38,540 African asylum seekers live in Israel; of these around 27,494 are Eritrean asylum seekers and around 8,000 are Sudanese.² Out of the total number, around 7,000 are women, the vast majority of whom are Eritrean nationals.

A decade of temporary status with no rights

6. Women (and men) asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan reside in Israel under a "non-return policy" and are protected from deportation to their home countries. Despite the fact that some have lived in Israel for as long as ten years, the vast majority of asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea are granted temporary stay permits, pursuant to Article 2(a)(5) of the Entry into Israel Law, that do not confer any rights.

² According to figures published by the Population, Immigration and Border Authority, July 2017
https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/foreign_workers_report_q2_2017/he/foreign_workers_stats_q2_2017_2.pdf
(Hebrew)

7. Women asylum seekers have little hope of being granted refugee status in Israel: only two Sudanese nationals and eight Eritrean nationals have so far been recognized as refugees in Israel and the overall acceptance rate stands at a little less than 0.1%.³

Inadequate health care services

8. The National Health Insurance Law (1994), which sets forth Israel's responsibility to provide health services, applies only to Israeli residents. Women asylum-seekers are therefore denied regular access to public health-care services and are entitled to treatment only in cases of emergency, based on the Patients' Rights Law (1996). Other than emergency services, the only two facilities funded or partially funded by the state, which asylum seekers can access, are the Terem clinic in Tel Aviv and the Gesher Mental Health clinic in Tel Aviv-Yaffo. The Gesher Clinic has been struggling to cope with the demand for its services and has been closed for new patients for a large part of 2017. Located in the center of Israel, both clinics are difficult to access for those living away from the center, further disadvantaging African women asylum seekers in the peripheries.

Employment: Article 4 of the Prevention of Infiltration Law pushes women into acute poverty

9. A recent amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law (Article 4) which came into force in May 2017 enables the Israeli authorities to withhold a fifth of the salaries of all African asylum seekers until they "agree" to leave the country. Under Article 4 of the Legislation, employers transfer 20% of a person's monthly salary into a fund. The money accumulated will be returned to its rightful owner only if and when they permanently leave Israel. An extra 16% of the salary is deposited by the employers themselves. The

³ For more information on the Israeli asylum system and RSD process, see <http://hias.org.il/english/>

Israeli High Court has recently denied a request for an interim order to suspend this measure, as part of a petition challenging the legislation.

Inadequate access to social service and denial of welfare

10. According to the policy of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services (MOLSASS), only children at risk, victims of domestic violence in situations of imminent danger, and recognized victims of trafficking receive certain services. All other asylum seekers are denied social services. This contravenes article 2(a) of the Social Welfare Law (1958). ASSAF is currently challenging this policy in the Israeli High Court of Justice.

11. In addition, the National Insurance Law (1995) does not apply to asylum-seekers, and therefore they are unable to get support in accordance with their situation and needs, such as income support, children support and disability allowance.

12. In 2014, Israel's State Comptroller published a comprehensive report harshly criticizing the government's current policy towards asylum-seekers. The report referred to the severe consequences of the lack of health and social services among the most vulnerable populations:

*"There is real reason for concern that the treatment offered to these weak and vulnerable groups as a result of the aforementioned policy does not meet the provisions of Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, does not guarantee protection from harm to the body or dignity of individuals belonging to these groups and does not maintain their right for basic social security. It is also feared that the treatment of these groups does not meet the provisions of the Social Rights Covenant designed to ensure everyone's right for social security, adequate standard of living and the best possible physical and mental ability as much as the state can offer. "*⁴

⁴ State Comptroller Report 64Gimel: "Non Deportable Foreigners in Israel 2014."
<http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Comptroller%20report%20%28English%29%20Mai%202014.pdf>, p.8

13. Following the State Comptroller's report and the discussions held by the Knesset's State Control Committee and the Labor, Welfare and Health Committee, a professional team at the MOLSASS formulated a policy paper to address most of the deficiencies raised in the report, including granting or improving social services to asylum seekers who are street dwellers, victims of trafficking, women victims of domestic violence (see paragraphs 33-36 below) and people with disabilities. This is an encouraging first step, it must be fully supported by all wings of government, fully and genuinely developed, adequately funded and promptly implemented. The Ministry of Health also recently declared that it is examining comprehensive solutions to improve asylum seekers' access to health services; however no change has yet to be implemented in practice.

