



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

Date: May 28 2024

**Re: Trafficking in women and girls
(A/RES/77/194)**

The following is a brief overview of relevant information, structures and activities. We are happy to provide any additional or clarifying information as needed.

NATU: National Anti Trafficking Unit

PIBA: Population and Immigration Authority

MWSS: Ministry of Welfare and Social Security

MOH: Ministry of Health

MNS: Ministry of National Security

MOJ: Ministry of Justice

[Information on multi-sectoral services for victim-survivors of trafficking including any available data on access to such services:](#)

[Services for Victims of Trafficking in Persons](#)

General

The rights to trafficking victims in Israel are granted upon recognition of *prima facie* evidence of trafficking, and are not conditioned on cooperation with a criminal investigation or prosecution.

The GOI treatment program for TIP victims includes varied frameworks, providing a diverse set of solutions, for victims of different needs and in different rehabilitative stages. It includes the following:

1. *Ma'agan* – a shelter for women victims (thirty-five (35) places)
2. *The Atlas Center* for male victims (thirty-five (35) places)
3. Family Apartments Complex (eighteen (18) places)
4. The National Center for Victims of Slavery and TIP (formerly titled the Day Center) (unlimited capacity)



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

The shelters provide psycho social support, assist with finding employment, and victims receive medical care throughout their stay. Victims are also eligible for state-funded legal aid for civil proceedings related to trafficking or for procedures related to their status in Israel. Victims also receive work visas – rehabilitation visas for a period of one year, and/or witness visas for those participating in legal proceedings, for the duration of the proceedings.

The yearly operating budget of the shelters and transitional apartments, provided by the MLSS, is 7,780,784 NIS (2,252,238 USD).

The Shelters Staff

The institutions staff includes twenty-seven (27) employees: a manager in charge over all three (3) institutions for treating TIP victims and in addition, every shelter includes: a shelter coordinator, two (2) social workers, four (4) or five (5) instructors, a family support person, a secretary, a superintendent, a shelter's physician who comes to the shelter twice a week and a shelter psychiatrist, who comes to the shelter twice a month. In the “Ma’agan” shelter, the morning instructor speaks Tigrinya and in the “Atlas” center a Tigrinya interpreter is employed in the evenings.

The staff of the family apartments for women includes: a social worker who is also the apartments' coordinator, an instructor, a secretary, an interpreter for Amharic and Tigrinya and a superintendent, who is also a full-time cook.

A children's social worker is also part of the staff of the “Ma’agan” shelter and the family apartments. The children's social worker is in charge of providing dyadic treatment to the mothers and children, as well as parental training, medical surveillances and contact

The Legal Aid Administration (LAA)

Legal Aid

The Legal Aid Administration (LAA) is a unit within the MOJ. It provides free legal aid to victims of trafficking in civil procedures and in certain administrative procedures. While it is part of the GOI, it enjoys independence and files suits or petitions against the GOI on behalf of the victims. Legal aid is granted free of charge, and the victims are exempted from the economic



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

eligibility test as set by the Legal Aid Law 5732-1972, usually required in order to prove one's entitlement for free legal aid services. Furthermore, those assisted by the LAA are also exempted from all filing fees that apply to legal proceedings in every instance, including the Immigration and Labor Courts

In criminal proceedings involving severe sex offences, victims are assisted by the LAA in the criminal proceedings from the point the indictment was filed; some victims of sex trafficking receive aid in the criminal proceedings in this manner. Government Resolution No. 1862 plan includes a recommendation to amend the Legal Aid Law to expand this aid to all victims of trafficking, starting at the investigation phase – to support them and to better ensure their representation necessary.

Compensation in Criminal Proceedings

Israeli legislation provides the same monetary compensation regime and relevant rules for all victims of offences, and also includes **specific provisions** for victims of trafficking.

Section 77 of the Penal Law authorizes the courts to include as part of sentencing, monetary compensation to the victim of an offence, up to the limit of 258,000 NIS (64,339 EUR). The victim has a right to write a Victim Impact Statement which describes their damages including relevant documentation according to Section 18 of the Rights of Victims of Crime Law. Furthermore, the prosecutor may, when necessary, inform the victim as to ways to obtain the documentation and evidence required for determining the damages.

