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## **Rise in numbers of Jews leaving for Israel from some European countries**

***Some European countries have seen an increase in the number of Jews leaving to live in Israel but the numbers fall short of an "exodus", according to a new study.***

By Harriet Sherwood

World-Wide Religious News (12.01.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2jJlWyy> - The Institute of Jewish Policy Research compared recent trends of Jewish migration with cases of mass migration in response to persecution or major political upheavals in the past.

Jonathan Boyd, the IJPR's executive director, said: "There is no evidence of an exodus of Jews from Europe, even though the numbers of Jews emigrating to Israel from some countries in recent years – most notably France – are unprecedented."

He added: "It is clear that Jews in parts of Europe are genuinely concerned about their future, most likely because of antisemitism, but the levels of anxiety and apprehension are nowhere near those experienced during previous periods of intense stress, like the 1930s and 1940s. Drawing those types of parallels has no basis in empirical reality."

The IJPR looked at six countries – France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK, which account for about 70% of European Jews. It concluded there had been an increase in migration, especially from France, Belgium and Italy; but in the UK, Germany and Sweden levels of migration were not unusual.

Suggesting a definition of an exodus as 30% of the Jewish population, it said 4% of Jews in Belgium and France had left for Israel between 2010 and 2015. The proportion leaving from the UK, Germany and Sweden was between 0.6% and 1.7%.

The context, said the report, was a significant demographic transformation of Europe, with an inflow of migrants from the Middle East, north Africa and south Asia, which had implications for European culture, traditions and politics.

"It is against this background of demographic change and political reckoning that European Jews and Jewish communities try to orientate themselves. Irrespective of the degree of their religiosity and communal involvement, the process is neither easy nor light-hearted for most Jews," said the report.

"It takes place both in the shadow of the Holocaust, an event that showed to Jews and others the scale of possible tragedy when a small and vulnerable minority is drawn into ideologically-inspired military conflict, and in the context of painful and difficult discourse about the State of Israel that affects many Jews at a gut level."

It said the differences between the two groups of countries pointed to "the existence of two distinct post-2000s trajectories of migration to Israel", it said. "On the one hand, there is the British pattern, constituted by the UK, Germany and Sweden, where 'business as usual' seemingly prevails, and on the other, there is the French pattern, constituted by France, Belgium and Italy, where new winds seem to be blowing."

According to a report by Human Rights First, antisemitic incidents in France doubled from 423 in 2014 to 851 in 2015 and were becoming increasingly violent. Figures collated by the UK's Community Security Trust suggested an 11% increase in antisemitic incidents in Britain in the first six months of 2016.

Daniel Staetsky, the author of the IJPR report, said: "European demographic and political landscapes are changing ... Large segments of Jewish populations in European countries perceive antisemitism to be on the increase. There is no perfect tool to measure the prevalence and strength of antisemitic attitudes in the general public, but some phenomena can be measured by their effects."

"Migration plays a very central role in Jewish demography, as Jews are known to move in response to a particularly acute deterioration in the political or economic situation. If Jews feel unwelcome in Europe, their movement out of Europe will serve as the first sure sign of that."

Two years ago, the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, urged European Jews to migrate en masse to Israel following terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. "Israel is your home and that of every Jew. Israel is waiting for you with open arms," he said.

However, European politicians and Jewish community leaders called on Jews to stay in Europe, saying terror was not a reason to emigrate.

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## **Report reveals poor living conditions in Saharonim detention facility**

***Israel Bar Association finds asylum seekers in southern detention facility are held in prison-like regime in cramped living spaces, no basic vaccines for infants, some cells without toilets***

Y Net News (04.02.2014) - An official inspection report issued by the Israel Bar Association reveals evidence of harsh living conditions in Saharonim prison in south Israel. Bureau officials present a grim picture regarding the operation of the facility, protection of the detainees' rights, child care, medical system and social care.

The Saharonim facility, used to detain infiltrators, is the largest of its kind in Israel. While the inspection was conducted, men, women and children – all African, mostly Eritrean or Sudanese, were held there. Among the migrants detained in the facility are infiltrators, victims of human trafficking and victims of torture and sexual offences.

The authors of the report are attorneys Rachela Arel, Shelly Vaknin Adam and Oded Feller, who heads the immigration and status division at the Association for Human Rights in Israel, who were all appointed by Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitz.