14. In addition to these developments, the General Attorney announced it will re-examine whether current policies harm asylum seekers' rights to minimum standard of dignified existence, enshrined in Israeli law and jurisprudence. There has yet to be any sign for reform aimed a holistic policy and services for women.

AFRICAN WOMEN ASYLUM SEEKERS: PUSHED INTO POVERTY, ABUSE AND PROSTITUTION

15. Eritrean and Sudanese nationals make the vast majority of African women asylum seekers in Israel, with Eritreans being by far the largest group. They are one of the most marginalized, disadvantaged groups in the country. At least a third of them are survivors of torture outside the state of Israel (see paragraphs 37-52).

16. African women asylum seekers in Israel are a minority in their own male-dominant communities. This means that women are often under pressure to marry and have children. This pressure is exacerbated by Israel's current policy and legislation.

17. The lack of stability in the form of regular status, and the denial of services and support from the state push many women into acute poverty. Left to fend for themselves, many

women marry or enter relationships as a means of survival. They have little freedom in choosing a spouse and have little control over the number and spacing of their children.

18. Domestic violence is rife: around 60% of women asylum seekers who receive services at ASSAF have reported suffering or having suffered domestic violence.⁵ According to figures received from the municipality of Tel Aviv alone, the municipality's Mesila - Aid and Information Center for Migrant Workers and Refugees provided services relating to domestic violence to 147 women in 2016 (see paragraphs 28-37 below). While there is no formal census of the number of women asylum who are single mothers⁶, ASSAF's own monitoring shows an increase in the number of single mothers coming to our offices for support, often after their male partners left them to a third country via Israel's secret transfer arrangements. In many cases, the men leave without warning and sometimes take all the family's money with them, leaving the mothers and the children destitute. Israel's Population, Immigration and Borders Authority (PIBA), which is responsible for arranging the flights to the third countries, do not query men asylum seekers about their family status and do not follow up with the women and children left behind.

19. African women who are single mothers are not eligible to any designated benefits or support.⁷ They are often dependant on the help of community members and are subsequently extremely vulnerable to gender-based violence and exploitation, and forced into various forms of prostitution. Almost 2% of the women asylum seekers who are supported by ASSAF admitted to some form of prostitution - this is five times higher than women citizens of Israel.

⁵ See ASSAF, *Abandoned: single mothers asylum seekers*, March 2016
<http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Abandoned%20report%20summary.pdf>

⁶ According to information received from Israel's Population, Immigration and Borders Authority (PIBA) in November 2015, 3340 women are mothers. The Israeli authorities do not record the number of single mothers.

⁷ Assistance to households headed by the Independent Parent (1992) Law regulates the rights and benefits to which a single parent is entitled. African women asylum seekers are excluded from the law because they have no permanent residency status in Israel.

20. Many single mothers cannot afford to pay rent for a place for themselves and their children, and take shelter with other community members. Very often, they are forced to pay by cooking, cleaning and having sex with others in the flat. 50% of single mothers interviewed by ASSAF share a living space with their children and up to five other people (women and men). Almost all of them said they have no privacy and several said they have been raped or sexually harassed by other residents in the flat. Women who did have a place of their own, expressed concern about having to find other housing arrangements in the future, due to lack of means to pay the rent.⁸ Women asylum seekers are not eligible for public housing or any of assistance programs made available by The Ministry of Construction and Housing. (See State Party Report 263-265).
21. 69% of the women that come to ASSAF for services and support suffer from various medical issues, such as disabilities and chronic conditions.⁹ Around 30% of the women interviewed by ASSAF talked of emotional distress including anxiety, confusion, hallucinations and depression, which often lead to mental health issues.¹⁰ Such issues stem from their experiences fleeing their home countries, experience of torture in the Sinai Peninsula and elsewhere and their current lack of stability and economic hardship. However, most physical and mental health issues remain untreated or are inadequately treated due to lack of access to health care services.
22. The lack of access to healthcare services in the community is especially problematic for women asylum-seekers with disabilities that require regular follow-up treatments, medications, and rehabilitation. Women asylum seekers with disabilities are unable to get support in accordance with their situation and needs, such as financial assistance, integration into assisted residential settings, supported employment and rehabilitation.

