

קו לעובד
Worker's Hotline
عنوان العامل



Kav LaOved

ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

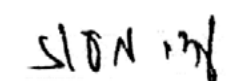


On 1 November 2022, the 25th Knesset elections were held following a long period of political instability and repeated elections over the previous years. The resulting government, one of the most right wing we've seen here, has immediately started targeting possible oppositions, including the High Court of Justice and human rights NGOs, as well as challenging the labor rights recognized to non-Israeli workers. This is not a new direction for Israel but is certainly an unprecedented leap forward in a very worrying direction.

Before these elections, the year 2022 had already kept us busy with many battles for individual worker's rights and advocacy initiatives for fairer work policies. Despite an hostile environment we were able to ensure that thousands of workers can access unpaid money owed to them as well as other rights. We were also able to move forward in several policy areas, including raising the debate among government and stakeholders around occupational health and safety, a neglected area producing hundreds of thousands of victims every year in Israel, and seeing the adoption of new rules we had advocated for to ensure transparency in salary and pension rights' payments for Palestinian workers in Israel.

Our battles for the protection and respect of workers' rights have always been marathons, also in the past, but the elections of 2022 have put us on a much steeper course. Our wins, making a difference in someone's life, our team's commitment, and being able to make silent voices heard, have always been the motivators that kept us focused and persistent in pursuing positive change, in the past and today as well.

I would like to thank KLO's extended local and international family - our staff, board members, volunteers, and supporters - for their steadfastness and belief in our work and its importance for hundreds of thousands of vulnerable workers, and ultimately for all of us in Israel



Adi Maoz, Executive Director
Kav LaOved



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Kav LaOved	4	What We Did in 2022	8	KLO Financials	13
2022 in Numbers	5	Supporting Individual Workers	9	Thank You to Our Supporters	14
Vulnerable Workers in Israel	6	Labor Trafficking	10	Our Team	15
		Monitoring the Israeli Labor Market	11	How to Contribute	16
		Advocating for Systemic Change	12		

ABOUT KAV LAOVED

Kav LaOved/Worker's Hotline is an Israeli civil society organization committed to the defense of workers' rights within the framework of Israel's labor law, irrespective of nationality, religion, gender, or legal status.

Established in 1991, Kav LaOved supports the most disadvantaged populations in the Israeli labor market: migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers, Palestinians, Arab citizens of Israel and low-income Jewish Israelis, providing legal and paralegal assistance to individual workers.

KLO also monitors the labor market, documents violations, and carries out policy and legal advocacy directed at policy improvements.

KLO employs a staff of 20 professionals in various fields and engages over 60 trained volunteers. The organization is governed by a seven-member board of directors.



Kav LaOved's lawyer Aelad Kahana and a group of asylum seekers on whose behalf we went to court against new regulations seriously limiting their employment opportunities in Israel.

2022 IN NUMBERS

We managed over

3,900

labor rights cases for workers from more than **40 countries**.

We reclaimed over

24 million NIS

in withheld wages and benefits, ensuring that they were returned to workers by their employers.

We continued to provide weekly face-to-face reception hours to workers at our two offices, in the field and online, in

8 languages.

Over

150,000

people followed our **8 Facebook pages** in **6 different languages**.

We disseminated

24

“Know Your Rights” information sheets in **6 languages**.

We produced over

70

reports, policy papers and newsletters in Hebrew, English and Arabic.

We facilitated

tens

of workshops, online informational meetings for workers, and meetings with a variety of stakeholders.

We managed

6

petitions in the High Court of Justice for the protection of workers’ rights.

We contributed to

144

media publications highlighting the reality of disadvantaged workers in the context of labor rights in Israel.

Our organization included:

20 **60**

staff members trained volunteers.

We have done this all with an annual budget of

4.4 million NIS.



