



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

FACT SHEET: ISRAEL



HIAS IN ISRAEL

Founded: 1950

Staff Size: 10

Country Director: Sivan Carmel

Office Location: Tel Aviv

There are approximately 30,000 asylum seekers in Israel, the majority having fled genocide in Sudan and forced military conscription in Eritrea, entering Israel after a perilous journey at the hands of brutal smugglers. Asylum seekers within Israel’s borders experience difficult conditions that limit access to protection and make it difficult to lead a stable life. The Israeli government continues to struggle to implement an appropriate response, instead focusing primarily on pressure to leave and deterrence. As a result, it has been nearly impossible for applicants to gain asylum, with Israel’s approval rate less than 1%. Although some refugees have been in the country for several years and speak Hebrew fluently, few prospects for local integration, immigration status, and access to basic rights exist. The COVID-19 crisis hit the asylum seeker community particularly hard, as over 70% lost their jobs.

To respond to their heightened needs during the pandemic, HIAS Israel has modified its services, implementing remote support, working to help asylum seekers access social benefits, and developing other innovative solutions. HIAS Israel helps the most vulnerable, including single women, women-headed households, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), survivors of torture, older people, people with disabilities and serious medical conditions, and LGBTQ refugees.



Photograph taken prior to March, 2020

HIAS PROGRAMS AND FOCUS

HIAS protects and supports refugees to build new lives and reunite with family members in safety and freedom. In Israel, HIAS plays a critical role helping refugees secure legal status, the first step toward regaining control and stability in their lives. HIAS also assists refugees with access to social rights and services, facilitates resettlement, and works closely with the private sector to provide pro bono legal support for refugees. In addition, HIAS advocates for a fair asylum system and offers higher education support to Jewish immigrants coming to Israel.

LEGAL PROTECTION

High Quality Individual Legal Representation

Without legal status, refugees are forced to live on the margins of society, sometimes for generations, without access to healthcare, education, dignified work, or safe shelter. HIAS Israel supports asylum seekers with various legal proceedings and before courts and tribunals, including those challenging deportation and detention orders; appealing rejections of asylum claims; filing humanitarian requests; and accompanying clients to Refugee Status Determination interviews and other hearings. As the only NGO offering legal representation to asylum seekers with urgent family law issues, HIAS lawyers provide legal guidance and accompany clients to government offices or hearings, often helping clients navigate through bureaucratic obstacles.



HIAS' Model of Legal Protection

HIAS' model of legal protection leverages the growing interest from law students and attorneys to help asylum seekers, awarding 30 fellowships each year to emerging legal professionals and collaborating with leading commercial law firms who give pro bono support. These lawyers and law students receive training and mentorship from HIAS' legal staff to provide pro bono legal aid and individual representation to asylum seekers. HIAS Israel has built the capacity of 200+ attorneys to assist over 1,200 clients in 2019-2020, increasing the pro bono assistance available to asylum seekers in Israel by over 500%. HIAS maintains a success rate of 98% in legal cases and is the only agency in Israel dedicated to building a network of pro bono lawyers and students who can provide legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees.

Strengthening Israel's Civil Society

HIAS trains and provides consultation for the staff and volunteers of partner NGOs, as well as Israeli's civil society. In the past year, HIAS trained over 40 volunteers on accompanying asylum seekers to asylum interviews.

For the last three decades, HIAS Israel has been running a scholarship program for students who have immigrated to Israel. The HIAS Scholarship Program has awarded funds for higher education tuition to students based on academic achievement, financial need, and community service. Each year approximately 45 students are awarded a HIAS scholarship.

PARTNERS

African Refugee Development Center (ARDC)

ASSAF (Refugee Aid Organization)

Eritrean Women's Community Center (EWCC)

Isha L'Isha – Haifa Feminist Center

The Geshar Mental Health Clinic

The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants

Jerusalem African Community Center (JACC)

The Migration Clinic at the Ramat Gan Center for Law and Business Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)

The Tel Aviv Municipality Aid and Information center for Migrants (MESILA)

Tel Aviv University Refugee Rights Program

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

CONTACT

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