⁸ See ASSAF, *Abandoned: single mothers asylum seekers*, March 2016
<http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Abandoned%20report%20summary.pdf>

⁹ ASSAF, *Abandoned*, <http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Abandoned%20report%20summary.pdf>

¹⁰ ASSAF, *Abandoned* <http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Abandoned%20report%20summary.pdf>

They are not currently helped by any of the support mechanisms or basic rehabilitation frameworks.

23. The Israeli government does not grant work permits to asylum seekers, but allows employers to hire them without applying sanctions and fines. This lack of clarity often brings about exploitation and unfair dismissal. Women asylum seekers in particular are prone to such abuse and are often dismissed once pregnant.
24. The denial of work permits also limits job opportunities to domestic work and physical labor. Many women work in cleaning residential homes or with cleaning companies, factories and so on. 40% of the women interviewed by ASSAF said they work at least 8 hours a day.¹¹ Such work is mostly unsuitable to people with disabilities and many women with disabilities are unemployed.
25. MOLSASS's policy paper (see above paragraph 13) included a section entitled, "*People with severe disabilities without basic independent functioning*". The paper detailed recommendations such as housing frameworks for people with physical disabilities and mental illness, a day care center for people with disabilities and supported employment. The recommendations are yet to be implemented.
26. Since May 2017, the State of Israel obliges employers to deduct 20% of the monthly salary of all African asylum seekers under Article 4 of the Prevention of Infiltration Law. This draconian measure has had a particular devastating effect on women. Many have reported working even longer hours as a result, others have lost their jobs and some have been forced to leave their homes. Since the implementation of the law, ASSAF has increased its food aid distribution and has been monitoring the impact of the legislation on the lives of women asylum seekers.

¹¹ See ASSAF, *Abandoned: single mothers asylum seekers*, March 2016
<http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Abandoned%20report%20summary.pdf>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

27. Around 60% of women asylum seekers who receive services at ASSAF have reported suffering or having suffered domestic violence, usually at the hand of male partners but sometimes at the hand of other male members of the family¹². Israel currently fails, in policy and in practice, to address high levels of domestic violence against women asylum seekers of African origin and to protect them from such violence.

Limited access to services discourages women from reporting violent incidents

28. According to current policy, African women asylum seekers who are considered to be in imminent danger due to domestic violence can get access to shelters for battered women. However, they have no access to regular social services at MOLSASS bureaus, and have so far been denied preventative services.¹³ They are therefore often unaware that they can go to a MOLSASS bureau in their local municipality and report a violent incident. When they do approach their local bureau, they often struggle to get the help they need because there are no translation services or because municipal staff country often are unaware of their obligations or reluctant to provide aid and refer women to a shelter. The notable exception to this is the Tel Aviv municipality that offers various services, including referrals services at the Mesila - Aid and Information Services to Migrant Workers and Refugees.

29. In practice, therefore, the only option for many women living outside of Tel Aviv is to report a violent incident to the police and to be referred to a shelter by the police officer (see paragraph 90 in State Party report). Many women are discouraged from reporting such incidents as a result, either because they are uncomfortable about "snitching" or because they are under pressure from family members to refrain from going to the

¹² See ASSAF, *Abandoned: single mothers asylum seekers*, March 2016
<http://assaf.org.il/en/sites/default/files/Abandoned%20report%20summary.pdf>

¹³ These services are offered to residents at the Centers for Protection and Assistance for Victims of Domestic Violence under the auspices of MOLSASS.



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police. Some women who did report to the police spoke of demeaning treatment and lack of adequate translation or culturally insensitive services.