VULNERABLE WORKERS

IN ISRAEL IN 2022



VULNERABLE WORKERS IN ISRAEL IN 2022

In 2022 Israel hosted around 130,000 **migrant workers***:

- **Migrant Agricultural Workers** - Around 29,000 Thai citizens employed via a bilateral agreement as well as 4,000 students from developing countries who come for one-year work/study programs in agriculture. Agriculture remains one of the most abusive labor environments in Israel given the work difficulty and the isolation faced by workers on farms. Agriculture workers comprise a significant number of labor trafficking cases identified yearly in Israel.
- **Migrant Caregivers** - More than 73,000 caregivers, mostly women, from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, who care for older persons and people with disabilities. They must be available around the clock as working hour rules do not apply to them. They often need to pay illegal brokerage fees to obtain a work visa, making them vulnerable to exploitation and debt-bondage.
- **Migrant Construction Workers** - Over 23,000 construction workers, largely from China, Turkey and Eastern Europe. They are at high risk for work-related injury and death as well as labor trafficking.

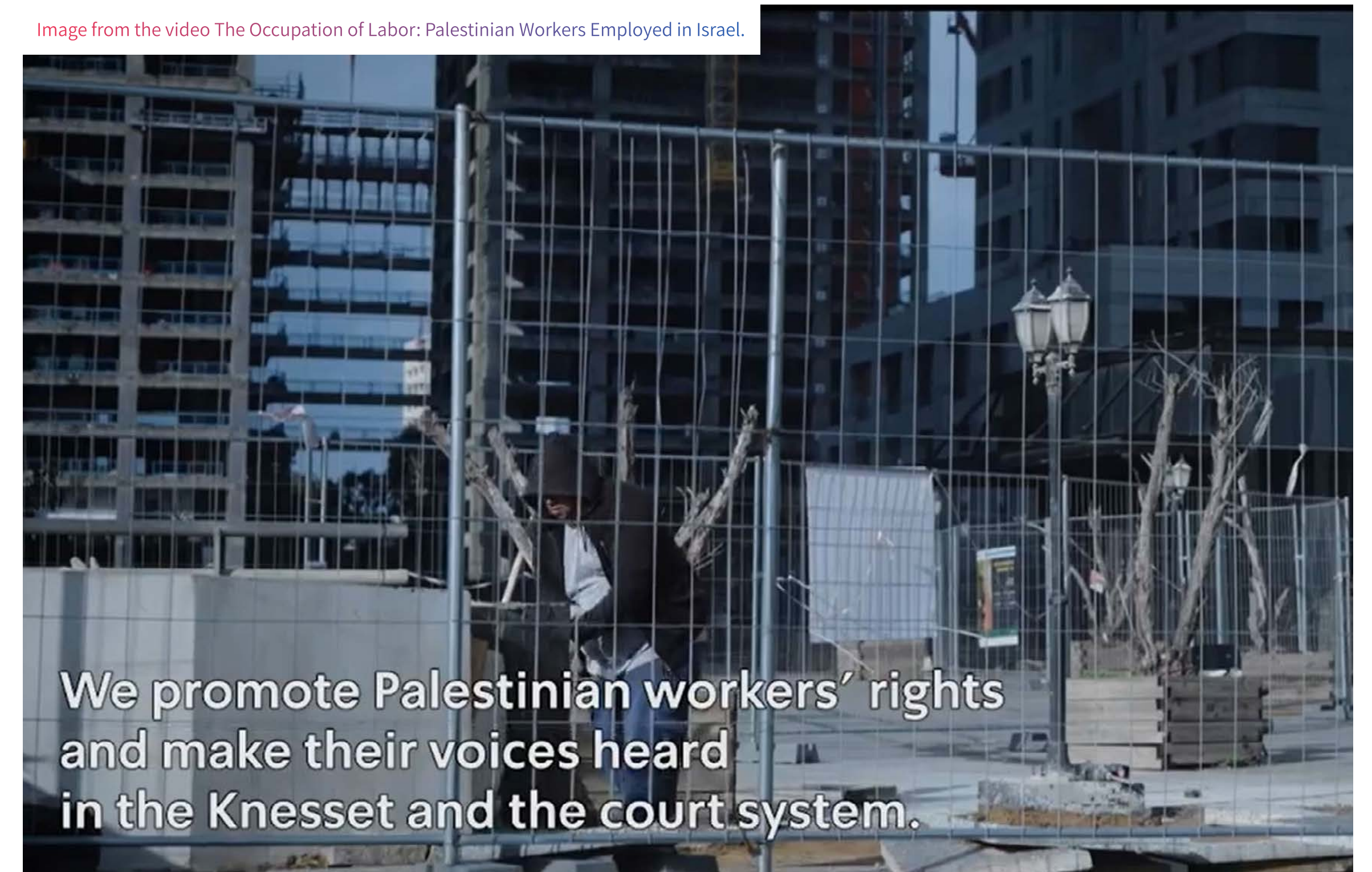
Over 120,000 West Bank **Palestinians**, and a few thousands from the Gaza Strip, come daily or weekly to Israel through lengthy checkpoint crossings, more than 75% of them work in construction. An estimated additional 40,000 Palestinians work in West Bank settlements and an unknown number, which may vary between 18,000 and 50,000, works in Israel without a permit. Palestinian workers in Israel suffer from labor rights violations in almost all aspects of work, including monthly payment of illegal brokerage fees.