Specifically for trafficking victims, Section 377C of the Penal Law stipulates that for the Offences of TIP and Holding a Person Under Conditions of Slavery, the Court must explain its decision to **abstain** from awarding compensation in the verdict – making compensation the default.

Specialized Visas:



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

Victim visas are B1 (or equivalent) visas, which allow victims to work in any employment field in Israel. They are available through two main mechanisms:

1. Victims who are participating in legal proceedings may receive witness visas for the duration of the legal proceedings. Witness visas are issued based on the existence of an investigation, or the statement of the Prosecution that the victim will be a witness in criminal proceedings.
2. Victims who completed the legal proceedings or those who did not participate in legal proceedings (whether because they chose not to, or because different reasons made such proceedings irrelevant) may receive **rehabilitation visas** for a period of one year, which may be extended if the circumstances require it, subject to an extensions committee where cases are discussed with the shelter, the MWSS and PIBA. To be clear, those visas are in no way dependent upon cooperation with law enforcement.

Dedicated Forfeiture Fund

The Anti-Trafficking Law (Legislation Amendments) 5767-2006 established a special Forfeiture Fund (hereafter: The forfeiture fund), where forfeited property and fines from trafficking and slavery offenses are deposited and are dedicated to various causes in combating TIP – with a special emphasis on victim protection and compensation. Institutions, government bodies and NGOs may apply for funds, as well as – uniquely – victims of the offences, who may ask for funds for the purposes of rehabilitation, as well as to request court ordered compensation which they have been unable to collect from the offenders. The law gives precedence to victim protection, ordering that at least half of the funds each year be allocated to that purpose.

The fund allows special use of forfeiture funds and fines imposed for the commission of crimes of human trafficking or holding in conditions of slavery for purposes related to the fight against these crimes and protection of the victims:

1. Rehabilitation of the victims of these crimes, their care and protection. As a precedent, the law states that not less than half of the fund's assets be allocated each year for this purpose in one year;



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

2. Payment of compensation (in whole or in part) to a victim of human trafficking for whom compensation was awarded, whether in a civil or criminal proceeding, if they were able to show that they were not reasonably able to collect the judgment.
3. Prevention of the commission of human trafficking offenses;
4. Performing the duties of law enforcement authorities to enforce the provisions of the law regarding human trafficking offenses.

So far, there have been six allocation rounds to the fund, in 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023. In total, the fund allocated over 2 million NIS (about half a million euros) – the large majority of which were allocated directly to victims for purposes such as vocational training, mental care, dental care, housing assistance (particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic) – note also the October 7th related activity in elsewhere in this document.

Programs for People in Prostitutions

The MWSS operates a wide range of programs for people in commercial sexual exploitation – children, youth and adults, of different genders and sexual orientation, and with a wide geographical distribution. Those centers, funded in part or in whole through the budget established in the Government Resolution, provide a wide range of services to address the needs of those in commercial sexual exploitation, to assist them and to help create sustainable exit options.

Programs for Minors and Young Adults: "The Heart" and Open Centers for Girls and Young Women in Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Ha'Lev ("The Heart") Care Settings program is aimed to provide a safe space to girls and young women aged 13–25 who are on the continuum of prostitution and in situations of sexual exploitation for consideration.

Response provided in the care settings includes initial assistance as shelter, food, shower, hygiene products and clothing; assistance with exhaustion of rights vis-a-vis state entities such as the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Construction and Housing; in-depth



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

treatment of coping with the sexual exploitation trauma; assistance with integration into studies or vocational training and integrating into work for a friend employer aiming to exit the cycle of prostitution.

Currently, there are 17 care settings operated nationwide for girls and young women under three models: The Limited Model – runs three days a week, ten hours a day – in six cities; **The Extended Model** – runs five days a week, ten hours a day - in five cities; **The 24/7 Model** – constant activity – operated in three cities. The total operating budget for the centers is 24,461,000 NIS (6,783,416 USD).

As of 2024, both the Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Petah Tikvah centers provide a monthly budget of 1,900 NIS (526 USD) monthly for each patient to address individual needs.

The center in Tel Aviv-Jaffa accepts people aged 13–21 of all genders.