According to the report, the living space for each detainee is smaller than that specified in the official standard, and the facility does not include almost any of the public functions that were decided upon in the standard. Despite the amendment to the law that requires the prolonged detention of the infiltrators, the authors of the report noted that no adjustments were made to the facility itself.

With no instruction book regarding prolonged detention, a prison routine is conducted in the center, with standard Israeli Prison Service (IPS) discipline to go along with it: The wings are locked, attendance counts are conducted three times a day, and the detainees are not permitted to go to other areas in the facility unless accompanied.

The report further shows that in some cases, the asylum seekers are tried and sent to isolation for up to a week at a time. In the 14th wing, designated for punishment, they are locked up in cells at all times of the day, apart from an hour and a half in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon.

### ***Facility not equipped to treat kids***

At the time of the inspection, children up to the age of 12, including infants, were held at the facility. A complaint that came up several times in the report was that there are not enough milk substitutes to feed the infants. Although a pediatrician did visit the facility twice a week, the infants did not receive vaccines or vitamins, and no development-tracking or instruction for parents was conducted, according to the report.

The head of the facility said that the issue of childcare will be regulated in the future. "The facility was not equipped for childcare, and children should not be held there," the report says.

Despite the fierce cold felt at the area during nights, the only wing in which heating is provided is that in which the mothers and children reside. No wing is equipped for a prolonged stay, or for the hot weather during the day. The showers and toilets are located in caravans.

The report also notes that the construction of the facility was not accompanied by an outline plan and no building permits were given. In one of the wings, detainees live in tents, with 16 crammed beds in each tent. In a different area titled Saharonim B, the cells do not include toilets.

In conversations with the authors of the report, the asylum seekers said that their complaints are not given sufficient weight. Most of them are dealing with severe mental distress due to their prolonged detention, and those who suffered from experiences of captivity, torture and sexual offenses show post-traumatic symptoms. The detainees shared with the inspectors their feelings of deep despair and lack of hope.

### ***IPS: Report is biased, incorrect***

The report cited that the IPS disapproved of the official inspection, and even moved to constrict their actions. It is to be mentioned that in the past two and a half years, the IPS did not allow journalists or media workers to visit the facility.

IPS officials told Ynet that "some of the claims put forth are incorrect and inaccurate," and said that childcare include transportation services to family health care centers, the testing of their development-tracking and a pediatrician on call.

An official report from the IPS said: "The Bar Association report was concluded in May 2013. Ever since, partly due to a change in legislation on the matter, the infiltrators conditions of detention have changed beyond recognition."

They further added that they only received the report seven months after it was conducted and they do not intend to take into account the deficiencies cited there as they are no longer relevant.

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## **Israel boycotts UN rights council in unprecedented move**

BBC News (29.01.2013) - Representatives of Israel have boycotted its regular review by the UN Human Rights Council, the first time a country has ever taken such action.

The move was expected as Israel has long been angered by what it claims is unfair criticism from the body.

A decision last year to investigate Jewish settlements in the West Bank prompted Israel to announce it would no longer co-operate with the council.

Tuesday's meeting was suspended and a course of action will be decided.

"After a series of votes and statements and incidents we have decided to suspend our working relations with that body," Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor told the Financial Times on Tuesday.

"I can confirm that there is no change in that policy."

Council spokesman Rolando Gomez told the Associated Press that Israel's unprecedented absence had put the council in "new territory" because attendance of the Universal Periodic Review was mandatory.

Haitian representatives failed to appear before the council in 2010, but on the basis that their country had suffered a devastating earthquake.

Otherwise, so far all countries - even Syria and North Korea - have attended.

Israel's action has prompted concern that it might undermine the UN's human rights work, says the BBC's Imogen Foulkes in Geneva, where the council is meeting.

Human rights experts fear other countries facing awkward questions might follow suit.

Even Israel's biggest ally, the United States, had urged Israel to take part. The big question now is what - if anything - the UN can do about Israel's refusal to participate, our correspondent adds.

A joint statement by eight Israeli human rights groups said: "It is legitimate for Israel to express criticism of the work of the council and its recommendations, but Israel should do so through engagement with the Universal Periodic Review, as it has done in previous sessions."

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## **Rachel Corrie: Court rules Israel not at fault for death**

BBC News (28.08.2012) - An Israeli court has ruled that the state of Israel was not at fault for the death of US activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed in the Gaza Strip by an Israeli army bulldozer in 2003.