Around 25,000 **refugees and asylum-seekers**, mostly from Eritrea and other African countries, are employed in Israel in hotels, restaurants and in other subcontract or informal jobs. Their status in Israel remains unstable and they are vulnerable to labor rights violations such as non-payment of wages and social benefits.

Low-income Israelis earning less than 6,500 NIS per month (circa \$1,800), including immigrants from Ethiopia and the former USSR, Palestinian citizens, and religious Orthodox Jews. Approximately one-third of all Israeli workers are employed in hourly jobs or through third parties.

*Source: Population and Immigration Authority, Israel

Image from the video The Occupation of Labor: Palestinian Workers Employed in Israel.



VULNERABLE WORKERS IN ISRAEL SUFFER WIDESPREAD LABOR RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AS RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT AND DETERRENCE BY THE STATE ARE VASTLY INSUFFICIENT

WHEAT
WEED

IN 2022



1. SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL WORKERS



LEFT: Image from a campaign raising awareness to the situation of Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley.
RIGHT: Image for a Facebook post on Thai and Palestinian agricultural workers published around the Jewish holiday of Shavuot.



Abed Dari and Adv. Chaled Dukhi from KLO's Palestinian team meeting with workers at a checkpoint.

In 2022 we opened over **3,900 individual cases** of labor rights violations, recovering more than 24 million NIS in unpaid wages and benefits.

- **Workers reached out to us** through our 7 hotlines, 8 Facebook pages in 6 languages, and our website in 3 languages.
- **We provided individual assistance** with labor rights assessments; calculations of due wages and benefits; outreach to employers and relevant authorities; and referral to labor courts.
- **We assisted workers** in our Tel Aviv and Haifa offices; we also met workers in the West Bank at checkpoints and local offices

of workers' unions and of the Palestinian Ministry of Labor; we also assisted many workers online - more and more since the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **The most common violations we addressed:** unpaid wages and benefits; denied access to healthcare; debt bondage and labor trafficking; infringements of safety at work, including work accident claims; barriers to disability and maternity benefits; violations of immigration law; and discrimination and violence.

As part of our effort to expand the impact of our support, and to decrease the barriers workers face in accessing justice, we enhanced workers' self-advocacy capacity by raising awareness to their labor rights through:

- **Informational Facebook posts on our 8 pages** in 6 different languages with more than 150,000 followers.
- **Workers' rights leaflets** for different work sectors in 6 languages, available on our website and distributed in person.
- **Workshops and Online Webinars** in 5 languages to groups of workers as well as to members of grassroots organizations assisting marginalized communities.