Centers for adult women

In Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa and Be'er-Sheva, there are therapeutic complexes operated jointly with the municipalities and designated to women in the cycle of prostitution, where the following services are provided:

- Emergency housing for several months, until a long-term solution is found.
- Hostel - Long-term out-of-home solution, including integration into an intensive treatment program.
- A day center that provides services such as group therapy, employment workshops, assistance in realizing rights. There is also an evening center operating in Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

"Sal'it", the center in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, has been providing service for women in the cycle of prostitution since 2014. The project's budget is approximately 7.1 million NIS per year, of which about 4 million NIS were budgeted to expand its services in the Government Resolution.

Ofek Nashi (Feminine Horizon) the center in Haifa, has been operating since 2014. The project's budget is approximately 5.2 million NIS per year, of which about 1.2 million NIS were budgeted in the Government Resolution.



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

Harduf (formerly Bishvilech, For You), the center in Be'er-Sheva has been operating since 2016. At first, the project operated with a budget of about 1 million NIS, and following an additional budget as part of the Government Resolution, the project's budget is now about 3.7 million NIS per year.

Apartments for mothers exiting the cycle of prostitution and their children

As part of the implementation of the anti-prostitution program, there is a joint venture formulated with the Women's Wisdom Center to open three designated apartments for mothers in the process of exiting the cycle of prostitution and their children. Each apartment (of five rooms) may accommodate up to six people (three mothers and three children). Alongside a place for residence provided to them, mothers will get support in an individual therapeutic process, aiming to help them cope with the complex traumas and act to improve parenting skills and integrate optimally in the labor market and in society as a whole. The children will receive support in therapy as well, with an emphasis on improving the mother's relation with her children.

The project currently operates one apartment, where two women live with their two children. The MWSS budget for the project (to finance three apartments) is about 800 thousand NIS. As a joint venture, 'Women's Wisdom' Center is budgeting the project from its own sources by the same amount as the MWSS.

A holistic consulting center

As part of the implementation of the anti-prostitution program, a **joint venture** conducted with the Turning the Tables NGO began in December 2020, for the establishment of a holistic consulting center for women in the cycle of prostitution in the central area. The center is designated to provide response to five hundred (500) women a year, who will receive a hot meal, individual or group therapy, psychologist and psychiatric counseling, legal aid and assistance in realizing rights, as well as other programs, such as one on financial planning.

Material assistance

- **Flexible financial aid:** the flexible basket, as part of which the assistance is provided through the departments of social services in the municipalities, enables provision of financial assistance for the benefit of a wide range of needs, for up to 10,500 NIS per



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

person a year. Those needs include: Purchase of household equipment and furniture, temporary assistance in rent, home repairs, legal aid, per diem and clothing expenditure, medical expenses, assistance in funding educational and vocational training programs, participation in travel expenses. This program is funded at 2.2 million NIS a year.

- **Complementary material assistance:** In order to help populations in prostitution that do not fit into a rehabilitative process and therefore are non-eligible for assistance as part of the flexible basket, or those not seeking assistance as part of the flexible basket because they avoid contact with the social services in the local authority, there is a complementary assistance system formulated with "Lo Omdot MiNeged" NGO. The system offers assistance in various areas, including: assistance with food baskets and cooked food; basic furniture and appliances, assistance in funding studies and rent, dental care, individual support and psychiatric opinion. The program budget for 2022 is approximately 1.1 million NIS.
- As part of joint venture between the MWSA and the Friendship Fund, a flexible financial basket is offered to groups that are at risk or struggling, including those in prostitution. The program is budgeted at 2.2 million NIS

In 2022, the MOH issued a directive that persons with no legal status in Israel, who are in the cycle of prostitution, are also entitled to flexible financial aid and complementary material assistance and set out a simple and fast procedure for dealing with these requests.

Promoting Employment

- **Beneficial employment:** A beneficial employment program was formulated as a joint venture with Hope Center NGO, aiming to provide a tailored response to people in prostitution who wish to reintegrate into the labor market. This program will provide, inter alia, individual and group accompaniment and preparatory workshops for labor market for three months, after which women will be employed with "friendly employers", with the continued support of the program, until they achieve stable employment and exit from the cycle of prostitution.
- **Vocational training – Ha-Michlala (Her Academy):** Vocational school for women exiting prostitution, aimed at acquiring a profession and integrating into the labor market.