Inadequate services at the shelters keep women at risk

30. Women who are referred to the shelters often do not receive support that is culturally appropriate and in their own language. Most women therefore do not stay in the shelter for long and leave after a few days. This means they are denied an adaptation grant once they leave the shelter, as by law only women who stay in the shelter for 60 days or longer are entitled to the grant. In some cases, women who manage to stay in the shelter for 60 days did not receive an adaptation grant despite being eligible. (See paragraph 269 in State Party Report and p.22 in Annex 1 to State Party report).

Women asylum seekers denied access to appropriate preventative and rehabilitative services

31. According to current policy, women asylum seekers (and other members of the family including the children and the violent partners) receive no access to preventative or rehabilitative services at the MOLSASS Centers for Protection and Assistance for Battered Women.

32. Women asylum seekers who leave the shelters for battered women are excluded from assistance in housing from The Ministry of Construction and Housing (MOCAH). (See Annex 1 pp 23-24 in State Party report). They are also denied income support for women who leave the shelters for battered women. This means that women who leave the shelter often return home and continue to be trapped in a violent relationship. This current gap in services means that Israel fails to address the root causes of the violence and does not offer meaningful protection to African women asylum seekers.

Suggested reform: positive first step must give effective response

33. Following a report by the Israeli State Comptroller in 2014, which harshly criticized the lack of services for women asylum seekers compared to services received by women residents of Israel (see paragraph 13) MOLSASS published in March 2017 recommendations to:
- a. Provide services to women asylum seekers in Centers for Protection and Assistance for Battered Women;
 - b. Establish a designated shelter for women asylum seekers offering linguistically and culturally appropriate services, vocational training and healthcare;
 - c. Entitlement to up to a year at transitional housing after leaving the shelter.
34. The Israeli government recently approved allocation of 10 million shekels for services to vulnerable asylum seekers (25% of the budget originally requested). While this is a significant positive step, it is unclear how much of this will be allocated towards addressing domestic violence against women asylum seekers and no commitment has been made for funding after this one year. Furthermore, the current reform does not address the need to provide services to other members of the family, including violent partners and children.
35. In addition, as MOLSASS team itself acknowledged in its recommendations, such reform will not adequately address domestic violence without services and support from Ministry of Housing, national insurance allowances and employment services. Under these circumstances, there is a concern that only a fraction of the women in need will actually benefit from the suggested reform.
36. While these recommendations are positive, it must be acknowledged that Israel's overall policy towards asylum seekers, principally the denial of stability, regular status and



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rights and deduction of 20% in wages is a first and foremost factor in making women asylum seekers vulnerable to violence and abuse.

VICTIMS OF TORTURE AND TRAFFICKING AMONG AFRICAN WOMEN ASYLUM SEEKERS

37. Out of a total number of 7,000, an estimated 2,500 African women asylum seekers in Israel, mainly Eritrean nationals, are survivors of torture and trafficking in the Sinai Peninsula prior to their entry into Israel.¹⁴ They suffer from trauma as well as various physical and mental illnesses. The State of Israel has recognized only around 250 of the women as victims of human trafficking eligible for support and rehabilitation services. Victims of torture are denied any type of identification and recognition procedures and there are no specialized rehabilitation services for them. The following paragraph give more details on these issues.

Inadequate support and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking

38. ASSAF and EWCC acknowledge the significant progress the State of Israel has made in addressing human trafficking. The State of Israel currently offers one year of rehabilitation services for people who have been recognized victims of human trafficking (see paragraphs 86 and 245 in State Party Report).

39. Around 250 African women asylum seekers have been recognized as part of this procedure so far. However, current measures are unsuitable to the circumstances of African women asylum seekers living in Israel, limiting their effectiveness in genuinely supporting and rehabilitating victims.

40. African Women Asylum seekers cannot directly and independently apply for recognition. They are therefore generally dependent on civil society organizations such as ASSAF to apply for recognition on their behalf. Lack of resources in these organizations mean that

¹⁴ There is no formal census of the number of survivors in torture in Sinai live in Israel today. These numbers are based on estimation by ASSAF, from data on people who receive our services.

in practice many women, particularly those living in the peripheries of Israel do not have access to the identification procedure and are consequently denied support and rehabilitation.