Ms Corrie's family had brought a civil claim for negligence against the Israeli ministry of defence.

The judge said the 23-year-old's death was a "regrettable accident" and that the state was not responsible.

She had been trying to stop Palestinian homes being pulled down in Gaza.

Judge Oded Gershon, presiding at the Haifa District Court, said Ms Corrie had been protecting terrorists in a designated combat zone.

He said the bulldozer driver had not seen her, adding the soldiers had done their utmost to keep people away from the site. "She [Corrie] did not distance herself from the area, as any thinking person would have done."

Rachel Corrie's parents, Cindy and Craig, looked dejected after the verdict was read out. Friends and supporters in court offered hugs and handshakes. But nine years after their daughter was killed, they have failed in their attempt to get the Israeli army to take responsibility for Rachel's death.

Speaking after the ruling, the family's lawyer was quick to say they would appeal against the decision in Israel's supreme court.

For Cindy and Craig Corrie, that will prolong what must have already been an exhausting and expensive process. Their legal fight is believed to have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

They regarded their daughter as a peace activist, passionately behind the Palestinian cause and trying to protect civilians. On Tuesday, they listened to a judge tell them the activists she was working with were acting as human shields for terrorists.

He ruled the state of Israel did not have to pay any damages. The Corries had requested a symbolic \$1 in damages and legal expenses.

They had accused Israel of intentionally and unlawfully killing their daughter, and failing to conduct a full and credible investigation.

An Israeli army investigation in 2003 concluded its forces were not to blame for Ms Corrie's death.

Cindy and Craig Corrie travelled to Israel from the US to hear the ruling along with a group of friends and activists.

After the ruling, Mrs Corrie told a news conference they wanted to see more accountability from the state of Israel, saying they had been "deeply troubled by what we heard today".

"From the beginning it was clear to us that there was... a well-heeled system to protect the Israeli military, the soldiers who conduct actions in that military, to provide them with impunity at the cost of all the civilians who are impacted by what they do," she said.

She said she believed at least one person in the bulldozer had seen their daughter, and that Rachel's death "could have been and should have been avoided".

She added: "I believe this is a bad day not only for our family, but a bad day for human rights, for humanity, for the rule of law and also for the country of Israel."

Israeli government spokesman Mark Regev says that, according to court evidence, the driver did not see Ms Corrie.

"If you read the seven pages of transcript by the judge after hearing all the evidence for months now, he says that the tractor drivers moved away from the demonstrators on a number of occasions, that the demonstrators took, he says, unreasonable, illogical action, putting themselves in danger."

"It's clear by the Corrie family's own expert - they nominated an expert to come to the court - he himself, their representative, said that it was impossible for the driver to see her."

The Corrie family's lawyer has said they will appeal against the ruling to Israel's supreme court.

The verdict was so close to the state's attorney's version of events that it could have been written by him, he said.

The Corrie family has already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on bringing the legal action.

### ***Human shields***

Ms Corrie was a committed peace activist even before her arrival in the Gaza Strip in 2002.

She had arranged peace events in her home town in Washington State and become a volunteer for the pro-Palestinian International Solidarity Movement (ISM).

In 2003, Ms Corrie was in the town of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip as part of a group of ISM protesters.

They were acting as human shields to try to stop the Israeli army demolishing Palestinian homes and clearing land around Rafah.

The Israeli army argued the area was being used by militants and that the protesters should not have been in a closed military zone.

The army's investigation found that Ms Corrie was not visible and that she was killed by debris falling on her.

But Ms Corrie's supporters say it is impossible that the bulldozer driver did not see her.

Israeli government spokesman Mark Regev: "It was impossible for the driver to see her"

"The bulldozer had a clear line across open ground while it drove towards her, relatively slowly, 20 or 30 metres or so, and even the estimation of the bulldozer's line of sight... would clearly suggest that during that time the bulldozer driver must have seen Rachel," activist Tom Dale, who was protesting alongside Rachel Corrie on the day she was killed, told the BBC.

Pictures taken on the day Ms Corrie died show her in an orange high-visibility jacket carrying a megaphone and blocking the path of an Israeli military bulldozer.

A collection of Ms Corrie's writings was turned into a play - My Name Is Rachel Corrie - which has toured all over the world, including Israel and the Palestinian territories.