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

The school operates around 62 focused courses that last about ten 10 weeks, including administrative management and web development cooking and pastry, interior design, and fashion-related sales. MSWA contracted "Her Academy Association" in December 2020, and in 2023 the Ministry allocated a budget for the project in an amount of about 850 thousand NIS.

Measures to address trafficking in women and girls, as per resolution A/RES/77/194, including on efforts to prevent and address the root causes that lead to all forms of exploitation of women and girls including through addressing demand:

Law Prohibiting the Consumption of Prostitution (Temporary Provision and Legislative Amendment) 5779-2019

On July 10, 2020 the Law Prohibiting the Consumption of Prostitution (Temporary Provision and Legislative Amendment) 5779-2019, that was published in the Official Gazette on January 10, 2019, **entered into force**.

The law prescribes a criminal prohibition on prostitution consumption and on being in a location that serves for acts of prostitution for the purpose of consuming prostitution. A rebuttable presumption was laid down with the offense, according to which whoever is in a location used primarily for acts of prostitution (such as a brothel) will be regarded as a person who intends to consume an act of prostitution. The law states that an offense of the consumption of prostitution is an administrative offense for which the police is entitled to impose a fine in the amount of 2,000 NIS (610 USD), and in a recurring offense within a period of three years – double of the said amount of the fine. Nevertheless, the prosecution is entitled, in extraordinary circumstances, to file an indictment in an offense in the ordinary criminal proceeding, and then the maximum penalty will be a fine in the amount of 75,300 NIS (22,890 USD). **Note that receiving an act of prostitution from a minor was criminalized prior to the enactment of the Prohibition on Consuming Prostitution Law (Temporary Order), 5779 – 2018, and currently carries a penalty of five (5) years' imprisonment.**

The law laid down as a temporary provision for a period of five years as of the date it entered into force, and in addition it prescribes that accompanying research will be conducted, whose



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

conclusions will be submitted to the Knesset no later than the expiration of the term of effect of the law.

In addition, the law provides for an alternative mechanism to a fine – detailed in the **Regulations Prohibiting the Consumption of Prostitution (Alternative Measures to Impose a Fine) 5780-2020**. The mechanism created in the regulations enables the consumer of prostitution to select a program as an alternative to the fine, operated by the Probation Service for Adults in the MWSA. The regulations state that the program includes a psycho-educational workshop or a series of individual meetings (according to the decision of the probation officer) in a total scope of 6 to 10 hours. The purpose of the program is to provide information and to develop the understanding of the damage and the negative impact of the consumption of prostitution on all those involved in the cycle of prostitution.

[Training for Police Officers on Prostitution](#)

A one-day training on the Law on Prohibition of Consumption of Prostitution was held in each Police district, for officers enforcing the law. The emphasis in these trainings was on the appropriate and respectful interaction with persons in prostitution, and understanding the harms they suffer – emphasizing the approach of the Israeli system, that those in prostitution are to be assisted and are not criminalized or seen as perpetrators of an offences. Police attitudes and behaviors in enforcement in the context of people in prostitution is also included in the research done by the Brookdale Institute as part of the review process of the temporary order prohibiting consumption of prostitution, and the results are due to be presented to the Knesset by June 2024.

- The State Attorney Guideline 2.32 guides enforcement policy on victims of trafficking who have committed offences, and applies the non-punishment principle. The Guideline's purpose is to guide prosecution policy for offences against a victim of TIP or slavery committed in relation to their victimhood. This stems from the recognition that the person's status as a victim may directly and greatly impact their ability to refrain from the commission of these offences – more so in cases where the offence was committed at the orders of the traffickers or their representatives. As a rule, victims will not be punished or prosecuted for immigration or illegal residence offences.
- Police policy is that victims may not be questioned on offences related to irregular stay and similar offences, and police units were instructed not to open investigations on



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

those offences if they are related to the trafficking in the victim or prostitution related offence. The PTC (The Police Trafficking Coordination Unit) runs spot checks on investigation cases to ensure this policy is maintained in practice, and sends periodic reminders on this to the units. The Police works to encourage victims to complain, and investigates complaints regardless of status, and without turning complainants over to PIBA, and when contacted by PIBA about a potential victim in detention, will investigate and if recognized – the victim will be removed from detention and released to the shelters.