41. Women who do manage to apply wait lengthy periods of time. This is partly due to the fact there is only one position with the authority to recognize victims of trafficking (the Police Anti-trafficking Coordinating Officer).
42. Consequently, by the time women are finally recognized and found eligible for a year of rehabilitation in a shelter, they are usually married and have children and are reluctant to enter into a shelter, despite still being in dire need for rehabilitation and support. The lengthy waiting period therefore means that such women are denied effective and holistic rehabilitation.
43. Once the year of rehabilitation ends, victims of trafficking no longer have access to public health care and their work permits are revoked. This despite the fact that African asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan reside in Israel under a non-removal policy and cannot be deported to their home countries. The day center at Mesila, under the auspices of MOLSASS, offers some support after the year of rehabilitation. However, the lack of stability and long-term solution means many remain extremely vulnerable to poverty, prostitution and further trafficking. While the day center, located in Tel Aviv is open to women from all over Israel, women who live in the peripheries may struggle to reach it.
44. It is imperative that women who are recognized victims of trafficking and protected from deportation to their home country are given regular status in Israel. They must also receive work permits and ongoing access to regular health care, social services and welfare in order to protect them from falling prey to further abuse.

45. In its March 2017 paper (see paragraph 13) MOSLASS recommended expanding the services given to recognized victims of trafficking who do not reside in designated shelters. This recommendation has not been implemented as yet.

Lack of identification and rehabilitation for victims of torture

46. Israel has no concrete legislative or administrative procedures for the identification of torture victims among asylum seeker populations, let alone for their long-term, holistic, appropriate and promptly accessible rehabilitation.

47. As a result, women who survived torture in the Sinai Peninsula are often left in complex psycho-social situations, suffer severe trauma, and are in dire need of medical care, social services and other forms of support.

48. Many torture victims suffer from medical problems resulting from the torture, such as injuries around their feet and ankles as a result of being chained to a wall for weeks or months at a time or mutilations to their arms, caused by the fractures in their bones after being broken by the torturers and left untreated for a long time. Many women suffer from gynecological injuries caused by rape. In addition, victims of torture suffer from various mental disorders. For many women, such injuries and mental health disorders affect their family life, particularly their ability to raise their children.

49. Many women who survived torture in Sinai live in social seclusion and are forced to keep their experiences secret. Most survivors of torture in the Sinai Peninsula are still in heavy financial debt to community members who helped pay the ransom to their kidnappers in the Sinai Peninsula. This debt adds to their vulnerability to forced marriages and relationships and lack of freedom in planning their family life.

50. The National Anti-Trafficking Unit (NATU), which operates within the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has recently embarked on a small scale, short-term mapping project into the

issues relating to victims of torture in Sinai. This is a positive sign that the Israeli authorities acknowledge the problems and issues concerning asylum seekers victims of torture currently living in Israel.

51. It is imperative that such endeavor will result in the implementation of designated system for identification and rehabilitation of torture victims as recommended by UNCAT in its concluding observations to Israel:

- a. "Ensure that effective procedures are in place to identify as early as possible all victims of torture among asylum seekers, in particular by conducting thorough medical and psychological examinations, and that, when signs of torture or traumatization have been detected, victims have immediate access to specialized medical and psychosocial services" (Concluding Observations 47b).¹⁵
- b. "While taking note of the information provided by the State party on the legislative provisions governing monetary compensation for victims of offences, the Committee regrets the lack of sufficient information on other forms of redress available for victims of torture and ill-treatment, in particular rehabilitation programmes or services. In this respect, the Committee notes with appreciation the system of rehabilitation for victims of trafficking, but regrets that a system of similar characteristics for victims of torture does not seem to have been set up (art. 14)" (Concluding Observations 48).¹⁶
- c. "The State party should take the measures necessary to ensure that all victims of torture and ill-treatment who are subject to its jurisdiction obtain redress and have an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible, as required by article 14 of the Convention and

¹⁵ UNCAT, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Israel, 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT/C/ISR/CO/5&Lang=En