FOCUS ON: LABOR TRAFFICKING

KLO is the lead organization in Israel identifying cases of **labor trafficking** particularly among migrant agricultural and construction workers. The US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report downgraded Israel from Tier 1 to Tier 2 in 2021, confirmed also in 2022.

In January 2022 we were contacted by a group of workers from China complaining about unpaid salaries and inhuman life and work conditions. The workers were recruited in China by their employer, a company involved in building Tel Aviv's light train. KLO assisted the group in reaching out to the Israeli authorities who were compelled by the evidence we presented to recognize the workers as victims of trafficking and offer them governmental protection in a shelter for victims of trafficking.

תחקיר N12: נעילת עובדים, מניעת טיפול רפואי וחשד לתנאי עבודת - מה קורה ברכבת הקלה בתל אביב?

עובדי כמה מהחברות הסיניות שבונות את הרכבת הקלה בתל אביב מעידים על תנאי עבודה קשים במיוחד • הם מספרים על מגורים בתנאים מחרידים, אי-קבלת משכורות, אווירת "משטור" ועבודה שנמשכת שבעה ימים בשבוע • למרות העדויות החמורות התיק נסגר, אך ל-N12 נודו תלונות חדשות שהגיעו טרם נבדקו

KLO's lawyer Michal Tadjer interviewed by Channel 12 News on the abuses suffered by Chinese workers employed in building Tel Aviv's light rail.



In 2022 we worked also on legal petitions against the government to put an end to one-year work/study **agricultural programs for international students**, and, separately, to end the practice of allowing **foreign construction companies** to hire workers in their home countries and bring them to work on projects in Israel. Both models have turned into unsupervised, parallel systems for bringing migrant workers from developing countries to Israel and are rife with trends of egregious rights violations, including labor trafficking. [See our report on this subject \(Hebrew only\).](#)

2. MONITORING THE ISRAELI LABOR MARKET



Diana Baron, head of KLO's Research and Public Policy Department, speaks at a Standing Committee's hearing in the Knesset.

In 2022 our **Research and Public Policy Department** continued monitoring work accidents through our [Tracking Database of Workplace Accidents in Israel](#). The Department's research focused on capturing emerging trends in labor rights violations, state failures in the implementation and enforcement of current laws, and gaps in the overall worker protection framework. This work resulted in the following reports:

- [Mid-year](#) and [Annual report on occupational safety at work](#) in Israel. The first is only available in Hebrew, the second also in English.
- [Roadmap to Health: Palestinian Workers in Israel's Construction Sector](#), a report on the occupational health of Palestinian construction workers in Israel, available in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.
- [Enforcement of Palestinian and Migrant Workers' Rights](#), only in Hebrew.

In 2022 we also released two additional reports:

- A report, in Hebrew, on [problematic parallel ways of legally bringing construction and agricultural workers to Israel](#).
- A report, in Hebrew, on the [rights of Israelis of Ethiopian origin to access dignified employment as well as unemployment](#), together with the Association of Ethiopian Jews in Israel.

FOCUS ON: OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is a vastly neglected area in Israel where there are serious gaps in the protection of workers' right to safe and healthy work. Israel's death rate caused by work accidents is 2.5 higher than that of the EU, with 72 workers' deaths in 2022. Most work accidents are in sectors saturated with intensive manual work carried out mostly by migrant and Palestinians workers. In 2022 the construction sector was the main source of work accidents while the agriculture sector saw a significant increase in the number of work injuries, mostly due to work vehicles. As far as occupational health is concerned, Israel does not have a system in place to address this pandemic, it has only 70 occupational doctors for the whole country and no clear data on the numbers and types of victims. Kav LaOved has taken on the challenge to mobilize change in the context of OSH by releasing a series of monitoring reports, available on our website. In 2022 KLO held multi-stakeholders meetings to discuss the situation with participants from governmental offices, employers, trade unions, civil society, and the media, resulting also in the creation of a coalition focusing on improving policies affecting OSH in Israel.