In the last three years, 5,104 fines were given to consumers of prostitution.

[New Initiative for Erasing Criminal Records Related to Prostitution](#)

In 2020, a joint initiative was announced between the President and the Pardons Department of the MOJ: A special call to the public was issued, calling on populations in prostitution to submit requests for **erasing criminal records associated with their lives in prostitution**.

[Roundtables on prostitution of minors](#)

The roundtables on prostitution of minors for the purpose of engaging in inter-ministerial cooperation of the struggle against the phenomena of child prostitution in four major cities in the country, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Petah Tikva, Be'er-Sheva and Hadera. A fifth table, operating successfully in the ultra-religious Orthodox municipality of Beitar Ilit closed due to the ha'Lev center there closing (see below on ha'Lev centers), but the core collaboration and personal relationships established between the Police and the social services on the issue continue to foster collaboration. A representative on behalf of the MWSA conducts these roundtables, together with the representatives on behalf of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health (MOH). The roundtables were convened a number of times in the past year and are expected to continue with their operations.

In addition, roundtables in the **national level** were held and these were intended, *inter alia*, to detect the difficulties that arose in the discussions of the roundtables in the different districts and answer these difficulties. During the reporting period, the national table decided to adapt modifications to the working procedures of the tables, based on the experience and lessons learnt from the several years of operation of the tables, and also it was decided to add further and different municipalities to this program, including from populations that had so been



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

underrepresented such as the Arab-Israeli municipalities. In addition, sub tables will be formed, aimed at improving enforcement.

Cooperation between the various parties, and the pilot roundtables established for this purpose, are also vital because minors who are sexually exploited for prostitution tend not to approach the police, and the information on them is coordinated only to a limited extent by the various educational entities and the social services.

Impacts of conflict, crisis, COVID, climate change or other emergency contexts on the trafficking of women and girls and specific measures undertaken to address these risk factors:

While there was no significant Covid-19 impact in 2023, Israel met a significant challenge in the Swords of Iron war, following the October 7th attack. Israel was the target of a barbaric attack by the terrorist organization Hamas on the 7th of October, in the course of which, more than 1,200 people, Israeli soldiers, police officers and civilians, and foreigners, were cruelly murdered, including children, babies and entire families, men and women were subject to horrific abuse, including sexual violence, mutilation and rape.

During the same attack, over 240 people were kidnapped and taken hostage to Gaza, including 33 children, 10 of whom under the age of 5 and babies only few months old. Those civilians, including foreign workers, agriculture students, asylum seekers and tourists, were deliberately and viciously targeted, attacked at their homes where they were defenseless, when they were taken. As we submit this paper, 125 victims are still held hostage by Hamas in Gaza and there are serious concerns for their lives and wellbeing, particularly for the young women, as hostages who have been returned report systematic gender-based violence and enslavement towards the hostages.

These inhumane acts by Hamas and the violations of international law, including the trafficking across borders of women, men, children, and elderly persons – Israelis and foreigners alike, their objectification, which lies at the root of trafficking crimes – using them as mere bargaining chips, committing severe and cruel systematic sexual and gender-based crimes against them. Their lives are a commodity that can be traded between terrorist organizations, with no regard to their welfare and dignity as human beings. While the criminal investigation is ongoing, we would like



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

to note that the forced abduction of civilians, including many young women and men and children, from their homes, taking them forcibly across borders, and their holding in absolute captivity and control of the Hamas, primarily as commodities and bargaining chips in the negotiations, embodying pure objectification that lies at the root of TIP, but also, as now confirmed by the report of the special representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in areas of conflict, published in March 2024 by the special representative after the mission collected all the evidence and facts during the visit to Israel, for the purpose of sexual violence, including rape, sexualized torture, and cruel inhumane degrading treatment by the captors against some of the hostages including women and children. The report states that the mission team received clear and convincing information, based on first-hand accounts of released hostages, that this sexual violence occurred against women and children during their time in captivity, and that there are reasonable grounds to believe that this is ongoing towards at least some of the many hostages still held in Gaza by the Hamas (page 18) .