¹⁶ UNCAT, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Israel, 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT/C/ISR/CO/5&Lang=En

elaborated in the Committee's general comment No. 3 (2012) on the implementation of article 14 by States parties. It should also ensure that specialized, holistic rehabilitation services, including medical and psychological assistance, are available and promptly accessible to all victims of torture and ill-treatment." (Concluding Observations 49)¹⁷

52. The Israeli authorities should utilize its knowledge in implementing identification and rehabilitation programs for victims of human trafficking, its accumulated experience in this matter and the ongoing information and professional experience to address, rehabilitate and support victims of torture. In developing and implementing such systems and services, special attention should be made to the particular needs and circumstances of women asylum seekers who are victims of torture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The State of Israel must grant Eritrean and Sudanese women asylum seekers who are in Israel under a non-removal policy full and ongoing access to social services and support and offer real and effective measures to protect them from poverty, prostitution, trafficking and gender-based violence and abuse, through the following concrete steps:
 - a. The annulment of section 4 of the Prevention of Infiltration law. Women must be exempt from this law as an immediate interim step until the section is annulled.
 - b. The application of the National Health Insurance Law (1994) or an equally comprehensive state-sponsored health plan to asylum seekers living in Israel under a non-deportation policy

¹⁷ UNCAT, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Israel, 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT/C/ISR/CO/5&Lang=En

- c. The application of the Social Welfare Law (1958) and of the National Insurance Law (1995) or an equally comprehensive state-sponsored social services and welfare plan to asylum seekers living in Israel under a non-deportation policy
- d. The application of all other relevant legislations, policies, plans, practices and norms relating to the provision of health care, social services and welfare that directly or indirectly help protect African women asylum seekers from poverty, prostitution, trafficking and gender-based violence and abuse.

2. Particular attention should be given to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of women within the community of African women asylum seekers living in Israel:

Women victims of domestic violence

- a. It is imperative that African women asylum seekers are granted full and ongoing access to effective preventative, rehabilitative and protection services and relevant welfare support. All services should be available to them in a culturally appropriate manner and in a language that they can understand.
- b. Ensure any national plan to combat domestic violence includes measures and services to support women asylum seekers in a non discriminatory manner.

Women victims of trafficking

- c. Applications for recognition as victims of human trafficking should be examined in an efficient and timely manner. Victims should have access to ongoing specialized support services, work permits, and health care services in clinics and bureaus close to their homes.

Women victims of torture

- d. Israel must establish an adequate mechanism for identification of victims of torture which complies with international standards. The identification mechanism for victims of torture should include specific attention to sexual and gender based violence and should be accessible as early as possible.
- e. Following the identification and recognition of victims of torture, rehabilitation should be provided, with specific gender sensitive approaches and methodologies through:
- The eligibility of all recognized victims of torture to full access to public medical care, welfare services, and work permits.
 - The development and dissemination of public policies regarding full and complete redress to victims of torture and ill-treatment, based on the knowledge accumulated through the existing mechanism of rehabilitation for victims of trafficking. This includes access to the existing daytime rehabilitation centers and shelters in which they would be eligible for medical and psychosocial treatments appropriate for treating trauma of victims of torture, as well as cultural and linguistic accessibility.
 - The development of new specialized services that are of a sufficient quality to enable all victims of torture to achieve as full rehabilitation as possible. These services should take into account holistic rehabilitation methodologies such as combination of medical and psychological care as well as legal, social, community and family-based, vocational, educational services, and interim economic and reintegration support. Services must be available for that purpose in all parts of the country.

Single Mothers

- f. Single mothers should be eligible for designated services and support in the same standards and scope as single mothers who are Israeli residents.



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Women victims of trafficking

- g. Prompt and effective procedure of recognition, independently accessible to asylum seekers. Full and ongoing access to public medical care, welfare services, and work permits after one year of rehabilitation
- 3.** Women asylum seekers must get a fair opportunity at regular status and stability in Israel, including by guaranteeing in practice that all women asylum seekers have access to efficient and fair refugee status determination procedures.
- 4.** The state of Israel must regularly document, record and publish data and figures concerning African women asylum seekers to enable monitoring and evaluation of the human rights situation in various fields
- 5.** Israel must ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.