3. ADVOCATING FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

In 2022 we continued, reactively and proactively, to advocate for improved access to rights, justice, equality and against exploitive structures of employment for all workers in Israel. We responded to new policy developments and initiated advocacy actions based on issues of concern identified in our individual assistance and field work. We issued 64 reports and position papers on labor rights and labor rights violations in Israel, as well as 9 newsletters in both Hebrew and English. The reports, position papers and newsletters are available in our web pages in Hebrew, and English. We also contributed to at least 144 media items to raise awareness among the public and bolster public pressure for change.

Examples of our advocacy work in 2022:

- Led a coalition of CSOs against the newly introduced “**employment geographic limitations**” for asylum seekers, a new populist measure barring asylum seeker from working in 17 municipalities in Israel, those municipalities where most of them live and currently work, including Tel Aviv.
- Demanded improved implementation and enforcement of the December 2020 reform in the **Palestinians employment model**, introduced

following a KLO petition to the High Court. We also carried out extensive activity to ensure that Palestinian workers get **medical expenses** coverage after a work accident. Our work has also been critical in the establishment of a new credible **pension fund**, finally guaranteeing that Palestinian workers can enjoy this right, and in ensuring that their **salaries** are paid into their bank accounts, rather than in cash.

- Monitored the status of workers from the **Gaza Strip** to ensure they enjoy the rights recognized to all workers in Israel. Raised awareness to the situation of Palestinians working without the minimal protection in Israeli settlements’ farms in the **Jordan Valley**. This activity included a successful diplomats’ tour to the area.
- Addressed widespread violations suffered by workers, both Israelis and non-Israeli, in **subcontract, hourly and “flexible” employment, including deliverers.**
- Continued focusing on **Israelis of Ethiopian origin** in the Israeli labor market, to ensure equal chances both individually and as a group.
- Assisted asylum seekers arriving from **Ukraine** to understand their labor rights in Israel, and