Taking this into account, our stand is that this may construe a crime of trafficking for the purpose of sexual abuse and exploitation, of course alongside other severe crimes including extortion and enslavement etc. According to Israeli case law on TIP, and we believe this is also the international approach, it is not mandatory to prove that the sexual abuse was the sole purpose of the trafficking, or even the main purpose, rather it is enough to demonstrate that it was a purpose that had significance for the perpetrators and was prevalent towards a number of victims or kinds of victims and not rare isolated incidents.

These acts run counter to international law, and beyond the other violations and war crimes enacted by Hamas terrorist organization, these actions may also constitute Trafficking in Human Beings crimes and violations of international law in this regard, particularly towards the defenseless children, women and persons with disabilities involved.

The State of Israel, under the leadership of the National Anti-Trafficking Unit (NATU), remains fully dedicated to the combat of TIP in all its ugly forms, as we have repeatedly demonstrated, and we continue despite the hardships, to the contrary, even stepping up, our prevention, prosecution, and protection efforts, to ensure no victim is left behind, particularly noting the vulnerability of thousands of displaced civilians in Israel.

We would note that beyond the particular horrors of the October 7th attack, Israel was left to deal with new and multiple challenges in its wake – and the subsequent Swords of Iron War. These



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

shocking events led to massive internal displacement from both the border adjacent towns and cities in the South, and those in the North – around 227,000 people – as well as foreign workers present in Israel who have had to deal with the fear and uncertainty of being at war in a foreign country. Government officials across all ministries were needed to address urgent war-related needs – including Police Officers called to identify bodies, to be in contact with families, Legal Aid Administration officials working around the clock to provide aid to family members of the many victims of the attack, and more. International travel was and still is limited, and many government officials and their families were conscripted into military reserves duty – in addition to those who were they themselves or their loved ones injured or killed in the attack or the subsequent war.

After the October 7th attack, many resources had to be diverted to urgent war-related tasks – as many officers were at the forefront of the early fighting, with many dead and injured, fighting to protect civilians. Resources continued to be diverted to this end – working on terrorism victim identification, on missile landing sites, collecting evidence from the families of the missing and the dead, investigating detained terrorists and more. Many officers in the North and South were also themselves evacuated with their families, and had to change their place of living. Despite these challenges, anti-trafficking efforts and attention continued – in the Northern district, 29% of the intelligence items on trafficking and prostitution were collected after October 7th.

Protection and prevention efforts towards vulnerable populations

- 1. NATU has been significantly stepping up** its prevention and protection efforts towards vulnerable populations such as Palestinians, LGBTQI+, persons in Prostitution, Bedouin population, Foreign Workers, Asylum Seekers etc., whose vulnerabilities have been exacerbated due to the emergency situation, and many have also been directly affected. This includes extrabudgeting of food vouchers, giving preference to non-Israelis; a new fast track in the forfeiture fund for TIP victims with urgent needs exacerbated due to the war and other steps detailed in this report.
- 2. NATU Roundtable and Food Aid to People in Prostitution** - In light of the severe war currently affecting Israel and considering its extensive impact on civilians in general and on populations involved in prostitution in particular, on **October 12, 2023, NATU initiated a roundtable meeting** with NGOs and relevant stakeholders, mapping unique challenges and examining multi-sectoral action strategies in the wake of the war.



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

One of the findings of that meeting was that NGOs reported that since the outbreak of the war, many requests for financial assistance have been received from people in prostitution, with an emphasis on food aid and basic needs. Consequently, on October 16, 2023, NATU assembled the Inter-Ministerial Team for Addressing Prostitution, and proposed to allocate a budget surplus of to **400,000 NIS (110,926 USD) for emergency aid to people on the prostitution continuum**, with an emphasis on vouchers for purchasing food (this is a surplus from an annual budget of 30 million NIS (8.32 million USD) managed by the Inter-Ministerial Team and intended for rehabilitation and treatment of women in prostitution and education about the harms of prostitution). The distribution of the vouchers is under way according to a contract with the Lo Omdot Mineged NGO which distributed about 1,000 vouchers to supermarkets in amounts of 500 NIS (138 USD) for mothers and 300 NIS (83 USD) for those without children. As part of the distribution mechanism, 26% of the available amount for distribution (104,000 NIS, or 28,200 USD) was allocated as a priority to food vouchers for women without legal status, out of the understanding that this population is particularly vulnerable in routine and emergency times more than others.

