

# CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

## Snapshot: Asylum seekers and stateless people in Israel

# 2.4.2020\*

**The challenge:** The population of asylum seekers in Israel numbers approximately 31,000 men and women, particularly vulnerable due to absent basic safety nets such as state health insurance, eligibility for benefits such as unemployment or income support. Therefore, there is an acute humanitarian crisis. [See an article on social television \(Hebrew\).](#)

In addition, other vulnerable populations who lack immigration status in Israel include Palestinians working in Israel, migrant workers etc.



## Snapshot: Needs and Responses | Round Table Subcommittee



➤ **Distribution of food and basic products** – for approximately 2,000 families. Currently explored is the possibility of utilizing the school nourishment system as a means of distribution for food to the families.



➤ **Severance and unemployment** – 10,000-20,000 men and women. As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, every employer of an asylum seeker has to deduct 20% of her/his monthly wages and deposit it in a designated fund, which cannot be used until asylum seeker leaves the country. As a partial immediate response, it is proposed to release the deposit funds for the benefit of the unemployed. In addition, exploring the possibility of alternative employment in essential jobs such as agriculture, building, food chains, cleaning and nursing.



➤ **Fear of eviction from housing** due to inability to pay rent.

➤ **Children at risk** – Exploring the possibility of providing individual childcare for small groups of children as an exemption to the current regulations.

➤ **Fear of expanding prostitution.** There is police supervision.

➤ **People with disabilities** – It was suggested to explore service provision through the Ministry of Welfare.

➤ **Homelessness** –

– **For asylum seekers** – when quarantine is required, the Ministry of Health is providing solutions.

– **Palestinians construction and agriculture workers** – requiring quarantine are handled through the Home Front Command. Contingent complaints that should be referred to the Commissioner for Foreign Workers' Rights in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Organizations are recommended to hold negotiations with employers.



➤ **Nursing Staff** – In individual cases that require quarantine or dismissal from work, the Employee Rights Commissioner at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare is to be contacted.

➤ **Reliance on public transportation** – as of now, there is no response.

\* This brief offers the latest picture as evidenced by the information available to us. The briefing will be updated from time to time. Interested knowledgeable and interested parties are invited to contact us with updates.

## Additional actions and needs in the field \*\*

### Status Matters

- Automatic Extension of asylum status - to prevent queues at the Population Authority's offices.
- Operations for release from administrative detention - to reduce the risk of contracting a virus while in prisons.
- Call for the release of the funds deposited in accordance with the Deposit Law (20% which is deposited separately and will be delivered and paid to the asylum seekers upon leaving the country). This matter is being reviewed by the government and a bill on the matter is being promoted.

### Health Matters

- Running a volunteer clinic for those lacking status in Israel or health insurance coverage and caring for at-risk patients.
- Arranging test complexes and quarantine facilities for those in need.
- Examination of insurance rights and ensuring continuity of insurance for the disadvantaged who lost or may lose private health insurance in the absence of work and livelihood.
- Translating Ministry of Health guidelines into foreign languages.



**Financing for medical equipment and medicines (NIS 30,000), financing for maintaining insurance coverage (NIS 25,000); Funding transportation for at-risk patients in need of hospital treatment (NIS 25,000), webcam funding for remote treatment.**

### Other Welfare and Employment Issues

- The continuity and additional supplies of food baskets, vouchers for food and basic need products.
- Coping with growing violence against women and children.
- Digital tutorials and individual psychosocial support through phone hotlines.
- Individual para-legal assistance and counseling. About 1,000 inquiries are expected in the foreseeable time.
- For Children Kids and Youth - Support for study, arts and crafts kits, workbooks, storytelling and other enrichment activities on the social networks and a zoom platform. Currently there is no proper infrastructure for online learning.
- Assistance to the unemployed in finding work and alternative means of income according to essential needs in agriculture, food chains and cleaning. This is done in coordination with the government.
- Rent assistance and tenant protection information.
- Examining needs and assistance to asylum seekers in the geographical periphery through the Negev Refugee Center – Moving from a physical community center to disbursed community work: food supply, medicines and medical equipment, protective equipment (masks, etc.), online sessions, online learning and leisure activities, emotional support.



**Additional funding for food, drugs and medical supplies and assistance with rent payment.**



## Philanthropic Response

- The New Israel Fund has approved a \$ 30,000 emergency grant.
- The Joint Israel, the Arison Foundation, the Schusterman Foundation, the Van Leer Foundation and the Mubadarat Foundation are interested and involved. An immediate response to support the community with allocation of an emergency grant of \$200,000. The foundations are looking to provide a strategic response for the medium and long terms.

\*\* Courtesy of The Hotline: Center for Refugees and Migrants, ASSAF, Elifelet, Kav LaOved, MeSila, Doctors for Human Rights, The Negev Refugee Center, Kuchineta, Gan Levinsky Library