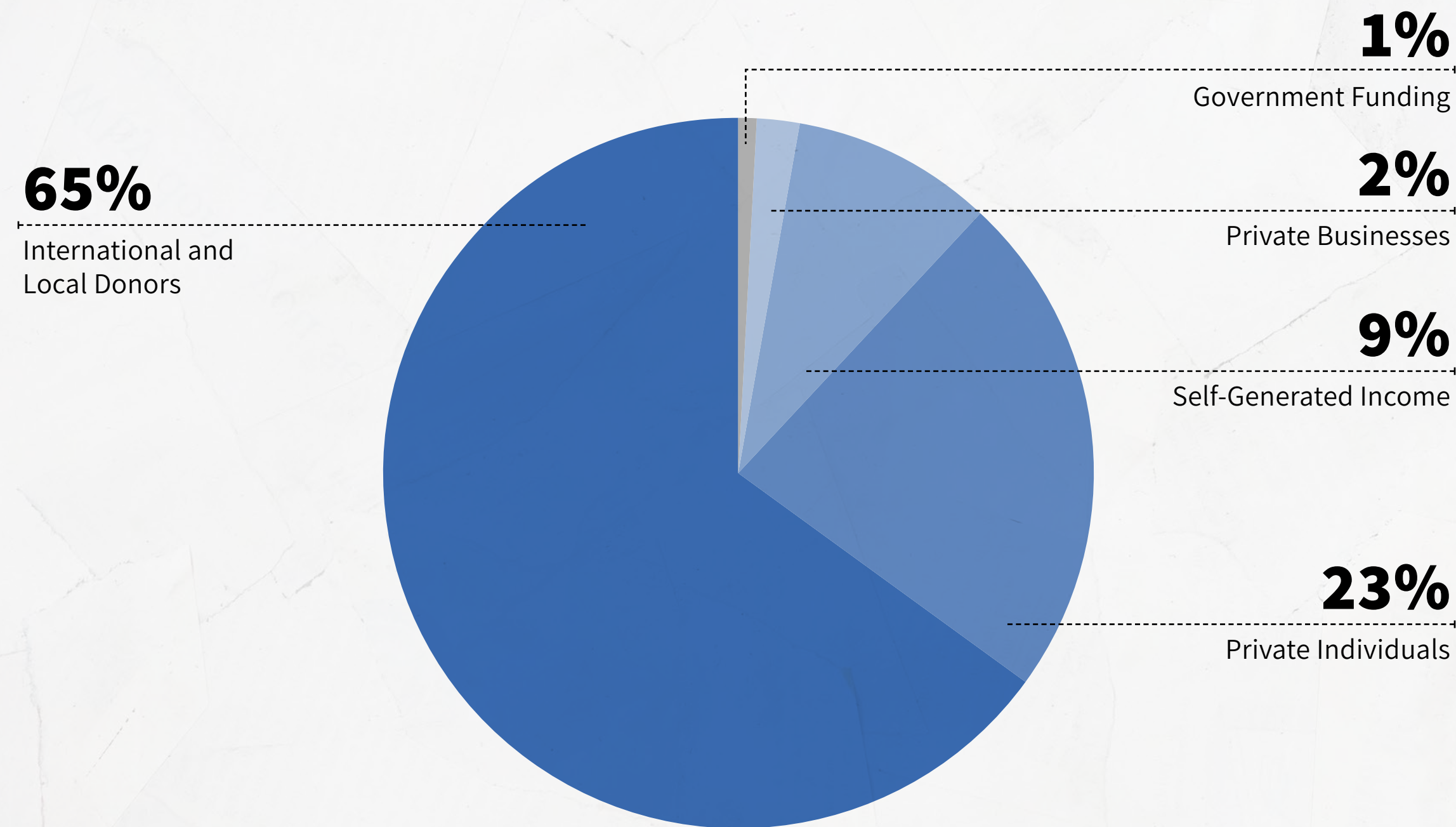
KLO's lawyers at a hearing in the High Court of Justice.

- successfully advocated with the government to allow them to work and earn an income.
- Continued calling for the signature and implementation of additional **bilateral agreements** with workers’ countries of origin, to stop the huge **illegal brokerage fees** that most migrant workers pay to obtain a visa to work in Israel, which often result in debt bondage. We also