Shelter Services

(i) Staffing and shelter operations

The traumatic impact of the October 7th attack was felt among the shelter staff, and they reported difficulty in dealing with the traumatic nature of the attacks, conscripted loved ones, the missile alarms and general uncertainty about the future. Frequent staff meetings were held in those early days to allow for mutual support, and professional content on resilience was brought in to support the work. In the first month following the attacks, the shelter operated in emergency mode, focusing on emotionally containing the victims, and gradually expanded to provide all its usual services.

Note that other than the very first week, there were no staffing issues throughout this period. Medical services were also provided at the shelter as usual.

In the early days following the October 7th attacks, some shelter staff were unable to show up to work because childcare facilities were closed following the Home Front Command's orders. Recognizing the need to provide therapeutic coverage in this difficult time, the shelters acted quickly to create a daycare for children of the shelters' staff, on shelter grounds, with volunteer



The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice

staff. The daycare had operated for two weeks, until educational facilities reopened and it was no longer necessary.

(ii) Impact on victims

The war activated traumatic memories and stress for many of the victims at the shelters, many of whom had not experienced missile attacks and missile warnings before, and in the early days, many places of work were closed. The Sinai victims – victims who were recognized on the basis of their exploitation having been held in the Sinai, subject to severe abuse, until their families paid the required ransom – experienced the stories of the hostages as trauma triggers, bringing to the fore their own experience of captivity. For some, psychiatric intervention and therapeutic attention was required. For the families in the apartments, the closing of daycares and educational facilities (which also meant mothers could not go out to work) was also a stressor. The shelter staff increased the food budget for the families, increased the frequency of visits, and enlisted the help of volunteers who ran activities for the children and families on the shelter grounds. Home front command instructions on what to do during a missile strike warning were also communicated and practiced.

Two of the women in the apartments volunteered with the Eritrean community in packing food packaged for soldiers and displaced families.

The Forfeiture Fund:

The fund originally announced that it would, due to shortages in funds, consider only requests from victims who have not previously received funds, and would prioritize core rehabilitation goals rather than short-term aid. However, after October 7th this policy was quickly revised, and a on October 18th special update session was held via zoom with representatives of potential requesters - both to hear any new concerns and challenges they expected to encounter in light of the war, and to update that the fund was now accepting requests for acute war-related needs. This policy update was also posted on NATU's web site. In addition, procedural requirements were eased where possible, to accommodate the war-related challenges.

The Fund allocated **77,460 NIS (21,480 USD) to thirteen (13)** applicants for such acute war-related needs, for those whose vulnerability increased due to the war's consequences and effects – they included food vouchers, rent, and childcare costs. These decisions were processed on an accelerated track, so that applicants whose request was approved (which was all of those applying) could receive them even before the committee had completed its deliberations.



**The State of Israel
The Ministry of Justice**

Impacts of technology and digitalization on the trafficking of women and girls and specific measures undertaken to address these risk factors:

Airport immigration officials are trained to identify and flag potential case of trafficking, which were this referred to immediate law enforcement investigation and the potential victim was able to talk to a specialized social worker. In 2023, twenty (20) victims were recognized under this model, where it was determined there was *prima facie* evidence of trafficking. It must be emphasized that under no circumstances are any persons or victims compelled to cooperate with Law enforcement or Immigration officials, or to receive aid including shelter, and at all stages the clarification is made that the procedure is intended to prevent exploitation and assist potential victims, depending fully on their consent and wish to be assisted.

We would note that an important tool in the screening of those victims is the use of information found in their cellular phones, subject to their consent. Often, this information is used to substantiate suspicions and offer aid to victims, as well as provide leads for future investigation cases. In July 2023, in Administrative Appeal 12780-01-23, the Tel Aviv District Court ruled that since the PIBA border officers are not explicitly authorized to search the phones of people seeking entry to Israel, the search is considered a violation of privacy, and thus border officials must be instructed to refrain from taking the phones of travelers and searching them, even with their consent. As a result, the relevant PIBA procedure was amended to clarify that PIBA officials may only request the travelers to present them with concrete documents from their phone, such as contacts they are planning to visit in Israel, or an email copy of a hotel reservation, and may not in any case search their mobile phones, even when consent is given.