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## **Court convicts 4 Israeli men for running international prostitution & trafficking ring**

***Ringleaders forced hundreds of Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan, Belorussian, and Uzbek women into prostitution in an operation that reached as far as England, Belgium, and Cyprus***

By Sharon Shpurer

Haaretz (30.03.2012) - The Tel Aviv District Court convicted four Israelis of heading a massive human-trafficking ring that reached out of Israel's borders to such countries as Cyprus, Belgium and England, forcing hundreds of women into prostitution.

At the end of a two-year international investigation, the suspects were arrested in 2009 along with over 20 suspects in several other countries. The convicted ringleader, Rami Saban, a 37-year-old resident of Magadim, was previously under investigation for alleged involvement in bringing hired killers from Belarus to assassinate leading Israeli underworld figure Nissim Alperon.

Along with Saban, the court also convicted three of his accomplices, including brothers David and Yaakov Moraidi and Shmuel Malka.

In what the verdict called "one of the most complex and extensive human-trafficking affairs to be uncovered in recent years, if not ever," Saban and his associates used a network which located hundreds of young women in towns and villages in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Uzbekistan.

Contacts would then persuade the women to arrive in Israel, promising them that they would be employed as waitresses and bar dancers. In some of the cases, the suspects violently abused the women, who were smuggled into Israel from Egypt and Turkey.

According to the court's verdict, some of the defendants owned and operated 12 brothels in Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan between 1999 and 2004, later operating a phone sex line between 2005 and 2006.

The suspects received between \$5,000-\$7,000 for each woman, depending on her physical appearance, and in some cases Saban was introduced as a partner in the establishments in which the women were employed, receiving 30% of the profits.

Some of the women were told that they would have to work for free or for very low sums of money at first, ostensibly to cover the cost of bringing them to Israel, with the women being paid between 100 and 400 NIS for their services.

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## **Desperate plight of refugees in Sinai exacerbated by Israeli illegal migrants bill**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW\*) (16.01.2012) / HRWF (23.01.2012) – [www.hrwf.net](http://www.hrwf.net) - CSW is concerned that the desperate plight of refugees and asylum seekers in the Sinai will be exacerbated by the passage of the Illegal Migrants Bill in the Knesset last week, which allows for the arrest and imprisonment of any crossing into Israel.

On 12 January the Italian NGO Agenzia Habeshia reported that a group of 20 women, six children and 12 men from Eritrea are being held hostage in the Sinai, where they are facing starvation and violence. According to the agency, the men in the group are blindfolded and chained by their hands and feet. The women are also shackled, and they and some of the young boys are reportedly suffering sexual violence. The group is also being subjected to electric shocks and burning with molten plastic, cigarettes or red-hot iron. Traffickers are requesting either USD \$30,000 per person or the sale of an organ to guarantee release and transfer to the Israeli border.

The experiences endured by this group are commonplace for hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers in the Sinai seeking to escape from Bedouin people traffickers or avoid the Egyptian police, who shoot or detain migrants seeking to cross the border into Israel. The majority of those who would fall foul of the proposed Israeli legislation are from sub Saharan Africa and are fleeing brutal regimes, such as those in Eritrea and Sudan.

According to the terms of the Illegal Migrants Bill, refugees can be imprisoned without trial for up to three years, or deported back to their country of origin or a third country. Not only does the bill effectively criminalise genuine refugees, it also carries a prison sentence of between five and 15 years for Israelis who assist them in any way. Prior to the passage of the bill, refugees were subjected either to a "Hot Return" border policy or imprisonment on arrival and subsequent legal limbo, due to the absence of a system of refugee status determination (RSD) in Israel that meets international standards. The Illegal Migrants Bill will further curtail the limited protection and assistance available to them from the state or from concerned individuals and humanitarian NGOs.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "CSW appreciates that the flow of people in search of refuge may present challenges. However, the Illegal Migrants Bill will criminalise vulnerable and traumatised people, who deserve protection, and is in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Israel is party to the UN Refugee Convention, and is a nation that was itself born out of an urgent search for sanctuary. We therefore urge the Israeli government to reconsider this proposed law, to institute an acceptable RSD programme in conjunction with the UNHCR that allows legitimate refugees to be processed and moved on, and above all, to respect the international principle of non-refoulement."

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