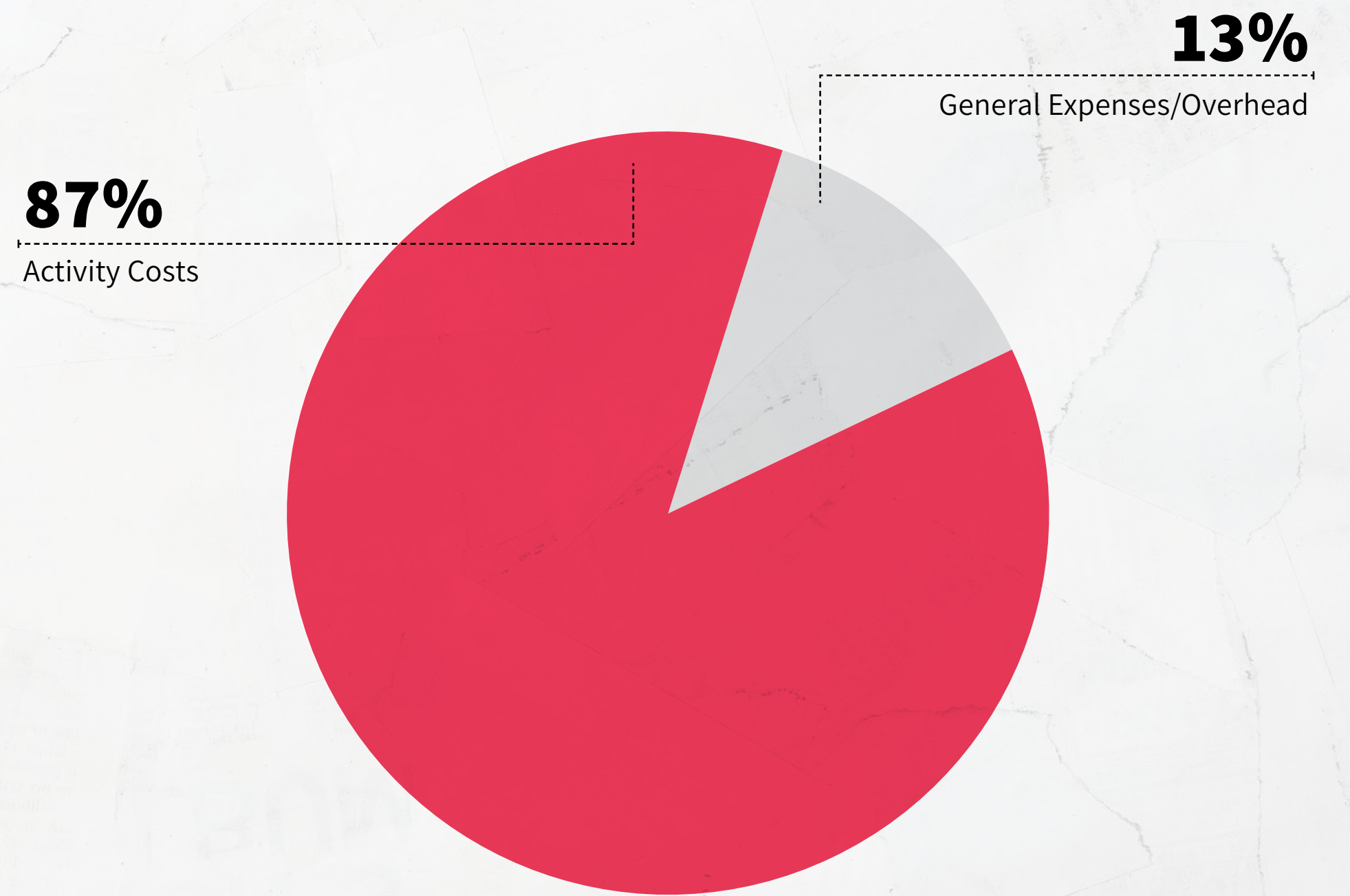
- continued demanding the implementation of a **deposit fund for agricultural migrant workers**, to ensure that they can also access their legally owed pensions and severance fees.
- Obtained that authorities finally issue **regular work accident reports**. We also initiated a stakeholder’s **coalition** focusing on how to improve Israel’s dismal treatment of occupational health.

KLO FINANCIALS

KLO FUNDING SOURCES



KLO EXPENDITURES



Thank You to Our Supporters

Our work would not be possible without the dedication, commitment, experience, professionalism and expertise of our board members, staff, and volunteers. We are extremely grateful to you for all that you do every day at Kav LaOved.

We would also like to thank all those in Israel and around the world who provide us with various forms of support without which we wouldn't be able to make a difference in the quality of people's life, especially those who are amongst Israel's most vulnerable workforce. Your contributions showed us the tremendous support we have among our local and international partners.

Lastly, we would like to recognize our donors whose guidance, funding, and support sustains our work and makes what we do possible:

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Arkin Family Foundation
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How to Contribute

HELP US PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS!

If you would like to support our work, there are various ways to make a donation. Each contribution will be used to provide assistance to workers – whether it be standing up for their rights with authorities and employers, providing legal assistance, or continuing to raise awareness about workers’ rights in Israel.

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Donations from the US are **tax-deductible** through the New Israel Fund, and can be processed either through [this link](#), or **via check** to the following address. “Donor-advised to Kav LaOved – Worker’s Hotline” must be written on the check.
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