This restriction has significantly impacted victim screening efforts, as they often rely on information the victim is reluctant at first to disclose when questioned. For those and other reasons, the GOI intends to draft and promote legislation giving PIBA the required powers, subject to balances and limitations, and also to search other appropriate avenues to screen vulnerable persons at this crucial junction.

Using Technological Tools in Trafficking Operations

In many of the cases investigated and identified, recruitment happened on an online platform – cases featured a suspect recruiting women via Russian-speaking telegram channels.



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

In the realm of prostitution and related offenses, there is a noticeable advancement in the tactics employed by escort agencies and discreet apartment owners. They refine their operations, learning from experiences to obfuscate their activities and hinder prosecution efforts. They utilize internet advertisements with phone numbers redirecting to centers in a way that hinders tracking calls, and direct clients to communicate via messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram. Websites direct clients to closed Telegram groups – the Telegram platform being an anonymous one that does not have a consistent collaboration with law enforcement.

Staff members receiving inquiries from clients contact the driver driving the woman via a different communication channel. Those methods create a divide between the agency owner and other members of the organization, so the women do not know them. In certain agencies, each woman is assigned dedicated drivers, preventing contact with other women or drivers.

Women brought to Israel for prostitution purposes typically stay for a few days, equipped with pre-purchased flight tickets to demonstrate temporary tourist intentions. They are coached by their traffickers to erase previous communications and activities from their phones, including messages, contacts, and browsing history, and are instructed to claim they are only visiting for tourism or to visit a close friend. Contact between the women and the recruiter is often done via software that is difficult for law enforcement to trace, making it difficult to establish the connection between them.

Additionally, suspects utilize "burner" phones operated by foreign telecommunication companies, which cannot be legally subjected to technological surveillance measures, including wiretapping or communication research. They also employ VPN-connected internet lines through foreign servers, adopt aliases, and communicate through encrypted messaging apps like Telegram, further complicating their tracking and evidence collection.

(iii) Acting Against Websites Advertising Prostitution

Israeli law allows the Courts to issue an order limiting access to a website used for the commission of offences. In 2023, the Cybercrime Unit requested and was granted closing orders for twelve (12) websites advertising the prostitution of adults.

(iv) The Child Protection Bureau Hotline (105)

The Child Online Protection Bureau is a national program for the prevention of violence and crime against children and teenagers online.



The State of Israel The Ministry of Justice

The program includes a hotline providing toll-free calls from all over the country and from any phone. The hotline deals with all offense and abuse behaviors against children committed in the online realm, including sexual abuse and prostitution. The calls are received by Police officers who received specific training, and is supported by an inter-ministerial desk with experts on online child abuse from the Ministry of Education, the MWSS, the MOH, the MNS and the MOJ, who are able to intervene and ensure that every call receives an appropriate and comprehensive response.

In 2023, the Bureau received 35,196 calls, and handled over 8,151 events. One-third of incidents (33%) are sexual harassment or abuse (sexual offenses, solicitation and harassment, distribution of images and videos, and threats and extortion). The platforms where most of the incidents took place are Instagram and WhatsApp, and the *modus operandi* is initial contact in a general group or on Instagram, and later an extended private correspondence.

Alongside its enforcement activity, the Bureau also collaborates with NGOs that are active in the field of commercial sexual exploitation of minors, and participates in local and national roundtables on the subject. The Investigation of child online prostitution is one of the goals set for the Bureau.

Within the framework of the National Headquarters, operates the operational Unit 105 / Lahav 433 alongside a civilian division consisting of directors and representatives of the partner Government Ministries, headed by an employee of the Ministry of National Security. The head of the entire formation is a police officer with the rank of commander.

The investigation of the phenomenon of online child prostitution was set as one of the objectives of Unit 105 due to its severity, scope and implications for minors, especially in the LGBTQI community. It should be noted that those suspected of such offenses operate in camouflage, using sophisticated methods, including fictitious profiles and applications that allow anonymous registration. Added to this is the challenge of convincing minors who are allegedly involved in prostitution and hampering their families to cooperate with the police.

In 2023, the Child Online Protection Bureau investigated around 30 cases involving the severe sexual abuse of minors online. In seventeen (17) of them, severe indictments were filed, including requests for detention until the completion of proceedings.



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